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# **Linguistics and Translation Studies**



# **A Functional Characterology of English Transitional Pr-Verbs: Presentation or Appearance on the Scene Revisited**

Martin Adam

## **Abstract**

*In the framework of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP), aptly elaborated by Jan Firbas (summarised in Firbas 1992), the English verb tends to be the mediator (i.e. transition) between the theme and the rheme. Every sentence implements one of the dynamic semantic scales, which functionally reflect the distribution of communicative dynamism and operate irrespective of word order. In principle, Firbas distinguishes two types of dynamic semantic scales: the Presentation Scale and the Quality Scale. The present paper discusses the dynamic as well as the static semantic characteristics of the English verb operating in the transitional sphere of the clause, with special regard to its Presentation Scale occurrence. The author examines especially the Firbasian phenomenon of presentation or appearance on the scene, exemplifying this phenomenon by means of a statistical and FSP analysis of a sample corpus based on religious discourse.*

*Keywords: presentation, scale, english, verb, FSP, Firbas, transition, existence, appearance.*

## **1 The Topic of the Paper**

The theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) is an integral part of research into information processing. Following the tradition established by the late Jan Firbas, the present author's research into the area of the theory of FSP has predominantly dealt with the textual material of religious discourse. His research has focused especially on the establishment, development, and function of the dynamic semantic tracks (within the thematic and non-thematic layers) which operate on a suprasentential level within texts (see e.g. Adam, 2004, 2008 and 2009).

The present paper aims at a functional characterology of the English verb, which typically occurs within the transitional sphere of the clause. Above all, attention will be paid to

the semantic characteristics of such verbs in the sentences where the so-called Presentation Scale is implemented. The paper will discuss the Firbasian understanding of presentation or appearance on the scene in the context of primary religious discourse, making use of particular examples from the corpus.

### **The Saple Corpus**

For the purpose of the FSP analysis, several extracts from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (hereafter abbreviated *NIV*) will be used. The theory of FSP has been applied to various discourses; it is not restricted to any specific text types. Nevertheless, my research into the area of FSP principles on the textual level has predominantly dealt with the textual material of religious discourse as offered by the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Biblical texts have proved to be suitable for the purpose of FSP research, and have supplied a syntactically rich source of discourse analysis studies (most notably Firbas, 1992, 1995; Svoboda, 1983; Adam, 2004, 2009, Adam, and Chamonikolasová, 2005). Especially the later studies published by Firbas dealt with a number of Old and New Testament texts (Firbas, 1989, 1995, 1996). Besides its linguistic value, the Bible is also particularly interesting thanks to its canonical – and thus fixed – character and the variety of translations that are available.

The sample corpus (derived from the author's long-term research into the field of religious discourse) consists of the following passages from *NIV*: six chapters from the *Gospel According to St. Matthew* (sections Mt 1:18–4:25, 5:1–12, 6:9–13); three abridged chapters of the *Gospel According to St. John* (verses J 1:1–9+14, 1:19–28, 3:1–18, 4:1–42); an extract from the *Gospel According to St. Luke* (Lk 2:1–20, 10:30–34); two passages from the *Book of Acts of the Apostles* (Acts 2:1–4, 4:31–35); *Psalms* 145; and finally three short pieces from the New Testament epistles, i.e. the *Epistle to Colossians* (Col 1:15–20), the *Epistle to Philippians* (Phil 2:5–11) and the *First Epistle to Corinthians* (1Cor 15:24–28). The corpus covers all the main biblical genres: narratives, historical accounts, dialogues, poetic texts, and doctrine (for the corpus in full, see Adam, 2009).

To sum up, the analysis explores altogether 245 biblical verses containing a total of 525 distributional fields (out of which there are 326 clauses as basic distributional fields, and 199 clauses or semi-clauses as distributional subfields). This makes up a corpus of over 31,000 words.

## **2 The Fundamentals of the Theory of FSP**

Generally speaking, the theory of FSP – rooted in the functional-structural teaching of the Prague School and especially of its Brno branch – explores the information structure (theme-rheme articulation) of utterances and the relationships between the units of information in the utterance. The analytical methods of the theory are considered to be among the most prominent tools of discourse analysis and research into information processing. According to Firbas, who elaborated the theory into its fully-fledged and widely renowned form (summarised in Firbas, 1992), the sentence is a field of semantic and syntactic relations which in turn provides a distributional field of degrees of communicative dynamism (CD). Firbas defines a degree of CD as “the extent to which the element contributes towards the development of the communication” (Firbas, 1964, 270). The most prominent part of



the information is the high point of the message, i.e. the most dynamic element; other elements of the sentence are less dynamic (have a lower degree of CD). The degrees of CD are determined by the interplay of FSP factors: linear modification, context and semantic structure (Firbas, 1992, 14–6). In spoken language, the interplay of these factors is joined by intonation, i.e. the prosodic factor. It is the continuum of degrees of CD along with the interplay of the basic FSP factors that make FSP specific within the field of text linguistics.

## 2.1 The Hierarchy of Communicative Units

At the very moment of communication, the communicative value of an element may be determined only on the basis of the interplay of the FSP factors; one has to consider all the factors in action, taking into account their relative power. In English, for example, the governing factor is context, which is followed by semantics and linear modification. In accordance with the distribution of the degrees of CD, each sentence constituent corresponds to one communicative unit. Units carrying a lower degree of CD form the thematic part of the sentence, while those carrying a higher degree of CD form – together with the so-called transition – the non-thematic part of the sentence. Firbas (1992), substantially amended by Svoboda (1968 and 1981), elaborated a sophisticated set of dynamic semantic units. The interpretative arrangement of the communicative units (which does not, as a rule, coincide with the actual linear arrangement), starting from the unit carrying the lowest degree of CD, is the following:

Tab. 1

Theme		Transition		Rheme	
theme proper <b>Th</b>	diatheme <b>DTh</b>	transition proper <b>TrPr</b>	transition <b>Tr</b>	rheme <b>Rh</b>	rheme proper <b>RhPr</b>

In sentences (basic distributional fields), the **thematic** units provide a foundation for the message to be conveyed. The least dynamic thematic elements perform the function of theme proper (ThPr). The most dynamic thematic elements, on the other hand, perform the function of diatheme (DTh). The **rhematic** elements exceed the Tr- and Th-units in their degrees of CD. They include rheme proper (the most dynamic element of the whole sentence) and rheme, which comprises any elements carrying a higher degree of CD than Tr and a lower degree of CD than RhPr. Through the interplay of FSP factors, an element can become rhematic if it conveys entirely irretrievable information.

The **transitional** layer – which is the focus of the present paper – consists of the transition proper (TrPr) and the most dynamic transitional element, transition (Tr). The transitional sphere as a whole adds to the information set out by the thematic elements, and at the same time forms a transition to the rhematic section. Typically, the transitional layer is made up of the predicative verb. The transitional layer is formed by the so-called Temporal Modal Exponents (TMEs) of the verb: categorial exponents and notional components (Firbas, 1992, 70–1).

The TrPr layer is constituted by the categorial exponents (i.e. formal realisation) of the verb (tense, mood, aspect, person, number and polarity); these categorial exponents

are signaled e.g. by auxiliaries, endings or suffixes. The categorial exponents of the verbs have a threefold linking role in the sentence: firstly, they link the subject with the predicate (syntactic level); secondly, they link the Th and Rh (FSP); and thirdly, they link the content of the sentence with the extralinguistic reality.

The Tr layer, in turn, is made up of the notional component (lexical meaning) of the verb – the semantic content – or, rarely, by the nominal part of the predicate. It performs the dynamic semantic function of Quality or Presentation. Interestingly, as long as the notional component of the verb is irretrievable from the immediately relevant context, it carries a higher degree of CD than the categorial exponents do. Under favourable conditions (when there is no successful competitor in terms of CD), the notional component of the verb abandons the transitional layer to complete the message as the most dynamic element of the distributional field (Firbas, 1992).

## 2.2 The Presentation Scale

Firbas (1992) introduced the idea of the so-called dynamic semantic scales that are implemented in sentences; these scales functionally reflect the distribution of CD and operate irrespective of word order. In contrast with the static approach towards the semantic functions of sentence constituents (e.g. affected participant, agent, instrument etc.), the dynamic semantic functions may change in the course of the act of communication; the same element may thus perform different functions in different contexts and under different conditions. In principle, Firbas distinguishes two types of dynamic-semantic scales: the Presentation Scale and the Quality Scale. In the scales, each element is ascribed one of the dynamic-semantic functions (DSFs) (Firbas, 1992). The elements in both scales are arranged in accordance with a gradual rise in CD from the beginning to the end of the sentence, reflecting the interpretative arrangement.

Since this paper deals with the role of the English transitional verb operating exclusively within the framework of the Presentation Scale, only this type will be discussed in detail here. The Presentation Scale (Pr-Scale) includes three basic dynamic semantic functions. Firstly, there is a scene (Setting; Set) of the action, usually temporal and spatial items stating when and where the action takes place. Secondly, the existence or appearance on the scene is typically conveyed by a verb (Presentation of Phenomenon; Pr). Thirdly, the major, most dynamic element (Phenomenon; Ph) is ushered onto the scene. The patterns below are accompanied by illustrative examples from the corpus:

**Ph**

*An angel of the Lord*

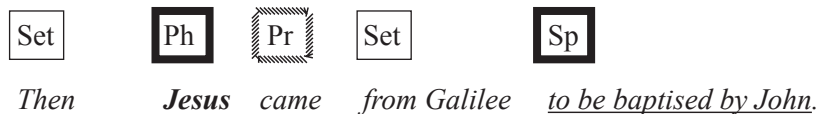
**Pr**

*appeared*

**Set**

*to Joseph / in a dream.*

Recently, a special sub-type of Pr-Scale was detected and described (see especially Adam and Chamonikolasová, 2005); it was labelled the Extended Presentation Scale. The structure of sentences implementing this type of interpretative scale actually corresponds very closely to the Presentation Scale, differing only in the presence of the Specification, which is not part of the pure Presentation Scale as defined by Firbas. In the following example, the Phenomenon Presented is in bold, and the Specification is underlined:



### 3 The English Verb and FSP

It has been largely taken for granted that – within the realm of FSP – the verb in English is usually semantically weak; it has a relatively emptied meaning, and serves as a mediator between the subject and other sentence elements. For instance Vachek claims that “in English the old Indo-European function of the verb i.e. that of denoting some action has been most perceptibly weakened” (Vachek, 1995, 23). Besides, as English is an analytical language, “the English finite verb form appears to be much less dynamic in character (...) and frequently ceases to be the unmatched instrument of predication, being often reduced to something that very closely resembles a copula” (Vachek, 1976, 342). This fact corresponds with what was described by Firbas in his writings (see e.g. Firbas, 1992, 69–71; 88–93). As he puts it, “performing the Pr, the AofQ or the Q-function, the verb tends to mediate between elements participating in the development of the communication” (Firbas, 1992, 69). Firbas also points out that the English verb can “point in two directions – in that of the Th and the Rh – and simultaneously to link the Th and the non-Th” (Firbas, 1992, 91).

In relation to this phenomenon, it will be useful to refer the reader to Firbas’ treatment of the verb within his theory of FSP. In the context of FSP, the English verb tends to be the mediator (or transition) between the theme and the rheme. Depending on the circumstances, the verb either ascribes a quality to the subject, bridging its specification, or presents something new on the scene if it expresses the existence or appearance on the scene with “explicitness or sufficient implicitness” (Firbas, 1995, 65; cf. Adam, 2009, 92–4).

### 4 FSP Analysis based on the Corpus

As has been stated above, the present analysis is focused on the English verbs that operate (i) in the sentences in which the Presentation Scale is implemented, and, at the same time, (ii) in the transitional part of the sentences only. Such verbs will be hereafter referred to as **Pr-verbs**. In other words, non-transitional verbs and those found in the Q-Scales will be excluded for the purposes of our discussion. The procedure will be as follows: firstly, a statistical analysis of the sample corpus will be presented and commented on, and secondly, I will attempt to provide a dynamic semantic characterology of the Pr-verbs found in the corpus, accompanied by illustrative examples.

#### 4.1 Statistical Analysis of the Sample Corpus

Below is a table that represents, in absolute numbers and percentages, the statistics of occurrence of sentences implementing the Pr- or Q-Scale respectively in the corpus. Drawing on what was written above about the character of the so-called Extended Presentation Scale (see section 2.2 of the present paper), I decided to include its occurrence under the

general heading of Presentation Scale. Analogously, the Quality scale also covers its subtype, labelled Combined Scale (cf. Adam and Chamonikolasová, 2005).

Tab. 2

Scale Implemented	No. of Fields	%
Pr-Scale (including Extended subtype)	64	12.19
Q-Scale (including Combined subtype)	461	87.81
Total	525	100.00

It appears that a low number of the basic distributional fields in the corpus follow the pattern of the Pr-Scale. However, it is possible to claim that the number of Pr-scale occurrences is – in comparison with other text types – still relatively high. To illustrate, in fictional narrative texts analysed in terms of FSP (works by Čapek, Leacock, and Wilde), the incidence of sentences implementing the Pr-scale is usually about 5 to 8 percent (see the results published by Řezníčková; Wachsmuthová; Tillhonová). This tendency may also be corroborated by the findings presented by Lingová, who detected an analogous occurrence of sentences implementing the Pr-scale in biblical theological texts, arriving at 7.7 percent of Pr-scale sentences. By contrast, the biblical texts in the corpus under discussion indicate 12 per cent of this subtype. However, due to space limitations, a deeper discussion of this disproportion is outside the scope of the present paper.

#### 4.2 Dynamic Semantic Characterology of the Pr-Verbs

Following the Prague tradition (see especially Mathesius; Vachek, 1995), the term *linguistic characterology* is used here to denote a holistic and functional description of linguistic phenomena. Below is a chart that offers a basic outline of the individual types of Pr-verbs detected in the corpus, classified according to their dynamic as well as static semantic character:

Tab. 3

Pr-verb category	No. of items	%	Examples detected in the corpus
verbs of going & coming	24	37.50	went out; was coming; came; followed; happened to be going; is coming; returned; will come; has come;
verbs of appearance proper	13	20.31	had appeared; came about; was created; were made; has been born; be done; appeared;
static & positional verbs	1	1.56	stands;
copular “be” + quality	10	15.63	be hallowed; blessed are;
existential “be”	12	18.75	(there) is; (there) were; (there) was; (there) were not;
miscellaneous	4	6.25	shone; attacked; took control; said;
Total	64	100.00	

The individual dynamic semantic groups of Pr-verbs found in the corpus will now be discussed in greater detail; each of the categories will be illustrated by one or two examples with reference to the corpus.

### A. Verbs of going & coming

Along with the B and E types, type A is clearly the most frequent one found in the corpus material. The Tr-verbs falling into this category are dynamic (as opposed to static), and carry the meaning of motion. Logically, they correspond with the Firbasian idea of existence on the scene, but mediate this existence from the dynamic point of view, placing emphasis on the motion process proper. For example:

*Then / Jesus / came / from Galilee / to be baptised by John.*  
(Matthew 3:13; distributional field 69)

*Large crowds from Galilee / followed / him.*  
(Matthew 4:25; distributional field 112)

The Pr-verbs identified in the corpus under examination usually denote a simple movement-type action performed by the phenomenon that is being presented on the scene of communication. The set of verbs is not extremely varied in terms of the meaning carried by the verbs; it denotes simple motions such as that of going, coming, following, or returning – which actually lack any further specification of a more subtle meaning. Kudrnáčová, for instance, in her monograph on the syntactic semantic interface of directed motion, speaks – when discussing the idea of verbs of going and coming – of “path verbs”, the semantic focus of which “lies on the directionality of motion” (Kudrnáčová, 2008, 44–45). In her opinion, and in accord with the present findings, it is the final localisation of the mover that

is semantically most prominent. Such verbs deal with translocation, rather than manner of motion; the culmination point is thus usually highlighted (cf. Kudrnáčová 2008).

In this connection, it will be interesting to recall the observations of Firbas regarding the semantic affinity of verbs operating as Presentations in Pr-scales. In his research material (based more or less on fictional texts), he identified a number of motion-specific verbs (such as *drift* or *gleam*) which, as it were, semantically support the character of their subjects (*a wave* or *spots of light* respectively). The noun *wave* along with the verb *drift* expresses, in his opinion, “the idea of motion” in *A wave of the azalea scent drifted into June’s face*. Analogously, *gleam* preceded by *spots of light* conveys the notion of illumination in *And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist* (Firbas, 1992, 60). In other words, it seems that via such semantic affinity “the verb prepares the way for the phenomenon to be presented” (Firbas, 1992, 61).

### **B. Verbs of appearance proper**

This type precisely complies with the Firbasian definition “appearance on the scene with explicitness”. One could also say that Tr-verbs in this category represent a somewhat dynamic verb type; however, these Tr-verbs are concerned more with the appearance *per se* rather than with the motion involved. If we take Tr-verbs from category A above as those based on the process of motion, here, by contrast, it is possible to speak of appearance as a non-scalar, polar phenomenon – somebody or something appears on the scene without any prior presence, i.e. from zero to full existence.

*When they had gone / an angel of the Lord / appeared / to Joseph / in a dream.*  
(Matthew 2:13; distributional field 43)

*Today / in the town of David / a Saviour / has been born / to you.*  
(Luke 2:11; distributional field 14c)

The set of Pr-verbs falling into category B is (similarly to A) relatively homogeneous in its content; most of the verbs simply carry the meaning of the appearance of the Phenomenon to be presented on the scene. Besides different forms of *appear* or *come*, we also find verbs such as *be born*, *be done*, or *occur* in the corpus.

Again, it will be beneficial to examine Kudrnáčová’s observations on the topic of the verbal appearance on the scene. Analogously to the findings discussed in the present paper, she views appearance as “a markedly contrastive concept because it presents the entity’s change of location as a sharp change of its original position” (Kudrnáčová, 2008, 47). Furthermore, she goes on to claim that “the intrinsically contrastive character of (dis)appearance is underlain by the strict bipolarity of the path, lacking a transitional phase”; cf. my claim on the change from zero to full existence above (Kudrnáčová, 2008, 47, and 2006).

### **C. Static & positional verbs**

With the exclusion of existential *there*-constructions, the corpus contains only one item in this category; it was felt that – from the functional point of view – this does not denote existence in the classical sense. Moreover, it does not follow the existential *there*-pattern

(even though, theoretically, such verbs may also occur in there-clauses). In the example below, the verb *stand* can be said to fulfil the function of an existential *there*-construction (cf. *There stands...*).

(...) *but / among you / stands / one you do not know.*  
(John 1:26; distributional field 11b)

In his monograph of 1992, Firbas gives further examples of Pr-verbs that might fall into category C, such as *have* or *hold* (Firbas, 1992, 62–63). He relates their FSP function to the idea of “production”, though he claims that they represent a group of transitive verbs of production. Drawing on Hatcher (44–5), he says that e.g. *have* “indicates the existence of a phenomenon in somebody’s possession” (Firbas, 1992, 63).

#### D. Copular “be” + quality

Syntactically speaking, the Tr-verb “be” falling into this category can be seen as a copula, because as a rule, a quality (carried by a complement) is ascribed through it to the subject. From the point of view of functional syntax, however, we must see the *be* + *quality* pattern as a representative of a transitional Tr-verb. It may be argued that such verbs might fulfil a somewhat ambiguous role – being potentially capable of perspectivising the sentence in both Pr and Q-scale directions. The examples of type D were found above all in the poetic texts of the *Lord’s Prayer* (Mt 6:9–13) and *The Beatitudes* (Mt 5:1–12).

*Our father in heaven / your name / be hallowed.*  
(Matthew 6:9; distributional field 1)

At first sight, due to potentiality, it is not quite clear whether the notion of *your name* is ushered onto the scene here for the first time, or, whether it forms the scene and is thus thematic, even though it is context-independent. Such verbs may be regarded as having a reduced or even zero notional component. Nonetheless, the interplay of all FSP factors disambiguates the interpretation of such sentences almost invariably towards the Pr-scale.

*Blessed are / the poor in spirit / for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*  
(Matthew 5:3; distributional field 5)

The whole clause is perspectived towards the subject (*the poor in spirit*), and thus the unit is rhematic, performing the dynamic-semantic function of a Phenomenon. The fact that these people (*the poor in spirit*) are *blessed* is context-independent, yet less dynamic than the Ph-element; the Phenomena entering the communication are actually introduced for the first time. The fact that these people are blessed can be viewed as something implied or even taken for granted. As a result, the verbal expression (*are blessed*) constitutes the transition only, and may be considered to be merely a verb suggesting “existence or appearance on the scene with sufficient implicitness” (Firbas, 1992, 88–9; for a thorough discussion on the topic see Adam, 2003).



### E. Existential “be”

Existential *there*-clauses represent a somewhat specific phenomenon in the area of FSP interpretation; it may be difficult to assign dynamic-semantic functions to the units. In this connection, Firbas speaks of the “permanent obviousness” of *there*-constructions in the immediately relevant context (Firbas, 1992, 24). For the writer and the reader it is obvious what this *there*-element means, and hence its notion is permanently present in the situational context. Firbas argues that this construction, “though semantically very weak, is not totally stripped of all meaning, ... and acts as an indicator of a scene expressed by a genuine adverbial of place” (Firbas, 1992, 24). That is why the existential *there* is assigned the Set-function and is entirely context-dependent. It is, furthermore, worth mentioning that the existential *there*-clauses are specific in their linear modification, i.e. their word order arrangement: unlike most sentences that implement the Pr-scale, in the existential clauses the notional subject is typically postponed towards the end of the sentence. In other words, the Phenomenon is not presented in the initial part of the sentence; on the contrary, it actually represents the culminating peak of the information structure. The English grammatical principle requiring the SVO wording is thus overridden by the linear modification FSP factor:

*In the beginning / there / was / the Word.*  
(John 1:1; distributional field 1)

*And / there / were / shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night / out in the fields.*  
(Luke 2:8; distributional field 10)

In the first sentence, the notional subject (*the Word*) is context-independent (N.B. irrespective of its position in the sentence) and conveys the information towards which the communication is perspectived. Thus it carries the highest degree of CD and performs the Ph-function. The verb *was* is then transitional and mediates between the theme and the non-theme. The rest of the sentence is thematic, forming the diatheme: *In the beginning* (for a detailed discussion of the existential *there*-clause, see also Firbas, 1992, 59, and Breivik).

### F. Miscellaneous

The last Tr-verb category covers the FSP interpretation of verbal elements such as *shone*; *attacked*; or *took control*. Occurring in the sentences implementing the Pr-scale, also these verbs should definitely express appearance or existence on the scene with “explicitness” or, at least, with “sufficient implicitness” (Firbas, 1995, 65). Obviously, the Tr-verbs have a more specific meaning than just that of existence or appearance on the scene. This uncertainty might thus open the door to potentially differing interpretations (Firbas, 1992, 108–110 and 181–6). At first sight it seems that verbs such as *shone* do not express appearance with sufficient implicitness, and so the subjects of the clauses should be assigned the B-function, not the Ph-function.



*The Holy Spirit / took control / of everyone.*  
(Acts 2:4; distributional field 7)

*(...) and / the glory of the Lord / shone / around them.*  
(Luke 2:9; distributional field 12)

At this point it should be emphasised that an entire complex (interplay) of FSP signals is needed to properly interpret the distribution of degrees of CD. In addition to the three basic FSP factors, two more (auxiliary) means of interpretation have been demonstrated (Firbas, 1995, 65; cf. Adam, 2009). The first involves comparison with other translations (e.g. in Slovak, the factor of linear modification asserts itself more powerfully than it does in English):

*... a ožiarila (Tr) / ich / Pánova sláva (Ph).*  
*[...and shone / them / the Glory of the Lord]*

The verb in the Slovak translation is definitely a Pr-verb, unequivocally perspectivising the sentence toward the subjects and ushering the phenomenon (subject) onto the scene.

Secondly, the interpretation can take account of the pressure of notional homogeneity developing in the rheme proper layer. In the examples above, the clauses are obviously perspectived towards the newly appearing participants of the communication – *the Holy Spirit* and *the glory of the Lord*. We may also speak of “the pressure potentially exerted by the tendency to induce the notional component of the verb to serve in the transitional layer” (Firbas, 1995, 65). This aspect of the FSP interpretation of the sentence is also maintained. In Firbas’ opinion, these two aspects can “tip the scales in favour of the Pr-interpretation” (Firbas, 1995, 65).

Let me conclude the discussion of possible types of Pr-verbs and their dynamic semantic characterology by emphasising that even Firbas was well aware of the fact that it is entirely impossible to enumerate a full set of verbs that may occur in the transitional sphere of Pr-scale sentences. In his summarising monograph he lists a number of Pr-verbs identified in his corpora, though (with a few exceptions) he does not comment on the set in greater detail. To present just a few, here are some of the Pr-verbs detected by Firbas in alphabetical order: *exist, be in sight, arrive, become plain, come forward, come up, crop up, come into view, emerge, evolve, develop, grow out of, happen, issue, recur, rise, spring up, show up, take place*, etc. (for further reference and a full account of the Pr-verbs given by Firbas, see Firbas, 1992, 60–64). We may readily say that all of these verbs are invariably in full concordance with what the present analysis suggests.

## 5 Conclusions

The present paper has discussed the functional characterology of so-called Pr-verbs, i.e. the verbs that operate in the transitional part of the sentences implementing the Pr-scale. The functional analysis of the Pr-verbs appearing in the corpus provides some principal data on the dynamic semantic makeup of Pr-verbs. The Pr-verbs occurring in the corpus were classified according to their dynamic semantic content and split up into six sub-categories: verbs of going & coming; verbs of appearance; static & positional verbs; copular

“be” mediating a quality; existential “be”; and a few specific Pr-verbs falling into the category of miscellaneous.

As has been mentioned several times above, Firbas characterises the Pr-verbs as those that present something new on the scene; this property is then defined as an expression of “the existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness” (Firbas, 1995, 65). Below is a table summarising the results of the functional analysis of the corpus, specifying individual groups of Pr-verbs as well as their role in expressing existence or appearance on the scene with explicitness or sufficient implicitness. The table presents the tentative data derived from the dynamic (and static) semantic analysis in the sense of the Praguian set of binary oppositions, i.e. the signs + or – (+ as presence, – as absence of the feature):

Tab. 4

Pr-verb category	Existence		Appearance	
	with explicitness	with sufficient implicitness	with explicitness	with sufficient implicitness
verbs of going & coming	–	+	–	+
verbs of appearance proper	–	+	+	–
static & positional verbs	+	–	–	+
copular “be” + quality	–	+	–	+
existential “be”	+	–	+	–
miscellaneous	–	+	–	+

The research clearly shows that all of the groups identified within the transitional Pr-verbs manifest – to different extents – at least one of the two qualities examined: existence or appearance. The varying degree of the property is partly reflected by the fact that the property in question may be actually expressed either with explicitness or different degrees of implicitness. It follows that even though the functional characterology of the Pr-verbs set has been further specified (compartmentalising the Pr-verbs into a number of sub-types), the analysis proves that all of the categories may be readily labelled as those expressing existence or appearance on the scene, either with explicitness or with “unmistakable” implicitness (cf. Firbas, 1992, 59). The Pr-verbs then, in accordance with their tendency to recede into the background, perform the presentation function, ushering the phenomenon onto the scene of the communication.

As has been noted above, the analysis deals with the author’s corpus, which is taken from religious discourse. It is possible to claim, though, that the current findings suggest that – when comparing religious and fiction discourse – there seems to be a substantial difference even in the ratio of the sentences implementing the Q- or the Pr-scales respectively. Also, the question whether the dynamic semantic characterology of the Pr-verbs is identical with other types of discourse (such as fiction narratives, non-fiction texts, etc.) is still left open for further discussion and research.

