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Linguistics and Translation Studies

Linguistic Representation of the Concept **ART** in Dan Brown's Novels

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Abstract

This article deals with the study of the concept ART as a unit of Dan Brown's individual world-view reflected in the language of his texts. The research is conducted on the material of Dan Brown's four novels making up the Robert Langdon series. The difference between universal concept, culture-specific concept and concept in fiction is revealed. The first type of concept reflects universal knowledge, typical of all people; the second represents culture-specific knowledge, which is peculiar to a group of representatives of a certain nation or linguistic community; and the third type reveals the subjective knowledge of a writer/poet. The paper also describes the main approaches to conceptual structure. The fiction concept ART is regarded as a hyperconcept, which is a domain for such hypoconcepts as ARCHITECTURE, PAINTING, SCULPTURE, LITERATURE and MUSIC. The paper explores linguistic means of objectivization of this concept, reveals cognitive features and describes its stratified structure and field-like content

Keywords: concept in fiction (fiction concept), writer's world-view, stratified structure of the concept, field-like content of the concept, cognitive features, hyperconcept, hypoconcept.

1. Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, the problem of mentality acquired great importance in linguistics (Langacker, 1987; Jackendoff, 1993; Lakoff, 1989; Fillmore, 1982). Linguists began to regard human mental experience as structured knowledge about the external world, which is organized into concepts whose content can be explicated via language. In cognitive linguistics, language is thought to be the means of access to human consciousness, as it represents or symbolizes concepts. Evans and Green (2006) in their book

“Cognitive Linguistics”, describe this function of a language in the following way: “language encodes and externalises our thoughts by using symbols [...]. The meaning associated with a linguistic symbol relates to a mental representation termed a concept. Concepts derive from percepts” (p. 21). “When we use language and utter the form [...], this symbol corresponds to a conventional meaning, and therefore ‘connects’ to a concept rather than directly to a physical object in the external world” (p. 7). Concepts bring the variety of observed and imaginary phenomena together, putting them under a single rubric; two or more different objects may be regarded as representatives of one class/category (Kubryakova, 1996, p. 90).

Some linguists admit the necessity to differentiate between types of concepts. Wierzbicka (1997) distinguishes culture-independent concepts (or universal concepts) and culture-specific concepts. She maintains that “if the meanings of all words were culture-specific, then cultural differences could not be explored at all. The hypothesis of ‘linguistic relativity’ makes sense only if it is combined with a well thought-out hypothesis of ‘linguistic universality’” (p. 22). Studying knowledge conceptualization, Langacker (2008) distinguishes between what a single speaker knows and the collective knowledge of the whole society, admitting that “the former is arguably more basic, since collective knowledge consists in (or at least derives from) the knowledge of individuals” (p. 30). Thus, this statement by Langacker enables us to argue for the existence of concepts reflecting individual worldviews, as not all people think in the same way. The embodiment of such a concept can be found in a literary text, as through the means of literary works a writer aims at describing the reality and expressing his/her unique perception of the world. As Karaulov (1987) mentions, “the process of creating a literary text is based on the intentional choice of the linguistic material that reflects author’s conceptions, ideas and mottos” (p. 53).

Although the point of view that the analysis of conceptual structures represented in the language of literary works can contribute to their interpretation is gaining popularity (Holland (1988), Crane (2000), Kövecses (2002), Danaher (2003), Sinding (2005), Freeman (2007, 2012), Nikonova (2008), Tarasova (2012), Kuczok (2014), Anna Kędra-Kardela (2016), *the notion of concept in fiction* (in other terminologies *artistic concept* (Gasparyan, 2016, p. 8), *literary concept* (Tarasova, 2010, p. 745) is still at the stage of comprehension and development. Bepalova (2002) defines it as “a unit of the poet’s or writer’s consciousness represented in a literary work and reflecting the process of individualized interpretation of reality” (p. 6). Krasnykh (1998) claims that, “on the one hand, the fiction concept is a starting point to create a literary text, and, on the other hand, it is a final goal when perceiving the text” (p. 202). The distinctive features of concepts of this type are associativity, evaluativity and semantic extension (Tarasova, 2012).

The study of concepts verbalized in fiction implies the analysis of the linguistic means (lexical, phraseological, syntactic) that encode them. A great deal of research into concepts in fiction is based on the theory of conceptual metaphor (Peña Cervel, 1997-98; Freeman, 2009; Danaher, 2003; Kuczok, 2014; Tarasova, 2012), the theory of conceptual blending (Freeman, 2009; Kuczok, 2014) and the theory of image schema (Peña Cervel, 1997-98; Freeman 2002). Research into conceptual metaphorical structures in fiction shows that they may reveal the author’s conceptual attitudes and motivations and help the reader/researcher to embrace his/her viewpoint, which includes world knowledge, beliefs and

values (Freeman, 2007, p. 1181). The study of a concept in fiction is often preceded by the study of the general representation of the concept in a linguistic community (Danaher, 2003; Kuczok, 2014), as in the concept verbalized in a literary text, common knowledge and beliefs coexist with the unique extensions and elaborations added by the writer. Thus, concepts in fiction can enrich universal and culture-specific concepts.

Researchers maintain that there is a relation between conceptual structures of literary texts and their compositional structure. Kahanovska (2003) admits that the content of the thematic lines of investigated literary works corresponds with the names of conceptual constituents that “unfold” concepts in texts (p. 19). Freeman’s cognitive analyses “show how metaphorical patterns generalize to other patterns, such as plot and scene, and provide interpretations detailed and coherent enough to be compared against traditional interpretations” (Freeman, 2007, p. 1184).

The aim of the present study is to analyze the structure and the content of the fiction concept *ART*, taking into consideration the theory of domains (Langacker, 1987), the hierarchical model of concepts (Prykhodko, 2013), the semantic-cognitive approach (Popova, 2005) and methodology of studying concepts in fiction (Tarasova, 2012). Conducting research into the idiosyncrasy¹ of Dan Brown (based on the Robert Langdon series), I decided to study the concept *ART* as a component of the author’s conceptual system. Several reasons have driven my choice of this concept. Firstly, the protagonist of the series is an art critic, and all events unfolding in the novels are related to works of art. Secondly, as a result of a psycholinguistic experiment², it was discovered that the lexical unit *art* is among the ten most frequent words given as reactions to the titles of Dan Brown’s novels. Thirdly, the statistical analysis of the text material showed the high frequency of the lexical unit *art* 128 and lexical units designating works of art and artists such as *painting* 151, *Leonardo da Vinci* 128, *Bernini* 108, *palace* 105, *basilica* 103, *Louvre* 91, *palazzo* 74, *Mona Lisa* 60, *Vasari* 58, *Raphael* 49, *Rotunda* 47, *sculpture* 46, *Michelangelo* 21.

2. Different views of conceptual structure

Opinions about conceptual structure differ, as do opinions regarding the nature of concepts themselves. The structure of a concept is quite complex and multidimensional; it is not strictly fixed. For this reason, there is no single approach to its investigation.

Generalizing existing investigations of conceptual structures, Evans (2007) distinguishes two approaches to their modelling: 1) in terms of relatively stable knowledge structures such as a domain, a cognitive model, a semantic frame, an idealized cognitive model and different kinds of conceptual projection including cross-domain mappings such as metaphor; 2) in terms of mental space formation, the establishment of a mental spaces lattice and the formation of a conceptual integration network (p. 36).

Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis (1999) reduce all conceptual structures to two models: the Containment Model and the Inferential Model. The essence of the first model is that “one concept is a structured complex of other concepts just in case it literally has those other concepts as proper parts, i.e., a concept C might be composed of the concepts X, Y, and Z [...] occurrence of C would necessarily involve an occurrence of X, Y, and Z” (p. 5). The second model supposes that “one concept is a structured complex of other

concepts just in case it stands in a privileged relation to these other concepts, generally, by way of some type of inferential disposition. On this model, even though X, Y, and Z may be part of the structure of C, C can still occur without necessitating their occurrence” (p. 5).

Clausner and Croft (1999) claim that “concepts can only be comprehended (by the speaker as well as by the analyst) in a context of presupposed, background knowledge structures. The most generic term for this background knowledge structure is *domain*” (p. 2). Langacker (1987) defines domain as “a coherent area of conceptualization relative to which semantic units may be characterized” (p. 488). He uses the terms *profile* and *base* to describe the relationship between a concept and the domain in which it is found. A profile is “some portion of conceptual knowledge which stands in relation to a base of presupposed knowledge” (qtd. in Clausner and Croft, p. 5). In this respect, the theory of domains is very similar to the theory of frames developed by Fillmore. Fillmore (1982) conceives of frame as “any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits...” (p. 111). He “adopts the terms *figure* and *ground* from Gestalt psychology to distinguish between a particular lexical concept and the background frame against which it is understood” (qtd. in Evans, 2006, p. 222). Describing similarities between the theories of domains and frames, Evans (2006) mentions their distinction as well: “while Fillmore [...] views frames as a means of accounting for grammatical behaviour like valence relations [...], Langacker’s theory of domains is more concerned with conceptual ontology: the structure and organisation of knowledge, and the way in which concepts are related to and understood in terms of others” (p. 231).

The notion of domain as a theoretical construct is used in the conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff. “The metaphor works by mapping roles from the source onto the target” (Evans, 2006, p. 295), where the target is the concept or domain being described, and the source is the concept/domain in terms of which another concept is described. In other words, the elements of one conceptual domain are “mapped” or projected onto elements of another conceptual domain. “Systematic correspondences across such domains” are called metaphorical mappings (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 246).

Prykhodko (2013) understands domains as concepts that are organized in a hierarchical fashion, and proposes that macroconcept should be regarded as a domain for hyperconcept, hyperconcept as a domain for hypoconcept, hypoconcept as a domain for mesoconcept, and mesoconcept as a domain for katoconcept (p. 185). The author stresses that the higher a concept is in the hierarchy, the more abstract the entity it represents.

In this paper, I regard the fiction concept *ART* as a complex one, and to investigate its verbal representation thoroughly, I employ several approaches. Firstly, basing my approach on Prykhodko’s classification of domains, I suggest studying the concept *ART* in Dan Brown’s novels as a hyperconcept which is a domain for the hypoconcepts *PAINTING*, *MUSIC*, *ARCHITECTURE*, *SCULPTURE*, *LITERATURE* and *MUSIC*.

The above-mentioned approach is combined with the semantic-cognitive approach developed by Popova (2007) and the methodology for studying concepts in fiction proposed by Tarasova (2012). Following Popova, I distinguish between the content and the structure of a concept. The structure of a concept includes basic structural components of

varying cognitive nature and is described as a set of cognitive features that belong to each of these structural components (p. 115). According to Tarasova, the structure of a concept verbalized in a literary text is composed of five strata: notional, physical, figurative, associative, axiological-evaluative and symbolic (p. 51). The description of the concept structure presupposes arranging the identified cognitive features into corresponding strata. The content of a concept is composed of cognitive features reflecting certain characteristics of the object or conceptualized phenomenon and is described as a set of these features according to the field principle – the core, the close periphery, the far periphery and the marginal periphery. The assignment of a feature to a particular zone is determined by the prominence of the feature in the consciousness of the concept bearer, the level of prominence being identified by its frequency of representation in the language material (Popova, 2007, p. 115).

3. Stratified structure of the fiction concept *ART*

3.1 Notional stratum

According to Tarasova (2012), “the notional stratum of the concept in fiction is composed of typical, logically ordered information, basic denotative semes and distinctive generic features” (p. 55). To reveal these features, I consider it reasonable to analyze contextual usage and cases of collocability of the name of the concept, its derivatives and synonyms, as well as lexical units verbalizing each hypoconcept in the four selected novels by Dan Brown.

Dan Brown uses the lexical unit *art* in the texts of his novels in the narrow sense – painting (16 contexts), as well as in the broad sense – fine art, architecture, music, literature and other creative and practical activities (13 contexts). The lexical units designating other genres of art than painting have the following frequency: *sculpture* 44, *architecture* 38, *music* 30, *literature* 12, *theatre* 4. In the texts of the four novels, there are 105 names of architectural monuments, 45 names of sculptures, 37 names of paintings, 5 titles of works of literature, and 2 names of musical works. In addition, Brown mentions the names of 28 artists, 16 writers and poets, 13 architects, 13 sculptors, and 12 musicians. Other types of creative and practical activities which are nominated by the lexeme *art* in the works of Dan Brown analyzed here are woodworking, anagrams and ambigrams (3 contexts). The word is also used in the meaning “skill” (5 contexts).

In the texts of the novels, the following derivatives of the key lexeme are used: *artist* 53, *artwork* 30, *artifact* 26, *artistic* 13, *arts* 12, *artisan* 1, *artful* 1, *artfully* 1, *artistry* 1, *artifice* 1. The lexeme *artifact* has a semantic feature “historical and cultural value”. The frequent adjective *artistic* actualizes features “art-related” and “natural artistic abilities”. The noun *arts* is used to generalize various types of art, as well as to refer to a certain type of art and some other non-artistic practices when it is used with an adjective: “poetic arts”, “fine arts”, “dark arts”, “martial arts”, “magical art”. The lexeme *artisan* expands the lexical-semantic field of the key word with the seme “making things by hand”. The lexical unit *artistry* has the seme “mastery in a kind of art”. Such low-frequency lexical units denoting abstract notions and qualities such as *artful*, *artfully* and *artifice* include not only the seme “mastery”, but also “cunningness”.

The criterion for the selection of synonyms was the availability of common semes with a key word and its derivatives. Here I deal only with those contexts where the lexemes actualize semantic features peculiar to the lexical units nominating the concept. For instance, the lexical unit *science* is used 269 times in the novels, however there are only 5 contexts in which the lexeme contains the seme “high level of skillfulness and mastery”; consequently, the lexeme *science* is synonymous with the lexeme *art* only in 5 contexts. In addition, I examine contextual synonyms (lexemes similar in meaning only within the texts of the novels, e.g. *artist* and *titan*, *artist* and *prodigy*). Identified synonyms can be divided into the following groups: 1) designation of a creative activity: *composition* 6; *representation* 4, *craft* (v) 12, *crafting* 1; 2) designation of a set of techniques in a practical activity: *knowledge* 5, *aptitude* 1, *technique* 3; 3) designation of a high level of skillfulness and mastery: *skill* 18, *dexterity* 3, *expertise* 7, *craftsmanship* 1; *knack* 1, *science* 1, *ingenuity* 1; *mastery* 3, *talent* 3, *feat* 6; 4) designation of an artist: *craftsman* 5, *prodigy* 2, *art luminary* 3, *master* 6; *giant* 3, *titan* 1, *man of genius* 1, *wonder boy* 1; 5) designation of craft, profession: *craft* 2; 6) designation of an artwork: *piece of art* 10, *masterpiece* 47, *accomplishment* 1, *masterwork* 10; 7) designation of cunningness, tricks: *deceit* 2.

The analysis of the synonyms of the lexeme *art* which are present in the novels makes it possible to reveal additional semantic features of the concept. The lexeme *representation* demonstrates the feature “reflection of reality”; *knowledge*, *expertise* – “awareness”; *dexterity*, *wonder boy* – “cleverness”; *ingenuity* – “initiative”; *mastery* – “perfect mastery”; *aptitude*, *talent*, *prodigy*, *man of genius* – “being gifted”; *masterpiece*, *masterwork* – “excellence”; *feat*, *accomplishment* – “successful completion”; *luminary*, *giant*, *titan* – “success of an artist”.

As a result of the contextual analysis, the following semantic features which reflect the universal representations and associations connected with the concept *ART* are revealed in the novels:

1) “the ability to evoke admiration” (34 contexts). This feature is represented by the use of verbs to adore, to worship, to love, to marvel and the nouns *gusto*, *dedication*, *buffs*, *aficionado*, *lover*, *attraction*, *passion*, *love*, *admirers*, *pride* and *joy* in combination with the names of concepts under investigation or the lexemes denoting works of art;

2) “aesthetic and material value”: (30 contexts). This semantic feature is verbalized by the adjectives *priceless*, *precious*, *valuable*, the nouns *treasures*, *assets*, the verb *to appreciate* used in combination with words that denote works of art and by word combinations designating frequent cases of artwork theft: *art theft*, *art thief*, *art intruder*, *to steal artworks*, *often stolen art piece*. In addition, the value of art is emphasized by contexts describing the increased protection of art objects;

3) “the ability to inspire respect” (4 contexts). This feature is expressed by the verbs *to revere*, *to worship*, e.g. “*revered artists*”;

4) “famousness” (25 contexts), e.g. “famous works of art”, “illustrious artwork”, “celebrated sculpture”, “renowned fresco”, “famed Vasari Corridor”, “legendary ceiling mosaic”;

5) “lack of simplicity”, “intricacy” (12 contexts), e.g. “intricate holy sculptures of the Virgin Mary”, “artistic challenge of creating the mythical ambigram”, “architectural complexity”;

6) “uniqueness” (7 contexts). This feature is mainly represented by the adjective *unique*, but it is also stressed by the description of artists’ specific features, their individual manner: “Langdon recognized the work was pure Bernini – the intensity of the artistic composition, the intricate faces and flowing clothing, all from the purest white marble Vatican money could buy” (Angels and Demons, p. 147);

7) “strength”, “influence” (7 contexts). This feature is represented by the adjective *powerful* (a piece of art), the noun *power* (of a piece of art), the verb to *mesmerize*, as well as by other contexts describing the ability of art to influence a person in a certain way, e.g. “Langdon had been mesmerized by Michelangelo’s David when he first saw it as a teenager ...” (Inferno, p. 34); “[...] physical space so imposing that those who entered felt dwarfed, their egos erased, their physical being and cosmic importance shrinking to the size of a mere speck in the face of God ... an atom in the hands of the Creator” (Inferno, p. 394) (about Hagia Sophia);

8) “oddity”, “eccentricity” (6 contexts): “paintings with strange mythical theme”, “Saint-Sulpice’s famed architectural oddity”, “fresco’s bizarre imagery” (Apotheosis), “[...] the pyramid itself seemed an oddity”, “Salvador Dalí’s eccentric series of watercolors and woodcuts”, “Temple Church’s unusual sanctuary”;

9) “coexistence of science and art” (8 contexts), e.g. “It was a remarkable fusion of engineering and art” (Pantheon) (Angels & Demons, p. 271).

10) “improbability” (1 context): “Art is man’s attempt to imitate the beauty of the Creator’s hand” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 134).

11) “art as a discipline” (17 contexts), e.g. “art historian”, “art world”, “art books”, “art history”, “art scholar”, “art connoisseur”, “art student”, “professor of art history”, “art teacher”, “art department”, “art conference”.

12) “eternity” (3 contexts): “Rodin’s timeless sculpture of The Three Shades”, “timeless basilica”, “timeless statue”;

13) “inconsistency and incomprehensibility of modern art” (4 contexts). The feature is expressed by the adjective *controversial* as well as by other contexts, e.g. “Admitting you liked the pyramid made you a tasteless American, and expressing dislike was an insult to the French” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 36);

14) “the ability to inspire people to create new works of art” (12 contexts), e.g. “No single work of writing, art, music, or literature has inspired more tributes, imitations, variations, and annotations than the Divine Comedy” (Inferno, p. 83);

15) “belonging to a cultural-historical epoch, direction” (67 contexts): “Renaissance art”, “religious art”, “Christian art”, “Hagiographic art”, “Islamic art”, “classical art”, “modern art”, “Gothic architecture”, “Byzantine architecture”. Art of the Renaissance period, including religious art (30 contexts), assumes a central role in the texts of Dan Brown.

16) “nationality” (30 contexts): “Italian art”, “Norman castle”, “German engraver”, “German castle”, “Italian literature”, “Byzantine art”, “Roman aqueduct”, “Greek architecture”. The most frequent lexical combinations designate Italian art (13 contexts).

3.2 Sensory stratum

The sensory stratum of the concept correlates with the perception, i.e. the sensory perceived image, and includes a number of modalities: visual modality, hearing modality, smell modality and somatic modality (Tarasova, 2012, p. 55).

Visual modality is presented in the texts of the novels quite vividly. The author describes the appearance, namely colour, size, shape and other details that can be visualized, for almost every piece of art and especially for those that are viewed by the main characters, e.g. “Langdon and Sienna were now facing the side of the cathedral with its dazzling exterior of green, pink, and white marble” (Inferno, p. 231).

On the margin of the sensory stratum and axiological-evaluative stratum, the feature “the ability to impress by largeness of scale” is revealed (74 contexts), since it reflects both factual information which is perceived via visual modality and the author’s assessment which is expressed by the hyperbolized phrases (as opposed to *large*, *big*), e.g. “enormous image”, “massive fresco”, “sprawling Pinturicchio fresco”, “colossal building” (Hagia Sophia), “monumental building” (Hagia Sophia), “tremendous holed dome” (of the Pantheon), “magnitude of the building” (Westminster Abbey), “its enormity” (Hagia Sophia), “Hagia Sophia’s prodigious size”. The listed lexemes express an unexpected and profound impression.

The analysis of Dan Brown’s novels revealed two layers of opposite vocabulary types which are used to describe the appearance of architectural structures. The first group includes lexical units which denote robustness and austerity (17 contexts): *stark*, *robust*, *coarse*, *rugged*, *cold*, *austere*, *austerity*, *severe-looking*, *ascetic*. The second large group includes words which denote brightness, splendour, richness in decoration (60 contexts): *dazzling*, *gilded*, *colorful*, *vibrant*, *shimmering*, *graceful*, *gleaming*, *glistening*, *blazing*, *smoldering*.

The analysis also revealed that Brown uses descriptions of natural phenomena as a background for the description of works of art (34 contexts). The use of this technique by Brown helps readers to easily visualize the work of art in their minds, to “draw” a picture that is close to reality, e.g. “On sunny days, the abbey floor was a prismatic patchwork of light” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 518). In addition, using this technique, the author emphasizes the distinctiveness of an artwork (9 contexts): “[...] his eyes ascending the illuminated spire, which shone stark white against the black winter sky” (The Lost Symbol, p. 493); size (3 contexts): “In the distance, on the very edge of Rome, Michelangelo’s massive dome blotted the setting sun” (Angels & Demons, p. 326); beauty (10 contexts): “[...] a bank of arched windows offered a stunning panorama of the sun-drenched St. Peter’s Square” (Angels & Demons, p. 169); uniqueness (1 context): “The sun’s rays through the oculus, the graduated shadows on the gnomon, this is what makes Saint-Sulpice unique” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 67); mysticism (2 contexts): “Today, the rain and darkness gave this massive hollow a wraithlike aura ... more like that of the crypt it really was” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 518); and symbolism (1 context): “As the rays of sunlight strengthened, the golden glow engulfed the entirety of the thirty-three-hundred-pound capstone. The mind of man ... receiving enlightenment” (The Lost Symbol, p. 508).

Smell modality in Dan Brown's texts concerns mainly architectural structures (9 contexts), e. g. "When Langdon reached the bottom of the stairs, the unmistakable smell of linseed oil and plaster dust assaulted his nostrils" (the smell of a restoration workshop in the Louvre) (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 144).

The effect of personal presence at the site of an artwork is also achieved through somatic (4 contexts) and hearing (4 contexts) modalities. For example: "[...] Langdon descended the curved staircase into the pyramid. He could feel the air grow cooler" (the Louvre's sprawling underground complex) (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 591); "Stepping across the threshold into Westminster Abbey, Langdon felt the outside world evaporate with a sudden hush. No rumble of traffic. No hiss of rain. Just a deafening silence, which seemed to reverberate back and forth as if the building were whispering to itself" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 518).

3.3 Associative stratum

This stratum comprises non-typical and individual associations connected with art which are actualized in the text.

First of all, art in the works of Dan Brown arises as a means of hiding information, ciphers and codes (54 contexts). For instance: "Leonardo was one of the keepers of the secret of the Holy Grail. And he hid clues in his art" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 311); "[...] Mary Magdalene, her story and importance had to be passed on through more discreet channels... channels that supported metaphor and symbolism". "Of course. The arts" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 348); "In 1563, these ten letters had been used to spell a message high on a wall inside Florence's famed Palazzo Vecchio [...]. Despite numerous theories, the significance of the message remains an enigma to this day" (*Inferno*, p. 95).

In each novel, Dan Brown emphasizes symbolism in art (64 contexts). On the one hand, this feature should belong to the notional stratum, since art is often associated with symbolism, but the persistent nature of this association in the texts and its individualized representation makes it possible to assign it to the associative stratum. The texts of the novels describe both well-known symbols in works of art and the author's own interpretation of symbolism. An example of the first case can be the description of the significance of the baptistery's octagonal form: "Langdon knew the octagonal shape [of Florence Baptistery] had nothing to do with aesthetics and everything to do with symbolism. In Christianity, the number eight represents rebirth and recreation [...]" (*Inferno*, p. 233). An example of the author's own reading of symbols in works of art can be the interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci's painting "The Last Supper". The novel "The Da Vinci Code" promotes the idea that the figure on the right of Jesus Christ in the picture is Mary Magdalene and not St. John, and the position of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the picture form the sign "V", which is a symbol of the "sacred feminine" (*The Da Vinci Code*, pp. 327–329).

On the margin of the notional and associative strata, the feature "an artwork is a tourist attraction" is found (26 contexts). Although this feature represents a well-known fact, it is not directly represented in entries in any of the dictionaries I consulted (Collins, Oxford Learner's Dictionary, Dictionary by Merriam-Webster). In the works of Dan Brown, this feature is very stable and is represented by the contexts in which the names of artworks

are used together with the lexeme *tourist* and its contextual synonyms *guests*, *admirers*, *crowds* / *thunders of people*, etc.

In almost every work of Dan Brown, artists and artworks are associated with secret societies (20 contexts), e.g. “Priory [of Sion] Grand Masters included Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and more recently, Jean Cocteau, the famous Parisian artist” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 280).

All novels represent the cognitive feature of the associative stratum “indication of a route” (18 works of art). For example: “Each piece of course was a marker [...]. It functioned as a trail of clues disguised as religious art” (Angels & Demons, p. 209).

Dan Brown also associates works of art with mysticism (8 contexts) e.g. “[...] she knew, whatever Kryptos ultimately revealed, the message definitely had mystical undertones” (The Lost Symbol, p. 477).

