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Literature and Culture

Girl Power Discourse in Contemporary Coming-of-Age Narratives

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Abstract

The essay focuses on the intersections between Girl Power media discourses and literature which has thus far been scrutinized mainly in relation to the chick lit genre. Caitlin Moran's novel How to Build a Girl is analyzed as an example of the influence of Girl Power discourse on another literary genre, the coming-of-age novel. The protagonist's process of growing up is read in the context of two contrasting narratives about postfeminist girlhood and also in the context of the Bildungsroman tradition. Moran's heroine appears both as a fusion of the can-do girl and at-risk girl versions of Girl Power, and also as a postmillennial variation of the classic female Bildungsroman heroine.

Keywords: Girl Power, the coming-of-age novel, the female Bildungsroman, can-do girl, at-risk girl, postfeminism

Girl Power discourse has been recognized as an important defining element of the turn-of-the-millennium socio-cultural space and an integral part of postfeminist mass media discourses concerning the situation of young women in postmodern societies. Anita Harris draws attention to the two contrasting images of girlhood that have appeared in the West following the popularity of Girl Power media constructs such as the Spice Girls, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or Tank Girl - the "can-do" girl and the "at-risk" girl (Harris 9). The can-do girls, associated primarily with white middle-class women, are defined by "their commitment to exceptional careers and career planning, their belief in their capacity to invent themselves and succeed, and their display of a consumer lifestyle" (Harris 13). On the other hand, at-risk girls are usually found among young women from marginalized, working-class and ethnic communities. Their turn to "laddish" patterns of behaviour (drug

abuse, binge drinking, violence, delinquency and sexual promiscuity) is seen as evidence that Girl Power can be taken “too far” (Harris 28).

Appropriations of the popular can-do girl image in literary texts have thus far been most noticeable in the “chick lit” genre, a form of popular literature which usually presents narratives about the “single, urban media professional” (Harzewski 4).¹ Considered by some as a clear example of the literary version of Girl Power discourse (Genz and Brabon 76), chick lit is, Stephanie Harzewski claims, the first genre of fiction which has been generally discussed in relation to postfeminism (8). Harzewski in her study notes that chick lit has often provoked negative criticism for its participation in the postfeminist sensibility generated by the contemporary mass media. Chick lit narratives typically feature the attempts of twenty- or thirty-something white middle-class women to combine successful careers with fulfilling personal relationships, and these themes have led to criticism of the genre for “rehearsing the narratives of romance and femininity that second wave feminists rejected” (Genz and Brabon 87). The protagonists’ obsession with their body image, their frantic search for Mr Right and their apparent complicity with commercial culture are all seen as major signs of their postfeminist lifestyles. On the other hand, critics who want to offer a more positive approach to the genre focus on the fact that the heroines are financially independent and sexually assertive, and that their stories are realistic representations of the efforts of real-life women to juggle the “contradictory demands and mixed messages of heterosexual romance and feminist emancipation” (Genz and Brabon 86).

Critics tend to relate chick lit narratives to the genres of romance, the novel of manners and the *Bildungsroman*, noticing that they are rooted in “the heroine-centered novels of the nineteenth century, novels like Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*” (Smith 7). They even suggest that many chick lit narratives can be read as comic appropriations of the *Bildungsroman*, combining the typical male plot of “a protagonist’s venturing into the city for a ‘real world’ education” (Harzewski 87) with the traditional female plot of relating the heroine’s *Bildung* to her search for the right partner.

The connection between chick lit, the *Bildungsroman* and postfeminism opens the possibility to explore postfeminist transformations of another genre rooted in the female *Bildungsroman* tradition, the female coming-of-age novel. Caitlin Moran’s novel *How to Build a Girl* (2014) offers a narrative that combines the focus on the protagonist’s movements in the media world with a strong awareness of the female *Bildungsroman* tradition. In this way, as I intend to show, Moran’s novel participates in what can be seen as the conundrum of the postfeminist Girl Power discourse generated by its ambivalent anti/pro-feminist character, its simultaneous “reif[ication] of gendered social roles and reject[ion of] the cultural dualism of masculinity and femininity” (Zaslow 5).

The novel *How to Build a Girl* is written in the form of a first person present tense narrative, an approach which contributes to the feeling of intensity of the young heroine’s lived experience. However, the narrative voice belongs to the adult narrator, who combines her earlier adolescent perspective with her current knowledge and hindsight – which allow her to reflect on her behaviour in this coming-of-age period using the conceptual framework of feminist and postfeminist discourses. The story covers the three-year period between 1990 and 1993 during which Johanna, due to the pressures of her family’s economic situation, leaves school, turns herself into a successful career woman in the media (she starts

working for a London music magazine as a sixteen-year-old), and learns the difference between false and true romantic relationships. By simultaneously presenting the heroine of her novel as both a younger version of the chick lit heroine – the attractive, middle-class and well-off prototype of the can-do girl – and as a working-class, poor, fat teenager, the author explores the possibilities that Girl Power discourse opens to those whose attributes do not conform to this image of success.

Johanna, brought up on a council estate in Wolverhampton, a town immersed in post-industrial depression and anti-Thatcher sentiments, in a family that lives on state benefits, is in many respects a prototype of the at-risk girl. Accordingly, her coming of age, although ultimately a positive process of the can-do girl's development, is significantly marked by many of the negative features (drug abuse, heavy drinking and promiscuity) that usually define the at-risk girl. The fusion of femininity and masculinity implied by the heroine's adoption of laddish patterns of behaviour acquires a more complex form at the level of the plot, which combines the two main motifs that mark the difference between male and female development in the *Bildungsroman* genre.

As feminist critics (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, Fraiman, Ellis) point out, the constitutive elements of the protagonist's development identified by early critics² of the *Bildungsroman*, such as formal education, independent life in the city, two love affairs and an active interaction with society, traditionally did not belong among the social options available to women. The novels of development written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were rooted in the Enlightenment concepts of *Bildung* which associated male maturation with the public sphere and female maturation with the main role that the Enlightenment philosophers attributed to women – to maintain the private sphere of domestic retreats that men of Reason could turn to whenever they were tired by their “working for the universal” (Lloyd 82). Thus, while the classic narratives about male *Bildung*³ present the protagonist's education in the public sphere and follow his apprenticeship in his vocation, the classic novels about female maturation⁴ focus on the heroine's romantic apprenticeship, which ties her to the domestic space of wifehood and motherhood. The *Bildungsroman* heroine's engagement with the public sphere only appears in the twentieth-century narratives that reject the traditional plots and romantic motifs and emphasize the motif of female emancipation. As Rita Felski stresses, these feminist versions of the *Bildungsroman*⁵ reject heterosexual romance and replace it by the female protagonist's “symbolic act of separation” (126) from the traditional social roles of wife, housewife and mother. Separating themselves from the domestic sphere, the heroines negotiate the opportunities available to them in the twentieth-century public space of education, work and politics. Caitlin Moran's coming-of-age novel represents a postfeminist variation of the genre which revives the heroine's focus on romance while preserving her need to find self-realization beyond the domestic sphere. The novel gives equal prominence to the female protagonist's apprenticeship in her vocation and her romantic apprenticeship, as Joanna's efforts to acquire mastery of her chosen vocation coincide with her search for the right (romantic) partner. As a closer examination of Joanna's story reveals, Moran's appropriation of the two main motifs of the classic *Bildungsroman* include certain adjustments that shed light on some of the more problematic aspects of Girl Power discourse.

In a feature shared by the classic male *Bildungsroman*, the urban environment in which Johanna lives plays a crucial role in the process of her initiation into adult life. The protagonist's move to the city to take up a vocation has long been associated exclusively with the male process of maturation and men's greater involvement in the public sphere. As Jerome Hamilton Buckley states in his seminal definition of the classic *Bildungsroman*, "sometimes at a quite early age, [the hero] leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city... There his real 'education' begins, not only his preparation for a career but also – and often more importantly – his direct experience of urban life" (17). The masculine overtones of Johanna's move from her provincial town to the big city during her work trips to London are intensified by her choice to seek her vocation in the music business, a sphere in which her father (forever trying to revive the fame of his 1960s band) had earlier tried to succeed. In addition, her well-paid work (writing reviews of newly emerging bands) also allows her, at least partly, to adopt the breadwinner role that her father (unemployed and living on disability benefits) has failed to fulfill. The masculine aspects of her apprenticeship in her vocation are also visible in Johanna's efforts to fit in with the predominantly masculine environment of the music magazine by adopting or imitating laddish patterns of behaviour. She gradually slips into a world of partying, drinking, drug-taking and casual sex as part of her effort to establish a sense of being on equal terms with men in what is an essentially male world: "Sometimes I get off with rock stars just so I can come back and tell the stories – ... This is my unique contribution to the gang: if this were *Dungeon Master*, and we were assembling a crew, then Rob's talent would be 'Drunken havoc-making, 7, Kenny's would be 'Drunken bitchery, 8' and mine would be 'Sexual Raconteuring, 10'" (Moran 267). The most significant moment of this process of the heroine's maturation in the context of the public sphere appears when she adopts a cruel, cynical persona who "specializes" in writing withering reviews of bands she does not like because it gives her a sense of participation in the power structures traditionally dominated by men:

... because rich people, powerful people, cool people or the kind of swaggering men that orm these bands, are the kind of people who would usually look down on a fat teenage girl from a council estate, and in the one place I am more powerful than them – the pages of D&ME – I want my revenge – revenge on behalf of all the millions of girls like me ... Because I am the weakest, youngest one in the gang at the D&ME, and need to kill to prove my loyalty. (Moran 260)

However, what initially seems to be a successful rite of passage into a masculine form of adulthood (the suppression of emotions and the development of the ability to "kill"), which earns Johanna her acceptance into the "gang" ("'Morning Cruella de Ville!', the men would cry, fondly", Moran 267), ultimately proves to be a false turn on her journey towards adulthood. Recognizing the atrophic effect of cynicism ("Cynicism is, ultimately, fear ... [it] keeps you pinned to the spot, in the same posture, forever", 262) and the cruelty implied in the masculine form of power, she completes her apprenticeship in her vocation by (re)turning to the traditional feminine qualities – empathy and kindness: "I [learned] the simplest and most important thing of all: the world is difficult, and we are all breakable.

So just be kind” (261). As a sign of her professional maturity, Johanna abandons her “bile-filled” journalistic persona and instead “go[es] back to explaining ... why I love a thing [a band]. Explaining why you love something is one of the most important jobs on Earth” (324). This association of the heroine’s (“true”) identity with love, understanding and support points towards some similarities with the traditional conceptions of women’s nature that shaped eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives about female maturation as a preparation of the girl for marital life and motherhood. However, in contrast to the classic *Bildungsroman* heroine, Johanna is ready to spread these positive feminine qualities (the “real” source of female power) through her active participation in the public sphere. In this way Moran’s protagonist challenges not only the patriarchal relegation of the female role to the domestic sphere and the masculine construction of “power” as the ability to fight and destroy, but also questions typical Girl Power media images which tend to represent femininity (“girl”) primarily through the largely superficial aspects of style, appearance and (female) consumption patterns.⁶

The problematic dynamics of the fusion of femininity and masculinity in contemporary constructions of girlhood also inform the process of Johanna’s romantic apprenticeship, which the novel develops in parallel with her apprenticeship in her vocation. The romantic apprenticeship – as a process of maturation revolving around the notion of finding the right partner and concluding with a happy marriage, the evidence of its successful completion – has been identified as a central motif in the classic female *Bildungsroman* (Fraiman).⁷ Moran’s representation of her heroine’s development into womanhood overlaps in some important aspects with the patterns of these traditional narratives, and she acknowledges their influence by some explicit allusions to this literary tradition. The fourteen-year-old Johanna constructs her self-perception in the framework of the standardized images of girlhood and womanhood provided by nineteenth-century novels, asking her mother what “[her] trousseau would be, upon someone taking [her] hand in marriage” (Moran 12) and “writ[ing her] diary in a series of imaginary letters to sexy Gilbert Blythe from *Anne of Green Gables*” (Moran 29). Later, at seventeen, she tries to perceive her sexual affair with a rich, older man as a version of Jane Eyre’s romance with Mr Rochester. The allusion to Brontë’s novel draws attention to the way in which Moran frames her heroine’s affair with Tony Rich as a more realistic (and cynical) version of Brontë’s explorations of the potential (or otherwise) of romantic relationships to overcome class, status and property differences. Johanna learns the life lesson that this so-called Cinderella status deprives women of autonomy through a greater sense of humiliation than that suffered by the protagonist of Brontë’s novel: she is merely used to satisfy her rich “boyfriend’s” S&M sexual desires and to provoke the jealousy of his real, wealthy and beautiful girlfriend, while Jane Eyre enjoys, despite all the problematic aspects of their romance, Mr Rochester’s “true love”.

Although her realization of the utterly unromantic nature of her relationship with Tony Rich marks a turning point in Johanna’s development towards a greater degree of maturity, romance still functions as a central structural element in her coming-of-age narrative. The heroine’s need to love and to be loved influences not only her personal development but also the development of her professional career, and thus generates important points of intersection between the two types of her apprenticeship: Johanna’s creation of the “Cruella de Ville” persona with which she starts her successful journalist career is induced

both by her realization that the overtly positive music review influenced by her romantic feelings for the singer is read by her colleagues as evidence of her professional immaturity, but it is also a result of her own feelings of romantic disillusionment: “I wrote John Kite a proposal in a feature and he notably never married me” (Moran 260). The convergence of the two forms of apprenticeship appears again at the end of the novel when the heroine’s abandonment of the negative course of her professional development is related to her rejection of the “false” relationship with Tony Rich and the revival of her spiritual bond with the “right” man, John Kite.

As with the motif of apprenticeship in a vocation, the romantic apprenticeship theme of the novel also includes some innovative developments of the traditional version that draw attention to the problematic aspects of female identity construction in the context of Girl Power discourse. Feminist critics (Abel, Hirsh and Langland, Fraiman, Pratt, Labovitz) tend to see the classic *Bildungsroman* heroine’s involvement in the preparation for marital life as the main reason for her arrested development.⁸ Annis Pratt maintains that the “growing up, according to contemporary gender norms, means [for the heroine] growing down – an atrophy of the personality, a premature senility” (30).⁹ The inequality that the female protagonist experiences in terms of social options, such as the access to the public space of formal learning and employment, or in terms of the development of independent agency (hindered by marital and maternal roles), is seen as a crucial factor that prevents her from achieving full maturity. On the other hand, as some (Labovitz, Felski) suggest, the second wave feminist movement opened up the possibility for a new phase in the development of the genre. Esther Kleinbord Labovitz maintains that “only when *Bildung* became reality for women, in general” could the heroine of the twentieth-century *Bildungsroman* start to search for the self-realization in both the private and public spheres of life (7). From this perspective, postfeminist Girl Power media discourse, with its promotion of independent female agency and autonomy, may in fact herald a further positive stage in the process of women’s liberation.

The prominence which Girl Power discourse gives to sexuality as one of the forms of the “expression of female agency and self-determination” (Genz and Brabon 12) also informs Moran’s novel, and *How to Build a Girl* treats sexuality as a crucial factor in the process of the heroine’s coming-of-age process. This focus on sexuality draws attention to the radical changes in cultural sensibilities which have transformed this traditionally taboo subject into a “compulsory” element of the romantic motif in contemporary narratives. As Laura Harvey and Rosalind Gill point out, “whereas the classical romantic heroine offered ‘virtue’, innocence and goodness as the commodities she brought to sexual/marriage marketplace, contemporary romances demand a ‘technology’ of sexiness”, which means that heroines are “required to be skilled in a variety of sexual behaviours and practices and [to perform] confident sexual agency” (56). Moran’s novel presents this (conscious) modernization of the romantic narrative, most visibly, at the moments when the fourteen-year-old Johanna reveals that the most “important” activities of her early adolescence are enjoying nineteenth-century novels (and the perfect romantic partner images that they offer) and the private exploration and satisfaction of her sexual desires; or at the moment when she reads Tony Rich’s unconventional sexual practices as signs of their deeper level of intimacy that suggests the kind of true love felt by Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester.

The Girl Power discourse is further reflected in the protagonist's constant attempts at self-invention, which are intended to give her control over her life. As cultural critics (Harris, Gill and Scharff) point out, Girl Power discourse, following the contemporary neoliberal trends, urges individuals to perceive their self-development as a process of self-invention, whose success depends solely on their own ability to make the right choices. This paradigm of personal development, though attractive in its perception of freedom of choice as the ultimate positive attribute of postmodernity, raises questions about its actual effects on the individuals who are burdened with the full responsibility for the choice of values that shape their lives.