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# Analyzing e-mails from the viewpoint of FSP

Zuzana Hurtová

## Abstract

*This paper reports on a linguistic analysis of e-mail messages from the viewpoint of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP). FSP is an important factor in communication strategies. The way in which sentences are perspectived suggests the communication purpose of the writer, indicating the point of departure and the core of the message. Drawing upon the methodology of FSP theory, this paper examines specific features of personal e-mail communication. Particular attention has been devoted to those items which demonstrate similar use. The aim is to present facts that are generally applicable and utilizable in deeper and more extensive research in the future.*

*Keywords: functional sentence perspective, e-mail communication, dynamic semantic functions, ellipsis, emoticons*

## 1 Introduction

The present paper focuses on e-mail communication from the viewpoint of functional sentence perspective (FSP) and emphasizes those findings which appear to be generally valid in all of the texts analyzed. The following issues will be considered in particular: the ambiguity of distributional fields in e-mails, the use of ellipses in e-mails, specific dynamic semantic functions, and the use of emoticons with regard to the principles of FSP.

In order to provide the reader with the most fundamental and crucial facts regarding the methodology used here, it needs to be pointed out that it is the Brno concept of FSP on which the findings in this article are based. Jan Firbas, the most outstanding figure involved in shaping the Brno school's approach towards the theory of FSP, claims that during the act of communication, certain elements contribute more than others to the further development of communication (Firbas, 1992, 6–11). Every element in a sentence carries what Firbas calls “a degree of communicative dynamism” (Firbas, 1992, 7). By this notion Firbas understands “the relative extent to which a linguistic element contributes towards the further development of the communication” (Firbas, 1992, 8). According to Firbas, the relative degree of communicative dynamism (CD) of particular carriers of CD, i.e. sentence elements, is determined by the interplay of four factors of FSP. These factors are: the

linear arrangement of the sentence elements, their semantic content, the immediately relevant preceding context, and intonation (Firbas, 1992, 10–12). Obviously it is not possible to employ intonation in a written text, therefore the analysis here is based on the interplay of the three remaining factors – linearity, semantics and context.

For the purpose of the present paper I have analyzed altogether seven personal e-mails of various lengths written by five different people (native English speakers), forming a corpus of over 1,300 words. Being fully aware of the limits of any analysis based on such a quantity of text or number of individual distributional fields, it needs to be pointed out that I consider this study to be a preliminary probe into the problems discussed, and therefore a pilot project to be followed by further investigation. Hence, the present paper reports on aspects which, from the viewpoint of FSP, have been recognized as possible subjects meriting further research. In total I have analyzed 189 distributional fields, consisting of 152 basic distributional fields and 37 clauses occurring within the texts as distributional subfields. (For a detailed explanation of the structure of distributional fields see Firbas 1992, 14–19; for further studies on the issue of distributional fields of non-finite clauses and nominal phrases see Svoboda, 1968, 1987.)

## 2 The theory of FSP applied

Individual sentence elements were assigned certain relative degrees of communicative dynamism, and thus particular communicative units have been identified in accordance with the pluripartition approach to the theory of FSP (for the principles of the pluripartition approach to the theory of FSP see Firbas, 1983, for illustration see ex. 1). Example 1<sup>1</sup> also demonstrates the way in which communicative units are hierarchically structured; “there is a hierarchy of units and fields, a field may become a unit in another field” (Svoboda, 2005, 220). The communicative unit of the rheme proper is expressed by a finite clause within the complex sentence. Since the clause constitutes its own distributional (sub)field, it is further analyzed and the respective communicative units are defined.

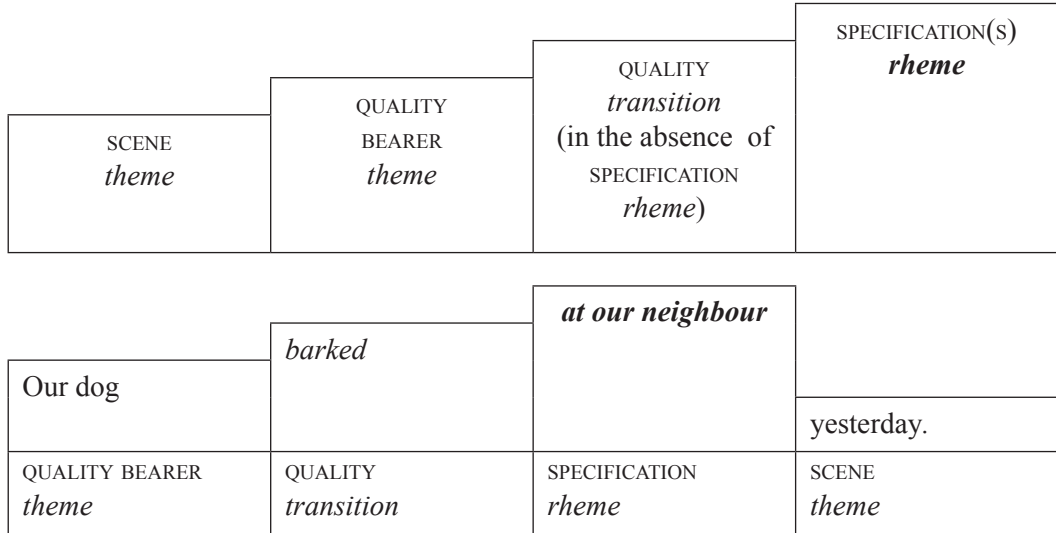
Ex. 1

		Th <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr		Rh <sub>p</sub>
I	hope	you	had	a fun Christmas and New Year.	
Th <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr			Rh <sub>p</sub>	

Furthermore, constituent dynamic semantic functions were also assigned, enabling me to examine how a particular language phenomenon contributes to the development of communication. In other words, my aim was to identify the distribution of the scales of dynamic semantic functions – the scales of Presentation and Quality (see Firbas, 1957, 1975, 1992, 66–69, 134–140).

In the case of the Quality Scale it is either the quality of the subject or its specification which is in the limelight of the communication. In his lucid diagram (see diagram 1), Svoboda (2005) explains the units of the dynamic semantic functions operating within the Quality Scale as follows:

Diagram 1



(Svoboda 2005, 222)

The following sentences from the corpus (ex. 2) represent examples of the perspectiving of the sentence elements in compliance with the principles of the Quality Scale. Individual dynamic semantic functions and communicative units are also displayed.

Ex. 2

It	was	good	to hear from you.
QB	AofQ	Q	Sp
Th <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub>	Tr	Rh <sub>p</sub>

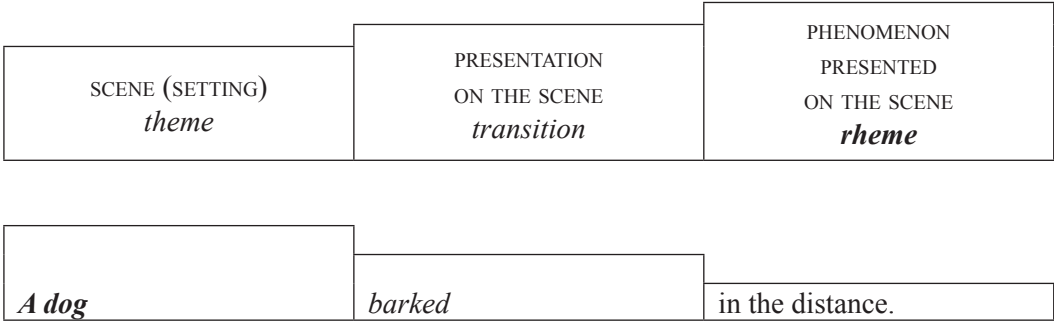
But	all that	depends on	time and money.
(Tr <sub>p</sub> )	QB	Q	Sp
	Th <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr	Rh <sub>p</sub>

We	have just got back	from Christmas in Montreal, ...
QB	Q	Sp
Th <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr	Rh <sub>p</sub>

When, on the other hand, the Presentation Scale is applied, the communication is clearly perspectived towards the subject of the sentence. Again, I make use of the lucid and systematic diagram (diagram 2) created by Svoboda (2005) to illustrate the dynamic semantic functions.

Diagram 2



(Svoboda, 2005, 222)

The sentences in example 3 demonstrate the operation of the Presentation Scale in the texts subjected to analysis.

Ex. 3

About a month ago,	a student from SLU	came to visit, ...
Scene	Ph	Pr
DTh	Rh <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr
... Chris	was over	in Czech then ...
Ph	Pr	Scene
Rh <sub>p</sub>	Tr <sub>p</sub> /Tr	DTh

It has already been proved, drawing on numerous other analyses carried out in the area of dynamic semantic scales (see Adam, Řezníčková, Hurtová), that the Presentation Scale is far less common than the Quality Scale. Therefore, it should not be considered surprising that altogether there are only five cases in which the Presentation Scale is implemented, i.e. five examples out of the total 189 distributional fields in which the communication is perspectived towards the subject of the sentence. All such instances are listed below (ex. 4), and the rheme proper is underlined. Semantic structure and the immediately relevant preceding context proved to be the dominant factors in determining the relative degree of CD and the subsequent interpretation of individual elements.

Ex. 4

About a month ago, a student from SLU came to visit, ...  
... Chris was over in Czech then ...  
Spring has already sprung here with all the spring flowers in full bloom and warm sunny days.  
Yes, autumn is well and truly here too.  
Authentic (less touristy) markets and regions of prague [sic] interest me the most .



Nevertheless, some of the sentences exemplified above do not quite follow Firbas' original model of Scene/Setting, Presentation on the scene and Phenomenon presented on the scene. A similar pattern may also be perceived when assigning the dynamic semantic functions of the Quality Scale. Instances when the interpretative arrangement of Scene/Setting, Quality Bearer, Quality, Specification and possible Further Specification is not quite observed are not rare. The following section therefore aims to acquaint the reader with such occurrences.

### 3 Ambiguity of scales of dynamic semantic functions

There are many distributional fields which, due to the nature and quality of the dynamic semantic functions of their constituents, fall somewhere between the Quality Scale and the Presentation Scale. The present section draws predominantly on the findings of Chamonikolasová and Chamonikolasová and Adam concerning the modification of the existing framework of dynamic semantic scales, and reports on the ambiguity revealed in the organization of the dynamic semantic functions within the analyzed texts.

In order to exemplify a distributional field which would demonstrate the above-mentioned ambiguity, the following sentence may be considered:

Ex. 5

Spring	has really sprung	here
Ph(QB) <sup>2</sup>	Pr	Set
	with all the spring flowers in full bloom and warm sunny days.	
		Sp

The structure resembles a standard Presentation Scale to which the dynamic semantic function of Specification (Sp) is added; therefore the term “Extended Presentation Scale” has been suggested (Chamonikolasová and Adam). In accordance with Chamonikolasová's findings, “the dominant semantic function” of *Spring* is the Phenomenon function, while the “implicit” Quality Bearer function “is based on the assumption that the Specification is a condensed form of an independent clause [...] and that the finite verb of the implied predication expressing Quality is ellipted” (64). In our case the independent clause including the finite verb form could read as follows: ... *it has arrived / sprung with all the spring flowers ...*

Similarly, the analyzed e-mails contain numerous examples of elements that appear context-independent and may be perceived as “fusions of the Ph-function and the [Q] B-function”, but where the dynamic semantic function of Quality Bearer is dominant (Chamonikolasová, 64). The structure of the following sentence (see ex. 6) is in accordance with a regular Quality Scale, where the subject's dominant function is that of Quality Bearer, but there is also an implicit Ph-function, the identification of which “is based on the assumption that the sentence [...] contains an ellipted verb of presentation” (Chamonikolasová 64). Referring to the sentence in example 6, such an ellipted verb of presentation may be the following: *There are most things which...*

Ex. 6

Most things seem to be done with less intensity over here – drinking, dancing, sex ...  
**QB (Ph)**                      Q                      Sp                      Set                      FSp

Because the structure of such a scale of dynamic semantic functions resembles that of a standard Quality Scale, no specific term for the sub-type including the implicit Ph-function has been suggested (Chamonikolasová 65). Other examples in which the Ph-function is perceptible are exemplified below (ex. 7):

Ex. 7

Sailing in Croatia seems a long time ago.  
One of our assistants is leaving earlier than expected....  
... many of your expertise lie in good pubs...

The majority of the distributional fields analyzed, where the dynamic semantic function of Quality Bearer is not held by a personal pronoun, can indeed be interpreted with respect to the sub-type of the Quality Scale implying the Ph-function. Nevertheless, it is personal pronouns (or even elliptical exponents of person) which mostly appear in the function of Quality Bearers in the texts subjected to the analysis.

#### 4 Ellipses and FSP

Situational and structural ellipsis is quite a common phenomenon which frequently appears within the communicative units of theme and transition proper. Such a large number of elliptical forms can be explained by the very nature of the analyzed e-mails. The writer and the addressee are more or less close friends, so the style is rather informal, and the situational and experiential contexts also play an important role. Proper names very often appear in the texts, especially the names of people used without any preceding context. From the viewpoint of communicative units, these elements were interpreted as Diathemes (the most dynamic among the thematic units), based purely on the situational and presumably experiential context.

It is mostly due to our compliance with the principle of economy of speech that situational and structural ellipses are quite frequent in informally written e-mails. The fact that the writers tend to use more straightforward language, writing briefly and to the point, means that from the viewpoint of FSP, certain distributional fields can be considered partly defective. This assumption draws on the implicit nature of the communicative unit of transition proper. Svoboda explains the role and distribution of the communicative units as follows: “At the level of the clause the communicative units mostly coincide with the syntactic units (subject, object, adverbial, complement (no matter whether expressed by one morpheme or the whole subordinate clause)) except for the predicative verb which splits into two communicative units: one is expressed by the notional content of the finite verb and the other by its temporal and modal exponent(s)” (1981, 4). The communicative unit which is expressed by temporal and modal exponents is called the transition proper.

Not only does it “represent a dividing line between units with lower degree of CD (thematic units) and the units with the same or higher degree of CD (non-thematic units)” (Svoboda, 1981, 4), but it is also necessary for the existence or creation of a distributional field as such.

Among the following examples (see ex. 8), items in bold represent instances of distributional fields in which the communicative unit of transition proper is implicit; only the rheme proper is present. These cases are far from isolated. For the sake of clarity, the implicit items are underlined. However, observing the principles of verbatim recoverability, it is possible only to deduce or infer such items.

Ex. 8

But I am working hard at my job and generally enjoy it. **Lots of discipline.** – I enjoy / There is ...

**Big hug from me**, I bet you need one. – Accept / Take ...

I’ve heard from various sources about the general decline of [...] since I’ve left (**strange coincidence?**). – Isn’t it ...

So, what was the exam you sat? **One for your PhD?** – Was it ...

## 5 Dynamic semantic functions in closer observation

There is another quite distinct feature which can also be attributed to the informal, though highly informative, style of writing. There is a large number of distributional fields in which the dynamic semantic functions of Specification and even Further Specification are expressed by a finite clause, which then consequently forms another distributional field of its own (see Svoboda, 2005). Altogether there are 37 distributional fields which are formed in such a way (see ex. 9).

Ex. 9

... but I think **I’ll be ok – hopefully!**

Was it the guy **you were going to marry?**

Now I can understand **what you meant** **when you said things** **have been a bit ‘gloomy’!**

Certain dynamic semantic functions are only optional, and are not necessarily present in every distributional field; this particularly concerns Further Specification. In the analyzed e-mails, however, the frequency of occurrence of Further Specifications is rather high in comparison with fictional texts. This phenomenon can be ascribed to the typically succinct, yet information-packed character of personal e-mails. From the viewpoint of FSP, this property of personal e-mails may therefore be demonstrated by the number of dynamic semantic functions assigned.

## 6 Emoticons and FSP

Finally, I would like to briefly touch upon the use of emoticons – a typical feature of informally written personal e-mails. The English words ‘emotion’ and ‘icon’ have been blended

to create the term ‘emoticon’, which can be defined as a graphic expression representing a face characterizing the writer’s mood, or his facial expression generally. The use of emoticons can be considered highly subjective. One of the authors whose two e-mails have been analyzed uses three emoticons in one e-mail, while no such symbol is employed in the other e-mail – yet the addressee remains the same. Thus, there are rather personal, momentary and internal motives for the use of emoticons, i.e. the current situation of the writer at the moment of communication, the content of e-mails, the subject matter discussed, etc.

In the analyzed corpus, emoticons are sometimes accompanied by exclamation marks and/or question marks, typically used to co-signal the broad modality. In other words, in the basic distributional field of a sentence, punctuation marks represent a co-signal of the sentence’s modal categorization and thus a part of the transition proper (Svoboda, 2002). These punctuation marks, however, are not always used to signal interrogative or imperative sentences, and this is when emoticons are added (see ex. 10). In such contexts, the aim of punctuation marks is to emphasize the narrow modality of the sentence which is suggested by emoticons. Emoticons provide the reader with a more detailed expression of the writer’s mood, evaluate the given situation, or suggest the way in which the sentence should be perceived and the notional content of the verb (and other elements) should be interpreted. However, emoticons are not always accompanied by punctuation marks; the analyzed e-mails also offer examples where emoticons appear on their own, maintaining the same function with the same impact on the reader (see ex. 11). I have therefore reached the conclusion that their relative degree of CD is generally related to the transition proper, i.e. high enough to signal the modal categorization of a sentence. Emoticons have therefore been classified accordingly, as transition proper.

Ex. 10

Are you happy and smiling as much as possible (who is it that says that?! 😊)

Ex. 11

Still, it’s one of my favourite times of year 😊

Well if i [sic] stick to the plan :s i should be in Prague from the 4<sup>th</sup>, for three nights.

↓  
I don’t know whether...

## 7 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I must acknowledge that the number of e-mails subjected to analysis is not sufficient to claim general validity for all the findings proposed in this paper. I personally consider this brief study a starting point for more complex and comprehensive research to be carried out in the future. However, this pilot study has proved that – from the viewpoint of FSP – there are certain communication strategy-related features common to all of the e-mails analyzed. These include, for example, the use of an informal and highly informative style of writing, supported and further emphasized by the modified interpretation of scales of dynamic semantic functions; seemingly defective distributional fields due to

elliptical transition proper; and the number of dynamic semantic functions assigned especially within the rhematic layer. E-mail messages, on the other hand, vary in form, length, purpose and also the motivation of the author. The entire analysis is therefore strongly influenced by the content and context of the communication.

### List of Abbreviations

AofQ	=	Ascription of quality
Ex.	=	Example
FSP	=	Functional Sentence Perspective
FSp	=	Further Specification
Ph	=	Phenomenon presented on the scene
Pr	=	Presentation on the scene
Q	=	Quality
QB	=	Quality Bearer
Rhp	=	Rheme proper
Sp	=	Specification
Thp	=	Theme proper
Tr	=	Transition
Trp	=	Transition proper

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Examples 1–11 comprise sentences from the corpus of analyzed e-mails.

<sup>2</sup> I have adopted Chamonikolasová's (2005) way of denoting combined dynamic semantic functions, thus "the non-dominant (i.e. implicit) functions of the subject are printed in italics" (p. 64).

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# Questioning and Responding Practices in Medical Interviews Revisited (Part II: Patients)

Miroslav Černý

## Abstract

*The paper offers selected results from a long-term project inquiring into the field of medical interviewing. The main goal of the project is to identify communicative strategies of doctors and patients that are capable of conveying empathy and trust. Via an interdisciplinary analysis based on data excerpted from the most recent edition of the British National Corpus, the author attempts to bring quantitative and qualitative evidence that doctor–patient interaction has undergone significant modifications, resulting in a social redefinition of the asymmetrical roles of the main protagonists. The presented text focuses particularly on the communicative strategies of patients, drawing attention to their questioning and responding practices.*

*Key words: Medical interviewing, questioning and responding practices, patients, interdisciplinary research, British National Corpus.*

## 1 Introduction

The present paper is a sequel to the first part of a two-part study focusing on questioning and responding practices employed in medical interviews (see Černý, 2010). Unlike the first part, discussing the communicative strategies of doctors, this subsequent part deals with the communicative strategies of patients. The paper follows the same intentions as its first part: it hopes to bring some evidence that would either support or challenge the commonly quoted opinion (Furst; Humphreys) that recent social changes have altered the traditional asymmetry of the doctor–patient relationship in favour of the patient, and that this shift is reflected in the way in which the main protagonists use eliciting techniques.

In order to understand some of the ideas and findings presented by the author, it is inevitable that the first part of the study should be read beforehand. It includes important introductory notes on the methodological approach and the language material used for the purposes of the analysis. It also presents essential definitions and illuminates terminology of relevance to the study. Moreover, it comprises tables, charts, and appendices which

offer quantitative and qualitative data related to doctors as well as to patients. The first part of the study was published in the previous issue of *Ostrava Journal of English Philology* (vol. 2, no. 1), so the reader need not undergo a time-consuming search for the relevant information.

On the other hand, it is not enough to read only the first part, because the main results of the study are discussed, and conclusions are drawn, only at the end of the second part – i.e. in the present paper.

## 2 Questioning practices of patients

As I have already indicated in the first part of this study, the distributional analysis found that patients are quite active initiators of a variety of question types. The following charts (Figure 1 & 2) show that the largest proportion of questions posed by patients is targeted towards information (53%), much less towards confirmation (18%), and even less towards clarification (11%), agreement (10%) and repetition (6%). The lowest percentage relates to commitment (2%). Furthermore, most questions are employed during the treatment section (52%), then during the information-gathering phase (30%), and the lowest percentage relates to questions occurring during the phase of diagnosis (18%).

Figure 1: Relative distribution of patients' questions with respect to their classification

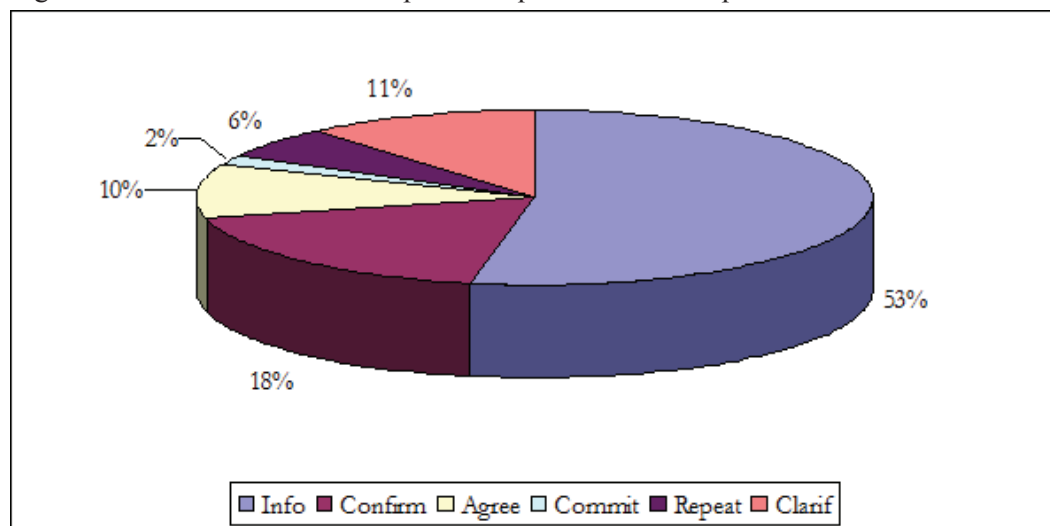
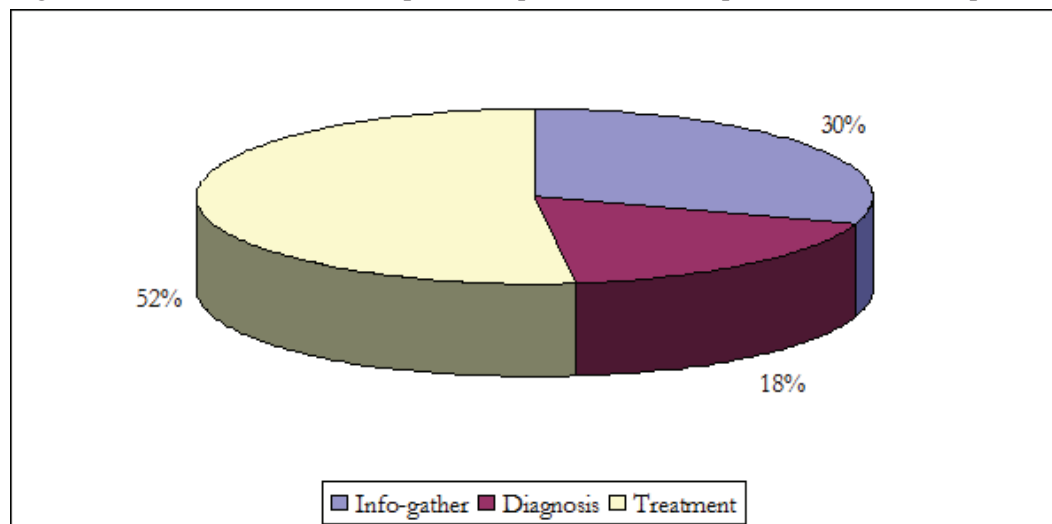




Figure 2: Relative distribution of patients' questions with respect to the interview phases



Interestingly, the ratio of patient-initiated questions representing **asymmetrical-symmetrical relations** (see Urbanová, 2003, 45) is approximately the same (70% : 30%) as the ratio calculated for doctor-initiated questions (74% : 26%). The order of the relative distribution of questions posed by patients also more or less corresponds to the relative distribution of questions posed by doctors. The only difference can be seen in the number of elicitations targeted towards commitment. While patients initiate only 2% of instances from this category (the last place in the distributional order of patient questions), with doctors it is 6% (fourth place out of six). The explanation for this can be traced to the dissimilarity of roles performed by the doctor and the patient in the interview. Naturally, whereas the doctor seeks confirmation that his client will undertake the necessary steps regarding the advised treatment, it would be considered rather impolite if the patient imposed any commitment upon the doctor. The few exceptions can be probably explained by the personal characteristics of the particular patient.

A more significant discrepancy between the questioning strategies of doctors and patients can be found in the distribution of questions with respect to interview phases. Unlike doctors, who are more active 'investigators' during the first part of the consultation (i.e. during the information-gathering phase), patients make their questioning contributions towards **the end of the consultation** (i.e. during the diagnosis and treatment). This fact is in harmony with the functions of the individual dialogue sections – i.e. the examination of the patient via doctor-initiated questions at the beginning of the interview, and the explanation of the problem and detailing of the treatment by answering patient-initiated questions towards the end of the interview (Examples 1, 2).

- (1) D: *So, it's very important we get you seen next week, even if you feel a lot better.  
[Er note, chest X-ray*  
P: ***Do you want me to make an appointment] next week, while I'm  
here?***  
D: *blood yes I you'll have to see one of either Doctor or Doctor I'm afraid but er if  
I, if I write everything down they'll know exactly where we are and what's going  
on.*

(BNC/GYC/144–146)

- (2) P: *See. **So what, what would you recommend that?***  
D: *We ba Johnson's Baby Shampoo.*  
P: *Aha.*  
D: *End of story.*  
P: ***That's it?***  
D: *That's for the whole lot.*  
P: ***For that does the, the business?***  
D: *The lot, yeah.*

(BNC/G43/53–60)

Compared to the previous research into patient-initiated questions, my investigation found both similarities and differences. As has been illustrated above, this study has confirmed that patient-initiated questions occur towards the end of the consultation (cf. Byrne and Long). By contrast, my research findings challenge the opinion that patients do not pose **questions about diagnosis** (cf. Boreham and Gibson). In the dialogue fragment that follows (Example 3), the patient is informed about her diagnosis – hiatus hernia.<sup>1</sup> Unexpectedly (?), she proceeds with a question regarding the diagnosis and its treatment, and the doctor willingly describes what it involves to treat such a medical problem.

- (3) D: *That's right. And you have acid coming up the gullet,*  
P: *Yeah.*  
D: *it can irritate the airway too and you can cough because of **hiatus hernias**.*  
P: *(unclear)*  
D: *No the [important*  
P: *There's no] [way I can, I don't (unclear)*  
D: *Yeah.]*  
P: *hiatus hernias. **Don't***  
D: *Er*  
P: ***[they ever go?***  
D: *Well]*  
P: ***Themselves or anything?***  
D: *They don't go by themselves, the problems they cause can go, but that's a bit  
different. What we need to do to start off with is to look at your chest in greater  
detail, get a chest X-ray. If that's clear we then need to go back and attack the  
hiatus hernia with more erm, but we'd better get your chest sorted out first.*

(BNC/GY6/33–45)

Another noteworthy discrepancy between past findings and the findings of the present study arises from Shuy's assertion that requests by patients for clarification "actually yield diagnostic labelling rather than understanding" (197). The following illustration (Example 4), excerpted from the material I have been working with, in fact suggests the opposite. In this interview, the patient's medical problem involves nervous panic attacks and an upset stomach. The interview excerpt is opened by the patient with a series of anxious questions (*will I be alright?; will this go away?*). After the doctor's reassurance that everything will be fine, the patient poses a question which is related to the diagnosis and touches one aspect of the treatment process (*is dietotectalitis attached to diet?*). The doctor patiently – and with the assistance of the patient – **clarifies** the required information to such an extent that it leaves the patient satisfied.