3.4 Figurative stratum

The figurative stratum includes “elements of trope constructions containing the name of a concept” (Tarasova, 2012, p. 139). The central role within this stratum belongs to conceptual metaphor. As a result of analysis of the text material, 38 metaphorical patterns (mappings) with lexemes nominating works of art were discovered. It is convenient to group these patterns on the basis of the cognitive features that underlie them:

1) “importance” (5 contexts): an architectural structure is the heart: “The Palazzo Vecchio is the oldest symbol of Florence and, in Dante's time, was the heart of the city” (Inferno, p. 166); a picture is a member of the royal family: “After everything she'd heard about the Mona Lisa, she felt as if she were approaching royalty” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 141);

2) “a large number of mysteries” (1 context): a work of art is an explosion: “His [Da Vinci's] artwork seemed bursting to tell a secret” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 233);

3) “unattractiveness” (6 contexts): an architectural structure is an eyesore: “The boxy annex [of the Temple Church] jutting out to the right was an unfortunate eyesore” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 453); an architectural structure is a warrior wearing a party hat: “Vatican had ruined the building by constructing two large aluminum telescope domes atop the roof, leaving this once dignified building looking like a proud warrior wearing a pair of party hats” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 208); an architectural structure is a battleship: “The Church of Santa Maria del Popolo stood out like a misplaced battleship, askew at the base of a hill on the southeast corner of the piazza” (Angels & Demons, p. 292); an architectural structure during restoration work is a dark cave: “The interior of Santa Maria del Popolo was a murky cave in dimming light” (Angels & Demons, p. 296); an architectural structure during restoration work is a metro station: “It looked more like a semi-finished subway station than a cathedral” (about Santa Maria del Popolo) (Angels & Demons, p. 296); an architectural structure is a scar: “Langdon sighed, [...]. ‘Yes, your pyramid is magnificent.’ Fache grunted. ‘A scar on the face of Paris’” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 40);

4) “large size”: an architectural structure is a mountain (24 contexts): “Hagia Sophia. Not so much a building ... as a mountain” (Inferno, p. 383); an architectural structure is a desert: “Again he scanned the sprawling expanse of granite beneath his feet – St. Peter's

Square – an open desert surrounded by Swiss Guard” (Angels & Demons, p. 334); an architectural structure is a monster: “From the access road, Gandolfo resembled a great stone monster pondering a suicidal leap” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 207); an architectural structure is a giant: “an immovable giant on the Piazza del Duomo” (Il Duomo) (Inferno, p. 33); an architectural structure is a city: “Hagia Sophia appeared to be a city to itself” (Inferno, p. 383). The first metaphorical pattern represents the shape of an architectural structure as well. Large size is also vividly verbalized by the following figurative expressions: “gargantuan, sword-wielding angel” (an angel statue on the castle roof); “castle’s elephantine double doors” (Castle of the Holy Angel), “monstrous stone structure across the river” (Castle of the Holy Angel), “the mammoth bronze angel” (an angel statue on the castle roof), “mammoth columns” (in Santa Maria del Popolo). The listed epithets, in combination with words denoting structures of architecture and their components, are individualized and represent not only the large size of the structure but also the writer’s evaluation. The adjectives gargantuan and mammoth, although indicating a large size, are not as a rule used with words which designate architectural structures. The first word is used to describe things related to food, the second one to describe the great complexity of a task or a situation (Collins Dictionary). In addition to the large size of the structures, all four adjectives convey their unattractiveness and excessive cumbersomeness;

5) “form” (17 contexts): an architectural structure is a ship: “Silas gazed up into the soaring ribbed vault of the ceiling, he imagined he was standing beneath the hull of an enormous overturned ship” (Saint-Sulpice) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 126); an architectural structure is a pencil: “pencil-shaped minarets” (The Blue Mosque); an architectural structure is a stalactite: “[...] a huge inverted skylight that hung from the ceiling like a stalactite” (La Pyramide Inversée) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 41); a sculpture is an iceberg: “The miniature structure itself protrudes up through the floor as though it were the tip of an iceberg [...]” (a miniature pyramid in the Louvre) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 592); an architectural structure is a horseshoe (2 contexts), e.g. “Shaped like an enormous horseshoe, the Louvre was the longest building in Europe [...]” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 34); an architectural structure is a chess piece (2 contexts): “The Palazzo Vecchio resembles a giant chess piece” (Inferno, p. 146); an architectural structure is a cake (2 contexts), e.g. “Resembling a layer cake, some had claimed, the eight-sided structure consisted of three distinct tiers that ascended to a shallow white roof” (Florence Baptistery) (Inferno, p. 233); an architectural structure is a silo tower: “three domed, silolike appendages jutting off the building” (Hagia Sophia) (Inferno, p. 389); ribs of a dome are the sun’s rays: “From its central point, forty ribs radiated outward like rays of the sun [...]” (dome of Hagia Sophia) (Inferno, p. 393); an architectural structure is the mast of a ship: “The monolithic spire of the Washington Monument loomed dead ahead, illuminated against the sky like the majestic mast of a ship” (The Lost Symbol, p. 13); architectural structures are plants: “Gray stone columns are ascended like redwoods into the shadows, arching gracefully over dizzying expanses, and then shooting back down to the stone floor” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 518); a part of an architectural structure is a canyon: “Before them, the wide alley of the north transept stretched out like a deep canyon, flanked by sheer cliffs of stained glass” (in Westminster Abbey) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 518);

6) “success”, “authoritativeness” (1 context): an artist is a behemoth: “Santi was a behemoth in the art world” (Angels & Demons, p. 253). The use of the lexeme behemoth in such a context is not typical; the senses success and authoritativeness can be determined through the synonymic relation with the word giant;

7) “brightness”, “beauty” (4 contexts): a carving is a smouldering fire: “Their white lacework carvings seemed to smolder with a ruddy glow as the last of the day's sunlight [...]” (Rosslyn Chapel) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 569); the surface of the vault of a baptistery is smouldering coals: “[...] the surface of the baptistery's octagonal vault [...] glistened and shimmered as if it were made of smoldering coals” (Inferno, p. 239); a copper ball on the dome of a cathedral is a beacon: “... its zenith adorned with a gilt copper ball that glistened like a beacon” (Inferno, p. 33); the facade of an architectural construction is fire: “The marble façade blazed like fire in the afternoon sun” (St. Peter's Basilica) (Angels & Demons, p. 143);

8) “perfection, beauty” (1 context): columns are the ribs of a beautiful beast: “On either flank, a shadowy row of sleek buttresses jutted out like the ribs of a beautiful beast” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 84);

The majority of the analyzed patterns represent “image metaphors” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, pp. 89–96), as the art objects are depicted in terms of other concepts based on shared perceptual features (mostly visual).

All analyzed examples demonstrate the metaphorical pattern *the artwork (artist) is Y*, i.e. the source of the mapping is another concept. The analysis revealed only one case of the metaphorical pattern *Y is art (an artist)*, where the concept ART is a source domain: “Rather than definitive theological identities like God, Allah, Buddha, or Jesus, the Masons use more general terms like Supreme Being or Great Architect of the Universe” (The Lost Symbol, pp. 30–31). This sentence contains the metaphorical pattern *God is an architect*, which represents the cognitive features “creation” and “designing”.

Cognitive features of the figurative stratum are also actualized by personification (13 contexts), i.e. the “ontological metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 32) *artwork is an animate being*. The following features are revealed: “large size”: “La Pyramide Inversée [...] was large enough to swallow their Smart-Car in a single gulp” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 189); “shape”: “[...] the Vasari Corridor was like a broad serpent, snaking through the buildings [...]” (Inferno, p. 142); “keeping secret information”: “Langdon quickly told her about works by Da Vinci, Botticelli, Poussin, Bernini, Mozart, and Victor Hugo that all whispered of the quest to restore the banished sacred feminine” (The Da Vinci Code, p. 348); “distinctiveness” (2 contexts), e.g.: “Lit from beneath by banks of floodlights, the church's two bell towers rose like stalwart sentinels above the building's long body” (Saint-Sulpice) (The Da Vinci Code, p. 83).

3.5 Axiological-evaluative stratum

The axiological-evaluative stratum captures features in terms of positive and negative evaluation as well as the characteristics determined by emotional perception of the object (Tarasova, 2012, p. 141). This stratum covers the lexemes denoting large size that have been analyzed as part of the notional (*enormous, massive, sprawling, colossal, monumental,*

magnitude, enormity, prodigious) and figurative strata (*gargantuan, elephantine, monstrous, mammoth*, figurative patterns denoting the feature “unattractiveness”) as well as the evaluative adjectives *great, beautiful, impressive, magnificent, imposing, finest, perfect, refined, breathtaking, spectacular, dignified, stately, staggering, dramatic, majestic, astonishing, striking, elegant, commanding*. The last group of enumerated adjectives convey positive evaluation and reflect such cognitive features as “beauty” (58 contexts), “grandeur” (6 contexts), “impressiveness” (52 contexts), “perfection” (6 contexts). The grandeur of architectural construction is also expressed by the frequent noun *edifice* (14 contexts) and the word combinations *to rise majestically, majesty of the building, architecture's grandeur, to stand regally, robust architecture*. In addition, the analysis revealed a number of evaluative adjectives characterizing artists in a positive way (12 contexts): *great, gifted, accomplished, brilliant, prolific*. These lexemes reveal the feature “gifted nature”.

Dan Brown repeatedly stresses the ability of art to evoke fear (9 contexts). To actualize this feature, the writer uses the lexemes *daunting, frightening, horrifying, intimidating, startling* and the word combinations *to feel gooseflesh, to feel a chill*, e.g. “As always, Langdon felt a chill as he entered the cavernous room” (the Pantheon) (*Angels & Demons*, p. 271). Fear is also combined with admiration: “He was in awe, transported for an instant to another world. In his life, he had never imagined a chapel that looked like this” (Chigi Chapel) (*Angels & Demons*, p. 301).

Despite mostly positive evaluation of artworks, the novels also include cases of negative or ironic attitudes towards some of them (11 contexts), which is expressed by the lexemes *boring, bleak, clumsy, murky, despised, somber, unfortunate piece of “art”, hideous* and other contexts, e.g. “[...] all she saw was a niche containing what had to be the most hideous statue she had ever seen. Good God, the Medici could afford any artwork on earth, and they chose this? The statue before them depicted an obese, naked dwarf straddling a giant turtle...” (*Inferno*, p. 123).

The symbolic stratum of the concept is based on “archetypal symbolic associations or the symbolic associations typical of the author's poetic system” (Tarasova, 2012, p. 62). The analysis of Dan Brown's texts did not reveal associations of this type, therefore they can be considered more typical of poetic texts.

4. Field-like concept structure

The revealed cognitive features are unified and integrated by cognitive classification features, each of which can be arranged by the frequency index in the field-like content of the concept. The formulation of cognitive classification features maintains economy in cognitive representation. The core cognitive classification features of the fiction concept *ART* are the most prominent cognitive features, and they are verbalized by the most frequent lexemes. The analysis shows that such features are “genres of art” 30 % (484 contexts), “exterior characteristics” 12.5 % (200 contexts), “emotional evaluation” 12.2 % (195 contexts) and “aesthetic evaluation” 11.6 % (186 contexts). The close periphery is composed of the cognitive classification features that represent the content of the most hypoconcepts and is actualized by a large number of lexical units: “function” 9.9% (159 contexts),

“significance” 6.4% (102 contexts), “characteristics of an artist” 4.3 % (69 contexts), “connection with other branches and activities” 2.9 % (46 contexts) and “directions in art” 2.7 % (44 contexts). The far periphery is composed of the cognitive classification features with a lower frequency of contexts in which they are verbalized: “national identity” 1.9 % (30 contexts), “individuality” 1.6 % (25 contexts), “ability to influence” 1.2% (19 contexts) and “field of knowledge” 1.1% (17 contexts). The marginal periphery consists of the cognitive classification features represented by a small number of lexemes and contexts: “smell characteristics” 0.6% (9 contexts), “falseness” 0.3% (5 contexts), “sound characteristics” 0.3 % (4 contexts), “somatic characteristics” 0.3 % (4 contexts) and “temporal characteristics” 0.2 % (3 contexts).

5. Conclusion

As is evident from the analysis, the fiction concept ART has quite prominent and specific linguistic expressions in the works of Dan Brown. The research has shown that the representation of the concept within the notional stratum is wider than in dictionaries. It also demonstrated that within the sensory stratum, it is visual modality that prevails, as the author very carefully describes the colour, shape, size and other details of artworks which can be visualized. The description of natural phenomena serves as a background for emphasizing the peculiarities of art. Rather unusual knowledge about the concept is reflected by the cognitive features of the associative stratum “means of hiding information”, “indication of a route”, “connection with secret societies” which have frequent verbalization. The author uses and creates numerous cognitive metaphors to emphasize such features of the concept as “importance”, “a large number of mysteries”, “unattractiveness”, “size”, “shape”, “success”, “beauty” and “perfection”. The specificity of the axiological-evaluative stratum is that not all artworks receive positive evaluation. The symbolic stratum is lacking in the structure of the concept. The analysis reveals that the hypoconcept *ARCHITECTURE* has the most striking representation within each stratum of the concept, while the hypoconcept *THEATRE* (which is peculiar to the universal concept *ART*) is not expressed at all.

The determination of the core in the field-like content of the concept has shown that cognitive classification features of the concept such as “genres of art”, “exterior characteristics”, “emotional evaluation” and “aesthetic evaluation” are dominant in the conceptualization of art in the novels by Dan Brown. Some cognitive features show the close connection of the concept *ART* with other key concepts of the conceptual sphere of the writer: *MYSTERY*, *FEAR* and *RELIGION*.

Notes

¹ In the works of Russian and Ukrainian linguists, idiostyle is understood as the “unity of concepts and cognitive structures of the author’s consciousness and their linguistic representation” (Tarasova, 2012, p. 11)

² According to Babenko and Kasarin (2005), the psycholinguistic experiment is aimed at analysing the conceptual perception of the text by a reader. It helps to determine the key words of the text on the basis of which the names of the concepts are revealed. During the experiment, the readers have to respond to a word-stimulus which is the title of the literary work with the words they associate with it. The most frequent reactions determine the key words of the text

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Addressing the reader: A comparison of research papers in Slovak, L1 English and L2 English

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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: academic writing, personal deixis, intercultural rhetoric

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1. Introduction

The genre of the research paper might appear monological since there is no immediate reply from its readers. Nevertheless, the writer hopes to provoke the readers' response and to trigger discussion, which gives the research paper a dialogic character. This response usually takes the form of another research paper citing the original paper, and at times of

a short ‘response to the author’ arguing against the original paper. As such, the response from the reader is necessarily delayed, and sometimes it does not occur at all. In the latter case, the paper has failed to stimulate academic debate, and it has thus arguably failed to achieve its purpose. The writer therefore needs to engage the reader as a participant in the communicative exchange. The task is not an easy one, as the readership is anonymous and varied: while research papers are primarily directed at peer researchers, its potential audience involves also practitioners, students, and non-experts interested in the topic. Therefore, writers structure the argument based on their own expectations of the readers’ response to the evolving text (Thompson 58). Such expectations are determined, among other factors, by culture (e.g. Lafuente-Millán 219; Čmejrková and Daneš 55).

The present paper studies reader address as a form of reader engagement. More specifically, it aims to explore how Slovak scholars address the reader in their research papers. In order to achieve this aim, I compare and contrast reader address in native Slovak (as the L1 of the authors), native English (as the L1 of the authors), and non-native English by Slovak authors (as the L2 of the authors). The paper will point out current trends in reader address in Slovak and Anglophone academic writing, which include avoidance of third person terms and second person pronouns, the use of formulaic language in the second person imperative, and the use of inclusive first person plurals to decrease the distance between the writer and the reader. The cross-cultural comparison presented in the paper will show that Slovak authors tend to signpost the reader to other parts of the text less than native English writers, and to use more conditional clauses to persuade the reader. We will see that Slovak linguists use a high amount of modality, i.e. of modal verbs, as a sign of authorial modesty when writing in Slovak. I will also show that, when writing in non-native English, Slovak linguists do not establish the same relationship with their readers as they do in native Slovak.

2. Reader engagement and reader address

Engagement, as defined by Hyland (“Corpus Informed Discourse Analysis” 111), is “the ways writers pull readers along with the unfolding discourse: recognizing their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants and guiding them to interpretations”. Engagement thus serves to acknowledge the reader as an equal member of the discipline and at the same time to persuade the reader of the validity of the claims put forth in the text. More commonly found in soft sciences than in hard sciences (Hyland, “Bringing in the Reader” 554), the overall frequency of engagement has decreased over the past 50 years in proportion to the increased length of the papers (Hyland and Jiang 32).

Hyland (“Bringing in the Reader” et passim) identifies five types of reader engagement, namely (1) real and rhetorical questions, (2) reader mentions (inclusive first person pronouns, second person pronouns and expressions referring to the reader), (3) directives (imperatives, obligation modals, and phrases of the type *it is {adjective} to {verb}*, which direct the reader to an action), (4) references to shared knowledge, and (5) asides addressed to the reader. This paper focuses only on some of these devices, namely directly addressing the reader through reader mentions and imperatives. These are primary means of reader

engagement, as they amount to 61 percent of total engagement in research papers as found by Hyland (“Bringing in the Reader” 554). I will now discuss these devices in turn.

To start with, inclusive first person pronouns are the most frequent reader engagement device (Hyland, “Bringing in the Reader” 554). By assuming a joint position with the reader, writers strategically use inclusive plurals to lead the reader to a conclusion desired by the writers themselves. In contrast, second person pronouns are rare in academic writing (Biber 334, Hyland, “Bringing in the Reader” 554). Hyland (“Bringing in the Reader” 557) suggests that writers try to avoid the distance that *you* creates between the reader and the writer, opting for inclusive plurals instead. Consequently, second person pronouns, as well as the indefinite pronoun *one*, are typically used to refer to people in general (Hyland and Jiang 33). Similarly, direct reader references, such as *the reader*, are rare; Hyland (“Community and Individuality” 178) states that this way of addressing the reader is “extremely unusual in current practice, [...] quaint and rather dated”. Lastly, imperatives belong among directives, which are face threatening (Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*), since they tell the reader what to think or do. For this reason they are more common in textbooks and less frequent in student writing compared to expert research papers (Hyland, “Directives” 223). However, Myers (21) argues that imperatives in academic discourse are similar to polite imperative invitations such as *come in and take a seat*. Therefore, imperatives are the least threatening among directives, which has perhaps contributed to their rise in academic writing in the past five decades (Hyland & Jiang 38). Hyland (“Directives” et passim) recognizes three types of directives, namely (i) physical acts requesting the reader to perform an action in the real world, typically as part of a replicated research process, (ii) cognitive acts asking the reader to understand issues in a particular way, and (iii) textual acts referring the reader to another text or another part of the same text. In the rest of this paper, I refer to the two types of textual acts as *intertextual acts* and *intratextual acts*, respectively.

The use of reader engagement features is influenced by the national culture and mother tongue of the writer (e.g. Lafuente-Millán 219). Consequently, the roles of the reader and the writer in academic discourse may vary across cultures (Čmejrková and Daneš 55). As has been shown by studies in intercultural rhetoric and contrastive linguistics, reader engagement in Slavic academic writing differs from engagement in Anglophone academic writing. Namely, texts in Russian, Bulgarian and Czech, as well as in non-native English written by speakers of Slavic languages, focus more on content than on interaction, and contain less reader engagement and less textual signposting for the reader, making the texts less dialogic than Anglophone texts (Chamonikolasová 83; Čmejrková and Daneš 54; Dontcheva-Navratilova “Autorovy role” 51, “Cross-Cultural Variation” 169, “Lexical Bundles” 10; Duszak 303; Khoutyz, “Engagement Features” 14; Vassileva 173). Further features of Slavic engagement are high modality connected to the first person plural, as found in Czech and Slovak by Čmejrková (28), and preference for collective directives (equivalent of *let us*), as shown by Khoutyz (“Engagement” 144; “Engagement Features” 11) in Russian. As we have seen, reader engagement by Slovak authors has received little research attention, and to the best of my knowledge, the only paper that deals with it is Čmejrková (“The (Re)Presentation”). Therefore, this paper studies ways of addressing

the reader in Slovak and Slovak English by drawing comparisons with native English academic writing.

3. Data collection and analysis

Three corpora of academic writing were created, namely a corpus of native English writing (abbreviated as EN), native Slovak writing (abbreviated as SK), and non-native English writing by Slovak authors (abbreviated as NN). For a text to be included in the native English corpus, it was sufficient for at least one of its authors to be a native English writer, as judged by the authors' names and affiliations. In order to avoid influences from individual styles, the corpora do not contain more than one text by the same author. They were each compiled from 30 research articles in linguistics, published from 2012 to 2016 in journals and (in the case of the non-native corpus due to a lack of suitable journal articles) also in an edited volume. Namely, the texts in the native English corpus were drawn from the journals *English for Specific Purposes*, *English Language and Linguistics*, and *TESL Canada*, the texts in the native Slovak corpus from the journals *Jazyk a kultúra*, *Jazykovedný časopis* and *Slovenská reč*, and the texts in the non-native corpus were taken from the volume *English Matters* and the journals *Jazyk a kultúra*, *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics*, *Topics in Linguistics*, and *XLinguae*.

The texts were converted to plain text format files using *AntFileConverter* (Anthony). Irrelevant parts of the texts, such as authors' names, abstracts, keywords, references, bios, pagination, etc., were removed. The length of the texts was then determined by *AntConc* (Anthony) as follows: 252,850 words in the native English corpus, 157,614 words in the native Slovak corpus, and 131,047 words in the non-native corpus. Given the varying length of the corpora, the results were normalized to 10,000 words (see Section 4).

Next, the texts were tagged using *TreeTagger* (Schmid; Ó Duibhín) and *TagAnt* (Anthony).¹ The corpora were then searched by *AntConc* (Anthony) and manually sorted for the following:

1. first-person writer-inclusive address – first person plural pronouns and verbs marked for the first person plural, including imperatives, 2. second-person address – second person singular and plural pronouns and verbs marked for the second person, including the imperative in its full forms, as well as abbreviations (such as *cf.*, see Section 4.2), 3. third-person address – the words *reader(s)* and *čitateľ/lia* 'reader(s)' (in all grammatical cases).

Instances with a general reference (e.g. references to the academic community or people in general and references to readers of a studied genre), including the first person plural, as in example (1), the second person, as in example (2), and the pronoun *one*, as in example (3) (cf. Biber et al. 331), as well as instances of addressing specific individuals rather than the reader in general, such as in example (4), were not included in the data.

- (1) *Tak ako sme v obchodných reťazcoch ovplyvnení vonkajším obalom výrobkov, vo svete vedy a výskumu sa obsah originálnej práce snaží „predať“ práve abstrakt. 'Just as at supermarkets we are influenced by the outer packaging of products, in the world of scientific research it is the abstract that tries to "sell" the contents of an original work.'* (SK16)

- (2) *There are different types of corpora (written vs. spoken, diachronic vs. synchronic, plain vs. annotated, monolingual vs. multilingual) and the texts are categorised (different corpora vary in categories but generally **you** can focus **your** searches and specify the subcorpora e.g. according to genre, register, style, etc. (NN6)*
- (3) *Furthermore, electronic dictionaries contain a number of useful and convenient features: academic words indication, help with writing, possibilities of making **one's** own word lists, opportunities to make **one's** own notes and comments within words... (NN22)*
- (4) *Thank **you** to the anonymous reviewer who provided this suggestion. (EN14)*

Similarly, cited examples, quotes, samples from questionnaires, etc., were disregarded, so that only instances referring to the reader of the given paper were retained.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Reader address

The frequency of reader address is shown in Table 1. The native Slovak corpus has the highest overall frequency of the addressing the reader ($n = 476$), especially when normalized to 10,000 words (30.21). The raw frequency is similar in the native English corpus ($n = 449$), yet since its texts are longer, the normalized frequency is much lower (17.76 per 10,000 words). The frequency is the lowest in the non-native corpus, both raw ($n = 134$) and normalized (10.23 per 10,000 words).

How do these results compare to previous research? On the one hand, in Slovak we do not see the relative lack of engagement reported in some other Slavic languages (Chamonikolasová 83; Čmejrková and Daneš 54, Dontcheva-Navratilova, “Autorovy role” 51, “Cross-Cultural Variation” 169; Khoutyz, “Engagement Features” 14). However, it has to be borne in mind that the present study does not exhaust all types of engagement, so further research would be needed to obtain a complete picture of reader engagement in Slovak. On the other hand, we can see that Slovak authors writing in English underuse means of addressing the reader compared to their use in native English. The same has been found for Czech authors writing in English by Dontcheva-Navratilova (“Autorovy role” 51, “Cross-Cultural Variation” 169, “Lexical Bundles” 10). However, as Slovak authors writing in English underuse reader address also in comparison to native Slovak writing, one cannot assume that the lack of reader address in non-native English is a result of the authors’ culture. In sum, Slovak authors do not establish the same writer – reader relationship in English as in Slovak. One reason for this might be recommendations to avoid personal pronouns found in academic style guides, and the general trend of decreasing occurrence of reader engagement in L1 English (as pointed out to me by a reviewer). However, as reader engagement has a strategic persuasive function (see Section 2), a relative lack of reader engagement may weaken the persuasiveness of a research paper.

Corpus	Native English			Native Slovak			Non-native English		
	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF
1 st person inclusive	160	35.6	6.33	185	38.86	11.74	65	48.5	4.96
2 nd person	282	62.8	11.15	289	60.71	18.34	69	51.5	5.27
3 rd person	7	1.6	0.28	2	0.42	0.13	0	0	0.00
Total	449	100.0	17.76	476	100.0	30.21	134	100.0	10.23

Table 1 The frequency of reader address in the corpora, both raw (AF) and normalized to 10,000 words (NF).

4.2. Second person address

I will now discuss each type of reader address in turn. The most frequent type of reader address is the second person address (cf. Table 1), representing about 61–63 percent in both native corpora, and 51.5 percent in the non-native corpus. Virtually all these instances are imperative forms of verbs – there is only a single case of the use of the second person addressing the reader in the indicative, which occurs in the native English corpus:

- (5) *And if monoclausal as if itself derives from a dependent clause (an adjunct adverbial clause), such a development would involve a double process of elision — the extremes of insubordination, if **you** will — first of the main clause and then of the content of the newly independent clause, leaving behind only the original subordinating conjunction.* (EN3)

Addressing the reader in the second person is not only limited to imperative forms; it is also restricted to a small number of verbs in all three corpora. More specifically, in the native English corpus it is restricted to the verbs *see* (210 occurrences), *note* (32), *compare* (6), typically in the form of the Latin abbreviation *cf.* (23), *recall* (4), *consider* (3), *take* (2) and *notice* (1). Similarly, the verbs occurring in the second person imperative in the non-native corpus are *cf.* (34), *see* (26), *consider* (3), and *let, take* and *note* (2 occurrences each). In the native Slovak, the verbs are *porovnaj* ‘compare’ (1), typically shortened to *porov.* ‘cf.’ (216), *pozri* ‘see’ (69), sometimes shortened to *p.* (4), and also *rozumej* ‘understand’ (1). It is interesting to note that the Slovak imperative forms are in the singular, as Slovak distinguishes between singular and plural form of address as a form of social deixis (cf. Levinson 119–121). Note that equivalent Latin phrases, such as *nota bene*, are also in the singular, as pointed out to me by Alexandra Brestovičová (pers. comm.). The use of the singular form of address appears to be in conflict with the distance expected in formal writing. However, it is not a sign of a close relationship between the writer and the reader; I propose instead that the imperative in academic discourse has become depersonalized, and its meaning is close to Slovak interjections such as *aha* (colloquial), *hľa* (poetic) and *ľalä* (archaic), which are used to draw the addressee’s attention to something. This impersonal character of the second person imperative, the limited number of verbs in the imperative,

and the abundant use of abbreviations all suggest that the imperative in academic discourse is a type of formulaic language.

The imperative (with associated abbreviations) has the function of signposting and, to a lesser extent, persuasion in all three corpora. It is generally used for the following: (i) to refer the reader to relevant published literature, either written by the given author or by other researchers, see example (6), (ii) to signpost the reader to another part of the text, such as a section, a table, a graph or a figure, see example (7), (iii) to draw the reader's attention to a particular detail, see example (8), and (iv) to make connections between various parts of an argument or between findings, see example (9).

- (6) *V našom lingvisticky zameranom výskume reči matiek orientovanej na dieťa sa venujeme charakteristike prototypovej lexiky,³ a to tak, že lexiku charakterizujeme v rámci jednotlivých slovných druhov (pozri Brestovičová, 2011, 2012, 2013).*

'In our linguistically-focused research of child-directed-speech by mothers we pursue the characterisation of prototype lexis³ by characterising the lexis in the scope of individual word classes (see Brestovičová, 2011, 2012, 2013).' (SK3)

- (7) *Hence, a face-threatening act potentially threatens all participants' faces, despite the fact that they may have a different degree of commitment to and/or presence in the act (cf. Figure 2).* (NN9)

- (8) *Note that COCA is equally divided among these genres.* (EN3)

- (9) *One likely reflection of this trend is the tendency for deontic must to occur more commonly than have to with first and second person subjects (where there is a stronger likelihood of an overbearing or imposing tone than is the case with third person subjects); compare the figure of 49.0 percent of first and second person subjects for deontic must in COOEE with that of 33.4 percent for deontic have to.* (EN8)

Note that the first two instances are textual acts – with (6) being an intertextual act and (7) an intratextual act (see Section 2), while the latter two are cognitive acts. The ratios of types of acts in the corpora are shown in Table 2. Physical acts do not appear in the corpora at all, as the research articles do not give any step-by-step instructions for replicating research. While the representations of textual acts (83%) and cognitive acts (17%) is the same in the native corpora, in the non-native corpus the dominance of textual acts (88%) over cognitive acts (12%) is slightly stronger. The reason for the greater amount of textual acts in the non-native corpus might be that non-native authors are less comfortable with cognitive acts: They tell the reader what to think and as such are more face-threatening than textual acts, which can actually be considered as mere additional information supplied by the writer. However, limited use of cognitive acts might weaken the persuasiveness of non-native texts.

Looking more closely at textual acts (cf. Table 2), we can see that while intertextual acts are more frequent than intratextual acts in all three corpora, their dominance is more apparent in the texts by Slovak authors. Overall, there are fewer intratextual acts in both raw and normalized frequencies in native Slovak and non-native English than in native English. The result confirms the relative lack of textual signposting found in academic Czech, Russian, and Bulgarian (Čmejrková and Daneš 55; Dontcheva-Navratilova, "Autovrovy role" 52, "Lexical Bundles" 18; Khoutyz, "Engagement Features" 11).

Corpus	Native English			Native Slovak			Non-native English		
	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF
Textual	234	83.3	9.25	240	83.1	15.23	61	88.4	4.66
<i>Intratextual</i>	105	37.4	4.15	58	20.1	3.68	15	21.7	1.15
<i>Intertextual</i>	129	45.9	5.10	182	63.0	11.55	46	66.7	3.51
Cognitive	47	16.7	1.86	49	17.0	3.11	8	11.6	0.61
Physical	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00
Total	281	100.0	11.11	289	100.0	18.34	69	100.0	5.27

Table 2 The frequency of types of acts referred to by imperatives, both raw (AF) and normalized to 10,000 words (NF).