The freedom to choose is realized in Moran's novel through the heroine's conscious process of "self-invention", in which she turns herself from a fat, provincial, teenage, working-class girl, with no greater prospects than becoming a younger version of her tired and disillusioned mother, into "Dolly Wilde", a young career woman. The creation of "Dolly Wilde" (including the choice of an appropriate name for the new unbound self and two years of autodidactic efforts to learn the basics of writing music reviews) shows the potential of the "self-invention" to transgress the limitations of one's class origin (unemployment and poverty). The fact that the invention of this new identity was initially fuelled by the energies of the new Riot Grrrl pop music subculture (an original inspiration for the later commodified media versions of Girl Power) also suggests a positive aspect of the heroine's approach to self-development; the possibility to create a new girl with her own voice in a male world: "they're making new kinds of girls in America ... Girls who dare ... They are all in the furious, messy, white-light act of self-creation, trying to invent a future they can be in" (Moran 105–106).

Although Johanna's freedom to invent herself in a world full of choices is in direct opposition to the situation of the classic *Bildungsroman* heroine whose story includes limited choices, "compromise and even coercion" (Fraiman 6), it does not provide the contemporary girl with a less complicated journey towards female adulthood. Just like her apprenticeship in her vocation, her (anti)romantic apprenticeship in the dynamics of the relations between men and women is marked by the masculine patterns of behaviour which problematize her personal development. Her teenage obsession with the need to lose her virginity as an important step towards adulthood, the business-like arrangements of the experience of her first kiss, her sharing of details of her casual sexual affairs with her colleagues as "proof" of adult expertise, her playing the role of the "sexual predator" by picking up boys for one night stands – are all signs of behaviour traditionally associated with men, and are tolerated as a (relatively) positive form of male "laddishness" in contrast to the female "whorishness" identified in similar displays of sexual freedom. Although in postfeminist Girl Power media discourse these masculine forms of sexual behaviour appear to have become a new norm for the can-do girls (as a "compulsory" sign of their free agency),¹⁰ in Moran's novel they tend to coincide, in a conflicting way, with more traditional perceptions of female sexual behaviour. Thus Johanna, although enjoying her "Lady Sex Adventuress" persona, cannot help perceiving herself as a "massive slag" (Moran 235), a phrase which she finds hurtful; and her attempts to construct a strong, independent identity through a form of sexual agency which objectifies men lead her in the opposite direction. She repeatedly positions herself as a pure object of male

desire, which she later reflects on in terms of feminist discourse: “In later years, I find this is called ‘physical disconnect’, and is all part and parcel of women having their sexuality mediated through men’s gaze” (243). This fills her, once again, with an intense sense of loss of the self, a state of nonexistence which she first experienced as a child when she had to pretend to be dead in order to attract her parents’ attention, and later as a teenager who believed that her real ‘me’ could be constructed only in the world of adult social and sexual relations. The repeated regression to the sense of non-existence that Johanna experiences in the course of her apparently successful construction of her “real” self is overcome only when she finds her way towards a spiritually and emotionally rewarding relationship with the “right” man.

Although Moran’s novel provides the reader with a happy ending conclusion of the protagonist’s coming-of-age crisis, ultimately it suggests that the contemporary girl is no less prone to the problematic issues of female maturation than her eighteenth- and nineteenth-century counterparts. Johanna’s story shows that “growing down” in the process of maturation is a possibility implied not only in the effects of the traditional patriarchal norms that arrested the development of the classic *Bildungsroman* heroine, but also in the norms of postfeminist female sexuality that pervade Girl Power media discourse. As a fusion of the successful can-do girl and the at-risk girl who loses herself in the process of her search for Girl Power, Moran’s protagonist suggests that the line between the two contrasting versions of girlhood can be rather thin.

Notes

¹The best example of the genre is one of its founding texts, Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996).

²See the studies by Buckley and Howe examining the English *Bildungsroman* in the context of the German tradition.

³Famous British variations of the German prototype, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, include Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* or W. Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage*.

⁴Typical examples are Frances Burney’s *Evelina*, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

⁵Rita Felski’s examples include, among others, Doris Lessing’s *The Summer before the Dark*, Marge Piercy’s *Fly Away Home* and Fay Weldon’s *Praxis*.

⁶A good example of the fusion of the superficial signs of femininity with masculine power is provided by the teenage heroine of the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, who, “conventionally attractive, petite, anblonde”, is the “butt-kicking girl par excellence” (Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz 43).

⁷Although the motif of romance naturally appears also in the classic male *Bildungsroman* – whose protagonists usually experience two forms of involvement with women, “one debasing, one exalting” (Buckley 17) – the romantic relationship never acquires the same centrality on the structural level of the text as in novels about female development.

⁸The examples that are used to illustrate the point include Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Emily Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, and *Shirley*, George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, or Frances Burney’s *Evelina*.

⁹Annis Pratt uses Jo Marsh from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* as an example of female development thwarted by the limitations that the patriarchal convention imposes on women by tying them to the domestic sphere.

¹⁰The American TV series *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) is the most obvious example of this change in the norms of female behavior.

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Worlds Made of Stories

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Abstract

Leslie Marmon Silko and Alexis Wright are well-known authors who represent two contrasting indigenous cultures from Australia and North America. Their works Ceremony (1977) and Carpentaria (2006) offer stories presenting traces of cultural heritage, memories and traumas that are common for many indigenous communities from their countries. These works, thoughtfully enriched with an essence of the mythical as well as reality, blend traditional stories with the boundless imagination of contemporary authors. Traditional stories have become a bridge overcoming the distance between the past and the present, and situated into the new context, they provide a different view of individuals and their indigenous communities in the contemporary world. This study is based on a comparative approach, as it is focused on the use of traditional stories and their forms in the chosen novels. It is found that both novels manifest similarities in the content of the traditional stories and their use within the context of the novels; however, there are evident contrasts in the style that the authors employ. Moreover, due to their conversive approach, the authors of these novels have introduced a transformative power that influences not only listener-readers of indigenous and non-indigenous origin (their main targets), but also the writers themselves.

Keywords: Leslie Marmon Silko, Alexis Wright, indigenous cultures, conversive approach, storytelling

1. Introduction

In the recent years many indigenous writers have enriched the field of literature with their unique writings, many of which have included elements of oral traditions that are typical of the cultures from which they came. In the case of Native American writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor or N. Scott Momaday, their work has become part of the struggle to change attitudes through not only political but also literary activism in order

to provide an explanation of “[...] how Indians, as tribal communities and as individuals, understand themselves [...]” (Padget 17–18). Also, Australian Aboriginal writers, such as Alexis Wright or Marie Munkara, focus in their works on current issues concerning long-term problems of Aboriginal communities, their return to oral traditions, and their transformation resulting from the process of decolonization. Yet, similarly to Native American writers, they also continue to create new stories in the spirit of their oral traditions by employing elements of traditional storytelling.

The tradition of storytelling, so important for Native Americans as well as Australian Aboriginals, shapes their modern stories and causes unexpected effects on readers who follow the stories of the individual characters in the novels. It is obvious that these novels differ from each other not only due to cultural differences, but also because their authors use different literary devices to express their ideas. While Silko’s novel plays out in a more spiritual mood, which is conveyed by traditional poems of various lengths in free verse, mediating a quest to achieve the healing of the individual and his community, Alexis Wright in *Carpentaria* (2006) uses traditional stories in the form of short narratives contrasting with a plot full of irony and parody as she mocks dominant cultural authorities.

2. Storytelling and the oral tradition

Padget describes the literature of Native Americans as a literature that is “predominantly oral – spoken or sung – and aural – to be listened to in a communal context. Stories, songs, prayers and chants were all articulated through memory” (18). One of the aims of contemporary Native American writers is thus to incorporate into their works of memory elements based on the oral tradition. In Suzanne Austgen’s view, “[s]torytelling is more than entertainment or even the passing on of history and religious beliefs to the next generation; it is also a ceremony that acts as a link between the mythical deities and the people themselves, whose ritual life is based on the myths.” When we look at indigenous literatures, we find that their knowledge and cultural aspects are based deeply on the oral tradition, in which storytelling is a “foundation to these literatures and, in fact, to all literatures” (Brill de Ramírez 1). Oral storytelling therefore cannot be considered a passive act, for it binds the individuals with their communities and with other communities beyond the borders of their countries. This is emphasized by Roberta Kennedy, the traditional Haida storyteller, who notes: “Though we will always be different, there are some things that will connect us. I share my messages of hope not just with our Indigenous communities, but with all of our communities. It is my hope that through my performances, I am building bridges between our different cultural groups” (134). The obvious differences in the use of the traditional stories make the individual indigenous communities distinctive from each other, though there are various aspects that are also shared by them, for example the belief in the power to create or influence reality.

In the case of Native Americans, stories and songs could be performed only in certain situations, mostly ceremonies and rituals enacted by a specifically trained person. This is because many indigenous cultures based on the oral tradition believe that words have a power to create. In the case of Native Americans, words serve

to alter the universe for good and evil. The power of thought and words enables native people to achieve harmony with the physical and spiritual universe: to bring rain, enrich the harvest, provide good hunting, heal physical and mental sickness, maintain good relationships within the group, bring victory against enemy, win a loved one, or ward off evil spirits. (Padget 18)

For Australian Aboriginals the traditional stories initially served to preserve knowledge, but later turned into a medium of life writing, “memorializing past injustice” (Wheeler 16). Therefore, “the oral histories from the years of past, and their accounts regularly promote healing between groups inside and outside of the Aboriginal community” (Wheeler 7).

The oral tradition is necessarily related to the act of communication; literary theorists should therefore take this into account when analyzing certain literary works including some elements of the oral tradition. However, for many readers the lack of knowledge of certain oral traditions gives rise to problems of understanding. According to Ruppert, such readers, especially those non-natives who are “aware of their lack of knowledge” (qtd. in Padget 23), are now open to patterns they previously did not know. They have a chance to learn how to see and understand a different point of view through the new “hybrids” created by contemporary indigenous writers.

Critical voices among the indigenous writers and critics can be divided into two groups. One group among Native Americans is represented by Arnold Krupat, who supports the creation of hybrids, as such new forms – which represent the differences between two contrasting cultures – at the same time represent a tool mediating communication, knowledge and understanding between them (in Padget 23). On the other hand, critical voices represented by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a Native American, and others point out that the indigenous writers, in this case Native American novelists writing their works in English, are just “used as the basis for the ‘melting pot’, pragmatic inclusion in the canon, and involuntary unification of [American] literary voice” (in Padget 23–24). Moreover, she argues that “American Indian fiction and the American Indian novel, in particular, has been the captive of Western literary theory” (Cook-Lynn in Brill de Ramírez 7).

3. New ways of listening to realities and histories within the literatures

In the case of indigenous literatures, we can see how “the Western framework and discourse that privileges the textual at the expense of the oral” (Brill de Ramírez 2) may give rise to fears that the oral cannot retain its features after transcription. Such opinions can be traced to the situation that arose during the process of transformation of the oral versions into their written forms, which took place via early “cross-cultural collaborations” between white scholars or editors and indigenous writers. However, this resulted in “Eurocentric editing”, which influenced the final form of the writings – subordinating the writings to general norms at the price of losing elements that were typical of the oral tradition of storytelling, a vital aspect of authenticity characteristic of indigenous literatures (Jones 37–38). Despite this, the emergence of postcolonial theories, including *conversive* theory, has also affected the area of indigenous literature, in which writers have realized the necessity of accepting the novel format. Simply put, those cultures did not possess anything

like that before, so incorporating the novel as a new medium enabled their representatives to approach a wider audience. The Western novel and its format have enabled writers to incorporate traditional oral forms representing the tradition of storytelling through the fusion and creation of new forms of literature. Owens refers to the oral tradition of Native Americans incorporated into the literary works of contemporary writers. He defines its position as “an attempt to recover identity and authenticity by invoking and incorporating the world found within the oral tradition – the reality of myth and ceremony – an authorless ‘original’ literature” (in Padget 21), and such similarities can also be found in the fiction of contemporary Australian Aboriginal writers.

The oral literary traditions within indigenous cultures, such as those of Australian Aboriginals and Native Americans, draw from the transformative power affecting those who listen to stories creating some kind of conversation with the storyteller, and therefore participate in the process of storytelling itself. The conversive strategy takes that into account, as it presents the different position of the scholar as “the listener-reader of the literary work” and at the same time “the listener participating in an oral storytelling event” (Brill de Ramírez 1). Brill de Ramírez states that the term ‘conversive’ “describe[s] the conjunctive reality of traditional storytelling through both its transformational and regenerative power (conversion) and the intersubjective relationality between the storyteller and listener (conversation)” (Brill de Ramírez 6–7). It took some time before the conversive approach found its place among other literary theories. However, as Brill de Ramírez notes, this approach has enabled to scholars finally to

learn to listen to voices previously silenced or otherwise critically altered through criticism’s preconceived interpretive strategies [...] serve as storyteller-guides teaching readers to listen to the words, worlds, realities, and histories within the literatures [...] demonstrate the transformative power of stories as manifested in the scholars’ own interaction with particular literary works. (7)

A growing number of critical voices from indigenous literature call for a more natural form of the oral tradition in its written and performative form than the one offered through the “lenses of the textually based Eurocentric tradition” (Brill de Ramírez 3). According to scholars such as Gerald Vizenor (in Bleaser) or Arnold Krupat, to get closer to and understand indigenous literatures it is essential to understand their oral tradition. Kimberley Bleaser, in her *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (1996), asserts that it is not possible to completely capture the essence of experience in written form. Nevertheless, Agnes Grant underlines the importance of differentiation between the oral and written forms of indigenous literature. On the other hand, she points to the preservation of oral elements even after they acquire written form; this observation is also echoed by Susan Brill de Ramírez (3–4).

Contemporary indigenous writers have begun to employ the storytelling and oral traditions in their writings. This has opened up possibilities for literary works labelled with terms such as “hybrid” (Brill de Ramírez 5), representing a link between literatures based on the oral and written literary traditions in order to show their perspective on the specific

aspects and life experiences of indigenous people and also to present these experiences to a non-indigenous audience.

4. Alexis Wright and Leslie Marmon Silko

It is Walter Ong who suggests that “every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation” (qtd. in Jones 44), and this is what Alexis Wright and Leslie Marmon Silko do in their novels. These writers, as the authors of *Ceremony* (1977) and *Carpentaria* (2006), represent the indigenous cultures of the Native Americans, the Pueblo and the Navajo people, and the Australian Aboriginals, the Waanyi people. These two female authors have much in common even though they come from such different and distant cultures. Their indigenous origin and their affiliation to their communities gives their works a strong charge of reality, as the authors have been able to draw inspiration from their firsthand experience of the problems they have had to face or witness during their lives within their communities.

One of the first things that is obvious from reading both books is the authors’ close relationship to the land they depict. Even though they offer own interpretations and views of the land, the influence of their cultural background is obvious and present in the novels. While Silko depicts the real Laguna Pueblo reservation where she grew up, Wright depicts a fictional town called Desperance, albeit located in a real area – the Gulf of Carpentaria, the home of the Waanyi people and an area that is deeply familiar to the author. Both writers interweave individual stories of their characters, and to some extent also the communities in which their characters live, with very carefully chosen traditional stories based or occurring in the oral traditions of their cultures. Various forms of storytelling, such as myths, songs, and ceremonies, are introduced in each of the novels; moreover, both authors play with the form as more contemporary and realistic stories related to the main protagonists of the novels are shaped and transformed into a form resembling a traditional one.

Such a technique enables the authors to embellish the main story, and it offers a different view on why things happen the way they happen. Silko’s *Ceremony* is marked by a spiritual mood, conveyed by shorter and longer traditional Pueblo stories in the form of poems in blank verse, mediating the quest to achieve the healing of the individual and his community; the author contrasts these stories with the personal story of the protagonist. Wright’s *Carpentaria* includes traditional stories, which are told in the form of narration that moves continuously from one story into the next, but the author creates a contrast by introducing a plot full of irony, parody and allegory, mocking the dominant cultural authorities as well as her people in order to point out real problems. The great stories of the Christian religion are juxtaposed with the personal stories of the characters, many of which have close connections with the traditional world of the Aboriginals.