- (4) P: ***Doctor, will I be alright? I I mean am I?***  
D: *Oh you'll be alright.*  
P: ***Will this go away Doctor?***  
D: *Yes. Yes. But you take you Stelazine that's the that's the secret. Use your [Stelazine]*  
P: *(unclear)] Last weeken is, is dietotectalitis attached to diet?*  
D: *(unclear)*  
P: *Cos really I, [I was awfully*  
D: *(unclear)]*  
P: *ill with it last night (unclear).*  
D: *They don't they don't really know.*  
P: *They don't know.*  
D: *Some people find that if they take [tomatoes*  
P: *Chocolates. Chocolate.]*  
D: *some (unclear). Could be anything. Chocolate.*  
P: *Sweets.*  
D: *Red wine.*  
P: *Well wine [and I*  
D: *Er]*  
P: *are not*  
D: *Eggs. Cheese. I've known people who have been upset by, you know,*  
P: *Yeah [(unclear).*  
D: *all all of those.]*  
P: ***And does this thing go away or does it stay for?***  
D: *Ah, it comes and goes. Thousands of (unclear)*  
P: *Last week I was quite ill, I [(unclear) people*  
D: *Er everyone gets some spells.] Yes.*  
P: *people.*  
D: *Everyone gets spells when they have cramps and [upset*  
P: *It was just]*  
D: *stomachs and*  
P: *Oh, I'm going to go off my head.*  
D: *No. No. That's not the dietotectalitis*  
P: *Ah*  
D: *That's not the dietotectalitis*  
P: *(unclear) nervousness on the bowels.*

- D: *No, it's the nervousness causing the trouble with the bowels.*  
 P: *[Ah, (unclear)]*  
 D: *Oh, the other, all that's up here.] And goes down the way.*  
*We'll need to get a transplant in here.*  
 P: *Yeah. (ha-ha)*

(BNC/H4W/94–132)

### 3 Responding strategies of patients

To discern patients' share in the successful creation of an atmosphere of trust in the consulting room, we should in my opinion take into consideration the way in which patients **respond** to their doctors (rather than the way they ask questions). In this respect, there seem to be two relevant discourse strategies. First, the doctor can trust his patient if he knows that his talk is being **monitored** by her. Second, he can trust the patient if he learns that the patient **complies** with his suggestions and advice. Both strategies are logically interrelated; the first creates a precondition for the second. Without careful monitoring of the doctor's words, it is not very likely that the patient will follow the suggested treatment. Of course, the monitoring in itself does not secure any compliance on the part of the patient. Still, this type of 'mutual negotiation', referred to by Bissel et al. as **concordance**, gives hope that the doctor's treatment recommendations will be remembered and later realized by the patient.

The first discourse strategy is dependent on the number of backchannel signals initiated by the patient (Example 5). These **vocal indications** (e.g. *yeah, hmm, oh, uh*) inform the doctor that the patient is paying attention to what is being talked about, and thus she is very likely to understand the message.

- (5) P: *I've] always suffered with my sinuses.*  
 D: *there's the drainage tube that [goes from*  
 P: *Yeah.]*  
 D: *this corner of the eye, [to*  
 P: *Yeah.]*  
 D: *the top of the nose. [Which is*  
 P: *Mm.]*  
 D: *why, when you cry, your nose runs. [Okay, and*  
 P: *Mm. Mm.]*  
 D: *if that is a little, that keeps blocking,*  
 P: *Mm.*  
 D: *when you blow your nose it will tend, [it can go the*  
 P: *Mm.]*  
 D: *other way as well.*  
 P: *Yeah.*

(BNC/GYH/32–46)

The second strategy, labelled by Cordella the **complier** and classified by her as one of the four aspects of the **voice of competence**, can be recognized only in the follow-up visit

(Example 6). Here, the patient's compliance-competence is expressed and confirmed via relevant and trustworthy answers. Importantly, patient competence can "enhance doctor-patient communication and contribute to more successful outcome. Competent patients not only show alignment to the medical institution and its principles of care, but establish a platform for further education to be developed in the discourse" (Cordella 159).

- (6) D: *Let's have a look. This is the Noraday yeah.*  
P: **Noraday yeah.**  
D: *Everything okay on that?*  
P: **Yeah, fine yeah.**  
D: *Periods behaving?*  
P: **Erm sometimes I have a good period, [like**  
D: *Yeah.]*  
P: **I used to on [er**  
D: *Yeah.]*  
P: **other pill.**  
D: *(unclear) yeah that's right.*  
P: **But sometimes I don't have [one**  
D: *Yeah.]*  
P: **day.**  
D: *Yeah, a bit erratic?*  
P: **Er yeah. [But**  
D: *Right, okay.]*  
P: **no problem at all.**  
D: *Yes, that can happen on Noraday. Waterworks? Bowels? Breasts?*  
P: **Yeah fine.**  
D: *All behaving?*  
P: **Yes.**  
D: *Right, now what we need to do today is to get your blood pressure checked.*

(BNC/G5M/2-24)

#### 4 Concluding remarks and discussion

In brief summary, my investigation into the questioning and responding practices of doctors and patients has proved the following. Asking questions and providing answers plays a significant role in the process of the medical consultation. As the results of the quantitative analysis show, there still is an unequal distribution of questions between the dialogue participants, with the greater amount of elicitations initiated on the part of the doctor. This attribute of the asymmetrical character of doctor-patient communication is further reflected in the ways in which the interlocutors employ questions with regard to particular dialogue sections. Whereas doctors ask preferentially at the beginning of the interview, patients pose questions towards its end. In addition, with respect to the functional character of questions employed, the data demonstrates that both the doctor and the patient hold a strong preference for questions representing asymmetric relations between the participants.

On the other hand, still taking into consideration the statistical perspective of the analysis, it can be said that the disparity in the number of questions posed by doctors and

patients in the medical interview is not as great as it used to be in previous decades. It is also interesting that patients employ exactly the same question types (actually all the question types) as doctors do, and that the distributional order of the patient-initiated categories of questions corresponds more or less to the distributional order of the doctor-initiated categories of questions. Another important change compared to what was claimed before is that doctors are willing to ask open-ended questions, enabling patients to recount what they themselves consider to be important. Finally, the material under scrutiny illustrates that doctors do indeed answer patient-initiated questions. If an answer is not given, it is due to specific circumstances, for example due to a phone call. All this suggests that the conventional (i.e. asymmetric) style of doctor–patient interaction has experienced a profound shift towards patient-centredness.

The qualitative analysis, aimed at revealing strategies capable of conveying empathy and trust in the medical consultation, yielded even more subtle findings concerning the symmetry-centred and patient-centred orientation of the doctor–patient relationship. It appears that doctors are starting to follow the so-called mutuality model, and tend to establish an atmosphere which enhances patients' perception that their contributions are given attention and valued. Furthermore, doctors employ questioning strategies that refer to the fellow human voice, and develop an empathic relationship with the patient. Interestingly, doctors also involve their patients in the decision-making process, strengthening the empathic relationship by initiating questions that incorporate patients' ideas and words. They also facilitate the narration of patients' stories by frequent utilization of backchannel signals.

Also in the verbal behaviour of patients, especially in the ways in which they respond to doctors' contributions, we can recognize discourse strategies that can be assessed as trust-building. Two such strategies have been presented as essential. The first can be characterized as mutual negotiation or concordance, realized by patient-initiated vocal monitoring of doctors' talk, which gives doctors a kind of feedback that the patient is listening attentively. The second strategy reveals patients as competent individuals who are able to follow doctors' recommendations and advice, and who therefore deserve doctors' trust.

One can, of course, ask what explanation lies behind these shifts in the nature of doctor–patient communication. How come, for example, that West and Frankle found patients initiating only 9% and 1%, respectively, of all questions, whereas the patients that appear in my material are much more active, with 36% of all questions? The first possible explanation is our definitions of 'question' differ. However, at least with West we share the same broad adjacency-pair definition; other factors should therefore be taken into consideration. Unfortunately, we currently have no definite findings at our disposal regarding gender, age, or race (cf. Wynn, 1999). Moreover, there is no evidence that the type of setting could influence particular questioning strategies of doctors and patients. Ainsworth-Vaughn, for instance, conducted her research among family practitioners, and arrived at approximately the same findings (patients initiated 40% of all questions in her samples) as I did, working with data from general practitioners. A further factor which can be discussed is whether or not the decisive factor we are looking for is the nature of the diagnosis revealed to the patient. Nevertheless, neither family practitioners nor general practitioners usually inform patients about complicated diagnoses which would require a special type of interacting.<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, I am inclined to believe that the primary explanation underlying the

shift in doctor-patient interaction is the ongoing social change affecting health care and its delivery.

My conclusions, naturally, may induce certain objections, both theoretical and empirical. For instance, I can imagine that some scholars could argue that my delimitation of a question does not allow me to investigate the role that rhetorical questions<sup>3</sup> play in the medical encounter. Other scholars may object to the fact that I have decided to apply Tsui's functional classification of questions, instead of, for example, Stenström's classification according to form and function. As regards the interpretative part of the study, my approach can be criticized for judging elicitations towards clarification as asymmetrical, though under certain conditions (see Cordella 139) the opposite can be the case. All this supports the opinion that there is no perfect method for the analysis of doctor-patient communication (Wynn, 1995, 111) and that it is always a matter of choice. Nevertheless, I believe that the interdisciplinary analysis, combining both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, is an appropriate tool for the research objectives of the present examination and has produced firm data. I would be happy to have my findings verified in the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Hiatal hernia=hernia where the stomach bulges through the opening in the diaphragm muscle through which the oesophagus passes" (*Dictionary of Medicine* 1996, 163).

<sup>2</sup> In my previous, comparative research (see Černý 2007), the interpretation of doctor-initiated and patient-initiated questions revealed that most questions asked by patients occurred in situations when they felt deeply concerned about a medical issue. Usually they had to undergo an operation and they wanted doctors to explain the operation in detail. They wanted information about what it involved, whether it was dangerous or not, what possible complications they could expect. In other words, patients wished to hear that the surgical intervention would help them and there was nothing to fear. It did not matter whether such dialogues took place in the consulting rooms of ORL practitioners or orthopaedic specialists. The age, sex, or race of doctors and their patients did not matter either.

<sup>3</sup> I view rhetorical questions as an important aspect of medical interviewing that deserves our attention. However, I have not included it in my research, as it formed the focus of the investigation by Ainsworth-Vaughn (103–124).

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# The Research Article Abstract in Social Sciences and Its Promotional Function

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## Abstract

*The present paper examines research article abstracts in social sciences. It introduces the research article abstract as a genre and investigates its rhetorical structure. Furthermore, it focuses on the promotional function of abstracts and the rhetorical strategies used to perform this function. A total of eighty abstracts selected from six social science journals were analyzed. The results showed that the pattern which occurred in the majority of abstracts was P–M–R (Purpose–Methods–Results).*

*Keywords: abstract, promotional function, research article, academic discourse*

## 1 Introduction

The abstract seems to play a marginal role in academic discourse, in comparison with such genres as the research article or the textbook. However, the abstract continues to gain in importance, which is reflected in the rapidly growing quantity of academic literature examining the genre. One of the reasons for the increased attention now devoted to abstracts is the need for rapid orientation within a wide range of academic publications – nowadays it is almost impossible for an individual to read all the new texts concerning his/her field of study. Another reason may be the fact that an abstract is often the key factor in deciding whether it is worth reading the entire research article. In fact, the relationship between the abstract and the article has been described in terms of “news value”, and an analogy has been drawn between research articles and newspaper articles. The typical textual structure of news stories is the so-called *inverted pyramid*, which is organized according to the top-down principle of relevance, with the most important information put first. Thus a headline and a lead (in a newspaper) could have a similar function to a title and an abstract (in a research article), since they are read first and should contain significant information about the subsequent text (Bondi 164).

The present paper is based on the findings contained in my Master thesis, which dealt with the rhetorical structure of research article abstracts in social sciences. The paper introduces the research article abstract as a genre (or a part-genre). It also focuses on the promotional function of abstracts; specifically, it aims to describe different rhetorical strategies used by authors to gain readers' interest and acceptance, and to persuade them to read the article. The paper also questions the somewhat stereotypical notion of the impersonality of academic writing (for the myth of impersonality, see Hyland 2002).

## **2 The research article abstract as a genre**

The abstract is considered to be an independent genre with a distinct communicative purpose. Bhatia states that "the research article abstract is a recognizable genre and has emerged as a result of a well-defined and mutually-understood communicative purpose that most abstracts fulfil, irrespective of the subject-discipline they serve" (Bhatia, 1993, 77). It is referred to as a research-process genre (Swales, 1990), or as an independent discourse (van Dijk). However, we cannot entirely separate an abstract from the text with which it is associated, especially in the case of research article abstracts. After all, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word "abstract" comes from the Latin "abstractus" and is defined as "something that summarizes or concentrates the essentials of a larger thing or several things."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the nature of the abstract as a genre is well demonstrated by Hyland, who observes that "abstracts have been considered in the literature as an independent discourse, but one which functions as a 'representation' (Bazerman 58), a 'distillation' (Swales, 1990, 179), a 'crystallization' (Salager-Meyer 367) or a 'summary' (Kaplan et al. 405) of an associated text" (Hyland, 2004, 64).

There are various definitions of abstracts, each highlighting a different aspect of this genre. Many of them emphasize that the abstract is a 'summary' of a larger text. Bhatia, for example, understands it as "a description or factual summary of the much longer report [which] is meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full article" (Bhatia, 1993, 78). Similarly, another definition states that "an abstract summarizes the essential contents of a particular knowledge record and is a true surrogate of the document" (Cleveland 104, in Orasan). However, it is very unlikely that most abstracts could function as a replacement for the whole document, as is implied e.g. by Graetz, who claims that "if comprehensive enough, it might replace reading the article" (7).

Ventola characterizes the abstract both as a 'reproduction' and a 'reduction' of an associated text, which corresponds to the historical view, considering abstracts to have developed from the practice of reproducing texts, mostly in a shortened, condensed version. On the other hand, the abstract is sometimes considered an 'expansion' – an expanded title, informing the reader what the article is about in detail (Ventola 335).

Moreover, abstracts are commonly used as a 'filtering device' (Orasan). Academics use abstracts to filter a large amount of existing literature in order to decide which articles are important and worth reading. This function is closely connected with the persuasive, promotional elements present in the abstracts. Hyland (2004) stresses that abstracts aim to persuade readers that the article is worth reading. In summary, Huckin distinguishes at least four uses of abstracts: 1. they serve as stand-alone "mini-texts", providing readers with a quick summary of a study's topic, methodology, and findings; 2. they serve as

“screening devices“, enabling the reader to decide whether to read the article as a whole; 3. they serve as “previews” for those readers who decide to read the whole article, creating an interpretative frame that can guide reading; 4. they serve as “aids to indexing” by professional indexers for large database services (Huckin 93).

### 3 Types of abstracts

There are various types of abstracts, reflecting their various uses in the academic world. Melander et al. (251) distinguish three types: “conference abstracts, the so-called ‘homotopic’ abstracts in journals, and the abstracts in abstracting journals”. These types of abstracts have different functions and different intertextual relations, which results in different features. That is why my analysis focused only on journal abstracts accompanying research articles.

Conference abstracts are stand-alone, independent documents with the aim of convincing the audience that the paper represented by the abstract should be accepted for conference presentation (Kaplan et al.). The primary audience is the conference reviewing committee, usually a small group of specialists, whose identity might sometimes be predictable, at least to a certain extent. These abstracts tend to be longer and more rhetorical; their promotional function is realized by “(a) addressing topics of current interest, (b) having a clearly defined problem, (c) discussing the problem in a new way, and (d) showing an “insider ethos” through terminology, topoi, and references” (Melander et al. 252). Homotopic abstracts, on the other hand, do not often require such “high levels of promotional advocacy” because this function may be fulfilled by the subsequent article (Melander et al. 252). However, journal abstracts also contain certain persuasive elements, because an abstract is often a decisive factor guiding readers whether to read an entire article or not. Abstracting journals include abstracts from many different journals. They are then adapted to conform to the style of the journal in terms of length, sentence structure, tense, voice, etc.; each abstract enters intertextual relations with the surrounding abstracts (Melander et al.).

Furthermore, three basic types of abstracts are distinguished on functional grounds: indicative, informative and critical (Graetz; Swales, and Feak; Orasan). Indicative abstracts should help readers understand the general nature and scope of the research article without going into a detailed step-by-step account of what it is about. This type of abstract indicates the subject and the type of research which has been done. Informative abstracts, on the other hand, encapsulate the whole paper; they tend to follow the exact order of the article’s organization, and, more importantly, they give the main results. This distinction also corresponds to the terminology used by Čmejrková, who distinguishes thematic (or indicative) abstracts suggesting the topic or set of topics covered by the article, and rhematic (or informative) abstracts which include not only the subject but also the results of the research (Čmejrková, Daneš, and Světlá). Finally, critical abstracts give not only a description of the contents, but also an evaluation of the article. In this case, it is usually not the author of the paper who writes the abstract.

#### 4 Rhetorical structure of abstracts

One of the aims of my research was to describe the rhetorical structure of abstracts of experimental research articles in social sciences. The macro-organization of abstracts has often been analyzed using a model which results from the traditional global organization of a research article (the IMRD structure). IMRD (Introduction – Methods – Results – Discussion) was found to be the common structure of the research paper genre, and was thoroughly investigated by John Swales (1990). This macro-structure was then used to arrive at four rhetorical moves found in abstracts: introduction (purpose), methods, results, and conclusion. “Move” is defined as “a genre stage which has a particular, minor communicative purpose to fulfil, which in turn serves the major communicative purpose of the genre” (Santos 485). The term has been widely used since Swales’ work on research article introductions. Moves may not have an independent existence outside the framework of a genre, but the unity and integrity of a typical genre crucially depends on the nature and function of moves employed in the textualization process (Bhatia, 2006, 84).

However, the IMRD model is connected only with one kind of research article – the experimental one, which is based on primary research. In his later work, Swales (2004) himself claims that the research article *per se* is actually not a single genre; it is rather divisible into theoretical (“argumentative”) papers, experimental or data-based research articles, and review articles, which are essentially literature reviews. As the structure of the three types is supposed to be different (Swales, 2004), their abstracts follow different patterns as well, and the traditional model reflecting the IMRD structure of the research article cannot be applied to all of them. This assumption is supported by the fact that the abstract structure recommended to authors by some organizations, for instance the British NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research), varies according to the type of the article, distinguishing between an empirical study, a literature review and a theoretical/opinion piece. The following structure of abstracts is connected only with experimental papers.

Regarding an abstract as a summary of the following research article, Bhatia (1993, 78–79) formulated four questions which should provide information on the research that it describes:

1. What the author did?
2. How the author did it?
3. What the author found?
4. What the author concluded?

Then Bhatia postulated and characterized four moves which seem to answer these questions:

1. “Introducing purpose” – the author’s intention, thesis or hypothesis of the research; it may also include the goals or objectives of the research or the problem that the author wishes to cope with.
2. “Describing methodology” – indication of the experimental design, including information on the data, procedures or methods used, or the scope of the research.

3. “Summarizing results” – the author presents his observations and findings, he may also suggest solutions to the problem posed in the first move.
4. “Presenting conclusions” – interpretation of the results; it often includes some indication of the implications and applications of the present findings.

These moves have been used in the analysis of abstracts by various researchers, such as Salager-Meyer, Kaplan et al., Ventola, Samraj etc. This pattern also corresponds to the earlier work of Graetz, who identified the “Problem–Method(s)–Results–Conclusions” structure and its possible variations (e.g. Objectives–Purpose–Experimental design–Methods–Results–Conclusion).

Santos, who focused on applied linguistics abstracts, postulated a five-move pattern; in addition to the four moves discussed above, he suggested a move called “Situating the research”, which typically appears at the beginning of abstracts and contains two sub-moves, a “statement of current knowledge” and a “statement of problem”. According to Santos “Move 1 motivates the reader to examine the research by setting the general field or topic and stating the shortcomings of previous study” (481).

## 5 Macro-organization of abstracts in social sciences

In order to determine the macro-organization of abstracts, I carried out a move analysis of 80 abstracts. They were randomly selected from social science journals, specifically *Educational Research*, *British Educational Research Journal*, *The Journal of Psychology*, *Applied Psychology*, *British Journal of Sociology*, and *Language Learning*, representing four disciplines – education, psychology, sociology, and applied linguistics. The sample was drawn from volumes issued between 2000 and 2007, and only abstracts accompanying the experimental research articles were considered – because, as stated above, different kinds of abstracts are supposed to have different rhetorical organizations. Each sentence in an abstract was assigned to a move: (1) Situating the research, (2) Purpose (Introduction)<sup>2</sup>, (3) Methods, (4) Results, and (5) Conclusion. Abstract 1 is an example of the rhetorical structure including all five moves:

Abstract 1:

**(Situating the research)** Evidence suggests that phonic interventions delivered by trained researchers improve early reading and spelling. **(Purpose)** This study sought to explore whether school Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) can also improve performance using these methods. **(Methods)** Four groups (each of  $n = 27$ ) of the poorest reading 6-year-old children in nine schools were screened and selected for this study. LSAs were briefly trained to administer phonic programmes as small group interventions for nine weeks. Rhyme- and phoneme-based programmes were also contrasted with controls receiving the National Literacy Strategy. **(Results)** At post-test, all intervention group children were better decoders, and had better phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge than controls. The phoneme-based group had better letter-sound knowledge than the other intervention groups. **(Conclusion)** It is concluded that trained Learning Support Assistants can deliver effective early preventive programmes for literacy difficulties. (Edu, 7)



However, in some cases a particular sentence served two rhetorical functions, especially when it included more than one clause. Santos, who called this aspect “move embedding”, found that especially Move 2 and Move 3 frequently merge (491), e.g. in the purpose-method combination which appears in the following sentence:

- (1) In this study, the authors investigated the links between emotional self-disclosure, as measured by the Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale (ESDS; W. E. Snell, R. S. Miller, & S. S. Belk, 1988), and a post-trauma psychological state, as measured by the Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI; J. Briere, 1995). (Psy, 6)

Table 1 presents the frequency of occurrence of the five moves. The results show that Purpose and Results appear consistently in the abstracts, and they seem to be obligatory moves in these journals. The high occurrence of Results is not surprising, as it is usually the findings of the research that are most important for the discourse community since they bring new information. This corresponds to the environmental science abstracts studied by Samraj, where Results are obligatory as well. However, in linguistics abstracts analyzed by Santos, Results were found only in approximately 80% of the texts.

The Purpose moves were also found frequently by previous studies (e.g. Hyland, 2000, 2004). Indeed, Martin claims that the Introduction section was the longest and most frequent rhetorical unit in his corpus of 160 abstracts.<sup>3</sup> The Methods appeared in 93.7% of the abstracts, and they also appear to be a salient part of the structure. This is consistent with Santos’s study, in which Move 2 (Presenting the research) and Move 3 (Describing the methodology) are regarded as essentially obligatory.

The first, background move was present in less than half of the texts, which is a surprisingly small quantity; this result does not seem to support the trend stated by Hyland that writers in the soft knowledge domains see a great need to situate their discourse with an Introduction (at least greater than in hard knowledge fields) because “the soft disciplines are characterized by the relative absence of well-defined sets of problems and a definite direction in which to follow them” (2004, 71). As a result, Hyland claims, writers have to work harder to acquaint readers with the background to their research and to construct its significance rhetorically. Finally, the Conclusion move occurred in 67.5% of the abstracts analyzed, and it seems to be an optional move to indicate general implications of the results reported, explanations for the results, or further recommendations.

Purpose, Methods and Results occurred in the vast majority (93.7%) of the abstracts analyzed, so there was a preference for the P–M–R pattern, often accompanied by the Situating the research move or the Conclusion, or both. This is partly consistent with the results provided by Hyland (2000, 2004), who contends that the typical model in the humanities/social sciences is the I–P–Pr (Introduction–Purpose–Product; in 75% of cases), and the P–M–Pr (Purpose–Method–Product) among physicists and engineers (60%). From this point of view, my analysis is in accordance with the ‘hard’ science model, which may be explained by the fact that my corpus consists only of experimental research article abstracts. These often deal with real-world phenomena and provide measurable results, and thus their methods are similar to the ‘hard’ science abstracts.

The findings suggest a relatively fixed structure of abstracts in this type of discourse, which applies not only to the occurrence of the moves, but also to their manifestations.



The beginnings of Purpose and Results were often stereotypical; in Purpose the majority of authors used descriptive or purposive formulas (*the study/paper/authors examines/investigates/explore*), so that the beginning of this move was rather formulaic. Similarly, Results were also often expressed in formulaic terms. In the majority of abstracts, the beginning of the move was signalled lexically by an inanimate noun in the subject position (e.g. *the results*) followed by verbs in the past or present tense (*show/showed*). In that respect, “Move 4 exponents are typically marked by the absence of references to the present authors, with reference only to their products” (Santos 493). This contributes to the impersonal, scientific style of this move, as it is not the author who speaks but rather the facts and findings themselves.

Table 1 Distribution of rhetorical moves in the abstracts

Moves	Disciplines					
	Education	Psychology	Sociology	Applied linguistics	Total	%
Situating the research	9	7	10	11	37	46.2
Purpose	20	18	20	20	78	97.5
Methods	18	19	20	18	75	93.7
Results	19	20	19	20	78	97.5
Conclusion	18	17	11	8	54	67.5
N (number of abstracts)	20	20	20	20	80	

Finally, it should be emphasized that these findings could have been influenced by the editorial guidelines of individual journals. However, these recommendations are often vague, for example: “An abstract of 50–200 words in English should precede the article. This will be translated into French.” (4) Other instructions stipulate e.g. that abstracts should be summaries including the rationale for the article, methods employed and conclusions drawn. Instructions for the British Journal of Sociology do not include methods at all, stating that “an abstract of up to 300 words, giving a concise statement of the intention, results and conclusions of the paper, should be attached to the article.” (5) However, all of the sociology abstracts in the corpus included these components. This indicates that editorial guidelines concerning abstracts may have a certain impact on the results, but it is ultimately the authors themselves who decide which information should be included, depending on their rhetorical purposes.

## 6 Promotional elements in research article abstracts

The promotional function of abstracts asserts itself most clearly in the first move, Situating the research, so let me examine this move more thoroughly. Hyland (2004) states that authors often use Move 1 to claim the significance of the topic concerned by identifying the topic convincingly enough to encourage further reading. The main rhetorical strategies to achieve this include appeals to “benefit, novelty, importance and interest”; the notion of importance was found to be the main promotional item in soft disciplines (Hyland, 2004, 76).

In my corpus this tendency was more than evident. At least in 12 cases, authors decided to claim that the topic of their paper is significant, either to the real world (example 2), or the research world (example 3).

- (2) Post-traumatic stress (PTS) is a significant clinical problem in the general population. (Psy, 6)
- (3) The persistence of social disparities in educational achievement in contemporary societies is a matter of concern to social theory. (Soc, 8)

However, promotional appeal was clearly not the only factor that was supposed to influence the readers in deciding whether to read an article. Other factors include the disciplinary competence or credibility of the author, i.e. whether he is an authority in the field and a competent member of the scientific community. This can be signalled in numerous ways, for example by the topic choice or more specifically by identifying a credible problem of the discipline. This is occasionally achieved by indicating that it was the subject of earlier work (formal citations), but more often by summarizing current knowledge in a few sentences and referring to relevant literature. It is often followed by indicating a gap in the literature. (Hyland, 2004, 79).

