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Finding balance in an unbalanced world

I would like to open the eleventh volume of the Journal of Anglophone Studies relatively personally. Writing this foreword, I am reflecting on how much has changed since 2014, when I first participated, back then as an assisting student, in the Hradec Králové Anglophone Conference. The conference where the contributions presented form the basis for most of the articles published in the Journal of Anglophone Studies. My role has changed, not only within the conference and academic environment but also in life. The lives of all of us have changed, the whole world has changed. But one of the certainties in the ever-flowing current of time is that the Anglophone Conference will always take place. However, both the conference and the proceedings must reflect the changes in society. Eleven years ago, an entire section dedicated to artificial intelligence would certainly not have been included, and the journal's title would not have been written in binary code on the cover.

What is currently sparking passionate debates in society and stirring emotions will be the topic of this issue. The first section will be dedicated to artificial intelligence. Peter Luba will present, based on the ideas of four philosophers, potential impacts of AI on, among other things, language, dreams, wisdom, and individuality in his paper *Dreams of Language in the Age of AI: On Neganthropic Linguistic Pragmatism with Emerson, Nietzsche and Stiegler.* Václav Řeřicha's contribution *Extensions of Imagination in Virtual Reality* will reflect on the question of how the speed of messages mediated by virtual reality affects our cognitive and emotional abilities when perceiving and analyzing these messages.

Traditional yet still bringing new insights due to the transformations reflected in language and teaching style, the section on Linguistics and Methodology opens with the article *The Syntax of Reflexive Possessive: A Contemporary Minimalist Analysis*, in which Anya Chalupová analyzes reflexive possessives from a syntactic perspective. The analysis is based on various viewpoints on anaphoric reference and offers a comparison with the positioning of reflexive pronouns in the linguistic systems of Norwegian and Russian. In the following article, *English Adjective with Infinitive Constructions with Gaps*, Michaela Čakányová focuses on three types of tough constructions, where an adjective is followed by an infinitive construction that functions as a complement in the sentence and contains a gap instead of the object of the infinitival phrase. Based on this analysis, she investigates movements that can occur within the sentence. The article *Teaching Lower and Higher Order Thinking Skills Through Graphs* by Eva Čoupková discusses how teaching English can be connected to the specific fields of study of students. Specifically, the author focuses on the positive impact of incorporating graphs into English language instruction for STEM students, particularly in the development of their linguistic and cognitive abilities. The integration of seemingly hard-to-link courses like *English for Specific Purposes* and literary texts, which can be beneficial for both students and teachers, is demonstrated by Markéta Dudová in her article *English for Specific Purposes: A Literary Approach*. Language study and teaching also encompass intercultural communication competences, including sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Whether the acquisition of these competences is a part of the preparation for future teachers at Slovak universities was explored by Petra Ivenz in the research presented in the article *Sociolinguistics and Pragmatic Linguistics Courses in Slovak English Teacher Training Programs*. We return to linguistics in the article by Jiří Lukl, *Form of First Referring Expression as an Indicator of Referential Importance in Discourse*. The corpus analyzed by the author consisted of five texts of different types, on which the author examined the relationships between referential importance and first referring expressions.

In the article dedicated to Larry Kramer's most significant play The Normal Heart, Tomáš Eštok examines this drama through the lens of Queer Marxism. The article, *Queer Marxist Reading of Larry Kramer's The*

Normal Heart Four Decades Later, opens the Literary and Cultural Studies section of this issue. Although several decades have passed since the play's premiere, the author finds a parallel with the modern queer political movement and the American Left in the lens of the aforementioned perspective. The comic book superhero Octobriana, originally created by Czech artist Petr Sádecký, who fought against the Cold War, is making a comeback thanks to new editions and new stories, bringing her back into the spotlight. Tomáš Hostýnek presents her original and unique story from various perspectives in the article *New Perspectives on Octobriana – the Return of an Enigmatic Comic Book Superhero* through narratology, semiotic analysis, and New Historicism. It has been nearly nine years since Brexit, but relations between the United Kingdom and Europe remain unresolved. How Brexit could affect not only society but also an individual's life is explored through the example of John Fuller's play *Anthony Hoyte-West* in his article *Anxiety and Loss in a Brexit-era Novella: An Examination of John Fuller's Loser*. Octobriana is not the only female hero discussed in the section. Another one is Cleopatra. Filip Krajník, in his article *In Love with Cleopatra on English Restoration Stages*, focuses on how this ancient Egyptian queen, whose life still fascinates people today, was used by Renaissance playwrights as a means of depicting the political situation of the time. We will stay within the realm of drama in the next article, but move closer to the present day. Jan Suk, in his article *Towards Expanded Theatre: Phenomenological Reflections of Goat Island The Lastmaker*, examines how theatre productions that are mediated or broadcasted can affect the audience. Using phenomenological methodology, the author, together with one of his students, analyzes the experience of mediated recordings of a piece by the American collaborative performance group Goat Island. The play about the creation of a theatrical performance, *Rehearsal* by George Villiers, second Duke of Edinburgh, is considered one of the most influential works of the Restoration Period. Tetyana Varvarina examines how elements typical of this period are reflected in it in her article *Reason, Nature, Art, and Wit" in* Buckingham's Enduring Rehearsal.

Another new section of the Journal is the Student Section, intended for articles by those currently studying in a master's degree or doctoral degree programme. The first article to be included in this section is by Klára Exnerová, *The Black Prisoner's Wife in a Memoir.* Aspects of the genre of prison literature in connection with the perspective of women married to African-American inmates, are analyzed on the example of the memoir The Love Prison Made and Unmade: My Story. Bára Nejedlíková, using the example of a fan fiction story, analyzes how reading such texts can change one's perspective on consent and how the fan fiction genre can reshape previously accepted patterns. This is the subject of the paper *Fan Fiction as Space for Consent Negotiation: Exploring Consent in a Harry Potter Fan Fiction Manacled*.

The last section consists of reviews written by this volume's editors. Filip Krajník's translation of the play *Edvard Druhý (Edward II)* by the English dramatist Christopher Marlowe is reviewed – and at the same time, facts about the various productions of this play in our region are provided – by Helena Polehlová. The way in which the beginnings of American drama were mapped by Tomáš Kačer in the publication *Dvousetletá pustina. Dějiny starší americké dramatiky (Two Hundred Years of Wasteland: History of Early American Drama)* are commented by Jan Suk.

For the volume cover colour, we have chosen Mocha Mousse, the colour of the year 2025. It is meant to evoke subtle elegance, glamour, and sensorial richness while also creating a calming effect. I believe that as you read the contributions, you will perceive them as classy and elegant, and that they will enrich you. At the same time, in the world where everything is constantly changing, I hope you find a moment of tranquility to delve into the articles that unfold the Anglophone world through the eyes of those who live for it.

SPECIAL SECTION AI

Peter Luba

Dreams of Language in the Age of AI: On Neganthropic Linguistic Pragmatism with Emerson, Nietzsche and Stiegler

The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history, and, if we must say it, a sort of tomb of the muses.

Language is fossil poetry.
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, Second Series*

Language has been central for the development of civilization from the moment we could truly be considered *homo sapiens* (Rorty, "The Fire of Life"). One of the defining traits of a human being is the ability to use language as the instrument of thought. It is not, therefore, surprising that the history of human technological revolutions has always been deeply intertwined with languages, vocabularies, and their respective redescriptions (Audi 33). Consequently it is not surprising that Gen AI, a recent revolutionary prosthetic of human thought, draws primarily from the vast corpora of human language. To meaningfully consider the influence of generative AI and LLMs on creative work and thought in language, we would do well to elicit the help of linguistic pragmatism.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a 19th century philosopher of American Renaissance became what Richard Rorty would later term a "cultural hero" (Bernstein 260), i.e. a philosopher of literature and language. (Poirier 167) With the exception of his predecessor, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Emerson was one of the pioneers of the idea of the prison-house of language (Robbins, *The Metaphor Will Hold* 196-197), where even every word is considered to be a restrictive intellectual definition (a dead metaphor, a fossil) (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 177). This condition seems to affect philosophy and culture at large, since these cannot evade their embeddedness in the medium that serves as their main and restrictive vessel of thought. Beyond Emerson, the founder of linguistic pragmatism, Friedrich Nietzsche, Bernard Stiegler, and Jacques Rancière all form a milieu of unconventional and eclectic thinkers, who grapple with the issue of "automatic nihilism" (Hörl, in Nancy 76) of language and creativity. Emerson examines the question of expressing and originating one's thoughts in his extensive analysis of poetic and creative expression (Emerson, *The Annotated Emerson* 160-162); Nietzsche, in turn, in his physiological metaphysics and creative perspectivism (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 241); Stiegler considers this with his theory of *grammatization* (Abbinnett 82); and Rancière through his idea of creative subjectivisation (Rancière, *The Method of Equality* 72-73).

The contemporary large language models search for the collocative pairs of words in large language corpora; they will then select a group of words that would likely appear together in natural language production (Generative AI in the classroom 5), which in turn creates the illusion of immanent logic in the produced text (Poirier, *Poetry and Pragmatism* 30). In this sense, the modern AI models, such as Open AI or Google Bard scan the immense library of tertiary retentions (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 62), (an archive of language or "a tomb of the muses") and through "big data" manipulation, devoid of any kind of attentive motivation (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 239), create strings of texts which mimic the intentional language perfectly, yet without any immanent intention behind it (Abbinnett 82). In other words, in our contemporary cultural economy, we have arrived to an era full of empty, and on the other hand, dissipated language-creations.

This fundamental automatization of language production and dissipation of genuine creativity leaks into culture industry, where deep thought, sacrality, de-growth, and deceleration are thoroughly discouraged

in lieu for the rampant consumption and encouragement of unbridled consumerism of vacuous, superficial cultural products. (Yuk Hui, in Nancy 88) This automatization of cultural production also leads to manipulation of individual and collective protentions (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 7), which leads to even further intellectual stultification (Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* 70), and proletarianization of individuals and collectives at large (Buseyne, et. al. 19).

The aim of this short research work is then to offer an overview of strategies that these four thinkers offer as a resistance to this reticulated and accelerated cultural industry that no longer works for the benefit of its people (Yuk Hui in Nancy 83), but rather towards its gradual spiritual dissipation (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 377). First, we will consider the question of creativity and concentration as a key tenet of Emersonian individualistic and creative philosophy (Audi 82). Then we will move on to Nietzsche's philosophy as creative rumination that also endorses courage to escape from the neo-capital marketplace (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 89). This turn towards (de)creative (Roraback, *The Power of the Impossible* 36) courageous solitude as a way of regaining control of one's protentions will then be developed in relation to Rancière's emancipatory imagination of potential new worlds of intellectual equality. Finally, we will consider Stiegler's critique of cultural and educational industry that plays all too willingly in the hands of "Californian 'business models'" of new digital barbarism (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 94). To begin with, the issue of the dissipation of concentration is described by Emerson as early as in 19th century.

A streak of innovative yet mercurial effort is deeply embedded in the American cultural DNA as the desire after "new and innovative" resides at the core of the American intellectual experience. (Ruland and Bradbury xix-xx) Emerson himself is one of the chief propagators of this idea, coming from his well-known "Self-Reliance:"

> A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always, like a cat, falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls… He has not one chance, but a hundred chances (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 145).

"Self-Reliance" is a typical and well-known example of this "try everything" American approach, which is internationally pervasive in the era of globalized western capitalism (Roraback, "Toward a New Frame" 87-88). This veneration of the mercurial, fugacious life experience is the core issue of accelerated capitalism; and "Self-Reliance" might be one of the original sources for the contemporary lack of reflective/sacral rumination. Nonetheless, while Emerson might be somewhat responsible for the chaos he unleashed through his nomialist nihilism, he also offers a whole set of remedies to this challenging situation.

In his essay "Power" from *Essays, Second Series*, Emerson considers an opposing approach towards his perennial question "How shall I live" (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 345)? In a manner very useful in our oversaturated digitalized capitalism, attaining a sense of (de)creativity (Roraback, *The Power of the Impossible* 40.) similar to Stiegler's vision of political dreams, (Buseyene 4) Emerson recounts his sense of *attaining the (de)creative power over oneself* (Deleuze 54).

> 'Enlarge not thy destiny,' said the oracle: 'endeavor not to do more than is given thee in charge.' The prudence in life is concentration; the one evil is dissipation: and it makes not difference whether our dissipations are coarse or fine; property and its cares, friends, and a social habit, or politics or music,

> or feasting. Everything is good which takes away one plaything and delusion more, and drives us home to add one stroke of faithful work … You must elect your work; you shall take what your brain can, and drop all the rest. Only so can that amount of vital force accumulate, which can make the step from knowing to doing (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 376).

This ideal also shared with Nietzsche (Pletsch 15), and Rancière (Rancière, *The Method of Equality* 91), is that of concentration, resilience and resistance to *dissipation*. "The one evil" of imaginative philosophy, understood as labor of experimentation, (Dewey 152), as with all creative work on the contemporary digital scene, is the *dissipation* of our attention (Bluemink 14-15), a disintegration of authentic individual and collective protentions (Buseyne 99). Highly individualistic and nihilistic Emerson (Robbins, "Emerson the Nihilist 98) recommends a powerful pharmakon – "concentration" on one thing. For Emerson, as for Rancière, a survival positive trait for life is "faithful work", i.e. "working on yourself is fundamental to any approach to equality" (Rancière, *The Method of Equality* 118). Once one achieves this sacred exclusivity of focus, what follows is the accumulation of "vital force" which "can make the step from knowing to doing." For Emerson, this need not only be practical idea of work, but also intellectual labor: "To think is to act" (Atkinson 188). The "rich mind" that "lies in the sun and sleeps" (Atkinson ibid) is thus the decelerated thinker, an individual whose *attention* or, in Stiegler's vocabulary, whose protentions are now free to tap into the vast cultural and historical capital in the form of digitalized tertiary retentions (Stiegler, "Elements for a General Organology" 81-83). Yet in order to become such good readers and (de)creative, negentropic (Roraback, *The Power of Impossible* 16) consumers, one also has to consider the Nietzschean bovine reading style, useful for the decelerated orientation in the vast digital archives.