5. Worlds made of stories

The comparison of these two novels enables us to focus on the use of traditional oral stories within the composition of the works, which – even though they are written by authors from different indigenous cultures – deal with very common situations. It is possible to identify

one typical feature of the indigenous tradition of storytelling found in both works – the non-linearity of time.

While Alexis Wright combines “different layers of time, ‘reaching back as much as it reached forward,’ and combining ‘the spiritual, real and imagined worlds’” (Selles 237), Leslie Marmon Silko presents the circular character of time, a feature that is characteristic of Native American oral culture. One story is a part of another one; this is presented in Silko’s own essay “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective,” where she emphasizes “the sense of story, and story within story, and the idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories, and the sense that stories never truly end” (160). Time is, therefore, bound with stories, history and culture into a circle, and most importantly, it has no end and no beginning.

5.1 Creation stories

Creation stories represent the core of the indigenous oral tradition as they present the indigenous communities’ specific view of the creation of their worlds, and of the people and other beings in it. Both authors work with such stories in their novels. Moreover, being inspired by traditional stories, they also create their own new stories, transforming the indigenous experience into something more.

In *Ceremony*, Silko presents the story of the Thought-Woman’s myth, which introduces the creation of the world and the whole universe according to the Pueblo tradition, with the Thought-Woman or Spider-Woman as the main protagonist in the process of creation:

Ts’ its’ tsi’ nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.
She thought of her sisters,
Nau’ ts’ ity’ i and I’ tcs’ i,
and together they created the Universe
this world
and the four worlds below.
Thought-Woman, the spider,
named things and
as she named them
they appeared.
She is sitting in her room
thinking of a story now
I’m telling you the story
she is thinking. (*Ceremony* 1)

This myth offers the Pueblo people’s interpretation of the universe and its structure, as it includes the human world on this Earth and the other four worlds occupied by spiritual beings as well as those who have passed away.

The creation story related to the world of the Aboriginals is described by Eleni Pavlides as “belonging to the Dreamtime mythopoesies of the Indigenous people” (152); it

interprets the creative power of nature, the power that “pulsates through all creation and which grants the land its sacredness” (in Pavlides 152). This power is obvious in the following extract from Wright’s *Carpentaria*:

The ancestral serpent, a creature larger than storm clouds, came down from the stars, laden with its own creative enormity. It moved graciously – if you had been watching with the eyes of a bird hovering in the sky far above the ground. Looking down at the serpent’s wet body, glistening from the ancient sunlight, long before man was a creature who could contemplate the next moment in time. It came down those millions of years ago, to crawl on its heavy belly, all around the wet clay soils in the Gulf of Carpentaria. (*Carpentaria* 1)

Stories related to the origin of the white man’s myth are present in both novels; they present the negative aspects which the white man brought into the worlds of the indigenous people. Wright’s creation story offers a confrontation with the white man and Christian religion, tracing their devastating effect on the Aboriginal community and its traditions:

A nation chants, but *we know your story already*. The bells peal everywhere, Church bells calling the faithful to the Tabernacle where the Gates of Heaven will open, but not for the wicked. Calling innocent little black girls from a community where the white dove bearing an olive branch never lands. Little girls who come back home after church on Sunday. Who look around themselves at the human fallout and announce matter-of-factly. *Armageddon begins here*. (*Carpentaria* 1)

Silko’s creation story in *Ceremony* has a different character, as it has two parts. One alludes directly to traditional stories, as the theme of witchery belongs to Native American folklore. The other refers to the creation of the white people and the events that this brought about.

Long time ago
in the beginning
there were no white people in this world
there was nothing European.
And this world might have gone on like that
except for one thing:
witchery.
This world was already complete
even without white people. (*Ceremony* 124)

This story brings white people to life, with all their power and instruments with which they work against the Native Americans. The story about the creation of white people sounds like a prophecy of the deeds which would be committed against the Native Americans during the centuries of colonial domination; at the same time, however, it is a kind of explanation of attitudes towards the whites.

What Wright presents at the beginning of her novel are two creation stories, alternatives allowing her to introduce other, much bigger issues such as “the legacy and nature of memory and inheritance; the permissible and possible avenues of its diffusion and

communication; the relationship between the history, dispossession, trauma and nation” (Pavlidis 152). The stories influence the process of remembering and creating “both a personal and collective history by producing the cultural memory that creates the myth of the nation” (Pavlidis 152).

Silko’s creation stories are not new. Brill de Ramírez describes what she does in her novel as “the old words, old stories, the old ways into retelling that provide new ways of seeing, understanding, and interpreting a world in which the old ways are no longer sufficient.” (129) According to Native American tradition, the stories and rituals used during the ceremonies are applicable to various events, as they have a transformative character depending on the specific situation when the specific effect is expected or needed - even in today’s society. In the following poem, Silko reconsiders the importance of traditional stories in fighting evil, and she intentionally gives her words a traditional form:

[...]
I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren’t just for entertainment.
Don’t be fooled
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off illness and death.
You don’t have anything
if you don’t have the stories.
Their evil is mighty
but it can’t stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
let the stories be confused or forgotten
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenseless then. (*Ceremony* 2)

Despite many dissenting voices from an array of indigenous critics and scholars, e.g. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (in Paget), Kimberley Bleaser or Erin Hanson, reacting to the attempts to transform oral stories into their written forms, Silko’s novel serves as an example that even if the traditional myth or another form of the oral tradition is transformed into its written form, it still possesses its original cultural qualities, albeit transformed.

5.2 Stories of survival

Even though literacy, as a tool of the dominant Western culture, may initially have suppressed the tradition of orality, the transformation from the oral to the written has become an inevitable part of the changing world of indigenous people – and not only Native Americans. Silko’s novel is a demonstration of how to survive such changes by creating new stories, myths, rituals or even whole ceremonies in order to preserve them. Yet these stories have taken on new forms, adapted to meet the needs of the contemporary world in which the indigenous people live. The explanation of why these changes were needed lies in the words of one of the characters from the novel, Betonie, an unorthodox medicine

man: “At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. However, after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only the growth keeps the ceremonies strong” (Silko, *Ceremony* 126).

Chester Eagle reacts to another side of literacy – a tool brought by Western culture, which came to represent colonial superiority; this is depicted in *Carpentaria*. Traditional storytelling and oral culture for Aboriginals – in its transformed form, as it is presented in *Carpentaria* – enables us “to think outside the prescribed way [...] it pushes its way into the thinking of white society, creating revisions, divisions, as it goes” (204). Eagle notes that the process of transformation merges the specific aspects of two different cultures, their strong points, as “[a]n oral culture has to be ready to accept, and make use of, huge bulks of information at critical times, and the recipient, the would-be user, has to be read” (205). Alexis Wright, similarly to Leslie Marmon Silko, mediates the conversation between the reader-listener and the story told by her narrator, and incorporates the conversive strategy into her work in order to reveal the experience hidden within the story itself:

Will knew. The stories of the old people churned in his guts [...] Yet, old man Midnight remembered a ceremony he had never performed in his life before, and now, to his utter astonishment, he passed it on to Will. He went on and on, fully believing he was singing in the right sequence hundreds of places in a journey to a place at least a thousand kilometres away. ‘Sing this time. Only that place called such and such. This way, remember. Don’t mix it up. Then next place, sing such and such. Listen to me sing it now and only when the moon is above, like there, bit lower, go on, practice. Remember, don’t make mistakes [...]’ The song was so long and complicated and had to be remembered in the right sequence where the sea was alive, waves were alive, currents were alive, even the clouds. (*Carpentaria* 372)

The extracts given below, chosen from both novels, represent a demonstration of this transformative power, as they are textual hybrids in which two different literary traditions merge into one, though the effect on the readers may differ. As Austgen asserts, this story by Silko is different from the other Native traditional stories in her novel, which refer to “the people’s relationship with earth and the deities” (2011). Even though the role of the land and nature is vital, as it passively participates in the process of healing presented in the story, Silko’s *Ceremony* introduces stories which present distinct transformative powers that do not derive from nature, but concern the relationship between Native American war veterans and society. Severe and deep imprints left on their souls caused by their war experience and the changes within the society transform their characters, distorting them enough to prevent them from defining their true identity:

He said, “Go get ’em, Chief.”
He was my best drinking buddy, that guy
He’d watch me
see how good I’d score with each one.
“I’m Italian tonight.”

“Oh a Wop!” He laughed
and hollered so loud
both of those girls were watching us then.
I smiled at
both of them, see, so they’d
both think I was friendly.
But I gave my “special look”
to the blonde. So she’d know, see. (*Ceremony* 53–54)

Silko refers to this as the timeless “witchery of the modern world” (Ausgten 2011), blinding the minds of her characters in the same way as the Pueblo people were fooled in one of the stories she recalls in the other part of the novel. This is a reference to the cyclical principle that is a feature of the Pueblo and Navajo storytelling tradition, which offers a possibility to refer to a new situation by describing to a situation that has already happened. By juxtaposing the old and the new story, Silko aims to reveal – for both indigenous and non-indigenous readers – that the core of the problem often remains the same.

Wright’s hybrid story, through its interpretation and its re-telling, exhibits the power of storytelling which reflects the functionality of the Aboriginal traditional story as a medium containing the knowledge passed from one generation to another:

The day he had left old Midnight and taken his boat to sea he had heard the report of a cyclone hanging south-southeast of Cape York, somewhere in the Coral Sea. What happened to that? The weatherman ended with a short statement about a tidal surge due to the cyclone activity in the region. Will closed his eyes and saw the tremendous fury of the winds gathering up the seas, and clouds carrying the enormous bodies of spiritual beings belonging to other worlds. Country people, old people, said it was the sound of the great spiritual ancestors roaring out of the dusty, polluted sea all of the time nowadays. Will believed this. Everyone clearly saw what the spirits saw. The country looked dirty from mining, shipping, barges spilling ore and waste. Something had to run a rake across the lot. (*Carpentaria* 397)

The way in which Wright tells the story about the storm juxtaposes differing points of view of the Aboriginal communities and the dominating part of the society. While the weatherman brings the view of the “whitefellas” in the form of a report full of factual information about the area hit by a cyclone, the Aboriginal view presents much more than that, and embodies all that makes the Aboriginal culture so unique - the close relationship with the natural world, and the deeply rooted belief in spiritual beings influencing the Aboriginal way of life.

Through their “hybrids” combining the traditional with the innovative, the novels have introduced modes of writing that have changed the perspective on contemporary indigenous literature as a whole. Imagination and knowledge of oral traditions and their principles has become a great challenge for both authors, yet Silko and Wright have both been able to turn their ideas into engaging works of fiction reflecting the changes undergone by their particular communities while also respecting the delicacy of indigenous traditional storytelling.

6. Conclusion

These two women writers represent two differing indigenous cultures and exemplify two different styles of writing, yet both of them draw their inspiration from traditional oral storytelling and apply it in their works. Even though there are obvious contrasts between the two – such as the form of the traditional stories used in the novels, in Silko’s case free verse and in Wright’s case narration – it is possible to identify many parallel features that are common to both writers and their works. The impact of the colonial and post-colonial periods and their impact on the indigenous cultures and the cultures dominating over them is uniquely depicted in both novels. These works represent their authors’ attempts to reconnect contemporary readers of indigenous origin with their rich traditional cultural past, which has been struck dumb under the burden of dominating cultures. The traditional stories enable self-identification with the characters, which in the Native American culture serves as an integral part of healing ceremonies. The Australian Aboriginal oral tradition serves as a medium of knowledge and experience shared among the generations in order to enable them to survive the conditions of the harsh land they live in. Yet, due to cultural and political interventions in Australia, the United States and global changes affecting these societies, many contemporary writers see meaning in the old stories which enable them to reconnect with the traditional roots of their cultures – while at the same time giving access to non-indigenous members of the global communities, enabling these readers to gain an understanding of the old stories’ distinctive perception of the world through the traditional oral culture transformed into its written form.

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The Social Impact of a Classic Novel

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Abstract

*This study is concerned with the way in which capitalism influenced the living and working conditions of the workers in Chicago's meatpacking plants, which were depicted in the novel *The Jungle* (1906) by Upton Sinclair. Even though advanced methods of production (such as the division of labour) are usually associated with progress, in the novel we see a completely different outlook, in which such methods more closely resemble regression. A great majority of Sinclair's workers were European immigrants who came to America in order to pursue the American Dream. The paper examines the way in which capitalism in the meatpacking industry controlled both the market and the lives of the helpless workers whose fortune was determined by it.*

Keywords: capitalism, meatpacking industry, socialism, European immigrants, labour abuse

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The American writer Upton Sinclair was a student of literature when he joined the Socialist Party of America in 1902; he believed that its philosophy was compatible with his Christian faith, marked by its concern for poor people and social equality. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century is known as the Progressive Era in American history, and various social problems were addressed during this period. Sinclair became one of the leaders of a group of investigative journalists known as the muckrakers.¹ Due to the existence of popular mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, public awareness of these issues was strong. According to the historians Arthur and Lila Weinberg, the muckrakers were the press agents of the Progressive movement; they wrote long, detailed articles which addressed government corruption, poverty, child labour, hazardous working conditions, etc. (Hillstrom 21). They exposed the misdemeanours and felonies of the titans of

several industries and documented many cases in which these industrialists took advantage of American consumers. Their work gave rise to many social and political reforms. Among others, we can list Jacob Riis, who wrote about the living conditions in tenement houses; his observations were published in a work entitled *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). John Spargo wrote about the danger of child labour in America in the novel *The Bitter Cry of the Children* (1906). Rheta Childe Dorr exposed issues affecting women, such as gender and pay discrimination. Another journalist, Ida M. Tarbell, conducted an investigation of the oil industry which was published in *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1902) (Hillstrom 38–53). As a result, these writers created a new type of American journalism.

Apart from muckraking, there is another phenomenon of American history which stands in the background of Sinclair's story – the Westward movement. Although this movement does not have anything to do with the plot of the novel itself, one might view it as an interesting background which is related to the plot's setting – Chicago. In 1830, prior to the Westward expansion in the 19th century due to which many new states and cities were created, Chicago was not even a town (Miller and Masur). Nonetheless, the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, technology, and a huge influx of immigrants reshaped the country and created Chicago – which became a gateway city connecting farms with the expanding meat industry. Thanks to the establishment of the railroad network, trainloads of cattle, sheep, and pigs were transported to Chicago's prominent meat corporations – Armour, Swift, and Morris – every day (Hillstrom 60); Sinclair called these companies Durham, Brown and Jones. Besides the meatpacking industry, which was considered the greatest aggregation of labour and capital ever gathered in one place (the West Side), other large businesses also became established in Chicago. Foremost among them was the steel industry on the Calumet River, which dominated and stood behind the story of Chicago's South-east Side (Sellers 12). At one point, the Calumet district was the largest steel-producing centre in the world. Prior to the foundation of the steel plants, the attractive surroundings of the Calumet River had been the cradle of the city itself. It was inhabited first by Native Americans, and later by French colonists who were involved in the fur trade (Sellers 3). However, the vast railroad system, with its numerous bridges built across the river in the late 1840s, pushed the borders of Chicago much further. Consequently, steel mills were built on the Southeast Side, producing coke, iron, and other metal products. Canals followed with yet another Chicago industry – shipbuilding – in the 1890 (Sellers 35). Sinclair depicts this shift in American society – a shift which transformed Chicago from a rural and agricultural town into an urban and industrial one.

Sinclair was assigned to his first job as an investigative journalist to write a story about immigrant workers in Chicago's meatpacking industry in 1904. Dressed as one of them, he wandered around the factories to witness the excruciating jobs of the people, and he lived in one of the tenement houses where he listened to their stories. Sinclair exposed the exploitation of the immigrant workforce by the big capitalists and revealed the shocking content of the meat they produced, which contained rat carcasses and toxic chemicals. Sinclair commented: "I wrote with tears and anguish, pouring into the pages all the pain which life had meant to me" (qtd. in Hillstrom 143). Even before Sinclair became a muckraker, he had experienced the contrast between rich and poor while he was a youngster. His family went through a period in which they lacked food, clothing, and shelter. On the other

hand, when he spent time with his maternal relatives, he experienced a dramatic contrast, as his grandparents lived a luxurious life. This profound difference made a strong impression on him, and he developed an interest in social divisions (Hillstrom 143). His own experience of battling cold and poverty was described in three articles for 'The Appeal to Reason', which was a socialist journal; this launched his writing career. He later drew on these articles to write a novel called *The Jungle* (Tavernier-Courbin 250).