There were fourteen abstracts in which authors made reference to previous research by formal citation (or rather paraphrases). Only four of them appeared in Move 1 to indicate that the problem (topic) in question had been covered by previous studies (example 4). The rest were distributed across Purpose, Methods and Conclusion, with the most cases occurring in Methods in order to refer to the exact procedure used.

- (4) Research suggests that attitudinal factors in high-proficiency students can affect second language (L2) pragmatic production in important ways, students at times rejecting or resisting undesirable L2 pragmatic forms. (Cohen, 1997; Hinkel, 1996; Lo-Castro, 2001; Siegal, 1996), (AL, 20)

Citation in research articles can be a useful means of persuasion. Through citation a writer is able to display an allegiance to a particular discourse community, create a rhetorical gap for his or her research, or establish a credible writer ethos. He can provide justification for arguments and demonstrate the novelty of a position. Highlighting the interactive and rhetorical character of academic writing in general, Hyland points out that knowledge-making in academic discourse is achieved by negotiating agreement among colleagues, since there is usually more than one plausible interpretation for a given piece of data. One

result of this negotiation is that in most academic genres a writer's principal purpose will be persuasive: to convince peers to agree to a knowledge claim in a research article, to acknowledge a disciplinary schema in a textbook; to establish the credibility of the writer's claims in general. Thus (viewing texts as social interaction), the interactions in academic writing stem from the writer's attempts to anticipate possible negative reactions to his or her persuasive goals.

In this negotiation process (with readers, editors, reviewers) the final ratification of a knowledge claim is granted with the citation of the claim by others and, eventually, the disappearance of all acknowledgement as it is incorporated into the literature of the discipline. In order to gain acknowledgment from colleagues, writers have to locate their claims within a wider disciplinary framework, and they often do so by situating their research in a larger narrative context through citation. Citation can be therefore regarded as one of the key features of knowledge-making (Hyland, 2004, 20–23).

Writers sometimes summarized current knowledge without any formal citations, also identifying a gap in it.

- (5) The high achievement of British–Chinese pupils in the British education system is established in the official literature, but few studies have asked British–Chinese pupils or parents about the factors contributing to their success. (Edu, 1)

As a matter of fact, in seventeen instances Move 1 was realized by “stating a problem”. This indicates that previous research has not been thoroughly successful or complete, and generally falls into two categories (Santos, 486–487):

1. statements that previous research is still embryonic (gaps in previous research) (example 6);
  - (6) Previous research on school bullying has largely neglected the issue of racism, and where it has been studied, the methods used have been unconvincing. The result is that little is known about bullying among ethnic minority children in British schools. (Edu, 9)
2. statements that there is still a continuing debate in current research (example 7).
  - (7) Positivism has been declared dead in sociological theory circles, yet questions remain as to its viability among researchers. (Soc, 2)

The prevalent category in the corpus consisted of statements that there is a gap in previous research. In this way, the authors justified their positions as researchers because they showed that they were able to find omissions in the previous research which deserved attention.

Another means of expressing insider credibility is the writer's appeal to implicit knowledge of the discipline. Writers can make references to “familiar approaches, well-known behaviour or traditional assumptions” (Hyland, 2004, 80). Insider credibility is therefore promoted by displays of intimacy with cultural knowledge (ibid.). In the corpus analyzed,

this was explicitly signalled by phrases such as *it is widely assumed*, *it is widely believed*, *there is general agreement*, etc. It might be followed by a statement of incomplete research too, as in (8). Moreover, writers appealed to implicit knowledge of the discipline by referring to well-known concepts, theories or theses. They did not use citations or paraphrases but only mentioned the author of the theory, thus proving to the community that they are acquainted with the basic concepts of their disciplines. This reference was obviously not always present in Move 1, as example 9 shows.

- (8) It is widely believed that listeners understand some dialects more easily than others, although there is very little research that has rigorously measured the effects. (AL, 3)
- (9) In drawing upon Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and habitus and Elias' notion of figuration, the article shows how the local neighbourhood represents the parameters of the girls' social worlds. (Soc, 3)

Therefore, Move 1, found in 46% of the texts, proved to be a useful device for pointing out the importance of present research and thus motivating the reader to examine it. However, even though half of the writers decided not to situate their research in Move 1, they used other promotional strategies instead. At least twenty abstracts which did not include Move 1 used a similar strategy in a different move. For example when stating the purpose of their research, authors mention how new or important the topic is:

- (10) The key new issue that this research addresses is ... (Soc, 4)

Move 3, Methods, can also have a promotional function. In several abstracts Methods were the longest move. Writers clearly found it necessary to characterize the corpus (number of participants etc.) and the method used, as this is a crucial factor influencing the results obtained, especially in quantitative research. They might have sought to justify their research by emphasizing that their corpus is sufficiently representative, either explicitly (11) or implicitly, by providing many details about the sample, statistical method etc.

- (11) The large sample size allows much greater statistical power for this purpose than any other previous source, and thus allows a more reliable assessment ... (Soc, 16)

As far as Results are concerned, they contribute to the promotional appeal of the genre because it is often the findings of the research that are most important for the discourse community – as they bring new information. This move was present in 97.5% of the abstracts, and it was often the longest one. Writers aim to present their findings in order to gain the reader's interest and acceptance.

Finally, the Conclusion was also widely used to advance claims for significance (example 12).

- (12) In light of these later findings, the present study underscores the importance of complementary research in L1 and L2 learning so that important questions about the nature of L1 acquisition may be answered by means of controlled manipulation of the language input in L2 learning. (AL, 4)

Moreover, authors sometimes point out that more research is needed or warranted. The function of these statements is similar to a strategy used in Move 1 – claiming that the research is not complete (there is a gap in knowledge), which also implies that more research is needed. However, indicating a gap in Move 1 is supposed to “create a research space”, in Swales’ terms, in order to state that the following research is justified. In Conclusions, authors also used this strategy to justify their research, but in a slightly different way. They imply that they are aware of the fact that their findings are not absolute or general; furthermore, they can also prepare the ground for their future possible research of this topic. Generally, when authors claim that more research is needed or when they refer to the future research discussed in the article, they imply that the topic is significant enough to be the subject of further study.

## 7 Conclusion

To summarize, we shall return to Hyland and his models of abstracts in soft and hard disciplines. He states that a typical pattern in soft disciplines is Introduction–Purpose–Product; this is because writers have to work harder to introduce readers into the background of their research, as soft disciplines sometimes lack precisely defined sets of problems. Judging from my research, based on experimental research article abstracts in social sciences, Methods play a significant role and the prevailing pattern was Purpose–Methods–Results. However, writers also aimed to “situate their research” and influence readers, but only half of them decided to use a special move for that purpose.

The particular promotional strategies used by authors in Move 1 include direct appeals to the significance of the topic explored, and claims of their own disciplinary competence and credibility as researchers. Authors show that they are dealing with a credible problem of the discipline by using formal citations, or more often by appealing to the implicit knowledge of the discipline (without any formal citations). This is often followed by identifying a gap in previous research, thus signalling that they are able to identify an important problem that has been omitted. Even though half of the writers did not use an extra move to situate their research, they used similar strategies in other moves. Furthermore, they sometimes did not use any direct promotional strategy at all, but instead aimed to characterize e.g. the methods thoroughly and convincingly enough to show that their research is credible and objective, and therefore worth further attention.

Finally, based on the results of my research, the abstract as a genre is definitely not a mere summary of the following article, as is implied by some previous studies (see Bhatia, 1993; Graetz etc.); it is rather “a selective representation of [...] an article’s content” (Hyland, 2004, 64). The abstract selects and highlights important information, but in such a way as to encourage the reader to undertake further examination.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abstract\[2\]](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abstract[2]). Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> The terminology is not unified. While Samraj and Salager-Meyer use the term Purpose, Lorés uses the term Introduction. Santos introduced his own term Presenting the research, which might be more precise with regard to function because this move not only presents the author's actual purpose but also often outlines the topic and problems investigated. However, I decided to use the more traditional term Purpose (Introduction), as it corresponds to the IMRD pattern of the research article itself.

<sup>3</sup> However, his claim about the length can be accounted for by the fact that he did not separate the Introduction from the Situating the research section.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=0269-994X&site=1>. Accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/BJS/toContribute/notesToContributors.aspx>. Accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.

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# **Literature and Culture**



# The Female Grotesque in Works by Fay Weldon, Jeanette Winterson and Angela Carter

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## Abstract

*The paper initially focuses on the character of the female grotesque presented in Bakhtin's study of Rabelais, paying special attention to Bakhtin's discussion of the "idealizing tradition" and the "Gallic tradition", two opposing views in the context of the medieval debate about women known as the querelle des femmes. This theoretical framework is then used to explore three twentieth-century examples of the British feminist novel claiming that they offer feminist versions of the medieval popular comic images of the woman in the Gallic tradition.*

*Keywords: female grotesque, querelle des femmes, Mikhail Bakhtin, feminism, Fay Weldon, Jeanette Winterson, Angela Carter*

## Introduction

In her seminal study, Mary Russo draws attention to an important similarity between the grotesque and the female, pointing out that both categories are recognizable only in relation to a norm. Thus "the grotesque, particularly as a bodily category, emerges as a deviation from the norm [represented by the ideal of the classical body]" (11) and "the female is always defined against the male norm" (12). Russo emphasizes that the grotesque is a term which, from women's perspective, has a more ambivalent meaning than male theoreticians of the grotesque have realized. Recognizing the importance of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival, the carnivalesque body and the comic grotesque, she at the same time makes a critical point about his failure to "acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender in his semiotic model of the body politic" (63). Particularly indicative of this failure is his discussion of the image of the Kerch terracotta figurines of senile, pregnant hags, which Bakhtin sees as an embodiment of his concept of the grotesque. According to Bakhtin, the pregnant hags illustrate the ambivalent nature of the grotesque body combining "a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life" (25–26), but for the feminist reader, Russo claims, the image "is loaded with all the connotations of fear and

loathing around the biological processes of reproduction and of ageing” (63). This reminds us that, in everyday life, women run a greater risk than men of having their bodies perceived as grotesque if they deviate from the accepted ideal of beauty and youth.

### **The Female Grotesque in the Context of the *Querelle des Femmes***

In his discussion of Rabelais’s works, Bakhtin indeed creates a concept of the grotesque body that does not focus on sexual or gender differences: “it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits ... the emphasis is on apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecating” (26). Developing his interpretation of the Rabelaisian grotesque from this definition, Bakhtin sees Rabelais’s images not as representing individual bodies but rather as the ever-regenerated body of all people<sup>1</sup>; as a result, he overlooks or undermines the misogynist character of some representations of the feminine. One may mention here the episode describing a procession of thousands of dogs that follow a lady and besmirch her dress after she has been sprinkled with the diced genital organs of a bitch in revenge for her rejection of Panurge (229), or the scene in which Panurge proposes to build city walls from the genital organs of Paris women, suggesting their cheapness (313).

On the other hand, Bakhtin is not completely unaware of the fact that Rabelais could be accused of having a hostile attitude towards women, finding it important to defend the author when referring to the passage in which Panurge asks advice about whether he should marry. Bakhtin places the advice received by the character in the context of a medieval debate known as the *querelle des femmes* [quarrel of women], which concerned the nature of women and marriage. He points out the difference between the “idealizing tradition” and the “Gallic tradition” which lay at the heart of the debate. While the idealizing tradition exalts womanhood,<sup>2</sup> the Gallic tradition is a contradictory phenomenon. It is constituted by the ascetic tendency of medieval Christianity, which sees woman as the incarnation of sin, and the popular comic approach, adopted by Rabelais, which produces an ambivalent image of woman as the incarnation of the “material bodily lower stratum” that degrades and regenerates simultaneously (239–240). The images of the female grotesque typical of the popular comic version of the Gallic tradition has a liberating potential, which is realized – as I intend to show – in the works of the feminist authors Fay Weldon, Jeanette Winterson and Angela Carter.

Before turning to the novels that contribute to the *querelle des femmes* dispute, I would like to throw more light upon the nature of this intellectual discussion, which has acquired the status of a “key term of European gender history” (Zimmermann 18). The tradition of the *querelle des femmes* emerged in the fifteenth century to develop from “a defense of women by the *champions des dames* (defenders of women), which dominated into the sixteenth century, to an increasing participation in this gender debate by the women themselves” (19–20). For centuries the debate included such topics as women’s access to reading, writing and education, the assessment of marriage, and controversies over topics such as feminine beauty, learned women and female poets. Finally the dispute evolved into “a much more complex phenomenon: an all-encompassing gender quarrel in which not

only women but [...] men are at issue as well. It is a quarrel in word and image but also about words and images ... The points of debate are the delimitation of an 'imaginaire', an imaginary space of masculinity and femininity, of gender hierarchies..." (19–20).

The female voice joined the debate in the early fifteenth century through the works of Christine de Pizan, who in her letters against the *Romance of the Rose* and in *The Book of the City Ladies* attacks misogynist representations of the feminine, setting up catalogues of exemplary women (Gray 20–21). Later she was followed by others, such as Jeanne Flore and Marguerite de Navarre, both contemporaries of Francois Rabelais and authors of collections of short stories inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In their works they both responded to the sixteenth-century discourses of misogyny, which presented woman as "having depraved and quarrelsome nature", as "a wanton, deceitful, unscrupulous person, whose character was derived from Eve, the faithless and disobedient first woman" (16). Jeanne Flore's *Comptes amoureux* has a revolutionary character, offering an apology for women's sexual liberation and a condemnation of arranged marriages (31).<sup>3</sup> Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* concentrates on "fundamental conflicts between the ways in which men and women see the world and their relationship to it" (Bauschatz 47–48). Her central concern is the difference between male and female moral codes, reflected for example in the story-tellers' discussions about rape, which is a common phenomenon in Navarre's stories.

Although working centuries later and in a different cultural context, Fay Weldon, Jeanette Winterson and Angela Carter continue the tradition of sixteenth-century female writing because their works, just like the tales of Flore and Navarre, can be seen as fictionalizing the questions raised by the *querelle des femmes*. While their French predecessors produced collections of short stories in a cultural milieu conditioned by male-dominated polemics about the nature of women, the three British authors have worked in the atmosphere of the second wave of feminism, in which the same dispute became dominated by the female perspective. In their responses to the misogynist images of woman common in their era, Flore and Navarre often turned to the idealizing tradition, generally avoiding grotesque representations of womanhood. Thus, though Flore, advocating female sexual freedom, creates images of sensual women that in their essence do not contradict the misogynist perception of woman as a grotesque creature with insatiable sexual appetites, in her presentation of women's physical appearance she never ventures into the sphere of the grotesque. All her heroines are young and beautiful, while the portraits of their old husbands are "compilations of grotesque details" (Gray 36–37). Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* reflects this idealizing approach in the focus on female virtue, while her use of the grotesque is rather traditional – it aims to induce a negative response from a suitor, whose sexual advances the heroine of one of the stories tries to avoid by grotesquely disfiguring her own face.

Flore's and Navarre's late-twentieth-century counterparts, by contrast, place the female grotesque at the centre of their works by employing images of women that, for centuries, carried negative connotations – or at least strongly ambivalent ones. In her study, Mary Russo lists some stereotypical examples of the female grotesque, including the Medusa, the Crone, the Fat Lady, and the Unruly Woman (14). Each of the heroines of the three novels – *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983), *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984) – falls into more than one of these categories. As I will show below,

by employing these traditional versions of the female grotesque, Weldon, Winterson and Carter produce images that in many respects correspond with the popular comic approach to the woman of the Gallic tradition. Weldon's, Winterson's and Carter's heroines are all marked by the grotesque bodily excess that is typical of the non-idealizing representations of the female, which relate woman to "the material bodily lower stratum" instead of exalting her. At the same time the three characters exemplify the womanhood that "is shown in contrast to the limitations of her partner (husband, lover or suitor)" (Bakhtin 240).

Bakhtin claims that in the carnivalesque context of popular comic medieval culture, the images of woman focus on her ambivalence: woman signifies both the "bodily grave of man, [...] represent[ing] in person the undoing of pretentiousness, of all that is finished, completed, and exhausted" as well as the life-giving womb that guarantees the process of regeneration (240). However, the fact remains that in the medieval phase of the *querelle des femmes* debate, these representations were appropriated by male authors, who often reduced their ambivalent meaning to its negative pole, producing an outlet for the voice of misogyny. The aim of this paper is to analyze the forms acquired by these traditional images of the female grotesque in the works of Weldon, Winterson and Carter, and thus to examine the feminist potential of the woman of Gallic tradition.

### **She-Devil – The Revenge of the Fat Lady**

Ruth, the heroine of Fay Weldon's novel about a suburban wife who exacts a devilish revenge upon her unfaithful husband and his mistress, clearly resembles the popular comic medieval characters of strong women "who are happily given to the sway of their bodily senses or who are using every ruse they can to prevail over men" (Davis 158). In an act of carnivalesque inversion, Weldon's character transforms herself from an unattractive, economically dependent wife who spends her life satisfying the needs of her family into a sexually attractive multimillionaire who takes full control over the life of her depowered husband Bobbo. Through a series of skilfully designed schemes, she deprives her husband firstly of his house, then his money, and finally even his freedom (when he is imprisoned for a theft she herself has committed), acquiring in the process literally everything his mistress initially possessed.

Ruth's revenge starts when she, in reaction to Bobbo's unfaithfulness, consciously adopts the role of a 'she-devil', stripping herself of the socially sanctioned form of femininity that requires submission, unrequited loyalty, and constant sacrifice of one's needs on the altar of other people's happiness: "But this is wonderful! This is exhilarating! If you are a she-devil the mind clears at once. The spirits rise. There is no shame, no guilt, no dreary striving to be good. There is only in the end what you want. And I can take what I want. I am a she-devil" (Weldon 43). Rebelling against the social norms and expectations which define the Good Wife, Ruth represents the grotesque category of the Unruly Woman, which is, according to Davis, exemplified by such characters as Chaucer's Wife of Bath or Rabelais's Gargamelle. She also reveals a particular affinity with "the clever and the powerful wife of the *Quinze joies de mariage* (The Fifteen Joys of Marriage) – cuckolding her husband and foiling his every effort to find her out, wheedling fancy clothes out of him, beating him up, and finally locking him in his room" (Davis 158–160).<sup>4</sup>



The character's deviation from accepted cultural norms is underlined by her physical appearance, the grotesqueness of which emerges through Ruth's repeated evaluations of her body against the classical ideal represented by her husband's mistress. Being too tall and too heavy, dark, with jutting jaws, a hooked nose, and three moles on her chin, the heroine is sharply contrasted with fair Mary Fisher, whose body is delicate and whose face is beautiful: "When Mary Fisher ran, her footsteps were light and bright. Ruth's weight swayed from one massive leg to another and shook the house each time it fell" (Weldon 23). The contrast between the grotesque and the classical body is not just a matter of two different aesthetics; it also intervenes into the sphere of social behaviour. As Bakhtin states, the dominance of the classical concepts of the body established in the seventeenth century produced a new canon of behaviour, requiring people to "close up and limit the body's confines and to smooth the bulges" – in other words, to conceal the features of the body that are perceived as grotesque (Bakhtin 322, note 8).<sup>5</sup>

Bakhtin's interpretation implies that every well-behaved person should adopt the same rules. However, as Sandra Lee Bartky argues, the canon of behaviour differs according to gender. Using Foucault's concept of the "docile body" produced by power structures, she maintains that the female bodies are more "docile" than males' since they are exposed to extra "disciplinary practices" aimed at the creation of their femininity. Bartky identifies three main categories of disciplinary practices: those concerned with the body's size; those affecting the body's gestures, postures, and movements (i.e. bodily manners); and "those that are directed toward the display of this body as an ornamented surface" (105). Through submission to this discipline, female bodies become more "limited and closed up," as well as more prone to imitate the classical ideal of beauty than male bodies. "Today massiveness, power, or abundance in a woman's body is met with distaste" (105) because it defies the patriarchal concept of femininity as signifying weakness, submission, and inferiority. Ideally, women should have a fragile body "lacking flesh or substance", which should be accompanied with "an infantilized face" that "never displays the marks of character, wisdom, and experience" (111).<sup>6</sup> This body then functions as both an object of desire and as a sign of woman's docility and her subordinate position in relation to men.

In the light of this theory, it seems ironic that Ruth's quest for power, control, and independence leads her to possess a body that signifies docility, as happens when she transforms herself, through excessive plastic surgery, into a replica of Mary Fisher. In this way she accomplishes the revenge that includes not only the repossession of her husband, but also the acquisition of his mistress's house, her body image – in fact, her whole life. If we read Weldon's novel as a tale about female empowerment, we may find its moral rather ambiguous, as the heroine's willing submission to the norms of feminine beauty and her repossession of her husband – who has been transformed into a spiritless, docile creature – turns her accomplishment into a bitter victory. If, on the other hand, we read it as a critique of the patriarchal society that pressures women to take unnatural measures to comply with social norms of femininity, we may notice that the critique includes a reconsideration of the relationship between the grotesque and the classical.

While at the beginning the boundaries between the grotesque and the classical are clearly defined by the difference between Ruth's excessive, ugly body and Mary Fisher's physical beauty, towards the end of the novel this distinction blurs, partly due to the fact that Ruth in a sense becomes Mary. The plastic surgery – which involves complete

disfiguration of Ruth's original appearance, including the shortening of her femurs – is revealed as a grotesque act that produces a classical body paradoxically marked by the sign of monstrosity. This monstrosity is the result not only of the unnaturalness of the whole process, emphasized by the text's allusion to Frankenstein's monster, but also by the fact that the grotesque – in the form of bodily decay, ageing, and ugliness – becomes an integral part of the classical. Though temporarily hidden behind the surface of artificial beauty, the grotesque is constantly present, as is indicated by its attempts to repossess Ruth's body: "an ingrowing nail was seen to; broken veins on the cheeks needed more laser treatment; facial moles kept struggling to reappear" (Weldon 237).

Ruth's body thus becomes an ambivalent "artistic object" (her surgeon sees himself as a Pygmalion) which, comprising both the classical and the grotesque, exists on the borderline of the two aesthetic categories. This draws attention to the awkward situation of women who, in their everyday existence, are placed under greater pressure than men to adjust their bodies to the ideal of classical beauty, while paying a greater price for their inevitable failure to dissociate themselves from the sphere of the grotesque.

### **Dog Woman – the Unruly Woman's Riot**

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Jeanette Winterson places her image of the female grotesque into the historical context of England's seventeenth-century Civil War. In a magical realist narrative she mingles the historical circumstances of King Charles's execution with the personal history of her heroine the Dog Woman (who makes her living by raising dogs for dog racing) and her adopted son Jordan (a foundling "fished out" from the river Thames), together with a fantastic narrative about Jordan's search for the one of the twelve dancing princesses with whom he is in love. Just like the She-Devil from the previous novel, Dog Woman can easily be associated with the carnivalesque grotesque. The bodily excess that functions as a crucial constitutional element of the physical appearance of Weldon's character also plays an important role in Winterson's work, though this time the author makes greater use of grotesque hyperbole, while focusing more on relating the grotesqueness produced by "the distortion of 'natural' size and shape" (Kayser 185) to monstrous ugliness.

The character's appearance ("How hideous I am? My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas") and her giant-like size (she can easily outweigh an elephant and "hold a dozen oranges in her mouth at once") (Winterson 19–21), which defies all notions of feminine weakness and submissiveness, sharply contrast her with the traditional female ideal. Her terrifying grotesqueness intensifies when, due to her sexual inexperience (men generally react to her appearance with fear), she inadvertently becomes a castrating female following the instructions of a pleasure-seeking man too literally. As an example of the female grotesque, Dog Woman can be read as a representation of the womanhood that denies patriarchal rule. Due to her monstrous ugliness, which repulses potential suitors, she never ends up in the subordinate position of a married woman, and her monstrous size effectively precludes any possibility of male sexual dominance: "there's no man who's a match for me" (Winterson 4).

However, as a dangerous woman who proves her active participation in an underground resistance to Puritan rule by gathering “119 eyeballs” and “over 2,000 teeth” (93) from her mangled enemies, she also resembles the carnivalesque female figure used to “incite and embody popular uprisings” (Russo 58). While Weldon’s Ruth resembles the images of women whose unruliness places them in conflict with their husbands, Winterson’s Dog Woman suggests another important version of the Unruly Woman, defined by possessing “the license to be a social critic” (Davis 162–163). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the female persona was often assumed as a popular folk disguise by males for the purpose of rioting. On the one hand, “the males drew upon sexual power and energy of the unruly woman and on her license (which they had long assumed at carnival and games) to promote fertility, to defend community’s interests and standards, and to tell the truth about unjust rule.” On the other hand, “the disguise freed men from full responsibility for their deeds”; in their roles as women they acted in full accordance with the belief that disorderly behaviour was female nature (Davis 181–182).

Although it may appear paradoxical that Winterson’s Unruly Woman becomes associated with an “uprising” against the official revolutionary forces, what she actually embodies is the revolution of the body, oppressed by strict Puritan morality: “The Puritans, who wanted a rule of saints on earth and no king but Jesus, forgot that we are born into flesh and in flesh must remain. Their women bind their breasts and cook plain food without salt, and the men are so afraid of their member uprising that they keep it strapped between their legs with bandages” (Winterson 70). Representing a force that uncovers the hypocrisy of the most zealous preachers of Puritan morals, who secretly satisfy their perverse bodily desires in a local brothel, Winterson’s heroine is the woman of the Gallic tradition, “a foil to [men’s] avarice, jealousy, stupidity, hypocrisy, bigotry, sterile senility, false heroism, and abstract idealism” (Bakhtin 240).

Still, being in conflict only with some men (i.e. the authoritarian representatives of Puritan morality), while siding with others (the Royalists, whose pleasure-seeking lifestyle was much more compatible with the natural needs of the body), Dog Woman complies more than Weldon’s She-Devil with Bakhtin’s interpretation of popular comic images of womanhood. Besides representing the strong woman who cannot be tamed by patriarchal culture, she also appears to represent the untameable “material bodily lower stratum”, which, as Bakhtin reminds his readers, was traditionally personified by female characters. The eruption of Dog Woman’s violence against her Puritan enemies thus symbolizes the violent eruption of the grotesque body into the sphere of the social and the political, which emerges whenever Puritan zeal attempts to relegate its forces to the utmost margins of culture.

### **Winged Woman – The New Woman’s Flight**

In *Nights at the Circus*, the female grotesque takes the form of Fevvers, a winged woman occupying the centre of a narrative in which Walser, a sceptical American journalist, tries to unravel the mystery of her wings. Creating a double grotesque image, a grotesque unity of incompatibles (the female body with wings) in combination with Rabelaisian hyperbole, Carter successfully challenges patriarchal conceptions of the feminine ideal. The Rabelaisian hyperbole takes the form of the bodily excess that relates Fevvers’ looks to the

appearance of Weldon's and Winterson's heroines. Although Fevvers, being "six feet two in her stockings" (Carter, *Nights* 12), is not really beyond the limits of human proportions, she appears giant-like to the eye of the observer (Walser). At one moment she seems to be "twice as large as life" (15) and when "without her clothes on" she looks "the size of the house" (292). The bodily excess is accompanied with vulgar manners, which include "guffaw[ing] uproariously" (7), talking too loud, slapping her thighs, wiping her mouth on her sleeve, and her gargantuan appetite. As a result, Fevvers appears as "untouched" by social norms of appropriate behaviour, which gives her unruly body an aura of unrestricted freedom.