4.3. First person address

The first person inclusive address is relatively more frequent in the non-native corpus (48.5%) than in the native Slovak (39%) and native English (36%) corpora, cf. Table 1, at the expense of the second person address, as discussed above. However, in normalized frequency the first person address is the lowest in the non-native corpus (4.96 per 10,000 words) and the highest in the native Slovak corpus (11.74 per 10,000 words).

Čmejrková (28) points out that the first person plural in Czech and Slovak is typically connected to contemplating possibilities via modality and conditional clauses, and Khoutyz (“Engagement Features” 11, “Engagement” 144) notes a high number of plural directives. Therefore, I studied three features associated with the first person inclusive address – imperatives, see example (10), conditional clauses, see example (11), and modality, i.e. the use of modal verbs, see example (12).

- (10) *For the sake of illustration of the structure in question, **let us take a look** at the following example:* (NN30)
- (11) ***Ak sa teraz zameriame na** svedectvo v intenciách náboženskej komunikácie, bude namieste najskôr priblížiť či sformulovať jeho definíciu.*
*‘If we now **focus on** testimony in the framework of religious communication, it will be apt to outline or form its definition.’* (SK2)
- (12) *To identify the relative granularity of meaning, **we need to** track the amount and type of style shifting in a speaker’s discourse, noting whether variable features are finely tuned to interactional stance or not.* (EN23)

Their occurrence in the data is shown in Table 3. (Note that the numbers are not exhaustive, as there is first person inclusive address which is not associated with any of the three features; in addition, there is some overlap between modality and conditionals.)

Corpus	Native English			Native Slovak			Non-native English		
	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF	AF	%	NF
Imperatives	3	1.88	0.12	39	21.08	2.47	6	9.23	0.46
<i>Textual</i>	2	1.25	0.08	20	10.81	1.27	4	6.15	0.31
<i>Cognitive</i>	1	0.63	0.04	19	10.27	1.21	2	3.08	0.15
Conditional clauses	12	7.5	0.48	24	12.97	1.52	13	20.0	0.99
Modality	62	38.75	2.45	71	38.38	4.51	24	36.92	1.83
Total	160	35.6	6.33	185	39.0	11.74	65	48.5	4.96

Table 3 Some features associated with first person inclusive address, in both absolute frequency (AF) and frequency normalized to 10,000 words (NF).

Imperatives are only marginal in inclusive address in native English (2%). In contrast, they are rather frequent in the non-native corpus (9%) and even more frequent in the native Slovak corpus (21%). In both the native English corpus and the non-native corpus, there is a preference for textual acts over cognitive ones, while in the native Slovak corpus the occurrence of textual and cognitive acts is virtually the same. Comparing these results to the imperatives in the second person (cf. Table 2), we see that the proportion of cognitive acts is higher with the first person (33% in both the EN and the NN and 49% in the SK corpus) than with the second person (17% in the EN and the SK corpus and 12% in the NN) in all three corpora, although there are fewer first person cognitive acts in total. The higher incidence of cognitive acts with the inclusive address in proportion to textual acts may be caused by two factors. First, as imperatives in the first person are not exclusive to the reader, they are less face-threatening than the imperative in the second person. Second, they are not limited to a small set of verbs. In English, the verbs *begin*, *get back to*, *take a look*, *demonstrate*, *group together* and *create a summary* are used. Slovak uses a greater variety of verbs, namely *zhrnúť* ‘summarize’, *ostať* ‘remain’, *zastaviť sa* and *pristaviť sa* ‘stop at’, *prejsť* ‘move on to’, *nazvať* ‘name’, *uviesť* ‘state’, *dodať* and *doplniť* ‘add’, *spomenúť* ‘mention’, *zamyslieť sa* ‘consider’, *predstaviť si* ‘imagine’, *pripomenúť* ‘recall’, *všimnúť si* ‘note’, *venovať/obrátiť pozornosť* ‘pay/turn attention to’, *skúsiť* ‘try’, *pozrieť* ‘look’, *načrtnúť* ‘sketch’, and *sledovať* ‘follow’. The textual acts in the inclusive plural are used to guide the reader through the text (cf. Tang & John 27), see example (13). However, in some cases this use of the inclusive address is peculiar, as the writer is obviously the one presenting knowledge yet still uses the inclusive imperative, cf. example (14).² This gives an impression that the reader has the same knowledge as the writer, who is merely mentioning it as a relevant fact. The writer thus shows that s/he considers the reader his/her equal, effectively decreasing the distance between them.

(13) *Prejdime teraz k výsostne praktickým dôvodom.*

‘Let us now **move on** to exclusively practical reasons.’ (SK14)

(14) *Odborná verejnosť schopnosť/neschopnosť používať materinský jazyk v zhode s jeho aktuálnymi normami hodnotí dosť nejednoznačne. Spomeňme aspoň zborník z*

konferencie Jazyková kultúra na začiatku tretieho tisícročia, ktorý editoval M. Považaj v roku 2008.

*'The expert community is rather ambiguous in its evaluation of the ability/inability to use the mother tongue in accordance with its current norms. **Let us mention** at least the conference proceedings Language culture at the turn of the third millennium edited by M. Považaj in 2008.'* (SK15)

Another aspect of the inclusive address followed in the study is conditional clauses. (For a detailed analysis of conditional clauses in academic discourse, see Warchał, "Moulding Interpersonal Relations".) As shown in Table 3, the ratio of conditional clauses used with the inclusive address is rather small in native English (7.5%); the ratios are higher in native Slovak (13 %) and especially in the non-native writing by Slovaks (20%). Conditional clauses are used to draw attention to particular data, cf. example (15), to introduce a viewpoint, cf. example (16), or make a concession, cf. example (17), and to make the reader accept the writer's premise, cf. example (18), or conclusion, cf. example (19).

- (15) ***If we examine** the individual scores of northern listeners (grey circles in Figure 4), we see that...* (EN16)
- (16) *To our knowledge, it is the largest existing parallel corpus, **if we take into account** both its size and the number of languages covered.* (NN30)
- (17) ***Even if we assert** that the peak in units 6 and 7 is discourse-linked, the fluctuation is very small.* (EN23)
- (18) *It is generally considered to be the core of modern semiotics, a discipline, which was founded by Saussure under the name semiology, but promoted by Peirce decades earlier **if we are to believe** the sources which we have no reason not to do (it was impossible to publish his findings).* (NN28)
- (19) ***Ak zohľadníme** povahu toho typu esejistiky [...] a **ak** ju (azda trochu neprávom a zjednodušujúco) **vyhlásime** za esejistický štandard, tak potom môžeme povedať, že... **If we take into account** the nature of this type of essay writing [...] **and if we call** it (perhaps a bit wrongfully and simplistically) the essay standard, **then we can say** that...' (SK19)*

In sum, inclusive address used with conditional clauses has a persuasive function. It follows that a relatively high amount of conditional clauses in the non-native corpus (0.99 per 10,000 words, compared to 0.48 in the EN and 1.52 in the SK) compensates for the lack of cognitive acts discussed in Section 4.2.

Lastly, modality is used with the inclusive address at approximately the same rate in all three corpora (37–39%). In frequency normalized per 10,000 words, however, the native Slovak corpus contains more modality with the inclusive person (4.51) than both the native English (2.45) and the non-native corpus (1.83). This result confirms high modality levels found in Czech (Čmejrková 28; Čmejrková and Daneš 47; Chamonikolasová 82).

Modality is typically used in the corpora to express ability, as in example (20), and possibility, as in example (21), with some overlap between the two. Modality in this use serves to hedge authors' claims, showing that "the same 'facts' can be viewed from different perspectives, and the approach taken by the author is just one of the many possibilities", as Warchał ("Moulding Interpersonal Relations", 141) puts it. The acknowledgement that

one's research admits other interpretations can be seen as a sign of authorial modesty. In addition, writers occasionally use modality to boost their claims when it expresses obligation, see example (22), or prediction, see example (23).

- (20) *In all the above-stated examples, **we can spot** the use of the subjunctive mood and that of modal verbs.* (NN30)
- (21) *Vo všeobecnosti **môžeme vyčleniť** tri druhy postojov, ktoré informátori zaujímajú k cudzosti jazykových xenosov – pozitívny, neutrálny a mierne negatívny.*
*'In general, **we can distinguish** three types of attitude that informants adopt towards the foreignness of language xenoses – a positive, neutral and slightly negative one.'*
 (SK7)
- (22) *Whichever position we take on this debate, **it is important that we do so** on the basis of a sound understanding of how widely-spread key linguistic features are across disciplines.* (EN11)
- (23) ***We will see** below, however, that the resulting patterns are surprisingly clear; by approaching the data from several empirical directions, **we will be able to** draw tentative conclusions from each, converging on an overall pattern of phonological transfer involved in the caught-cot merger.* (EN9)

4.4. Third person address

The third person is used only sporadically: in the native English corpus, there are only seven occurrences of *the reader* and *readers* in the total of five papers out of 30; in the native Slovak corpus, there are only two occurrences in a single paper, and the third person address does not appear at all in the non-native corpus.

The data found in the corpora serve: (i) to refer the reader to published literature, cf. example (24), (ii) to claim a common ground of shared knowledge with the reader, cf. example (25), (iii) to predict the reader's response, cf. example (26), or (iv) to invite an action on the part of the reader, cf. example (27).

Thus the third person address may substitute other forms, such *you/your* and the imperative for textual acts, as in (24), and physical acts, as in (27). The third form of address may feel more personal than a fixed expression like *see* or the distance-imposing second person pronoun *you*.

- (24) *For elaboration on the mathematical and meta-mathematical argument, and more authentic examples from RAs [research articles], I refer **the reader** to Kuteeva and McGrath (2015).* (EN17)
- (25) *Here, we will not recount the history of NA [needs analysis], which will already be familiar to **readers** of this journal and for which detailed accounts are available elsewhere (see, e.g., Hyland, 2009; Long, 2013a, 2015a; Norris, 2009).* (EN22)
- (26) *Uvedené príklady možno podnietili **čitateľovu** zvedavosť sledovať cestu odkryvania aspektov významu, ktoré oscilujú v architektonických termínoch.*
*'The given examples may have sparked **the reader's** interest in following the path of revealing the aspects of meaning oscillating in architectural terms.'* (SK14)
- (27) *(**Readers** might like to try this [an example task] for themselves.)* (EN26)

5. Conclusion

This paper has studied means of addressing the reader in academic discourse in three types of writing – native Slovak, native English, and non-native English by Slovak authors. I have found the following to hold across all three types of writing: The third person address (*the reader(s)*) and the second person indicative address (*you*) are used rarely, possibly due to the distance they (especially *you*) create between the writer and the reader. In contrast, the second person imperative is very frequent, despite the fact that it increases distance and is potentially face-threatening. To mitigate these undesirable effects, the second person imperative relies on formulaic language – a limited number of routine expressions, often abbreviated. In contrast, authors use the first person inclusive address to decrease the distance. They steer their readers to desired conclusions using conditional clauses and first person plural imperatives. At the same time, by hedging their claims with modal verbs, writers can choose to show that the path they are taking their readers on is just one out of many possibilities.

The comparison of reader address across the corpora reveals culture-specific features: For instance, I have found that Slovak authors use more conditional clauses with the inclusive address and refer the reader to other parts of the text to a lesser extent than Anglophone writers. Some features might not be transferred to L2 writing, however: this is the case of the high amount of modality used with the inclusive first person by Slovak authors in their L1 papers. In addition, there are features which are not transferred from the L1 but are specific to non-native writing by Slovak authors. Among such features are the low amount of cognitive acts and of reader address in general, which may decrease the persuasiveness of Slovak academic discourse written in L2 English.

Notes

¹ The advantage of TagAnt (Anthony) is that it attaches tags in a way that they can be hidden in the concordance; however, it does not tag Slovak, in contrast to TreeTagger (Schmid; Ó Duibhín). For these reasons, both taggers were used in the study.

² Note that *spomeňme* ‘let us mention’ does not allow a reader-exclusive meaning. While in English, *let us mention* is ambiguous between a reader-inclusive (equivalent of *let’s mention*) and reader-exclusive (equivalent of *let me mention*) reading, the imperative in Slovak has distinct forms for the two, namely the first person plural (*spomeňme* ‘let’s mention’) and the second person (*dovoľte mi/nám spomenúť* ‘let me/us mention’) imperative

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Finite Complements of *suppose (that)*, *supposing (that)*: A Corpus-Based Study

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Abstract

This study attempts to present rich complementation profiles of two related expressions - suppose (that) and supposing (that) - to show that there are correlations between the choice of certain verbal syntagms in the complements and particular genres. For example, the study demonstrates that the majority of usages of suppose (that) in both academic and non-academic genres involve complements with present indicatives, while the occurrences of supposing+0 have complements predominantly in the past indicative. Furthermore, the study illustrates the ratio of the past indicatives and past subjunctives in be-contexts. Finally, the data suggest that suppose (that) and supposing (that) may take on a range of textual and interactional functions.

Keywords: the mandative subjunctive, the past subjunctive, hypothesis verbs, conditional subordinators, corpus analysis

Systematic research in monolingual corpora has revealed that expressions governing content clause complements (e.g. *I suggest that he go/goes/should go there* etc.) exhibit complexities in their distributional patterns. According to Biber et al. (661), verbs that take content clause complements belong to three semantic domains. These involve mental verbs, speech act verbs and other communication verbs. As a mental verb, more specifically a hypothesis verb (Quirk et al. 1183), the expression *(to) suppose* represents one of the matrices that take the content clause complements and exhibit a rich complementation profile.

The study presented below aims at mapping this rather underexplored area of research. It presents the corpus analysis of verbal syntagms which appear in the complements of

two expressions that originated from the verb *suppose*. One of them, *supposing* (*that*), is considered to be a subordinator, forming part of a gradient between the participle and the conjunction (Quirk et al. 998, 1089). The other, *suppose* (*that*), is classified as the imperative of this hypothesis verb complemented by a nominal clause (Quirk et al. 1183). As both are derivatives of the same verb, they display similarities in terms of the functions and meanings which they convey. The range of their uses will be discussed in the following section.

2. Classification of *suppose/supposing*

Quirk et al. (842) state that both the subordinator *supposing* and the imperative *suppose* may occur in a range of functions, which are similar to the functions of *what if*.¹ In (1)–(2), the meaning of *supposing* and *suppose* may be rephrased as *what would happen if*. Also in (3), the expression *supposing* retains its conditional meaning and can be paraphrased as *what does it matter if*. Finally, in example (4), *supposing* may still be substituted with *what if*, but unlike in the previous usages, it marks the utterance as a tentative invitation. A similar function of *suppose* is demonstrated in an example given by Dušková et al. (332), here shown as (5).

(1) *Supposing I don't see her*. [inquiry: What would happen if] (Quirk et al. 842)

(2) *Suppose he was/is lost, what would you do?* (Quirk et al. 1013)

(3) *Supposing they ARE poor?* [What does it matter if they...?] <impatience or scepticism>, (Quirk et al. 842)

(4) *Supposing you come with us*. [invitation] (Quirk et al. 842)

(5) *Suppose we go for a swim*. (Dušková et al. 332)

Furthermore, both expressions may occur in different forms than those presented in (1)–(5). In example (6), *supposing* is the gerund, and in (7) *suppose* is a verb in the indicative mood with the first person singular pronoun, which is used in the preceding context.

(6) ...there are no good grounds for **supposing** that men have gradually been evolving into creatures of greater and greater intelligence. [BYU-BNC:H10: W_non_acad]

(7) *Because they're not stored in, in (SP:PSIV4). Yes. (unclear) (SP:PSIV3) a drawing number sequence. So. I (SP:PSIV4). (SP:PSIV3) No. **suppose** we could find them easy enough if they were. They're actually stored in bloody line reference and (SP:PSIV3) Are they really?* [BYU-BNC:FUL: S_meeting]

This study deals with the usages in which *supposing* and *suppose* can be replaced by *what if*, such as in (1)–(5); it therefore excludes cases demonstrated in (6)–(7). The following section attempts to outline the rich complementation profile of both expressions, preparing the background for the corpus analysis presented in Sections 6–10.

3. Complementation patterns and functions of *suppose/supposing*

The expressions *suppose* and *supposing* may be followed by a range of finite complements. There are slight differences in the use of individual choices. For instance, examples (8)–(9) demonstrate the pattern in which the complement involves the verb in the present indicative. As Quirk et al. state (1013, 1182), the present tense refers to the present or the future, and weakens the counterfactuality of the hypothetical meaning of the expressions *suppose (that)* or *supposing (that)* (see as if in Leech 121).

- (8) *Suppose a contract of sale contains an exemption clause; suppose also that exemption clause is rendered ineffective by the Unfair Contract Terms Act. There still remains the question...* [BYU-BNC:H7U: W_acad]
- (9) *...supposing that the flow investigated becomes more complicated than might be expected because of an instability, this fact would be discovered not by a stability analysis but by the observation, in the laboratory...* [BYU-BNC:J12: W_acad]

Also, the complements of the expressions *suppose* and *supposing* may contain the past indicative, as in (10)–(11), or the past subjunctive, as in (12)–(13). These uses imply hypothetical distance and suggest a negative presupposition. The latter option is more formal, and may evoke “overtones of tentativeness” (Quirk et al. 1093).

- (10) *Oh, it was a dangerous thing, to threaten Jasper. Suppose he left her? Oh no, he would not, she knew that absolutely.* [BYU-BNC:EV1: W_fic]
- (11) *Supposing the tramp was there behind the clump, she thought, smoking his pipe and waiting to catch her?* [BYU-BNC:B0B: W_fic]
- (12) *Suppose that the new equilibrium were at P.* [BYU-BNC: K92: W_commerce]
- (13) *Supposing she were found not guilty in Manila on whatever charges the government brought against her?* [BYU-BNC: ABK: W_MAG]

Finally, when the past perfect marks the verb in the finite complement, it locates events in the irreal past and suggests that the events did not happen, as in (14)–(15).

- (14) *Suppose that this agreement had never been made, and the wife had made no promise to maintain herself and did not do so.* [BYU-BNC: H81: W_acad]
- (15) *Supposing it had been your baby. Supposing all this had happened three months from now. We were still standing on the landing.* [BYU-BNC: FEE: W_fic]

The above-cited examples demonstrate that the subordinator *supposing*, along with the imperative *suppose*, may form complex distributional patterns and convey a range of communicative functions. All of these usages retain a conditional meaning which links *supposing (that)/suppose (that)* to the conditional subordinators whose distributional patterns have been subjects of corpus research. Major issues in the research into the area of conditional subordinators and their complements will be summarized in the following section.

4. Previous research on conditional subordinators and their complements

Research in the area of conditional subordinators has focused on the mood marking of the verb in the complement finite clause. For example, Leech et al. compare preferences for the past indicatives of the verb *be* (i.e. *I was*, *he was*) over the past subjunctives (*I were*, *he were*) in conditional clauses introduced by four conjunctions – *as if/as though/ even if* and *if*. Their corpus analysis, based on the data from the LOB and F-LOB corpora, leads to the conclusion that the use of the past subjunctive has decreased in British English within the last thirty years; both options (*he were* x *he was*) occur with comparatively similar frequencies (Leech et al. 65).

On the other hand, Johansson and Norheim (33–34), using the Brown and LOB corpora and a larger set of conditional subordinators, conclude that in the area of conditional clauses, the past subjunctive represents the dominant choice in hypothetical-conditional clauses. However, their analysis does include the expression *suppose*, indicatives are not counted, and their corpora exhibit only five subjunctives. Also, these occurrences involve the use not only after *suppose*, but also after the verb *wish*, as authors do not provide the data separately for each expression.

Also, Schlüter's study (2009) illustrates the use of the verbal mood in conditional clauses. Her analysis aims at describing the complementation profile of one conditional subordinator – *on condition that*. She reaches the conclusion that past subjunctives are sporadic (286–287), and therefore she discounts them from her analysis. At the same time, she shows that adverbial clauses of condition represent a potential environment for triggering the present subjunctive (Schlüter 291–292).

Studies have demonstrated that the present subjunctives have exhibited increasing use within the twentieth century, and – especially in American English – have been gradually losing their formal stigma (Leech et al. 60, Øvergaard 1995). This specific mood marking may be used if the semantics of a particular trigger denotes an action that should be taken by somebody or if some person wants a certain event to happen (Crawford 259). Prototypical expressions that are associated with triggering the present subjunctive on the verbal syntagms in the complement content clauses are verbs used “for directive speech acts” (Peters 134), such as *suggest*, *recommend*, *insist*, etc. This is demonstrated in example (16), where the verb *recommend* elicits the use of the present subjunctive (i.e. *he speak*).

- (16) “Personally, I’d recommend that he **speak** in public as soon as possible,” said
Toko Kanoh [COCA:2011:NEWS: WashPost]

As Schlüter (278) points out, the conditional subordinator *on condition that* may also be added on the list of expressions which elicit subjunctive mood marking. This is shown in example (17). In this sentence, somebody wants the school to change its name, and the verb *change* is marked as the present subjunctive.

- (17) *He left \$ 67 million to the endowment when he died in 1925 on the² condition that the school - then Trinity College - change its name to honor his father, Washington Duke. (The Times 1990, Schlüter 278)*

As is neatly illustrated in example (18), *suppose* may occur in similar contexts. In this case the speaker wants the other person to come and see him/her in the future. Therefore, the speaker proposes a potential course of action (Biber et al. 667), and *suppose* endows the utterance with the communicative function of a tentative suggestion.

- (18) *Well, I suggest you give up about the beginning of September. You'll be wanting to take things a bit more easily by then, I dare say. Suppose you come and see me again at the beginning of April. Perhaps you would like to make an appointment with my secretary on the way out. Thank you.*" [BYU-BNC:CDE:W_acad]

Since this expression carries the mandative component of meaning and exhibits affinity with verbs, as in (16), and with the conditional subordinator *on condition that*, as in (17), it is questionable whether or not the verb in the complement clause in (18) can be marked as the present subjunctive. Simply put, the question that arises is whether *suppose* (*that*), alongside with *supposing* (*that*), may trigger the contexts into which the present subjunctives have begun to expand.

To answer this question, this study aims at providing a detailed complementation profile of both triggers, showing the distribution of individual complement types across genres. Finally, the study attempts to illustrate the ratio of the past tense forms of the verb *be* and of past subjunctives.

5. Data and methodology

The analysis of the complementation patterns of the expressions *suppose* (*that*)/*supposing* (*that*) is based on data from the *British National Corpus* (BYU-BNC). The search was restricted to finite complements of both expressions (*suppose* and *supposing*) introduced by *that* or a zero complementizer (hereafter referred to as zero). Prior to presenting the data in the following sections, there are several methodological caveats that need to be mentioned.

First, the whole corpus involved 1382 usages of *suppose that* and 155 instances of *supposing that*. All of them were manually checked to extract examples in which *suppose* and *supposing* fulfilled the criteria mentioned in Section (2) and represented uses in which these two expressions imply conditionality and may be replaced with *what if*.

Second, in case of *suppose*+0 (i.e. zero complementizer), the search was narrowed down to those instances in which this hypothesis verb was preceded by a punctuation mark, specifically a full stop or a colon. This was done to exclude usages in which *suppose* was preceded by personal pronouns, and therefore represented a conjugated verb, as in (19).

- (19) *I suppose I don't know whether we ought, we should mention it here, erm, the, the National A G M is a future event really isn't it?* [BYU-BNC:DCH: S_meeting]

To keep the search consistent, the same process was applied to filtering complements of *supposing* followed by a zero complementizer. Despite the fact that the results were limited to contexts in which the key expressions were preceded by punctuation, satisfactorily

workable samples were generated, as shown in Table 5.1. Individual results and figures will be presented in the following section.

	<i>suppose that</i>	<i>.(:)suppose+0</i>	<i>supposing that</i>	<i>.(:)supposing+0</i>
all manually checked examples	1382	752	155	67
extracted samples	340	457	50	60

Table 5.1 Overall representations of *suppose (that)*/*supposing (that)*

6. Complementation patterns of *suppose that* and *suppose+0*

Table 6.1 below summarizes the overall frequencies of occurrences of all verbal syntagms occurring in the complements of the expression *suppose* irrespective of their time reference (for differences see Section 3).

	<i>suppose + that</i>	<i>suppose + 0</i>
present indicatives (3rd person sg)	212 (62.4%)	194 (42.5%)
ambiguous present indicatives (all other persons)/present subjunctives	48 (14.1%)	100 (21.9%)
present subjunctives (3rd person sg)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
past indicatives	31 (9.1%)	71 (15.5%)
ambiguous past indicatives/past subjunctives	4 (1.2%)	12 (2.6%)
past subjunctives (1st and 3rd pers. sg)	4 (1.2%)	15 (3.3%)
present perfect	10 (2.9%)	16 (3.5%)
past perfect	17 (5%)	32 (7%)
modal	9 (2.6%)	12 (2.6%)
miscellaneous	5 (1.5%)	5 (1.1%)
TOTAL	340	457

Table 6.1 Complementation patterns of *suppose that* and *suppose +0*

Before commenting on the tendencies in the use of complements of the expression *suppose*, one remark needs to be made about finite clauses involving the verbs in the present tense. Returning to the point raised in Section 4, one has to keep in mind that the present subjunctives cannot be theoretically *a priori* excluded from the repertoire of finite complements because *suppose* may occur in the contexts which coincide with the use of

mandative subjunctives – as for example in (18), discussed in Section 4. Since present subjunctives are clearly distinguishable from present indicatives only in the third person singular contexts, the analysis treated the verbs in the third person singular and those in all other persons separately.

However, the corpus search has not proved any occurrences of the unambiguous present subjunctive mood in the entire sample of finite complements of *suppose that/suppose+0*. Leaving the question why this is so aside at this moment (see Section 10 for a discussion of this issue), it can be stated that all the verbs in the present tense are therefore considered present indicatives. A detailed summary of their representations in the corpus is, for the sake of clarity, provided in Table 6.2. Here it is shown that if the finite complement of *suppose* occurred in the corpus, then in the majority of cases it involved the verb in the present tense (76.5% with *suppose that* and 64.4% with *suppose+0*).

	<i>suppose + that</i>	<i>suppose + 0</i>
present tense (3rd person sg.)	212 (62.4%)	194 (42.5%)
present tense (all other persons)	48 (14.1%)	100 (21.9%)
TOTAL	260 (76.5%)	294 (64.4%)
all usages	340	457

Table 6.2 Finite complements with the verbs in the present tense

7. Distribution of finite complements across genres

Building on the data presented in the previous section (Table 6.1), this section will demonstrate how the use of a certain complement correlates with its occurrence in a particular genre.

For example, the data yield interesting results related to the use of finite complements with the present tense in the formal registers. The analysis shows that if the expression *suppose* was complemented by a finite clause with the verb in the present tense, then roughly a half of these occurrences were represented in the formal register, such as academic and non-academic genres (193 instances in ACAD and 93 in NON-ACAD – see the rightmost column of Table 7.1), or in the formal text types of the miscellaneous genre³.

	<i>suppose that</i> (present indicatives)	<i>suppose+0</i> (present indicatives)	TOTAL
MISCELLANEOUS	116	106	222
ACAD	92	101	193
NON_ACAD	44	49	93
FICTION	2	30	32
MAGAZINE/NEWSPAPER ⁴	3	6	9
SPOKEN	3	2	5
TOTAL	260	294	554

Table 7.1 Distribution of finite complements with the verbs in the present tense (indicative mood) across genres

Furthermore, it may be stated that the relation between the use of the genre and of the tense functions in both directions. In other words, if the expression *suppose* appeared in the academic or non-academic genre, it predominantly involved the finite complements with the verb in the present tense. This is demonstrated in Table 7.2, which presents convincing figures reflecting that in the academic and non-academic genres, almost 77% of usages of *suppose that* and *suppose+0* have finite complements with present indicatives.

	pres. ind.	past ind.	past subj.	modal	pres. perf.	past perf.	ambg. <i>be</i> past/ subj.	misc.	
ACAD/ NON- ACAD <i>suppose that</i>	136 77%	17 9.6%	1 0.5%	2 1.1%	8 4.5%	11 6.2%	0 0%	2 1.1%	177
ACAD/ NON- ACAD <i>suppose+0</i>	150 77%	20 10.25%	3 1.53%	2 1.02%	8 4.18%	5 2.5%	5 2.5%	2 1.02%	195

Table 7.2 Distribution of all finite complements of *suppose that* and *suppose+0* in academic/non-academic genres

A final remark needs to be made about the overall representations of *suppose that* and *suppose+0* in the fiction genre. There is a striking difference in the distribution of *suppose* with and without the overt complementizer in fictional texts. Table 7.3 illustrates the discrepancy between the frequencies of *suppose* with and without the complementizer, showing the limited representations of *suppose that* on the one hand (1.5%), and 109 occurrences (24%) of *suppose+0*, on the other hand.