Nietzsche is a philosopher of creative experimentation who drew his inspiration for cultural criticism (Robbins, "Emerson the Nihilist" 134-135) from a vast array of sources. For Nietzsche, the key strategy of intellectual growth was thus the establishment of a certain intellectual *otium,* a *vita contemplativa* (Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 259-260) to allow for time and digestion of his eclectic reading. His approach towards the regaining of creative protentions (unlike the "newspaper-reading *demi-monde* of the spirit" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 199)) relied on the resistance/disavowal of the reading of "plundering soldiers" (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* 187):

> To be sure, one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an art in this way, something that has been unlearned most thoroughly nowadays – and therefore it will be some time before my writings are 'readable' – something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a 'modern man': *rumination* (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* 29).

While the notion of cow-like "rumination" is for Nietzsche fundamental, the most relevant idea that he shares with Emerson and Stiegler is his advocacy of hope (Robbins, "Emerson the Nihilist" 95) and courage (Buseyne 30-31). Since Stiegler was a thorough scholar of Nietzsche, he connects this oppositional courage with *desires* (Fitzpatrick 147). And it is precisely these individual and collective desires, which stand for the forms of (re)creativity, that require the ruminative approach and meditative, sacral deceleration and re-sacralization from (within) the individual (Schlette and Krech 453-454).

Ruminative (de)creativity, however, is not a type of passive or stoical resignation that leads to (superficial) creative apathy and lack of intellectual or practical action (Lindeman 57-58). For Nietzsche, this quiet, dark, subterranean flow of intellect (Roraback "Toward a New Frame" 96) connects profoundly with risk-taking and danger:

> But you, when I see what eyes you make, almost seem to me to be seeking *more insecurity,* 'more horror, more danger, more earthquaking. You have a desire, I almost think, (…) you have a desire for the worst, most dangerous kind of life that terrifies me the most, for the life of wild animals, for the forests, caves, steep mountains and labyrinths (…) Courage, however, and adventure and joy in the unknown, the unattempted – *courage* seems to me the whole pre-history of man. 'He has envied the wildest, most courageous animals all their virtues and robbed them of them: only thus did he become – man(Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 313).

The Anthropocene's revaluation of all values rises as "devaluation of all values" (Roraback, "Toward a New Frame" 88) and therefore leads to the arrival of the "ultimate man" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 45) and inauguration of the age of existential/creative nihilism: "We have discovered happiness,' say the Ultimate Men and blink." (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 45) This lack of experimentation and disavowal of adventurous life-style (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 228) of a (de) creative, expansive individual (Lindeman 63) is the sense of Stiegler when he considers Anthropocene to be a negativitst period of human development. This is because the noetic impulse perishes along with the authentic, individual protentions which can only be communicated to the individual's (un) conscious through Heideggerian "hints" (Mitchell 168-173). This, however, requires *otium* on the side of a receptive being along with "courage" (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher Psychologist, Antichrist* 110) and "desire" combined with openness towards "most dangerous kind of life." In the final analysis, these characteristics created humanity as it is, "*courage"* has been "the whole pre-history of man" – only through this virtue "did he (we) become – man" i.e. we arose to our potential. And it is this combination of desire, passion, courage, and, above all, *dreams* that lead Bernard Stiegler to his poignant yet hopeful vision for the Neganthropocene (Fitzpatrick 141).

As the shared founders of the counter-cultural Neganthropocene, Emerson, Nietzsche, Rancière, and Stiegler all share a defining, romantic trait (Berlin 118-120), which is their shared veneration of imagination and dreams as regulative fictions (Vaihinger 176). These are used instrumentally and keep us in the working mood. Even more notably, this preoccupation with the dreamworld seems to appear often in the late, valedictory essays, just like in Shakespeare's *Tempest* (Act IV, Scene i, lines 148-158). One example can be found in Emerson's "Poetry and Imagination:"

> This reminds me that we all have one key to this miracle of the poet, and the dunce has experiences that may explain Shakespeare to him, – one key, namely, dreams. In dreams we are true poets (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 458);

Emerson ends his career with a firm, democratic affirmation of the universal power of dreams, and extends it to the plurality of the people. This position is only reinforced by statements such as "In dreams we are true poets" or "Every man should be so much an artist..." (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 198). In a similar vein, Nietzsche offers his advocacy of *Traumwelt:*

> Ein Verkehr zwischen imaginären Wesen ("Gott", "Geister", "Seelen"); eine imaginäre Naturwissenschaft (anthropozentrisch; völliger Mangel des Begriffs der natürlichen Ursachen) eine imaginäre Psychologie (...) Diese reine Fiktions-Welt unterscheidet sich dadurch sehr zu ihren Ungunsten von der Traumwelt, dass letztere die Wirklichkeit widerspiegelt, während sie die Wirklichkeit fälscht, entwerthet, verneint (Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist* 181*)*.

In his multifarious and posthumously published (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher Psychologist, Antichrist* 7) final work, *Antichrist: The Inversion of All Values,* (Montinari 121-123) Nietzsche not only presents his caustic criticism of organized religion, but also offers a profound look into Jesus Christ's immanent faith (Luba 26-27) which he expands into a general consideration of "imaginäre Naturwissenschaft;" that is, he distinguishes between the unworthy "reine Fiktions-Welt" that he considers to be physiological prejudices of philosophers (Nehamas 32-33) and "Traumwelt" that reflects the reality (i.e. is more grounded) while the fictions falsify, disintegrate and *negate.*

Finally, a similar sentiment is also found in Rancière's philosophy, with his signature perspective that emphasizes the creation of the possible, potential new worlds of sensibility, where the creative subjectivisation is afforded to as many as possible:

> For politics, this means: if there is no world revolution, it's not because the moment isn't ripe; it's because the issue is what those who want change actually want, what those who want an end to injustice actually want. It's a question of what potential worlds you see as being possible, of the capacity you grant yourself to change the world in a way that's in keeping with what you see as being desirable (Rancière, *The Method of Equality* 91).

A key term in Rancièrian philosophy is "politics" (Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics,* 90) which in his perception acts as the primary vehicle of democratic dialogue (Feola 70) and as a space where the healthy societal "disagreement" (Rockhill 84) occurs. This approach is very similar to Jamesian pragmatic pluralistic meliorism (Koopman 106-107) and Stieglerian "digital hermeneutics" (Fitzpatrick 150-154). These shared, collective all aim to open our perception to the "potential worlds" that we can see as "being possible" and enhance our "capacity" to dream novel worlds, where those who were previously unseen now take the stage and tell their story (Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* xxii.), composed of vocabulary taken over form the dominant discourse. (Rancière, *Die Wörter und das Unrecht* 112-113) This political and practical perspective towards the exploration of (de)creative potentialities (Lindeman 61) in the divination of new possible spiritual and mutual ways of being (Roraback, *The Power of Impossible* 234) leads us directly to Stiegler's ultimate political hope.

In his 2015 work *Age of Disruption*, Stiegler engages with the initial set of ideas that he had been developing since his *Technics* series (Buseyne 98-100) where also began his criticism of industrial society. It is important to reiterate that Stiegler was not against technological progress from an absolutist perspective (Yuk Hui in Nancy 83). Beyond his career as an academic philosopher, he was also a deputy director of Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA) in 1996 in charge of the innovation department (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 6). His nemesis are rather the nefarious intentions of the new digital barbarians, that is, the complete lack of noetic intentionality (Abbinnett 76) behind the movements of the Capitalocene economy (Abbinnett 77) – an inhuman, negativist system focused on the increase of wealth instead of human well-being (Yuk Hui in Nancy 83).

The arrival of digital technologies brought with itself the digital barbarism in the form of acceleration and reification of the formerly sacred (Roraback, "Toward a New Frame" 110-111). Digital acceleration manipulates and takes over the individual and collective protentions of its global user-base, and in doing so, essentially *blocks the possibility of slow paced rumination and the experience of the sacral, reverential perceptiveness* which is what all these thinkers advocate for. The unending stream of attention-grabbing stimuli originating from the digital prosthesis (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 7) in the form of the omnipresent smartphone rendered the zen-like, meditative states of the brain virtually non-existent

for many. This lack of productive *otium* then leads directly to the loss of immanent-transcendent imagination that is foundational for the *emancipation* – the vision of potential new worlds and *dreams*, i.e. hopes for tomorrow. This is also where Stiegler's "digital despair" comes in, in the account of a gen z teenager, Florian:

> You really take no account of what happens to us. When I talk to young people of my generation, those within two or three years of my own age, they all say the same thing: we no longer have the dream of starting a family, of having children, or a trade, or ideals, as you yourselves did when you were teenagers. All that is over and done with, because we're sure that we will be the last generation, or one of the last, before the end (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 9).

Stiegler uses this contemporary example of digital nihilism that plagues an increasing amount of young people from Greta Thunberg's generation (Yuk Hui in Nancy 83) as an instance of what digital nihilism looks like—a case of complete lack of positive protentions – "an absolutely negative protention" (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 10) a sense of no future to look forward to. Pedagogically considered, this is one of the reasons why emotional intelligence and well-being become ever more important in Capitalocene, where the AI became not just another form of acceleration (unnatural to human brain, faster than the speed of lightning) (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 311) but also an existential threat to once resilient creative industries (OECD (2023), *Is Education Losing the Race*).

> This *possibility is precisely that of the bifurcation, which moves infinitely faster than every trajectory pursued in becoming,* since, as its quasi-cause, it reverses this becoming within which it *opens up* the sole motive for hope: the future as improbable possibility. What then is desire? … desire is not envy, or covetousness, or ambition, which are only the deadening decomposition of what, in desire, affirms itself as *being-for-life*. Desire is already courage, which is admirable only because it admires – which makes it courageous… In order to do politics, we must dream" (Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption* 312).

Nearing the end of his philosophical project, in a sense close to the valedictorian essays of the previous thinkers, Stiegler advocates for the function of *dreaming* in our intellectual life, as a way of reclaiming our individual and collective protentions. Only through dreams can one regain the possibility of individuation (Bluemink 3-6), which is a process of continuous, future-oriented growth (Dewey 46) and transformation. In a signature Emersonian and Rancièrian sense, the "sole motive for hope" is for Stiegler the "future of improbable possibility." In other words, while it is highly unlikely that the ideal of Neganthropocene will catch (Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* 139) and a significant change within the globalized Capitalocene will occur, our only recourse is *belief* (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 146), i.e. a re-sacralization of the everyday life. As per Nietzsche, "we want to be the poets of our life – first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters." (Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 239-240) It is the capacity to dream that still distinguishes human creativity from the illusion of consciousness of the large language models. And, at the same time, it is this capacity to dream that becomes ever more important to develop in the face of oppressive reality of the Anthropocene, with the encroaching climate change, rise of the extremist politics, and upsurge of aggression and violence at large.

As the secularization spreads and the sacral becomes ever rarer, there is less and less opposition to the new depthlessness (Jameson 6) and automatization of late capitalism; nothing is sacred from the encroaching reification (Dimock 783). In Stieglerian positive vision, "desire" is the key element that must

be regained in our collective unconscious, a "*being-for-life;*" or, in Emersonian terms, "a stupendous antagonism" (Emerson, *A Critical Edition of the Major Works* 354) against "Fate" oppressing "the last generation." "Desire" is "already courage" a type of resistance that can only be sparked by slowing down, ruminating, reconnecting to one's own primary and secondary retentions i.e. perceptions and memories. The aim should then be to integrate these incitements into a constructive personal vision that should then be shared with others through the means of pluralistic digital hermeneutics (Fitzpatrick 153-154). This might, in turn, give rise to new forms of individual (de)creativity, gradually building up the collective ethos from thousands different blooming flowers (Bernstein, 234.).

The significance of the negentropic "fossil poetry" turns back to the question of large language models. These models might operate nimbly with language, which is, however, by itself only a mere "archive", a "tomb of the muses" a "fossil," cold instrument (Hook 57), or a dead metaphor. There is no intrinsic meaning to language signs; without dreams, language remains an empty vessel. While signs might inspire or incite previously unknown connections, they do not carry by themselves the creative contingency of dreams, the immanent-transcendent "hint" that only arises from the ruminative, subterraneous dark flow of imagination.

From the standpoint of education, "Wisdom should … be the key goal of education in this century (Fadel, et. al. 68). Similarly, Buddhist traditions "give central importance to developing wisdom; the ultimate aim is often presented as … 'penetrative understanding of all phenomena' (Fadel et. al. 58.). In other words, the future of (de)creative art and life might reside in "fostering of *genuine wisdom:"*

> (…) AI, can be counter-productive in fostering *genuine wisdom*. One of the primary concerns is the over-reliance on technology for decision-making: Scholars posit that the incessant reliance on the internet and digital devices is reshaping our neural pathways, making it harder for individuals to engage in deep, reflective thinking. The readily available information may lead individuals to be more superficial in their analyses, often skimming through vast amounts of data without truly understanding or internalizing it (Fadel et. al. 78).

Negentropic linguistic pragmatism might well offer us with direction towards the accrual of *genuine wisdom.* "Deep, reflective thinking" requires, just as the experience of the sacred, adherence to principles and personal discipline. This discipline and sacrifice, however, needs to be fueled by genuine passion that is accompanied with a certain sense of tranquility, self-assuredness. This could be a reverential presence of the sacred, sourcing from within (or yet from the transcendental stream?). The study here only scratches the surface of what linguistic pragmatism can offer in the services of Neganthropocene, further vistas await in concrete pedagogical methodologies, storytelling, and their potential in emotional regulation. To this end, the Emersonian pragmatic ethos offers an open, passionate, yet serene philosophical foundation for art and life in the age of AI. It might well be that the best approach towards the fostering of *genuine wisdom* in our age of dissipation is a certain sense of pragmatic nonchalance that recommends a simple mantra: "Keep cool, but care" (Goodman 267).

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Václav Řeřicha

Extensions of Imagination in Virtual Reality

Abstract: *In analysing the information-rich virtual reality and its influence on the perception of the physical world, we must not be led into a blind alley of irrelevance by the content of the narrative, which is incidental. The speed of the Internet has created a brevity of perceived and user-generated content that excludes lengthy cognitive processes and enhances emotions. New digital perceptual cues have been created that drive brief narrative situation models with simple and immediate cues. Virtual reality can then be defined as any environment using digitally generated perceptual cues that are intuitively or automatically understood by the user. The real, unintended message of the digital technology represented by the Internet environment is that users interpret the real and virtual worlds as if they were short emotional narratives. The imagination created by virtual reality has extended into the physical world.*

Introduction

It has been long known, as McLuhan suggested in his letter from 1958, that the "classroom ... is a by-product of the book form of codified information." The repeatable printed books assembled pupils and determined the curriculum because the students did not have to write their own textbooks. Print technology was a medium that created the surroundings, the environment and its effects.