The grotesque nature of her body is further emphasized by her wings, which, in the magical realist world of the novel, are accepted as real. Some critics stress that the wings are used in the text to displace "concerns pertaining to breasts, female genitalia and menstruation" to "another part of the body" (Peach 154), which suggests that they function as a sign of the mysterious nature of the female body which the rational observer tries to resolve. However, the wings also allow a different reading, focusing on the fact that they are "repeatedly given masculine or phallic overtones" (Bell 29). As I show below, the phallic overtones of the wings are crucial for the production of the liberating effect which Carter's image of the female grotesque possesses. If the wings are read as a sign of the phallic principle, Fevvers' grotesque body can be viewed from two main perspectives. The first one is represented by a male character, Mr. Rosencreutz, who treats her as a personification of the occult symbol that is pictured in his medallion: "The penis represented by itself, aspires upwards, represented by the wings, but is dragged downwards, represented by the twinning stem, by the female part, represented by the rose" (Carter, *Nights* 77). This image focuses on the downward movement in which the high, the phallic, is dragged down by the low, the womb, to the level of the earth. The second perspective, captured through a poster that advertises the "most famous *aerialiste* of the day" (7), however, offers a different image of the winged body: "The artist had chosen to depict her ascent from behind – bums aloft, you might say; up she goes, in a steatopygus perspective, shaking out about her those tremendous red and purple pinions, pinions large enough, powerful enough to bear up such a big girl as she" (7). Here the focus centres on the upward movement in which the body moves towards the high sphere of the sky.

The first perception, emphasizing the downward movement, connects Fevvers' body image to the "downward thrust, inherent in all Rabelaisian images" (Bakhtin 386), as it represents the carnivalesque "grotesque swing, which brings together heaven and earth", in which "the accent is placed not on the upward movement but on the descent" (370). In fact, from a feminist perspective, this "grotesque swing" can be seen as bringing down to the material bodily level the phallic, patriarchal culture whose power is associated with the oppression of the female body – which has been traditionally perceived (to a greater extent than the male one) as "the site of unruly passions and appetites that might disrupt the pursuit of truth and knowledge" (Shildrick, Price 2).<sup>7</sup> However, since the result of such grotesque debasement is, in fact, the regeneration of the debased – through its contact with the material bodily stratum, the high is "uncrowned in order to be regenerated" (Bakhtin 372) – it is possible to see the whole process as merely the mis/use of the body for the sake of the strengthening of the element that oppresses it. Carter's narrative symbolically

suggests this possibility when Rosencreutz tries to use Fevvers in a ritual aimed at his own renewal.

This, however, is all challenged by the second perception of Fevvers' grotesque body, which focuses on the opposite, upward movement. Now it is not the body that "drags" down the wings, but rather the wings that, moving the body upwards, liberate it from the sphere of the low. Here Carter turns one of the main principles of the carnivalesque grotesque upside-down, since the ultimate liberating power is not given to Fevvers' Rabelaisian body but to the wings that redeem the female subject from the limits of the material bodily principle. On the one hand, this fact becomes a part of the story's plot when, for instance, posing as the Winged Victory in the brothel, Fevvers is not treated like one of the prostitutes by the customers, and thus avoids the fate of a "whore". On the other hand, this "escape" from the material bodily sphere acquires wider implications in the symbolic context of the novel, in terms of which the wings make her a "New Woman" who is no longer "bound down to the ground" (25).

Through these wings, the "New Woman" is allowed to make herself at home in a sphere that was traditionally defined as truly belonging only to man – who, as Carter states in another of her novels, "lives in historicity" because "his phallic projectory takes him onwards and upwards" (*Passion* 53). Possessing this "phallic projectory", Fevvers, even if unable to control history as such, is certainly able to control her own history. In one sense this is reflected in the fact that her point of view controls the narrative that presents "her-story"<sup>8</sup> to Walser, whose attempt to explain the "winged woman" from an "objective" point of view of masculine rationalism fails. In addition, Fevvers exercises a kind of control over the processes that form the history of one's life that was traditionally accessible only to men. Through her wings she achieves economic independence (making the most of her "winged wonder" status), escapes from sexual victimization (she is able to "fly off" when threatened by a male aggressor), and is even freed from the dependent status of woman in marital relationships. It is Walser who, once married to her, is expected to "hand himself over into [her] safekeeping" and let her "hatch him out" and "make a new man of him" (Carter 281). Visualizing the journalist as writing down not only her story of a woman with wings, but "the histories of those woman [*sic*] who would otherwise go down nameless and forgotten", she believes that in that way he too can "help to give the world a little turn into the new era" when "all the women will have wings" (285). Fevvers does not require a complete re-writing of history from women's point of view, but the adding to history of the voices of those (i.e. women) who are usually "erased from history as if they had never been" (285). She advocates not the replacement of the masculine by the feminine, but rather the co-existence of the two.

Using an element that can be read as a symbol of phallic, masculine power (wings) to create a picture of the New Woman of the New Age, Carter, in her specific way, produces a grotesque conception of the body that, like Rabelais's conception, "is interwoven not only with the cosmic but also with the social, utopian, and historic theme, and above all with the theme of the change of epochs and the renewal of culture" (Bakhtin 325).



## Conclusion

As has been shown, the three characters discussed in this paper represent, in various ways, traditional categories of the female grotesque. Firstly, they all can be seen as Medusa figures, powerful enough to destroy men. While in the case of Fevvers this destructive power appears only in the form of unrealized potential, when Walser feels that she “could easily crush him to death in her huge arms” (Carter 52), in the other two cases it takes the form of either symbolic (Ruth’s disempowerment of her husband) or real castration (Dog Woman’s act). Furthermore, the characters’ bodily excess aligns them with the grotesque category of the Fat Lady, which both challenges socially sanctioned norms of feminine beauty and points at the uneasy situation of women who, more than men, are pressed to comply with the rules of classical aesthetics. Finally, Weldon’s, Winterson’s and Carter’s characters function as examples of the Unruly Woman, who not only escapes from her entrapment in the subordinate position of wife, but also becomes a voice providing a critique of male-dominated social systems and institutions. All this aligns the three female characters to the woman of Gallic tradition and allows one to perceive them as twentieth-century feminist versions of the medieval popular comic image of womanhood.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, analyzing the scene of Gargantua’s birth, he believes that what “loom[s] beyond Garagamelle’s womb [is] the devoured and devouring womb of the earth and the ever-regenerated body of the people” (Bakhtin 226).

<sup>2</sup> “At the time of Rabelais, this second line was supported by the ‘Platonizing poets’ and was based in part on the tradition of chivalry of the Middle Ages” (Bakhtin 239).

<sup>3</sup> Although there are some, e.g. Floyd Grant, who pursue the hypothesis that *Comptes amoureux* could have been written by a male author, the problematic gender of Jeanne Flore in no way diminishes the importance of the fact that, as Cathleen M. Bauschatz states, the work “creates a convincing picture of a woman writer speaking to women readers” (44).

<sup>4</sup> *Quinze joies de mariage* is an anonymous late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century satire that represents the misogynist voice of the *querelle des femmes* debate, warning the young man against the trap of marriage.

<sup>5</sup> This canon consists of restrictive rules, such as “not to place the elbows on the table, to walk without protruding the shoulder blades or swinging the hips, to hold in the abdomen, to eat without loud chewing, not to snort and pant, to keep the mouth shut, etc.” (Bakhtin 322, note 8).

<sup>6</sup> The fact that Bobbo believes that he is more intelligent than his mistress, a writer of Romantic fiction, which is reflected in his attempt to improve her style of writing, illustrates this male need to adopt the position of intellectual superiority.

<sup>7</sup> As Shildrick and Price point out, “the ability to effect transcendence and exercise rationality has been gender marked as an attribute of men alone” while “women remain rooted within their bodies, held back by their supposedly natural biological processes” (2).

<sup>8</sup> Drawing a distinction between masculine history (“his-story”) and the history as presented by the novel, Aidan Day believes *Nights at the Circus* to be “a her-storical novel to the extent that it gives details on and voices to women involved in historical events – details left out of conventional history”.

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# **“Safe underneath the Story of My Life”: Completing the Circle in Phyllis Alesia Perry’s *Stigmata***

Karla Kovalová

## **Abstract**

*The paper discusses Phyllis Alesia Perry’s novel Stigmata (1998) and demonstrates how Perry interrogates the meaning of traumatic memories and remembering in relation to one’s (in)sanity and wholeness. Binding the past to the present, I argue, Perry’s novel probes the issue of historical authenticity and access to historical truth, while establishing a distinct Africana womanist consciousness that validates African heritage and black female subjectivity. Building upon the art of quilting, the novel offers a way in which traumatic memories can be overcome to foster recovery and healing: personal, cultural and national.*

*Keywords: Africana womanist, black female body, history, insanity, memory, remembering, pain, slave trade, trauma, wholeness*

When Eva, an old black woman in Phyllis Alesia Perry’s novel *Stigmata* (1998), tells her great-niece Lizzie, “‘The past ain’t never really gone, is it?’” (115), she succinctly summarizes what cultural critics and African American writers have been articulating for years: that the legacy of slavery continues to affect the American collective consciousness. Indeed, recent fiction by African American writers indicates that slavery has been far from forgotten; rather, it has become a significant trope in African American literature, giving birth to a new genre of contemporary slave narrative, one that redefines both the historical and literary constructions of American slavery.

Rejecting traditional historiography and employing various, often non-realistic literary techniques, numerous African American women writers have created alternative histories based on subjective representations of slavery with the aim not so much of settling the score and/or filling in the gaps, but of bearing witness in order to provide healing for the ever-present wounds wrought by the traumatic past. As Keith Byerman argues in his study *Remembering the Past in Contemporary African American Fiction* (2005): “Contemporary

[slave] narratives are trauma stories in that they tell of both tremendous loss and survival; they describe the psychological and social effects of suffering. More important, perhaps, they tell of the erasure of such history, and, as a consequence, its continued power to shape black life” (3). In this respect, Perry’s *Stigmata* could serve as a model narrative.

Presented as a psychological thriller, this text tells the story of an ordinary young black woman, who, thought to be insane, has spent fourteen years in several mental hospitals trying to come to terms with her family past, manifested outwardly by metaphysical episodes, embodied visions, and haunting reincarnations. Binding the past to the present, the novel interrogates the meaning of traumatic memories and remembering in relation to one’s (in) sanity and search for wholeness, while probing the issues of historical authenticity and access to historical truth. Moreover, it establishes a distinct Africana womanist consciousness that validates African heritage and, more specifically, the history and culture of African women.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I explore how Perry negotiates the delicate line between physical and spiritual wholeness when the past becomes alive, inscribing pain onto one’s body, forcing it to keep remembering. In doing so, I also examine the ways in which traumatic memories can be overcome to foster recovery and healing: personal, cultural, and national.

When Lizzie DuBose,<sup>2</sup> the protagonist, turns fourteen, she inherits her grandmother Grace’s trunk with all of its mysterious contents: a stack of papers; some jewelry, gloves, and handkerchiefs; a small doll; two stones; “a very old bit of a blue cloth”; a quilt Grace had made; and a diary, written by Grace’s mother Joy, much of it recording her grandmother’s history (Perry 16,17). Opening the trunk to feed her childhood curiosity about the treasures it might hold, she notices how “an old smell, a sigh, a breath escapes from the past” (16). Unaware that the past has just come alive to claim its rightful place in her life, Lizzie reads a page from the diary, at first without comprehending a word of it:

*We are forever. Here at the bottom of heaven we live in the circle. We back and gone and back again.*

*I am Ayo. Joy. I choose to remember.*

*This is for those whose bones lay in the heart of mother ocean for those who tomorrows I never knew who groaned and died in that dark damp aside a me. You rite this daughter for me and for them. (17)*

This passage foreshadows five of Perry’s major concerns in the novel—history, identity, memory, the trauma of the Middle Passage, and the healing power of a testimonial narrative. To understand the passage will require twenty years, during which Lizzie will undertake a difficult and dangerous journey that will eventually enable her not only to find a place in her eternal ancestral circle, but also to make herself both whole and “safe underneath the story of [her] life” (24).

Having unlocked the door to the past, Lizzie unconsciously invites it into her life by spreading on her bed her grandmother’s quilt, through which Grace had hoped to tell her grandmother Ayo’s story. As she later attempts to explain to one of her doctors, it was as if “the pictures there on that quilt were like some long-faded memory to me” (5). From then on, Lizzie starts having dreams and visions of her long-dead relatives. Both her grandmother Grace and great-grandmother Ayo wrap their thoughts around Lizzie’s mind so much that their pain invades her body, leaving it with raw scars. The physical

manifestations of the pain inscribed on her body assure Lizzie that she is not simply imagining the past but is actually undergoing it: she is re-living the lives of her female ancestors, "crumpling under the weight of the old African's pain" (125).

As the reader learns from the fragmented story in Joy's diary, tellingly juxtaposed with the fragmented narrative of Lizzie's journey toward recovery from her mysterious mental illness, as a fourteen-year-old child Ayo was captured and taken away from Africa in chains on a slave ship. Having survived years of brutal subjugation, she could never forget the traumatic feeling of cultural loss, or what Corinne Duboin calls "the original trauma: the forced transatlantic journey that meant separation from the mother and departure from the ancestral homeland" (287). It is precisely from this trauma that Ayo attempted to free herself after her emancipation, first dictating her story to her daughter, Joy, so that she could record it for future generations, and then invading the bodies of Grace and Lizzie, forcing them never to forget where and who they come from: "Ayo is there, *reminding us who we are*. And we can't stop the sea from rolling beneath us and we can't stop the fear" (58, emphasis mine).

While the horrors of the original trauma might render its pain unspeakable, Perry, through the re-experienced story of Ayo, insists that the past needs to be spoken, listened to, and heard. As Cathy Caruth explains in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), trauma "is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). The reality that Perry's novel strives to express is the historical truth of the Middle Passage – the suffering of the unverifiable number of those who perished in the course of it, "*whose bones*," as Ayo tells Joy, "*lay in the heart of mother ocean*," and "*who groaned and died in that dark damp*" of a slave ship next to her (Perry 17). While the temporal distance from slavery makes it impossible for anyone in the twenty-first century to claim an experiential connection to it and/or first-hand knowledge of how enslaved Africans must have felt both physically and spiritually during their slavery, in *Stigmata*, argues Lisa Long, Perry invokes "the suffering that ordinarily cannot be conveyed ... as metonymic proof of a knowable past." Through "the bodily transubstantiation" of her ancestors' suffering, Lizzie is able both to access history and to authenticate it (460), her body becoming the site of remembering as well as a channel for recovery and healing.

Via bodily identification with her female ancestors – when Lizzie is, in mysterious ways, able to reincarnate them, seeing them as well as seeing through them, remembering what their bodies feel like while living parts of their lives – she comes to understand that her ancestors' suffering is also her own. In doing so, Lizzie also comes to comprehend that the original trauma is her legacy, a sort of "transgenerational trauma that shapes her individual self" (Duboin 289), becoming part of her – "*This is your own self talking to you. Don't you understand?*" (Perry 125) – and, in fact, being her life: "*This is my life*. These people belong to me. They ... it's like they've always been there, trying to make me *hear* them" (141, emphasis mine).

As Dori Laub explains in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), the act of listening to and *hearing* a testimony to trauma is of extreme significance for both the victim/survivor and the listener, as "the emergence of the narrative which is being listened to – *and heard* – is ... the process and the place wherein

the cognizance, the ‘knowing’ of the event is given birth to” (Felman and Laub 57, emphasis mine). According to Laub,

the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. He has to address all these, if he is to carry out his function as a listener ... so that ... the impossible witnessing [of the trauma] can indeed take place. (58)

In other words, the listener functions as more than a mere *tabula rasa* onto which one inscribes the text of the traumatic narrative. If healing and recovery are to take place, the listener must engage in the narrative by accepting the historical truth of it and identifying with it, without ever having personal, authentic access to what may seem unreal.

When Ayo, the victim/survivor of the original trauma, fulfills the imperative to testify and to bear witness, and when, choosing to remember, she tells her daughter to write her story down and wait for “*the girl baby ... who gon know thangs*” (Perry 34), her daughter’s response is one of disbelief: “*Mama I get tired of you talking all bout stuff that aint real*” (34). Unable to carry out the function of a listener/hearer, to recognize the truth and identify with it; she fails to re-experience Ayo’s trauma and to co-own the painful knowledge of the primal event – two acts necessary to facilitate healing and recovery. Her attitude to a large extent parallels that of Sarah, Grace’s daughter, who also has closed her ears to hearing the truth about her mother’s past, although for different reasons. Having grown up, the anticipated “girl baby”, Grace, is possessed by uncontrollable pains as Ayo attempts to inhabit her body and memory. Unable to “keep things straight in her head” (58), Grace decides to leave her family – her husband George, her twin boys Frank and Phillip, and her daughter Sarah – to spare them the shame of having their wife and mother locked up in a mental institution. Before her death, she writes a letter to her sister Mary Nell, asking her to give her haunting possessions, a quilt and Joy’s diary, to her yet-to-be-born granddaughter, thinking this act will make her daughter safe from pain and mental confusion:

*Please do not show these to my baby girl Sarah. . . . She will ask questions that you cannot answer that I’m not sure I can answer. And I could never burden her with the thought that her mother is crazy. I could not curse her with these things that are happening to me. I thought getting all that down on the quilt in front of me out of me would get rid of it somehow. I don’t know about that. But I know I can’t pass it on to her this craziness. So save it but not for Sarah. Maybe Sarah will be safe. . . . Please leave these for my granddaughter. I know she ain’t here yet. (15)*

However, this act of love is misunderstood by Sarah, who, feeling abandoned and hurt, carries with her the trauma of separation, in some ways not unlike that of Ayo in that it was imposed on her, a wound that she deals with by choosing not to know the truth about her mother’s life, and, by extension, about the larger ancestral history of the original trauma. Although saved from insanity, Sarah is inadvertently robbed of something far

more essential in life: the connection to her mother, without which she can never be fully whole, and the absence of which, in turn, affects her own relationship with her daughter Lizzie.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the mother/daughter relationship in African American culture, largely informed by the cruel parameters of black mothering set by slavery, has been noted by numerous scholars. Described as protectors, nurturers (although not always affectionate in their behavior), and tradition-bearers passing down the cultural history of their people to ensure its continuity in the hostile world of white hegemony, black mothers – or othermothers in the case of absent mothers<sup>4</sup> – have always been vital for their daughters' quests for self-definition and wholeness. In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), Patricia Hill Collins describes the mother/daughter relationship as a "fundamental relationship" in which "Black mothers ... empowered their daughters by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival as African American women" (Collins 96). As Lisa D. McGill elaborates, the black mother/black daughter dyad has historically been central to the daughter's identity, namely her creation of an affirmed self, for it is by "thinking back through the mother" that the black daughter comes to define herself as a subject (McGill 34).

In *Stigmata*, however, contrary to these conditions, Perry exposes the mother/daughter relationships as dysfunctional in that the mothers fail to pass down to their daughters both cultural and familial histories, thus obscuring the ancestral past and, consequently, distorting their daughters' sense of identity, which can never be accurate without their conscious acknowledgment and incorporation of the past. To provide a corrective to this failure, Perry deftly reconfigures the mother/daughter paradigm, first by replacing it with that of grandmother/granddaughter and then by reversing the roles in the original dyad so that the granddaughter (the daughter in the original paradigm), having acquired the necessary knowledge from the grandmother, can, in turn, pass it on to her mother and assist her in filling the gap in her own life to become whole. In the course of this reversal of roles, however, Perry remains faithful to the centrality of the mother's role, making Lizzie – the daughter – assume the role of her mother's mother, Grace. Therefore, it is Sarah's recognition of her mother Grace in Lizzie that heals her wound of separation and dissolves the wall of denial, enabling her to reclaim the lost connection to both her mother and her ancestral past.

Before Lizzie is able to embody her grandmother and aid Sarah in becoming whole, however, she must learn of the traumatic details of the ancestral past; she must hear Ayo's victim/survivor story without fear, accept it as part of her self, and transform it into a usable text that can be read and embraced by her mother. In other words, she must re-construct Ayo's narrative and ground it in the present, making it a source of healing, both for her mother and herself. Just as Grace feared before her, however, walking the line between (in)sanity and wholeness to find a healthy way of accommodating and living with painful memories, she faces difficulties when confronted by her environment, unwilling to believe in her supernatural powers which seem to transport her into the distant past and make her reincarnate her ancestors.

Listening to her explanations of the mysterious wanderings in the past, Lizzie's parents, especially her father – a medical doctor – question her sanity, ascribing her behavior to delusions, psychosomatism, and/or denial. Although Lizzie knows that she is not insane

no matter how unreal, surreal, and/or irrational her experiences may sound, when she is forced to attend sessions with a psychiatrist, she is unable to explicate what she has not yet fully grasped herself: why this “communication between then and now is going on” (83) and why her dead ancestors keep coming back to haunt her. Describing their visitations, she is certain that she is not just hearing voices: “‘*these are memories*, that’s what they feel like. And when the ... conditions, I guess ... are right, they’re more than memory, they’re events. They’re replays of things that have already happened’” (141, emphasis mine, omissions in the text). However, “chosen” by her ancestors to take an active role in them, Lizzie has no control over their course.

During one of her memories or “replays,” Lizzie experiences the raw pain of being dragged off and chained on the slave ship, which leaves her with bleeding cuts all over her body. Her parents, interpreting the wounds as evidence of a suicide attempt, and afraid for her mental health, see no alternative but to have her institutionalized. Grace’s fear of how her immediate family might have reacted to her own odd behavior years before comes full circle: Lizzie is “stigmatized” as a lunatic in the eyes of society. Her psychiatrists do not understand why and how Lizzie keeps hurting herself because she does not know of any *rational* way to articulate her (and Ayo’s/Grace’s) pain, the rawness of which, according to Perry, cannot be described adequately in words but must be experienced: “Surely, if they knew, if they heard and smelled and saw all, they’d understand how speech ... has become inadequate” (159). Lizzie thus resorts to silence, which the psychiatrists misinterpret as a sign of her being a “mental vegetable” (191). They subject her to all sorts of medication and therapies aimed at restoring what they consider a mental state of wholeness.

Having set up the binary opposition of logos/rationality versus silence that defies rational explanation, Perry exposes the inadequacy of Western medical science to assess Lizzie’s behavior, i.e., her African “rememory,” which, in the words of Timothy Spaulding, “asserts the ability of the past to maintain its surface traces in the physical world of the present” (66). While Lizzie dreams of Africa and wakes with burning scars, her body becomes a site of memory: “The maze of scars, from neck to waist and beyond, [being] permanent remembrance of the power of time folded back upon itself. Proof of lives intersecting from past to present” (Perry 205). Her experience resonates with the African concept of understanding life, in which the past and the present are intertwined: the dead maintaining contact with the living, serving as mediators between the physical (present) and spiritual (eternal) worlds. As John Kuada and Yao Chachah explain in *Ghana: Understanding the People and Their Culture* (1999): “Ancestors communicate with their descendants in many different ways” which may not appear rational, logical, or clear (43). Engaging in communication by listening to/hearing one’s ancestors is presented not as a sign of illness or insanity but rather as an imperative to seek what the ancestors are trying to communicate and why.

Unlike African culture, however, Western culture, with its tradition of empirical science, refutes the possibility of communication with an ancestral, spiritual world, as well as the idea that the past is alive. As Perry reveals in her haunting narrative, those who do not conform to the belief in Western, objective “truth” can be stripped of their freedom and agency: they are proclaimed unfit for the world, regarded as “insane,” and put out of sight of the society to be cured of their mental “illness.” Lizzie’s friend, Ruth, comes close to understanding this pattern when she declares that sanity “is a mutual agreement between



folks trying to control their world'" (193). For Perry, the twentieth-century United States of America in which *Stigmata* is set is a world ruled by white, male, Western rationality that maintains its inalienable right to decide who is sane and who is not. Just as in the nineteenth century, when men had power over the lives of women and whites over the lives of blacks, in Lizzie's world, the agency and freedom of black women are restricted by male dominance and "a gendered Cartesian discourse that tends to 'hystericize' rather than 'historicize' the uncontrollable black female body that remembers" (Duboin 285). It is against this world that Lizzie has to reclaim her right to rememory and assert the subjectivity of her African great-grandmother.

In *Stigmata*, Perry also draws parallels between African spirituality/way of life and Western Christianity by associating Lizzie with a Christlike figure who has been chosen to suffer in order to bring about healing and recovery from the painful collective history of the African Diaspora. As the title of the novel suggests, there is a striking correspondence between Lizzie's scars and stigmata, symbolic marks that the Catholic Church has come to regard as authentic experience of the Savior's torture. Although stigmata are, as Lizzie understands, "generally associated with devout religious persons" (Perry 215), among whom she would not belong, Perry underscores the connecting element between the two kinds of wounds, in Lizzie's words: "Remembering something unbelievably traumatic" (215). While Lizzie's "stigmata" do not elevate her to the status of sainthood or martyrdom, they clearly function as reminders of the original suffering of African Americans that one can access only through faith and collective memory.

Lizzie spends fourteen years in various mental institutions, during which she comes to understand much of her ancestors' experience and slowly learns to polish her "story of redemption and restored mental health" (5) to gain release. Unlike her medical doctors, who believe in objective science that can provide a cure for her mental condition, Lizzie knows that "there is no cure for what I've got" (6), because she is neither physically or psychically ill. Playing the game of those in power, however, she persuades them to believe in her mental wholeness (sanity) and physical wholeness (lack of fresh scars), although she fools neither herself nor her ancestors, who still follow her wherever she goes. Her journey toward genuine wholeness must continue, and Lizzie seems now more fully equipped for the next leg of it. As she admits to herself, "Psychotherapy, psychiatry and long-term residential treatment really cured me of something. Cured me of fear. Made me live with every part of myself every day. Cured me of the certainty that I was lost" (47).

Lizzie's development, however, can be credited not simply to Western science but also to the uninterrupted *time* that she has had on her hands in the mental institutions to accommodate her long-dead relatives in her life and to comprehend why they keep coming to her and what they are trying to communicate. For it is through the numerous visits of her ancestors that Lizzie comes to understand their stories and, unafraid, accepts them as part of herself – feeling, for the first time in her life, *grounded*, as opposed to being lost, and also, perhaps more importantly, *free to remember* without being wounded by her painful memories. As Lizzie realizes, going through her grandmother's possessions once she is back home: "These things can't hurt me anymore. The story on those diary pages belongs to me, but they don't own me. My memories live somewhere spacious now; the airless chamber of horrors has melted into the ground" (47).

While Perry exposes the damaging effects of a traumatic collective past that returns to seek reconciliation in the lives of future generations and that, if unattended to, can paradoxically wound the living, physically and/or mentally, she also suggests that despite the risks involved, conscious amnesia – the cutting off of the hurt and the building of a wall against it – is no solution for dealing with the traumatic past. As Ron Eyerman contends in *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001), slavery “has left scars and thus *must be dealt* with by later generations who have had no experience of the original event” (74, emphasis mine). This is what Lizzie tries to explain to her friend Ruth, who wonders why her relatives keep hurting her: the past hurts because it demands to be heard. It wants to be remembered (Perry 194). Yet the memories alone are not sufficient to bring about healing; as Lizzie comes to know: “It’s how you *feel* about them” (210, emphasis mine). Here lies the difference between Grace’s and Lizzie’s attempts at dealing with Joy’s/Ayo’s repeated visits from the past. Unlike Grace, who interprets Ayo’s imposition as a curse that precludes one from being safe and sane, Lizzie feels instead that it is a gift: “‘*The gift of memory... That’s all that sets me apart, really*’” (205, emphasis mine). Indeed, Lizzie’s approach to the memory sets her so far apart from the rest of her people that she becomes an intermediary or bridge between the past and the present worlds, enabling others to access the past through her.

Born to well-respected, middle-class parents, Lizzie has lived most of her pre-institutionalized life in a comfortable cocoon of hypocrisy and pretense. Educated in a parish school of “lukewarm Catholicism” (32) and raised as a single child in a house that “is a shrine to middle-class order. Not just neat, not just clean, but true to *the standards demanded by our position* in this little belch of a town” (30, emphasis mine), she has never questioned the hegemony of those in power or pondered the absence of African heritage in her family tree. Unlike underclass blacks who may, in fact, look upon contemporary American society as a reincarnation of slave society, Lizzie can afford to revel in the fruits brought by the 1960s and forget the costs paid by those who experienced the original trauma. Her story thus functions as Perry’s attempt at a constructive criticism of the persisting amnesia of members of the black middle class who “have made it” in American society by conforming to the rules of the world of white supremacy, denying their roots and ties to Africa, and/or reclaiming them only superficially through a blind adherence to Afrocentrism, without ever probing the significance of their African slave past and its place in their lives.