	<i>suppose + that</i>	<i>suppose + 0</i>
FICTION	5 (1.5%)	109 (24%)
TOTAL IN ALL GENRES	340	457

Table 7.3 Overall distribution of *suppose that* and *suppose+0* in the fiction genre

Naturally, the question that arises is why there are correlations between the choice of certain verbal syntagms and particular genres (see Tables 7.1-7.2). One potential explanation relates to the diverse meanings and functions which *suppose* may take on. This will be dealt with in greater detail in Section 10. Nevertheless, prior to it I will present the data related to the complementation patterns of *supposing that* and *supposing+0* to

provide a complex picture of the distributional layout of all analyzed matrices.

8. Complementation patterns of *supposing* (that)

To maintain consistency with the presentation of the data related to the distribution of complementation patterns of *suppose that* and *suppose +0*, Table 8.1 is provided below to reflect the occurrences of all verbal syntagms in the adverbial clause introduced by *supposing that/supposing+0* that refer to various time spectra.

	<i>supposing + that</i>	<i>supposing + 0</i>
present indicatives (3rd person sg)	10 (20%)	10 (16.7%)
ambiguous present indicatives (all other persons)/present subjunctives ⁵	4 (8%)	6 (10%)
present subjunctives (3rd person sg)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
past indicatives	10 (20%)	28 (46.7%)
ambiguous past subjunctives/past indicatives	3 (6%)	2 (3.3%)
past subjunctives (1st and 3rd pers. sg)	4 (8%)	3 (5%)
present perfect	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
past perfect	2 (4%)	8 (13.3%)
modal	15 (30%)	3 (5%)
miscellaneous	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	50	60

Table 8.1 Complementation patterns of *supposing that* and *supposing +0*

The first notable difference between *suppose (that)* and *supposing (that)* taking finite complements is in the frequencies of their representations in the BYU-BNC corpus. The subordinator *supposing*, regardless of its occurrence with or without the overt complementizer, appears approximately seven times less than the expression *suppose* in the analyzed corpus sample (see the total of 110 vs. 797 in Tables 8.1 and 6.1).

Another difference is in the shape of the distributional patterns of *supposing*. When used with the complementizer *that*, the architectonic make-up of the complementation landscape of *supposing* is much more diverse than that of the expression *suppose*. Specifically, the verb in the finite complement is a modal verb roughly as many times as the verb in the present indicative. As Table 8.1 shows, there were 15 modals and 14 present indicatives (in all persons) altogether. Furthermore, this table demonstrates that the past indicatives represent a viable complementation option of *supposing that*, and it is even the most represented verbal syntagm occurring with *supposing+0*. Overall, past indicatives

appeared almost in half of cases (46.7%) out of the total number of 60 manually checked corpus samples involving the subordinator *supposing+0*.

Additionally, these occurrences of the complements with the past indicatives were predominantly represented in the fiction genre. Table 8.2 demonstrates that out of the total number of 28 finite complements with past indicatives, 21 of them were found in fictional texts.

	<i>supposing that</i> (past indicatives)	<i>supposing+0</i> (past indicatives)	TOTAL
ACAD/NON ACAD	0	3	3 ⁶
MISCELLANEOUS	1	2	3
FICTION	4	21	25
MAGAZINE/NEWSPAPER	1	0	1
SPOKEN	4	2	6
TOTAL	10	28	38

Table 8.2 Distribution of finite complements with the verbs in the past tense (indicative mood) across genres

At the same time, the relation holds between the use of the fiction genre and the choice of the verbal syntagm in the past indicative as well. In other words, if the subordinator *supposing* complemented without the overt complementizer appeared in the fiction genre, it was most likely to be in the past indicative. To provide precise figures, Table 8.3 shows that out of the total 37 instances of *supposing+0*, 21 sentences (56.8%) involved finite complements with the verbs in the past indicative.

	pres. ind.	past ind.	past subj.	modal	pres. perf.	past perf.	ambg. <i>be</i> past/ subj.	misc.	
FICTION	4	21	2	2	0	7	1	0	37
<i>supposing+0</i>	10.8%	56.8%	5.4%	5.4%	0%	18.9%	2.7%	0%	

Table 8.3 Distribution of all finite complements of *supposing+0* in the fiction genre

Again, the question that arises is why there is a correlation between the choice of the past indicative and the use in the fiction genre (Tables 8.2-8.3). I will discuss a potential explanation in Section 10. Before that, I will turn my attention to the choice of the subjunctive mood, as up to this point I have only considered the indicatives.

9. The use of past subjunctives versus past indicatives

This section will take a closer look at the contexts in which past subjunctives are easily distinguishable from the past indicatives. The setting where the ambiguity between the two moods is resolved is represented by the complements involving the verb *be*, as in (12), repeated here in (20). In this example the verb *were*, used with the third person singular subject, is clearly marked as the past subjunctive.

(20) *Suppose that the new equilibrium were at P.* [BYU-BNC: K92: W_commerce]

The question that may be put forward is whether the past indicatives and subjunctives occur with comparatively similar frequencies, as suggested in Leech et al. (65), or whether the past subjunctive represents a marginal choice for complementing the expressions *suppose* and *supposing* (cf. Schlüter 286–287). To answer this question satisfactorily, one has to take into account that the total number of the *be*-contexts with past reference is made up of 87 sentences, and therefore the settings for the potential usage of these verbs are rather limited in representations. The overall figures are provided in Table 9.1, where it is shown that past indicatives form almost a half of all occurrences (46%).

	suppose+ 0	suppose <i>that</i>	supposing + 0	supposing <i>that</i>	TOTAL
past subjunctives (1st and 3rd pers. sg + <i>were</i>)	15	4	3	4	26 (30%)
past indicatives (1st and 3rd pers. sg + <i>was</i>)	22	9	6	3	40 (46%)
ambiguous <i>were</i> (2nd pers. sg and plural)	12	4	2	3	21 (24%)
TOTAL	49	17	11	10	87

Table 9.1 Past indicatives versus past subjunctives in *be*-contexts

Nevertheless, past subjunctives were used in 26 cases (30%), out of which 12 (46%) involved a lexicalized phrase *suppose/supposing (that)+ NP + were+to infinitive*, as in (21).

- (21) *Supposing that worst were to occur—you missed that promotion, your lover rejected you, you failed to sell your house – what would be the ensuing results and how would you deal with them?* [BYU-BNC: W_MISC]

A closer inspection of the distribution of the past subjunctives and past indicatives across the genres only confirms conclusions brought by the corpus study of Johansson and Norheim (33–34). Similar to their findings, the genre analysis shows that a half of all past subjunctives (13 out of 26, see Table 9.2) occur in fiction. However, Table 9.2 demonstrates that fictional texts are also dominated by the past indicatives; therefore, it cannot be stated straightforwardly whether the genre factors determine the preference of one alternant over the other one.

	FIC	ACAD	NON-ACAD	MISC	MAG	NEWS	SPOK	Total
past subjunctives	13	1	3	4	1	1	3	26
past indicatives	16	5	7	9	0	0	3	40

Table 9.2 Distribution of past subjunctives and past indicatives across genre

On the other hand, it is possible to conclude that the data do convincingly demonstrate that albeit not a dominant choice, past subjunctives are far from sporadic. In the light of this conclusion, one may feel even more puzzled why the *present* subjunctives were not represented in a relatively large sample of corpus data. I will address this point in the following section.

10. Meanings and functions of *suppose (that)*/ *supposing (that)*

The data in the previous sections have shown that certain verbal syntagms tend to be represented in particular genres more than in others. While some verbal constructions exhibit a different time reference (e.g. the perfect tenses), some differ in the degree of negative truth commitment to the hypothetical meaning which they convey, as was mentioned in Section 3 (see examples 8–15). For example, in (22)–(23), the present tense weakens the counterfactuality of the hypothetical meaning of the expressions *suppose (that)* and *supposing (that)*.

- (22) *Suppose that in a decay the recoil momentum is p ; then the kinetic energy of the nucleus is $p^2/2M$ where M is its mass. It follows that in a Mossbauer transition...*
[BYU-BNC: H8K: W_acad]
- (23) *Supposing that the result of the investigation is satisfactory, and the purchase is completed, a subsequent purchaser must again go through the whole process;...*
[BYU-BNC: ABP: W_acad]

On the other hand, the use of the past indicative in (24)–(25) draws a negative inference, but past subjunctives (26)–(27) also express a tentative distance.

- (24) *Who are the 'Hobbs'?* Flora asked, speaking their name with a comic intonation. 'Nobody. Oh—dreadful people.' Richard laughed but I could tell he was alarmed. Suppose we went for this drink and the Hobbs greeted us? Flora might think we were friends. I saw him redden: he was ashamed to have thought like this. [BYU-BNC: CEX: W_fic]
- (25) *Eighteen years away from a stage, eighteen years and she'd forgotten until now that terrifying gut-wrenching dread of stepping out in front of several hundred people and making a total fool of yourself. Supposing Gesner pulled a trick, or she fell over. Supposing the audience laughed at her playing a soubrette role. Supposing she forgot what she was supposed to do, missed her entrance, let them all down. The Direktor had taken such a chance on her. Supposing she let him down? When she got to the theatre she found her dressing room was full of flowers...* [BYU-BNC: J19: W_fic]
- (26) *His hat disturbed him too much. He shuddered at his remembrance of royalty's puzzled look when he removed this ostentatious headgear. Suppose he were to think it Auguste's own choice?* [BYU-BNC:H8K: W_fic]
- (27) *And on the busto Victoria she began to wish she had not been quite so rash in offering to visit John. Supposing he were not ill at all? It was surely – the words came in the tone of voice her mother would have used – 'most unsuitable'...* [BYU-BNC:HA4: W_fic]

These differences may imply why the uses of the present tense, such as in (22)–(23), are conventionalized and coincide with occurrence in formal registers. On the other hand, the past tense is well-fitted for describing imaginary scenes, as in (24)–(27), typically occurring in the fiction genre.

Also, it can be pointed out that the function of *suppose/supposing* in (22)–(23) is somewhat different from the function in examples (24)–(27). In the first two above-mentioned examples, *suppose*, alongside with *supposing*, is deployed as a strong conditional device with a clear structural dependency on the following clause (cf. *because*, Burridge 526). On the other hand, in (24)–(27) both expressions do retain their conditional meaning, but the consequent of the condition is more implied in the wider discourse, rather than on the sentence level.

Finally, *suppose* (and probably even *supposing*⁷) may serve as an element that indicates the communicative function of the utterance. It relates the content of the clause introduced by *suppose* to the speaker, who suggests that a certain action be carried out (Biber 667). This interactive function is demonstrated in examples (28)–(29), in which *suppose* marks the utterances as tentative suggestions.

- (28) *Suppose you come and see me again at the beginning of April. Perhaps you would like to make an appointment with my secretary on the way out.* [BYU-BNC:CDE: W_acad]

(29) *If Mr. Marshall will excuse me, I don't think I'll bother with lunch. Suppose we meet in the offices downstairs at, say, five o'clock?" "That'll be fine," I said.*
[BYU-BNC:CDE: W_fic]

It may be stated that out of these three different usages, only those in (28)–(29) represent potential settings where the present subjunctives could be triggered. *Suppose* in these examples occurs in contexts that may be interpreted as mandative. For illustrative purposes, the overview of all mandative uses with *suppose/supposing* is provided in Table 10.1 below.

	mandative uses
suppose that	2
suppose + 0	11
supposing that	0
supposing + 0	0
all mandative uses	13 (1.4%)
all analyzed uses	907

Table 10.1 Mandative uses of *suppose that*, *suppose+0*, *supposing that*, *supposing+0*

Table 10.1 yields interesting results. It demonstrates that with respect to the total sample of all analyzed usages, mandative uses of *suppose* represent a small fraction (1.4%) and *supposing* does not occur in such contexts at all. It also needs to be pointed out that in these mandative uses only the indicatives appeared, as in examples (28)–(29). Therefore, it remains an open question whether the present subjunctives cannot be triggered after these expressions or whether they have not filtered into the data because of the limited number of contexts in which they could appear.

11. Conclusions

The data analysis has shown tendencies in the complementation of *suppose/supposing (that)*, as documented in the British National Corpus. It reveals certain asymmetries in the use of tenses, as well as in the distributions of individual forms in the genres. One of the asymmetric uses may be seen in the fiction genre, in which there is a discrepancy between the representations of *suppose that* (1.5%) on the one hand, and *suppose+0* (24%) on the other hand.

It can also be summarized that there are correlations between the choice of particular verbal syntagms and genres. For example, occurrences of *suppose (that)* in the formal genres involve predominantly finite complements with the verb in the present tense (77%, see Table 7.2). Furthermore, the appearance of the subordinator *supposing+0* in the fiction genre is in 56.8% cases connected to the use of the subordinate verbs in the past indicative (see Table 8.3).

In the use of the past subjunctive, *suppose (that)* and *supposing (that)* exhibit converging tendencies, with subordinators introducing adverbial conditional clauses. The data indicate that the *were*-subjunctive is not dominant, yet it is a well-established choice

in these contexts (see Table 9.1). On the other hand, the use of the present (i.e. mandative) subjunctive has not filtered into the data, which may have been caused by the limited number of mandative uses of *supposing (that)*/*suppose (that)* represented in the corpus sample (Table 10.1).

Finally, the data suggest that *suppose (that)* and *supposing (that)* take on various functions, ranging from strong conditional linkers with a clear structural dependency on the main clause to modal-like elements that imply conditionality and serve communicative purposes.

Notes

¹ As Quirk et al. (842) put it, “subordinate clauses beginning with *supposing* may have the same force as *what if* or indeed, of the imperative *suppose*”

² The use of the definite article is optional and is more characteristic of American English (Schlüter 279).

³ The miscellaneous genre is made up of various texts of different degrees of formality. It includes essayistic, religious, administrative, biographical and commercial texts, instructions, miscellaneous texts, and also less formal text types, such as emails, advertisements and personal letters. Out of 116 usages of *suppose that* in the miscellaneous genre, 105 occurred in the commercial texts, and 48 (out of 106) did with *suppose*+0.

⁴ Genres are grouped together so that they represent comparable samples: miscellaneous (20,835,159) academic (15,331,668), non-academic (16,495,185), fiction (15,909,312), magazine and newspaper (17,728,412), and the rather underrepresented spoken genre (9,963,663) – see <https://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>.

⁵ To achieve a systematic organization of the complements, the categories in Tables 6.1 and 8.1 are identical. However, all of these are considered present indicatives (see Chapter 6).

⁶ Figures are low, therefore, the percentage of uses is not stated.

⁷ There were no instances of *supposing* with this function in the analyzed corpus sample (see Table 10.1), but as shown in example (4), Quirk et al. (842) demonstrate a similar usage.

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Persuasion in business documents: strategies for reporting positively on negative phenomena

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Abstract

The research presented in this article focuses on the means and strategies of persuasion used in a particular type of specialised discourse, namely in the discourse of business. It looks into some sections of annual reports (chairman's statement, CEO's statement, review of the year, executive summary, letters to shareholders) as these can be considered persuasive. The paper largely deals with lexico-grammatical means utilised to persuade the target readers and communicate the intended propositions. It observes that implicit persuasion is more efficient in these genres than explicit persuasion, and that the credibility of the source must be carefully built by sticking to the facts, personalising the source and illustrating the data with specific examples and stories. The main focus of the paper is on strategies used to report threats to the business and other negative phenomena. Ten specific strategies have been identified, belonging to two large groups (namely facing problems vs. relativising problems), and these strategies are illustrated by extracts from a subcorpus of ten texts. Apart from highlighting the selection of appropriate lexis (such as semantically positive, vivid, concrete words) and grammatical structures, the research also notes how arguments are structured syntactically.

Keywords: annual report, attitude, business threats, credibility, explicit, image, implicit, persuasion, positive words, reputation, strategy

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1. Introduction

The ability to persuade is a crucial skill in business, since influencing people's minds and intentions is an essential condition for leading someone towards the decision to buy. The behaviour of the writer/speaker and the recipient is standardly explained by reasoned action theory (Yzer 2013, p. 120). Yzer states that persuasive messages change beliefs, and if the beliefs are selected properly, changes in them "affect attitude, perceived norms, or perceived behavioral control, which in turn should affect intention and behavior" (2013, p. 122). Authors of corporate statements must aim to change attitudes rather than influencing specific actions, i.e. the behaviour of their addressees. Investors, shareholders, business partners, and financial analysts – the main readership of the documents – have different goals and engage in different behavioural categories, so their exact reactions can neither be targeted specifically nor predicted accurately.

Although the role of attitude in behavioural predictions has been questioned and largely rejected in recent theories based on empirical research, and in fact suggestions have been made that attitude "be separated from its antecedents and consequences" (Fishbein, 1967, in Yzer, 2013, p. 122), it is still considered an important part of the belief-attitude-intention-behaviour chain. Efforts aimed at changing attitude cannot be very explicit, as this would rather discourage the target subjects. Contrarily, an implicit and tentative form of persuasion is more efficient since it preserves space for free decisions without unnecessary imposition. Thus, persuaders in business reports must be informative, objective, positive and credible, not overly assertive, imposing or pushy. According to Bülow-Møller, "persuasion *per se* rarely leads to the desired result by the active persuader" (Halmari and Virtanen, 2005, p. 17).

2. Aims and methodology

This research was carried out on a set of company annual reports of large businesses. The complete corpus used in the research is called the *Corpus of English and Czech Specialised Discourses* (abbrev. *CECSD*) and it contains two subcorpora (English and Czech), each of which is composed of an approximately identical number of words and a comparable number of texts. To be precise, the English subcorpus contains 60 documents with 115,503 words, and the Czech subcorpus contains 60 documents with 100,895 words. The English subcorpus is divided into 4 sections on the basis of the provenance of the business texts in English: those from Anglophone countries (25 texts), texts of Czech origin in English only (10 texts), texts of Czech origin with a parallel English version (15 texts) and texts from other non-Anglophone countries (10 texts).

For the purposes of this paper a part of the English subcorpus was compiled and examined, namely 10 texts produced by companies which are mostly either based in English-speaking countries, or multi-nationals. Only two of them come from annual reports of Czech businesses, a beverages producer and a bank reporting in English. The business texts were chosen on the basis of their presumed persuasive potential, i.e. from sections of annual reports which address readers explicitly and whose aim is to persuade

them of the good management and outlook of the company they invested in or trade with. Such genres include a chairman's statement, a CEO's statement, a letter from the Board of Directors, a review of the year, an executive summary, a letter to shareholders, and similar short texts.

Text	Specification	Number of words	Code in the corpus CECSD in <i>Sketch Engine</i>
ABB Group. <i>Annual Report 2016</i>	Chairman and CEO letter	2,661	BUS_ENG_electr-eng-14.txt
British Airways. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Strategic report / management review	1,594	BUS_ENG_transport-2.txt
British Airways. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Director's report	1,666	BUS_ENG_transport-3.txt
Burberry. <i>Annual Report 2016/2017</i> .	Strategic report / Chief Creative and CEO's letter	3,297	BUS_ENG_fashion-6.txt
Citi. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Letter to shareholders	1,814	BUS_ENG_bank-15.txt
HSBC. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Group Chairman's statement	1,967	BUS_ENG_bank-1.txt
Komerční banka. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Strategy and priorities for 2017	957	BUS_ENG_PAR_bank-2.txt
Microsoft. <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Business	7,340	BUS_ENG_comp-8.txt
Pivovary Lobkowicz Group. <i>Annual Report 2014</i> .	Operational & financial rReview	1,396	BUS_ENG_CZENG_food-2.txt
Rolls Royce. (2016). <i>Annual Report 2016</i> .	Strategic report / market review	888	BUS_ENG_eng-13.txt
Totals	10 texts	23,580	

Tab. 1. Selected English subcorpus – texts, their specifications and wordcounts.

The reports were studied qualitatively, without any numerical analysis of the established persuasive features. This paper represents a pilot stage of the research, before the complete parallel English and Czech corpora are analysed contrastively through the programme *Sketch Engine* and linguistic correlates to selected persuasive strategies are identified quantitatively. Methodologically, qualitative analysis has its advantages in identifying

ideological bias and intentions. Cresswell (2014, p. 239) asserts that qualitative research, unlike its quantitative counterpart, enables purposeful sampling, which is essential for understanding the problem and answering the relevant research questions.

The paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the typical linguistic devices used for reporting positive facts, i.e. the core type of information with persuasive force?
2. What are the typical linguistic devices used for reporting negative facts, i.e. undesirable phenomena from the point of view of persuasion?
3. How are negative phenomena reported so that the writer does not lose face and the reader considers the information to be unbiased, credible and true and does not feel misinformed?
4. How is the position of the author of persuasive texts, who possesses the inside information and also holds some power, communicated successfully so that the outsider addressee attributes the source high credibility and trust?

The analysed texts reflect the persuasive strategies of their writers, and these strategies can probably be considered to be general. The micro-analysis approach, according to Van Dijk (1993, p. 261), is construed on the idea that linguistic choices are intentionally determined by the speaker/writer as their aim is to convey specific messages. Lexical and grammatical devices are selected purposefully to moderate or strengthen certain propositions, so they perform a persuasive function. Also, as Fairclough (1995, p. 210) puts it, the selection of one language item implies the exclusion of some others. What is said and how it is said is thus as important as what is not said and how.

3. Importance of credibility and implicitness in persuasion

Persuasion in business texts is used to manifest a writer's professional credibility and, through its acceptance by readers, to make them accept the writer's evaluation and interpretation of the situation of a business entity or a certain segment of the market.

The authoritative marketing theorist Philip Kotler claims that new and interesting stories, articles and events seem to be much more trustworthy to the public than (direct) advertising (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004, p. 638). Consequently, even annual reports are full of examples, pictures, and "case studies".

Persuasive means used in public business genres need to be rather implicit, without direct imposition and pressure on the target audiences, as audiences might feel offended and thus discouraged by direct and overly pushy persuasion. As Bülow-Møller claims, "overt, explicit persuasion is a signal of a deadlock in a negotiation; for maximal success, persuasion needs to be subtle and implicit" (as paraphrased in Halmari and Virtanen, 2005, p. 17).

Non-explicitness of persuasion can be achieved by using euphemisms and mild, positive, pleasing language. These devices are a demonstration of linguistically marked behaviour (cf. Fowler, 1991). As such, it relies on the intentional choice of lexis and referential approaches which maximise the benefits of the speaker/writer by maximising the positive image of self and the reality associated with one's interests in the eyes of the addressees.

The model of persuasion known as "Persuasion as implicit anchoring" is based on the idea of persuasion as implicitness. It distinguishes three parameters: *coherence*,

politeness and *involvement*. While coherence is understood as mappings “between a text and the socio-cultural context in which it emerges and which it helps construct” (Östman in Halmari and Virtanen, 2005, p. 21), politeness concerns the situational context of a text. The last parameter, involvement, refers to the interlocutors’ expression of emotions. Östman examines three notions with negative or taboo associations and their collocations in newspaper language: *propaganda*, *manipulation*, and *persuasion* (2005, p. 21). According to him, only implicit persuasion can be successful. He asserts that certain linguistic elements are “specifically geared towards the task of implicit anchoring – so much so that they do not have any propositional content” (paraphrased in Halmari and Virtanen, 2005, p. 22).

The question arises whether authors of persuasive analytical business documents follow any techniques consciously, and if they do use the same techniques, whether this persuasion is done consciously in business as compared with other areas. Halmari and Virtanen observe that genres which are found at the private end of the continuum need to be learnt to an extent. Successful persuasive strategies are part of the insider knowledge in the discourse community owning the genre (2005, p. 15). It is debatable whether texts in annual reports and on company websites belong rather to public or private communication (cf. Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985, pp. 13–14). On the one hand, they are available to the general public, but on the other hand, the authors of the documents have a certain limited group of readers in mind and they focus on them, which is a feature of private communication.

This might also apply to company reports, since neither their content nor their form are appropriate or interesting for the general public, although they are, in theory, fully public and accessible to everyone. Conversely to private genres, the ones at the other end of the continuum, namely public persuasive genres, are accessible without special training or limitations (Halmari and Virtanen, 2005, p. 15).

4. Credibility of a source in the business environment

Successful persuasion in the business environment is fundamentally conditioned by the credibility of the source of information. The source is often anonymous and undisclosed, as the texts have a virtually institutional authorship. On the other hand, there are texts – whether letters from top executives addressed to shareholders in annual reports or testimonials on corporate websites or in companies’ printed presentations – which reveal authorship explicitly. The top executives, often portrayed in photographs, are supposed to be successful, industrious and responsible people, and therefore also respectable and trustworthy.

This analogy is associated with the concept of discourse coherence, defined as a collaborative achievement of the participants involved in an interaction, “who use their experience of the world and discourse processing (...)” (Dontcheva Navrátilová, 2011, p. 87). Processing a discourse adequately, i.e. creating a coherent representation of the reality in the minds of discourse participants, “involves the interpretation of explicit (cohesion) and implicit (inferences) cues by interactants, who draw on their experience (...) to check whether incoming information coheres with previously processed information”

(Gernsbacher, 1997, qtd. in Dontcheva Navrátilová, 2011, p. 87).

As Sperber et al. (2010) claim, the audience do not have to accept and believe a message; they can understand it even without this. The speaker/writer must establish epistemic trust and epistemic vigilance. The process of epistemic vigilance is based on the assessment of the reliability of the speaker/writer and the assessment of the reliability of the content conveyed (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2011, p. 85). The source of information (the speaker/writer personally), must be regarded as trustworthy. Here, two conditions must be met: the speaker must be seen as competent, i.e. being in possession of reliable and relevant information, and the speaker must also be seen as benevolent. Benevolence is understood as the expression of a willingness to share information (Sperber et al. 2010, as qtd in Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2011, p. 86). What is of high importance in persuasive business documents is that the source (speaker) should also be attractive for the audience. The attractiveness of the source (reflected in the attractiveness of the message) is a function of the reputation of the source.

Letters by top executives which directly address anonymous shareholders, business partners and investors share many properties with the genre of public speeches in politics, where the audience is also anonymous, but similarly well definable. Dontcheva-Navrátilová asserts that in order to build up a well-constructed argument, the speaker makes an effort to persuade the audience to believe the speaker's interpretation of the conveyed information (2011, p. 86). The persuasive force of a speech is enhanced by two main strategies, namely by coherent shifts of topic and by the use of explicit markers of logical relations (ibid.).

5. Persuasion using positive words

As Van Dijk emphasizes, “negative topics have negative consequences in the minds of the recipients” (2000, p. 34). It follows, by negation, that positive, pleasing topics should have positive consequences in the minds of the target readership or audience. Logically, negative topics should thus either be avoided or transformed linguistically (if the unethical strategy of reporting untrue facts is excluded). Though the use of positive emotions to evoke the conveyance of unfavourable facts might be criticised as “window dressing” etc., it has an undoubtedly positive persuasive impact on the recipient, which is the pragmatic goal of the speaker/writer.

Informing about positive developments and achievements rather than about negative trends and failures is naturally in the best interest of a business entity which has external stakeholders. The most important of these – shareholders, potential investors and creditors – must be informed about the company's successful operations in order to keep their favour, avoid fears and panic in the case of setbacks, and ensure continued funding necessary for the business's operation and expansion. The strong correlation between positive and optimistic information and support for a company's endeavour is reflected in the tone of the company's reports for external users, which are primarily annual reports, press releases or information on the company's own website.

Positive messages in business texts are conveyed via similar tools as those used in advertising messages because their persuasive goals are largely identical: to inform about the existence of a product/company, to evoke positive reactions, to draw attention

to a product, company or accomplishment, and to generate a willingness to buy/invest. Business reports express many of the 42 emotional appeals that Pollay (1983) identified for advertising, e.g. performance, productivity, wisdom, security, durability (orig. “durable”), convenience (“convenient”), morality, tradition (“traditional”), popularity (“popular”), nurturance (Vysekálová et al., 2014, p. 82-83). They also share with advertising such tools as positive evaluative adjectives (*new, original, excellent, extensive, broad, important*), superlative adjectives and adverbs (*the widest...ever available, our first-party premium...*), strong, vivid, dynamic and often unrestricted verbs and nouns (*a positive impact, to capitalise on..., maintain, lead*), words with positive connotations (*ambition, commitment, opportunity*), etc. (see Examples 1 and 2, emphasis added).

(Ex. 1) Our **ambition** for Windows 10 is to **broaden** our economic **opportunity** through three key **levers**: an **original** equipment manufacturer (“OEM”) ecosystem that creates **exciting new** hardware designs for Windows 10; our own **commitment** to the **health** and **profitability** of our **first-party premium** device portfolio; and monetization **opportunities** such as services, subscriptions, gaming, and search advertising. Our OEM partners are investing in an **extensive** portfolio of hardware designs and configurations for Windows 10. We now have **the widest range** of Windows hardware **ever available**.

(Microsoft, *AR 2016*, Business)

(Ex. 2) The employment policies aim to **balance** the **rights** of colleagues along with the responsibilities of the Group in order to **drive** the business **forward**. The policies are regularly **reviewed** and **updated** with input from colleagues that represent different areas of the business. The overall aim is to have policies that are **fair, legally compliant**, and **cost effective** as well as **empowering** line managers.