The effects of different technologies, different media take different forms, but the basic patterns remain. Just as the by-product, effect, of the printed book the school classroom has been constituted, so by-products, effects of digital technology are different forms and genres of video. From the big screen film to the television screen, to the mobile phone screen and the smart watch with a local touch screen. This technology also affects the artistic content. Films try to immerse the viewer in another world more through visual and sound effects than with narrative. TV video technology with limited visual appeal uses brief shows with two dramatic plots, one within each episode of a TV series, and the other usually framing the entire series. At the same time, TV screens are being enlarged to accommodate large-screen movies at home.

Vertical dramas

Mobile phone technology has forced the emergence of so-called vertical dramas. Vertical dramas are not only about the way of viewing the mobile phone screen, but the effect of this technology is a new genre with very short episodes between two and five minutes, usually a comic plot providing gratification in short bursts and emphasis on actors' facial reactions.

Perhaps the most striking effect of the vertical drama is a visual combination of split screens, swipes, and quick cuts. The genre is derived from the surrealistic process of irrational juxtaposition of images, the video's creators seek to resolve dream and reality into a super reality. Vertical dramas – due to the limitations of the cell phone screen – cannot allow the viewer to be visually immersed into a different world or longer narratives, instead they offer, according to their creators, a surreal world different from physical reality. The world of vertical dramas is faster, denser and more information-rich than the real world can offer (Sung 2019).

The school classroom has become an effect of the medium of printed textbooks, and the medium of large-screen cinema, television and vertical drama have become effects of digital technology. The school classroom, centrally controlled by the textbook as well as the digital video technology, are nonetheless ephemeral, historically short-lived effects of the technological environment. Both can be completely replaced by, for example, Apple's Vision Pro virtual reality glasses (Patel 2024), which contain all the print and digital tools, from the iPhone to large screen cinema or FaceTime calls and the school classroom or office, anything that can be perceived by sight or hearing. By-products limited by visual form, like vertical drama or school classrooms are disappearing. Each new medium creates a new environment that generates new effects new by-products such as Apple's Vision Pro virtual reality glasses.

Technologies are tools extending human capabilities, such as the hammer, rowing boat, bicycle, or artificial intelligence. A hammer is designed as an artificial fist, and it provides us with the feedback how to use it efficiently. The same is true for a rowing boat or a bicycle. We use a tool and adapt our behaviour. We identify with the tool, we become the content of activity. The effects of using the hammer are obvious (metallurgy has impacted the Bronze Age as well as the Information Age and the blacksmith and smithy have become cultural concepts).

Perception of virtual reality

Artificial intelligence is also a medium, an extension of people. However, it is clearly divergent from other extensions of human capabilities. AI is seemingly an extension of sight and hearing and of our cognitive abilities, such as memory. Nevertheless, we must distinguish between tools that are interactive and those that are pro-active. AI puts an algorithm between us and digital technology. This algorithm is active and controls us, so that we become a tool for AI. AI becomes our perceived environment, much like the physical real world. We perceive AI just like a physical reality because humans are primarily visual creatures, the primary sense informing us about physical reality is the sight. Human visual and auditory perceptions do not react differently to the physical reality and the virtual reality developed by AI pictorials and sound recordings (Giusti 2010, 1763).

The argument about whether a specific pictorial/photograph is created by humans or AI is irrelevant, because artistic photographs try to achieve an image from "beyond reality" and AI tries to imitate the details of physical reality. The problem is in the semantics of the very content of the medium of photography, a pictorial created by AI does not fulfil the definition of photography (drawing with light). In the case of AI pictorials, we do not draw with light but with words/concepts.

From the by-products of the technologies described, whether it is the school classroom or Apple's Vision Pro, the primary message, influence of the new technologies, only becomes apparent in retrospect. For example, the original technology of full-screen film looks outdated, even ridiculous today. From the point of view of 16 mm film in 1923, today's digital video on a cell phone would have seemed like magic. This is a consequence of our perception determined by ever changing technologies. Our perception, i.e. our understanding of the technology, is historical. The new technology clashes with the perception determined by the historically older technology. In the present, now, seniors are experiencing an environment generated by the current technology. Generation Alpha, with the perception accustomed to full screen cinema and miniature screen cell phones, have been using outdated technology in terms of Apple's Vision Pro. Generation Alpha's past is the future of today´s seniors. Technology is creating the future and constantly pushing us to catch up.

We have used the above argument before (Řeřicha 2023); for the older generations, whose perception has been determined by the technologies of the previous text-based environment, the contemporary digital environment is the future, a kind of science fiction, for Generation Z the contemporary digital environment is the past (124). Within a timespan of a year this argument can be updated with respect to Apple's Vision Pro technology.

For the first time, the speed of digital technology allows us to become old-fashioned several times over in one generation and on the other hand we have the opportunity to become aware of the patterns of technological obsolescence.

Technological "generations" have become changing faster than biological generations and seniors appear old-fashioned because their visual and auditory perception has been primed by the preceding text-based technology. The new technology, e.g., vertical drama, is, according to its creators, "faster, denser and more information-rich, than the real world can offer" (Sung 2019). To fully experience vertical drama as it was originally conceived, seniors would have to be able to adapt their perception to this new world.

The picture touches reality

In 1972, when analysing Aldous Huxley's utopian trilogy (Brave New World, Ape and Essence and Island), we had realized that the best science fiction is that which is closest to the current physical reality, to the present facts of the world.

"If a fact is to be a picture it must have something in common with what it depicts," writes Wittgenstein (2.16, 1961), adding that "These correlations are, as it were, the feelers of the picture's elements, with which the picture touches reality" (2.1515, 1961).

The virtual world created by digital technology may be Wittgenstein´s facts, science fiction in genre, but its relationship to the facts of the world have been dramatically changed. In the pre-digital science fiction, the author exercised his imagination, thinking through the facts of the physical world. The imagination and the real world were the starting line of the author; today, digital technology enhancing the facts of the physical world has shifted that starting line without regard to author's imagination or the facts of the physical world. The digital world has been enhancing the facts of the physical world visually and auditorily, creating a new, information-rich world.

The visual and auditory enhancement, visual or auditory shocks generated by new digital technologies are motivated by attention economy, the enhancement is the most efficient way to get full attention of perceivers immersing them into a video, digital game, or pictorials. If we translate a physical object or person's original appearance into another media, image, photograph, video or artwork, or AI rendition, such a pictorial writes McLuhan (1974) has a strong emotional effect even without further enhancement (131).

As we stated above, every human extension amplifies human capabilities; and the technology of an image, or sound recording will amplify emotional response. If photographs or a video of a conference are available, they will arouse more interest than looking around at the living participants.

Emotions of graven images

We believe that amplified emotional reactions are the reason why some religions prohibit so-called graven images. The belief that the creation of living forms is God´s prerogative and that the worship of such images is a form of idolatry or humility as in the Old Order of Amish people, may be an effort to

avoid the amplified emotional impact of the depicted object. A similar explanation may be relevant for the belief the photographs can capture the soul of person being photographed.

In this context, the public outcry to the vulgar, AI-generated images of a pop-singer that appeared on social media early in 2024 is interesting. This non-consensual deep fake AI-generated photography mimicking one´s likeness is considered a personal attack on an authentic person strengthening the superstition that the image is a part of a person. This superstition had been apparently shared by the authors of these images who considered the impact of the image when using AI to develop the vulgar pictorials (Barber 2016). However, the use of AI in this context is purely incidental, artificial intelligence merely serving the authors´ limited imagination. But the negative reaction of the pop-singer is already related to the beliefs mentioned above, otherwise there would be no reason to consider these AI-generated photographs as an invasion to their privacy or a source of embarrassment.

Another explanation of the pop singer taking umbrage at the public pictorials may be that they add another component to the carefully generated predominantly visual public image. The virtual image thus created, becomes part of a virtual world, a dream world of social platforms for teenage girls. Some of the AI generated "explicit" images have obviously been ironic commentary on the pink sentimental virtual world of the perfectly made-up avatar that girls half their age can instantly associate with. Irony or parody can be an effective antidote to the virtual world if it creates a picture which "must have something in common with what it depicts." That is, effective irony retroactively deconstructs the virtual world by confronting some of its more lurid aspects with physical reality (Phiddian 1997), thereby emphasizing the unreality of the image virtual reality is trying to sell to us (690).

Humour or even irony as a method of deconstructing the carefully designed virtual reality of this popular singer, as is the case of the aforementioned "non-consensual deep fake" pictorials, may lead to counteraction because the hundreds of millions of fans, followers have placed their identity on the platform of the singer´s "dream world" and an ironic deconstruction would strip them of their digital self-consciousness. For young fans, it might be demanding to distinguish between physical and virtual realities because even the singer´s performances are focused on attention economy, with a verbalized variant on the singer's Instagram (6.12.2023), cf. "the biggest, loudest, most aggressively, over-excited thank you."

Hangover of the information-rich world

The message of virtual reality, of the information-rich world makes the physical world grey, slow, uninteresting, and less involving. Virtual reality users' visual and auditory perception is constantly shocked by pictorials and sounds that are rare or absent in physical world. One of the Czech representatives of Generation Z feels according to Jandová (2024) dissatisfied in the real world: "We are a generation that needs more sensations," she says. "When you don't have them, anxiety sets in."

Every new technology creates a new environment which we perceive mainly visually, adapting to it. In this case, however, the perception of the real world is not transposed to the world of virtual reality, but, vice versa, primary is the perception adapted to the highly involving virtual world, because this is where Generation Z spends most of their waking hours.

The Czech artist complains about the sensual information emptiness of the real physical world, to which they return, because their perception has been permanently altered; they perceive the real physical world through the enhanced senses of the user of the virtual world. It is akin to distracting the reader from a thrilling text or the listener from a moving operatic aria. However, printed text or music are

products of the physical world or text-based technologies that do not alter perception, although they may possibly increase our sensitivity and teach us to better understand some aspects of the real world. Their message as media may be complex but it does not alter our senses. The text-based generation may perceive digital technologies as magical, but they are aware of their marked unusual demands on one's attention economy. For Generation Z, current physical reality is unmarked, too quiet and lacks drama; the phenomena of the real world do not shift fast enough.

Cues

Visual cues in general are intuitive or learned cognitive interpretations of what is directly perceived in physical reality. One of the cues main functions is to interpret selected facts of physical reality as signs of a narrative (He 2021). These cues obtained from physical reality are applied in virtual reality where they function as cognitive feelers between real world facts and virtual world images (294).

Moreover, virtual reality is enriched with new visual and auditory cues generated by digital technologies, these cues are not available in the real world. Virtual reality has visual cues such as progress bars and loading spinners indicating time of an ongoing narrative and reducing user anxiety. These cues can also be tools of enhanced physical reality, then the enhanced reality and virtual reality are intertwined.

When new visual cues have been learnt in virtual reality, their users may feel to be deprived of them in the physical world. The new visual cues of the virtual world have – besides cognitive – also psychological effects. In the virtual reality, the participants may experience an illusion of their own physical activity within a narrative generated by visual (and auditory) cues, while at the same time their emotionality is being enhanced by the medium, by digital technology.

The strong emotional response is triggered both by the immediate effects of the visually and auditorily enhanced cues, and by highly involving complex virtual reality narratives, which can spill over into how we perceive the world around us (Jääskeläinen et al. 2020, 2).

Virtual reality narratives make use of situation models says Baldassano (2018) that "abstract away from perceptual details and focus on the location, characters, actions and causal relationships" (9689). The location, characters and actions offer the visual imagination of virtual reality designers unlimited possibilities.

In virtual reality, location is enriched by visual cues whose primary function is to reinforce the narrative. Realistic details need not be essential; the simpler action virtual realities like "first person shooter" employ the Gestalt principle of Closure, with the participants mentally completing the suggested incomplete shapes. It is a principle previously applied in comics, and it enhances the involvement of the player or viewer. We have illustrated the process of Closure on the cartoon film Minions and explained its popularity by employing highly involving visuals that mime the patterns of naïve style art. The minions with primitively sketched figures and often unintelligible muttering are involving because they are auditory and visually cool, that is poor in sensory data, demanding Closure (Řeřicha 2024).

Typical VR cues

Typical virtual reality location visual cues are based on contrast emphasizing selected objects with brighter colours, symbolic time representations, distortions of the user's sense of size and distance and other cues like exploring expansive space and 360° environment.

Narratives shape our understanding of reality, both virtual and physical, narratives shape the very structure of our perception writes Georgieva (2022). Narratives are based on perception, cognition,

emotion, and decision making. As suggested above, we may perceive physical reality through a cognition that has been permanently adapted to virtual reality. These cognitive shifts can result in narrative overlap with mental boundaries blurring, and disoriented users may consider physical world events to be a part of an ongoing virtual reality narrative.

Cues when scrolling and scrollytelling

Perceptual cues thus alert us to the fact that physical or virtual realities are arranged in a narrative; they are narrative signals. Their function is quite clear in the perception of the surrounding environment. But these cues also have an important function in seemingly non-narrative scrolling. We have discussed scrolling in another text, where we noted that scrolling was an attempt to avoid information and "the permanent instant gratification achieved by the scrolling technique is without a context, syntax or logical narration" (Řeřicha 2023, 121). Its main context is the experience, which is driven by the Dopamine Loop.

The emotional experience of scrolling is supported by a set of perceptual cues that are exclusively designed for digital screens. They usually control the images or add so-called sticky elements (navigation bars, scrolling progress bars etc.). Our perception of the screen is further manipulated by the depth, fading, animations, colours, or multidimensional scrolling. The scrolling perceptual cues focuses solely on attention economy, they have no cognitive function, they do not add or subtract information. Scrolling is a literacy, complex activity like reading a text.

The common perceptual cues of scrolling and virtual reality embodying narrative principles, i.e. the perception of scrolling as a kind of story, enabled the emergence of the scrollytelling format. Scrollytelling is more involving than the static format of so-called long-form journalism (Tjärnhage 2023). For the purposes of our analysis, the current phenomenon of scrollytelling is interesting namely because it confirms our assumption about digital technology as a mechanism generating brief narrative forms.