The opening of the novel introduces several themes that Sinclair touches upon in the text – such as the different perception of values by Europeans and Americans, as well as the exploitation of innocent people in America and the widespread corruption in society. The novel starts with the scene of a wedding featuring the protagonist Jurgis Rudkus and his soon-to-be wife Ona; both are immigrants from Lithuania. The wedding scene introduces a series of struggles and swindles that the newcomers had to face. In fact, the idea of debt and bills was hanging over the couple even during their wedding ceremony. They had to pay for the hall and church, and on top of that they were cheated by the saloonkeeper who charged them more than they were supposed to pay. It might be argued that the importance of maintaining the Lithuanian traditions did not mean anything for the saloonkeeper, who could have had mercy on them as far as his bill was concerned. One can assume that the wedding ceremony (*veselija*) was probably not of great importance for the Americans, though for the Lithuanians it was an important custom – including traditions such as the requirement that every guest should contribute to the property of the newlyweds. It is suggested in the novel that the American environment was not in favour of that tradition, as the wedding guests lacked money to uphold it. As Morris suggests, the communal obligation which they would have performed in Lithuania was lost in America (57). If Jurgis and Ona had married in Lithuania under the same conditions, there could have been a chance that their fellow citizens would have tried to help them as much as possible, maybe requiring them to pay only a small sum.

The wedding scene is followed by an explanation of why the European people had decided to pursue their quest for a better life in America. They had heard that America was a country where one could easily become rich; in America a man was free, did not have to serve in the army, and was equal to others. All of the above-mentioned facts represented an important pull factor for many Lithuanians, as they were part of tsar's serfdom and thus did not know freedom at all. Most people also left for America due to economic reasons (Eidintas). It is said that between 1899 and 1914 there were 252,594 Lithuanian immigrants in the United States (Selenis). Although Sinclair focuses mainly on European immigrants such as Poles, Slovaks, Czechs, or Lithuanians, one can assume that the workforce also included the low strata of Americans or black people. Even though the immigrants achieved personal freedom in the new continent, they were not free in every aspect. The way they had imagined life in America was far from the reality due to the immense power of big corporations which controlled both the entire market, and indeed the government itself. As a consequence, the immigrants' lives were marked by a struggle for survival in the 'promised' land. Hence, Sinclair attacks the American Dream through the main characters' realization that it is one big lie, as capitalism had not enabled them to improve their 'trapped' situation. The reader can see that they came to the New World with naïve

expectations – and were in fact reduced by utilitarian calculations, as for example in Dickens's *Hard Times*.

As an opponent of the system, Sinclair's novel primarily attacks capitalism. One is able to witness the role of capitalism through the work of big American corporations which Sinclair called The Beef Trust; this corporate milieu is portrayed as an enormous den of iniquity and fraud. While the central characters take a tour of the meatpacking plant, they are provided with a first-hand glimpse of the industry's efficiency. They see a never-ending railroad which brings thousands of cattle, hogs, and sheep every day from the countryside right to the packing houses. Sinclair observes: "[I]t was all so businesslike that one watched it fascinated. It was porkmaking by machinery, porkmaking by applied mathematics" (29). Additionally, division of labour was used in order to achieve business goals. The assembly-line technique was employed in combination with human labour to ensure effective production, and the division of labour created an immense number of different positions – such as knockers, butchers, headsmen, and floormen. Owing to the fact that meat production did not include only the processing factories, other industries also existed to process the inedible waste. Sinclair lists a steam power plant, an electricity plant, a barrel factory, a boiler-repair shop, a soap box factory, and a lard can factory – all forming part of the meat industry. The processing transformed the waste products into valuable commodities including soap, lard, glue, combs, buttons, hairpins, knives and toothbrushes, mouthpieces for pipes, violin strings and gelatin. Sinclair explains in the story that "there was scarcely a thing needed in the business that Durham and Company did not make for themselves" (33). Nonetheless, Sinclair writes that "the Packingtown² was really not a number of firms at all, but one great firm" and "every week the managers of it got together and compared notes, and there was one scale for all the workers in the yards and one standard of efficiency. Jurgis was told that they also fixed the price they would pay for beef on the hoof and the price of all dressed meat in the country" (92). As a matter of fact, the companies controlled the American economy as they produced nearly half of all the manufactured products in the country (Tavernier-Courbin 10). Consequently, the big businesses could also use their power to manipulate and influence government officials in e.g. giving approval to rotten meat. Jurgis witnesses beef full of chemicals being mixed with the rest of the good meat, and at the end "being carefully scattered here and there so they could not be identified. When he came home that night he was in a very sombre mood, having begun to see at last how those might be right who had laughed at him for his faith in America" (Sinclair 53).

The situation in Packingtown resembled a jungle, where the bosses were the predators and the workers the prey. In the jungle, animals do not care about others since their only interest is to find food. Even the characters are sometimes described as animals; Ona looked like "some wild beast in a menagerie" (Sinclair 111). Later her appearance is said to be even worse, as Jurgis "caught Ona's eye, and it seemed to him like the eye of a hunted animal" (117). These facts therefore reflect another philosophy which sided with capitalism – social Darwinism. This ideology was used to justify the chasm between the rich and poor by drawing on the idea of the 'survival of the fittest'. It is based on Charles Darwin's work *On the Origin of the Species* (1859), which observes that animals evolve and change over time in order to survive. In other words, it is necessary for animals to adapt to the

conditions they find themselves in, and only the strongest or more competent will survive. Consequently, some people used this theory as a basis for explaining the changes in American society, in which the rich were claimed to be genetically superior to poor people (Tavernier-Courbin 16). Sinclair's jungle is thus an allusion to the fact there is no difference between animals and humans as far as achieving success is concerned.

Furthermore, the bosses used the people to perform work for low wages until they were exhausted, after which the predators essentially spat them out. Initially it appeared that there was enough work for everybody, yet the novel's characters later began to experience exploitation from their employers. One would assume that having a job would make a person secure; however, employees were not always paid in full for their work. Moreover, working hours were organized according to the sizes and times of cattle shipments, which meant that people were called to work every day usually at seven o'clock, but if the cattle were not ready to be slaughtered or some machinery broke down, the workers were forced to wait but were not paid for their time. Additionally, if they worked only forty minutes out of sixty, they would be docked the full hour. To have a job in Packingtown did not always bring a regular income, and this was hard to deal with in a land of high prices. The wage was calculated by the hour, so it sometimes happened that the packers employed some people only for a day or a week. Irregular employment also reduced the cost of production, so the packers had some regular employees who were usually the strongest and most healthy-looking men, but occasional hiring was also widespread. Unfortunately, the workers were trapped because finding a job was a difficult task and they could quickly find themselves living on the street if they decided that they did not like the conditions imposed on them. Sinclair mentions in the novel that there were hundreds and thousands of homeless people on the streets, with hundreds more waiting in front of the factories every morning to ask for work.

What is more, each working environment had its own dangers, e.g. sharp objects, slippery floors, extreme cold and heat. The workers could be infected with tuberculosis, rheumatism or pneumonia, and certain acids they came into contact with could easily damage their hands. Once they were injured it meant one simple thing – they lost their jobs. This also happened to Jurgis one day, which was a prelude to the even darker future that awaited him. As a matter of fact, Phelps comments that meatpacking was “the most dangerous factory job in the country, with workers suffering high rates of laceration and disabling injury”. Regarding women, they were also forced to work from fifteen to sixteen hours a day, and child labour was also common – either by the companies themselves, or in cases when children sold newspapers in order to contribute to the family income. In the case of underage children, the priest often provided false documentation proving their age for a small fee.

As a result, the novel reflects a form of labour akin to contemporary slavery that existed in the late 19th and early 20th century. It also refers back to slavery itself, because the working and living conditions were comparable to that time – or sometimes the circumstances depicted in the novel are even worse. In fact, the U.S. has a history of taking advantage of individuals such as the Native Americans, then African slaves and lastly the immigrants from all around the world. Sinclair even hints at the idea of slavery as he writes: “[T]hey were tied to the great packing machine, and tied to it for life” (85) – and he

continues by writing that “things that were quite unspeakable went on there in the packing houses all the time, and were taken for granted by everybody; only they did not show, as in the old slavery times, because there was no difference in colour between master and slave” (89). Moreover, the financial situation of the protagonist became so desperate that Ona turned to prostitution, while Stanislavas (Ona’s stepbrother) was forced to carry out child labour. As a result, “every week he would carry home three dollars to his family, being his pay at the rate of five cents per hour – just about his proper share of the total earnings of the million and three-quarters of children who are now engaged in earning their living in the United States” (Sinclair 60).

Besides the exploitation at their workplace, the protagonists were also forced to deal with the cruel reality of the streets of Chicago as well as the agonizing housing situation. Owing to the fact that Chicago’s population was growing explosively as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the local authorities were not able to provide adequate services and housing. This situation resulted in poverty and crime. As soon as the Lithuanians arrived in Chicago they were in awe. The city did not resemble anything they had ever seen before. The characters find themselves in an environment that contrasted completely with what was familiar to them. There was a street which was as long as Lithuania itself, framed with lookalike buildings consisting of innumerable windows. The smoke released from countless chimneys made the atmosphere even darker. The landscape was hideous as there were no mountains, valleys or rivers. Sometimes a puddle of green water appeared on the unpaved streets, which served as a swimming pool for the children who played in the mud. They were in the middle of the great meatpacking district which would be their new home – nothing like they knew from their homeland, which was full of greenery, clear water and a peaceful rural environment. While in summer the workers battled unbearable heat and were in danger of catching some disease on the street, the winter time brought temperatures even twenty degrees below zero, causing immense suffering. Apart from the industrial surroundings, other things too were imprinted into the characters’ minds. There was a pungent smell in the air and a sound consisting of ten thousand smaller ones. As they soon found out, it was the result of thousands of swine in the stockyards.

Once the Lithuanians arrived at their temporary home, their shock at their first impression became even more profound. The boarding houses did not look appealing from the outside, and they were no better inside. They were desperately overcrowded, as there were on average thirteen or fourteen tenants in one room, totalling fifty to sixty people to a flat. The only furniture that was provided was a stove, a mattress and some bedding, and it could happen that the ‘bed’ was shared by two men – one used it by day, working at night, while the other was sleeping during the night and working the dayshift. The housing situation in the tenement houses thus forced Jurgis and his family to look for something more decent which they could actually own. And so one day they saw an advertisement which said “Why pay rent? Why not own your own home? We have built thousands of homes which are now occupied by happy families” (Sinclair 37). Consequently, the family decided to ‘buy’ one of these happy homes without putting much thought into it. This was another lie of America – a lie rooted in the pernicious cooperation of the advertisers and the housing agents. First, in reality the house did not look like it did in the picture. It had some unfinished parts which the agent claimed were left undone so the customers could decorate it

according to their own taste. Yet the contract was of much more importance, and the poor immigrants did not understand what it said due to their poor knowledge of the English language. Although they were warned about corruption in the housing business, they did not want to live in the tenement houses so they called a lawyer to help them understand the contract. Unfortunately, even the lawyer was a fraud, as he worked in cooperation with the housing agent so that both of them benefited from the exploitation and misfortune of the European working class. In the end, Jurgis and his family signed a contract which did not make them the real owners of the new house but only tenants. The contract was designed so that they would have to pay the rent for nine years and after that they would actually own the house. Nonetheless, due to additional interest and high prices and low wages in general, it was expected that after some time the tenants would not be able to afford it, and they would have to leave. Consequently the 'new' house would be repainted and sold to other people.

Clearly the working and living conditions were miserable; and the food was no better, as it provided scant nutrition to the already poor workers. Sinclair provides vivid descriptions of bad food, such as beef full of chemicals or from injured cattle being mixed with the rest of the healthy meat; sometimes it was also infected by tuberculosis. Meat on which thousands of rats were crawling, or meat that was lying on the floor in dirt, sawdust, and covered in billions of germs, would be processed as well. In addition, all sorts of chemical substances were used in order to give the meat a different (healthy) colour, flavour or odour; for example, the rotten meat was rubbed in soda to get rid of the smell. Moreover, other products such as tea, coffee, sugar, flour, milk were doctored or watered down, while artificial colours were added to peas or fruit jams. There even existed a poem that was commonly recited after the revelation of the meatpacking scandals: "Mary had a little lamb/And when she saw it sicken/She shipped it off to Packingtown/And now it is labelled chicken" (qtd. in McIntyre 7). At the end, the issue of food became a major topic of interest among the American population, eclipsing their concern over the working and living conditions of the workers. According to Sinclair, he "aimed at the public's heart, and by accident (had) hit it in the stomach" (qtd. in Tavernier-Courbin 250).

The climax comes when Jurgis loses his job and Ona is sexually abused by her boss, later becoming pregnant and dying while delivering the baby. Also Jurgis' father dies due to the unbearable working conditions and a similar fate awaits his son Antanas. Moreover, Maria (Ona's cousin) becomes a prostitute, and Stanislavas is eaten by rats. At the end, the vision of the American Dream has turned into a lost game, and the strong family unit the Lithuanians had at the beginning has been destroyed. They have lost their innocent lives, their home, and their dream of being decent and strong people. The immigrant workers have lost their hope, and the city has become their tomb.

With regard to Sinclair's portrayal of living conditions, he has been criticized for exaggeration, improbable occurrences, and barely believable facts leading to the unfortunate fate of Jurgis and his family. There are generally too many catastrophes which happen to the main characters. Moreover, Sinclair also generalized when describing the conditions of the Packingtown workers, so consequently the credibility of the story is put into question. However, he claimed that "I intended 'The Jungle' to be an exact and faithful picture of conditions as they exist in Packingtown, Chicago. I meant it to be true, not merely in

substance, but in detail, and in the smallest detail. It is as true as it should be if it were not a work of fiction at all, but a study by a sociologist" (Morris 54). Sinclair stated that his intention in writing the novel was to make the U.S. public conscious of the inhuman conditions of the meat industry in which the immigrant labourers were forced to work. Further, he added that "In my effort to get something done I was like an animal in a cage. The bars of this cage were newspapers, which stood between me and the public; and inside the cage I roamed up and down, testing one bar after another, and finding them impossible to break" (qtd. in Morris 63). Additionally, Sinclair commented upon his writing process, stating that while writing the novel his eyes were full of tears due to the anguish and anger he felt about the hostile reality of that time. Although it is a fictional story, he experienced similar pain to the workers in his own life. He too had difficulties paying the mortgage, and his wife Meta experienced gynecological problems similar to those experienced by Ona and other women.

As a result of Sinclair's accusations, President Roosevelt took a concerned interest in the conditions in the meatpacking plants – and in the allegations that the federal inspectors were corrupt. He therefore launched extensive investigations of the factories. The investigations found both good conditions and poor, insanitary conditions; for example, extensive dirt was present in some rooms, but the inspectors claimed they were not as horrific as the author of *The Jungle* had described, and they tried to convince Roosevelt that Sinclair's generalization was unfair. It was said that Sinclair had chosen the worst possible conditions which could have been found and then described them in the novel. Roosevelt nevertheless decided to investigate further, as the results of the inspection were not consistent. Commissioners Charles P. Neill and James B. Reynolds found dirty floors, workbenches and receptacles, unsanitary toilets, and poorly ventilated rooms. Even though they did not mention the presence of rats in the rooms, they hypothesized that chemicals could have been used to process bad meat. In the end there were both defenders and critics of Sinclair; the latter claimed that many journalists or visitors to Packingtown never mentioned any unsanitary conditions. Nonetheless, President Roosevelt took several steps to prevent these conditions from occurring if they were not already present. In the case of *The Jungle*, the investigations resulted in the passage of the Meat Inspection Bill in 1906 and the Pure Food Bill in 1907 (Tavernier-Courbin 254).

Furthermore, there have been arguments claiming that the housing situation in Chicago was not as bad as Sinclair states. Of course one could find a house or flat which did not meet the sanitary requirements, but in general the houses were hardly overcrowded and unacceptable. Others argued against Sinclair by stating that men did not really succumb to drinking in high numbers, and some questioned the fact that Sinclair did not mention any churches or ethnic organizations which worked on behalf of the immigrants. Several such organizations existed, and more importantly they were meeting places and provided people with moral support. Due to the fact that the Lithuanians accentuated a traditional pattern of family life, as is clear from the importance of Jurgis and Ona's wedding at the beginning of the novel, it might seem strange or questionable why they found consolation or advice only in their neighbours (Wade 95–6). Additionally, when the tubercular bacillus was discovered by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882, he was under the impression that it had the same cause for humans as for animals. However, Koch later claimed as a result of his

further studies that human and bovine tuberculosis are caused by different bacilli; Sinclair thus presented inaccurate information regarding the diseased food as well. Nevertheless, the facts that cattle were infected by tuberculosis and food was doctored and coloured were proved to be true, so the situation was serious in any case.