BA continues to drive **genuine** and **effective engagement** with colleagues, putting the customer at the **forefront** of everything it does and **maintaining a high performing** organisation. BA’s objective is to have **involved** colleagues, with **deep knowledge** of their customers, who are **empowered** to deliver **outstanding** customer **service**.

(British Airways, *AR 2016*)

This does not mean that companies misinform or even lie. Their communication strategy is rather based on the selection of positive facts, highlighting and linking them with the company’s strategy and goals. Contrariwise, negative information is not given such wide publicity; it is used selectively and interpreted with respect to its objective causes, which lie outside of the company, or with respect to possible solutions which the company intends to implement. Elimination of negative developments is a natural ambition of every business; once the negative phenomena are spotted, every well-managed company starts identifying their causes and applying measures to their moderation or complete elimination (see Ex. 3). Persuasive means are used to communicate outside the company, where too much emphasis on such negative phenomena might cause undesirable worries and reactions

which could damage the business.

(Ex. 3) The Group's strategy is to **maintain its flexibility** and **wide range** and to **capitalise** on changing customer preferences and demand, shifting towards regional and special beers. **Ability to promptly** react to market trends and to **introduce new** beer types while **maintaining economies** is perceived as **very important** by the Group. Focus on promotion and sale of such beers and also on premium segment is believed to have a **positive impact** on the Group's financial performance. (Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*)

The message a company sends to the public about itself can be compared to a "value statement", and its image is then "what the majority of the public presumably perceives the subject to stand for" (Marconi, 2004, p. 80). As Marconi admits, many people believe that there is a big gap between image (or perception) and reality, although he strongly opposes this belief (2004, p. 81): "To assume that perception is not reality is to suggest that a subject's image is a lie. Obviously, that is not always the case and, as a rule, it is hopefully rarely the case." As much as a company's priority should be to create a positive image for itself, it must do this responsibly and stick to facts so that it does not harm its precious reputation.

Potential business threats that may have a negative impact on the company's situation are treated using several types of lexico-pragmatic devices:

1) verbs which are semantically positive, while referring to the elimination of a potentially negative phenomenon (e.g. a threat that policies would become obsolete):

(Ex. 4) The policies are regularly **reviewed** and **updated**... (Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*)

2) verbs referring to long-term policies, generally considered as useful, positive and efficient:

(Ex. 5) The Group's strategy is to **maintain** its flexibility and wide range and to **capitalise** on changing customer preferences and demand... (Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*)

3) adjectives and adverbs which are semantically positive and refer to current policies and actions, which are thus stressed as more important and overshadowing negative past events:

(Ex. 6) Ability to **promptly** react to market trends and to introduce **new** beer types while maintaining economies is perceived as **very important** by the Group. (Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*).

(Ex. 7) We strive to make computing more **personal** by putting users at the core

of the experience, enabling them to interact with technology in more **intuitive**, **engaging**, and **dynamic** ways. (Microsoft, *AR 2016*, Business)

(Ex. 8) We developed Windows 10 not only to be **familiar** to our users, but more **safe**, **secure**, and always **up-to-date**. Windows 10 is **more personal and productive** with functionality such as Cortana, Windows Hello, Windows Ink, Microsoft Edge, and universal applications. Windows 10 is designed to foster innovation – from us, our partners, and developers – through **rich** and **consistent** experiences across the range of existing devices and **entirely new** device categories. (Microsoft, *AR 2016*, Business)

4) positive nouns, mostly deverbal:

(Ex. 9) BA continues to drive genuine and effective **engagement** with colleagues, putting the customer at the **forefront** of everything it does and maintaining a high performing organisation. (British Airways, *AR 2016*)

The avoidance of words with negative connotations – and, conversely, the preference for those with positive connotations – can be illustrated on a sample of 30 lexemes, 15 negative and 15 positive, forming approximate pairs of opposites. The research was done on the complete subcorpus of English business texts in the *CECSD* corpus. The words were searched for in the base form only, ignoring different grammatical forms, and the specific context was not identified either. It is obvious that some words are used in fixed expressions without communicating any particular evaluation, either positive or negative (e.g. *profit and loss*), and some may be used in a negated sense (e.g. *avoid losses*), which enables words with prevailingly negative connotations to be used in a positive sense and vice versa.

Words with generally positive connotations			Words with generally negative connotations		
Word (<i>word class</i>)	Rate of occurrence (in the corpus)	Rate of occurrence (per 1 million)	Word (<i>word class</i>)	Rate of occurrence (in the corpus)	Rate of occurrence (per 1 million)
commitment (<i>n</i>)	64	479.65	negligence (<i>n</i>)	0	0
opportunity (<i>n</i>)	97	726.97	threat (<i>n</i>)	4	29.98
profit (<i>n</i>)	80	599.56	loss (<i>n</i>)	100	749.45
effective (<i>adj</i>)	39	292.29	ineffective (<i>adj</i>)	1	7.49
innovative (<i>adj</i>)	31	232.33	conservative (<i>adj</i>)	4	29.98
new (<i>adj</i>)	440	3,297.58	old (<i>adj</i>)	14	104.92

outstanding (<i>adj</i>)	15	112.42	poor (<i>adj</i>)	2	14.99
stable (<i>adj</i>)	19	142.40	volatile (<i>adj</i>)	10	74.95
successful (<i>adj</i>)	37	277.30	unsuccessful (<i>adj</i>)	0	0
updated (<i>adj</i>)	11	82.44	unchanged (<i>adj</i>)	11	82.44
promptly (<i>adv</i>)	6	44.97	slowly (<i>adv</i>)	2	14.99
achieve (<i>v</i>)	60	44.67	miss (<i>v</i>)	0	0
approve (<i>v</i>)	12	89.93	reject (<i>v</i>)	1	7.49
strengthen (<i>v</i>)	28	209.85	weaken (<i>v</i>)	3	22.48
succeed (<i>v</i>)	6	44.97	fail (<i>v</i>)	6	44.97
Total / corpus	945	N/A	Total / corpus	158	N/A

Tab. 2. Rate of occurrence of words with generally positive vs. generally negative connotations in the English business subcorpus of *CECSD*.

The sums of occurrences in this sample reveal that prevailingly positive words are used more frequently than prevailingly negative ones (here six times more). Words are deliberately chosen to evoke positive impressions, which complements other strategies of processing and presenting information outlined in Chapter 6.

6. Strategies for the presentation of potential business threats and negative facts

From the corpus of selected parts of annual reports, several strategies can be formulated that are used when business threats, negative events and trends need to be reported. They are as follows:

- (i) A problem is a challenge.
- (ii) A difficulty has proved our strength.
- (iii) A difficulty has enabled us to show our resourcefulness.
- (iv) The problems were overcome thanks to our preparedness.
- (v) There are minor difficulties, but major successes.
- (vi) The problems were not as serious (for us) as they seemed to be at the beginning.
- (vii) The problems are a general and widespread phenomenon, not affecting only us.
- (viii) The problem is a (temporary/inevitable) side-effect of a positive development.
- (ix) The problem has been solved and it is not worth talking about any more.

(x) The problem is natural and inevitable (and was expected).

Strategies (i)-(iv) can be subsumed under the heading FACING A PROBLEM, whereas strategies (v)-(x) share the property that can be labelled as RELATIVISING A PROBLEM. The identified strategies are considered as typical, but this paper does not claim that the given semantic continuum is described completely.

6.1. Strategy of FACING A PROBLEM

(i) A problem is a challenge.

This approach presents a problem as an inevitable and stimulating phenomenon in the life of an organisation. It motivates the business to revisit its practices used so far and to invent and implement new ones.

(Ex. 10) In reviewing performance in 2016, the Board **noted with approval** the traction now evidenced from management actions **to reshape** the Group and **address the challenges** brought about by the continuing low interest rate environment. (HSBC, *AR 2016*)

(ii) A difficulty has proved our strength.

A problem is not only a motivation for its elimination, but it also demonstrates how strong, robust and resilient the organisation is.

(Ex. 11) As the year progressed from a first half defined by economic anxiety and volatility to a second half impacted by a series of political upsets and surprises, **we demonstrated the power and resilience** of Citi's unique global franchise by helping our millions of customers and clients around the world navigate an environment far more challenging than anticipated. (Citi, *AR 2016*, Letter to Shareholders)

(iii) A difficulty has enabled us to show our resourcefulness.

Similarly to (i), a problem is no threat for the organisation, but the focus here is on its implicit ability to solve the problem efficiently, creatively and inventively.

(Ex. 12) Sustained geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty in the U.S. and E.U. through 2016 prompted customers to adopt a wait-and-see approach to investing in large-scale infrastructure projects. While **working to sharpen and focus our offerings** across industries, **ABB used this period of global uncertainty to strengthen operational excellence**. Our white-collar productivity program outperformed expectations, allowing the company to increase its cost-reduction target by 30 percent, saving \$1.3 billion. (ABB Group, *AR 2016*, The Chairman and CEO Letter)

(iv) The problems were overcome thanks to our preparedness.

The organisation is rational, realistic and well-informed, so problems are expected as an objective fact and the company prepares procedures to deal with such disruptions in

normal operation when they occur.

(Ex. 13) Historically, growth has recovered quickly following major economic shocks. The geographic spread of our installed base and wide customer base **spreads our risk and reduces our exposure to any one shock**. (Rolls Royce, *AR 2016*, Market review)

6.2. Strategy of RELATIVISING A PROBLEM

(v) There are minor difficulties, but major successes.

A variation on the classical dialectics which stresses a continuous effort to reestablish balance and mutual elimination of two opposing forces, combined with the idea of prevailingly positive development.

(Ex. 14) During 2016, we completed an extensive strategic portfolio review for the Power Grids division. We listened carefully to all stakeholders and considered all views on how to create maximum value for ABB shareholders. In October we announced the Power Grids division would **continue its transformation** under ABB's ownership and, **through that, this business can unlock the most value** for shareholders, customers and employees.

(ABB Group, *AR 2016*, The Chairman and CEO Letter)

(vi) The problems were not as serious (for us) as they seemed to be at the beginning.

If this was the case, this information is given to explain retrospectively what once was the reason for concern, which eventually ceased to be so serious. Problems that have remained and are still a threat should be reported truthfully, without relativising them.

(Ex. 15) The uncertainties created by such changes **temporarily influenced** investment activity and contributed to volatile financial market conditions. Against this background, HSBC's performance in 2016 was broadly satisfactory. **Encouragingly**, operating performance in the second half of the year **was much stronger than expected** and compared with the prior year, as businesses and financial markets **responded more optimistically than predicted** to these events. (HSBC, *AR 2016*)

(vii) The problems are a general and widespread phenomenon, not affecting only us.

The company's policies and management are not to blame; the company is one of the victims of a trend.

(Ex. 16) **Overall** there has been a slowdown in **all major geographical markets** for new aircraft orders after a period of higher than normal order placement for new airframe products in recent years (principally Airbus A350 XWB and A330neo, and Boeing 787 and 777X). (Rolls Royce, *AR 2016*, Market review)

(Ex. 17) **Sustained geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty in the U.S. and E.U.** through 2016 prompted customers to adopt a wait-and-see approach to investing

in large-scale infrastructure projects. (ABB Group – AR 2016, The Chairman and CEO Letter)

(viii) The problem is a (temporary/inevitable) side-effect of a positive development.

This relativising strategy is often combined with the technique of contrast (cf. strategy (v)), respecting also the rule that if the negative phenomenon is mentioned earlier, and the positive one later, then the more permanent effect (in the minds of readers/hearers) will rest with the latter piece of information. The following extracts (Ex. 18 and 19) illustrate the seemingly negative, yet positively interpretable correlation between rising distribution and organisational costs and rising sales, as well as between staff costs and bigger output:

(Ex. 18) On the contrary, the distribution **costs** and cost related to agreements with pubs **went up due to higher sales**. Staff cost in 2014 **went up moderately due to more intensive work on beer bottling**.

(Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*, Operational & Financial Review, section Costs)

(Ex. 19) In our Global Consumer Bank, we continued to focus our footprint with the announcement of plans **to divest** our retail banking and credit card businesses in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia, strategic decisions that **enable us to consolidate our finite resources on our three major consumer markets**: the U.S., Mexico and Asia.

(Citi, *AR 2016*, Letter to Shareholders)

(ix) The problem has been solved and it is not worth talking about any more.

In the following extract (Ex. 20), the reporting company informs the reader about talks with a potential investor and their termination, but the text ends there. The company avoids mentioning the reasons for the termination and thus eliminates the risk of giving information about possible problems of its own. On the other hand, it seems to be logical that if there is no tangible outcome of the negotiations and thus no effect on the ownership of the company, there is no need to talk about the matter any further.

(Ex. 20) On 30 July 2014, PLG made public the information that a negotiation has been conducted by a potential buyer – a fund managed by Enterprise Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, a.s. Investors with an aim to acquire an equity stake in PLG. In April 2015, the Company announced that negotiation with the potential buyer **was terminated** and that the transaction in concern **will not happen**.

(Pivovary Lobkowicz Group, *AR 2014*, Operational & Financial Review, section Negotiation with respect to a potential sale of the majority stake)

(x) The problem is natural and inevitable (and was expected).

This strategy is based on admitting sincerely that business is not completely predictable, that a subject has to consider the interplay of diverse factors with uncertain outcomes, and

that the low phases of the business cycle must be endured and countered. It is necessary to bear in mind that business poses constant threats and volatility is a natural part of it.

(Ex. 21) Aftermarket demand for engines on 50-70 seat aircraft **is reducing in line with expectations**. (Rolls Royce, *AR 2016*, Market review)

7. Conclusions

As Marconi correctly says about a company's efforts in the area of public relations, a company is similar to an individual in that "it is true that *actions speak louder than words*, but words *do* matter in creating and maintaining a reputation" (2004, p. 81). The message a company publishes about itself employs suitable strategies and linguistic means to create a positive image in the eyes of the public and thus strengthen the business's reputation. Company annual reports and company profiles rely on many tools that are also used in marketing communication and advertising, but reports must naturally stick to the facts and give a serious impression, so some efficient tools (such as humour, hyperbole, metaphor, implicit comparison with competitors, etc.) must be avoided.

Logically, negative phenomena make up a minority of the reported facts and trends in company annual reports. A successful, long-living organisation carries out its business, and does so prevalently successfully. Although negative phenomena are reported sincerely, objectively and materially, there is a space on the linguistic level to mitigate the message. This paper suggests that there are two main moderating strategies, that of facing and that of relativising a problem. In these, ten more specific strategies were identified and demonstrated by examples. This list is probably not finite; only the most obvious strategies have been named.

As an old saying asserts, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Top managers and their staff, who are the authors of texts in annual reports, realise this fact. The strategies help to communicate the message to the target audience, influence its attitude, enhance the company's image and preserve its reputation. If this functions well, the strategies prove their persuasive force and thus their usefulness.

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Literature and Culture

“Instead of Flowers, Our Neighbors Plant Mortars and Machine Guns in Their Gardens”: An Ecofeminist Reading of Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*, *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *MaddAddam Trilogy*

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Abstract

This article examines Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing (1972), The Handmaid’s Tale (1985), and the MaddAddam Trilogy (2003–2013) from an ecofeminist perspective. Created against a backdrop of environmental devastation, Atwood’s speculative ventures, which are entangled with gender issues, appositely lend themselves to such investigations. Taking patriarchal dualisms as the root cause of the historical polarization of humanity from nature, and sundry subsequently established domination/subordination relationships as the point of departure, this study explores the hierarchies of culture/nature, masculinity/femininity, mind/body, sky/earth, and competition/cooperation with a focus on the issues of war, science and religion. Oppressive social relations and anti-ecological lifestyles prove to be inexorably entangled where their expunction is contingent on the eradication of hegemonic centric structures.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, ecofeminism, hegemonic masculinity, heroism, scientism, ecophobia, quest, necrophilic transcendence

This essay is a modified version of a chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation entitled “An Eco-critical Study of Selected Works of Margaret Atwood” submitted to Shiraz University, Iran in September 2017.

1. Introduction

Margaret Atwood, a self-proclaimed environmentalist, spent most of her childhood in the region of Quebec following her father, an enthusiastic forest entomologist, in his pursuits in the midst of the wilderness. Her deeply ingrained sense of ecological awareness – a legacy of her father's lifestyle – is coupled with her nationalistic and feminist preoccupations, and this combination informs her literary endeavors to a marked extent (Cooke 3). Dana Percec contends that Atwood's "preoccupation for environmental issues and deep interest in gender discourses have made her one of the best known ambassadors of ecofeminism in North America" (45). Engagement with feminist speculative fictions, such as Atwood's, can potentially enable "a fundamental exploration and critiquing of complacencies; the devaluing produced by austerity and eroded values which, if taken to a logical end, suggest rejection of difference and a shutting down of what it means to be human" (Wisker 314). The focus of this paper is mainly on Atwood's speculative ventures which were created against a backdrop of environmental devastation. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Atwood imagines a future in which the legacy of biosphere-damaging trends and experiments is a totalitarian theocracy in which women's lives are reduced to their reproductive functions. The *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003–2013) tells the story of a science-torn and environmentally devastated world in which a scientist decides to correct the wrongs of his fellow human beings by releasing a pandemic virus. *Surfacing* (1972), which is about a woman who travels back to her hometown in search of her father, is also included in the discussion, as this novel anticipated many of Atwood's subsequent feminist and environmental concerns.

2. Ecofeminism and Literature

Ecofeminism introduces the sciences and philosophies of environmentalism and ecology into feminist discourse, asserting a link between gender and ecology. The basic premise of this coalition is that nature and women share not only a subordinate but also an instrumental relationship to men under global patriarchal practices. Eco-feminists' central project, as Karen Warren contends, is to unpack "the connections between the twin oppressions of women and nature" (107). Ecofeminists, Russell avers, "have realized that we must question the entire civilization that mankind has contrived—all of its values, its goals, its achievements. It is not merely antifeminine, it is antihuman, antilife" (225). Planetary health and global ecological destruction are indeed feminist issues, because a healthy environment is prerequisite to many of their long-sought transformations: "A commitment to woman's health—reproductive health (freedom from compulsory motherhood, freedom to choose motherhood and to regulate it), labor health (safe conditions and fair compensation), and general health (in terms of unpolluted and sufficient sources of food, fuel, water, and shelter)—requires a commitment to planetary health" (Gaard and Gruen 247). Therefore, although no one single definition of ecofeminism exists that would satisfy every party involved (as is indeed the case with definitions of feminism itself), there is nevertheless a consensus that ecological and feminist agendas can merge to foster substantial change in the very fabric of society, in which a rapidly accelerating pattern of environmental degradation is most palpable: "It is no longer possible to discuss environmental change without addressing social change; moreover, it is not possible to

address women's oppression without addressing environmental degradation" (Gaard and Gruen 236). The discernable social character of this ecological movement "stems from the fact that it emerged from a variety of areas of activism, such as peace movements, labour movements, healthcare and anti-nuclear movements" (Percec 46).

The official marriage of literary criticism and ecofeminism was established through Patrick D. Murphy's *Literature, Nature, Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995), Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy's co-edited volume, *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (1998), and Glynis Carr's edited volume, *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (2000). However, the role and the position of literature within ecofeminism as a rapidly expanding and highly diverse movement has not been without its challenges. In 1996, Greta Gaard, in a dialogue with Patrick D. Murphy, argues that ecofeminists have mostly sought source materials that look like facts, and literature is not exactly perceived as "factual." She explains that such omission of literary resources, according to Ynestra King, is a sign of "a kind of elitism that may be classist or racist" (Gaard and Murphy, *A Dialogue* 2). However, Gaard contends that on the one hand, literary critics are "justifiably eager to contribute to the development of an ecofeminist movement," as history has shown that "broad social movements have been inspired or catalyzed by music ('We Shall Overcome') or by literature (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*)." On the other hand, she maintains that the tide is changing in favor of the inclusion of literature, as more and more ecofeminists are now "thinking about literature both as data and as an effective rhetorical mode and have been doing so for some time," as "literature can appeal to certain readers who would otherwise not be moved by theory" (2–3).

3. Quaint and Curious War Is: Hegemonic Masculinity in Conflict

A variety of feminist theorists in the 1980s focused their attention on how the hierarchical distinction between masculinity and femininity informs the practice and legitimization of war. These feminists, who mostly happened to be peace activists too, considered the social construction of masculinity as the root cause of the widespread appeal of militarism (Hutchings 391). The basic argument is that the tremendous growth of militarism during the twentieth century (continuing well into the twentieth-first century) stands on a masculine conceptualization of power dynamics that is based on competition, control, dominance and violence. Of course, the focal point here is hegemonic masculinity, which stands in contrast to alternative masculinities and an oppositional, feminized Other: "The term 'hegemonic masculinity' refers to a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current Western culture is a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational" (Barrett 130). Therefore, it seems most apposite that Atwood touches upon the subject of war on the very first page of *Surfacing*, albeit in passing. Surfer juxtaposes her brother's aggressive sexual behavior and the issue of war: "In one of those restaurants before I was born my brother got under the table and slid his hands up and down the waitress's legs while she was bringing the food; it was during the war and she had on shiny orange rayon stockings, he'd never seen them before" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 3).

What is even more thought-provoking is her brother's fascination with the subject of war, and his imaginative ways of introducing its staggering violence (i.e. the mutilation of soldiers) into their childhood games: "In the car that time we sat with our feet wrapped in blankets, pretending we were wounded. My brother said the Germans shot our feet off" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 4). Evidently, from an early age, his imagination has been captivated by daunting acts of violence and war. His scrapbook is dominated by images of explosions, dismembered soldiers, and weaponry inspired by WWII (Atwood, *Surfacing* 90). Surfacers believes that they are now so immersed in this toxic system of thinking that imagining a world where people are not perpetually in a state of violent conflict is simply beyond the realm of possibility: "But his pictures were more accurate, the weapons, the disintegrating soldiers: he was a realist, that protected him" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 132). However, later on, Surfacers explains the "kill or be killed" logic that her brother had developed only to question its legitimacy: "My brother saw the danger early. To immerse oneself, join in the war, or to be destroyed. Though there ought to be other choices" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 195).

The recipients of man's hostility are not only man's fellow human beings. The root cause of humanity's destructive relationship with nature has been traced back to the fear and contempt they feel for the agency of the natural environment. Estok explains that the term ecophobia in clinical psychology is used to "designate an irrational fear of home;" however, in ecocriticism, this term is defined and used in an entirely different manner. With a similar pattern as other forms of discriminatory treatments, ecophobia, as a recognizable discourse and one of the hallmarks of human progress, is "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism" (208). In very simple terms, ecophobia, Estok maintains, is about control and power: "Human history is a history of controlling the natural environment, of taking rocks and making them tools or weapons to modify or to kill parts of the natural environment, of building shelters to protect us from weather and predators, of maintaining personal hygiene to protect ourselves from diseases and parasites that can kill us" (210). Therefore, nature is seen as a formidable opponent to be feared, fought and ultimately conquered. Having a hard time sleeping, Snowman feels a threatening presence behind the trees where the proverbial damsels-in-distress are in need of rescue (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 261).

If nature is indeed a hostile force, masculine acts of self-defense – and, in some cases, the protection of others – are interpreted as heroic. Even in civilized settings, "the heroic battle against unruly nature is reenacted as ritual drama in such masculine ventures as sport-hunting, bullfights, and rodeos. A similar mentality can be seen in the ritual degradation of women in pornography and rape" (Kheel 246). In Surfacers's view, this is exactly the mentality that drives the Americans who have come onto Canadian soil to hunt and fish: "My brain recited the stories I'd been told about them: the ones who stuffed the pontoons of their seaplane with illegal fish, the ones who had a false bottom to their car, two hundred lake trout on dry ice, the game warden caught them by accident" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 122). When their bribes were turned down, the Americans got drunk and started chasing the loons in their powerboats, drowning them or chopping them up with their propeller blade. Surfacers views the game of killing the loons as a simulation of war (Atwood, *Surfacing* 123). In contrast, it is among her childhood drawings that

Surfacer finds her vision of Heaven, a place that is devoid of heroes, monsters, and wars (Atwood, *Surfacing* 91). Atwood also establishes a link between the violent heroic battle and the denigration of women in pornography by juxtaposing the two in her description of the kinds of entertainment Jimmy and Glenn enjoy. Besides playing extremely violent war games, and watching live coverage of executions in Asia on hedsoff.com, Jimmy and Glenn spend most of their time watching pornography, especially featuring young children, on their computer (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 82, 85). When Blanco rapes Toby, what he wants is "submission" and a "thank you after every degrading act" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 38).

Heroism is the constant concomitant of masculinity, as the latter must continually be proved. Nancy Hartsock avers that heroism requires four steps: firstly, women are to be excluded from the scene of heroic deeds. Secondly, it should be a zero-sum competition where one's loss is another's gain. Thirdly, a heroic action, separate from daily life and its concerns, must take place. Fourthly, the last step involves a sense of abstraction of the self and the moment from the larger whole (141). Simone de Beauvoir's account of men's pursuit of transcendence pertinently reveals the nature of the appeal of heroic courage to men. Men pursue transcendence because they seek activity and creativity in their lives, being free from the burden of childbearing and menstruation. The celebrated *Homo faber* – the hunter, the gatherer, the warrior – breaks through frontiers and lays down the foundation for the future. The supreme dignity of these activities comes from their element of danger: "The warrior put his life in jeopardy to elevate the prestige of the horde, the clan to which he belonged. And in this he proved dramatically that life is not the supreme value for man, but on the contrary that it should be made to serve ends more important than itself." As a result, men are raised above women in status for "it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal" (88-89). Building upon de Beauvoir's analysis of transcendence, Brown argues that heroic courage becomes the most appealing virtue for men because "the willingness to risk death is the proof that life has been discarded as a fundamental value. To be willing to *die* for something is considered more glorious than to be willing to *live* for something" (182). Man's endeavor to distinguish himself as a human being through valued acts of heroism inevitably alienates him from whatever is associated with life and survival, as "the activity of maintaining and sustaining life has been ideologically and practically divided off from the activity of creating history and meaning" (Brown 192).

This heroic mentality has been blamed for bringing the world to a state of ecological despoliation; however, "it is not until the crisis is of sufficiently epidemic proportions that heroes will respond" (Gaard and Gruen 245). Opposition to this heroic mentality is so fervent among ecofeminists that many of them have declined to take up the role of the patriarchal "hero" hunting for a "savior theory" (i.e. an environmental ethic) that could singlehandedly rescue Mother Nature (i.e. the proverbial "damsel in distress") from the "villains" that have bound and subdued her. Instead, ecofeminists have shown more interest in exposing the underlying mentality of the twin exploitation of women and nature, which they view as a prerequisite to social transformation (Kheel 243–244). That is probably why Surfacer mockingly renounces the prevalent savior mentality: "Saving the world, everyone wants to; men think they can do it with guns, women with their bodies,

love conquers all, conquerors love all, mirages raised by words” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 168).

Furthermore, what Surfacers takes away from the birthday party games of her childhood is a strictly competitive zero-sum ideology: “There were only two things you could be, a winner or a loser.” At first, she refuses to participate; however, once she is coerced to learn how to be “civilized,” she joins the other children in one of the games, being “welcomed with triumph, like a religious convert or a political defector” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 68–69). The assertion of male control over the wild is established by their conquests of food and wood. After catching a fish, Surfacers explains their sense of pride, which is quite similar to that of victorious soldiers: “They are all laughing, joyful with victory and relief, like the newsreels of parades at the end of the war, and that makes me glad” (Atwood, *Surfacing* 62). Later on, David the Conqueror attempts to “immortalize” his moment of victory by filming the innards of the gutted fish with no compunction (Atwood, *Surfacing* 66). A similar pattern is recognizable when David and Joe return from the forest with wood. The notched log seems to have been “attacked” by the two valiant soldiers who immortalize their heroic triumph over their formidable foe by recording footage of them carrying the defeated log (Atwood, *Surfacing* 80). However, later on, Surfacers drowns the images of Joe and David with their defeated enemy in the cleansing water of the lake.

In *Oryx and Crake*, the frontier fantasy of the heroic individual taming the wild world is revealed to be “an unspeakable crime.” After the end of human civilization, “the entire world becomes again free and open land, to be once again molded and ‘tamed’ by heroic individuals” (Canavan 141). This is exactly the situation in which Snowman finds himself at the beginning of the story. As an attempt to preserve his sanity, he tries to recite lines from self-help books, only to reveal to readers later on that the directive was likely written for the European colonials, who were mostly rapists (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 4–5). The affiliation of women and nature in their shared plight is reinforced as these colonials not only came to conquer the land, but also to conquer (i.e. rape) women. Human history cannot offer Snowman a model for navigating his new and hostile terrain, as the exhausted frontier myth – with all its motifs and ideological assumptions – can no longer help man build anew a better society in the wild territory (Canavan 141).