The message of the medium of scrolling in general is the same as that of virtual reality. The physical world is static, non-actionable and dissatisfying because it cannot be scrolled away when perceptually emptied of content, it is unmanipulable. The inability to apply cognitive skills gained in virtual reality to the physical world may have a frustrating and disorienting effect.

Common effects of narrative cues

Above we described perceptual cues, either adopted or directly created for narration in virtual reality. Even the scrolling itself, i.e., the orientation in the content of the digital environment, generates the user's behaviour as a controlled process, as a meaningful motivated behaviour, regardless of the perceived content of the scrolling itself.

All perceptual cues, whether applied in virtual reality, in scrolling or on social media platforms, have common effects that control and drive forward the narrative. The basic common effects are brevity and emotionality: we have identified these as being present in the perceptual cues of virtual reality, in scrolling, and in all social platforms.

The clarity and obviousness of perceptual cues is crucial for virtual reality narratives due to the brevity of the video sequences. The videos must evoke immediate emotion while instantaneously providing perceptual cues that interpret and advance the story. The perceptual cues have to enhance critical objects with brighter colours, symbolic time representations, perspective shifts and other cues.

Another means of eliciting and enhancing the desired emotion. e.g. suspense, surprise, resonance, or humour, is soundtrack. Short video format however remains a fundamental condition of the user's involvement, it is a horizontal passive scrolling with the dopamine loop.

World as short emotive narratives

In the analysis of information-rich virtual reality and its impact on the perception of the real world, we must not be led into the blind alley of the content of narratives which is incidental and of the instruments enriching virtual reality. Our analysis shows that the perceptual cues of virtual reality permeate all levels of the digital environment (McLuhan), which is the definition of any successful technology. "Once a new technology comes into a social milieu it cannot cease to permeate that milieu until every institution is saturated," writes McLuhan (1974, 198). A technology is successful when it has been successful in the market. Perceptual cues thus change all levels of the digital environment to virtual reality. Virtual reality can then be defined as any environment using digitally generated perceptual cues that are understood intuitively or automatically by users.

The formal content, i.e. perceptual cues and the visuality of brief narratives are a consequence of technology, they are enforced by digital technology. The Internet has absolutely accelerated the speed of information, its rapidity has enabled the brevity of user generated content, the brevity does not provide space for uploading of more complex cognitive processes and is limited to emotions (I feel instead of I think). Perceptual cues have been created to drive new narrative situation models with simple and immediate signals. The real, unintended message of the digital technology represented by the environment of the Internet, is that users interpret the real and virtual worlds as if they were short emotive narratives.

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LINGUISTICS AND METHODOLOGY

Anya Chalupová

The Syntax of Reflexive Possessives: A Contemporary Minimalist Analysis

Abstract: *This paper critically examines and brings together insights from three different perspectives on anaphors (Despić, Fischer, Reuland) using the dataset of Czech reflexive possessive svůj, with relevant comparative data from Norwegian and Russian (Nedoluzhko, Sturgeon). Unlike prior research of svůj that mostly centered on semantic interpretation in comparison with possessives and/or the grammaticality of reflexive possessives, this study highlights the cross-linguistically variable but systematic syntactic behavior of reflexive possessives, e.g. their presence in languages lacking definite article (based on Reuland, Despić and in extension Rákosi) and looks into the applicability of the analyses listed above on this specific dataset. Additionally, this paper engages with the Strict Modularity hypothesis and aims, with the Minimalist syntactic perspective, to provide introductory insights into the syntactic underpinnings of this linguistic phenomenon, contributing to a deeper understanding of characteristics of reflexive possessives.*

1. Introduction

Two words sharing an extra-linguistic referent are said to be in an anaphoric relation. Czech reflexive possessives[1] are a type of anaphora and like any anaphoric expression they need an antecedent – a constituent being referred to and binding the anaphora – which has been, when in the same clause, claimed to be in a c-command relation since Reinhart[2]. The first formulation of the canonical binding theory outlined in Chomsky's *Lectures on Government and Binding* is based on the notion of index so a canonical definition of binding would be "*a* binds *b* iff *a* and *b* are co-indexed and *a* c-commands *b*" as adapted in Reuland (40).

In Czech as well as other languages, the reflexive possessives are claimed to be used when the antecedent occupies the subject position. Based on this, Sturgeon (497) points out that c-command is not precise enough for this dataset, as the reflexive possessive would be often connected to the object, not subject, as the object can be in a c-command relation as well and at the same time more local than the subject, as illustrated in (1). This and other morpho-syntactic characteristics of reflexive possessives are discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

Having introduced the issue of (non-)locality, it has been discussed, e.g. by Dočekal, that the scope of anaphora is not limited to one phrase, clause, or sentence, but semantically it can go through the whole conversation[3]. From the syntactic point of view, since Chomsky (1981), the anaphoric relation is tightly connected with binding and three principles A, B, C applying to anaphors, pronouns and R-expressions respectively. These principles have been evolving to account with more precision for cross-linguistic variation and some of their recent developments as well as relevant reformulations of the binding rules which limit the scope of anaphoric relations are discussed in Section 3.

Complementarity of anaphoric reflexive pronouns and the rest of possessive pronouns, i.e. in Chomsky's terms type A and B expressions, has been inconsistently used as a diagnostic tool in the literature. However, to my knowledge there is no clear consensus on what the mechanics of this phenomenon are. A large group of Czech speakers systematically uses possessive pronouns in contexts where reflexive pronouns would be expected. Why this is a syntactic phenomenon and not a phonological one is briefly discussed using the lens of strict modularity in Section 4. Section 5 then sums up the findings.

2. Characteristics of reflexive possessives

The following paragraphs offer a view into the most salient characteristics of reflexive possessives, especially the reference to subject, their position in the structure which is different from English possessives, and basic morphology and semantics discussed in separate subsections.

2.1 Reference to subject

Czech grammars, e.g., Trávníček, Grepl and Karlík, Daneš et al., and Karlík et al. state that the basic condition and at the same time the obligatory syntactic context of reflexive possessive *svůj* is the co-reference with the subject of the sentence, i.e. the external argument of the verb.

(1) a. (*My$_i$/Každý$_j$*) *budeme$_n$ mít svoji$_{i/j/h}$ postel.*
we$_i$ each$_j$ have$_{1.ST.PL.FUT}$ REFL bed.
"We/ Each of us will have our/ their (own) bed."
b. *Lucka$_i$ píše s Jarkou$_l$ svůj$_{j/*j}$* úkol.
Lucka write with Jarka REFL homework
"Lucka does her$_i$ homework with Jarka$_l$."
c. *Lucka$_i$ píše s Jarkou$_j$ její$_{j/*i}$* úkol.
Lucka$_i$ write with Jarka$_j$ her$_j$ homework
"Lucka does her$_j$ homework with Jarka$_j$."

As illustrated in (1), seemingly following this rule, in Czech the reflexive pronoun is always co-indexed, i.e. semantically connected, with the referent in the subject position of the sentence. The interpretations with object as an antecedent are ungrammatical and ruled out in (1b) and (1c). This is the case of a specific antecedent as well as in cases of variable binding as illustrated in (1a)[4].

However, Dočekal and Sturgeon point out that usage of Czech reflexive possessives referring to subject is rather a carefully formulated tendency than an imperative. In other words, while reflexive possessives do not seem to allow anaphoric co-indexation with an antecedent in other than subject position, a referent in the subject position *can* be referred to not only by reflexive possessives but also by non-reflexive possessive pronouns which needs to be captured in the analysis. Supporting their observation, young Czech native speakers (age 6-15) systematically break this grammar rule and underuse the reflexive pronoun even in contexts where this strategy leads to confusion which is especially in the case of 3rd person[5].

(2) a. *Já mám můj/ svůj mobil.*
I have my/ REFL phone.
"I$_i$ have my$_i$ phone."
b. *Lukáš chytil jeho/ svého psa.*
Lukáš caught his/ REFL dog.
"Lukáš$_i$ caught his$_i$ dog."
c. *My si přineseme naše/ svoje židle.*
we will bring our/ REFL chairs.
"We$_i$ will bring our$_i$ chairs."
d. *Prvňáci budou mít jejich/ své tužky.*
first-graders will have their/ REFL pencils.
"First-graders$_i$ will have their$_i$ pencils."

Though Reuland (47) asserts that not only in Czech, but also in Icelandic, Faroese, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish the reflexive possessive must be selected if the antecedent is a local subject, more cross-linguistic data suggest that in this case the rule also applies only one way, i.e. if the antecedent is subject, the reflexive possessive is preferred, but not all antecedents of reflexive possessives are in subject position. See the following example from Russian (Nedoluzhko 114).

(3) a. CZ: *Matku$_i$ vždy velice těšila péče o *své$_i$ děti.*
b. RU: *Mamu$_i$ vsegda očeň radovala zabota o svoich$_i$ detjach.*
"The care for self's children always gave joy to the mother."
Norwegian actually allows the same pattern as Russian:
(4) NO: *Moren$_i$ min liktealltid å ta seg av barnasine$_i$*[(6)].
"The care for self's children always gave joy to the mother."

Both languages allow reference to an antecedent which is not in the subject position. Clearly, though the subject position plays a role in the anaphoric relation when speaking of reflexive possessives, it is not a universal rule and there are other factors in play. As pointed out by Despić (19) "many East Asian languages have non-subject-oriented reflexive pronouns whose possessive forms are also not subject oriented; e.g. the Japanese local reflexive possessive pronoun *kare-zisin-no* is clearly not strictly subject oriented."

Based on the presented data, it can be concluded that the subject position plays a role in the interpretation of both reflexive and non-reflexive possessives; however, this role cannot be defined as obligatory but must be a part of a larger system of processes allowing more variation.

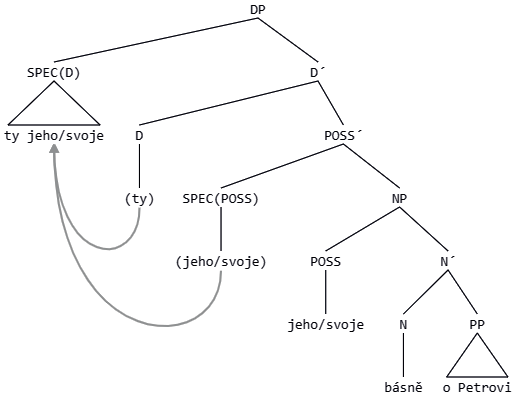
2.2 Position in the structure

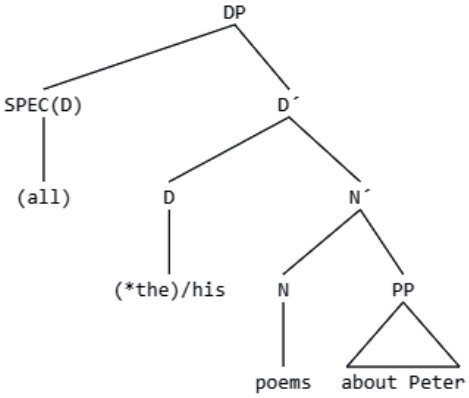
The presence of reflexive possessives as well as other functional elements uncontroversially implies that there is a functional layer above the modified noun, though possibly optional. Based on the possibility of co-occurrence, i.e. non-complementarity with other functional/ D-like elements, I assume that (reflexive) possessive pronouns in Czech are base-generated lower in the structure than their English counterparts which are uncontroversially considered to be sitting in the head D of D-layer[(7)].

This structure is further supported by the fact that reflexive possessive *svůj* and all the other Czech possessive pronouns (as well as the possessive Genitive in English) can stand independently, i.e. allow elliptical constructions, whereas their English counterparts - possessive pronouns - cannot, unless they are in adjectival form (e.g. *mine*) which I assume moves to SPEC(D) as indicated in the Czech tree below. In Section 3, I will go back to this movement because Despić (23) uses it to claim, "that only phase heads can license ellipsis of their complement." Here I conclude only that the elements which are not elided are those which move to SPEC(D).

The Poss position in English is filled by *'s* in possessive genitive constructions and in extension by the adjectival forms of possessive pronouns. In structures like (5b) the position can be either occupied by an empty morpheme or left out. A test by ellipsis suggests that the latter is right, as discussed in Section 3 and indicated in the tree.

(5) a. *ty jeho/ svoje básně o Petrovi*
those his/ REFL poems about Petr
b. *(all) his poems about Peter*





Another argument for different positions of possessive pronouns in English and Czech arises from more cross-linguistic evidence. It has been only recently argued by Reuland and Despić that possessive reflexives are present only in languages which lack definiteness marking or encode definiteness post-nominally:

Table 1 Overview of languages with(out) reflexive possessives[8] (adapted from Despić 5)

No Reflexive Possessives	
Pre-nominal Definiteness Marking	Afrikaans, Dutch, Frisian, English, German, Italian, Misantla, Totonac, Modern Greek, Portuguese, Spanish, Tunisian Arabic
Reflexive Possessives	
Post-nominal Definiteness Marking	Bulgarian, Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Koromfe, Macedonian, Norwegian, Romanian, Swedish
No Definiteness Marking	Belorussian, Chinese, Czech, Dolakha Newar, Hindi-Urdu, Japanese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Korean, Latin, Lezgian, Malayalam, Mosetén, Old Church, Slavonic, Persian, Polish, Proto-Slavonic, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sorbian, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian

As the cross-linguistic overview suggests, the above presented structural difference of English and Czech probably comes along with more than one effect. For further details, see the discussion in Section 3.

2.3 Morphology and semantics

Nedoluzhko (117) claims that "in Czech, the possessive reflexivization is mostly limited to syntactic functions and does not go beyond the grammar." According to her data analysis, this is in direct opposition to Russian *svoj,* which "gets additional semantic meanings and moves substantially towards the lexicon" (Nedoluzhko 110) which she illustrates with a range of examples where *svoj* becomes almost adjectival[9]. In my view, these semantically charged uses of *svoj* can be either taken as complex realizations of more than one functional element (e.g. a definiteness operator and *his/ reflexive possessives*) or as lexicalized phrasemes. The latter analysis would be supported by a limited range of contexts which seems to be the case to me, but which I am not able to confirm and support with data at this point. Different status of reflexive possessives in Czech, Russian and in extension different languages can be the case if there is a more general structural difference between the languages which is not evident to me at this point of analysis. I postpone further discussion to Section 3.4.