Last but not least, if we return to the political side of the novel, we can consider the claim that Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* as a form of socialist propaganda. Even though the socialist idea is deeply embedded in the story, the labour union which tries to fight the capitalists in the novel (and thus symbolically stands for socialism) is not given as much importance as could have been expected. Sinclair writes that Jurgis and his adult relatives joined the union in order to fight for their rights. However, they did not necessarily understand its purpose owing to their lack of knowledge of the English language. Therefore, Jurgis started to attend evening classes of English, and he started to pay attention to his new country – becoming interested in politics. Unfortunately, he came to the realization that as in Russia, “there were rich men who owned everything; and if one could not find any work, was not the hunger he began to feel the same sort of hunger?” (Sinclair 76). At the end, the organization was not able to protect their jobs. This may suggest that the union was not in fact a very helpful institution. Although Sinclair mentions that the main characters joined the union, this is expressed as part of the plot rather than being Sinclair’s explicit promotion of his socialistic belief. According to Wade, it was never important for Sinclair to mention the labour unions or ethnic religious organizations which were active in Chicago that time (80). In reality, it was proved that most immigrants were not such passive victims of the capitalists as Sinclair portrays them to be, and most of them did not fall into the trap of prostitution or alcoholism. One can suggest that Sinclair aimed to unveil the corruption of capitalism and its practices rather than to promote socialism itself. Yet socialist or not, Jurgis was determined to win the game against capitalism, a determination which is visible through his repetitive proclamation – “I will work harder” (Sinclair 17) – which was borrowed by George Orwell³ (also a socialist) and used in his novella *Animal Farm*, allegorizing the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Stalinist Era by means of its animal protagonists. This suggests a connection to the title of Sinclair’s work.

To conclude, judging from the arguments presented in the previous paragraphs, the picture of the meatpacking industry in Chicago which Upton Sinclair presented is far from the reality. He was not viewed in a very positive light because of his inaccuracy and generalizations; nevertheless, we can assume that Sinclair’s story is not all one big lie if we consider President Roosevelt’s legislative changes concerning the working conditions in the plants and the content of the food produced there. Further, a strong defender of Sinclair was another significant author, Jack London, who proclaimed: “What *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* did for the black slaves, *The Jungle* has a large chance to do for the white slaves of today” (Elliott 912). Nonetheless, Sinclair’s novel is a work of fiction, not a historical account of the era, so some inaccurate facts are probably inevitable. Chicago’s Union Stock Yards were closed in 1971, yet in reality this was only a change of location. The packers moved their operations to the rural locations in Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. Nonetheless, one thing did not really change, i.e. the structure of the workforce, which is now dominated by new immigrants from Latin America or Asia. As Phelps argues, if were written today, Jurgis Rudkus would probably be named José Ramirez (12).

Notes

¹This term was in fact coined by President Theodor Roosevelt himself in 1906 when he worked in close cooperation with the top journalists of that time in order to enact a series of progressive policies. However, later he rejected the term because he felt that journalists were too focused on exposing the negative stories and did not mention any positive ones (Hillstrom 3-4).

²The name 'Packingtown' is used by Sinclair to describe the area where the meat packers were situated. In other words, it refers to Chicago's meatpacking industry itself. Moreover, one can suggest that 'Packingtown' has a symbolic meaning as well – to represent the actions of capitalism in the meat industry that time.

³George Orwell asserted that he had written his novel *Animal Farm* (1945) in praise of *The Jungle*, as he was a great admirer of Upton Sinclair (Hitchens 176).

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Linguistics and Translation Studies

The Varieties of English Pronunciation Used by Slovak University Students

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Abstract

This paper concerns the two main varieties of English pronunciation: BBC pronunciation and GA pronunciation. After a theoretical introduction and a description of major differences between the two accents, the study examines which variety of pronunciation Slovak university students of English use in their spontaneous monologues. The subjects were recorded, and subsequently, on the basis of a subjective analysis, they were categorized according to whether the speakers use the BBC accent, the GA accent or a mixture of both. Thus it is revealed which type of pronunciation is prevalent among prospective professional users of the English language.

Keywords: pronunciation variety, BBC pronunciation, GA pronunciation, accent, mixture

1. Introduction

The matter of pronunciation varieties has been of considerable interest to linguists and scholars, as there exist many factors which influence how foreign language learners speak. Learners' pronunciation typically tends to approach either BBC pronunciation or General American. However, in the majority of cases L2 learners use a mixture of the two varieties. To complicate matters, pronunciation can be regarded as an area which is often neglected, and thus aiming to use one accent only becomes a secondary objective when it comes to speaking.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Pronunciation varieties

There exist many English pronunciation varieties in the world – including London, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African, etc. However, there are two accents which learners of English desire to attain more than the abovementioned: BBC pronunciation and General American.

2.1.1 BBC pronunciation

BBC pronunciation is a variety of standard British pronunciation that has traditionally been regarded as a prestigious accent, demonstrating very little or no regional variation. For a long period of time, this variety of pronunciation was referred to as Received Pronunciation (abbreviated to RP). Older terms were Oxford English, the Queen's or King's English, and the Public School Standard (Cruttenden 79, Kavka, 7, Kavka 60, Svoboda – Hrehovčik 118). However, Roach (3) indicates that the term RP may be misleading and old-fashioned, as the word “received” relates to something accepted or approved and thus other accents could possibly be viewed as undesirable. Moreover, Crystal claims that substantial regional variations can be observed in contemporary BBC English. This accent is therefore losing its prestige, and the younger generations appear to regard accents which are regionally marked as more fitting (404).

Typically, BBC pronunciation is recommended to L2 learners because many English language lecturers and teachers attempt to use this type of pronunciation. Interestingly, only 5% of the population of the British Isles actually use BBC pronunciation, and most of them are from or reside in the south-east part of England, or belong to the middle or upper class and have completed higher education (Gut 52). In connection with this, Crystal states that “RP is in no sense linguistically superior or inferior to other accents: but it is the accent (more accurately: a set of accents) which tends to be associated with the better-educated parts of society, and is the one most often cited as a norm for the description of British English, or in teaching that dialect to foreigners” (404). Nevertheless, it appears that BBC pronunciation remains the variety of pronunciation which L2 learners aim to acquire; this is the accent mostly used in English language textbooks. Moreover, Pavlík (221) names the following reasons for teaching BBC pronunciation:

1. People from Britain regard this accent as the one which is most correct;
2. The BBC accent is used by broadcasters and newsreaders on radio and TV;
3. It is the accent which is most often presented in books on the phonetics and phonology of the English language;
4. Dictionaries use the BBC accent for the transcription of words and pronunciations;
5. Course-books and textbooks use and regard this accent as a basis for proper and correct English pronunciation;
6. The BBC accent is easily intelligible in every English-speaking country and may be considered to be a model of proper pronunciation in those countries.

A number of reasons can thus be stated in favour of teaching the BBC accent. On the other hand, it appears that this accent is losing its dominance among users of English, because regional variations have recently appeared within it (Crystal, 404). Therefore, it is obvious

that the BBC accent has been subject to change over time, and it will be interesting to observe what status will be attached to it in the (not too distant) future.

As far as teaching pronunciation is concerned, Scrivener indicates that RP pronunciation might not be the best option, because students learning English will most likely communicate with other non-native speakers and will rarely (if ever) need to communicate with an English native speaker who uses the BBC accent (273). Moreover, it would not perhaps be fair to demand a genuine BBC or GA accent from L2 learners, as this appears to be virtually impossible. Typically, English courses in the Slovak education system use British textbooks which concentrate on the BBC accent. However, the GA accent is prevalent in the entertainment industry (movies, TV series, reality shows, music etc.).

Another factor which should be taken into consideration is the fact that at lower secondary school levels in Slovakia, pupils start to learn another foreign language in the 6th grade (Bírová – Eliášová 76). Therefore, the pupils need to tackle two types of foreign language pronunciation at an early age, and perhaps they do not pay much attention to achieving a flawless accent of a certain type within the foreign languages they are studying.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the vast majority of learners use a mixture of the two accents. Furthermore, L2 learners of English can communicate effectively and successfully without having native-like pronunciation. Thus, the goal of their pronunciation learning ought to be attaining clear, comprehensible pronunciation with no distracting L1 accent, producing language which is easily intelligible to both native and non-native speakers of English.

2.1.2 General American (GA)

GA is considered the standard pronunciation variety of American English. In comparison to BBC pronunciation, which is used by a rather small minority of British people, General American is the pronunciation of the majority of people in the USA, excluding the north-east and the states in south-east. It is also used by many broadcasters and presenters; it is therefore also known as Network English or the Network Standard (Crystal 2007). In connection with this, Richards and Schmidt claim that “As represented in textbooks for learners of American English and the pronunciations most often given in American English dictionaries, “General American” was originally modelled after Midwestern dialects, but the concept is not rigidly defined, and speakers from many other parts of the US also claim to speak general or standard American English” (241). Roach, Hartman and Setter (2003) claim that it is essential to point out that there is no single social or regional dialect that is regarded as an American standard. Even people who are professionally trained and whose voices are used in the media (radio, TV, films, etc.) demonstrate regionally mixed features. Nevertheless, it appears that General American, as varied as it may appear, could be considered a dialect which is relatively homogeneous and which mirrors the development of American dialects.

2.2 Differences between BBC pronunciation and GA

Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (450) state that there exist a number of recognizable differences between Standard British pronunciation and Standard North American

pronunciation. Cauldwell (159-173) also highlights the pronunciation variations. The specific differences can be categorized as differences in:

1. Phonemic inventories;
2. Allophonic variations;
3. Pronouncing common words;
4. Word stress;
5. Sentence stress;
6. Intonation;
7. Overall sound and voice quality.

The first two differences involve mainly variations in vowels, diphthongs and consonants. In the lists below, the first type of pronunciation is BBC and the second is GA.

2.2.1 Essential variations in vowels

- The vowel [ɒ] is replaced in GA with [ɑ:] or [ɔ:], as in *dog* [dɒg] – [dɔ:g] or [dɑ:g];
- In a number of words in which BBC has [ɑ:], GA has [æ], as in *class* [klɑ:s] – [klæs];
- The vowel [ɔ:] is usually more open and less rounded in GA. Moreover, it typically results in [ɑ:], as in *thought* [θɔ:t] – [θɑ:t];
- There is often no difference between [ɪ] and [e] in GA, as in *rabbit* ['ræbɪt] – ['ræbət];
- There is often no difference between [u] and [ə] in GA, as in *deputy* ['depjuti] and ['depjəti].

2.2.2 Essential variations in diphthongs

- The diphthongs [ɪə], [eə], [ʊə] are pronounced as [ɪr], [er], [ʊr] in GA, as in *weird* [wɪəd] – [wɪrd], *share* [ʃeə] – [ʃer], *lure* [lʊə] – [lʊr];
- The diphthong [əʊ] in a BBC accent is pronounced as [oʊ] in a GA accent, as in *open* ['əʊpən] – ['oʊpən];
- The diphthong [aɪ] in a BBC accent is often pronounced as [ə] in a GA accent, as in *organisation* [ˌɔ:ɡənəɪ'zeɪʃn] – [ˌɔ:rgənə'zeɪʃn].

2.2.3 Essential variations in consonants

- Variation in pronouncing [r] is the most significant difference between the two accents. In BBC pronunciation, it only occurs before vowels. However, it is pronounced in each position in GA, as in *mark* [mɑ:k] – [mɑ:rk]. Moreover, GA is a rhotic accent, and Štekauer states that the articulation of [r] is very close to that of the American short mixed vowel (23). Another aspect which appears to be confusing for L2 learners is the different realization of this consonant. Roach claims that “The important thing about the articulation of [r] is that the tip of the tongue

approaches the alveolar area in approximately the way it would for a [t] or [d], but never actually makes contact with any part of the roof of the mouth” (49). The consonant [r] sounds markedly different in Slovak or Czech in comparison to BBC or GA [r].

Interestingly, children who are not able to pronounce the Slovak [r] usually replace this sound with [l] since this phoneme shares some common features with [r]. However, British people (both children and adults) who have problems with pronouncing [r] often substitute this sound for [w] (some Slovak children do this, but this is never done by Slovak adults), because the acoustic similarity between English [r] and [w] is stronger than the similarity between Slovak [r] and [w] (Bázlik – Miškovičová 74).

- The consonant [t] sounds nearly like [d] in a GA accent. The symbol for this sound is [t̥] as in *atom* ['ætəm] – ['æt̥əm];
- Unstressed syllables [ntɪ] in BBC pronunciation are often pronounced as [ni] in GA, as in *twenty* ['twenti] – ['tweni];
- Speakers of GA do not typically pronounce [j] after [t], [d], [n] as in *student* ['stju:dnt] – ['stu:dnt];
- [ʃ] is often pronounced as [ʒ] in GA, as in *excursion* [ɪk'skɜ:ʃn] – [ɪk'skɜ:rʒn].
- Speakers of GA tend to pronounce the suffix *-ile* as [əl] or [l], as in *mobile* ['məʊbaɪl] – ['moʊbl];

Speakers of GA incline to replace the weak vowel in the suffixes *-ary*, *-ery*, *-ory* with a strong vowel, as in *mandatory* ['mændətəri] – ['mændətɔ:ri] (Celce-Murcia – Brinton – Goodwin 450-453; Bázlik – Miškovičová 144-145).

2.2.4 Essential variations in word stress

- Some words employ a different word stress, as in *vaccine* ['væksɪ:n] and [væk'si:n];
- Some compound words have a different stress pattern, as in *ice cream* [ˌaɪs'kri:m] – ['aɪskri:m].

2.2.5 Variations in sentence stress

- Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (457) state that little research has been conducted on sentence stress differences between the BBC accent and the GA accent. It is said that users of BBC pronunciation sometimes place light stress on the fronted auxiliary verb, whereas the speakers of GA do not. However, it is necessary to carry out further research in this field (Shakhbagova, Celce-Murcia – Brinton – Goodwin).

2.2.6 Variations in intonation patterns

- A typical example can be found within yes/no questions. BBC pronunciation low rise is polite, whereas a high rise indicates disbelief. As far as GA is concerned, the high rise is polite, and it is the extra high rise which signals disbelief. Moreover, the BBC low rise sounds patronizing or ingratiating to users of GA. On the other

hand, GA high rise sounds somewhat casual to British people. Comparing intonation patterns between the BBC accent and the GA accent is obviously another area where more research needs to be conducted, as little information is available in this field (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, Cruttenden).

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research problem

A total of 30 subjects were recorded using a computer and a microphone. The subjects were required to deliver a two-minute spontaneous monologue on a topic of their choice. It seemed reasonable to assume that the subjects would use an ample amount of the features described in section 2.2, enabling it to be determined what accent their speech approaches. The choice of different topics was thus not expected to disturb the evaluation process. Afterwards, a subjective auditory analysis was performed (by the author) to determine whether the subjects are closer on the “pronunciation continuum” to BBC pronunciation, GA pronunciation, or whether they stand somewhere between the 2 accents.

3.2 Research sample

The subjects were first-year university students of a teacher training degree in English Language and Literature at a university in Slovakia. It is vital to mention that before creating the recordings, the students had already completed their phonetic training, which involved both segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation. The phonetic training concentrated on BBC pronunciation, since the majority of universities in Slovakia use *English Phonetics and Phonology – a Practical Course* by Peter Roach. Moreover, BBC accent textbooks are typically used at lower and upper secondary levels of the education system. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect that more subjects will use the pronunciation which is closer to the BBC accent than the GA accent. However, the fact that pronunciation teaching is neglected at lower secondary and upper secondary school levels, along with the subjects’ exposure to the US entertainment industry (movies, TV series, games, music etc.), ought to be taken into account.

3.2 Research criteria

The subjects were divided into five pronunciation variety categories; five primary criteria were established before conducting the auditory analysis. Each subject was assigned one of the following accents:

1. Strong BBC accent;
2. More or less BBC accent;
3. Mixture of the 2 accents;
4. More or less GA accent;
5. Strong GA accent.