Certainly, it can be argued that human civilization is so much more than its atrocities. Atwood, in the “Blood & Roses” game played by Jimmy and Crake, juxtaposes the good with the bad: “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism,” as Walter Benjamin most aptly puts it (256). The basic logic of the “wicked” game is that you can trade one human accomplishment for one human atrocity: “The exchange rates—one Mona Lisa equalled Bergen-Belsen, one Armenian genocide equalled the Ninth Symphony plus three Great Pyramids—were suggested, but there was room for haggling” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 79). However, the salient question remains, and presses for an answer: Are these human achievements and triumphs enough to counterbalance human civilization’s most dire failures? Although Atwood is very protective of the human culture and the creative vitality of humanistic thought, she seems to be leaning toward answering *no*, as the number of Roses is absolutely insufficient to defeat the Bloods (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 79–80).

4. The Fault, Dear Brutus, Is Not in Our Stars: Scientism

The role of science in society is a contested issue in ecofeminist discourse. Basing their argument on new developments in biotechnology, genetic engineering and reproductive technology, Mies and Shiva, in their introduction to *Ecofeminism* (2014), argue that "science's whole paradigm is characteristically patriarchal, anti-nature and colonial and aims to dispossess women of their generative capacity as it does the productive capacities of nature" (16). Carolyn Merchant's distinguished text *The Death of Nature* (1980) questions the dualistic discourses of individual mastery and scientific control that have created systems of domination and exploitation such as sexism and naturism. Merchant attributes the root of the separation of culture from nature, and the inferiority of women in modern society, to seventeenth-century mechanical philosophy and the Scientific Revolution, most notable in the works of Francis Bacon and René Descartes. Her core message is that "nature-culture dualism is a key factor in Western civilization's advance at the expense of nature" (143), and that "nature and women are both perceived to be on a lower level than culture, which has been associated symbolically and historically with men" (244). She advocates the need to "reexamine the formation of a worldview and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women" (xvii).

Similarly, Easlea focuses on the rise of science and technology, and how sexism was built into the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution. He argues that science is a masculine affair of controlling and dominating nature which rarely leads to a collaborative and cooperative relationship with the natural world: "[M]odern science, as it has developed in the West, has not only been a male-dominated activity thereby conferring a masculine identity on its successful practitioners, but in addition, it has been a 'masculine philosophy' which allows its practitioners to claim and indeed to demonstrate an impressive male virility" (61). Easlea believes that the culpability lies with the problems of male identity in a patriarchal society. Seeing exclusively women in a parenting role would lead men to strong feelings of ambivalence and hostility. This would turn men's relationship to his others into "a relatively mild insecurity to a full-fledged compulsive hardness" (44), the extent of which is determined by wider socio-economic conditions. In other words, triggered by their insecurity about their masculinity, men use their aggressive sexuality and their science as tools to oppress both women and nature.

Christina Bieber Lake contends that human "scientific knowledge and technical skill will ultimately give us complete control over our own evolutionary future. ... Whether the ability to control the destiny of the human species will turn out to be a good thing remains to be seen" (xii). This heightened sense of perturbation and reservation regarding human flourishing – taking the form of scientism, which has increasingly led to environmental degradation endangering more and more species, including *Homo sapiens* – is indeed of a more modern disposition. Stapleton contends that dystopian texts and films are a manifestation of the political and cultural fears of any given era, and a closer look at recent dystopian fiction reveals "how afraid we are of our own 'progress'—human development that leads to natural disasters, world-ending climate change, and science and technology

run amok” (19). In the postwar years, people started to wonder if we possess the wisdom to use and control our advanced scientific knowledge, which we have turned into power: “The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seriously called into question humans’ ability to judge the appropriate use of a technology so powerful that it could destroy the world” (Stapleton 21). Atwood herself has a skeptical view of scientism, which has been defined by Tom Sorell as “the belief that science, especially natural science, is much the most valuable part of human learning—much the most valuable part because it is much the most authoritative, or serious, or beneficial” (1). However, to question the hegemony of science, which has led to technoscience’s immense political, social and cultural power, is not synonymous with rebuffing the numerous important “*truths* (lower case t and plural)” with which it has provided us. These types of criticisms, as Patrick Curry explains, are not anti-science but anti-scientism: “[T]he modern cult of science, according to which science is not one way of being among many but the only valid or *true* one” (25).

Atwood gives tangible instances where humans have put a gaping distance between themselves and nature through their techno-scientific practices. Surfacar, at her moment of vulnerability while she is attempting to immerse herself in the natural world, hears four or five Americans, the arch-villains of her story, “hulking out of” their boat. She believes that the Americans are half-way through their metamorphosis from a living organism to a machine (Atwood, *Surfacing* 190). Deep down, she fears that one day, the very technology we use to make our lives more and more convenient – like flush toilets and vacuum cleaners – will wipe us out completely (Atwood, *Surfacing* 119). In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, one of Atwood’s strongest critiques is directed toward the technophilic attitude of people. The dysfunctional society of Gilead is a result of people’s “easy reliance on and unthinking acceptance of computer data storage of personal information, genetic modification and a myriad of other scientific interventions (including fertility treatment), or the world’s complacency in the face of environmental shifts” (Macpherson 53). The plight of the Handmaids is a direct result of “a sterility-causing virus that was developed by secret pre-Gilead gene-splicing experiments with mumps, and which was intended for insertion into the supply of caviar used by top officials in Moscow” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 391). Atwood highlights people’s obsession with technology by showing how the Gileadean language is replete with blend words highlighting the technological aspect of their identities: “Computalk” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 177), “Compuphone” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 216), or “Compubank” (Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* 224).

The spliced words of *The Handmaid’s Tale* presage the science-torn world of the compounds of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, in which the public’s attitude is overwhelmingly positive and uncritical toward the untouchable, privileged position of science, and specifically genetic engineering. One of the most significant challenges of the trilogy’s story is directed at unchecked science, uncontested technological practices, and unlimited human ecological manipulation in the name of progress. In the absence of any legal or regulatory frameworks that would govern the scientific endeavors in order to safeguard public health and protect the environment, the scientists are left with only two imperatives: “[T]he technological possibility and the economic significance of their creations” (Sanderson 237). Glenn explains that “technological connections” have replaced the kings

as the "centre of power" in their world (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 228). Science also seems to have displaced the authority of religion. Crake, the ultimate scientist, along with Oryx and Snowman, are now the Christian Trinity: "Crake assumes the role of Father, creator of all, triumphant over chaos; Snowman, that of sacrificial Son and immanent Logos (and perhaps also of Gnostic Logos marooned in matter); and Oryx, that of Spirit, omnipresent, 'feminine' Paraclete" (Dunning 95). Curry argues that "in a society dominated by financial, commercial and fiscal imperatives, science is no more immune than any other human enterprise to the corruption entailed by selling your services to the highest bidder" (26). The corporations even go as far as to create new kinds of diseases in their laboratories so they can sell the cure for a handsome profit (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 210).

Furthermore, turning a blind eye to the environmental impacts of widely used technologies and unbridled resource consumption proves to be detrimental to the very survival of the human race. In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, even without Crake's radical intervention, science – freed from restraints due to the removal of virtually every regulatory oversight of scientific experimentation and ethics because of the dissolution of a powerful central state – threatens human survival (Dunning 98). International biotech corporations have taken over the world, and have assumed complete control over people's lives: "All characters in the MaddAddam series are impacted by the biotech corporations in some way: as employee, as consumer, as dissenter, or, in the case of the Crakers, as invention" (Stapleton 28). The scientific elites in their fortified compounds literally dictate the lives of the pleeblanders. The scientifically and technologically gifted individuals are systematically privileged, whereas people such as Jimmy have to suffer through the degraded Martha Graham Academy with little prospect of satisfying future employment. Obviously, the worst fate awaits those who dare speak out against the biotechnology corporations. These companies easily silence or discredit the opposition by means of political assassinations, strange accidents, unexplained disappearances, and sex scandals (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 254).

Jimmy's and Crake's questionable behaviors are partly the product of "the deployment of scientific research and rational practices into the construction of a divided, heavily guarded, valueless, outwardly comfortable, inwardly vacant lifestyle" (Wisker 312). What makes this story all the more poignant is the fact that Crake's experiments in bioengineering and genetic manipulation, albeit to an extreme, are indeed a true reflection of current scientific endeavors: "Although *MaddAddam* is a work of fiction, it does not include any technologies, or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 393). That is probably why Atwood so adamantly argues that her work is speculative fiction rather than science fiction. In an interview with Hoffman, Atwood, building her argument on the issues of overpopulation and the consequent profligate consumption of natural resources, drew a Malthusian conclusion: "People think they will fix the problem with technology, but famine may fix it for us" (35). In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, she changes her tone by rendering technology the very means that engenders the prophesized Malthusian end, catalyzed by the scientific mind of Crake. Science in itself is a masculine affair of control and domination, and Crake asserts his mastery by condemning the entirety of the human population to death as, by his scientific calculations, their existence was no longer making sense. Even Oryx, his

beloved, does not escape this fate. Her murder, unsettlingly close to a suttee rendering it a symbolic act in subjugation, seems to be a tribute to Crake's colossal ego: Crake "refuses the beloved's call to move beyond his objectified scientific self, preferring death—even global death—to the possibility of life shaped in communion with another" (Dunning 98).

Crake is not the only scientist with dangerous experiments and an astonishingly extreme masterplan. The story is riddled with cartoonishly irresponsible experiments conducted both on animals and humans. In OrganInc Farms, Jimmy's father helped engineer the Methuselah Mouse as part of Operation Immortality before becoming "one of the foremost architects of the pigeon project, along with a team of transplant experts and the microbiologists who were splicing against infections" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 22). The rakunks were the product of "an after-hours hobby on the part of one of the OrganInc biolab hotshots." Many of these create-an-animal experiments were destroyed as "they were too dangerous to have around" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 51). Crakers themselves are a mishmash of a litany of desirable and environmentally-sound attributes spliced together from other species. The successful appropriation of each trait meant a lot of "botched experiments" at the expense of many human subjects. Snowman recalls how Crake struggled to perfect the "purring" by conducting Mengelian experiments on defenseless children (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 156). Furthermore, another real threat that the misuse of advanced science poses is the development of weapons of mass destruction. People fear that the "biogeeks" are gene-splicing nasty parasites that can "lay thousands of eggs in you or creep through your brain and out your tear ducts, or split themselves into regenerating segments and turn the inside of your body into a festering patty-melt" as part of "a bio-weaponry project" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 198).

5. Pretty Women Wonder Where My Secret Lies: Female Quest and the Lost Matriarchal Past

Surfacer's journey can be construed as the female counterpart to the more familiar narratives of male initiation in which the hero goes into the wilderness, faces a series of perilous yet enlightening adventures, gains wisdom and courage, and eventually returns to civilization with a renewed sense of self and his milieu. She re-experiences nature on her own terms far from the comfort of home, and attempts to re-evaluate her place in it apart from the influences of a patriarchal society. Her encounter with nature is far from facile assumptions of naïve romanticization. When she sets foot in nature, she does not become a transparent eyeball in an ecstatic moment of revelation. She does not transcend the material world into infinite spaces. She remains bound to the physical world and all its limitations: "My bones ache, hunger is loose in me, belly a balloon, floating shark stomach" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 185). The end of Surfacer's quest is to be awakened from "a male-defined world, to the greater terror and risk, and also the great potential healing and joy, of a world defined by the heroine's own feeling and judgment" (Christ 325). This quest can potentially help her circumvent the vortex of internalized narratives of victimhood. Regression to her past seems imperative if she is to claim a story of *hers*: "This awakening is especially poignant for women who, like Atwood's protagonist, have suppressed their own feelings in order to acquiesce to male value systems. Rejection of a male-defined

world may also open a woman to a full experience of the great powers, as happens to the heroine of *Surfacing*" (Christ 325).

In his 1967 seminal essay entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Lynn White, Jr. brings forth the idea that Christianity, or rather the prevalent interpretation of it, is responsible for the West's exploitative attitude toward nature, which assumes a sharp division between humans and nature, encourages the control of nature, and arrogantly insists that the natural world only exists to serve humanity (197). White contrasts Antiquity and Christianity in figures called *genius loci*, guardian spirits who protected different elements of nature: "Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (197). In other words, the shift from earth-bound religions to metaphysical ones drastically changed humanity's relationship with its habitat. Such ideological maneuvering seems like a feasible plan if the exploitation of the natural world with impunity is to be sanctioned.

What feminists add to this argument is their analysis of men's pursuit of the necrophilic transcendence of nature, and by proxy women who by the virtue of their biology and reproductive labor lead the kind of lives that are highly entangled in physicality and cycles of life and death. As Gimbutas argues, the shift from goddess-worshipping to male deities – which coincides with the start of oppression of nature – goes back to 4500 B.C., way before the Scientific Revolution (9). In *When God Was a Woman* (1976), in an effort to denaturalize the Judeo-Christian conceptions of the relationships between God, man, women and nature, Merlin Stone argues that, in goddess-centered cultures, the earth and women's fertility and reproductive capacity were sacred and revered. The disintegration of goddess religions and their replacement by patriarchal ones resulted in the decline of women's status and the degradation of nature through "falsely founded patriarchal images, stereotypes, customs and laws that were developed as direct reaction to Goddess worship" (xxv). In this way, people started to worship detached male sky gods to whom nature was only one of their creations, one that was put at the service of the apex of their creations – man. Specifically targeting the figure of Jesus Christ as the sky god, and Christianity as a patriarchal religion, Mary Daly maintains that the "Tree of Life has been replaced by the necrophilic symbol of a dead body hanging on dead wood. The Godfather insatiably demands more sacrifices, and the fundamental sacrifices of sadospiritual religion are female" (17–18).

Another point of interest is the instrumental value of women and nature in relation to men in Christian doctrine. In *Green Paradise Lost* (1981), Elizabeth Dodson Gray differentiates between the first and second Genesis ideologies. She argues that the pattern of the first Genesis account suggests a "hierarchical" conception in that it gives domination over all of nature to human beings (male and female) as they are created in God's image, whereas the second account is more "anthropocentric," in that "everything is created around the male, including the female [who is] created from his rib to be his helpmate." Ultimately, she concludes that "the interpretation through the ages has blended the accounts in Gen. I and Gen. 2 into a single Creation Tradition, which has been both hierarchical and anthropocentric" (4). Furthermore, women's connection with Eve's sin

renders them the ones to be blamed for the fall and the loss of the *locus amoenus*. This is a belief best articulated in the words of Tertullian, who adamantly reminds women that they all share Eve's "ignominy ... of original sin and the odium of being the cause of the fall of the human race" (117). In his address to women, he implores them to embrace the guilt and onus of being the gateway for the Devil (118).

Surfacer acknowledges that she had never really connected with the sky god of Christianity. On her journey back home, she notices the landmarks on either sides of the road: "Already it's beginning to gather landmarks, a few advertisement signs, a roadside crucifix with a wooden Christ, ribs sticking out, the alien god, mysterious to me as ever" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 9–10). She finds the picture of Jesus she is given at the church "tired-looking, surely incapable of miracles" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 52). Surfacer first shows her tendency toward an earth-bound matriarchal religion when she compares her belief in the existence of the fish, an element of nature, underwater to that of other people in the existence of God: "The dark torpedo shapes of the fish are seeing it [the worm], sniffing at it, prodding it with their noses. I believe in them the way other people believe in God: I can't see them but I know they are there" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 61). However, she feels that she needs to tap into a different source of power, far from the male-dominated realm, to be able to reach the long-forgotten deities. The maternal gift proves to be where she finds the inspiration and the strength to look beyond the confines of the male-defined religions.

Throughout the novel, Surfacer persistently searches for alternatives. It is through her mother that she ultimately finds an alternative to her father's god. After her encounter with David, she adamantly continues her search for her mother's "gift" and rejects the strict rationality of her father: "More than ever I needed to find it, the thing she had hidden; the power from my father's intercession wasn't enough to protect me, it gave only knowledge and there were more gods than his, his were the gods of the head, antlers rooted in the brain" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 154). She feels that her contempt for humanity is vindicated as they have turned their backs on the gods: "I realized it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both. They'd had their chance but they had turned against the gods, and it was time for me to choose sides" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 155). She invokes the idea of earth-bound deities, i.e. *genii loci* who reserve and protect special places for themselves in the natural world, when she is convinced that the Americans do not have permission from the guardians to catch anything in the sacred lands: The Americans "accelerated and headed off towards the cliff where the gods lived. But they wouldn't catch anything, they wouldn't be allowed" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 150). The scrapbook serves as a guide for her spiritual journey. The images are to be re-interpreted through the feminine power of the mother now awakened within of her: "They were my guides, she had saved them for me, pictographs, I had to read their new meaning with the help of the power. The gods, their likenesses: to see them in their true shape is fatal. While you are human; but after the transformation they could be reached" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 159).

Surfacer also reveals her sense of anxiety about the transcendental patriarchal religion which holds that physicality and body reside in the disadvantaged, lower half of the binary oppositions. What she finds annoying about fairy tales is the fact that in those stories nobody talks about bodily functions and needs, probably because we have come to believe that the natural necessities debase us to the status of beasts: "[T]he stories never

revealed the essential things about them, such as what they ate or whether their towers and dungeons had bathrooms, it was as though their bodies were pure air. It wasn't Peter Pan's ability to fly that made him incredible for me, it was the lack of an outhouse near his underground burrow" (Atwood, *Surfacing* 51). On the other hand, the more decidedly eco-friendly God's Gardeners have adopted a much more embracing attitude toward the body and all its functions: "Gardeners said digestion was holy and there was nothing funny or terrible about the smells and noises that were part of the end product of the nutritional process" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 63). Snowman also ponders how the body had been unjustly considered "a mere corrupt vessel or else a puppet acting out their dramas for them [the mind and the soul], or else bad company, leading the other two astray" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 85).

On a similar note, Offred has to grapple with this kind of world-negating attitude that particularly targets the bodies of women. In a world where the survival of the human race is dependent on the viable ovaries and wombs of a declining number of Handmaids, it is quite ironical to see how their fertile bodies are resented, feared, and looked down upon: "Rita scowls at me before slipping in to stand behind me [for the Ceremony]. It's my fault, this waste of her time. Not mine, but my body's, if there is a difference. Even the Commander is subject to its whims" (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 104). Offred is even forced to observe modesty in the privacy of her own room by being forced to wear a long-sleeved nightgown that would keep her from the temptation of her own flesh (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 247). Offred reveals the sadomasochistic nature of their prayers when some experience the "ecstasy of debasement" by asking God to obliterate and mortify their flesh so that they can be fulfilled. This is exactly what Aunt Lydia tries to teach them. Corporal mortification can strengthen their will and spirit: "She wanted our heads bowed just right, our toes together and pointed, our elbows at the proper angle. ... she knew too the spiritual value of bodily rigidity, of muscle strain: a little pain cleans out the mind, she'd say" (Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* 251).

6. Conclusion

Trepidation over future environmental collapse seems to be compelling enough to spark a massive call for change. For ecofeminists, the eradication of oppressive social structures is a prerequisite to such endeavor, as they detect similar underlying principles governing both such social relations and ecologically damaging human activities. If we get the rearrangement wrong, Atwood contends, "we may be looking down a dark and ever-narrowing tunnel, with human oblivion at the far end" ("Atwoodville" 28). That is probably why Atwood, in her fiction, subverts any utopian assumptions standing on the shoulders of a fatalistic, Malthusian solution. She thus holds onto the conviction that change is feasible; however, the means prove to be as salient as the ends. Furthermore, quite contrary to the postmodern disposition of hopelessness, Canavan contends, "the radical disruption of history offered by eco-apocalypse is, in fact, a dialectical reassertion of both the possibility and the *necessity* of such change" (139). The amalgamation of the sense of impending doom and the sense of impending change renders the aura of the Atwoodian fictional world concomitantly threatening and promising. Atwood is a cautious

optimist in her strident refusal to concede to a vision of a futureless, irremediable humanity that persists in its oppressive social relations and anti-ecological lifestyles. Although her sense of measured hope in the trilogy might not be as compelling as that in the “Historical Notes,” hope still lingers obstinately when the already chimerean race of Crakers begin to hybridize anew – not only biologically but also culturally – with the surviving *Homo sapiens*. What burgeons from the very depth of the darkness of Crake’s human holocaust, regardless of the derailment of its initially planned trajectory, is the hope of a second chance for humanity – a modified, hybrid and polyvocal version that is hopefully capable of creating an ecologically sane and socially just society.

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Resisting Arab American Label in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Origin*: From Descent to Consent, from Origin to Originality

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Abstract

The paper discusses Diana Abu-Jaber's understanding of ethnicity and ethnic literature as portrayed in her novel Origin. In contrast with her previous works – which revolve around Arab American characters, motifs, and themes – Origin is an Arab American novel which does not mention the word Arab. Still, the setting of the story, confined to multicultural Syracuse, offers a space for negotiating Arab American topics such as the search for one's roots and identity and the role of memory. By refraining from using the word Arab, Abu-Jaber questions the "Arab American label" tacitly ascribed to American authors of Arab origin, and she challenges the discourse of ethnicity and ethnic literatures.

Keywords: Arab American literature, Diana Abu-Jaber, Origin, ethnic writing, detective story, identity, other

Introduction

The image of American literature as "a branch of English stock" (Lauter xwii) has drastically changed during the last fifty years. The Civil Rights Movement, along with other social movements of the 1960s, began to change the understanding of the American literary canon. Writers who had previously been ignored – whether by virtue of ethnicity, race,

or gender – gradually found their way to US publishing houses, college courses, literary discussions, and, most significantly, to the awareness of the American reader. American bookstores began to put new labels on their shelves, labels denoting new categories of the American literary tradition: Native American authors, African American poetry, Jewish American letters, Chicano fiction, etc. Sometimes, a general label of US ethnic literatures would be used. This label gradually included more and more groups residing in the US multicultural literary milieu. The Arab American literary label, which this article focuses on, was among the most recent labels to appear, having attracted wider critical interest only in the last two decades. In this context, Wail S. Hassan maintains that “an entire tradition of Arab American literature” (xi) was for a long time largely ignored “in the by-then thriving fields of ethnic American, minority, and postcolonial studies” (xi).

In contrast, the beginning of the 21st century has been witnessing what Fadda-Conrey refers to as “an exciting flourishing of Arab American literature” (1). New authors from an Arab background have found their ways to publishing houses throughout the United States; university courses focusing on Arab American culture and literature have been opened; journals specializing in Arab American writing have been established¹, etc. As Al Maleh states, “[f]ollowing a half-century of dormancy², Arab American literature revived with unprecedented, breath-taking rapidity” (21). Salaita enumerates the reasons for this Arab American *entrée* to the American literary landscape: the events of 9/11, the US political agenda in the Middle East, the questions of immigration and Islam, as well as the status of and controversy over ethnic writing and the prominence of some Arab American writers and literary critics³ (*Arab American* 8–9). In other words, at the onset of the 21st century the (Arab) American reader becomes interested in Islam and Muslims (a term often wrongly ascribed to all Arabs); while the Arab American writer feels compelled to respond to the stereotypes about Arabs existing in American society – views perceiving Islam as a backward religion residing in the past; perceptions of Arab women as puppets in the hands of men; or public opinion nourished by existing mass media which portray all Arabs as terrorists longing to destroy Western civilization.

Though the interest in Arab American writing is quite recent, the roots of Arab American literature date back to the second half of the 19th century when the representatives of what later became known as the *Mahjar*⁴ movement stepped onto the formidable Ellis Island. These authors (including Gibran Khalil Gibran and Ameen Rihani) always felt more like sojourners than immigrants, constantly “commuting” between their adopted country and their Lebanese homeland. In writing, they were bilinguals whose works in English and in Arabic display two distinctive features. In Arabic, they built on European and American romanticism, bringing to Arabic literature “new ideas and new forms that Arab writers needed” (Imangulieva 21). However, in their English works, they would often resort to self-orientalizing, assuming the role of Eastern prophets on the American continent, as exemplified by Gibran’s masterpiece *The Prophet* (Hassan 2011). The age of *Mahjar* was followed by the age of autobiographies whose authors wanted to be on the American side of the hyphen – authors like George Hamid⁵ or Salom Rizk⁶ who “distanced themselves from those elements of Arab culture viewed as less readily assimilable” (Majaj). As in the case of many other ethnic groups in the United States, the Civil Rights Movement as well as The Black Power Movement of the 1960s created more fertile ground for those Arab

American authors who were less willing to assimilate than their predecessors had been.

In contrast to the representatives of the *Mahjar*, who viewed the Arab world as their true homeland and who eventually returned to the Middle East, contemporary Arab American authors are more apt to see their home in America. With the aim of challenging the discriminatory views of Arabs in America, they often resort to themes displaying peaceful features of Arab immigrants in the United States – themes related to Arab folk culture, the role of family or food. Similarly to the representatives of other US ethnic groups, Arab American authors often discuss such topics as the search for home and identity, the conflict between the personal and the collective/political, hybridity and hyphenated identity accompanied with the mixing of genres⁷ and languages. As Wail S. Hassan puts it, in Arab American writing these thematic concerns are often tackled from the perspective of Said's Orientalism and the concept of cultural translation (4). Despite the ongoing interest in Arab American authors, accompanied by the tireless publishing of their works, "there is not yet an established canon of Arab American novels" (Darraj 179). Nevertheless, most of these novels revolve around some common issues, such as the attempts to reconcile the American and the Arab side of one's identity, discrimination, American politics in the Middle East or the role of Islam. As Fadda Conrey notes, "[i]nstead of framing their work primarily in terms of its contributions to an ongoing tradition of Arabic literature, the literary output of contemporary Arab American writers needs to be read *as* American literature, with a recognition of its formative role in shaping alternative and antihegemonic types of US cultural production" (18). However, it is still read as the literature of the other, and many Arab American authors struggle with what Nouri Gana terms the "Arab American label" (29). This label is given to literary works by American writers of Arab origin even if their books do not discuss Arab American characters or themes – such as Alameddine's 2014 narrative *An Unnecessary Woman* about a Lebanese recluse spending most of her days translating books in her Beirut apartment. Diana Abu-Jaber, whose novel *Origin* is the subject of this article, has also struggled with this label throughout her literary career.

Abu-Jaber – born in 1959 in Syracuse (which is also the setting of her novel *Origin*) to a Jordanian father and an American (Irish-German) mother (Oakes 2) – is a critically acclaimed author of four novels, two food memoirs, and numerous essays and short stories. She holds a Ph.D. in Creative Writing. Her debut novel, *Arabian Jazz* (1993), is considered the first work of modern Arab American literature to achieve wide critical acclaim (Salaita, *Modern Arab* 97). Her former teachers include Joyce Carol Oates and John Gardner (Miller 5), but she regards her parents' "Arab American narrative" as the most significant influence on her literary pursuits. As she asserts in the "Foreword" to *The Language of Baklava*, "My childhood was made up of stories – the memories and recollections of my father's history and the storybook myths and legends that my mother brought me to read" (xi). In an article entitled "A Life of Stories", Abu-Jaber further contemplates her Arab-American (Father-Mother) upbringing by employing the language of fairy-tales: "I lived between America and Jordan, like the mermaid who was neither fully human nor fish—I knew myself to be a creature of the in-between" (122). The protagonists of Abu-Jaber's works are also "creatures in-between" – first or second generation immigrants from the Middle East who need to tackle the problem of the Arab American label. Even Abu-Jaber was once warned against the ethnic label by her professor, who told her: "If you publish

under Abu-Jaber, people are always going to think of you as the ethnic writer. You should absolutely change it to an American name and just go for it" (qtd. in Al Maleh 36). Abu-Jaber did not change her name; nevertheless, she managed to challenge the label that her professor had warned her against by completely ignoring it in her 2007 detective thriller *Origin*. Nevertheless, it is not just the Arab American tag that she casts doubt on in her novel; Abu-Jaber also questions the general concept of ethnicity and ethnic literature by taking a specific stance toward belonging, which for her is a matter of personal choice, the result of one's own longing to belong. Thus, the quest of her protagonist, who is looking for her roots and origins, turns out to be a failure at the end of the novel. For Abu-Jaber, blood is not thicker than water, and one's belonging is a matter of invention and cultural construction. In Werner Sollors' terms – in a descent-versus-consent conflict (*Beyond Ethnicity* 6) – Abu-Jaber's 2007 novel, despite its title, seems to be favoring the consent; it is less about origin than about originality.