As to the morpho-syntactic status of *svůj,* (1a) illustrates the antecedent is any element connected with the external argument, i.e. subject, bearing phi features, in this case including the finite verb as Czech is a pro-drop language. Burzio and others observed that many reflexives are underspecified for phi features. Rákosi confirms that Serbo-Croatian possessive reflexive *svoj* is an example of underspecified reflexives as opposed to other possessive pronouns which are fully specified for person, number and sometimes gender, however like non-reflexive possessive they agree in case, gender and number with the antecedent. This extends to Czech *svůj,* and as far as I am aware, to other Slavic languages employing the possessive reflexive. Whether the under-specification of phi-features w.r.t. the antecedent is the decisive factor for the preference of the subject position or not is a matter for future research but the effects of possessives and modified element's phi-feature concord are discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

To sum up, the characteristics of reflexive possessive to be discussed are:

i. co-reference with subject and in extension their binding domain
ii. their position in the structure and its consequences
iii. phi-features presence and its effect and function

Having presented the data, I move onto theoretical analyses of anaphora and in extension the possessive reflexives in Section 3.

3. Theoretical insights into anaphora

Reuland (Section 3.1), Fischer (Section 3.2) and Despić (Section 3.3); the three authors whose theoretical frameworks I discuss in the following subsections have formulated clear hypotheses based on the data they had available. Testing those against the above presented data provides a deeper insight into the mechanics of anaphora. The data set above raises the following questions:

- What is the mechanics of choice between reflexive and non-reflexive possessive?
- What is the binding domain of reflexive possessive and is its definition compliant with the minimalist concept of strict modularity?

First, let me review the most essential theoretical basics. Supposing the bottom-up direction of structure building, these theories offer more nuanced views of Chomsky´s 1981 binding theory, focusing on principles A and B which are paraphrased below:

A: Reflexives are bound within a binding domain.
B: Pronouns are free within a binding domain.

(C: Referential expressions are free.)

The original definitions of premises including binding domains, c-command requirement, and mechanics of anaphoric co-indexation, the original i-within-i filter as well as other important developments like PRO or covert movement are not used in all three discussed analyses, therefore I discuss relevant aspects separately in corresponding subsections[10]. What they share is work with Phases (based on Chomsky´s works from 2001, 2004, 2008) and the Phase Impenetrability Condition which, in simplified words, makes visible only the edge and the head of the phase after it has been sent further into computation.

The authors offer diverging explanations of the reflexives interpretation in more complicated structures, for reflexive possessives the most relevant constructions being infinitival clauses (5a) or "picture-type" and"psychological nouns-type" (5b) phrases (terminology from Sturgeon).

(6) a. *Lukáš$_i$ viděl Milana$_j$ políbit svou$_{i/j}$/ jeho$_{i/j}$ ženu.*
Lukáš saw Milan kiss REFL/ his wife
„Lukáš$_i$ saw Milan$_j$ kiss his$_{i/j}$ wife."
b. *Klára$_i$ četla Jirkův$_j$ článek o sobě$_{i/j}$.*
Klára read Jirka´s article about SELF
„Klára read Jirka´s article about herself/ himself."

However, what they all share is the derivational approach to binding. Thus, they all agree that whether an element requires a binder is not only determined by its intrinsic properties, but it also depends on how these properties interact with the syntactic environment.

3.1 Reuland

In his monograph *Anaphora and the language design*, Reuland develops a framework based on his research of anaphoric relations. He sets out from his so-called "Feature Determinacy Thesis" which states the following:

> Syntactic binding of pronominal elements (including anaphors) in a particular environment is determined by their morpho-syntactic features and the way these enter into the syntactic operations available in that environment (Reuland 22).

He exemplifies this thesis through phenomena in various languages, e.g. differences between long-distance binding in Icelandic infinitival and subjunctive constructions. As to the cross-linguistic variation, all grammatical rules employed in his account are universal, while all cross-linguistic variation comes from the lexicon (Reuland 60). In other words, he argues for different featural composition of pronominal elements that defines their behavior in various syntactic environments.

As to the treatment of possessive reflexives, he is the first one to realize the cross-linguistically confirmed correlation between the occurrence of reflexive possessives and definiteness (Reuland 166). He does not use the indices and argues they have no place in syntax since they are never morpho-syntactically expressed (Reuland 55). Instead, he uses copies of (phi) feature bundles stating that "the Agree relation represents identity of feature bundles in syntax" (Reuland 56). He adopts Pesetsky and Torrego´s approach to chain formation which is blocked when definiteness marking on D is present:

A maximal A-chain (α_1, ... ,α_n) contains exactly one link - α_1- which is fully specified for the (relevant) phi-features and for structural Case (Reuland 63).

In his system, the possessive reflexive is accessible to the chain formation with the verbal functional system as it is realized in the left periphery and hence in principle accessible. As the trigger he mentions the unvalued features of the possessive anaphor and the fact the Case-licensing of the DP takes place via the D-system (Reuland 167).

Reuland counts on the complementary distribution of reflexive possessive and the non-reflexive possessive pronouns and the subject orientation of possessive reflexives. However, as presented in Section 2, universally, this is not the case. A full evaluation of this, as well as the following two theories, can be found in Section 3.4.

3.2 Fischer

In her two chapters "Theories of Binding" and "Pronominal Anaphora" published in the handbook *Syntax - Theory and Analysis* Fischer sets a goal to explore in detail pronominal anaphora. As opposed to Reuland and Despić, she does not test her hypotheses on possessive reflexives. Despite this, I chose her approach for further application on the present data set as she addresses the cross-linguistic variation through different sizes of binding domains and develops a theory of universal hierarchy for binding domains which should be applicable on the reflexive possessives as well.

Like Reuland, Fischer criticizes accounts of anaphora based on movement arguing against using the lack of maneuvering space for parametrization. Furthermore, she criticizes Chomsky's principles A and B as redundant since they control the same piece of structure(11). Her approach is competition-based and thus the non-complementarity of reflexive possessives and possessive pronouns which I have exemplified, and which is problematic for Reuland, could be explained by unfulfilled requirements on possessive reflexives. In other words, Fisher states that "a pronoun might occur in a relatively local binding relation – it is only barred if anaphoric binding is available instead" (Fischer 1376). She defines this choice in terms of domains (Fischer 454):

General patterns

a. If anaphoric binding is licit in domain D1, it is also licit in domain D2, if D2 is smaller than D1.
b. If pronominal binding is licit in domain D1, it is also licit in domain D2, if D2 is bigger than D1.

Cross-linguistic variation

a. The size of the domains (i.e. the degree of locality) (…) can vary.
b. Whether optionality occurs at all and in which domains also depends on the language under consideration.

The domains she works with are the following (Fischer 455; following Kiss):

Binding sensitive domains

a. The θ-domain of α is the smallest XP containing the head that θ-marks α plus its argument positions.
b. The Case domain of α is the smallest XP containing α and the head that Case-marks α.
c. The subject domain of α is the smallest XP containing α and a subject distinct from α.
d. The finite domain of α is the smallest XP that contains α and a finite verb.

e. The indicative domain of α is the smallest XP that contains α and an indicative verb.
f. The root domain of α is the XP that forms the root of the sentence containing α.
g. Subset relations: θ-domain ⊆ Case domain ⊆ subject domain ⊆ finite domain ⊆ indicative domain ⊆ root domain

As to the mechanics of binding, the general idea is that "the concrete realization form of the bound element x is determined in the course of the derivation, depending on the locality degree of the binding relation. Before the derivation starts, we only know that there will be a binding relation between *x* and its designated antecedent (…), however, we are familiar with all potential realizations of *x*. Hence, it is assumed that *x* is equipped with a realization matrix, i.e., a list which contains all possible realizations of *x*." (Fischer 1376)

Extending Fischer´s theory to reflexive possessives, in the smallest θ-domain, the element used should always be the reflexive possessive with increasing possibility of alternation with possessive pronoun as the distance between antecedent and the other expression increases. For the present approach, there are two problematic aspects of this theory. First, the modularity of language computation as Fischer works with "root" of a sentence which is not part of the syntactic but semantic component. Second, the incompatibility with the Minimalist syntax which does not work with competition of elements. I discuss possible application of this approach and test it on the present data set in Sections 3.4 and 4.

3.3. Despić

In his article "Phases, Reflexives and Definiteness" Despić[12] explores the relation of definiteness and the distribution of reflexive possessives as well as other characteristics listed below which are argued to be the source of the observed cross-linguistic variation[13]. He extends the list of languages which have reflexive possessives presented in Reuland (see Table 1 above). At the same time, he argues that reflexive binding should have the following properties:

(i) binding domains are stated in terms of phases
(ii) in addition to CPs and vPs, DPs are phases, and
(iii) DP is not universal (Despić 1).

One of the cornerstones he bases these properties on is the claim that in English only complements of the phase head D may be elided and D, as a phase head, is non-universally characterized by "some sort of Edge Feature" (Despić 22).

In his analysis, phrases including material above the PossP are DPs, whereas phrases following the possessive pronoun are NPs, APs or DegPs. Thus, he makes a parallel between the D-Poss complex and the C-T complex. The cross-linguistic variation results from an interaction of three independent syntactic factors: D may have EFs, D either is or is not a phase head depending on the presence of Possessive (and at the same time phase) head and phases define binding domains.

Though Despić addresses variation between languages, like Reuland he does not account for the variation between reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns as it is not the focus of his article and from his set of data, he even concludes that there is a complementary distribution between these two (Despić 15).

The author himself admits that his proposal is "yet to be exploited" (Despić 48). Based on the application to the Czech data in the following subsection it seems to bring at least partially correct predictions, like the two authors discussed above.

3.4 Application to the data

Czech reflexive and non-reflexive possessives present a puzzling case in the following aspects presented in Section 2:

a. In many speakers' grammars, they are not in complementary distribution, and it is not clear what the mechanics of this variation are. It remains to be confirmed whether this is the case also in other languages.
b. As opposed to other languages, e.g. Norwegian or Russian, Czech reflexive possessives cannot refer to the object of the matrix verb when merged into structure as a complement of subject, i.e. external argument of the verb.

Fischer offers an elegant solution for the first issue supposing that competition is included in the grammatical system. Using her domains, Czech non-complementarity of reflexive and non-reflexive possessives in Fischer´s system can be exemplified in the following way:

(7) a. θ-domain
Wakanda$_j$ miluje svůj$_j$/její$_j$ pelíšek.
Wakanda loves REFL her pet bed
„Wakanda$_j$ loves her$_j$ pet bed."
b. Case domain
Wakanda$_j$ slyší mňoukat svého$_j$/jejího$_j$ kamaráda.
Wakanda hears to meow REFL her friend
„Wakanda$_j$ hears her$_j$ friend meowing."
c. subject domain
Wakanda$_j$ mi ukázala hračku blízko svého$_j$/jejího$_j$ pelíšku.
Wakanda me showed toy near REFL her pet bed
„Wakanda$_j$ showed me a toy near her$_j$ pet bed."
d. finite domain
*Anya$_i$ nařídila Wakandě$_j$ přestat škrábat *svoji$_i$ / její$_i$ kabelku*[14].
Anya ordered Wakanda to stop to scratch REFL her handbag
Intended: „Anya$_i$ ordered Wakanda to stop scratching her$_i$ handbag."
e. indicative domain
*Anya$_i$ říká, že Wakanda$_j$ škrábe *svoje$_i$ /její$_i$ věci každý den.*
Anya says that Wakanda scratches REFL her things every day
Intended: „Anya$_i$ says that Wakanda scratches her$_i$ things every day."
f. root domain
*Anya$_i$ ví, že Wakanda$_j$ škřábe *svoje$_i$ /její$_i$ věci každý den.*
Anya knows that Wakanda scratches REFL her things every day
Intended: „Anya$_i$ knows that Wakanda scratches her$_i$ things every day."

In Fischer's terms, the possibility of variation is encoded through different-sized domains. As expected, the anaphoric binding is consistently possible in all domains smaller than the finite domain. As illustrated in (7), since the pronominal binding is possible in the smallest θ-domain, it is also possible in every other bigger domain.

Fischer counts with the cross-linguistically varied domains, and while this approach is descriptively correct for Czech, it is a matter of future research which domains exactly apply in different languages and whether the domains presented above are exactly those which capture the variation correctly cross-linguistically. Her approach also explains the grammaticality of Russian example in (3b), repeated and adapted here as (8b) and in extension its Norwegian counterpart exemplified in (4).

(8) a. CZ: *Matku$_i$ vždy velice těšila péče o *své$_i$/její$_i$ děti.*
b. RU: *Mamu$_i$ vsegda očeň radovala zabota o svoich$_i$ detjach.*[15]
"The care for self's children always gave joy to the mother."

While in Russian and Norwegian the reflexive possessive is available for the root domains, in Czech it is not. This analysis leads us back to Nedoluzhko's claim that Russian *svoj* is more lexicalized than its Czech counterpart (Section 2.3). From the presented evidence, it can be concluded that the hierarchy and size of domains has an impact on the variation and explains wider use of Russian *svoj*. Since neither Reuland nor Despić deal with this issue, for the moment (and scope of this paper) this is the most precise analysis of this phenomenon in grammatical terms. The analysis thus offers the syntactic limits for the option of choice between reflexive and non-reflexive counterparts leaving the choice itself to the pragmatic component as suggested e.g. by Yokoyama-Klenin and Yokoyama.

Now to the second issue, i.e. the special status of antecedents in subject position in Czech but crucially not in the other above exemplified languages. Dočekal (58) draws attention to the fact that Czech linguistics omits cases with embedded predications where the co-indexation is not straightforward and can be interpreted in both ways.

(9) *Petr$_i$ našel děti$_j$ ve svém$_{j/i}$/ jeho/ jejich pokoji.*
Petr found kids in REFL his their room
"Petr$_i$ found the children$_j$ in their$_j$/his$_i$ room."

A combination of Reuland's and Despić's theories offers an analysis with more explanatory power[16]. Using the Agree and elimination of the index in syntactic structure proposed by Reuland offers an intriguing range of variation in terms of the antecedent choice. The presence of index in syntax would mean a need of marking both in antecedent and the anaphoric expression and result in a rigid system limiting the ambiguity in interpretation for the speaker and hearer. On the other hand, the system of checking by Agree combined with Fischer´s different domain sizes will predict the ambiguity of the reflexive (9) and at the same time allow for the choice between reflexive and non-reflexive possessive.