It is vital to mention that the 5 accents are rather understood as a continuum, and that one needs to be careful in stating that a person uses a BBC accent or a GA accent. Attaining native-like pronunciation is a goal only few L2 learners are able to achieve and, as has already been mentioned, only a very small number of English speakers do actually have a BBC accent.

4. Research results

The results of the auditory analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Subject	Strong BBC accent	More or less BBC accent	Mixture of both accents	More or less GA accent	Strong GA accent
1.			•		
2.				•	
3.				•	
4.		•			
5.					•
6.				•	
7.			•		
8.			•		
9.	•				
10.		•			
11.		•			
12.		•			
13.		•			
14.		•			
15.			•		
16.		•			
17.				•	
18.			•		
19.		•			
20.			•		
21.			•		
22.		•			
23.	•				
24.			•		
25.			•		

26.			•		
27.		•			
28.					•
29.					•
30.			•		
Total:	2	10	11	4	3

Table 1 Pronunciation varieties of the subjects

Figure 1 shows the accents of the respondents expressed as a percentage.

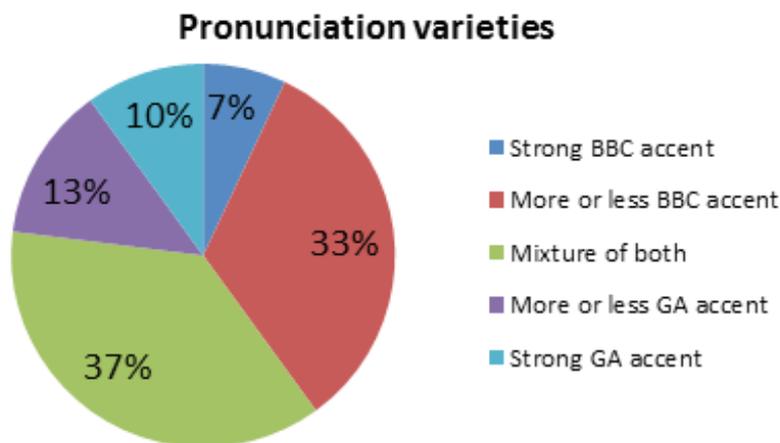


Figure 1 Pronunciation varieties of the subjects expressed as a percentage

4.1 Research results interpretation

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 show the research findings. There are only 2 subjects whose pronunciation can be regarded as a strong BBC accent and only 3 subjects whose pronunciation can be considered a strong GA accent. More or less BBC pronunciation is recognized within 10 subjects, and a more or less GA accent is identified within 4 subjects. Finally, 11 subjects shared features of both pronunciations.

Despite the fact that the subjects had completed their phonetic training focusing on BBC pronunciation, and despite having been taught from BBC accent textbooks at their lower and upper secondary school levels, only 12 of them (40%) have either a strong BBC accent or a more or less BBC accent. This could be regarded as an interesting finding, as one might have expected BBC pronunciation to prevail over a GA accent and a mixture of

the two accents, especially after the subjects had been using BBC pronunciation textbooks for so many years.

A mixture of pronunciation varieties was identified 11 times. These subjects displayed characteristics of both accents during their utterances. This created a strong impression that their pronunciation did not merely belong to one of the two accents.

The vast majority of segmental features in section 2.2 were employed by the subjects. The most significant difference was recognized in terms of pronouncing [r], followed by vowel and diphthong differences, and other consonantal differences. Finally, suprasegmental differences were also detected. However, as far as suprasegmental features are concerned, not all of them were found. Essential variations in word stress and variations in intonational patterns would perhaps be used more in longer utterances and in conversations rather than in monologues. Nevertheless, this does not appear to have significantly influenced the evaluation process, as the distribution of both segmental and suprasegmental features was more or less equal in all the subjects. Therefore, the author had a sufficient amount of the features at his disposal in order to determine the subjects' accent.

There exist many contributing factors which may have influenced the research results. First, it would be interesting to find out the amount of time devoted to pronunciation teaching at the subjects' lower secondary and upper secondary school levels, as pronunciation often seems to be neglected there. Another aspect is concerned with exposure – how much they listen to authentic pronunciation. The entertainment industry of the USA is immensely strong in terms of films, TV shows, and music. Therefore, being exposed to North American pronunciation is increasingly widespread. Attending extra language classes (for example at language schools), along with subjects' personal attitude towards pronunciation, may be regarded as important variables too. Naturally, there are also other factors which influenced the research, and such aspects need to be taken into consideration.

5. Conclusion

BBC pronunciation is obviously the accent which is the most prevalent in the English language teaching environment within Slovakia. It seems, however, that its status has been lowered recently, and this therefore poses the question of whether this is the accent that L2 learners ought to be taught. Furthermore, only few people actually use this accent in Britain itself. On the other hand, the GA accent is used by the majority of Americans, and the enormous influence of films and music plays a role when it comes to English pronunciation. Therefore, it appears that GA is the accent that L2 learners of English are most likely to encounter. The study reveals that 37% of the subjects used a mixture of the two accents despite the fact that they had completed a BBC pronunciation course before the recordings were created. It can therefore be concluded that the majority of subjects do not adhere to one accent only, but share the features of both pronunciation varieties. Naturally, the question is how much disturbance is caused by this phenomenon and whether it is absolutely necessary to use one variety only. It is also vital to take other factors, which could have influenced the research results, into account.

Undoubtedly, further research, concentrating on the differences concerning particular segmental and suprasegmental features, needs to be conducted. Another possibility would

be to use a larger sample of students, from more universities in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Finally, the issue of using textbooks which explicitly train BBC pronunciation at each level of education ought to be discussed more thoroughly too.

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Multimodal Analysis of British Theatre Websites: Polyphony of Modes

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Abstract

This paper draws on a long-term research project analysing the websites of British theatre institutions, focusing on their multimodal character and the ways in which they constitute a new genre. The corpus analysed for the study consists of websites from three institutions: a traditional great house – the Royal Opera House, an acclaimed dance group – the Akram Khan Dance Company, and a representative of the field of physical theatre – the DV8 company (only the results from the first two companies are reported in this article). As each of the dance companies falls into a different sphere of dance art, their websites naturally provide diverse forms of layout, graphic arrangements and photograph placements. Exploring the mutual harmony and cooperation of the individual modes on the sites, this paper discusses primarily the modes of text and image (including layout, which determines the interplay between these modes) and their function within the meaning-making process and the overall image of the sites. The analysis is grounded in a number of methodological contexts: Bateman's framework (2008) for the layout analysis, Martin and White's system of evaluation in language (2005) for the textual elements, and Monika Bednarek's typology of evaluative expressions (2009) for the description of inter-modal relations.

Keywords: multimodality, theatre websites, dance, polyphony of appraisal, layout, evaluation

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1 Introduction

The world of theatre is very diverse, and so are the ways in which this kind of art is (and

has been) presented to the public. Over the course of time, the promotion of art has taken many forms, from oral presentations and displays to large posters and billboards. These days, the medium that dominates (and naturally not only in art promotion) is the internet, with its digitalised formats, multi-layered sites and abundance of stimuli for viewers. The universe of the world wide web provides space for new genres, new combinations and variations that could hardly be imagined before – and when narrowing our attention to just one piece of this mosaic (theatre promotion) we can still be dazzled by the possibilities the internet provides. Multimodality is a natural result of the endeavour to appeal to multiple senses at the same time and thus to attract the attention of potential customers, clients or visitors. For this reason, the multimodal character of websites, in this case theatre and dance company websites, provides ideal material for analysis, as these sites make use of various modes and new, innovative features which appear and take root very rapidly. The websites of theatre institutions can take many forms depending on the purpose they serve and on the services or products they advertise. Therefore, no two institutions have identical advertising strategies – they tailor the design and organisation of their promotional discourse to the target audience and to the artistic style they prefer. Naturally, another factor here is the website designer, who decides on the final appearance of the site. However, it is certain that no website design is created randomly, without pre-mediation or without at least an idea of how to represent the institution in the best possible light.

The aim of the present study is to demonstrate how the modes on these websites are interwoven and how their relations can be classified within Bednarek's polyphony model. The mode of layout is first analysed to specify the placement of the individual visual and textual elements on the page – for this purpose, Bateman's concept of base units and his area model are employed. Attention is then focused on visual elements which have their own inner structure (drawing this time on the methodology developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen) and on the links between these elements and what can be described as evaluative language in the text (Martin and White's model).

2 Corpus

The analysed corpus consists of websites of theatres and companies based in the United Kingdom. Other countries were not included – firstly to limit the amount of data, and secondly to prevent the possible clash between texts produced by native speakers in the Anglophone environment and those translated into English from other languages in order to address a wider viewership. The websites were selected to constitute a diverse sample of dance promotion on the internet. For the purpose of the present analysis their entire scope had to be reduced to only two pages – the *homepage* and the *What's On* page (which can have different names on different websites – such as *Current projects*; its content is, however, very similar).

Homepages are the most fruitful sources of material for analysis, as they function as “shop windows” for the whole website and include most of its crucial visual and textual artefacts. They also combine various genres – including public fora, video presentations, and links to Facebook or Twitter. Such a condensed amount of data is adequate for

a primarily qualitative analysis, and it allows us to concentrate on subtle details and mutual links between individual modes. What's On pages often include visual material concerning the current activities of the theatre/company, descriptive texts and video documentation.

The first webpages were drawn from the *Royal Opera House* website. This well-established and traditional institution enjoys a high status in British cultural life and attracts audiences from all around the world. Its website is colourful; it reflects the ROH's varied repertoire, showcases its mass productions and highlights its long tradition.

As far as *Akram Khan Dance Company's* website is concerned, it shows many contrasts to the ROH presentation. The colours, layout and image placement are all moderate, almost minimalistic, resembling objects of design. This also corresponds with the company's artistic character, as its performances are mostly from the sphere of contemporary dance and physical theatre.

This study focuses solely on the homepages of ROH and AKDC, specifically on selected units of visual and textual components which are analysed and presented as examples.

To illustrate the third sphere of dance theatre, I will briefly present the website belonging to a very experimental ensemble – the *DV8 company* (though this website does not form part of the present analysis). It should be acknowledged that this company has now built up a strong position on the world dance scene and is no longer perceived as genuinely shocking and ground-breaking. The company's website is based largely on images, reducing texts down to nothing more than the titles of the shows. Depending on the season and ongoing performances, the homepage includes parts of reviews, short picture captions, or reactions from some viewers.

3 Multimodality of a webpage

3.1 Reading images

Interest in multimodal discourse, and mainly in visual features accompanying (or functioning entirely without) texts, began some decades ago, with Gunter Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen among the first researchers to develop a system of categories and analytical rules to be applied specifically to multimodal texts. The modes were regarded as socially and culturally shaped (Kress 54, in Hiippala 28); this characterises the social semiotic approach to multimodality. Kress and Van Leeuwen's methodology can still be used for multimodal analysis today, when the printed medium has been largely replaced by digital space, because the visual organisation of a webpage is equal (if not superior) in importance to the message conveyed by the written text. Various properties of visual features have been taken into account, and three basic functions have been identified – these are based on M.A.K. Halliday's systemic concept of *metafunctions* (textual, interpersonal and ideational). As the authors state in *Reading Images: Grammar of Visual Design*:

In order to function as a full system of communication, the visual, like all semiotic modes, has to serve several representational and communicational requirements. We have adopted the theoretical notion of 'metafunction' from the work of Michael Halliday for this purpose. The three metafunctions that he posits are the ideational, the

interpersonal, and the textual. In the form in which we gloss them here they apply to all semiotic modes and are not specific to speech or writing. (Kress and Van Leeuwen 41–42)

Kress and Van Leeuwen introduced their own terms for the three functions, which cover two or more subcategories enabling a detailed description of visual components:

- *representational function*: narrative and conceptual images
- *interactive function*: contact, social distance, attitude
- *compositional function*: information value, salience and framing

The compositional meaning of images is realised through three interrelated systems: information value (given or new, ideal or real, important or less so), salience (achieved through size, colour, tone, focus, perspective, overlap, repetition, etc.), and framing (Kress and Van Leeuwen 165–183).

Kress and Van Leeuwen also paid attention to colours and elaborated on them separately, stating that “...colour can be used to denote ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning: it is metafunctional; but the resources of colour are not (yet) fully specified in semiotic theory to the extent that some other modes are” (351). Colour is undoubtedly a significant part of the websites’ image, but in this study it will be viewed as one of the qualities of an image.

All the above-mentioned functions of visual elements are relevant in the present study, as none of the websites functions without the visual side. A feature shared by all three selected homepages is that they reserve a prominent place in the top part of the page, immediately below the upper bar, for salient and eye-catching images: here we can find photographs (or stylised pictures) usually related to upcoming premieres or the most successful productions, which have an eye-catching effect on viewers. To be precise, The ROH homepage is headed by a triplet of photographs promoting premieres of both the ballet and opera ensembles. These triplets are periodically changed, depending on the repertoire. The AKDC’s featured photographs are more stable, and they do not show any performance captures, but rather close-ups of the founding choreographer, Akram Khan himself. In addition, over a longer period of time, the website has stayed faithful to a black and white colour scheme, which also extends to its images. It is the DV8 company which differs most from the pattern described here. It uses screen-wide photographs or groups of thumbnails which do not leave much space for captions or longer texts. The images are colourful, expressive and raw (matching closely with the style of the whole company). In terms of stylisation, the ROH images are furthest from reality, while DV8 seems to approach naturalism.

3.2 Layout

Layout, a key element of the multimodal structure, helps to identify the links or relations between the individual modes. In the present study, attention will be paid to the mutual placement of visual and textual features and the interactions which thus emerge. To be able

to observe how layout contributes to the process of communicating a message, I draw on the model developed by John Bateman. This model is a practical tool that can be applied to any type of multimodal document (Bateman 107). Bateman's empirical approach and highly detailed systematisation of the arrangement of multimodal artefacts enables us to describe the layout structure of a webpage and, even more importantly, to identify those units that could form larger complexes and participate in polyphonic interactions. Bateman identifies three layers of a multimodal artefact: base level, layout level and navigation level. On the base level, so-called base units – the smallest units of analysis – can be recognized. On the layout level we can observe how the smallest units are gathered into larger units and hierarchically arranged. It is therefore the layout level that is relevant for the present study. Further, Bateman's *area model* provides a useful method of describing the organisation of a multimodal webpage, both due to its neutrality and due to its variability in terms of application. The findings presented in section 5 thus draw on the results of the area model analysis (Bateman 115).

4 Evaluation in text

4.1 Martin and White – the language of evaluation

Along with diverse visual elements, theatre websites also include texts in various forms. These pieces of writing are structured and distributed in specific ways over the individual homepages, depending on their purpose and function. Very often they accompany images, and they are embedded into a tailor-made layout template. If we put aside their form for a moment and focus purely on their content, such written discourse elements might be labelled as advertising texts or examples of institutional discourse because they obviously carry the specific properties of such texts and discourse, and they could also be analysed from the perspective of promotional strategies. However, my main focus here is not on advertising, but on the presence, distribution and character of evaluative expressions. Naturally, any artistic performance is evaluated – by the audience, by critics, by the artists themselves. And this evaluation will be positive or negative. Positive evaluation is potentially a powerful persuasive tool, and the choice of words that express this evaluation is often vital on websites. People simply seem to react differently to reading that a piece is brilliant rather than to reading that it is merely good. At the same time, evaluation leaves some space for ambiguity and allows for various interpretations.

The model for classifying evaluative expressions was provided by Martin and White, whose appraisal framework contains a system of categories that helps us to recognise evaluative expressions and group them according to their referential points and their purpose. In this way, the intuitive labelling of evaluative expressions that every viewer recognises at first sight becomes sharper and more formalised. The three main typological systems introduced by Martin and White are *appraisal*, *graduation* and *engagement* – describing, respectively, what and how is evaluated, to what degree it is evaluated (its scalar character), and who is involved in the evaluation. These three broad groups are further subcategorised so that they allow more space for detailed distinctions. The system that is most relevant for this study is appraisal, subsuming the categories of *affect*, *appreciation*

and *judgement*. Martin and White give detailed delineations of the borderlines between the categories, and they are very precise in listing the expressions which fall into the given groups. They admit, however, that ambiguity occurs in many cases and that the emotion-bound character of evaluation cannot be overlooked.