To avoid such a mistake and to deal with the “left-over scars” from slavery, Lizzie must come “home” in the true sense of the word. She must re-discover her origins, in the sense of both the African homeland and the original trauma, and enable her kin to do so as well. In this process, she is assisted by her grandmother’s sister, Aunt Eva, who guides her toward an understanding of what needs to be done. In Perry’s narrative, Aunt Eva functions as the wise ancestor who, although devoid of any magical powers, is able to help others by passing on traditional African wisdom. She is the one who understood what her sister Grace was going through; the one who gave Grace’s possessions to Lizzie after Mary Nell died before fulfilling Grace’s request to pass them to her yet-to-be-born granddaughter; and the first one to recognize in Lizzie the reincarnated Grace, who has returned to ensure that the healing – the completion of the circle – will take place.



Aunt Eva elucidates for Lizzie the true meaning of the past, which is, in the traditional African understanding, seen not as a separate segment of one's life preceding the present but rather as an extension or continuation of the present: "'The past – *that's what you call it* – is a circle. If you walk long enough, you catch up with yourself'" (Perry 119, emphasis mine). Having always been exposed to the Western worldview, in which the past is regarded as the first of the three distinct steps on the ladder to the linear progression toward the future, Lizzie seems initially confused by the African cyclical understanding of life because to her, one "'can't make progress that way'" (119). In the traditional African understanding, however, as Perry depicts it, one's development is not measured by spatial (upward or forward) mobility; rather, it is determined by one's destiny, which one receives from the Supreme Being together with the breath of life (Kuada and Chachah 41). The ultimate goal of each person is thus to comprehend his/her place in the circle of life and the role he/she is to play in it: what purpose his/her life has in the larger "scheme of things" where nothing happens randomly. Accordingly, Lizzie's task is to find out where she fits in the circle of the eternal lifetimes to which her ancestors, through the pages in the diary and the images on the quilt, unlocked the door, and where, as Ayo describes it in the diary, "*We are forever. Here at the bottom of heaven we live in the circle. We back and gone and back again*" (Perry 17).

Aunt Eva gives Lizzie only a small clue to put her on the right path when she tells her: "'You done already been here'" (119), addressing her as her own sister, "*Grace*" (120). Her impromptu means of address, collapsing two generations into one, signals that Grace has been reincarnated in Lizzie so that she might return to finish what Ayo has started: the task of completing the circle and recovering the original wholeness. To attend to the "unfinished business" (96), Lizzie sets about piecing her memories into an appliqué quilt that would evoke "the lifetimes layered one on top of the other" (213). As Duboin explains, Perry's use of a quilt is doubly significant here in that it functions "as an overarching metaphor for the legacy of the past" and a "gendered expression of a shared cultural memory," for quilting, she elaborates, "has roots in African history and culture; it ties up the past with the present, the old with the new. It facilitates female bonding and bridging across generations and continents" (293,4).

Indeed, as Margot Anne Kelley reminds us in "*Sisters' Choices: Quilting Aesthetics in Contemporary African American Fiction*," one of the major qualities of quilting is "the promise of creating unity among disparate elements, of establishing connections in the midst of fragmentation" (176), the promise that Lizzie hopes to achieve as she connects her ancestors' stories with her own and involves her mother in the project. To design her quilt, Lizzie first draws vignettes of Grace's life to construct her story in the hope that they will enable Sarah to recognize her lost mother and accept her as the missing element in her life: "I have to continue the story, and maybe, please God, Mother will understand in the process" (Perry 61). Lizzie portrays Grace in all her complexity, as a loving yet desperate mother who abandons her family, leaving for the North, only to come back home as a dead body in a casket. Tellingly, she assembles the cut pieces of the story "like a horseshoe" (153) – a shape suggestive of an unfinished circle – having used both *old* scraps of cloth and some *new* cloth she has bought for the binding, thus symbolically ensuring both connection and continuation. Asking her mother to help her sew them together, Lizzie engages her in the healing process of reclamation as she invites her to look at her past in order to

be able to move forward in life. With this assistance, Sarah is eventually able to overcome her repressed sense of loss and, having recognized Grace in her own daughter, she “picks the needle [Lizzie] had put down and finishes the stitching. The circle is complete... and the gap finally closed” (230).

As Duboin points out, “The completion of the quilt, with its elements that form a unified whole, means the completion of the circle and the recovery of wholeness” (298). Sarah has reclaimed her mother and thus has been able to acknowledge the long-denied ancestral past that Lizzie has incorporated in her project by inserting into her own quilt a “tiny replica” (Perry 72) of Grace’s quilt with Ayo’s story, eternally connecting the lives of all of them.<sup>5</sup> By doing so, Lizzie has also completed her task and found her place in the eternal circle of ancestral lifetimes. Yet, the completion of the quilt is also significant in other ways. While Sarah’s final act of stitching Ayo’s indigo-blue scrap around Grace’s neck – “the very old bit of a blue cloth” (Perry 17) that Lizzie found in the trunk and kept with her – signifies transgenerational connection as well as a sense of belonging, it also, and perhaps more importantly, highlights the connection to African origins and aesthetics, for the indigo-blue scrap refers to the West African tradition of dying cloth—a tradition of which Ayo, as Lizzie learns in one of her memories, was a master. Moreover, Sarah’s looking back at the past in order to move forward in her life is reminiscent of the West African philosophical concept of *sankofa* (go back and take), which, as Adolph H. Agbo explains in *Values of Adinkra Symbols* (1999), “teaches the wisdom in learning from the past” (3).<sup>6</sup>

As noted earlier, the distinct point of view that Perry brings into her novel has much affinity with Africana womanist aesthetics, defined by Clenora Hudson-Weems in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993). According to Hudson-Weems, Africana womanism connects continental Africans and Africans in the diaspora while emphasizing the ancestry and locale of both: Africa (22). In her narrative, Perry never loses Africa as her focus; her firm intention to reclaim it in its original, pre-colonial condition is evident from the beginning of the novel when Ayo, the symbol of Africa and true to the nature of an Africana woman,<sup>7</sup> asserts her right to self-definition: “*My name mean happiness she say. Joy. That why I name you that so I don’t forget who I am what I mean to this world*” (Perry 7).<sup>8</sup> By highlighting Africa’s original humanity, Perry strives to override a current attitude that prevents many American blacks from reclaiming their ancestral roots: the equation of Africa with poverty, disease, and death. Moreover, she attempts to challenge “the Eurocentric *status quo*” (Hudson-Weems xviii) that seems to permeate mainstream feminism, prioritizing gender as the key issue on its agenda.

As Daphne Williams Ntiri explicates in her Introduction to *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, while there is no doubt that women on all continents suffer from sexist domination and exploitation, “the discourse involving Africana women cannot escape the historical realities of hegemony and ethnocentrism by western cultures and *the accompanying atrocities of slavery*, colonialism and oppression. The status, struggles and experiences of the Africana women... remain typically unique and separate from that of other women of color, and of course, from White women” (in Hudson-Weems 3, emphasis mine). Consequently, unlike a mainstream white or black feminist who prioritizes gender, an Africana womanist must prioritize race and “embrace the concept of a collective struggle for the entire family in the overall struggle for liberation survival” (Hudson-Weems 44). Accordingly, although Perry chooses to tell the story of the Middle

Passage primarily through fragments of stories of four generations of women, she firmly binds them with a fragment describing Grace's memory of being forced to witness a scene in which white people on a slave ship throw a small black *boy* overboard. In doing so, she firmly establishes that the traumatic event, together with the heritage of "the unspeakable things unspoken," applies not just to black women but the entire black race.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Perry engages men in her project of healing and wholeness, making them part of the ancestral circle. Lizzie's father, initially an embodiment of Western rationality, eventually comes to understand how important and meaningful the quilting experience is and decides to make a contribution to it. As Lizzie realizes, buying a frame to make the quilt a *permanent* fixture in their home "seems to be his way of finally getting in the game" (197), an attempt suggestive of a need to provide a sort of grounding for the uprootedness of the black diaspora. Furthermore, Lizzie's black lover, Anthony Paul, has also had dreams of Ayo, which he is able to transform into a painting and which make him open to trust Lizzie's interpretation of her familial history.

Indeed, although written from the perspective of a black woman, *Stigmata* does not suggest that only black women have access to the historical truth. While Lizzie is the "chosen" one to mediate between the past and the present worlds, to enable the completion of the circle, and to re-experience the original trauma, she is not the only character to have access to the historical legacy of African Americans. And, interestingly enough, neither is the black race. Coming to terms with her past, Lizzie meets in the Montgomery "nut-house" a mysterious white woman who is able to see both Ayo and Grace, and thus testify to the historical reality. By including in her narrative this character, without abandoning her project of giving voice to the African women brought on slave ships to America, Perry deftly extends the boundaries of the Africana perspective to suggest that African American history is not just personal, familial, or exclusively black but it is the history of us all if only we choose to acknowledge it.<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I define Africana womanist consciousness in accord with Clenora Hudson-Weems' concept of Africana womanism, described in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers Inc., 1998. c. 1993). I return to the concept in more detail at the end of my essay.

<sup>2</sup> The last name DuBose brings to one's mind the name of W.E.B. DuBois, associated with the concept of double consciousness. Perry's playfulness with names is evident throughout the novel. The name Lizzie resonates with Lissie from Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), who, just like Lizzie, is also "the one who remembers everything," and Leesy from Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1965), who is also somehow connected to the supernatural. For more details about the spiritual dimension of other names in the novel, see Duboin 301, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, while Sarah is not cursed with insanity, she curses her own mother for choosing Lizzie to inherit it (Perry 46).

<sup>4</sup> The concept of othermothers is key to the centrality of women in African extended families. As Patricia Hill Collins explains in *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), "Grandmothers, sisters, aunts, or cousins act as othermothers by taking on child-care responsibilities for one another's child."

When needed, temporary child-care arrangements can turn into long-term care of informal adoption" (119-120).

<sup>5</sup> Lizzie is, of course, connected to Ayo/Joy from the very beginning. Besides feeling her pain on her own body, she was fourteen years old when she inherited the trunk with the haunting possessions, the same age as Ayo at the moment of her separation from her mother and Africa.

<sup>6</sup> Perry's use of a quilt works on other levels, too. First, the art of quilting – through which Lizzie and her mother achieve wholeness by sewing together the scraps of the lives of her ancestors – is replicated in the structure of the novel, where Perry pieces together the fragments of various written narratives. Second, just as Lizzie finds her place in the eternal circle of ancestral lifetimes by sewing her quilt, so Perry, with her literary quilt, establishes her place in the circle of African American women authors creating an alternative history in their writing.

<sup>7</sup> The self-definition corresponds, according to Hudson-Weems, to the second of eighteen features of the Africana womanist, who is: "(1) a self-namer and (2) a self-definer, (3) family-centered, (4) genuine in sisterhood, (5) strong, (6) in concert with male in struggle, (7) *whole*, (8) authentic, (9) a flexible role player, (10) respected, (11) recognized, (12) *spiritual*, (13) male compatible, (14) respectful of elders, (15) adaptable, (16) ambitious, (17) mothering and (18) nurturing" (143, emphasis mine). Due to lack of space and given the focus of the article, I do not discuss how all the features pertain to the lives of female protagonists in the novel, a fertile topic that would certainly deserve an article of its own.

<sup>8</sup> Ayo's reference strongly resonates with Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), which also suggests that Africans are inextricably linked to joy.

<sup>9</sup> The concept comes from Toni Morrison's essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature" (Eds. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting: *The Black Feminist Reader*, Malden, MS: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2001, 24-56).

<sup>10</sup> This idea is further underscored by the ways in which Perry engages the reader in her project generative of wholeness and healing, especially her use of narrative strategies. By employing the means of "the fantastic," collapsing the temporal frames through Lizzie's reincarnations and mysterious travels in time, Perry contracts the distance between narrated events and the moment of their reading, thus making the protagonists' pain more tangible for the reader.

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# At the Intersection: The Conflicting Position of the Army Chaplain in World War One

Jane Mattisson

## Abstract

*Their conflicting roles as officers and upholders of the faith made army chaplains particularly vulnerable. They are one of the most difficult but also most revealing groups to analyse within the army of World War One. By focusing on Anne Perry's quintet on World War One, this article demonstrates that fiction has a special ability to illustrate the complexity and vulnerability of the army chaplain's position as it reveals a multi-faceted and deeply felt reality which is both more personal and intense than that provided by documentary accounts insisting on factuality.*

*Keywords: Army Chaplain, duty, World War One, Anglican, Ypres, fiction, history*

As officers and upholders of the faith, army chaplains experienced World War One from a variety of perspectives. They were caught at the intersection where the interests of the Church and the Army conflicted. "Tied to the command by both rank and conviction" (Perry, *At Some Disputed Barricade* 3), their multiple identities and vulnerable position make them one of the most difficult but also most revealing groups to analyse within the army of World War One. The chaplain must constantly negotiate a compromise between his spiritual and military duties as he offered a message of love, peace and forgiveness in a world where one was expected to kill or be killed. Fiction has a special ability to illustrate the complexity and vulnerability of the chaplain's position in time of war. The reader becomes an eye-witness to a multi-faceted and deeply felt reality which is more personal and intense than that provided by documentary accounts insisting on factuality (Cobley 12).

This article focuses on the representation of army chaplains in Anne Perry's recently published quintet on World War One. I demonstrate that Perry's novels are history *as* fiction as opposed to history *and* fiction.<sup>1</sup> The army chaplain is largely ignored in memoirs and popular histories; on the rare occasions he is mentioned, it is usually in dismissive or derogatory terms (Moynihan 12). The same holds true for fictional representations of World-War-One chaplains. Anne Perry's quintet constitutes an important exception. Each



of the five novels, *No Graves As Yet* (2003), *Shoulder the Sky* (2004), *Angels in the Gloom* (2005), *At Some Disputed Barricade* (2006), and *We Shall Not Sleep* (2007) covers one year of the war. At the outbreak of war, the protagonist, Joseph Reavley, is a doctor of theology and lecturer of Greek and Hebrew at St John's College, Cambridge. He serves as an Anglican chaplain at the western front from 1915 to the signing of the armistice in 1918. The novels, based on historical research and the author's conversations with her maternal grandfather, Captain Joseph Reavley, offer rare opportunities to follow the life, thoughts and compromises of a chaplain from enlistment to demobbing. Joseph Reavley engages the interest and sympathy of the reader from the very beginning. His story is both universal and deeply personal.

The number of chaplains of all denominations serving in the Allied forces increased by 400 percent during the war, from 113 in 1914 to 3,480 in 1918 (Marrin 206). Reavley is neither more noble nor talented than many of his historical counterparts. He does, however, exhibit greater endurance by deciding to remain at the front for the duration of the war.<sup>2</sup> Like a number of chaplains, he is awarded the Military Cross for rescuing the wounded from No Man's Land. For Reavley, this award is of little significance in comparison with his Christian duty of saving life. He is not interested in military honour. Although he accepts his official military responsibility to maintain morale among the troops, he prioritises his Christian mission to comfort his men.

The reader understands from the very first novel that Joseph Reavley is fully aware of the conflicting nature of his military and ecclesiastical duties. What the narrator describes as the fickle nature of mankind complicates his position. Reavley cannot trust his fellow soldiers, officers and privates alike. The narrator of *No Graves as Yet* explains, for example, that "[d]ealing with man it is wise not to leap where you cannot see. Dealing with God," on the other hand, "is the final step without which the journey has no purpose" (Perry 189). Reavley, as an upholder of the faith, recognises that being seen to trust in God is an important part of his task at the front. This is, however, an increasingly difficult mission as he faces destruction and bloodshed on a scale hitherto unseen.

In addition, the church which Reavley represents in Cambridge and at the front was in poor shape at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the mid-nineteenth century, the Church of England had been losing its hold over all social classes and was particularly affected by the national decline in church attendance.<sup>3</sup> Soldiers who enlisted in Britain's army complained of the lack of fellowship, pew rents, and a socially exclusive priesthood which was seen as the enemy of labour and the friend of nobles and capitalists.<sup>4</sup> The working man was largely oblivious to the consolations of religion. Where religion was deemed important, he favoured the Roman Catholics or sectarian bodies such as the Primitive Methodists, Baptists and Salvationists (Marrin 29). Charles Booth's<sup>5</sup> verdict was irrefutable: "the great mass of the people remain apart from all forms of religious communion, apparently untouched by the Gospel" (qtd. in Marrin 28). Instead, the lay doctrine of progress predominated. Utility, success, decorum, diligence, perseverance, moral commitment and the veneration of socially motivated effort and service were at the centre of Britain's achievement in the world and were the core of her conduct of the war (Eksteins 185). The challenge for chaplains was to bridge the gulf between the religion of Christ and the doctrine of progress.<sup>6</sup> This task was made particularly difficult as chaplains were separated from other members of the army by two apparently insurmountable obstacles: lack



of understanding of and/or sympathy with the Christian message, and class allegiance. The former applies to both officers and private soldiers; the latter, to privates only. Both divisions cause Reavley considerable anguish.

Many private soldiers regarded Anglican clergy as ‘starchy’, out of touch with real life and the mouthpieces of Conservative views and traditions. They were nonetheless familiar with Christian values and Protestant theology having attended Sunday school or read John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Indeed, according to the World-War-One cultural historian, Paul Fussell, “it was the one book everybody knew” (137–8). While the waste, horror, loss and fear that Christian encounters on his journey to the Celestial City provided World-War-One soldiers with images with which to describe the indescribable (Fussell 139), they did not offer an explanation for the suffering witnessed and experienced at the front. Time and time again, Reavley finds himself unable to offer any explanation (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 106) because at best, sacrifice in the service of military victory makes no sense; at worst, it contradicts the Christian message of love for one’s fellow man.

Working-class suspicions of the church and its representatives were shared by many officers. The upper class had been the mainstay of the Church of England. Like the working class, their religious zeal had been on the decline since the mid-nineteenth century. Traditionally, it was the upper class who took Orders in the Anglican Church. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, there was a proliferation of professions within teaching, commerce and the Empire; it was no longer necessary for the sons of gentlemen to choose the Church as a profession. And a career in the church was not as lucrative as it had once been.<sup>7</sup> A division had arisen between the upper class and the Anglican Church which proved to be irreparable.

The second obstacle between officers and men mentioned earlier in relation to the condition of the Church of England, i.e. social class, was no less problematical for the army chaplain. Joseph Reavley is the son of a gentleman and a Member of Parliament. At the beginning of Perry’s quintet, he is a teacher at one of Britain’s most exclusive universities. His students belong to the upper class. Like so many Anglican clergymen in real life, Reavley has much to learn about the ways and ideas of the working class who serve under him.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, as a junior officer (most chaplains were given the rank of Captain), he is hampered by his inferior rank. He has little power but must persuade the men under him to obey orders blindly, even those which both Reavley and his men recognise to be ill-advised or unrealistic. A case in point is when he tries to persuade his commanding officer to rescind an order to retrieve wounded men in No Man’s Land. The objections of Reavley and his men are overruled, with enormous casualties as a result (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 104–6). Reavley’s academic training has taught him to think for himself; he understands that his men are right, but like them, he is expected to obey orders without question and without considering the consequences.

As an academic and theologian, Reavley’s world view is different to that of many of his fellow soldiers and officers. He has learned to revere England’s history, its landscape and culture. The reason he refuses to believe that war will break out in 1914 is that he has complete faith in the inviolability of English culture and “the order of things” (*No Graves as Yet* 52). Reavley is certain that mankind will continue to enrich the earth (*No Graves as Yet* 52). He pays no heed to Sebastian’s warnings about a new kind of destructive war employing steamships, aeroplanes and long-range guns. Perry’s chaplain trusts in God,

who will not allow the civilised world to be plunged into chaos. No amount of discussion can reconcile the views of Reavley and his student.

Joseph Reavley is neither mentally nor physically prepared for war. The army provided no training for chaplains, and its recruitment procedure was very basic. At the recruitment interview, often only one question was asked: "Imagine yourself in a trench beside a dying soldier. He has five minutes to live. How would you deal with the position?" (Schweitzer 63). The prospective chaplain had little or no concept of what a trench was or what a mortally wounded soldier looked like or needed. The first injured soldier Reavley encounters is Private Corliss. This is an important case for Reavley because it forces him to understand the difference between the principles of the army and those of the church. Having deliberately shot himself in the hand in order to be sent home, Private Corliss is subject to the harshest of military punishments, i.e. the firing squad. Reavley can see only a man filled with physical and mental anguish. He can offer neither comfort nor protection, and is forced to acknowledge that "there was nothing human big enough" (*Shoulder the Sky* 34) to help the unfortunate private. Reavley is filled with guilt and remorse as he recognises that he has failed Corliss. He wonders where his God is in the presence of such misery. He knows that he is not alone in such thoughts.

His faith is tested over and over again at the front. After the first gas attack at Ypres he asks himself if God is blind or deaf, or perhaps quite simply occupied elsewhere (*Shoulder the Sky* 80). Reavley even doubts if he can identify the few absolutes that exist, a fundamental requirement of a chaplain in his eyes (*Shoulder the Sky* 233). His period of sick leave in 1916 gives him the necessary time and distance to reflect on his decision to join the army and proves to be a turning point in his military career. Numerous discussions with the local vicar, Hallam Kerr, consolidate Reavley's view that the Christian virtues of honour, courage and love remain true whatever the external circumstances (*Angels in the Gloom* 374). When at the very end of his sick leave Shanley Concoran, an old family friend, is found guilty of treason (he has sabotaged the development of a secret weapon), Joseph's lack of faith in mankind is reinforced. He decides to place all his trust in the goodness of God, a trust he will not betray because to do so would mean he would have nothing left "to offer to the men in the trenches, to those I love, or to myself" (*Angels in the Gloom* 374). Despite the fact that his fellow men are unreliable, he is determined to continue to care for them as part of his Christian responsibility. He returns to the front a stronger man: he has looked inside himself, questioned his faith, and resolved his doubts. The final words of the novel read: "He walked into the street smiling, to return to his friends, and his purpose" (*Angels in the Gloom* 375). He is now more able to deal with the demands of the Christian church which he represents and the army to which he owes allegiance.

As the war progresses, Reavley recognises with growing certainty that the chaos of battle requires obedience to rules; these rules are, however, moral rather than military: "It's we who are left who need to keep the rules – for ourselves. At times it's all we have" (*Shoulder the Sky* 232). He believes that the only guarantee of the preservation of morality and the continuation of civilisation is faith in God and "its power to outlast everything else" (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 196). Military discipline has no place in this vision.

While military discipline has no place in the continuation of civilisation for Reavley, Germany certainly does. His travels in Germany as a young man and his admiration for German culture and philosophy give rise to increasing internal conflict. Reavley sees

Germany as the land “of science and philosophy and vast myths and dreams” (*Shoulder the Sky* 10). Germans are not enemies. While working as an interpreter at a hospital admitting wounded German soldiers, he reflects that these men are “much like the men from his own village that he talked with every day” (*We Shall Not Sleep* 13). He gradually comes closer and closer to the view widely held by many private soldiers and so eloquently expressed in Thomas Hardy’s poem, ‘The Man He Killed.’<sup>9</sup> In the eyes of the church, Reavley’s attitude is admirable; in the eyes of the men under him, it is understandable; but for his commanding officers, his views are treason. The reader’s sympathies are with Reavley because he has reason and humanity on his side.

It is this humanity, fuelled by Christian love and duty, which prompts Reavley to commit repeated acts of bravery at the front. Like Anglican chaplains in reality, he is not permitted to move up to the front lines but chooses to do so nonetheless. As a consequence of the prohibition to move forward, a myth developed that Anglican chaplains were cowardly. This appears in the writings of World-War-One survivors:

For Anglican regimental chaplains we had little respect. If they had shown one-tenth the courage, endurance and other human qualities that the regimental doctor showed, the British Expeditionary Force might well have started a religious revival. But they had not, being under orders to avoid getting mixed up with the fighting and to stay behind with the transport. Soldiers could hardly respect a chaplain who obeyed these orders, and yet not one in fifty seemed sorry to obey them. (Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, 1929. Qtd. in Moynihan 13)

The myth of the cowardly Anglican chaplain is also reproduced in modern fiction. Sebastian Faulks’s *Birdsong* is a case in point, where the chaplain is described as a “useless earthbound bird” because he “never ventured beyond the backlines” (218). Perry’s quintet, on the other hand, bears witness to the courage of the many Anglican chaplains who defied the rules and won the respect of their men.<sup>10</sup>

In a world where manliness was associated with soldierly qualities, it is not surprising that chaplains were sometimes regarded as weak. Joseph Reavley is mocked for his non-combatant status; this continues until the end of the war. When, for example, he defends a German prisoner who is being cruelly beaten by his British captors, he is challenged by Turner, a private in the Cambridgeshire regiment; the narrator’s comments explain Turner’s animosity: “Joseph was a chaplain, a non-combatant, and this soldier considered him inferior” (*We Shall Not Sleep* 6). Reavley is laughed at and the atmosphere is hostile. Despite repeated feats of bravery and the award of the Military Cross, he must live with the stigma of being a non-combatant.

Catholic priests had a more clearly defined role in the war. They were also generally more popular among soldiers because they had a working-class background. In addition, unlike Anglicans, they had an authorised form for sacramental confession and absolution,<sup>11</sup> an adequate ritual for the commendation of the dying, and an official form of unction. In times of emergency, sacramental rituals seem to have an objectivity and professionalism that can be more effective than improvised prayer and counsel. The Church of England had no form of popular prayer as simple and objective as the rosary or Catholic litanies. In times of emergency and chaos, rituals can create a sense of solidarity and form a welcome

link to pre-war life (Wilkinson 133–4). This is described by Guy Chapman in his memoir, *A Passionate Prodigality* (1933): “one felt a serenity and certitude streaming from [the Catholic chaplain] such as was not possessed by our bluff Anglicans... The Church of Rome sent a man into action mentally and spiritually cleaned. The Church of England could only offer you a cigarette” (qtd. in Marrin 208). Popular literature reinforces these truths. Catholic Father Buckley in Sebastian Barry’s *A Long Long Way*, for example, is active in the front lines, administers the sacraments, and dies giving the last rites to dying soldiers (237). Perry’s Reavley has no sacraments to offer. His strength of personality and personal sacrifices combined with a manner which commands respect<sup>12</sup> must be sufficient. He expresses this as follows: “With being an officer comes the duty to be right... In peacetime you can order obedience, regardless of your own qualities, but in war you have to earn respect. Moral courage is required as well as physical – the more so of officers” (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 257). Joseph is not only respected by his men, he is loved by them.

The second turning point in Joseph Reavley’s war career comes one year after the sick leave which constituted his first. It is prompted by the trial at which he is ordered to defend his men in a court of law. The trial fills the two final chapters of *At Some Disputed Barricade*. The narrator describes Reavley’s effort as “trying to defend the morally just and legally indefensible” (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 422). The defendants, who are accused of mutiny and murder, are morally right in trying to put an end to Major Northrup’s period of command because his incompetence puts lives at risk; at the same time, Northrup is a senior officer and must be obeyed without question. In addition, the mock drumhead court martial<sup>13</sup> at which the accused ‘try’ Northrup cannot be condoned under any circumstances. The case is also problematical for Reavley on a personal level: one of those implicated in the escape of the soldiers on trial is Joseph’s own sister, Judith. To win the case, Reavley must expose Major Northrup’s incompetence. Uncomfortable details about General Northrup’s past must also be revealed. Joseph must also face one of the British Army’s most notorious and successful lawyers, Lieutenant-Colonel Faulkner.

The trial bears witness to the fact that Joseph has learned to compromise between his spiritual and military duties: he protects his innocent clients, hides the truth about his sister’s involvement in the accused soldiers’ escape, and exposes the inadequacy of his superior officers. He must play the part of a lawyer in a system he does not understand and according to rules with which he is not familiar. His loyalty is with his men, for whom he feels a responsibility as their chaplain. He must stage the performance carefully to ensure that justice is done even though technically the accused have broken military law.