Despić offers an up-to-date alternative to previously suggested mechanics of anaphora using the concept of phases. The assumption that the reflexive possessives will be bound to an antecedent within the same phase together with the highlight of propositionality, one of the characteristics of phases, leaves enough space to generate all grammatical possibilities and at the same time discards the ungrammatical ones.

What is blocked in Czech is not the reference to other than subject position but the reference outside of the phase, or in extension proposition. Thus, in (7d-f), *Wakanda* in the position of object serves as an antecedent of the reflexive possessive as they are in the same phase which results in ungrammaticality of the reflexive possessive reference to the matrix subject.

This section offered an extended application of the theories presented above discussing their potential to predict the behavior of Czech reflexive possessives. In the following section I will briefly discuss possible issues of the presented instruments under strict modularity.

4. The culprit in the variation of reflexive and non-reflexive possessives

The definition of the absence of complementarity between reflexive and non-reflexive possessives in terms of linguistic processes is one of the challenges for the minimalist theory. Pragmatically, for a group of Czech speakers the difference seems to be almost non-existent, and they use the two elements almost interchangeably, though we saw in the previous section that there are limitations in terms of locality.

Considering the strict modularity which impedes the interaction of individual components of language production of the feed-forward Y-model during derivation, there are only two suspects in dealing with the non-complementarity: syntactic and phonological component. Syntax provides the information for phonology in sense of Newell and Sailor 4. In the following paragraphs I present arguments which suggest that the syntactic component is the culprit.

Switching between two forms of the same elements (like suppletion) is taken to be work of the phonological component. Then the question is whether the non-reflexive and reflexive can be taken as forms of the same element. Logically, there are three different sets of features present on the possessives – one bundle dependent on the antecedent's grammatical categories, one bundle dependent on the modified noun which makes visible the phi features and Case of the possessed noun in case of ellipsis, and one feature (bundle) distinguishing reflexivity and non-reflexivity. The featural content of reflexives vs. non-reflexives must be very similar; otherwise, they would not be able to replace each other so easily.

The behavior of the feature bundle dependent on the antecedent offers the first indication of active syntactic component - the discrepancy in the extent of variation with different grammatical persons. Sturgeon (497) states that as opposed to 3rd person where only some speakers accept the non-reflexive pronoun for the coreference with subject, in 1st and 2nd person there is a full non-complementarity among speakers. My data are not as radical, but there is a difference between the range of variation showing greater extent of variation with 3rd person. It has been extensively argued that 3rd person has a different syntactic status than 1st and 2nd and there are structural consequences during derivation (e.g. for person-case constraint in Spanish as discussed by Nevins). Here, the explanation can be that weaker or impoverished features on 3rd person do not fulfill the requirements of reflexive possessive and the derivation crashes which leads to the usage of more independent non-reflexive possessives.

As suggested above, Czech reflexive possessives refer to antecedents which bear complete phi-feature bundle expected from the external argument of the verb. In opposition to this analysis, Sturgeon claims that reflexive possessive can refer to a possessor merged as an external argument of the subject as she illustrates by the example in (10). As a native speaker of Czech, I did not share this intuition, therefore I decided to conduct an online survey. Among 50 native speakers of ages between 12-60 nobody marked this sentence as grammatical.

(10) **Janina*$_1$ *radost ze* *své*$_1$*/* *její*$_1$*nové práce mě překvapila.*
Jana.adj happiness from self's/ her new work me surprised
"($_{PossP}$Jana's$_1$ happiness with ($_{PossP}$her$_1$ new job)) surprised me."
(adapted from Sturgeon 505)

If we go back to Reuland´s system of Agree, this is not surprising at all. In Czech but not in English, the possessor *Janina* "*Jana´s*" lacks the complete bundle of features and therefore it cannot serve as an antecedent, be it for reflexive or non-reflexive possessive. Furthermore, Prepositional Phrases have been argued to be Phases (e.g. Abels) and it is arguable that what is at the edge in the PP is not the

reflexive possessive and therefore it is not available for further operations. Consequently, I marked Sturgeon's example as ungrammatical and use it as a supporting argument for a more similar treatment of both reflexive and non-reflexive possessives.

While this treatment of the non-complementarity as a different pronunciation of the same element is intriguing, it has to be discarded also based on the above discussed cross-linguistically attested absence of reflexive possessives in languages with the prenominal definite article which suggest that they are morpho-syntactically, but crucially not just phonologically, different from the non-reflexive possessives.

5. Conclusions and summary

In this article I presented Czech, Russian, and Norwegian data to argue against the special relation between the reflexive possessive and subject by exploring the variation between reflexive and non-reflexive possessives. By merging three separate analyses (Reuland, Fischer, Despić) I offer an account outline of the observed variation in Czech as well as in other languages.

This system uses the mechanism of Agree, Phase Impenetrability Condition and additionally cross-linguistically different binding domains and their hierarchy which accounts for the non-complementarity of reflexive and non-reflexive possessives which is argued to be work of syntactic, not phonological component of speech production. While a number of issues still remain for further research, I hope that testing these theories against the present set of data provided useful insight into the mechanics of anaphoric binding.

Notes

(1) In Rákosi "dedicated reflexive possessives", in Despić "possessive reflexive", in Reuland "(dedicated) possessive anaphors".

(2) According to their order, anaphoric and cataphoric reference is distinguished. Whereas anaphoric reference means that a word refers back to an antecedent, cataphoric reference works the other way round. Uncontroversially, the linearization where anaphora precedes its antecedent is a result of movement of the referring expression for pragmatic reasons and therefore in the initial position before movement the structures in questions are the same and this difference is ignored.

(3) From a semantic point of view, anaphoric reference is tightly connected with coreference and descriptive semantic approaches offer all kinds of classifications. An example of such a classification is Kolářová who mentions pseudo-anaphora, false anaphora or inaccurate anaphora which (as far as I understand) all describe a pair of different words, i.e. synonyms, which refer to one extra-linguistic subject. However, Reuland (28) gives an extensive list of literature which argues that this is "another fundamentally different type of anaphoric dependency".

(4) (1a) shows that the reflexive possessive can refer to *each*. I show that to give a complete picture, but hereinafter I only focus on cases of coreference, not variable, semantic or distributive binding.

(5) The data come from my experience as a Czech teacher at secondary school, support Dočekal's observation and were the first trigger for this article.

(6) I would like to thank Anežka Písačková for Norwegian data sets.

(7) The term D is used in its broadest sense to refer to a NP left-periphery position and covers all elements which appear in this layer, not necessarily in the same syntactic position, i.e. possessive pronouns,

articles, demonstratives, but not quantifiers. For a justification of this approach see Giusti´s work cited in references.

(8) As a student of Tunisian Arabic, I added this language (in italics) as another example of language with prenominal definiteness marking lacking reflexive possessives.

(9) Data supporting her hypothesis were obtained from the parallel English-Czech-Russian corpus PCEDT-R (Novák et al.).

(10) I am aware that I am skipping years of complex developments of binding theory but for the purposes of this article, they are not relevant unless referred to in more detail below.

(11) But see e.g. Řezáč (in references) for usage of both principle in argumentation.

(12) Reuland was the first one to notice this connection which Despić recognizes.

(13) In his article especially variation among English, Japanese and Korean.

(14) Though this structure is possible, a Czech native speaker would probably prefer a dependent finite clause "aby přestala škrábat její kabelku", lit. "so that she stops scratching her handbag".

(15) In this case, the reflexive possessive modifies the subject which is another violation of the usual prescriptive rules. I will not deal with this phenomenon in this article for reasons of space.

(16) The mechanics of anaphoric binding is applied here not only to the reflexive but also to non-reflexive possessives.

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Michaela Čakányová

English Adjective with Infinitive Constructions with Gaps

Abstract: *There are several constructions in English that contain an adjective followed by an infinitival complement. The most notorious one is definitely the tough construction (first described and named by Rosenbaum in 1967). The present study focuses on three of those constructions, all of which contain a gap instead of an object of the infinitival phrase. The gapped object is in turn the subject of the matrix clause. Each of these constructions has a different motivation for the gapped object and different internal syntactic structure. By applying multiple syntactic operations, the syntactic structures become apparent, and the study tries to explain these surface differences by explaining the origin of the three constructions in terms of control and raising, argument and non-argument movement and deletion of the lower copies. The semantics of adjectives as well as the 'phrasal sizes' of infinitives and the semantic roles of their "subjects" are also taken into account.*

1. Introduction

One of the notorious topics in linguistics in the last half century has been the so-called *tough* construction. One of the first systematic descriptions of this phenomenon dates back to Rosenbaum (1967) even though there were earlier attempts at its explanation by Jespersen (1937) as described in Comesaña (1987). A more contemporary approach is described in Hicks (2009) or Brillman (2017). These clauses which include an object of the infinitival verb in the subject position of the matrix clause present a challenge. In this paper I am not going to add as much to this puzzle as I am going to focus on multiple constructions that share this kind of structure: NP *be* ADJ INF, where the NP is both the syntactic subject of the main clause as well as the understood or even phonetically realized object of the infinitival verb. By contrasting these constructions, I hope to arrive at their underlying different syntactic forms and describe how they work.

To begin let's compare the following four sentences.

1. These teachers are **difficult** to please. Type 1
2. These flowers are **fragrant** to smell. Type 2
3. These articles are too **long** to read. Type 3
4. These rescuers are **happy** to help Peter. Type 4

They all contain an adjective followed by an infinitival phrase. On the surface they may look similar, yet there are some crucial differences between them. In this article I will be referring to them with the labels Type 1-4 and they basically constitute *tough* constructions, constructions with a perception adjective such as *pretty*, gapped degree phrases, and control structures.

Before I start contrasting their syntactic behavior, I am going to prepare the ground by contrasting Control and Raising structures. In Generative Grammar, control constructions typically involve semi clauses and understood subjects. These subjects, which are phonetically empty are labelled PRO subjects, and are anaphorically dependent on a specific argument, their antecedent, in the matrix clause. The PRO can be coreferential with the subject of the main clause, which can be seen in example (5).

5. I promised Jim_x (PRO_x to quit my job).

Control constructions have one overt subject in the matrix clause and one PRO subject in the embedded clause. These are the semantic arguments (agents) of the finite and nonfinite predicates respectively and they both have a distinct semantic role. In example (6), it is the pronoun *I* which functions as the agent of persuading and it is the silent PRO, co-referential with the object of the matrix clause *Jim*, which functions as the agent of the verb *quit*.

6. I persuaded Jim_x ($_{CP}\text{PRO}_x$ to quit his job).

Control predicate typically take clausal (CP) complements. That is why the structure that includes a control verb, and an infinitive is in fact bi-clausal. It can be seen in Fig. 1 where there are two IPs and also two independent adverbial of time positions.

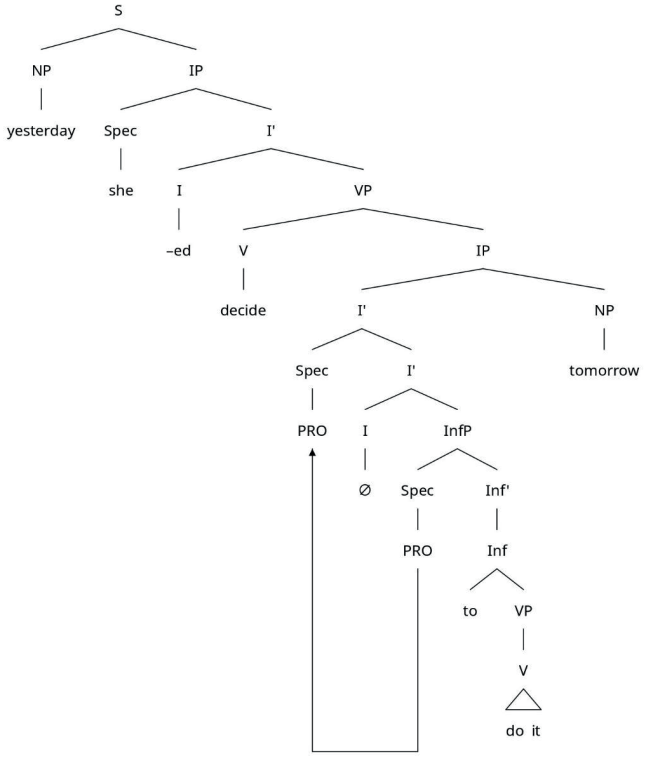

Fig. 1 Control structure (adapted from Čakányová 2022, 142)

A different kind of structure which contains a non-finite clause as well includes Raising to subject movement. An argument (often but not always an agent) is moved from the embedded clause to become an argument (the subject) of the matrix clause.

7. Peter_i seems (t_i to like the film).

In this example, the subject of *seem* is Peter, however, *seem* does not have an experiencer as it cannot assign any semantic role. The agent/experiencer of *liking the film* is Peter. Thus, what happens here is that *Peter* is moved (raised) from the position of an Agent or Experiencer (subject) of the infinitive to the higher position of the subject of the main verb and thus got the nominative case marking assigned.

A hallmark feature of raising structures is their alternation with *it*-extraposition. Raising predicates / verbs can be identified in part by the fact that they alternatively take a full clause dependent and can take part in *it*-extraposition.

8. a) Tom seems to have won the race.
   b) It seems that Tom won the race. R-to-S verb *seem* with *it*-expletive
9. a) Sam believed someone to know the answer. R-to-O verb *believe*
   b) Sam believed it (right away) that someone knew the answer. with *it*-expletive

Therefore, raising structures are in fact mono-clausal, as they contain only one IP layer, and the infinitival complement is smaller than in control structures, it constitutes only a VP (for more on restructuralization of mono-clausal infinitives see Wurmbrand 2012; or Emonds 2022, where he claims that raising InfP is a type of PP.)