Martin and White's approach has been subject to criticism, but it has also received positive feedback from many linguists. It has since been enhanced and extended by many researchers who have applied it to other spheres of language and communication.

4.2 Bednarek and the concept of polyphony

Bednarek worked with Martin and White's system of evaluation and addressed cases where the system does not satisfy the needs of the analysed material and where the existing categories could be extended or new categories could be added; this is especially the case with those phenomena that straddle the boundary between two systems or two sub-systems, or those expressions which convey two ideas at the same time, depending on the point of view. Bednarek introduced her own set of categories which stems from the appraisal system but includes borderline cases and combinations of the above-mentioned categories. She likens her approach to *polyphony*, in which various distinct voices work towards the same harmonious unity. She thus identifies four major categories (Bednarek 110):

- 1) Fused appraisals
- 2) Invoked appraisals
- 3) Border phenomena
- 4) Appraisal blends

The *fused appraisals* and *invoked appraisals* categories are the most relevant for the present study because they correspond best with the character of the images and texts that are found on the webpages. Monika Bednarek explains fused appraisal as a combination of the three typological systems – *appraisal*, *graduation* and *engagement*. The adjective “brilliant”, for instance, merges appraisal and graduation, and it would thus belong in the category of fused appraisals.

Invoked appraisal refers to cases in which e.g. appreciation (one of the subcategories of appraisal) is inscribed in a text but invokes judgement (another subcategory of appraisal) – e.g. in *Tchaikovsky's brilliant piece*, the expression brilliant refers to both Tchaikovsky (judgement) and piece (appreciation) (Bednarek 110).

Bednarek applied her theory mostly to texts, contributing to a better identification and categorisation of evaluative expressions and a fuller explanation of their role in discourse. However, it is not only texts that are relevant here – they represent just one part of the multimodal complex of a webpage, as they represent just one of the modes. The idea of extending the application of Bednarek's model to other modes might be controversial, but it definitely merits research of its own. The modes can be seen as representing the voices of polyphony, because these also differ significantly from each other and combine to create the overall message. In the following sections, examples of polyphonic links will be demonstrated in examples.

5 Analysis

In terms of layout, the ROH homepage can be regarded as the most complex. Describing it briefly from the top to the bottom, it consists of several groups of base units. It is headed by an upper bar, below which there is a complex of several base units, defined by the colour background; it consists of a large photograph, a short accompanying text (one paragraph) and a triplet of thumbnails. In addition, the large photographs switch every 5 seconds to a new image. Nevertheless, the complex unit remains the same in terms of its structure. The pattern ‘picture + short caption’ recurs several times on the page – in the sections entitled *On Stage*, *Open Up*, *News and Features*. Different unit clusters can then be found in the section *Calendar* and in the bottom bar (footer).

On the webpage retrieved on 28th July 2016, one of the heading images shows three women, three leading cast members in the ballet *Anastasia*. The viewer can only see their faces – very pale, depressed, confused and scared, with messy, cropped hair. At the forefront we can see broken glass, or rather a broken mirror. The colours are shades of grey and black, with pale skin tones. Each of the three women is looking in a different direction and only the middle one is staring directly at the viewer.

In the related text, the following evaluative expressions are to be found (using Martin and White’s model): *compelling* (*exploration*) and *turbulent* (*wake of Russian revolution*) – which can be seen as participants in the polyphonic relationship. How, then, are they linked to the visual component (the top-page photograph)? Perceiving the two modes (textual and visual) as voices, it is clear that they are different in nature (different modes), but they both contribute to creating the message concerning the production that is to be premiered. Bednarek’s categories can now help us to be even more precise when describing the polyphonic rapport. The following summary provides the basic classification and depicts the mutual links between the evaluative expressions and the visual features:

Fig. 1 ROH homepage: Upper part - image-text interaction

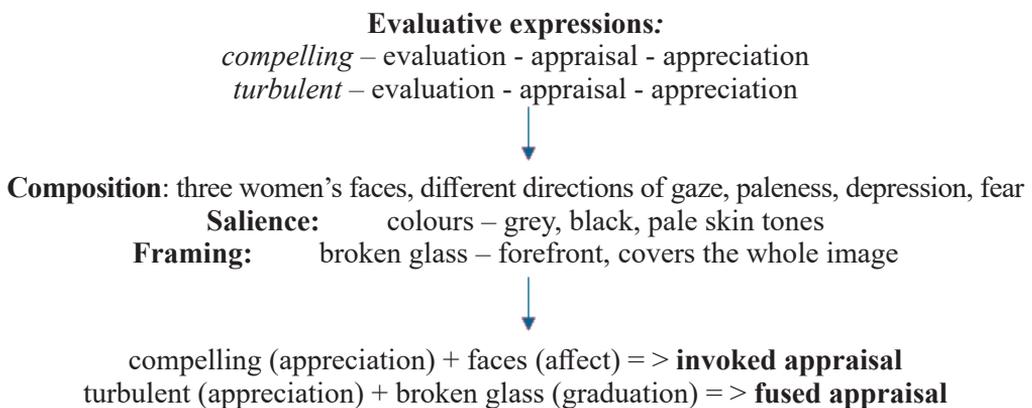


Fig. 2 ROH homepage: Upper part

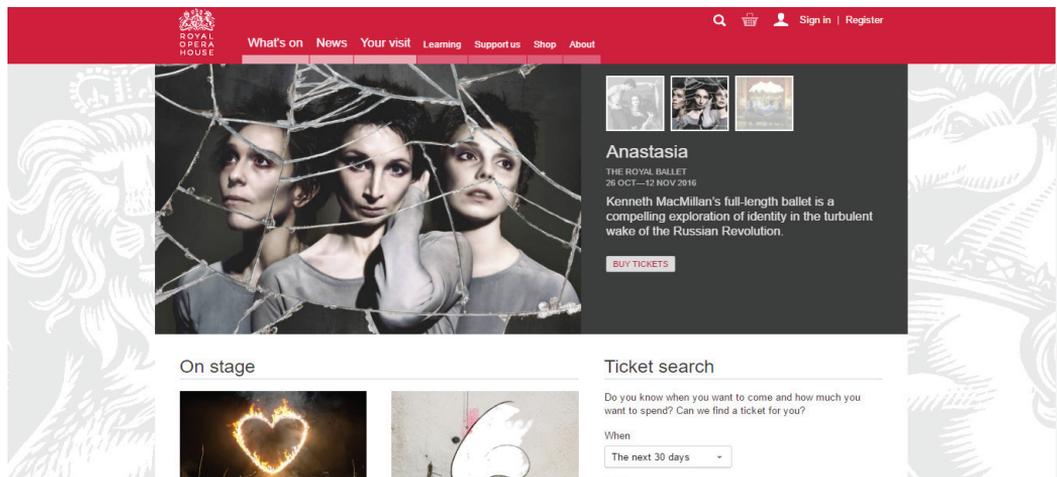
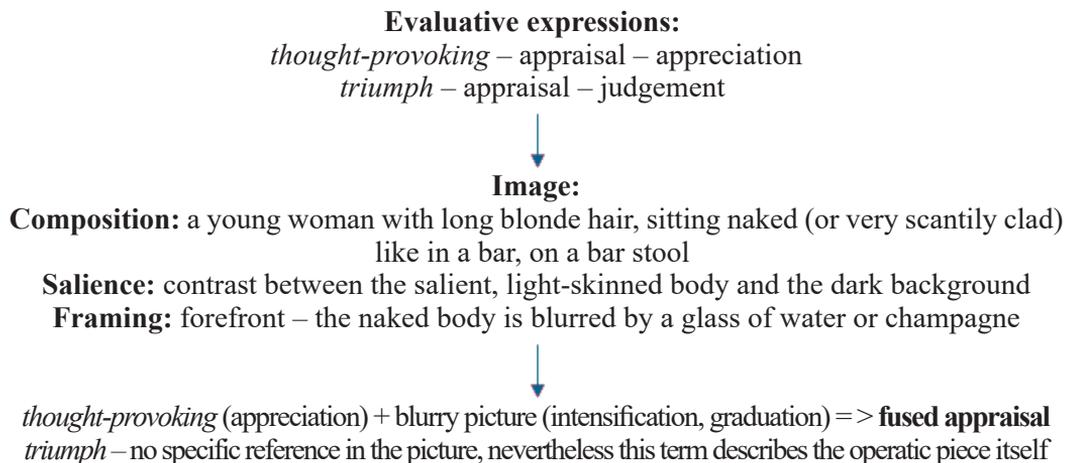


Fig. 1 illustrates the polyphony between the featured photograph and the related text (see also Fig. 2). In the short text caption, two evaluative expressions can be identified. They both represent the system of *appraisal* and the subcategory of *appreciation*. The interplay with the content of the picture (classified into the categories of composition, salience and framing) can be labelled as *invoked appraisal* in the first case and *fused appraisal* in the second.

Another example from the same page is a combination of a thumbnail photograph and a short caption (the ‘On Stage’ section, in the middle of the page, retrieved later). Even though the text is short (serving as one of the inside-the-list descriptions) evaluative expressions can be found in it as well:

Fig. 3 ROH homepage: Manon Text – image-text interaction



(*Manon Lescaut is a triumph*) and being an inscribed appreciation, evaluates the author of the opera at the same time and could thus be identified as an instance of ‘**invoked judgement**’.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, the evaluation in the text is not always linked directly to the content of the picture. While the expression *thought-provoking* finds corresponding features in the image (which intensify the expression’s evaluative meaning), the other expression *triumph* is more closely linked with other parts of the text. As it refers at the same time to the piece and to the author (meaning that it functions as both appreciation and judgement), it falls into the category of *invoked judgement*. Thus the polyphonic relations may occur not only between the modes, but also within the same mode.

The third and last example from the ROH homepage is the following, from the same ‘On Stage’ section:

Fig. 4 ROH homepage: Mad Hatter – image-text interaction

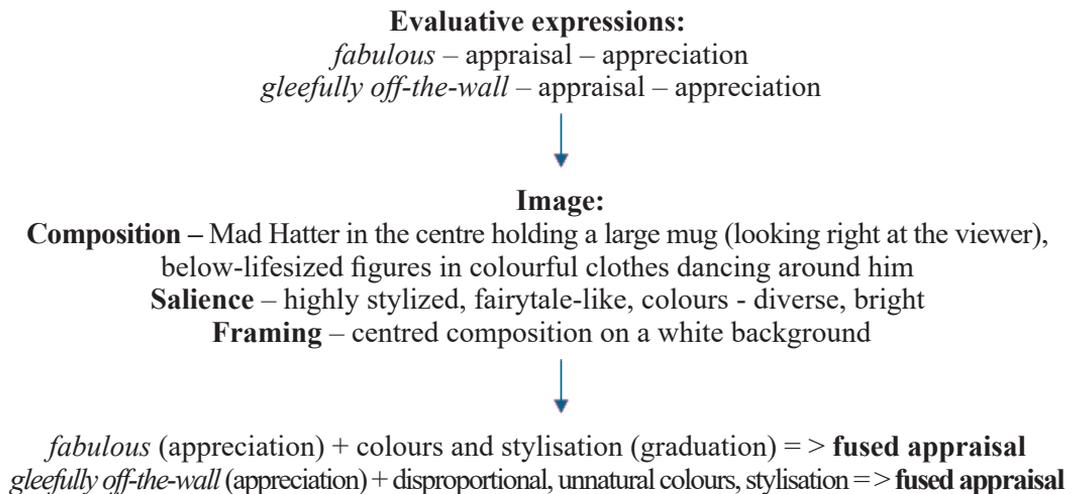
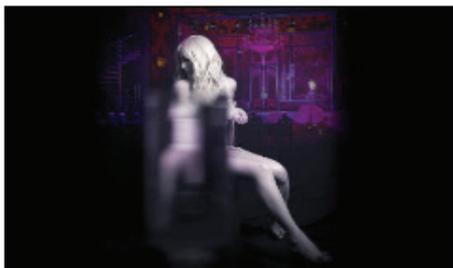


Fig. 5 ROH homepage: On Stage section



Manon Lescaut
 THE ROYAL OPERA



The Mad Hatter's Tea Party

The simple, almost minimalist layout of the Akram Khan Dance Company's homepage reflects the progressive nature of the ensemble, and especially of its head choreographer Akram Khan. Unlike the ROH homepage, its colours are reduced to shades of grey, black and white, the space is less diverse, and there is less text. On the other hand, there are gifs and large photographs that attract the viewer's attention. The longest and most elaborate piece of writing includes some examples of evaluative expressions; however, this text is not (according to Bateman's model – see section 3.2) linked directly with any image. Nevertheless, it is, spatially, closest to a page-wide close-up of Akram Khan himself, so it would be plausible to perceive and understand the two artefacts as related units. The evaluative expressions identified in the text are the following:

Fig. 6 AKDC homepage: About the company – image-text interaction

Evaluative expressions:

- foremost innovative* (dance companies) – appraisal - appreciation
- critically acclaimed* (work) – appraisal - appreciation
- (the company has) *a major international presence* – appraisal - judgement
- (the company) *enjoys* (busy tours) – appraisal - judgement
- (dance) *can transcend* – appraisal - appreciation
- (dance) *can break through many barriers* – appraisal - appreciation



Image:

Composition: close-up of the choreographer's face, looking down on something, profile, expression of the face showing concentration, commitment, thoughtfulness

Salience: black and white colours

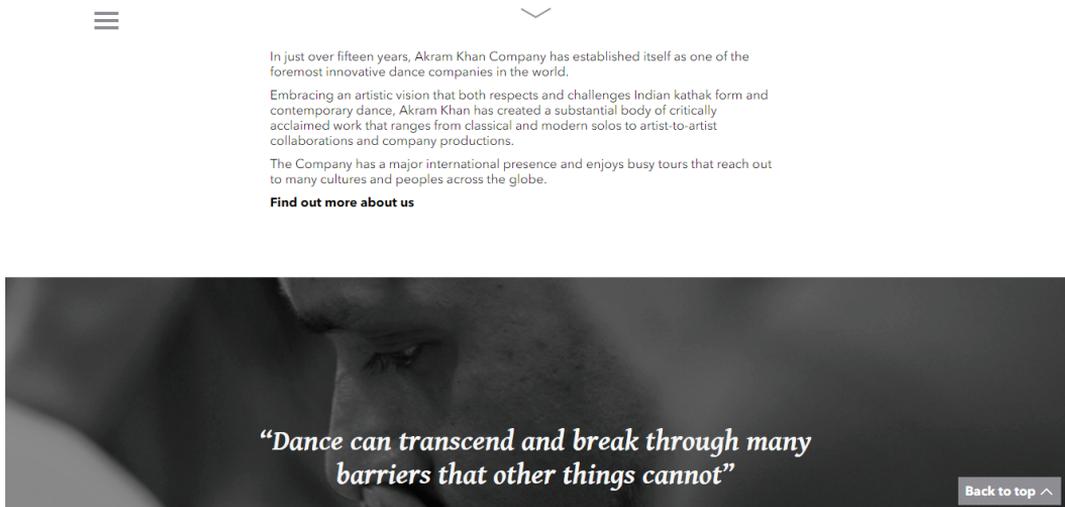
Framing: dark contours of the face with a light-grey background



Possible combination:

Appraisal (appreciation + judgement of the company) + the face of the choreographer (concentrated, thoughtful) => **fused appraisal**

Appreciation in text (see the examples above) + judgement in the picture (the choreographer) => **invoked appraisal**

Fig. 7 AKDC homepage: About the company

As Fig. 6 and 7 demonstrate, the featured text on the AKDC website includes many evaluative expressions referring to the company. Most of them represent the subcategory of appreciation, even though it is arguably possible to label them as examples of judgement (depending on whether the company is viewed as a group of living persons or as an abstract unit). These expressions in the text represent one voice, while the content of the photograph (a close-up of the choreographer) stands for another voice. The two voices combined then lead us to the category of *fused appraisal* (appreciation intensified by the content of the image) or invoked appraisal (appreciation conveyed by the evaluative expressions in the text which, if the picture is taken into account, actually judge the person of the choreographer).

6 Conclusion

Bednarek’s approach proved to be beneficial for the multimodal analysis, even though the original typology had to be adjusted in several ways to fit the interplay of modes, their characteristic features and nature. Nevertheless, the categories introduced by Bednarek are useful tools for explaining how textual and visual components, along with the layout which determines their closeness or distance, are linked and how their connections might be labelled.