Reavley trusts in God. He calls to the stand just two of the accused and two witnesses. The simple words “Please God this was the right decision” (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 423) indicate that Joseph has little faith in his own ability to win the case. However, he plays his trump card with skill as he allows Private Morel to expose the identity of the murderer and the reasons why the latter wished to kill Major Northrup. He demonstrates considerable courage in calling General Northrup to the stand to collaborate Morel’s evidence. Reavley’s final address to the jury is a testimony to the horror of war and the honour of those fighting. Reavley sees himself as one of the men as he tells the jury “[a]lmost all of us came here because we wished to, we came to fight for the land and the people we love, our own people” (*At Some Disputed Barricade* 449).

Because Reavley has right on his side, he gains the respect of all ranks and manages to fulfil all his duties: Christian, military and familial. The accused are released, Judith's involvement is kept secret, and military justice is done as the murderer is identified and sentenced. *At Some Disputed Barricade* ends with the words:

[Joseph] had found a decision within himself and been prepared to pay the price of it, bitter as it was. He had not flinched. He had repaid the trust. Now he was dizzy with hope and a searing promise of faith, a belief in the possibility of the impossible, even out of utter darkness. (452)

The decision that Joseph finds within himself at the trial is a consequence of the resolve made one year earlier while on sick leave, namely to serve his men in whatever way he can and at whatever the cost. The final novel in the quintet describes Reavley standing next to his men as the firing stops and the war comes to an end. He ends the war as he began it, side-by-side with his men.

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Chaplains make rare and brief appearances in modern literature. Anne Perry's quintet is an exception and an excellent example of fiction *as* history rather than fiction *and* history. Joseph Reavley's career shows a moral dilemma whose depth and complexity fiction is well suited to convey. Joseph's actions and thoughts, challenges, moments of certitude and vacillation, his earnest wish to serve two masters as different as God and the army cannot only be understood but also felt by the reader. Chaplains may not always have been as brave, loyal and virtuous as Joseph Reavley. They were human and thus not infallible, but their concern and affection for their men were genuine. Perry draws attention to these unknown heroes, demonstrating the special contribution literature can make to our understanding of the human tragedy of war.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This distinction has been made by Nooral Hasan in relation to Thomas Hardy's novels. See *Thomas Hardy. The Sociological Imagination* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 185.

<sup>2</sup> In a discussion of the recruitment system for army chaplains, Richard Schweitzer observes that a combination of poor pay, homesickness, a sense of duty to the home church and/or a conviction that they had failed resulted in approximately one thousand chaplains declining to renew their contract. *The Cross and the Trenches. Religious Faith and Doubt among British and American Great War Soldiers* (Westport, CT: Praegar Publishers, 2003), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Between a religious census conducted in 1886 (reported in Sir William Robertson Nicoll's *British Weekly*) and 1902-3, when the *Daily News* issued the results of Richard Mudie-Smith's survey, all denominations had suffered a setback. While Nonconformists lost approximately 6,000, a negligible number, Church of England figures fell from 535,000 to 396,000 (Marrin 28).

<sup>4</sup> The Bishop of Kensington's report, *The Army and Religion: An Enquiry and its Bearing upon the Religious Life of the Nation*, 1919, 447-9. Qtd. in Marrin, 205.



<sup>5</sup> Charles Booth (1840-1916) was a well-known philanthropist and social researcher. He documented working-class life in London at the end of the nineteenth century (published under the title *Life and Labour of the People in London*).

<sup>6</sup> For a description of the state of the Church of England at the outbreak of war, see Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London:SPCK, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> For statistics showing clergymen's salaries, see Albert Marrin, *The Last Crusade*, 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Reavley has one advantage over other officers in this task: he is not required to take military responsibility. As Gordon Corrigan argues, "[a]s the chaplain was not involved in the day-to-day running of the unit or in the decision-making process, and had no real military responsibility, he could afford a familiarity that the regimental officer could not" (*Mud, Blood and Poppycock*. London: Cassell, 2007), 100.

<sup>9</sup> The final verse of the poem reads: "Yes, quaint and curious war is!/You shoot a fellow down/ You'd treat if met where any bar is/Or help to half-a-crown." The poem was published in 1902 but did not become well-known until World War One. The narrator of *Shoulder the Sky* observes: "Many of [the soldiers] did not want to kill Germans. Some had guilty nightmares, blood-drenched dreams from which they awoke screaming, soaked in sweat, afraid to tell anyone of thoughts that might be seen as disloyalty, cowardice, even treason, but were simply humanity" (35-6).

<sup>10</sup> Doris L. Bergen argues that the army chaplain answered the soldiers' need for a hero, one who stood steadfast in the face of chaos. See *The Sword of the Lord. Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2004), 13. Father Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy was one of the Anglican chaplains who became a hero. He was a poet as well as an Anglican minister. He gained the nickname of 'Woodbine Willie' from his distribution of cigarettes to the soldiers during World War One. Like the fictional Joseph Reavley, he volunteered as an army chaplain at the outbreak of war, was awarded the Military Cross in 1916 for rescuing men in No Man's Land, and returned to England at the end of the war to serve a congregation. He wrote a number of poems about his experiences in the War; these appeared in *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1918) and *More Rough Rhymes* (1919). See also 'Woodbine Willie: A Cleric at War' for further details of Father Studdert's life and war career: 22nd February 2010.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/herfordandworcester/hi/people\\_and\\_places/history/newsid\\_8339000/8339671.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/herfordandworcester/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8339000/8339671.stm).

<sup>11</sup> One of the most famous Catholic priests at the front was Father William Doyle. In a letter to his father, William Doyle wrote: "We reap a good harvest with confessions every day, at any time the men care to come, but there are many who for one reason or another cannot get away, hence before going into the trenches, which nearly always means death for some poor fellows, we give them General Absolution" (O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle S.J.* 283).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the importance of commanding respect, see G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*. (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> A hasty judicial proceeding in which the principles of law are disregarded or perverted. In Perry's trial, Major Northrup faces a firing squad comprised of several of Reavley's men. One of the latter, who bears a personal grudge towards the Major, loads his gun with live ammunition instead of the blank bullets originally agreed upon. Major Northrup dies. All those present at the trial are arrested. It is Joseph Reavley who discovers the identity of the murderer.

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# The Borders of Realism in Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*

Jaroslav Kušnír

## Abstract

*This paper analyzes Paul Auster's use of narrative techniques such as metafiction and intertextuality as postmodern narrative techniques along with the imagery of presence and absence and the complementarity principle to point out the author's depiction of the problematic status of physical reality in the contemporary world. Based on the theory of possible worlds in literature (Ronen), the paper also points out the way in which Auster, by using these narrative strategies and techniques, problematizes such myths of American cultural identity as the American Dream and emphasizes the difference between physical reality and the world of fiction; this becomes one of the key themes within the allegorical framework of the novel.*

*Keywords: Realism, borders, postmodernism, allegory, narrative techniques, American dream, textuality, imagination, ontological levels*

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## Introduction

If Paul Auster is considered to be a postmodernist author, it is most probably because of his book *New York Trilogy*.<sup>1</sup> His narrative strategies, however, are reminiscent partly of psychological realism and partly of modernist narrative techniques emphasizing the epistemological dominant.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in my view, some of his works include realistic narrative techniques and are modernist rather than postmodernist (*In the Country of the Last Things*, 1988; *The Music of Chance*, 1990; *Mr. Vertigo*, 1994). By realistic I mean a narrative strategy based on the mimetic principle, through the use of which an author emphasizes the vision of the world as supposedly clear, understandable, logical and explicable through reason and logical operations of mind, to which all formal aspects of poetics are subsumed (the narrative voice, depiction of characters, setting and plot, for example). As Raymond Federman argues, "Realistic fiction presupposes chronological time and as the medium

of a plotted narrative, an irreducible individual psyche as the subject of its characterization, and above all, the ultimate concrete reality of things as the object and rationale of its description” (137).

Postmodern literature is sometimes characterized as including a romantic element of nostalgia and the undermining potential of individualist rebellion.<sup>3</sup> In his study on American postmodern fiction entitled *Romantic Postmodernism in American Fiction* (1996), Eberhard Alsen even distinguishes between realistic and romantic postmodernism.<sup>4</sup> Although his understanding of *realistic* and *romantic* postmodernism, as well as the identification of some authors as postmodernist (Saul Bellow, for example), is open to question, and terms such as ‘romantic’ and ‘realistic’ postmodernism are self-denying, what is important is that Alsen highlights various kinds of hybridity and mixing, especially of realistic and romantic poetics within the framework of a single postmodern literary work. It is my contention that, besides using partly realistic, partly modernist poetics, Paul Auster’s work also contains romantic elements in Alsen’s sense (a depiction of the lonely, sometimes eccentric individual in search of the meaning of life). Yet, although Auster makes use of psychological realist and modernist poetics in some of his works, he also deploys intricate intertextual and intratextual relationships and complicated chains of metafictional elements<sup>5</sup> such as parody, allusion and intertextuality, thus creating postmodern poetics and a postmodern vision of the world based on the allegorical principle as characterized by Craig Owens. In Owens’ view,

In allegorical structure [...] one text is read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest [...]. Conceived in this way, allegory becomes the model of all commentary, all critique, insofar as these are involved in rewriting a primary text in terms of its figural meaning [...]. Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter [...]. He does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image. If he adds, however, he does so only to replace: the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one; it is a supplement. (Owens 54)

In my view, it is above all the systematic use of metafictional and intertextual elements that create postmodern meaning in Auster’s fiction. Although not the best of his postmodern novels, one of his most recent works – *The Book of Illusions* (2002) – testifies to this strategy of seemingly establishing a traditional psychological realistic or modernist narrative and its further development into postmodern poetics. As in many of his novels, Auster introduces a lonely, reclusive and alienated individual (Professor David Zimmer) in search of the meaning of life – here more specifically recovering from the tragedy of losing his family in an airplane crash. On the basic narrative level, the protagonist is seemingly introduced as a psychological realist character trying to cope with reality after his personal tragedy and crisis. Professor Zimmer, the protagonist of *The Book of Illusions*, comments on his mental state after the tragedy in retrospective:

I remember very little of what happened to me that summer. For several months, I lived in a blur of alcoholic grief and self-pity, rarely stirring from the house, rarely

bothering to eat or shave or change my clothes. Most of my colleagues were gone until the middle of August, and therefore I didn't have to put up with many visits, to sit through the agonizing protocols of communal mourning [...]. It was better to be left alone, I found, better to get out the days in the darkness of my own head. When I wasn't drunk or sprawled out on the living room sofa watching television, I spent my time wandering around the house. (Auster 7)

This extract seemingly suggests a psychological realistic narrative portraying a lonely character recollecting his problem through a narrative reminiscent of an interior monologue. However, Auster further extends this narrative into a modernist pessimistic and subjective narrative centered on an alienated subject searching for his identity in a chaotic urban setting, which is a typical modernist theme.<sup>6</sup> After losing his family, David Zimmer's stable ordered optimism, which characterized his previous life, is increasingly undermined by disorder (of his behavior, life experience), pessimism, disillusion and doubt regarding his ability to perceive, understand and penetrate the mystery of the nature of life. Such narrative hesitation problematizes both the psychological realist narrative and its ability to give a logical account of the psychological motivation of the characters' behavior. At the same time, through a depiction of these characters Auster symbolically indicates doubts about the capacity of the human mind to control, understand and explain reality. In addition, Auster's depiction of these characters enables him to further treat the relationships between life and art, reality and its linguistic/artistic representation or reconstruction. Auster's depiction of these characters provides an implicit critique of traditional realistic and partly modernist narrative techniques based on the mimetic principle. Thus both psychological realist and modernist narratives are undermined by the meaning which Auster further creates through the allegorical principle, including such elements as intertextuality, intratextuality, allusions, metacommentaries on art, and to some extent parody and irony. All these metafictional elements participate in problematizing and undermining realistic and modernist methods of writing, while conveying a postmodern vision of the world. By metafiction I mean what Patricia Waugh, in her book *Metafiction: the Theory and Practise of Self-Conscious Fiction*, characterizes as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh 1984: 2).

Professor Zimmer is an academic writer, a literary critic and biographer. His job consists not in creating a fictional world through language, but mostly in reconstructing the meaning of already existing texts that have already constructed reality through language. It would be simplistic to argue that this character's status as a writer makes him metafictional or postmodern. Zimmer's status, however, provides Auster with a framework within which he creates an intricate web of intertextual and intratextual relationships, eventually creating a metafictional effect. Within a framework of allegory as partly characterized by Owens, Auster deals with the relationship between life, art, and fiction as well as with the nature and mutual interaction between different ontological entities such as physical experience and its fictional treatment through language (in literature or film). In this novel, for

its protagonist David Zimmer, it is writing (academic, creative, biographic) and the other (visual) kind of narrative – film – that become a compensation for the loss of life's meaning. Zimmer's identification with and transposition into the realm of the fictional world creates an alternative to the physical and experiential world which itself suggests Auster's celebration of imagination as represented by creative writing.

In *The Book of Illusions*, Auster juxtaposes different worlds creating different ontological levels, especially physical reality and its literary or cinematic treatment. On the basic narrative level, the narrator tells a story of his recovery from a tragedy by both watching the films of a forgotten film comic (Hermann Mann) who mysteriously disappeared in the 1920s, by writing about this comic's life and film career, as well as by the unexpected love relationship with Alma Grund (a child of the actors in Mann's film studio, established after his withdrawal from public life). Zimmer's physical experience with his new love is reminiscent of a narrative reconstruction of his process of recovery after a tragic event leaves him entrapped in a chain of different worlds, problematizing both the convincingness of the presentation of physical experience, the nature of the physical world and the mimetic methods of artistic representations of reality.

### **The Complementarity Principle**

The result of Zimmer's research on Mann's films and of the comic's rebirth and recovery is a book on Mann's films entitled *The Silent World of Hector Mann*. Mann's use of film as a compensation for failure in real life seems to confirm Auster's strategy of appreciating writing as a possible source of romantic compensation and glorification of imagination, but Zimmer, a narrator himself, comments on this book:

I didn't give much information about Hector's life in my book. The Silent World of Hector Mann was a study of his films, not a biography, and whatever small facts I threw in about his off screen activities came directly from standard sources: film encyclopedias, memoirs, histories of early Hollywood [...] The story of his life was secondary to me, and rather than speculate on what might or might not have happened to him, I stuck to a close reading of the films themselves. (Auster 3)

Zimmer's study of Hector Mann becomes a critical study of Mann's (film) texts through the examination and reconstruction of other texts, creating a metatext which is further united into an ontological level of *textuality*. Through the use of such a strategy, Auster emphasizes the separateness and uniqueness of the textual world of criticism and its difference from real, physical, experiential reality. This is, however, further problematized by the juxtaposition of this textual world with real physical experience. In the narrative process, this distinct ontological world is represented by Zimmer's complicated love relationship with Alma Grund. A mysterious descendant of the acting couple from Mann's film studio, Alma emerges as the mediating figure who both literally and symbolically restores David's connection with the physical world. She does so in two ways: by becoming his lover and by introducing him to Mann himself, who is dying at a remote private film studio in New Mexico. Both Zimmer's and Mann's physical identities are thus restored, and Mann's *textual* side is compensated and supplemented by his physical identity. In addition, Zimmer's narrative becomes also a reconstruction of Mann's identity, which is further supplemented

by Alma's narration of Mann's life through various secondary resources. This strategy is reminiscent of the principle of complementarity, which Auster further develops to emphasize the idea (and treatment) of identity – resulting further in his allegorical treatment of the relationship between life and art, experience and its linguistic representation. The *textual* aspects of Mann's identity (Zimmer's book on his films) are thus further complemented by his physical being and biography (reconstructed through Alma's narration and the book she is writing about him). Mann's film roles are complemented by his life (film, art-life), and his popular film comedies, shot before his disappearance, are complemented by his more artistic films made later at his private studio; popular films are complemented and compensated by artistically valuable films. This principle of complementarity also applies to Mann's lovers, each supplementing the qualities of the other (Birgid O'Fallon and others). Zimmer's physical status is complemented by his *textual* status (the books he has written and has been writing).

### Presence – Absence

The principle of complementarity does not create a coherent whole consisting of contradictory or conflicting yet united selves, but is further developed into an imagery of presence and absence that problematizes not only the stable subject and identity but also the validity of fictional and real events. Mann's last film, significantly entitled *Mr. Nobody*, also suggests a connection between life and art (film). Zimmer describes this film as

a meditation on his own disappearance, and for all its ambiguity and furtive suggestiveness, for all the moral questions it asks and then refuses to answer, it is essentially a film about the anguish of selfhood [...]. He becomes invisible, and when the magic finally wears off and he can be seen again, he does not recognize his own face. We are looking at him as he looks at himself, and in this eerie doubling of perspectives, we watch him confront the fact of his own annihilation. Double or Nothing. That was the phrase he chose as the title for his next film. Those words [...] refer back to the mirror scene in *Mr. Nobody*... (Auster 53)

As can be seen from the above extract, Auster develops an imagery of presence and absence, using this imagery to point out several issues. First, on a more general level, the imagery of presence and absence refers to the position of a human being made to wear *masks* of different identities: one associated with his true, emotional, natural state, the other artificial and socially constructed – a behavior and identity influenced by social codes, norms, morality and cultural conditions, often resulting in hypocrisy (as suggested by the narrator's description of one of Mann's films). Second, this imagery of presence and absence highlights different rules on which different worlds are based – the world of film (art) and real life. Third, the imagery of presence and absence is also associated with the presence of Mann's ethnic, physical (Jewish) identity as well as with his consequent covering, hiding and suppressing of that identity – the absence and marginalization of his ethnic identity in real life in order to achieve success. Fourth, this imagery indicates a change in the nature of Mann's later films. The mirror scene from one of his films evokes the idea of imitative, traditional and realistic art, and it is associated with presence – the mainstream and popular art dominant in this period – while a later film, *Double or Nothing*, draws

on and apparently develops the motifs from Mann's previous films and consequently becomes a metafictional, postmodernist, more artistic work, as if based on the 'absence' of the referred-to subject. This film becomes purely fictional, textual, constructed out of the words and language. In addition, the imagery of presence and absence refers to the idea of success and failure, which are associated with the idea of the American dream – or rather its failure.

Presence (the presence of Hermann Mann) is thus associated with the popularity of both his personality and films as well as with his star status, while his withdrawal from public life into the anonymity of family life and an independent film company – suggesting absence – is associated with failure. This failure suggests the collapse of Mann's American Dream – the belief that hard work can bring material success, popularity and the fulfillment of unfulfilled desires to anybody. Despite Mann's popularity during his successful film career, his withdrawal and *absence* from public life represents a deliberate rejection of fame; Mann is significantly renamed Loesser, which evokes the idea of loss. His American Dream fails, because his child dies in an accident and his artistic films do not sell. From this perspective, Mann's/Loesser's life can be understood as a parody of the American Dream, as he eventually rejects the potential commercial success of his films, which would potentially bring him profit, as well as fame and the fulfillment of his desires. According to his last will, his films are to be destroyed after his death, something Professor Zimmer perceives as follows:

If someone makes a movie and no one sees it, does the movie exist or not? That's how he justified what he did. He would make movies that would never be shown to audiences, make movies for the pure pleasure of making movies. It was an act of breathtaking nihilism, and yet he's stuck to the bargain ever since. Imagine knowing that you're good at something, so good that the world be in awe of you if they could see your work, and then keeping yourself a secret from the world [...] Emily Dickinson lived in obscurity, but she tried to publish her poems. Van Gogh tried to sell his paintings. As far as I know, Hector is the first artist to make his work with the conscious, premeditated intention of destroying it. There's Kafka, of course, who told Max Brod to burn his manuscripts, but when it came to the decisive moment, Brod couldn't go through with it. (Auster 2002: 207–208)

Auster further develops and complicates the motif of presence and absence by intertextual elements which support and supplement it. By 'intertextual' I do not mean exactly Julia Kristeva's understanding that "[A]ny text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66), but rather a deliberate borrowing of elements from other texts by means of allusion, parody, quotation, false quotation, paraphrasing, etc. Intertextuality emerges not as a passive method of borrowing, but as the creative reconstitution, *transformation* of texts, as Kristeva suggests, in such a way that it produces additional meaning. Intertextuality thus manifests itself, for example, in Auster's (Zimmer's) quotes from Chateaubriand's *Memoirs of a Dead Man*; in the allusion to a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne "The Birthmark"; in Alma Grund's reference to her favorite authors, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and also Ludwig Wittgenstein, André Breton, Dashiell Hammett, or Boston Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson



and Henry David Thoreau (Auster 283). Intertextuality is also created by Professor Zimmer's refusal to talk about his seclusion and loneliness with his friends, a refusal that is reminiscent of and alludes to *Bartleby*, a mysterious character from Herman Melville's short story *Bartleby, the Scrivener* (Auster 65), who is Zimmer's favorite character and is also a lonely, alienated and tragic personality. The intertextual connection to these texts creates two basic layers of meaning associated with the imagery of presence and absence – the physical retreat either of the authors or the characters from these authors' books into seclusion and anonymity – that is, a transition from presence to absence. The intertextuality also refers to the connection between life and art – life's reconstruction through language – in other words, a transition from the presence of the subject (writer) and the absence of his works before their creation to the absence of the subject (the author replaced by his writing, by his text) and presence of the writer's text as "textualized" reality. In her critical study on *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, Ruth Ronen argues that "...the fictional world is constructed as a world having its own distinct ontological position, and as a world presenting self-sufficient systems of structures and relations" (8).

As can be seen from the examples above, through the use of intertextuality Auster points out the resulting existence of an independent textual world which has its own distinct ontological position and rules. In other words, he emphasizes the post-structuralist idea of the self-contingency of the signifier, which is able to create its own world and meaning rather than this being done through its connection to the signified. The use of these metafictional and intertextual elements to create additional meaning is now associated with the idea of the relationship between reality and fiction, life and art, language and reality. Auster systematically uses these metafictional and intertextual elements to create postmodern meaning based on the allegorical principle. Within an allegorical framework, Auster deals with the relationships between reality and fiction and between different ontological levels. Auster's depiction of these relationships as part of his allegorical framework is distinctively postmodern, as he foregrounds the ontological issues and dominants which were characterized by Brian McHale as typically postmodern. In his seminal study *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), McHale argues that

typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world it projects, for instance: What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? (McHale 10)

McHale further argues that "[a]mong the oldest of the classic ontological themes in poetics is that of the otherness of the fictional world, its separation from the real world of experience" (27).

In an interview, Auster admits that in this novel "the emphasis [is] placed on imaginary works – Hector's films and David's book about them. There have been *fictive novels* in my books before – stories within stories, so to speak – but never so fully fleshed out as

in this one. In *The Book of Illusions*, Hector's films are an essential part of the narrative" (Auster 2).

Thus the narrative strategies used by Auster, especially his allegorical principle including metafictional and intertextual elements, emphasize the relationship between these different worlds. David Zimmer compensates his real-life tragedy with academic writing (on Hector Mann's films), but his literal and symbolic restoration of the contact with reality cannot be fulfilled, because his new love, Alma Grund, literally eradicates herself by committing suicide and by destroying an unfinished manuscript on Hector Mann's life. Hector Mann and his wife finally die, and what remains are only films – which are also destroyed but continue to be renowned, being reconstructed through David's writing about them (his first book) and by his description of them. Finally, David's life and experience can be known and restored only through his own *story*, that is by writing about his life. What remains is thus only the *fictional* reconstruction of several stories and lives, that is, of David Zimmer and his lost family, Hector Mann, Alma Grund and other characters. This means that all events and lives become reconstructed through different kinds of narrations, and thus they seem untrustworthy and unreliable. David Zimmer comments on his writing of his story that

This is a book of fragments, a compilation of sorrows and half-remembered dreams, and in order to tell the story, I have to confine myself to the events of the story itself [...]. Hector's films had been destroyed, Alma's book had been destroyed, and the only thing I could have shown anyone was my pathetic little collection of notes, my trilogy of desert jottings; the breakdown of Martin Frost, the snippets from Hector's journal, and an inventory of extraterrestrial plants that had nothing to do with anything. (Auster 316)

On the one hand, this extract shows David's doubts as a writer – someone supposed to provide a truthful, meaningful, and perhaps a *mimetic*, literal depiction of reality, which manifests itself also in his doubts about Alma's destruction of Mann's films and his wife's natural death; he thinks she might have been murdered (p. 319). On the other hand, David emphasizes the power of the story to create and construct reality, thus acquiring an ontological status equal to that of reality itself. In other words, he accentuates the textuality of narrated events; in the above passage, life is constructed from different kinds of writing, that is, different kinds of *language*. This is supported by David's inspiration by Hector Mann's last will, which is an inspiration not by real life but by a written document – that is, a document constructed by language. He addresses a reader saying "I have left a letter of instruction for my lawyer, and he will know where to find the manuscript and what to do with it after I am gone [...]. If and when this book is published, dear reader, you can be certain that the man who wrote it is long dead" (Auster 318).

By directly addressing the reader, Zimmer draws his/her attention to the fictionality of the narration. At the same time, David, by following the model of both Chateaubriand and Hector Mann, emphasizes the power of textuality and language to create a reality equal to other ontological worlds; it is quite apparent from this extract that physical eradication (David's death, as the reader can deduce) is replaced and compensated by language – that is, a text (David's book, being read by the reader). This compensation of reality by text is



supported by the last sentences in the story, in which David considers Alma's burning of Mann's films: "She forgot to tell me. She meant to tell me, but then she forgot. If that was the case, then Hector's films haven't been lost. They're only missing, and sooner or later a person will come along who accidentally opens the door of the room where Alma hid them, and the story will start over again. I live with that hope" (Auster 321).

Such an emphasis on textuality, the power of imagination and the rejection of the possibility of the verifiable/mimetic reconstruction of events through the story becomes an implicit critique of the mimetic principle and of traditional realistic as well as modernist writing. As is suggested both by Mann's later films and by David Zimmer's and Auster's metafictional and intertextual strategies, traditional writing cannot convincingly depict reality or give an objective and truthful picture of reality. At the same time, Auster emphasizes the idea that reality constructed by means of language, despite working on different principles than real life, has the same value as real life itself.

## Conclusion

In his novel *The Book of Illusions*, Auster uses narrative techniques reminiscent of traditional psychological realist or modernist writing. His protagonist, Professor Zimmer, turns out to be a modernist individual searching for the meaning of life in a chaotic urban setting. Auster, by using the imagery of presence and absence, the principle of complementarity, intertextual elements, parody, irony and allusion, creates an allegorical principle on the basis of which his postmodern meaning is constructed. It is not a traditional allegory as a genre, but a fragmented allegory as understood by Craig Owens, through which the author addresses such issues as the relationship between life and art, fiction and reality, *fictional* and *real* truth. The use of the allegorical principle points to the validity of the ontological status of the fictional world, highlighting on the one hand the difference between the workings of the real, physical world and the textual world, and on the other hand the axiological equality between them.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, D. Barone, ed. *Beyond the Red Notebook: Essays on Paul Auster* (Penn Studies in Contemporary American Fiction) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1987), 8–11.

<sup>3</sup> See Eberhard Alsen, *Romantic Postmodernism in American Fiction* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Eberhard Alsen, *Romantic Postmodernism in American Fiction* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Metafiction as understood by Patricia Waugh, see Bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> See Stephen Spender, *The Creative Element: A Study of Vision, Despair, and Orthodoxy among Some Modern Writers* (London: Hamilton, 1953). G. Hoffmann, A. Hornung, and R. Kunow, "'Modern', 'Postmodern' and 'Contemporary' as Criteria for the Analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature." *Postmodernism in American Literature*. Ed. Manfred Pütz, Peter Freese (Darmstadt: Thesen Verlag, 1984) 12–37.

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# **Book Reviews**



**Lívia Körtevényessy.**

*Vplyv sociolingvistických faktorov na produktivitu v slovo tvorbe.*

**Prešov: Slovacontact, 2010.**

Readers will certainly be impressed by this book; mainly those who are interested in word-formation. Yet others will find useful information in it too. The author deals with selected issues of terminology concerning productivity and sociolinguistic factors. Expectedly, she opts for those terms that are essential when discussing issues of productivity: naming, occasionalism, potential words, and neologisms. Particularly worthy of note is her successful delineation of differences between the notions of frequency, productivity and creativity, as well as the ways of defining productivity. The issue of bilingualism is treated from both the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic points of view; here a lay reader will be surprised to learn how problematic the term may be.