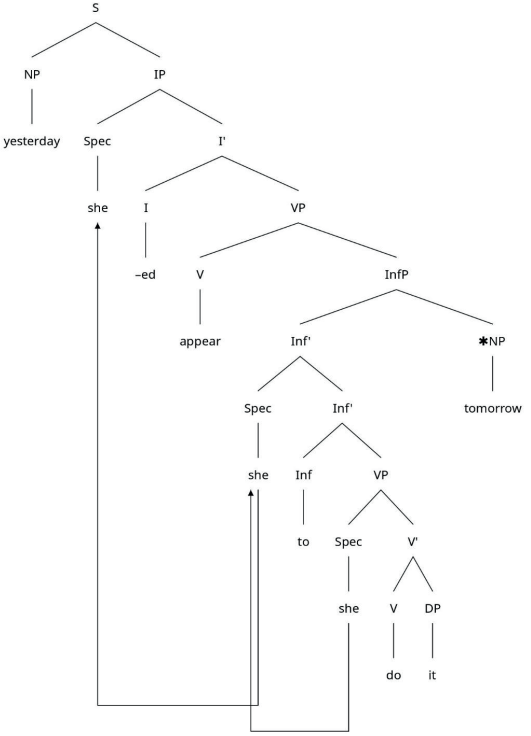

Fig. 2 Raising structure (adapted from Čakányová 2022, 141)

2. Complementation of Predicative Adjectives

There are some adjectives in English, which need complementation in order to be grammatically correct. In this case, it is the infinitival VP which needs to be there. Other adjectives may tolerate complementation, but do not require it at all times. In the following examples we can see that Type 1 will always require complementation with an adjective while Types 2-4 do not.

10. a) Gold was unlikely to find ___.
    b)*Gold was unlikely.
11. a) The soup was delicious to taste ___.
    b)=The soup was delicious.
12. a) These chairs are too heavy to lift ___ with one finger.
    b) ≠These chairs are too heavy.
13. a) Jane was happy to help Peter.
    b) Jane was happy.

Moreover, if we omit the infinitive altogether in case of Type 2 (11), the core meaning remains the same. The soup is still going to be delicious. In Type 3 structures, we can drop the infinitive, however, the meaning is not going to be exactly the same (12). The original sentence does not really imply that the chairs are too heavy, they might be, in fact, of average weight, but simply not light enough for just one finger.

Type 4 construction in example (13) is different from the other three. It is obvious at first glance that there is not a gap in it. The object of the infinitival verb is a different NP than the subject of the matrix clause, so there is no need for movement. If the infinitive is deleted, the meaning of the adjective and the clause remains the same. The infinitival phrase functions as an adjunct. Sentence (13) is an example of a subject control structure where the matrix cause subject *Jane* is also the agent (PRO) of the infinitival verb. Because these sentences are so clearly different from the other three types of adjective with infinitive structures, and because they do not present any mystery from the syntactic point of view, we are not going to consider them any further.

So, we are left with three different types of adjective plus infinitive constructions that may (or must as we will see with some of them) include gaps. They are Type 1 (*tough* constructions), which need infinitival complementation at all times. Type 2, which doesn't need the complementation and Type 3, which doesn't need the complementation either for grammatical purposes, but if the infinitive is not included, the meaning of the sentence is different. All of them, however, contain a gap in the place of the infinitival object.

14. Linguists are tough to please ~~linguists~~.
15. Wild pacific salmon are delicious to eat ~~wild pacific salmon~~.
16. These algorithms are too complex to decrypt these ~~algorithms~~.

3. Raising versus Non-raising ADJ with INF constructions

We will now have a look at some syntactic operations which best reflect the differences between Type 1 and Types 2 and 3. In all of these operations, Types 2 and 3 behave in a similar way and distinctly from Type 1.

The first striking difference can be seen if we try to reformulate the phrases using the expletive subject *it* or if we try to front the infinitive. This is only possible for Type 1 structures. Type 2 and 3 structures do not allow this.

17. a) It is tough to please linguists.
    b) To please linguists is tough.
18. a) *It is pretty to look at these flowers.
    b) *To look at these flowers is pretty.
19. a) *It is (too) heavy to lift this chair.
    b) *To lift this chair is (too) heavy.

From these examples, it is apparent that *tough* constructions are in fact raising to subject constructions. The adjectives that may appear in them include items which seem to express speaker's point of view and a kind of modality rather than anything factual or tangible. In this respect they are similar to typical raising verbs like *seem* or *appear*. Raising verbs cannot assign any semantic roles to their subjects because they are too light and do not have enough lexical content. They also function as linking verbs in English.

With raising adjectives, the situation is similar. They form a sort of adjectival predicate together with the verb *be* and they are likewise unable to assign any theta role to the NP that is moved to the subject position. These verbs and adjectives comprise a rather short finite list which includes items which are light in the semantic sense. The adjectives include subjective evaluative words such as *impossible, simple, hard, important, difficult,* etc. Because the adjective does not provide a theta role to the Subject it is possible to use the expletive *it* subject instead, which does not have any theta role by definition either.

20. a) It is easy / important to please John.
    b) John is easy / important to please.

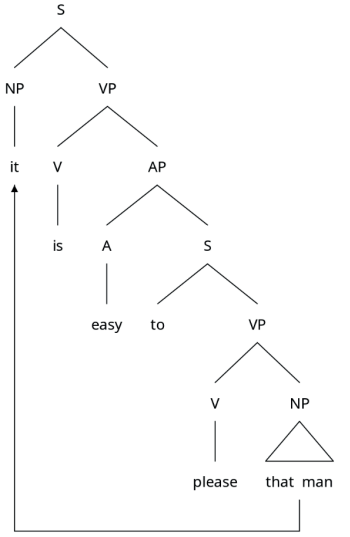

Fig. 3 Raising in *tough* constructions adapted from Nanni (1980, 569)

Tough constructions include reanalysis (Chomsky 1981) of the original separate adjectival phrase and infinitival phrase (21a) into a single constituent (21b) where the infinitive is absorbed into the complex predicate AP.

21. a) John$_i$ is ($_{AP}$ easy) ($_S$ PRO ($_S$ PRO to please t$_i$))).
    b) John$_i$ is ($_{AP}$ (easy to please) e$_i$).

There are several arguments for a single complex lexical unit, for instance Nanni (1980, 573) notices that these adjectives with infinitives can appear in front of a noun and function as a pre-nominal attribute.

22. a tough-to-please boss
23. rare and hard-to-find manuscripts
24. a fun to watch movie

Moreover, these reanalyzed constituents cannot be modified by anything, not by any adverb or PP or even another infinitive. The following examples are adapted from Nanni (1980, 575).

25. *an easy to **quickly** clean room
26. *a tough to open **with a knife** letter
27. *an easy to expect **to finish** problem

It is well known that a complex AP must follow the noun it modifies while most simple APs in English precede the noun. If we use these reanalyzed ADJ+INF structures with nouns, they precede them. It is safe to say that they function as complex adjectives of sorts yet as simple APs.

28. a) a teacher hard on her students
    b) *a hard on her students teacher
29. a) boys anxious to dance
    b) *some anxious to dance boys

Another test would include Wh-movement in questions where the entire constituent needs to be moved rather than just an adjectival or infinitival part. The same can be seen if a constituent is fronted in exclamations.

30. a) How (easy to please) is John?
    b) How (tough to please) are linguists?
    c) *How pretty to look at are the flowers?
    d)*How melodious to listen to is his voice?
31. a) How (easy to please) John is!
    b) How (tough to please) linguists are!
    c)*How delicious to eat the wild pacific salmon are!
    d)*How fragrant this perfume is to smell!

Another way of looking at these constructions is considering the scope of the adjective in them (Fleisher 2008). The scope of adjectives in Type 1 constructions seems to be clausal rather than just over

a constituent (scope over a word or phrase). The adjectives with infinitive constructions (AICs) including the adjectives such as *bad* and *easy* in (32) can select infinitival-clause arguments.

32. a) *The Lord of the Rings* is a bad book to assign.
    b) It is bad to assign *The Lord of the Rings*.

Nominal AICs (33) may be formed with adjectives that do not independently select infinitival-clause arguments, e.g., adjectives *long* and *well-made*. Nominal AIC DPs (34) behave like ordinary predicative DPs in which an attributive adjective modifies the following noun. We can see this from the fact that the adjective functions as an attribute to the noun only. A big sparrow does not mean that it is a big bird.

33. *The Lord of the Rings* is a long book to read.
34. a) That is a **big sparrow** to see in this area. → *That is a **big bird** to see in this area.
    b) That is a **big sparrow**. → *That is a **big bird**.

(Fleisher 2008, 32)

Clausal AICs (35) behave as if the attributive adjective does not modify the noun at all. It is rather the case that the adjective modifies the entire predication. The noun then can be replaced by its hypernym and the sense remains similar. A good novel implies that it is a good book, since a novel is a type of a book.

35. a) That is a good **novel** to read. → That is a good **book** to read.
    b) That is a **novel**. → That is a **book**.

In case of Type 3 degree phases, the adjective is definitely not clausal because we cannot rephrase the sentences using the *it*-extraposition. Moreover, the construction does not undergo raising to subject.

36. a) This lid is **too heavy to lift** with one finger.
    b) *It is too heavy to lift this lid with one finger.

The adjective is not just nominal either. The structure is more complex because of the degree. So, it is not just the adjective that would be modifying the noun, but rather it is the entire DegP which includes the adjective and also the infinitival phrase. This entire complex DegP then modifies the noun.

4. Internal Structure of the ADJ with INF Constructions

Now I will try to consider all the tests and draw conclusions as to the differences in structures between Types 1, 2 and 3.

4.1 Syntax of Type 1

By now we can safely say that Type 1 constructions most certainly include a movement. The question is which movement it is. Due to the re-analysis, there should be an argument movement (A-movement). The trace in the position of the infinitival object is A-bound by the matrix subject. However, this would pose a problem for Case and Theta role assignment. Hicks (2009) introduces a complex Null Operator which

assigns a theme theta role to the DP. At the same time, it enables smuggling of one element (DP comp) as a part of another. It is thanks to this operator that the locality constraint can be bypassed.

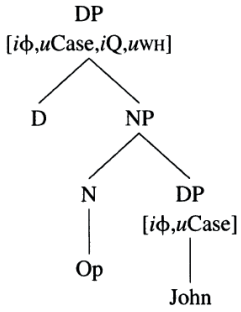

Fig. 4 From Hicks (2009, 547)

The movement involved in these structures is a sort of a long-distance movement and includes both A-movement as well as non-argument movement (A'-movement). Due to the Null Operator, there is in fact A-A'-A successive edge-to-edge movement. The DP has an unchecked case so there is no Spell Out until it gets to the matrix subject position. The cycles take place in the following way:

37. a) John is tough to please.
    b) to please (DP **Op** ... John) → tough (DP Op ... John) to please t_{DP} → $John_k$ is tough (DP Op ... t_k) to please t_{DP}

Even though there is still an ongoing debate on the nature of the *tough* constructions (see e.g., Heycock 2013), many linguists (e.g., Mulder and den Dikken 1992, Hartman 2012, Fong and Ginsburg 2014) agree on some basic assumptions, namely that "Null operator movement and predication are the basic ingredients of the standard approach to *tough*-movement constructions in the generative literature" (Dikken 2017, 8).[1]

4.2 Differences Between Type 2 and Type 3

Up until now, we have been treating Types 2 and 3 in opposition to Type 1 and in all the operations mentioned so far, they have been similar. However, there is an underlying syntactic difference between them, and we will now point out the difference by making the underlying structure visible. The very first obvious difference is the necessity of the object deletion. While Type 2 will always need to have the object of the infinitival verb gone, Type 3 can sometimes have it overtly present.

38. These flowers are pretty to look at *them.	(OBJ never possible)	Type 2
39. These chairs are too heavy to move them.	(comp VP - OBJ possible)	Type 3
40. This problem is too abstract to solve *it.	(comp VP - OBJ not possible)	Type 3
41. This problem is too abstract for us to solve it.	(comp CP - OBJ always possible)	Type 3

Whether the object is spelled out or not depends on the size of the complement as well as the type of predication in the matrix clause, whether it is an event or whether it is an individual oriented predication (Nissenbaum and Schwarz 2011, 12).[2]

Another difference between these two types manifests when we try to include an overt infinitival subject in the form of the *for* DP phrase. This in effect means that the complement becomes bigger, it becomes a CP instead of a VP. While this is something possible for Type 3, in Type 2 it leads to ungrammaticality. So, Type 2 can tolerate a VP complement but nothing bigger. Type 3 can have either a VP or a CP complement.

42. These flowers are fragrant *(for us) to smell _____.	VP Comp
43. This soup is delicious *(for us) to eat _____.	VP Comp
44. These articles are **too** long (for us) to read _____.	CP Comp
45. This book is **too** expensive (for us) to buy _____.	CP Comp

A further contrast between Types 2 and 3 is that only adjectives from type 2 can also appear pre-nominally as attributes. Type 3 constructions do not allow this. The reason for this is that while the head of the NP in Type 2 is the noun, in case of Type 3 constructions it is the degree word *too* which is the head of the DegP. The DegP cannot have the noun inserted into it because the scope of the DegP would be narrowed down to that noun and the original meaning/structure would be lost.

46. These are pretty flowers to smell.	ADJ is Nominal (**N** is head)	Type 2
47. This is a delicious soup to eat.		Type 2
48. *This is a **too** long book to read.	**DegP** is Nominal (Deg is head)	Type 3
49. *This is a **too** complex algorithm to decrypt.		Type 3

The last major distinction I will mention is the measure of productivity of these two structures. Type 2 constructions can function with only a handful of adjectives, such as *delicious, fragrant, tasteful, melodious*… All of them express what we can perceive through our senses and thus their infinitival complements require a covert experiencer PRO subject. Type 3 constructions have almost no restrictions when it comes to the type of adjective they contain. They just need to include a degree word, either *too or enough* and a scalar adjective. There is a constraint that the gap must be coreferential with the subject of the matrix clause, of course, but other than that they are virtually limitless and are, therefore, highly productive.

4.3 Syntax of Type 2

Before we look at the syntax of Type 2 clauses, we need to consider their semantics. There is a huge difference as we have seen between these *pretty* clauses and *tough* construction, namely in the scope of the adjective. This is connected to the type of property which is described by the adjective. In the case of *pretty* constructions, it is the property of an individual type as opposed to an event type. That is also why we cannot use the adjective in sentences describing some kind of event, even when the event is represented by an event nominal.

50. a) *Pleasing these linguists is pretty.
    b) *Eating the soup is delicious.

Type 2 syntactic structure includes obligatory deletion of the Repeated Material as already suggested by Lasnik and Fiengo (1974). The subject of the main clause is the same as the object of the non-finite clause adjunct and this object must get deleted. This is in line with the suggestion from Nunes (2011, 50): „Linearization requirements trigger deletion of the repeated material".