Ethnicity as a Descent versus Consent Conflict

Multiple authors have pointed out the problem of defining ethnicity, considering it a concept that is difficult to define mainly because of "its interrelations with race, nation, culture, geography, by migration, immigration, discrimination, dominance and control, and by historical and cultural values of the times" (Tian 192). The *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies* defines ethnicity as "a group possessing some degree of coherence and solidarity composed of people who are, at least latently, aware of having common origins and interests" (142). While the first definition points to both biological and cultural aspects of ethnic identity, the second stresses the idea of awareness of common origins (descent) and interests. In other words, it relates to the subjective nature of ethnicity, suggesting that one's ethnic belonging is a matter of individual identification with a certain group – or, as Lauret puts it, that "ethnicity is less a matter of identity than of identification with others who are perceived to share the same plight" (3).

The crucial problem linked to the concept of ethnicity relates to the question as to which groups should be referred to as ethnic groups. The inclusive use of the word suggests an "ethnicity-for-all principle" ascribing ethnicity to dominant as well as minority groups. In this sense the US ethnic map includes Yankees, WASPs, African Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans, etc. Nevertheless, as Werner Sollors puts it, a common use of the word follows the principle of "ethnicity minus one" (*Beyond Ethnicity* 25) by excluding the dominant group from the category. In this sense, ethnicity is perceived as otherness, and in this concept the ethnic map of the United States excludes the dominant group. For this reason, instead of ethnicity Sollors prefers to rely on "the cultural construction of the codes of consent and descent" (*Beyond Ethnicity* 39). As the author stresses at a different point in his work, the former focuses on "our abilities as mature free agents and 'architects of our fates'" (6) while the latter sees us as heirs, looking at our "hereditary qualities, liabilities, and entitlements" (6). In another work, Sollors associates ethnicity with invention, equating it with "collective fictions" (*The Invention of Ethnicity* xi) which are continually created and recreated. In this sense, ethnicity is not viewed as something stable, as a final product of culture or society, but as a process which is subject to constant

change and which is subjective in its essence. This understanding goes hand in hand with the historical experience of Arab American writers from different generations (outlined in the Introduction), because their ideas of ethnic belonging differ not only between specific generations but also between individual authors.

The concept of ethnicity or an ethnic group complicates the concept of ethnic literature and ethnic authors. Since the emergence of ethnic literatures in the USA, these authors have been trying to share their experience in writing, and they have managed to give American literature a specific ethnic *timbre*. Thus their literary works have been classified as ethnic literature – a concept further complicated by other terms frequently applied in literary studies, such as minority writing or immigrant narratives. While minority refers to a number, immigration suggests movement. Židová assumes that both ethnic and immigrant writing “present characteristic features of the minor ethnic group, but immigrant literature, additionally, deals with the immigrant experiences and problems with adaptation to the new culture” (73). Immigrant narratives stress the geographical aspect; very often they revolve around the movement and translation (translation both as a physical and as a linguistic transfer) of an individual or a group to a different (geographical or cultural) setting. Minority literature focuses on the quantitative aspect, and refers to a smaller (or subordinate) group in a society in comparison with a dominant group. Thus, the term ethnic literature could be considered “superior to and more inclusive than” the other two terms (Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* 39). In other words, the concept of ethnic literature is superior to the more specific concepts of immigrant and minority literatures. While immigrant literature focuses on the immigrant experience stemming from the process of movement (the process of changing places), minority writing calls attention to the criterion of the size of a specific group.

Considering the universalist, inclusive use of the term, one may ask a question as to which literature is not ethnic. Salaita assumes that ethnic narratives include ethnic characters. The problem is that all human beings have an ethnicity; therefore, all literature has some ethnic background. As Salaita suggests, the term ethnic is mostly used to mean “the characters who are recognized to belong to an ethnic minority community, which is usually what the term [ethnic literature] connotes” (*Modern Arab* 107). Similarly, for Reilly ethnic literature is “literature like any other, except that it contains ethnic references” (2). It does not depend on the author’s race, origin or association, but is a matter of personal preference. The writer makes a choice as to whether particular ethnic references are going to be included in his or her work or to what extent they are going to be included. Ostendorf looks at the problem from the author’s perspective, and classifies ethnic references on the basis of the authorial subject that includes them in a work of literature. This approach allows him to distinguish three forms of both immigrant and ethnic literature: literary works “about immigrants and ethnics written from the point of view [...] of the dominant culture”; works “for immigrant and ethnic groups written from the point of view of the old culture” (these might be produced either in the adopted country or the country of origin); and last but not least, literary works “evolving out of the ethnic group experience in America written for the group in question and for the larger market” (583). In other words, ethnic (or immigrant) literature is not solely written by immigrants or by what we tend to refer to as minorities (the ethnicity-minus-one principle) but also by the members of

the dominant culture (the ethnicity-for-all principle). Moreover, ethnic literature includes works “from abroad” (or from the immigrants’ native country). This supports the idea of universalist writing: “If searching for it [ethnic literature] becomes difficult, try looking under the heading of ‘Universal Reading.’ It should encompass everything from John Steinbeck to Amy Tan, all of it specific to certain experiences and able to be appreciated by all readers” (Tamkin).

If we take ethnic literature as any kind of literature which can (but does not necessarily have to) be written by a minority writer but which contains ethnic references, then what label should we ascribe to a literary work which is written by an author from a minority ethnic group in the USA, a second generation immigrant, but whose work refrains from using references to a specific ethnic group? Abu-Jaber’s *Origin* seems to fall into this category. Despite its book cover with an Arab name and an English title, which might mislead the reader into believing that the book is going to tackle the life of Arab immigrants in America, the novel never mentions the word Arab. Abu-Jaber includes a wide range of characters from various ethnic backgrounds, but their descent relations are either suggested implicitly or are ignored. In the case of the novel’s protagonist, they are unknown. Nevertheless, by employing this special approach, Abu-Jaber seems to make a point about ethnicity and ethnic writing in general by challenging the reader’s views of origin, race, and belonging.

Abu-Jaber’s Origin versus Originality Dilemma

Lena Dawson, the protagonist of *Origin*, is very different from the protagonists of Abu-Jaber’s previous literary pursuits. The *Arabian Jazz* (1993) as well as *Crescent* (2003) contain Arab American characters living in the United States who struggle with the gap between American and Arab culture, which is translated to them by their family relatives or friends. In contrast, Lena Dawson, an FBI fingerprint specialist, has no idea as to where she comes from. As a child, she was taken (but not officially adopted) by an American couple, but no one ever gave her any information regarding her real parents. Blurred and confusing memories of her childhood prompt her to create a story of her origin: Lena is convinced that she survived a plane crash in the jungle; was saved and raised by apes; then discovered by people and brought to a Syracuse orphanage. This story outlives Lena’s childhood. As an adult she does not try to search for the truth; the ape tale seems to satisfy her until a series of strange crib deaths occur. Initially, they are diagnosed as unusual occurrences of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). Nevertheless, Lena gradually comes to the conclusion that in Syracuse there is a serial killer responsible for the babies’ deaths and that these deaths are somehow linked to her own life story. The search for the killer eventually turns out to be Lena’s search for her own origin.

The detectives’ investigation includes several inaccuracies and implausibilities, as Lena’s detective colleagues seem to overlook some details that an ordinary detective would look at as the first thing. For instance, Lena is the only one who manages, upon visiting the baby’s room, to discover that there is something poisonous about the crib. Soon, her suspicion is confirmed – Lena was able to identify lead and other poisonous substances in the house just by her sensory experience. In reality, the presence of lead would have been

checked as one of the first steps in an investigation of a baby's death. As Hall suggests, "the police-detective elements do not interest Abu-Jaber enough to induce her to take them seriously. What interests her is a personal detective story that we all share: the desire to understand where we come from" (Hall). In other words, *Origin* can be read as a dual-layer detective story. In the first layer, Lena is a detective searching for the identity of the killer, while in the second layer, she is a human being searching for her own identity. In contrast with her other literary works, "the search for identity [in *Origin*] is not riveted on different ethnic backgrounds but delves more deeply into questions of nature vs. nurture, and even animal vs. human" (Shalal-Esa). Moreover, the way in which Abu-Jaber tackles the question of origin and ethnicity questions the way the expressions ethnicity and ethnic literature are used. Her critique of the notion of ethnicity is demonstrated through her treatment of the characters residing in winter-beaten Syracuse as well as through the thematic concerns of the novel.

The narrative hosts a wide variety of characters whose background is suggested implicitly, between the lines. Lena's neighbor is called Mr Memdouah – an elderly fellow, a former professor of sociology – whose name suggests Arab origin. He is portrayed as a confused man who often talks to himself and whose ideas are impossible to follow. In the novel, he serves as a scapegoat, who is unjustly accused of being the killer, but Lena succeeds in proving his innocence. To compare, Margo, one of Lena's colleagues at work, has two small children, Amahl and Fareed. Throughout the novel, the reader does not learn anything about their background directly; their Arab origin is hinted at implicitly, through their names. At one point of the novel, Margo tells Lena: "I always thought you were so lucky – not knowing what you came from. Not having to deal with it. You can just walk around [...] sort of invisible" (340). Margo, in other words, assumes that being considered "other" because of one's origin is a far less favorable situation than knowing nothing about one's background.

Abu-Jaber did not include only characters with Arabic names in the story. Lena's colleague and partner Keller Duseky has a family tree stretching across several countries and cultures. His background is discussed in a conversation with Myrtle, who took care of Lena before she was sent to her foster parents:

Keller clears his throat.
She turns her head, looking at him from a bit of an angle.
"Duseky," she says slowly, testing his name.
"A Czech boy, are you?"
"My great-great-grandparents," he says, drawing himself up. "And Swiss, French, Irish. . ."
"Good, good. I'm good at nationalities." (255)

This mixed background complicates the notion of a uniform ethnic label and suggests Edward Said's idea that "[n]o one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no-more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind" (407). Similarly to all other characters in the novel, Keller is haunted by his memories and fears. His ethnic background does

not protect him from the problems that every man has to face at some point of his life (in Keller's case, it is the loss of his father and divorce).

Another character of mixed origin in the novel is Troy Hawerstraw, whose murder Lena investigates. Troy's mother has several children with different fathers. In the case of Troy, she does not even know the father's name, as he was a migrant worker who once came to her house asking for water and stayed a little longer. The man's ethnicity is hinted at implicitly: "She named him [her son] Troy, she said, because she didn't know Spanish – she didn't even know the man's name, but she wanted to name this wheat-skinned boy something exotic and that's what Troy sounded like to her" (62). The reader might infer that Troy's father was a Spanish-speaking immigrant, which is also supported by the remark pointing to his wheat skin. Towards the end of the novel, the boy is referred to as a "[p]oor creature. One of the damaged" (357). This remark is made by the murderer who kills babies whose life was not planned, and who therefore had no right to survive.

The question of ethnicity is especially complicated in the case of Lena. Not even her racial background is certain. As a child, she accidentally hears her foster mother proclaim: "...guaranteed she [Lena] was a hundred percent white. I'm not even sure..." (32). Lena is aware of her exotic appearance, of her oddity or otherness. In terms of her appearance, she is neither white nor African American; she seems to be something in-between:

My racial identity blurs at the edges: I have Caucasoid smooth wavy hair the color of black coffee. I cut it myself, between clavicle and jaw—Charlie⁸ likes it long. My skin seems too deeply pigmented to match my eye color: I look suntanned—almost amber, but sallow in elevators and lobbies. My eyes are that compromise of the indefinite—green—brown—flecked, gold-ringed. My face is long, the bones in my jaw and cheeks pronounced, my nose low and narrow, my mouth wide—the skin of my lips naturally a bitten or burn vermilion... (45)

Margo thinks that Lena is a mix "like she might have a black mommy, but she might be Puerto Rican, or maybe just a year-round suntan in Syracuse" (143). Her foster parents never disclose anything about her background and let her believe in her ape story. Lena's blurred memories of green jungle and apes convince her that the ape tale is real. When the crib deaths occur and Lena realizes that they are somehow linked to her (the killer carries an ape's tooth which is almost identical with the tooth that Lena wore when she came to her foster parents), she begins to search for her roots. At this point of the novel, the two layers of the detective story – one revolving around the investigation of the crime and the other related to Lena's "investigation" of her origins – come together. Lena realizes that without solving the former she will not be able to solve the latter.

The results of her two investigations are ambiguous. While she manages to identify the killer, she does not really identify who her true parents were. Having gone through a heap of folders containing information about orphaned or abandoned babies who were admitted to Lyons Hospital approximately at the same time as Lena, she identifies the footprints which are in fact hers: "I look for discrepancies in the ridge paths between the questioned and the known—something to indicate the prints don't match. But each comparison leads to one conclusion: it's me" (374). Her finding, however, does not reveal her origin: "2/12/70.

Newborn infant, abandoned. Bruises on arms and legs. Contusion and frostbite of extremities. Mild hypothermia. Breathing partially obstructed by debris. Estimated 8–48 hours post-partum. Infant discovered covered with trash in dumpster on 1800 block James St. Officer responded to citizens' reports of baby crying" (375).

The image of the jungle that so often chases Lena is, in fact, the image of the room in the orphanage where she stayed after being released from Lyons hospital (its walls painted with jungle trees), and the ape mother is in reality her favorite toy at the orphanage, a stuffed monkey. Thus, Lena's search for her origins leads to the assumption that she will probably never find them. Her roots stretch to a dumpster, to a heap of trash. One day, as she walks in the street where she was found as a baby, she meets a Greek immigrant who has been running a small drugstore at that place since 1949. When she questions him about a child found in the dumpster, he says:

"Some stories—sometimes—" he says carefully, "shouldn't be told."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, the world is full of stories. They're like those—oh, what are they called? He rubs his thumb and forefinger together. "The lightning bugs." He flutters his fingers in the air. "Winking and flashing—off, on." He drops his hands then and says, "Some things it's better not to look at them. Yes?" (383)

The story of Lena's origin does not reach its denouement. The reader never finds out what her ethnic background is. Abu-Jaber thus complicates the understanding of the Arab American label (or ethnic origin in general). As Salaita states, "[b]y not identifying any of her characters as Arab Abu-Jaber is making a specific political point in addition to an artistic choice. It is possible that she simply wanted to move away from being typecast as an ethnic author, but her choice not to name Arabs ultimately reinforces the importance of culture and identity in literature" (*Modern Arab* 107). Abu-Jaber might not be telling a story about some specific ethnic origin; she might not be discussing the conflict between the Arab/Chinese/Mexican etc. and American sides of the hyphen; she might not be reflecting on the problem of the divided sense of one's self; however, she is touching on the concept of identity. The problem of being labeled as one thing does not correspond with the idea of fingerprints – the area in which Lena specializes. Being labeled as something automatically classifies a person within a certain group – racial, ethnic, religious, etc. Labels, therefore, do not match fingerprints, which are always unique. At one point in the novel, Lena reflects on prints which are "completely our own, unique down to the individual features to each individual ridge. Twins have their own fingerprints. Babies are born with the prints they'll grow into" (25). Fingerprints point to the fact that every person is unique. The premise of a rigid classification to a particular group, therefore, lacks justification. The identity that Abu-Jaber describes goes to the primary and essential identity of the human being, which stands above any ethnic labels.

The resolution of the novel is accompanied by the signs of oncoming spring. Syracuse, beaten by harsh winter and snow throughout the novel, warms up, the snow melts and uncovers the earth, which for Lena represents a "sultry beauty" (384). Despite living in the

“furnished rooms” (384) of the civilized world, Lena feels that her ape mother still keeps visiting her:

Even now, though I work in an office and spend my life in furnished rooms, the ape mother still visits me. She is still my comfort. She runs her fingers through my hair, above us the circling twirl of transparent butterflies, the lazy, long-legged drift of a blue dotted wasp. Sun-yellow birds and wide-toed lizards come to converse with us. The days are filled with their sweet chattering: all day and all night are filled with their languages, reminding us of who we are and where we came from. (384)

“The sultry beauty” of the earth points to an earth-born (which is a synonym of human, mortal) understanding of identity, the identity of a human being that is like fingerprints: singular, unique, unmatched, one of a kind – an identity which eludes borders and labels. The search for this identity is always unique, as is the technique that Abu-Jaber chose to communicate her message. The genre of the detective story that can be read in two distinct layers, with a plotline revolving around the search for the origin of the killer as well as the origin of the detective, can be seen as a parallel to Werner Sollors’s idea of ethnicity, which is not “an ancient and deep-seated force surviving from the historical past but rather the modern and modernizing feature of a contrasting strategy that may be shared far beyond the boundaries within which it is claimed” (“Introduction” xiv). In other words, ethnicity should not be searched for in one’s past (origin), as it is not something stable or final. It is not a product but a process. The concept of ethnicity as a product of one’s origin is thus replaced with the concept of ethnicity as a process which is always original, never fixed or final: “It is not a thing but a process – and it requires constant detective work from readers, not a settling on a fixed encyclopedia of supposed cultural essentials” (Sollors, “Introduction” xv). Similarly, Abu-Jaber does not see ethnicity in origin and descent, but rather in original detective investigation and consent.

Conclusion: Literary Labels

The narrative about Lena Dawson might be read as an analogy of the story of an American writer who is being labeled as ethnic because of his (or her) origin. Pointing to the writer’s origin often tempts the reader not to regard the literary works of this author as original. These books are automatically categorized under the label of ethnic just because of a sense of exoticism that the name of their author connotes. Subsequently, they are read as histories or cultural documentaries, not as “his stories” (or her stories) and literary works. Abu-Jaber is not saying that we should completely do away with the notion of ethnic literature; what she suggests is that the label of an ethnic writer should be a matter of consent, not descent; that it should be the result of the author’s individual journey, creation, or artistic choice. After all, the term Arab American writer is a complicated concept. It includes Muslims (Sunnis, Shiites, etc.), Christians, Jews, atheists; reformers and conservatives; people living in an urban setting as well as those living in rural areas, etc. As Rebecca Layton points out, what these authors share is their concern to do away with stereotypes so as to be perceived as distinctive, unique literary voices: “While many of these writers integrate

elements of their cultural heritage into their works, they are often burdened with the added task of breaking free of these concerns and labels in an effort to establish their own unique authorial presence" (9).

In her other books (even the ones which were written after *Origin*)⁹ Abu-Jaber does not refrain from pointing to her Arab American hyphenated identity. The irony of *Origin* is that it does not point to a particular ethnic origin; origin in the novel is the origin of every individual, which is unique, mixed, and original; its identification requires the subtle detective work of a "fingerprint specialist" (which might still lead to a story that is like a flashing lightning bug and that should not be told). Analogically, the irony of being ascribed the label of an "ethnic writer" is that it does not point to any specific ethnic origin (as suggested by the ethnicity-for-all principle). Like more recent definitions of ethnicity which state that belonging to "an ethnic group could be at least partly voluntary by using words 'allegiance' and 'association' rather than limiting membership strictly to origins" (Martin 4), for Abu-Jaber ethnicity in writing is likewise a matter of individual choice, and it may vary not only between individual authors but also in the case of several works by the same author. In other words, a book is a word fingerprint, and its identification (or labeling) should draw on the author's consent.

Notes

¹ Some of the most influential literary journals focusing on Arab American writing include *Al Jadid: A Review and Record of Arab Culture and Arts* and *Mizna*.

² Al Maleh is referring to the period from 1924 to the beginning of the 1970s. The 1924 Johnson-Reed Quota Act limited the number of new immigrants to the USA. Arab American writing at the time was characterized by self-distancing strategies and a general tendency towards assimilation.

³ Critics like Edward Said, Steven Salaita, Wail S. Hassan, Khaled Mattawa, or Lisa Suhair Majaj.

⁴ *Mahjar* is derived from the Arabic verb *hajara* (to leave, to emigrate); *Mahjar* is often translated as emigration or exodus, but the term is generally used to denote Arab authors who began to leave Lebanon in the last decades of the 19th century.

⁵ See Hamid's *Circus* (1950).

⁶ See Rizk's *Syrian Yankee* (1943).

⁷ In their introductory chapter to *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (1999), the editors stress that in the process of preparing the first modern anthology of Arab American literature, they were encouraging cross-genre experiments as they believe that formal changes "are important signifiers of changes in both subject matter and tactics" (xiii).

⁸ Charlie is Lena's former husband, who divorced her.

⁹ As an example, we could mention her food memoirs *The Language of Baklava* (2006) or *Life without a Recipe* (2016).

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The Cheer and Charm of Earth's Past Prime: Experiencing the Natural World in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

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Abstract

The article is a re-reading of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins from the perspective of Heideggerian ecophilosophy. It presents Hopkins's dynamic concept of reality, key principles of his sacramental poetics and his concern for the gradual destruction of the environment. The Hopkinsean concept of the sacred core of reality is discussed and interpreted in the context of Heideggerian environmental criticism. The conclusion sums up the main tenets of Hopkins's vision of the natural world and attempts to show how this vision may inform our environmental awareness even in a non-religious or multi-religious age.

Keywords: Gerard Manley Hopkins, English poetry, Victorian poetry, sacramental poetics, environmental criticism, Martin Heidegger, environmental awareness

1. Introduction

The genius of Gerard Manley Hopkins's (1844-1889) poetry has traditionally been related to his use of sprung rhythm, his linguistic purism, his rediscovery of forgotten English words, his fascination with music and, last but not least, also to his sacramental poetics. Although his poetry is clearly rooted in the Catholic "worldview" apprehending things of this world as immersed in God, it also offers a remarkable vision of the natural world, celebrating its primeval freshness and boisterous vitality. This vision may acquire a new significance in an age of heated debates about environmentalism and about the role of our

organic and intuitive relationship with the natural world, marred by purely scientific or technological reasoning.

This article aims at presenting the basic tenets of Hopkins's vision of the natural world in relation to Heideggerian ecophilosophy and offers a new reading of his poetry which could form and in-form our contemporary environmental awareness even in a non-religious or multi-religious world.

2. *The world charged with God: adoring "life, not stone"*

Unlike many other religious poets, Hopkins's concept of reality is not primarily symbolic or metaphysical. In "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection", Hopkins presents a dynamic vision of the world in a state of constant change. However, this change is understood as a vital transformation, not as a moment of degeneration. Fire is thus not a means of destruction, but a process that "consumes everything, but somehow recycles and restores what is consumed" (Ellsberg 58). For Hopkins, embracing change means relating it to the Christian concept of the Resurrection. In the poem, all reality is "drowned" in "an enormous dark": however, the amorphous processes find their shape in the *forma Christi*. "Immortality" is thus not a state "beyond" death; it is the ultimate living, processual consummation, i.e. its transformation of a life "lived" unto its full potential, whereby everything is consumed and thus "given away", i.e. sacrificed:

... Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd spark
Man, how fast his firedint, | his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond. (Hopkins 56)¹

The consuming (and consummating) Heraclitean fire finds "comfort in the Resurrection", because things need to change in order to be transformed and to find their unique, final and incorruptible identity. The sheer given-ness of the "created" state of things is thus being transformed into a gift that cannot be taken back. In that sense, it becomes an "immortal diamond".

For Hopkins, this "unfathomable" gift of "life" radiates natural beauty. "Man's" destiny is to express the beauty of "Creation" and communicate the driving principle of its being while not falling into the trap of being fixed to it, i.e. possessing it. In other words, "Man"

does not “worship ‘block or barren stone’”, but “grace”, the process through which reality keeps its original “given-ness”:

To man, that needs would worship ' block or barren stone,
 Our law says: Love what are ' love's worthiest, were all known;
 World's loveliest—men's selves. Self ' flashes off frame and face.
 What do then? how meet beauty? ' Merely meet it; own,
 Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; ' then leave, let that alone.
 Yea, wish that though, wish all, ' God's better beauty, grace.
 (“To What Serves Mortal Beauty”, Hopkins 58)

In fact, the tension between the boisterous, dynamic reality of nature unstained with sin (“there lives the dearest freshness deep down things”²) and the precariousness of the human situation is very much at the core of Hopkins’s imagination. Moreover, “man’s” predicament is “his” consciousness, which makes him aware of his exceptional position in the context of all reality: he is there to articulate the inarticulate longing of the subhuman world, a longing to be consummated in the fullest sense of the word.

The major sign of this dynamic materiality of life in Hopkins’s poetry is its capacity for *in-scape*: realities are not mere “copies” or even “products” in the sense in which we tend to produce and re-produce various objects and commodities of our everyday (late capitalist) life: they are entities radiating their own “haecceitas”, i.e. their inalienable and unique “thisness”.³

Arguably, the best instance of this poetic insight can be found in his poem “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s
 Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
 Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
 Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
 Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*.

The various objects addressed in the poem are struggling to reveal *what* they are; their life is *crying* to spell out “for what (they) came.” This inner drive discloses their inner self and exposes their unique meaningfulness. Moreover, the physical reality described in the poem seems to follow a paradoxical double movement: a movement *out of itself* as an *ex-sistence*, and a movement *inside itself* as it happens in *in-scape*. Both movements, however, express a singular identity: this is how things “selve”: “myself it speaks and spells,/ Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*”.⁴ The climax of the poem thematises the mission of “speaking”: in that way, it moves back from the subhuman world – a pre-linguistic state – into the human world in which this “selving” uniqueness can be celebrated in an act of poetry.

A similar moment can be found in “To What Serves Mortal Beauty”: humans see real-

ity as a process which they are obliged to emulate: “the just man” is the one who strives to become who he/she is. The centre is the reality of the Incarnation, in which – according to the Christian doctrine – the human and the divine element (co)in-form each other, since the ultimate source of his/her “inalienable” individuality is to be found in the sacramental personhood of Christ:

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces. (Hopkins 51)

In “God’s Grandeur”, the in-scaping of reality finds its limit in the directness of the human response: the soil “charged” with “God’s grandeur” is “bare”; and “man” fails to “feel” what reality is, since the directness of the contact has been broken:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod. (Hopkins 27)

However, in the climax of the poem, Hopkins’s God guarantees the “freshness deep down things”:

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings. (Hopkins 27)

This inner energy of nature can, however, become stuck and fixed in an idolatrous, dead form of *non-being*: it can fail to show its open-ended inner truth, its *in-scape*, by *es-caping* from itself “off” the realm of “life.” This brings us to the issue of Hopkins’s sacramental language.

3. Freshness of fresh words: the sacrament of language

In her study of Hopkins’s use of language, Margaret R. Elsberg refers to two major theories of language dominating scholarly discourse in the 19th century, namely the difference between the “Cartesian” or “Benthamite” empirical idea of language “based on rationalist

epistemology, emphasizing that only clear, fixed, defined, and distinct perceptions could be true" (Elsberg 46), and the "fiduciary" concept of language,⁵ in which the audience must "trust" in the "analogical, symbolical, or metaphoric expressions" beyond the simple dictionary definition of the word (Cf. Elsberg 47). This second type was indeed associated with poetry.

Hopkins's poetry, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic belief in the transubstantiation, i.e. in the real presence of the divine, not just an analogical presence as viewed by the Reformers. His view of Creation is thus *sacramental* in putting forward a poetics in which a certain word and a particular entity are joined together. In that sense, he reiterates the criticism voiced by his teacher Walter Pater, who complained about the "aesthetic poetry" of the High Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites.⁶ Ultimately, the question at stake is the core of "reality" itself: it is either "real", i.e. "present" and tangible in the things of this world, or it is just a form of Platonic "deception" which can be overcome by various forms of aesthetic "escapes". Hopkins's concept of "in-scape" is intended to be a completely opposite movement to the symbolism of the High Victorians: it celebrates reality by unfolding this dynamic presence of the divine element, i.e. grace.

In "The Sea and the Skylark", Hopkins contrasts the purity of the two protagonists of the poem with the "shallow and frail town" near the sea. The sea and the skylark "shame" human dwellings for being unable to re-present "the cheer and charm of earth's past prime":

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench—right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none 's to spill nor spend.

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime. (Hopkins 29)

The industrial "man-made" world lacks something central, i.e. the revelation of the "original", "real presence", the sacramental in-dwelling of the divine in the universe. "The sea and the skylark embody nature's and God's moral challenge: they 'ring right out' the diminished, man-made present, 'right' now coming back adverbially to contain both 'fully' and 'correctively'. Dust and slime represent spiritual degeneration; no doubt they were also the visible by-products of the construction-work [...] Even earlier in the sonnet,

in words like ‘trench’ and ‘roar’, these human efforts at creation are subliminally present” (Rumens). This “man-made present” thus conceals the in-dwelling of the divine creative force in our lives and deprives us of the experience that all reality is sacred.

In “Binsey Poplars” the poet regrets the loss of a beautiful line of trees, and the “destructive encroachment upon nature”.⁷ The “fresh” presence of the felled poplars/aspens is contrasted with their absence. In fact, the poetic power of this poem rests in the “real presence” of the trees:

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
 Of a fresh and following folded rank
 Not spared, not one
 That dandled a sandalled
 Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew —
Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene. (Hopkins 39–40)

Indeed, the “presence” of the trees is fragile; it can easily be destroyed and thus deprive us of the “tender” in-scaping of the original, “given” reality beyond the boundaries of a fabricated universe. It is interesting how Hopkins compares the absence to the loss of sight: such a loss “unselves”, i.e. creates a dismal, empty caricature of the original “rural scene”.