The author is well acquainted with a wide range of sources related to the topic. Admittedly one may take this for granted, but it is of crucial importance and worthy of praise that she is able to summarize the essential points in the opinions of the linguists cited, grasp concurrences and differences, advance her views and enlarge upon them. In other words, although the book is a strictly scholarly work, its outstanding feature is that it does not lack elements of pedagogical style: readers will be pleased to learn that the issues and questions they themselves tend to raise are not only articulated clearly, but are also answered satisfactorily.

The research itself is aimed at verifying the hypothesis claiming that (in the author's words) new naming units represent a "crossroads" of sociolinguistic factors and the pressure of productivity of respective word-forming types. It is obvious that evaluation of the emerging interrelations is very difficult, because these form a complex (and complicated) network on two planes and also between the planes. Using relevant data acquired from 288 respondents and almost 2,500 English and Slovak naming units, the author managed to create a satisfactorily representative and three-dimensional picture.

The analysis of sociolinguistic factors influencing the productivity of types (onomasiological, word-forming, morphological) and word-forming rules is treated and presented in a genuinely detailed and exact way. The author feels at home using mathematical models of statistics, the application of which reinforces the plausibility of the relations which we experience or at least conjecture, namely: the connection between the level of education and profession and age, the preference for English borrowings (loan-words) among the young generation, and similar factors. The resulting linear and non-linear canonic correlations support the hypothesis and are in accord with the findings of the previous team research.

The present book is a truly comprehensive work, its comprehensiveness lying in (a) the author's mastering of various theoretical approaches to current word-formation, (b) the character of the issues studied, which require a high standard of theoretical thinking in the domain of morphology, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and language typology, and (c) the link between theory and experimental research. The examination of productivity in relation to sociolinguistic factors (laying emphasis on the role of bilingualism) as discussed in the present volume is a pioneering deed, which opens up new horizons for the study of word-forming productivity and creativity.

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**Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova, and Renata Povolná, eds.**  
***Coherence and Cohesion in Spoken and Written Discourse.***  
**Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.**

Coherence and cohesion are two key discourse-organization concepts. While cohesion has gradually become a standard and established category for analysis, mainly thanks to Halliday and Hasan's 1976 *Cohesion in English*, coherence has long been denied such unanimous acceptance due to the lack of a clear definition of its criteria. Instead, coherence has been referred to as an intuitive notion (van Dijk 93) or a "puzzling phenomenon" (Renkema 4). Nevertheless, many attempts at demystifying coherence have resulted in more than three decades of assiduous research which has elevated coherence to an interpretive notion of central importance to recent developments in text and discourse analysis. From the beginning, research into coherence offered text and discourse analysts an analytical tool for distinguishing text from non-text within which the existence and realization of coherence was conditioned by textual connectivity and cohesion – this approach is often referred to as "static". By contrast, in the dynamic approach – which is now the dominant text-linguistic trend – coherence has become associated with notions such as mental phenomena, interlocutors' collaboration and negotiation, and cognitive mechanisms. This approach stresses the processual and temporal character of coherence: it is a mental entity, more a context and reader/hearer-oriented property of text rather than a text-inherent quality. According to this view, coherence is based on multiple negotiation between a writer/speaker and a reader/hearer, and as such the interpretation largely depends on a particular interlocutor-based constellation. Consequently, understanding texts depends on "a host of interacting factors on all levels of communication" (Bublitz 2).

In their book, Dontcheva-Navratilova and Povolná have collected a series of contributions on coherence and cohesion that study various aspects of both phenomena. The book

falls into two sections, dealing with the spoken and written mode respectively. The six chapters in Section One focus on coherence in three genres – impromptu, academic and political discourse. Aijmer and Povolná study pragmatic/discourse markers: both authors treat various functions of these markers with respect to their dialogic and cooperative functions. Aijmer stresses that ‘well’ is a multifunctional particle whose meaning in the text-types such as face-to-face and telephone conversation, legal cross-examination or parliamentary language enables the speaker to be ‘considerative’ and weigh ‘strategic’ alternatives. Aijmer’s research shows that ‘well’ can perform two main functions: deliberative and intersubjective (dialogic). The former helps express the contemplation of alternatives, while the latter enables the speaker to express a stance – including divergence and (dis) agreement with the hearer or with common knowledge. The intersubjective meaning of ‘well’, Aijmer argues, helps the speaker “control or manipulate the discourse” (26). Importantly, the meaning of ‘well’ is modified by the social roles of the speakers and consequently the power relations and authority in conversational text-types.

In contrast to Aijmer, who deals with one particular marker, Povolná’s research is intended as an exploration of a wide range of comment clauses of the type ‘you see’, ‘I mean’, etc., for which she proposes the label ‘interactive discourse markers’ (IDMs); this reflects their major function of supporting and enhancing the smooth flow of interaction. The author claims that IDMs help establish the communication flow between the speaker and the hearer, and thus they establish discourse coherence – which is the result of the mutual cooperative process of negotiation of meaning between all discourse participants. This view supports Bublitz’s (1999) idea that coherence is a matter of interpretation. IDMs are studied within the framework of seven pragmatic functions, and the author concludes that – besides their interpersonal function – these items also contribute to the textual level by functioning as connective devices. The strong interpersonal aspect and context-based inferences of the IDMs in the corpus seem to be the outcome of the highly dialogic discourse type – face-to-face private conversation among academics.

An interesting aspect of impromptu discourse, fluency, has drawn the attention of Hüttner, who questions this seemingly unproblematic concept in the context of English as a lingua franca (ELF) using a corpus of naturally occurring data – consisting of private informal conversations, which are assessed by lay raters. Hüttner’s approach to testing fluency is based on the presupposition of a dialogic conceptualization while focusing on interactivity. Her research shows that fluency can be treated as a speaker’s ability to adjust his/her language competences according to the changing context. In this way the author comes to the conclusion that fluency is the result of the interplay of coherence and interactivity. Although Hüttner does not offer any unanimous methodological framework for classifying fluency phenomena, her results seem to offer promising perspectives for the future research of ELF performances.

Academic lectures as a type of scripted spoken monologue are the object of study for Malá, who is interested in the use of participial adverbials. By studying the spoken mode, the author attempts to determine whether the functions traditionally attributed to participial adverbials used in written academic texts (cognitive complexity – a means of complex condensation, textual functions) are different in spoken discourse than in written discourse. Formally, the most frequent examples are asyndetic subjectless adjuncts with an active present-participial predicate in end-position, while functionally the most



dominant type are adjuncts. Malá concludes that adjuncts show a tendency to appear in certain sets of patterns, known as lexico-grammatical bundles, while conjuncts, disjuncts and subjuncts operate as textual and interpersonal metadiscourse devices. Overall, the author compares adverbial participles in the spoken mode to fixed schemata or ‘ready-made building blocks’ as markers of time-pressure, which makes their function in spoken register disparate from that in written academic texts.

Political discourse is the theme of the last two chapters in Section One. Cap draws on his previous research into proximization and legitimization in spoken political discourse, focusing here on the axiological aspect of proximization in the US presidential addresses. The author understands this axiological aspect as a so-called ‘building block of the rhetoric’ in the Spatial-Temporal-Axiological model of proximization: the three building blocks together form a coherent, conceptually connected unit. Axiological proximization is a powerful means that enables the speaker to create a type of discourse which is intentionally more abstract for the addressee, and which is thus difficult to interpret; this opens up space for manipulative interventionist rhetoric – demonstrated using the case of the US intervention in Iraq.

According to Dontcheva-Navratilova, coherence contributes to discourse comprehension, which is the result of “conceptual connectedness, evaluative and dialogical consistency and textual relatedness” (97); this concept reflects Halliday’s meta/macofunctions of language. The author studies coherence in referential strategies employed for self-representation in diplomatic communication – the speeches of Directors-General of UNESCO. The analysis of personal pronouns in terms of deixis and endophora reveals that due to the interplay of meanings on the ideational, interpersonal and textual levels, the pronouns work as complementary discourse referring devices.

Five chapters in Section Two address coherence and cohesion in three written genres: media, academic and fictional discourse. Chovanec and Tomášková explore coherence in two different text-types which combine the features of literacy and orality. Chovanec studies textual structure and coherence in a relatively new text-type – that of live text sports commentaries – whose specificity lies in the interconnection of two narrative layers, the primary factual and the secondary interpersonal. This text-type combines the features of chat discussions and computer-mediated interaction; as the author claims, pseudo-conversational exchanges are the result of the use of linguistic features connected with orality. Tomášková’s treatment of pseudodialogic properties in women’s lifestyle magazines is rooted in Ong’s 1982 typology of features of orality: orality is one of the stylistically distinctive features in this text-type. The author argues that some of the typical features of women’s lifestyle magazines – such as the text colony structure, redundancy, semantic indeterminacy, emphasis on the writer-reader relationship, reliance on situation and shared experiential background – have arisen due to the interplay between oral-like communication and the discourse of women’s magazines. The features of orality are rather intentionally ‘implanted’ into the texts: the ‘orality’ pervades and penetrates all linguistic levels, which results in the desired coherence.

As in Section One, two chapters of Section Two are devoted to academic discourse. Krhutová’s chapter is a contribution to the study of lexical cohesion and its influence on coherence in highly specialized texts from the field of electrical engineering. Coherence is viewed as a gradual processing of the information encoded in lexical cohesive chains

which contain mainly province-specific culturally neutral terms. Schmied studies the role of sentence adverbs in two text-types – specialized research articles and their popular text versions. The research is based on the interactive character of the communication between writers and readers on the basis of metadiscourse. From this perspective, sentence adverbials fulfil interactional features and textual features; the latter are responsible for creating coherence in texts. Schmied observes that there are no profound differences in the use of adverbial clause connections in the two text-types, concluding that these academic metadiscourse features reflect the writing conventions of the particular discourse community and play an important role in sentence organization and expressing author stance.

The last chapter is the only contribution which deals with translation. Miššíková presents her research on pragmatic dimensions in a literary text from a comparative English-Slovak perspective. The author tries to determine how conventional representation of knowledge of the world is reflected in the target text. The concept of coherence is based on the assumption that readers bring their own cognitive experience to the text, which causes them to interpret particular parts of the text as being connected; such an approach underlies the necessary cooperation on the part of the reader. Miššíková shows that in some cases the translator's limited knowledge of the world may distort the target text.

In summary, this book is a highly interesting contribution to the field of discourse analysis. It provides a thorough overview of coherence and cohesion, and proposes a dynamic approach to the study of coherence, stressing that coherence emerges during discourse production and comprehension. The editors have successfully managed to avoid possible problems inherent in using one central topic as an organizing theme: I can imagine that it must have been very difficult to structure a volume around a broad topic such as coherence or cohesion, which can be studied from many different points of view.

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**Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova.**

***Analysing Genre: The Colony Text of UNESCO Resolutions.***

**Brno: Masaryk University, 2009.**

In certain aspects, Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova's monograph represents an exceptional contribution to the field: as an in-depth study of UNESCO resolutions it brings new findings revealing the features of a specific type of diplomatic discourse, which has so far inspired little attention among discourse analysts or pragmatologists, and as a multi-faceted genre analysis of a colony text type it is a pioneering study providing an insight into the generic structure of a highly productive but under-researched text type. Furthermore, the originality of the research consists in its rare combination of diachronic and synchronic approaches, resulting from a contrastive analysis of the 1947 Resolutions volume and the 1999 Resolutions volume; this enriches the overall picture of the genre with a view to the process of its constitution.

The monograph draws upon the author's long-term study and research. Her expertise manifests itself both in the comprehensive theoretical background to the monograph and in the detailed text analysis, with a variety of examples supporting the arguments and conclusions.

The methodology of the research is anchored mainly in sociolinguistics, stylistics and pragmatics, approaching the analyzed texts and discourse from a functional viewpoint. Text is seen as an autonomous unit of human interaction, related to social practices and shaped by context. The role of context and its scope in discourse analysis receives focused attention throughout the study: the concept is carefully defined and all four delimited aspects – linguistic, cognitive, social and socio-cultural – are then considered in all individual parts of the analysis. The principal objective of the research – to explore the impact of situational context on generic structure and genre-specific linguistic selections – is thus systematically pursued, and the author's findings clearly show that contextual factors, including the social and socio-cultural dimensions, strongly influence even the seemingly self-contained texts of legal discourse.

The chapter "Preliminaries: Key terms and methodological issues" provides a solid theoretical grounding for the three components of the subsequent multi-dimensional analysis: the analysis of the chosen colony text type, the generic structure, and the style markers of the Resolutions volume. The characterization of colony texts is based on a variety of contemporary studies on the topic, particularly work done by M. Hoey, who introduced the concept of text colony into linguistic research and suggested a definition of the term, accompanied by a list of features constitutive or at least typical of this text type. With regard to the results of the investigation into the colony structure of UNESCO Resolutions, Dontcheva-Navratilova has enlarged Hoey's list of text colony qualities, using characteristically precise language. Her interpretation of the generic structure follows Hasan's and Swales's methodology of genre analysis, applying Hasan's concept of generic structure potential and Swales's rhetorical moves analysis. Finally, the stylistic analysis – carried out in accordance with the socially-based functional approach to language variation – focuses on the identification of stylistically significant features, i.e. the style markers present in the texts, and involves their qualitative as well as quantitative survey.

The detailed description and interpretation of the research into the genre itself is preceded by another chapter providing necessary background information: the section “Introducing UNESCO Resolutions” offers a highly informative overview of the institutional extralinguistic context and a thorough discussion of the immediate situation determining the choice and organization of the language used, taking into account a range of situational parameters, discourse participants, communicative purposes and conventions.

The core of the monograph lies in an extensive analytical chapter entitled “Analysis of the genre of resolutions”, which guides the reader step by step through a variety of aspects of the linguistic make-up of the material under investigation. The corpus of 121,000 words – taken from two distinct time periods, 1947 and 1999 – ensures that the results are representative and allows the author to take a diachronic view of the genre. The diachronic study has yielded results particularly in relation to the analysis of the colony text structure of Resolutions. The comparison of the documents – separated by a time span of more than fifty years of UNESCO practice and development – reveals considerable shifts in the realization of the text colonies towards the enhancement of their cohesiveness and easily surveyable structuring. The adoption of the central colony text type has been proved to be mutually interdependent with the selection and frequency of specific types of cohesive devices (lexical cohesion – repetition, parallelism, vertical cohesive chains) and thematic development (the excessive use of constant theme patterns). The rhetorical moves description within the genre analysis draws attention to intrageneric variation in the discourse of the Resolutions, which is presented as contextually determined. Acknowledging the presence of features traditionally described as typical of formal written texts, the stylistic analysis then concentrates on discourse-level style markers, such as recurrent syntactic patterns or clause relations, which are considered to be controlled by the genre and the text type rather than by the register alone.

Even though an analytical approach towards linguistic phenomena necessarily requires their classification and provisional separation, the analytical chapters of the monograph do not overly isolate the individual viewpoints, and the author always evaluates features against the background of the other two complementary approaches. In the “Conclusions”, the author herself stresses the importance of a holistic conception of the study of genre, and her presentation of the research could serve as a model example of the application of such a conception. The consistent attention paid to genre characteristics in holistic terms – as the result of interplay between the text type, rhetorical structure and stylistic variety – is one of the principal assets of the monograph.

This study represents a valuable contribution to the fields of genre analysis, text typology and stylistics – not only due to its research findings but also for its methodological consistency and clarity.

The monograph has a full index as well as a glossary of terms; these features add to its quality as a textbook for university students majoring in philology or linguistics.

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**Karel Helman.**

*Postavy imigrantek v dílech současných amerických etnických autorek.*

**Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Karolinum, 2009.**

Hlavní předností monografie Karla Helmana je samotný výběr tématu. Opírá se o výzkum přistěhovalecké literatury amerických etnických spisovatelek, reprezentujících asijskoamerickou, hispánskoamerickou a afroamerickou literaturu (autor záměrně vyloučil tvorbu amerických židovských autorek). Troufám si říci, že v kontextu výzkumné práce českých amerikanistů, pokud je mi známo, jde o práci navýsost průkopnickou a přitom velice užitečnou, neboť její téma, reflektující diasporickou či lépe řečeno transnacionální přistěhovaleckou zkušenost, postihuje jeden z nejvýraznějších rysů současné americké literatury. Zdá se totiž, že u nás stále ještě plně nedoceňujeme význam etnických autorů, kteří přispívají k decentralizaci americké literatury, modifikují její mainstreamovou kulturu a v podstatě rozostřují hranice mezi centrem a periferií. Z tohoto hlediska je přínos Helmanovy práce nesporný. Pozoruhodný je i její záběr: autor v ní interpretuje 18 próz deseti autorek. Literaturu vycházející z hispánských kulturních kořenů zastupuje Sandra Cisnerosová, Judith Ortiz Coferová a Cristina Garcíová, afroamerickou literaturu Alice Walkerová a Jamaica Kincaidová a nejpočetněji je představena literaturu asijskoamerická tvorbou Lan Caové, Nory Okji Kellerové, Amy Tanové, Jhumpy Lahiriové a Bharati Mukherjeeové. Ve skutečnosti je ovšem Helmanův záběr ještě širší, neboť zahrnuje i ty autorky, jejichž díla nejsou bezprostředním předmětem jeho zkoumání (např. *Válečnici* /*The Woman Warrior*/ Maxine Hong Kingstonové).

Dalším kladem Helmanovy práce je šíře jejího teoretického zázemí. Nutno vyzvednout autorův interdisciplinární přístup ke zvolenému tématu. Helman vychází z celé řady významných teoretických studií, ať je to např. Sollorsův koncept biologických kořenů (descent) a vyjednaného souhlasu (consent), nebo práce Edwarda Saida, Homiho Bhabhy, Anthonyho Giddense atd. Autor je dobře obeznámen s teoretickou literaturou z oblasti etnických, kulturních a zejména postkoloniálních studií a v neposlední řadě také s relevantními texty feministické a poststrukturální kritiky, což jen přispělo k jeho dobré orientaci ve zkoumané problematice. Rovněž historiografický a sociologický přístup mu pomohl lépe objasnit některé specifické otázky imigrace, které autorky jednotlivých etnických skupin ve svých dílech nastolují.

Pokud jde o obsahovou stránku monografie, rád bych vyzvedl druhou tematicky zaměřenou kapitolu, v níž autor přesvědčivě objasňuje příčiny deziluze postav nových imigrantek v Novém světě a zajímavě poukazuje na demytizaci moderního ráje. Zároveň v ní sleduje mechanismy, které umožňovaly zmírnit tlaky většinové angloprotestantské společnosti, ať již prostřednictvím kolektivních společenství (kluby, *barrios* v chicanské komunitě apod.), nebo etnického separatismu. Cenné jsou i ty části kapitoly, v nichž se autor zaměřuje na individuální strategie přežití – maskování (tricksterské strategie nasazování a snímání masek, odpovídající jeho fluidní povaze), vzpomínání (vyprávění příběhů) a „převlékání“ identit.

Helman nepojímá své téma staticky, neboť do problematiky imigrace vnáší generační aspekt, což je patrné zejména ve 3. kapitole. Zkoumá v ní role matek a dcer, jejichž vzájemný vztah se stává významným formativním prvkem, určujícím charakter interpretovaných postav. Všímá si společných i antagonistických rysů představitelek dvou, někdy

i tří generací a citlivě interpretuje vymezování dcer vůči matkám, proces, jemuž přisuzuje dialogický charakter. Výstižně akcentuje ambivalentní povahu tohoto vztahu. Na jednotlivých příkladech ilustruje proces předávání matčiných prožitých příběhů jejich dcerám. Je velice důležité, že při zkoumání vztahů mezi první a druhou generací imigrantů autor nepominul roli paměti. Zároveň přitom upozornil na strategii manipulování s pravdou. V diskurzích matky a dcery je minulost často přetvářena pomocí zamlčování a mystifikace. Helman vyzvedává význam matky pro dceru v procesu mezigeneračního přenosu zkušenosti a hodnot, jehož nejdůležitější formou je matčino narativní svědectví. Naznačuje, že se v interakci s americkým prostředím dcery stylizují do rolí „amerických překladatelek“ mateřského originálu.

Výrazným tématem imigrační literatury je hledání nové celistvosti (ostatně toto téma je charakteristické i v literatuře autochtonních menšin, vzpomeňme jen díla Momadaye nebo Silkové). Helman správně konstatuje, že se ve svém integračním úsilí imigranti museli vyrovnat s rozporem mezi individualismem americké společnosti a kolektivním cítěním přistěhovaleckých společenství. Ukazuje, že při překonávání nevyváženosti euroamerického centra a menšinové periferie se celistvosti dosahuje mimo jiné návratem ke kultuře předků, zpětnou migrací do mateřské země. Zároveň však upozorňuje na to, že ve snahách o znovunastolení jednoty mohou cesty do zemí původních předků přinášet i nejedno rozčarování. Je pozitivní, že téma konstituování rovnováhy/celistvosti obohacuje i o rodový aspekt.

Vliv postkoloniální kritiky na Helmanův přístup k literárním textům je patrný zejména tam, kde se autor zabývá orientalistickými bariérami v saidovském pojetí, jež narušují integraci menšinových kultur do většinové společnosti a jež jsou důsledkem západního etnocentristického vnímání světa. Totéž platí i o místech, kde autor věnuje svou pozornost hybridizaci subjektu, procesu, jenž můžeme vnímat jako obohacující, ale i represivní faktor.

S novostí tématu v domácím literárněvědném výzkumu však souvisí i řada problémů, které se v autorově práci vyskytly. Má zásadní výhrada směřuje k dvojjazyčnosti textu knihy. Helmanova monografie je napsána v českém jazyce, nicméně citace jsou uváděny v jazyce originálu, tedy v angličtině. Chápu, že naprostá většina zkoumaných titulů nebyla do češtiny dosud přeložena, nicméně autor si měl dát tu práci všechny citace přeložit do českého jazyka, aby tak jeho publikace ztratila poněkud „makarónský“ charakter.

Také má další připomínka souvisí s původností předmětu zkoumání. Nadužívání uvozovek při uvádění termínů a pojmů svědčí o tom, že si Helman uvědomuje jejich nezdolnost v českém literárněkritickém kontextu, na druhé straně se měl pokusit vymanit se z přílišné závislosti na cizích zdrojích. Mechanické přejímání výrazů z těchto zdrojů vede k tomu, že v češtině zní text místy nepřírozně, což nepřispívá k významové jasnosti a v odborném textu žádoucí jednoznačnosti některých tvrzení. Autor se měl vyhýbat příliš metaforickým a expresivním výrazům, které sice mají v americké literární vědě bohatou tradici (ostatně některá zásadní díla americké literární kritiky vycházejí z centrálních metafor, např. *The Machine in the Garden* L. Marxe, *The American Adam* R. W. B. Lewise), nicméně u nás působí poněkud uměle, cizorodě a v některých případech těžkopádně. Za všechny poněkud násilné jazykové konstrukce uvádím jen několik příkladů: „pevné skupenství“ odhodlané imigrantky v tomto „roztoku“ (s. 56), „tekut[á] krajina[a]“ (s. 75), „bikulturní ‚tah do dvou stran‘“ (s. 144), „čekání v ‚předsíních životů‘ matek“ (s. 198). Překládat výraz „displaced person“ slovem „bezdomovec“ je problematické, neboť tento



výraz váže na sebe významy, které autor jistě neměl na mysli. Konec konců autor si problematičnost takového překladu v jedné z poznámek pod čarou uvědomuje.

Závislost na sekundárních zdrojích se projevuje v nadměrné frekvenci citací. Podstatnější však je, že občas text sklouzává k pouhému komentování citací primárních zdrojů (v některých částech 3. kapitoly). Autor měl také zvážit podle mého názoru až neúnosnou zatíženost textu poznámkovým aparátem (důsledkem je jeho přílišná fragmentace) a poněkud těžkopádný systém zkratk názvů románů, který nepřispívá k čtenářově orientaci (snad by bylo vhodnější uvádět v závorce první slovo titulu prózy).

Při interpretování jednotlivých textů etnických autorek nelze nevidět, že možnost ovlivnění kulturní identity imigrantek osobními volbami naráží i v moderním světě na svá omezení v důsledku nejružnějších faktorů, ať již třídních, rasových či rodových. Ostatně to byl jeden z argumentů kritiky Sollorsovy teorie „descent“-„consent“. V souvislosti s ekonomickými důvody imigrace je škoda, že autorově pozornosti unikla kniha Johna Bodnara *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (1985), i když se v ní Bodnar soustředí především na tradiční přistěhovalce z Evropy, jejichž literární zobrazení není předmětem studia Helmanovy monografie. U chicanských hrdinek Sandry Cisnerosové se Helman zmiňuje o kultu Panny Marie v jejich původním prostředí, nicméně autor neměl pominout dva tradiční archetypy, odpovídající mexické mentalitě, „la Virgen de Guadalupe“ a „la Malinche“, které hrají v chicanské literatuře velice důležitou úlohu.

Nechci se příliš vyjadřovat k otázce Helmanova výběru amerických etnických autorek. Podle mého názoru je vskutku reprezentativní a dobře vystihuje kulturně pluralitní prostředí Spojených států, i když se zdá, že v ilustračních ukázkách autor upřednostňuje asijskoamerickou literaturu na úkor hispánskoamerické a zejména afroamerické literatury a literatury oblasti Západní Indie (pozornost by si zasloužila například próza Paule Marshallové). Nicméně to je jeho svrchované rozhodnutí, které nutno respektovat. Ve svém celku představuje monografie Karla Helmana na poli české amerikanistiky významný a v mnohých ohledech i novátorský literárněkritický počín.

Stanislav Kolář  
Ostravská univerzita



# **News, Announcements**



## **Universals and Typology in Word-Formation II**

**Venue: Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia**

**Date: August 26–28, 2012**

The Conference aims to give an impetus to the research into universals and typology in word-formation by a joint effort of both morphologists and typologists. Papers discussing cross-linguistic correlations between individual word-formation processes, between WF processes, on one hand, and genetic types and/or geographically related languages, on the other, are most welcome. Space will also be given to any other typologically oriented research into word-formation as well as papers discussing the scope of word-formation and the relation between word-formation and other linguistic disciplines.

### **Main organizers**

Jan Don, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Livia Körtvélyessy, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia  
Pavol Štekauer, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia  
Slávka Tomaščíková, Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia

### **Guest Speakers**

Alexandra Aikhenvald, James Cook University, Australia  
Mark Aronoff, University of New York at Stony Brook, USA  
Matthew Baerman, University of Surrey, United Kingdom  
Laurie Bauer, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand  
Joan Bresnan, Stanford University, USA  
Franz Rainer, WU Vienna, Austria  
Keren Rice, University of Toronto, Canada

### **Scientific Committee**

Michael Cahill, SIL International, USA  
Greville Corbett, University of Surrey, United Kingdom  
Jan Don, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Heinz Giegerich, Edinburgh University, United Kingdom

Pius ten Hacken, Swansea University, United Kingdom  
Denis Jamet, Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University, France  
Stanislav Kavka, University of Ostrava, Czech Republic  
Ferenc Kiefer, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary  
Grzegorz Kleparski, Rzeszow University, Poland  
Livia Körtvélyessy, Šafárik University, Slovakia  
Rochelle Lieber, University of New Hampshire, USA  
Lachlan Mackenzie, Vrije Universiteit, The Netherlands  
Stela Manova, Vienna University, Austria  
Verónica Nercesian, Universidad Nacional de Formosa, Argentina  
Sailaja Pingali, University of Hyderabad, India  
Ingo Plag, Siegen University, Germany  
Angela Ralli, University of Patras, Greece  
Anna-Maria Di Sciullo, Quebec University in Montreal, Canada  
Pavol Stekauer, Šafárik University, Slovakia  
Greg Stump, University of Kentucky, USA  
Bogdan Szymanek, Catholic University Lublin, Poland

### **Important deadlines**

Submission of abstracts: March 31, 2012  
Notification of acceptance: May 21, 2012  
Submission of a registration form: June 15, 2012

All the information about the Conference is available at  
[www.skase.sk](http://www.skase.sk) > KOSICE 2012 CONFERENCE