Simultaneously, a certain amount of ambiguity is typical of the type of webpage that is the focus of this article. Ambiguity in texts, as well as in images, is present on websites that are produced especially for promotional purposes, as this ambiguity enables the website to address a wider range of viewers (not imposing any given set of facts but leaving space for individual interpretations). The evaluative expressions were identified according to Martin

and White's criteria, but it must be borne in mind that evaluation is based on emotions, and it depends to some extent on the perspective of the researcher.

Very often the combinations of features in a text and an image fall into the category of *fused appraisal*, as the picture functions as an intensifier of what is expressed in the text. The analysis shows that the modes hardly ever act against each other; when they are related by means of layout and clearly form one complex – even if they use distinct expressive tools, typical of the mode – they support each other in the meaning-making process. They are not represented equally among the results – the categories of fused appraisal and invoked appraisal proved to be the most frequent in this multimodal analysis, but as they share some characteristics with the other two categories of border phenomena and appraisal blends, it is plausible that also the other two categories may also be present.

Finally, the role of layout cannot be neglected, as it influences (to a certain degree) the communication among all the modes. The three sets of webpages showed three distinct layouts, generating various combinations of the visual and textual modes.

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Book Reviews

Ema Jelínková, ed.
Scottish Women Writers of Hybrid Identity.
Olomouc: Palacký University, Olomouc, 2014.

It was in 1831 when Goethe finished his *magnum opus* with the mystic lines “Das Ewig-Weibliche/Zieht uns hinan.” Not even eighty years later, Gustav Mahler used the same words in his gigantic “Sinfonie der Tausend” (8. Sinfonie in Es-dur, 1910). Both works were finished at the end of their authors’ lives, and both authors considered them to be their most essential works.

“Das Ewig-Weibliche” would be an excellent motto for this collection of papers dealing with the issue of Scottish national, cultural, religious and gender identities, since the role of women underlies all the articles in the collection.

Not surprisingly, when discussing Scottish writing in the preface, Ema Jelínková, the editor of the volume and the author of one of the four papers contained in it, stresses the multi-layered nature of Scottish identity, with its inherent capacity for the conjunction of opposites; she finds this to be a traditional hallmark of stories written by such well-known authors as James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson. However, the reader does not have to worry about being plunged into another analysis of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; the canonical works of the Scottish Renaissance serve as an imaginary scaffolding by means of which it is possible to investigate “a newly rediscovered Scottish tradition of ambivalence and hybridity among the women writers of Scotland” (9). We should look to the present, as well as to the future, through the rear-view mirror of the past; in this regard the authors of the papers in this collection more or less succeed.

In the opening essay, Markéta Gregorová sets out to (re)define Scottish women’s writing by analyzing the novels of Janice Galloway and A. L. Kennedy. Gregorová draws a parallel between Simone de Beauvoir’s thoughts, demonstrating how much the opposition between a man (considered as the Absolute) and a woman (being the Other) (33) is intertwined with the quest for national as well as personal identity. Even though it is a tightrope to walk, if we accept this premise we may enjoy a vivid yet distinguished text, offering us a sociological insight into Scottishness, especially the dark side of it. Here – and this is a comment that applies to all essays in this collection – Scotland is generally presented in a negative light, as if still dragging one foot through the foggy streets of the 19th century, with all its phantoms and ghosts. Is contemporary Scotland really haunted by its national past? Is it burdened with unsolved business and uncomfortable knowledge from the past, dipped in simulacra – “representations without originals, signs emptied of meanings” (16) as Gregorová phrases it? Is this simulacral hauntedness solely a Scottish issue, and not a post-modern and post-cultural one, resulting from a vanishing authenticity in the age of mass reproduction? Readers should find their own answers to these questions, probably after visiting Scotland itself; nevertheless, Gregorová’s essay might serve as an impetus to further thoughts.

The second chapter, whose author is Petr Anténe, explores the multiplicity of the dynamic field of Scottish women's fiction. In comparison to the first essay, the term *gothic* reflects a more complex semantic frame, offering more methods when interpreting novels by two contemporary women writers in Scotland – Emma Tennant and Alice Thompson. Anténe has decided to stress the socially engaged role of art, and he writes about the illusory, cryptic aspect of gothic writing, with its ambiguity and ambivalence, as disturbing reality in order to effect change; these novels are thus presented as “an efficient vehicle for dealing with gender issues at the turn of the century, as well as other social conflicts” (38). Seen from this perspective – without questioning the purpose of the artistic representation – the selected authors and their works prove to be a felicitous and apt choice; nevertheless, it is the first part of Anténe's essay, outlining in a very concise and organized way the tradition of Scottish gothic writing, that attracts one's attention most of all. The second part, a detailed analysis of contemporary novels focusing on gender issues, is rather descriptive in nature: instead of retelling the plots and stressing common features, the author could have focused on the differences between these contemporary novels and their forerunners of the 19th century; after all, it is the part of the paper where Anténe offers such a comparison that is most stimulating (e.g. a comparison between London and Scotland on page 49). The task of a literary critic is to open up more books and invite us to engage in further reading; this function is somewhat lacking in Anténe's chapter.

Jan Horáček, in his contribution dealing with women writers from diverse ethnic origins, reveals a better understanding of this task. His study is a celebration of cultural diversity: it covers the experience of black writers of African origin (Jackie Kay, Maud Sulter), the Muslim, Indian, South-East Asian immigrant experience (Leila Aboulela, Leela Soma, Raman Mundair, Chiew-Siah Tei), as well as the very post-modern experience of a writer of mixed ethnic heritage (Catherine Czerkawska). Although it seems that the number of authors presented here is too large for one chapter to adequately cover, Horáček's approach is very disciplined and balanced. The reader will especially appreciate the almost dialectical method by means of which the difficult topic of cultural diversity and hybridity is discussed: the variety of perspectives (e.g. in the quest for identity by Mundair and Czerkawska) helps us to realize how important it is not to approach issues, particularly cultural ones, only from the single point of view of a dominating subject. Not surprisingly, Horáček concludes his paper with the rather clichéd statement that “Scottishness does not stand for a specific type of identity but identities,” having become “an umbrella for a plurality of voices and ethnic influences” (91); nevertheless, these words do deserve respect, as the author supports them with a thoughtful analysis.

Finally, in the last part, Ema Jelínková recalls the recurring motif of “Caledonian antisyzygy.” The fact that this idea (defined as the conjunction of opposites that permeates Scottish life and culture) is mentioned throughout all the book's chapters is logical, and to some extent it helps to conjoin four diverse texts, written by four authors. On the other hand, however, it leads to overlaps and redundant repetitions (e.g. passages dealing with Calvinism on pages 39 and 93). However, Jelínková's contribution is indisputable, as she raises readers' awareness of Scottish contemporary women writers by introducing Muriel Spark and Kate Atkinson. This is the shortest chapter in the book, yet it commands the reader's attention; one example is the concluding paragraph where Jelínková describes

the positions of all Anglo-Scots and Scoto-English with a reference to Donne's twin compasses: "distant and distinct but still marking out the same territory; separate, yet undeniably yoked together" (99). It is a pity that her text is spoilt by several typographical faults, which detracts from an otherwise stimulating study.

To conclude: this concise collection consisting of four balanced contributions achieves its task of raising awareness of feminist literary theory and taking into account a variety of minorities while discussing Scottish contemporary literary life and the country's literary heritage. Even though there are occasionally somewhat clichéd opinions which could have been considered in a more thoughtful way (are women *victimized* by means of the cult of youth and beauty, and is the patriarchal society to be blamed for this?), it is an apt prolegomenon to Scottish literature as well as to Scottish studies, and it represents a good point of departure for further research; this time maybe addressing Goethe's view of the "eternal feminine." After all, Celtic culture, being close to this view, still forms an essential part of Scottishness.

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Petr Chalupský

***A Horror and a Beauty: The World of Peter Ackroyd's London Novels*
Praha: Karolinum Press, 2016**

A Horror and a Beauty explores Peter Ackroyd's presentation of London in both his fiction and non-fiction. The different facets of the city portrayed in Ackroyd's works, and the diversity and richness of experience of its inhabitants, are idiosyncratic constructs full of charm and power; they are also as diverse as they are interrelated. London is a city in continuous imaginative development, and overflowing with creativity and experience. Time is perpetual, past and present are virtually indistinguishable, and good and evil exist side by side. Surprisingly, these qualities have been largely overlooked in Ackroyd's works. Chalupský aims to redress the balance. Novels and history meet in Ackroyd's fiction, restoring what its creator calls the "poetry of history" (15).

Chalupský's study is divided into six chapters: "Ackroyd's London, Past and Present", "Uncanny London", "Felonious London", "Psychographic and Antiquarian London", "Theatrical London" and "Literary London". Chapter one introduces Ackroyd's ideas about the capital city, his understanding of history and historical writing, and the theoretical principles of his urban chronotype. While Chalupský would be the first to acknowledge that Ackroyd's London defies any systematic categorization, chapters 2–6 nonetheless discuss the most prominent features of his works separately; at the same time, however, Chalupský emphasises that they are interconnected and together form what Ackroyd describes as "spiritual truth". As Chalupský demonstrates, Ackroyd does not aspire to precise or correct reconstructions of historical events; rather, his goal is to provide thought-provoking

and evocative accounts of London's past and present. The capital is "a literary city of unrelenting imaginary vision" (22).

The heterogeneity of London and the richness of human experience to which it gives rise have as their primary origins occult practices, subversive acts, criminal activities, questionable scientific experiments, dynamic change and spiritual renewal – all essential ingredients in London's literary character. Ackroyd's works, fictional as well as non-fictional, are outside the domains of mainstream cultural production and social conventions. Chalupský's chronotope provides a useful tool with which to illustrate and critique the complexity and controversial nature of Ackroyd's view of the capital city.

Chapter three, "Felonious London", is particularly fascinating – and very topical, as it focuses on London's relationship with crime, reflecting on the nature of one of our most popular genres today, detective fiction. The city's populous streets, run-down areas, and hidden nooks and crannies make London a primary setting for detective writers. Ackroyd recognizes this. It is no coincidence that he is a fan of Charles Dickens, and particularly of *Oliver Twist*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House*. Crime narratives are an important feature of Ackroyd's works as they "combine his interest in history and literature with his fascination with the recurrent pattern of crimes and other forms of violence in London, especially the possible ways in which these discourses can intertwine" (117–8).

Chalupský's discussion of Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, *Dan Leno* and the *Limehouse Golem* and *Chatteron* are particularly intriguing because these works constitute parodies of classical detective narratives in which the detective is incompetent. Instead, it is the reader, argues Chalupský, who becomes the investigator. The chapter goes on to discuss Ackroyd's *The Clerkenwell Tales*, *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* and *Three Brothers*. The story of the crime, the detection process and their fictional representations, argues Chalupský, are "some of the most significant constituents of the polyphony of voices and narratives that forms the very essence of Ackroyd's discursive and intertextual London" (154). London is inherently theatrical and uncanny in its blend of past and present, its felonious tendencies and its population's radical and indeed subversive strategies for survival.

While the overwhelming tone of Chalupský's study is positive, as he identifies the important contributions of Ackroyd's works to our understanding of London past and present, at the same time he is not uncritical of Ackroyd's achievements. His discussion in chapter six of *Three Brothers*, for example, also includes the observation that, while the novel is gripping, "it does not offer much that is new and original" (273) as a consequence of its focus on its author's own scholarly and literary works. Indeed, the chapter ends on a decidedly negative note: "the absence of other than a self-referencing literary framework or a historical dimension means that *Three Brothers* lacks a great deal of the vividness and imaginative playfulness of its predecessors" (274).

A Horror and a Beauty is scholarly in style and content; at the same time, it is highly readable, entertaining and intellectually challenging. The detailed footnotes and copious bibliography bear witness to Chalupský's immense knowledge and understanding of his subject. They are also a valuable aid to the reader. Chalupský has also made excellent use of interviews with Ackroyd, all of which are readily accessible on the internet and listed at the end of the study. *A Horror and a Beauty* is a valuable resource not only to scholars

of Ackroyd but also to all interested in the development and presentation of London in literature.

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Jozef Pecina

The Representation of War in Nineteenth-Century American Novels
Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave: Trnava, 2015

War is a phenomenon which is represented in many fields, both physical and abstract, and it has been a part of mankind since the earliest beginnings of time. The descriptions of its charms and horrors can be found in literature of various nations and eras. We acknowledge the validity of Pecina's remark on how fascinating and important the topic of war is; however, not everybody would enjoy a journey to a battlefield. On the other hand, what many readers would definitely enjoy is being introduced to the development of nineteenth-century American war-themed novels and a discussion of their battlefield realism through the eyes of selected authors.

American literature of the nineteenth century provides readers with an interesting view of how war was perceived by different authors. Beginning with the Romantic treatment of war in the works of James Fenimore Cooper and John Neal, Pecina acquaints us with several key facts which determined and defined war-themed novels of those times. Whether it is Cooper's *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* or Neal's *Seventy-Six*, published in 1821 and 1823 respectively, we find out that at the dawn of war-themed American novels the texts offer readers very few detailed descriptions of battle itself. There is almost no place for emotions, and the overall view of war is rather omniscient. The author suggests an explanation of this by describing Cooper's novel as "full of thrilling chases and valiant soldiers, among which there was no place for fear" (15). Contrary to *The Spy*, John Neal's novel emphasizes the emotions of the characters to a previously unheard-of extent. War-themed novels of nineteenth-century American literature perceived war as something rather glorious – an endeavour of heroism and patriotism.

The second part of the book introduces us to a different point of view. The author presents John William De Forest's work *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867), a partly autobiographical novel which contains descriptions of war based more on personal experience. Instead of glory, we are given realistic and brutal battle scenes where there is no place for metaphors or sentiment. The language suddenly becomes direct and simple, often enhanced by swear words and blasphemies. War is not what it used to be – it is much more real thanks to the visual images and sensory details. De Forest removes the veil of mystery from the topic. This is the reason why he is described by many scholars as "a pioneer of realism in American literature" (33).

It seems, however, that some authors were unwilling to treat war as something dirty and horrific. In the third part of the book we learn more about the literature of the South, in which historical romances and writers such as Sir Walter Scott remained the dominant sources of inspiration. John Esten Cooke's *Mohun, or the Last Days of Lee and his Paladins* (1869), serves as an example of this, and confirms Pecina's idea of Southern writing being a kind of celebration of the beauty of the South, chivalry and nostalgia.

Nonetheless, as literature undergoes certain changes, so do writers and their works. The next part of the book presents the interesting notion of trauma felt by particular authors – including Mark Twain, Henry Adams and William Dean Howells. This feeling of guilt and incompleteness is probably, according to Pecina, rooted in the authors' lack of war experience, which causes a certain kind of pain, "no less serious than physical wounds suffered by real soldiers on Civil War battlefields" (68). If this part of the book had been slightly richer in facts and provided some more thought-provoking information about the selected writers, it would have served as a good turning-point.

The final part delivers the climax of the entire book. It introduces us to Stephen Crane and his novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, a work which at the time of its publication, in 1893, caused a small earthquake among Crane's contemporaries and literary critics. Though he had no previous experience of wars or battlefields, Crane achieved huge success, and it still remains a mystery how such a young writer (aged only twenty-two when the book was published) managed to deliver such a complex and "experienced" novel on war and battlefields.

Although there are almost no references to the Civil War in Crane's novel (such as geographical names or the events surrounding the abolition of slavery), the reader is given a picture of this conflict, though it is one without any heroic posturing. War once again becomes noisy through speech and shouting, and it comes alive thanks to Crane's frequent use of personification. One of the main themes of the novel is fear, an emotion that was so strongly suppressed in the early stage of the development of war-themed novels. Crane's work focuses on the psychology of soldiers, and the description of combat scenes is very realistic. These are features which are also typical of De Forest.

The author concludes that "John William De Forest was a pioneer of realism in writing about war, but Crane is the first American author who depicted war in its most brutal essence with no romantic subplots" (107).

With source material like *The Face of Battle* (1976) by John Keegan or *Acts of War* (1989) by Richard Holmes, along with many other resources, this book has plenty to offer. Even readers who might not be interested in the themes of war and battles to such an extent will find some important facts about various authors and the development of the war-themed American novel. *The Representation of War* might serve as an inspiring source of information which may lead readers to visit libraries and read selected novels – out of curiosity or to learn more about a phenomenon which, though sometimes glorified, reminds us of the dark side of mankind.

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News, Announcements

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