The sacramental principle is of the highest importance here because of the relation between the sacramental doctrine and the validity of the poetic symbol: “A denial of the Real Presence and real sacrifice [...] is therefore a repudiation of the sanctification of natural things, therefore, too, an assault on the analogical validity of the poetic symbol” (Ross).⁸

The analogical validity of the poetic symbol in “The Sky and the Skylark” or “Binsey Poplars” is the intimate connection between the “reality” of the referent and the dynamism of meaning, seen sacramentally as the unity between the *sign* and *the reality* (*res et sacra-*

mentum, significatur et significat).⁹ In that sense, the poetic technique of Hopkins's poetry focuses on "letting reality be", on the real presence of things that are *given*, not "*made*". In this sense, language becomes the conscious inscape of reality because it lets things "dwell" in our world.

4. *What would the world be, once bereft/of all wet and wilderness?: poetry and our environmental consciousness*

The consciousness of the "presence" in Hopkins's vision of the natural world can also be understood as a consciousness of the impossibility of reducing and narrowing our conception of natural phenomena. Hopkins's experience of the sheer joy of nature with its sacred, given origin opens up a perspective in which we may rethink the role of imagination in our environmental consciousness.

Martin Heidegger's idea of "Man" as the "shepherd of Being" is in fact deeply connected to the consciousness of his being neither the master, nor the possessor of nature and the environment. "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being."¹⁰ Heidegger's concern is the gross reduction of nature as *Bestand*, a simple "standing reserve":

Assuming an anthropocentric outlook (which Heidegger labels "enframing"¹¹), the subject takes a myopic view of the environment, seeing a field in terms of soil quality, rivers as sources of hydroelectric power, and reducing forests "to the orderability of cellulose."¹²

In Heidegger's late philosophy ("*nach der Kehre*"), the central insight is the irreplaceable importance of poetry in disclosing the central mystery of existence, the "Being" (*das Sein*). Poetry is not just a language like any other, it is the "house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling."¹³ Indeed, because of this central role of poetry and imagination¹⁴ in disclosing Being, Heidegger has been a focus for environmental critics.¹⁵ Ultimately, it is not just science and its findings that informs our environmental consciousness, it is also the intuitive relationship enhanced by our experience of the poetic.

Heidegger's approach to language interestingly corresponds to Hopkins's own concept of the language of poetry as "the current language heightened"¹⁶: for Heidegger, the language disclosing the mystery of Being must be in some way distant from mere everyday language, since it must be a language focused solely on the act of speaking. In that sense, the mission of language is to speak (*die Sprache spricht*), not to represent the instrumental reason of technological society¹⁷ or the transient nature of mere chatter. Moreover, Hopkins' idea of the energy of life – to which we alluded earlier – seems to overlap with the Heideggerean concept of "unconcealment" ("Unverborgenheit") based on Heidegger's etymologizing of the Greek word *ἀλήθεια*. Things need to be open to the "clearing" ("die Lichtung des Daseins") to let meaning go through the text.

In "What Are Poets For?", Heidegger analyses the various concepts of *natura* in philosophical discourse. The crucial idea is that the recognition of "nature" (which only humans are capable of) is the recognition of the fundamental relation to the "ground of beings":

A comparison places different things in an identical setting to make the difference visible. The different things, plant and beast on the one hand and man on the other, are identical in that they come to unite within the same. This same is the relation which they have, as beings, to their ground. The ground of beings is Nature.¹⁸

Indeed, for Hopkins the ground of being is God. Nevertheless, his God is not just an ideological construct, but an ultimate mystery which needs to be *experienced* and *disclosed* in the “grandeur” of “Nature”. Hopkins’s God does not rest in a supernatural world “beyond”; He is to be unfolded here and now, in the actual, vital space for a truly human development.

Hopkins’s contrast between the intuition of the given-ness of nature and the revelatory aspect of the environment clashes with the arrogant attempts of modern civilization to encroach on this vital space. In his poem “Inversnaid”, reflecting on the waterfalls on the bank of Loch Lomond in Scotland, he meditates on the majestic beauty of the place:

THIS darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-froth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew,
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet. (Hopkins 50–51)

The waterfall is rendered in the “heightened language” of the poetry that discloses and reveals the meaning created from the sounds, rhythms and the overall vitality of the place. In fact, the “wonder” of the poem is the “speaking” transformation of the mute reality by the act of poetry itself. The “reality” is lifted up to the level of meaning (or – in the analogy with sacramental theology – the “real presence”) which – at the same time – guarantees and affirms its intrinsic value. The agitated final question “What would the world be, once bereft/Of wet and wildness” contrasts the beautiful, harmonious scene with the fragility of the environment in modern society, because it does not belong to the “world of disposable stuff”.¹⁹ The emotional appeal of literary discourse targets the fundamental relationship we build towards nature, i.e. the intuitive certainty about its irreplaceable significance for

creating a truly human form of dwelling. In that sense, imagination makes us conscious of the moral imperative to save “the weeds and the wilderness.”

Heidegger's analysis of the subjugation of the environment in a technological society also refers to the danger of the purely objectifying scientific language which sees it primarily as something to be subjugated by the powers of technology.²⁰ Such enslavement of the environment results in its failure to reveal and disclose:

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly, and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of man and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will, trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers. (Heidegger, *Poetry* 11)

Scientific language brings evidence of the reality, but does not replace the intuitive primeval relation. The Hopkinsean attitude of awe celebrating the sacred given-ness of the world of nature filled with the mystery of the divine can bring us back to the human task of being the “shepherds of Being”, being guardians to the complexities of meaning that need to be discovered, not made or fabricated. Hofstadter's commentary on Heidegger's thought aptly expresses both the thought of the great German philosopher and the central tenor of G. M. Hopkins's poetry:

So poetry – together with the language and thinking that belong to it and are identical with it as essential poetry – has for Heidegger an indispensable function for human life: it is the creative source of the humanness of the dwelling life of man. Without the poetic element in our own being, and without our poets and their great poetry, we would be brutes, or what is worse and what we are most like today: vicious automata of self-will. (Hofstadter)²¹

In that sense, poetry is a guardian of a truly human experience of the world, an experience that can never degrade into a mere “automaton”: it is aware of the fundamental uncertainty of human life which makes the idea of a technological mastery of the world completely nonsensical: “the poetic reminds us of the limits of our interpretative mastery of the world and of the essential importance of dwelling in uncertainty [...] If poetry can return us to an awed appreciation of the mystery of *phusis*, then it has place in a project whose task is the preservation of being” (Norris 124, 125). Indeed, this task knows no ideological or religious barriers.

5. Conclusion

We have discussed the main tenets of Hopkins's nature poetry: his focus on the dynamism of life as revelation of the mystery of being; his sacramental poetics viewing nature as “actually” communicating messages, i.e. not just symbolically and arbitrarily “carrying”

meaning, and finally his concern for the destruction of the environment. His nature poetry is driven by a deep intuitive identification with the dynamism of life: in this sense, the wonder of life is presented as a gift radiating both joy and awe. Hopkins delights in the spectacular variety of living forms and their unique “this-ness”, i.e. their irreplaceability by anything else. It is because of this focus that motifs of environmental destruction acquire such a special significance: this manifold, variegated beauty is a fragile phenomenon in a technological society where everything tends to become “disposable stuff” or – to use Heideggerian language – just *Bestand*, i.e. mere “standing reserve.”

Cultivating this intuitive faculty is a unique mission of poetry that in-forms our environmental consciousness. Poetic “dwelling” is thus a process of “in-scaping” into the core of reality. This transformative experience makes us even more aware of our indispensable responsibility for the unconscious, subhuman forms of life.

Notes

¹ All quotations are based on the Penguin edition of Hopkins’s poems: Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems and Prose* (London: Penguin, 1985).

² Cf. *God’s Grandeur* (Hopkins 27).

³ In this sense, Hopkins extrapolates the philosophical insight of Duns Scotus. “St. Thomas held that the form determines the species of a thing, while the matter determines its individuality within the species. For him the form determined the ‘whatness’ of a being, while the matter determined the ‘thisness’. Together they make up the individual thing. Thus the Thomistic ‘principium individuationis’ is a spatially determinant matter, ‘materia signata’. Now, as frequently interpreted (or, rather, misinterpreted), St. Thomas would seem to sacrifice individuality in favour of the specific.

Scotus, on the other hand, as Etienne Gilson points out, almost destroys the unity of the species in order to safeguard the particularity of the individual, for he places the principle of individuation within the form itself. He distinguishes two things within the form: the universal nature common to all individuals of the same species, and the ‘haecceitas’ or ‘thisness’, which he calls the ‘entitas singularis’ and which constitutes the individuality of the form.” See John Pick. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet*. 2nd Edition, reprint of the 1966 Oxford edition. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 156.

⁴ The OED records the word as a Hopkins’s own invention. For this reference I am indebted to A. Jenkins, cf. *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Sourcebook*, ed. by A. Jenkins. (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 133.

⁵ The term was coined by John Coulson in his *Newman and the Common Tradition: A Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Oxford: London 1970), 3–4.

⁶ John Hillis Miller summarizes Pater’s argument as follows: it is “a desire for escape from any actual form of life into some artificial realm of “earthly paradise.” Cf. *The Linguistic Moment* (New Jersey, Princeton, 1985), 246. The reference is also quoted by Ellsberg (53).

⁷ This definition comes from Angus Easson, cf. his *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), 96.

⁸ Malcolm M. Ross, *Poetry and Dogma: The Transformation of the Eucharistic Symbols in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1954), 56. The text is also quoted by Ellsberg, 56.

⁹ Further on sacramental theology Hans Boersma, Matthew Levering (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2015).

¹⁰ “Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden. Der Mensch ist der Hirte des Seins.” Martin Heidegger. *Brief über den “Humanismus”*, 1946. In: *Gesamtausgabe, Band 9 “Wegmarken”*, 1. Aufl. (Frankfurt am M.: Verlag Vittorio Klostermann 1976), 342; English translation quoted from Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings*. Ed. D.F. Krell, London: Routledge, 1993, 245. The text is also referred to in Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 31.

¹¹ Heidegger’s original term is *Ge-stell*.

¹² Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. (London: Routledge, 2011). 83–84.

¹³ Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell, (London: Routledge, 1993), 237. This text was translated by Frank A. Capuzzi.

¹⁴ We may also refer to his essay “On the Origin of the Work of Art” (Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks) where he famously analyses one of Van Gogh’s paintings. Cf. Martin Heidegger. *Basic Writings* (139-212), transl. by Albert Hofstadter.

¹⁵ “[...] the essential function of poetic language is that it returns our attention to nature as phusis, and counters a deadened approach to our environment.” Trevor Norris. “Heidegger, Lawrence, and Attention to Being” in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Eds. A. Goodbody and K. Rigby (University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville and London, 2011), 116.

¹⁶ I am quoting from Cary H. Plotkin’s study of Hopkins’s poetry *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of the Poetic Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1989), 86.

¹⁷ Cf. his famous lecture “Die Sprache” which he delivered in 1950 at Bühlerhöhe Castle. The text was first translated into English by Albert Hofstadter and published in 1971 as *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 185–208.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 98.

¹⁹ I borrowed this term from Greg Garrard (*Ecocriticism*, 31).

²⁰ In fact, Heidegger sees the core of the trouble already in the Platonic concept of the *eidos*: “Being is appearance in the sense of presence. It is what is present to us, what is enduring and lasting. But being is also what becomes, what comes to presence, and what ceases to be. Beings remain the same. Beings change. Beings emerge into being. Beings cease to be. Plants, human beings, animals, and the processes of nature are of the order of being that Heidegger describes as phusis. In Heidegger’s terms, being as *phusis* contains as its essential nature both coming to presence and absencing or ceasing to be.

The wrong turn that Heidegger attributes to Platonism and to the subsequent history of Western metaphysics is the misconception of what appears, what comes into presence, as the expression of an *eidos*, an independent essence common to and present in all beings that have appearance. It is therefore something that endures ideally once any given being has ceased to be. Through this misinterpretation, the singularity of beings is displaced into the mode of a derivative, secondary, and degraded appearance” (Norris 123).

²¹ Hofstadter’s preface to Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, xv.

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Book Reviews

Soňa Šnircová

Girlhood in British Coming-of-Age Novels: The Bildungsroman Heroine Revisited
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017

Though first coined in 1819 by the philologist Karl Morgenstern in his university lectures, the term *Bildungsroman* has lately been frequently used in literary criticism. The term itself refers to the literary genre that relates to the growing-up or coming-of-age of a male or female individual and describes various difficulties on the path to maturation. The classic 18th- and 19th-century examples of the *Bildungsroman* have obviously left a great impact on contemporary writers, as 20th- and 21st-century literature witnessed a proliferation of male and female coming-of-age novels. However, female *Bildung* narratives have attracted the attention of both literary scholars and the reading public because they depict current issues of female self-discovery and emancipation. For this reason, the book *Girlhood in British Coming-of-Age Novels: The Bildungsroman Heroine Revisited* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) by Soňa Šnircová represents a significant contribution to recent academic studies exploring this complex matter.

As the title of the book suggests, Šnircová's field of study relates to contemporary transformations of the classic *Bildungsroman* in British literature. The author explains that researchers' interest in British coming-of-age novels by female authors "was motivated by the need to fill in a blank page in the existent academic studies of coming-of-age narratives in English" (2). Šnircová validly notes that a great number of academic studies have lately been devoted to North American examples of the genre, whereas British examples have largely been overlooked by literary scholars.

The theoretical framework of the study is substantially based on the works of feminist critics (Abel, Hirsch, Langland 1983, Labovitz 1986) who contributed to the notion of the "female *Bildungsroman*" by introducing gender into studies of coming-of-age narratives. Though the feminist perspective on the genre which was developed in the context of second-wave feminism is adequately represented in the book, it is the postfeminist outlook that underlies the basic theoretical approach used when researching the most recent developments of the female coming-of-age novel. The book should be praised for adopting an interdisciplinary approach (literary studies of the *Bildungsroman* and its contemporary variations are combined with postfeminist cultural studies), an approach which makes it a remarkable contribution to the newly emerging academic field of girls' studies.

Surprisingly, a rather traditional close reading approach to selected novels of development is applied in the study. Although at first sight this might seem an outdated method, the individual analyses of each female protagonist purposefully reflect on the impact of the myriad new cultural impulses in post-war and post-millennial Britain. The coming-of-age novels analyzed in the book exhibit conspicuous thematic and structural similarities with the classic female versions of the genre (for instance, liberating trends in female sexuality coexist with traditional patriarchal expectations of women).

Bearing in mind the fact that feminist and postfeminist phases in the development of Western cultures have not automatically improved the situation of women in general, but rather concentrate on white middle-class women in their representations of the “New Woman” and the “can-do” girl, Šnircová intentionally focuses on various representations of the white middle-class heterosexual heroine in British novels of development in order to discover potentials that feminist and postfeminist discourses have opened up to the traditional coming-of-age heroine. Hence, the “selection of novels includes texts whose dates of publication range from 1949 to 2014, opening a possibility to study the changes of the traditional genre in three different periods of the post-war British literature: the pre-second wave feminism period, the decades dominated by feminist debates (1960s-1970s) and the postfeminist turn-of-the millennium period” (5).

The book consists of six chapters. Apart from outlining the theoretical framework of the study, the author in the first chapter also tracks the development of girl heroines in the British coming-of-age novel by emphasizing the prevalent interest in girlhood – a phenomenon recently detected by cultural scholars in numerous social and cultural discourses.

The second chapter is dedicated to a comparative analysis of two novels, Dodie Smith’s *I Capture the Castle* (1949) and Rumer Godden’s *The Greengate Summer* (1958). Although both these texts represent intersections between the classic genre of the *Bildungsroman*, children’s literature and young adult literature (a characteristic which may be rather interesting to present-day readers), Šnircová reveals that their topics basically depict a traditional perspective related to the role of romance and sexuality in the process of women’s maturation: the focus is on the presentation of the heroines’ relationships with father figures (reflecting their position in society) and the description of the female solidarity/rivalry binary.

The representations of girlhood in Angela Carter’s *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) and Jane Gardam’s *Bilgewater* (1976) are discussed in the third chapter of the study. Šnircová claims that these novels portray the same issue of the heroine’s relationship with the father figure, but also vividly present the central concerns of second wave feminism: “demand for gender equality in all spheres of life, rejection of the public/private divide along gender lines and vigorous critique of brutal and subtle forms of patriarchal dominance” (7).

Two more recent coming-of-age novels, Helen Walsh’s *Brass* (2004) and Caitlin Moran’s *How to Build a Girl* (2014), are explored in the fourth chapter as instances of literary appropriations of Girl Power media discourse. The main issue that Šnircová is interested in resolving is related to the subversive quality of these narratives: “do they undermine the ideological implications of the traditional *Bildungsroman* or can they be read as contemporary variations of the genre, reifying, in a typical postfeminist way, the gendered social roles that they apparently reject?” (62). Šnircová perceives these novels as “the conundrum of the Girl Power discourse” (60) and refers to the studies of Zaslow (2009) and Harris (2004b) to portray their ambivalent anti/pro-feminist character. The representations of what Harris (2004b) termed the “at-risk girl” and the “can-do girl” can be found in the aforementioned novels; however, Šnircová concludes that the usual class determinants of the two versions of Girl Power are potently ignored in both of them: “Walsh creates the former through her middle-class protagonist’s descent into the underworld of crime, drugs and prostitution, while Moran appears to draw on the latter through the focus on the suc-

cessful career efforts of her working-class heroine” (60).

The fifth chapter focuses on the images of “new traditionalism” and the criticism of victim feminism in Susan Fletcher’s *Eve Green* (2004) and Tiffany Murray’s *Happy Accidents* (2004). *Jane Eyre* is used as a central intertext in both novels, with the function of producing “interesting contemporary variations of the classic female *Bildungsroman*” (8). Special attention is paid in this chapter to these authors’ attempts to “move beyond the accepted feminist interpretations of the novel and offer postfeminist ‘rewritings’ of the famous narrative of female development” (8).

In the final chapter of the book, Šnircová rightly claims that cultural changes which have occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries have not substantially influenced literary representations of girlhood. The four postfeminist coming-of-age novels discussed in the book deal with identical themes to those identified by feminist critics in the currently popular chick lit genre, so the author finally alludes to the potentially reactionary character of these texts. “As a result”, Šnircová concludes, “the postfeminist coming-of-age novels do not simply try to seduce the reader with the idea of an escape into the world of heterosexual romance and safe domesticity, but also encourage her to imagine some new, utopian forms of girls’ liberation that will overcome the limitations of both the radical feminist and Girl Power versions of female emancipation” (100).

Girlhood in British Coming-of-Age Novels: The Bildungsroman Heroine Revisited is both readable and intellectually challenging. The detailed and extensive bibliography, as well as its scholarly style and content, testify to Šnircová’s immense understanding and knowledge of the subject. Although primarily intended for scholars and students in the field of literary, gender, women’s and girls’ studies, the interdisciplinary character of the book represents a valuable resource to readers interested in the intersections between post-millennial media culture and young adult literature.

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Ed. Renate Haas

Rewriting Academia: The Development of the Anglicist Women’s and Gender Studies of Continental Europe

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015

Women’s and Gender Studies have a very specific position within the context of European academia. Mostly propagated and represented by women, these fields have been steadily growing and finding their way into English Studies curricula, despite the fact that they are often looked down upon. While there are many papers discussing the “gender gap” in academia, few of them provide a solid basis for quantitative research. Moreover, the

national data that can be obtained from various studies often do not address the distribution of female professors in universities. *Rewriting Academia* provides such an overview from a national perspective, and it also traces the history and development of Women's Studies. One of its goals is to point out the discrepancies between the number of female students and junior staff and female holders of leading positions within English Studies. This subject is also very topical, as is documented in various newspaper articles researching the biases that prevent women from becoming professors (see e.g. "Why Universities Can't See Women As Leaders" (*Guardian*, Wednesday 8 March, 2017); it is argued that women usually do not progress beyond Ph.D. level, and are mainly directed towards teaching. The authors of *Rewriting Academia* ask similar questions, documenting the statistical representation of women in higher academic positions in individual European countries.

The collection is an outcome of an ambitious and unprecedented project that strives to map and interconnect European scholars sharing an interest in the field. In the introduction to the volume, entitled "Basic Concepts and Realization," Renate Haas explains that the volume has been a result of a long discussion, including the title. The resulting subtitle of the volume – "The Development of the Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies of Continental Europe" – is broad enough to include feminism and Queer Studies without sounding too revolutionary or liberal for the general public (12).

As Women's and Gender Studies have been heavily influenced by Anglophone culture, most research in the field is published in English and/or relates to English departments; that is why the book reflects the state of research and teaching in English Studies only. The book seeks to avoid the association of the field solely with social sciences, realizing the importance of literary studies for the development and awareness of these subjects.

This informative introduction is then followed by detailed national surveys from Southern Europe, namely Portugal, Spain and Italy; Western and Central Europe, featuring France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Croatia; Northern Europe, including Sweden, Finland and Lithuania; and finally, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, mapping the situation in Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Armenia. The volume thus presents national surveys that address local and regional struggles, issues and victories and places them into the broader context of the role of English departments throughout Europe, presenting both local concerns and more global perspectives.

All papers follow a similar structure where applicable, outlining the history of feminism and Gender Studies, mapping their institutionalization and main directions, and finally describing important achievements. The historical context provides a valuable background for the present-day feminist issues Europe is currently facing. As soon becomes clear, most countries struggle with a lack of women in leading positions, including women professors (and associate professors); this is true especially for the Czech Republic.

The chapter mapping the position and development of Women's and Gender Studies in the Czech Republic was written by Věra Eliášová, Simona Fojtová and Martina Horáková, who all have their background at Masaryk University in Brno. In the introduction, they point out the challenges of introducing Women's Studies in the Czech Republic, which is "not supported by any faculty lines or other forms of institutional commitment and is mostly propelled by personal initiatives" (196). While the historical overview is short and selective out of necessity, it nevertheless serves its function and highlights the essential

features and roots of Czech feminism. Interesting and insightful is also a subchapter on Medúza, Brno's Gender Studies circle. Yet the part of the chapter that should map the current state of teaching and research at Czech English departments is sadly limited. The authors chose to explore the situation at three major universities, namely Charles University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, and Palacký University in Olomouc. Yet despite its narrow focus, the overview is far from complete, especially when it comes to the English Department at Palacký University.

While the statistics concerning women in higher positions (either full professors or chairs of Women's and Gender Studies) may look bleak for the Czech Republic, it cannot, however, be said that there have been no female heads of English departments. Prof. PhDr. Jarmila Tárnířková, CSc. (appointed professor in 1997 and not mentioned in the paper), an expert in the field of syntax, pragmatics and discourse analysis, was the head of the Department of English and German Philology at Palacký University in the period 1986–1991, and served (among other positions) as an associate editor of *Linguistica Pragensia*. Doc. Mgr. Šárka Bubířková, Ph.D. runs the Department of English and American Studies at the University in Pardubice, and was named docent (associate professor) in 2014 at Palacký University. The Department of English and American Studies at the University of Ostrava is also led by a woman, Mgr. Andrea Holešová, Ph.D., and so is the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, with the head being PhDr. Katarína Němčoková, Ph.D. and the deputy head Mgr. Dagmar Masár Machová, Ph.D.

When it comes to research within the field of Gender and Women's Studies, it is mainly the Ph.D. researchers whose work should be supported or at least mentioned: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D. from the Department of English and American Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University publishes on Scottish women writers, while Mgr. Andrea Hoffmannová, Ph.D. from the English Department of the Faculty of Education at Palacký University focuses her research on women's rights and feminism.

Despite the limiting (though understandable) emphasis on three major universities, other English departments also produce significant research in the field that should be acknowledged if only for the sake of a connection on a national level, which is a partial aim of the book: Mgr. Karla Kovalová, Ph.D. from the University of Ostrava publishes in the field of Gender Studies and (black) feminism and sexual politics. Similar topics are the focus of PhDr. Veronika Portešová, Ph.D. from the Silesian University in Opava, while Mgr. Markéta Johnová, Ph.D. (from the same department as Portešová) publishes on the issue of gender on the internet. Of course, this list is far from complete.

Rewriting Academia as a whole provides insightful data and helpful information for everybody interested in the field, and it can serve as a tool connecting both academics and other groups. Moreover, the data it collected seem alarming when it comes to the number of female professors and chairs – especially in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic.

The project and the book also greatly benefitted from the involvement with the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE), which highlighted the necessity of cooperation and networking. The annual conferences and the organization website provide an indispensable platform for new projects and exchanges of experience and information. Overall, the volume provides an invaluable source of data concerning not only the state of

Gender and Women's Studies, but also of English Studies as a whole.

The volume proves that the goals of higher visibility and involvement of women in academia (setting aside other areas, as such politics) are still far from reached, and the issue is still highly relevant.

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Adam Kirsch

The Global Novel. Writing the World in the 21st Century
New York: Colombia Global Reports, 2016

Adam Kirsch, poet and literary critic, addresses the power of literature to represent the world. He argues that the global novel is the most important means that we have today of speaking for and about human nature. This is not a new notion, of course, but unlike earlier novelists, who focused on the unity of human nature, novelists today plot 'local experience against a background that is international and even cosmic' (p. 13). Because their themes are often pessimistic – they tend to focus on alienation, violence and 'reckless exploitation' (p.13) – it may appear that world literature is a prescription for disappointment and mediocrity. Kirsch questions this assumption as he examines eight popular novels produced during the twenty-first century. They are all by popular authors: Orhan Pamuk, Haruki Murakami, Roberto Bolaño, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, Mohsin Hamid, Margaret Atwood, Michel Houellebecq, and Elena Ferrante. These authors span six languages and five continents. Their narrative strategies are highly diverse. In fact, at first sight, there is very little that unites them apart from their contemporaneous nature and their status as global novels.

Kirsch addresses the unifying factors that unites the works of the above eight authors, i.e. the global dimension, and the authors' power to depict both contemporary experience and imagination. The novelists discussed in Kirsch's study are not driven primarily by the desire for commercial or critical reward. Rather, their concern is to depict individual lives as they are lived in a global world. This approach presents challenges both in terms of representation and homogenization. These challenges can, however, be turned to good effect and prove both stimulating and productive. Kirsch claims that in studying the global novel of the twenty-first century is to be hopeful for the 'capacity of fiction to reveal humanity to itself' (p. 26) – wherever you are.

The six chapters of *The Global Novel* address issues as diverse as climate change, sex trafficking, religious fundamentalism and genetic engineering. They also focus on the more traditional themes of literature, including morality, society and love. Two of the chapters, two and six, are particularly interesting as they discuss the issue of choice and the

notion of a collective conscience. Chapter two, which focuses on Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, brings out the consequences of literary, religious and political choice. It concludes that it can be necessary for an author to retreat to the margins in order to address such sensitive issues. In so doing, Kirsch concludes that the author can 'belong to no camp or party, . . . he can be the medium through which all people find expression' (p. 39).

Chapter six, which addresses Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels, highlights the unanimity of authors globally when it comes to the significance of misogyny and sexualised violence in society today. Kirsch concludes that '[t]his convergence suggests that the global novel may be, not the homogenizing and coercive force it has often been called, but the herald and agent of a dawning collective conscience. Everyone must strive to hasten its approach' (p. 103).

The Global Novel is thus not only an exploration but a challenge. 'Everyone' in the above quotation comprises not only authors but also readers, who, by buying global novels, spur on this development. The stakes are high, making the academic and journalistic discussion of world literature impassioned. Kirsch goes as far as to argue that '[s]urely world literature is a perfect demonstration of the liberal values on which all intellectuals depend for their existence – values like tolerance of difference, mutual understanding, and free exchange of ideas' (p. 13). Global literature is thus all about what it means to be a human being in a fast-changing and highly diverse world.

Kirsch's study is compact, provocative and highly eloquent. *The Global Novel* is persuasive; it encourages us to see the role of literature today in a fresh light as it brings together the works of diverse authors from different parts of the world. At the same time, it also reminds us that we are all human-beings, and we are all connected – not least through literature.

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News, Announcements



Silesian Studies in English

SILSE 2018

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Institute of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Philosophy and Science,
Silesian University in Opava announces the

5th International Conference of English and American Studies
SILESIA STUDIES IN ENGLISH – SILSE 2018

Date	6–7 September 2018
Place	Silesian University in Opava Hradecká 665/17 746 01 Opava Czech Republic
Sections	Linguistics and Methodology Literature and Cultural Studies
Presentations	The presentations will be allotted 25 minutes, including 5–10 minutes for discussion, i. e. the talk should last up to 20 minutes.
Registration deadline	31 May 2018
Conference fee	CZK 1,000
Contact person	Markéta Johnová silse@email.cz
Organising committee	Daniel Jedlička Markéta Johnová Michal Klimek
Conference website	http://silse.slu.cz