51. a) flowers are pretty + to look at flowers
    b) Flowers are pretty (VP PRO_{exp} to look at ~~flowers~~)

The subject of the main clause is base generated, it is not moved from the infinitival clause. The matrix clause happens to have the same kind of subject as is the object of the infinitival verb. That is why the meaning of (51)a and (51)b remains the same. If we use the same adjective in a different structure such as the degree phrase, we can see that the meaning, when the infinitive is deleted, is going to be very different.

52. a) Flowers are too pretty (CP for us to give them away).
    b) Flowers are too pretty ~~for us to give them away~~.

From this it is apparent that it is the combination of the particular adjective with the particular construction which decides about the syntactic behavior of the resulting structure and not just the adjective itself.

4.4 Syntax of Type 3

The gapped degree phrases contain an embedded Deg(ree)P clause, with a DegP layer immediately above a CP layer. In this way, gapped degree phrases contain an embedded clause that is one layer "larger" than the embedded clause in a corresponding *tough* construction. Type 3 constructions include a CP infinitive which is an argument of the degree word *too*. This is evident from the fact that we cannot delete the infinitival phrase without losing the particular kind of meaning. The adjective is also within the scope of the DegP. It is the entire DegP that constitutes the predicate together with the linking verb.

There is obviously a movement present, namely the A'-movement of the null operator from the embedded infinitive object to the edge of the DegP. The lower copy is usually phonetically empty, but it can be sometimes pronounced in PF (53b). The movement stops here, which is different from Type 1 where the object of the infinitive is raised further to the position of the matrix subject via A-movement. This does not happen in Type 3 structures and therefore it is not possible to use the *it*-extraposition (53c).

53. a) The Lord of the $Rings_i$ is (DegP Op_i too (long (Op_i for us to read t_i))).
    b) $Waste_w$ is too expensive to throw it_w away.
    c) *It is too long to read The Lord of the Rings.

The situation is similar with structures that contain an adjective followed by the degree word *enough* and an infinitive.

54. The $crate_c$ is (DegP light enough to move t_c with a forklift).

In Type 3 structures the adjectival predicate is therefore headed solely by the degree word and can include almost any kind of adjective with scalar properties. The subject of the matrix clause is typically

a patient of the infinitival verb. Of course, there are also DegPs where this is not the case, where the subject is the agent of the infinitival phrase as well e.g., *John is too proud to apologize*, but these do not include a gap and are examples of subject control.

4.5 An overview of the Constructions

In the following table we can see the overview of the properties of the three discussed constructions which include gaps, Type 1 *tough* constructions, Type 2 *pretty* constructions, and Type 3 degree phrases.

	Movement	Reanalysis	INF = adjunct	Overt INF OBJ	Scope of ADJ
Type 1	YES	YES	NO	NO	clausal
Type 2	NO	NO	YES	NO	nominal
Type 3	YES	NO	NO	YES / NO	inside DegP nominal

Table 1

Each construction has slightly different syntax. While Type 1 and Type 3 involve movement (both A and A'-movement in the case of Type 1, and A'-movement in the case of Type 3), Type 2 does not. Also, both Type 1 and Type 2 require the infinitival phrase in order to be both grammatically and also semantically satisfied. Type 2 can do without it as the infinitival phrase functions as an adjunct. Only Type 1 constructions include reanalysis and are examples of raising to subject. It is only Type 3 which can sometimes include the gapped infinitival object overtly, so the same NP can be present at the same time as the subject of the matrix clause and object of the infinitival verb. The last difference concerns the scope of the adjective in each of these structures. It ranges from clausal (Type 1), via phrasal (Type 3) to strictly nominal (Type 2).

Conclusion

This article has analyzed three kinds of constructions of the sort: ADJ (INF + COMP) that include a gap in the place of the infinitival object. With Type 1, *tough* constructions, we have seen that they involve a successive "improper" movement A–A'–A. They contain adjectives which have a scope over the entire clause and the adjective and infinitive are reanalyzed into one constituent. They form a monocausal structure because they include raising to subject. Type 2, *pretty* constructions include an obligatory deletion of the infinitival object. The adjectives they include have scope over the noun phrase and the complement cannot be bigger than a VP. There is no reanalysis of the adjective and infinitive. Type 3 gapped degree constructions involve an A'-movement within the embedded phrase, the DegP including the adjective and the infinitive has phrasal scope over the NP. The infinitival complement of the DegP can be as big as a CP. If the complement is a CP, then the deletion of the infinitival object DP is never obligatory. If the complement is just a VP, then the deletion is sometimes obligatory and sometimes not depending on the infinitival verb. There is no reanalysis of the adjectival and infinitival phrase. The syntactic properties of the three types of structures stem from their clausal size and the particular type of the adjective they include.

Notes

(1) A different approach to *tough* constructions can be found in recent study of Poole, Keine and Mendia (2023). They compare both approaches (movement and no movement) and claim that the subject

of the *tough* constructions cannot reconstruct into an embedded clause and that this subject is in fact base generated rather than moved from the gapped position. The scope of this article does not permit any further discussion of this issue.

(2) This is best seen in the examples (Nissenbaum and Schwarz 2011, 12) provide. The first one is ungrammatical because the adjective has adverbial function, and the second one is grammatically correct because the adjective functions as the subject complement.

i) *Homer eats too much (for Jim to keep up with ___).

ii) John came to the party (too drunk for us to talk to ___).

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Eva Čoupková

Teaching Lower and Higher Order Thinking Skills Through Graphs

Abstract: *As our society becomes more and more technical, visual displays of various quantitative and qualitative data have started to prevail over texts in many types of interactions in face to face and online environments. Therefore, the ability to read, describe, and interpret graphs and diagrams of many types is seen as an indispensable part of training university students of all specialisations should receive. It is especially important for STEM students whose focus on factual knowledge and data is self-evident. General and domain-specific understanding of graphs is also necessary for successful language learning in all areas of higher education. Research has shown that cognitive and linguistic developments are closely connected and language and thinking skills intertwined: therefore, integrating thinking skills in the foreign language classroom raises language proficiency. The aim of the paper is to show how graphs, their description and critical interpretation, may function in an EFL classroom, discuss the aspects of teaching the skill of graph analysis in the English language, and give examples of some activities that function well in the context of language instruction for science students. Even if some critical thinking skills are domain specific, in the case of graphs there seems to exist a wide transferability across all STEM disciplines and even beyond them.*

Introduction

In our highly technical society, visual displays of various quantitative and qualitative data are ubiquitous. Therefore, critical thinking and literacy required of the university students include also the ability to read, describe, and interpret graphs and diagrams of many types. General and domain-specific understanding of graphs is also necessary for successful learning in all areas of higher education. Generally speaking, graphs are used to simplify the presentation of complex concepts and facilitate the exchange of information (Brückner et al. 1). Since the graphical presentation of information is becoming more important than texts both in face to face and online environments, the ability to interpret graphs is seen as a central area of cross-disciplinary generic skills such as scientific reasoning and media literacy (Shah and Hoeffner 65), information-based problem-solving (Brand-Gruwel et al. 1207), and assessing the credibility of the information that floods our smartphones, tablets, and computers (Wineburg et al. 221).

Because graphs and other types of diagrams are an instructional method for representing both expert and generic knowledge, they are the focus of teaching especially at the beginning of university studies. Quite often the graphs are embedded in text-based instructions to aid the comprehension of textual descriptions and to supplement them by providing the learner with further visually structured information (Stern et al. 194).

But how can graphs function in an EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom? Percival Santos argues that EFL teachers should aim, apart from promoting communicative and intercultural competence of students, also at the enhancement of thinking skills, as the practice of these skills improves students' English language proficiency. Research has shown that cognitive and linguistic developments are closely connected and language and thinking skills intertwined: therefore, integrating thinking skills in the foreign language classroom raises language proficiency (HLT 2016). The well-known concept of Lower Order

Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the so-called Bloom's Taxonomy, can be a useful starting point for the discussion. For the purposes of this paper, Anderson's and Krathwohl's (2001) Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT Table 1) will be referred to in order to demonstrate how graphs can be used to promote the acquisition of these crucial skills in EFL lessons.

Table 1: RBT with associated action verbs

RBT	Domain	Action verbs
	Create	design, construct, plan, produce, invent
Higher Order Thinking Skills	Evaluate	check, judge, test
	Analyse	compare, organise, find, structure, integrate
	Apply	implement, carry out, use
Lower Order Thinking Skills	Understand	interpret, summarise, classify, compare, explain
	Remember	recognise, describe, identify, name

Source: http://old.hltmag.co.uk/feb16/less01.htm

STEM students typically concentrate on factual knowledge and data interpretation based on evidence. A well-known barrier to creative thinking for science students is their focus on logic, practicality, and looking for just one correct answer. The aim of the language instruction should be to let students see these facts from different perspectives and make them aware of how the interpretations and opinions are generated; in other words, make them mindful of their thought processes, which may, in turn, improve their learning and thinking skills. This may further enhance their abilities not only in the area of language learning but also in their subject-specific studies.

Students use different types of graphs depending on the nature of the problem and their specialisation. Line graphs, for example, are c ommonly used in many areas; in biology, it is important to make developments (e.g., cell division) visible; in mathematics and statistics, relationships between variables, their distribution, and progressions can be graphically visualised. Furthermore, the connections between distance and speed in physics or between time and stock prices in finance can be illustrated with a line graph.

The importance of graph comprehension, description and interpretation is obvious for the students specialising in various branches of mathematics and physics as the collection of data, their plotting, analysis, and interpretation form a vital part of their studies. They should be able to employ graphs in their subject-specific tasks such as report writing in physics or model creation and design in mathematics. As students are expected to be competitive within international research teams, the ability to discuss and describe graphs and their data in English as a language of science is becoming increasingly demanded.

To assist our students in acquiring these critical skills, our B1 and B2 level language courses concentrate also on this area. We use graphs and diagrams when practising the so called "language functions" that are vital for science students and comprise both lower and higher order thinking skills. For the B1 level, we integrate graphs in tasks including comparing and contrasting, classifying, sequencing, and cause-effect relationship or predicting. For more advanced B2 students, the tasks aiming at generalising, contextualising or hypothesising have been devised, together with the description of graphs and diagrams integrated in students' presentations. The aim of this paper is to discuss the aspects of teaching the skill of graph description and interpretation in English and give examples of some tasks that function well in

the context of language instruction for science students. Moreover, sample problems will be introduced that enhance the critical thinking skills of students, such as the recognition and correction of misleading or distorted graphs. Students can employ these skills in their future careers as mathematics or physics teachers or general educators and popularisers of science.

Language of graphs

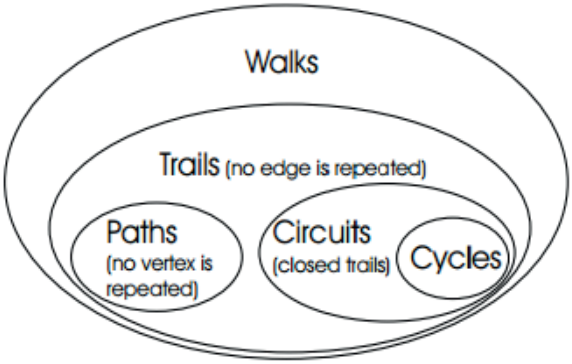
Graphs are mainly used for analysis and communication. Frances R. Curcio argued that "the graph might be viewed as a type of text in which the effect of prior knowledge about the topic, mathematical content, and graphical form, might influence the ability to comprehend the mathematical relationships expressed in graphs" (383). This view of a graph as a text is useful for language instruction as it enables the teacher to identify the specific "language" of each graph associated with its structural components, such as framework, specifier, labels or background (Monteiro and Ainley 31). It also sees a graph as a form of communication of its kind useful not only for data analysis, but also for transmitting the knowledge and information. Therefore, some authors agree that graph comprehension can be broken down to at least three levels: translation as a change in the form of communication, i.e. describing contents and data in words or interpreting graphs at a descriptive level, interpretation requiring rearranging material and sorting the important from the less important factors, and extrapolations and interpolations, i.e. stating not only the essence of the communication but also identifying some of the consequences (Friel et al. 129). To achieve these aims, it is necessary to speak the language of specific graphs when reasoning about the displayed information.

Graphs in Bachelor level courses

At the B1 level, it means in the courses for Bachelor's degree programmes, we start with the basic graph description and concentrate mainly on graph types and their differences. On a lexical level, we practise the verbs and adverbs indicating tendency, degree, and speed of change. However, students are also encouraged to think critically of the graph types and decide on the appropriate kinds of graphs in various situations and contexts, i.e. which diagrams to use for presenting the different stages of a research project, the populations of English native speakers in various countries, or the individual layers of rock in the Grand Canyon. A very useful activity is also a pair work in which one student describes the given graph and their neighbour tries to draw it following their peer's instructions. This way, students can verify how accurate and precise their description is and try to transmit and communicate the visual information contained in specific graphs.

The language functions area is another example where graphs and diagrams can work well. By language functions, we mean the syntactic features that enable students to put ideas together in a wide range of ways and internalise the patterns needed to express concepts and thinking. Teaching from the perspective of language functions helps to identify the language demands of specific academic tasks across the disciplines. Language functions for which graphs play an important role are, in our courses, comparing and contrasting, explaining and defining, classifying, sequencing, or identifying a cause-effect relationship, that means action verbs corresponding to both LOTS and HOTS domains. For some of these language functions, an example of a graph that can be efficiently employed in this context is presented below.

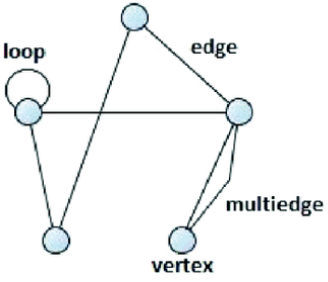
a) Comparing and contrasting (Venn diagram)



Source: https://www.math.utah.edu/mathcircle/notes/MC_Graph_Theory.pdf

Task: Students review the Venn diagram, choose two or three types of journeys, and write a short comparison of them, explaining their similarities and differences. They should use expressions for comparing and contrasting, i.e. similar in that, differs in, unlike, and so on. Alternatively, they may attempt to create provisional definitions of terms.

b) Defining and explaining (picture and table)

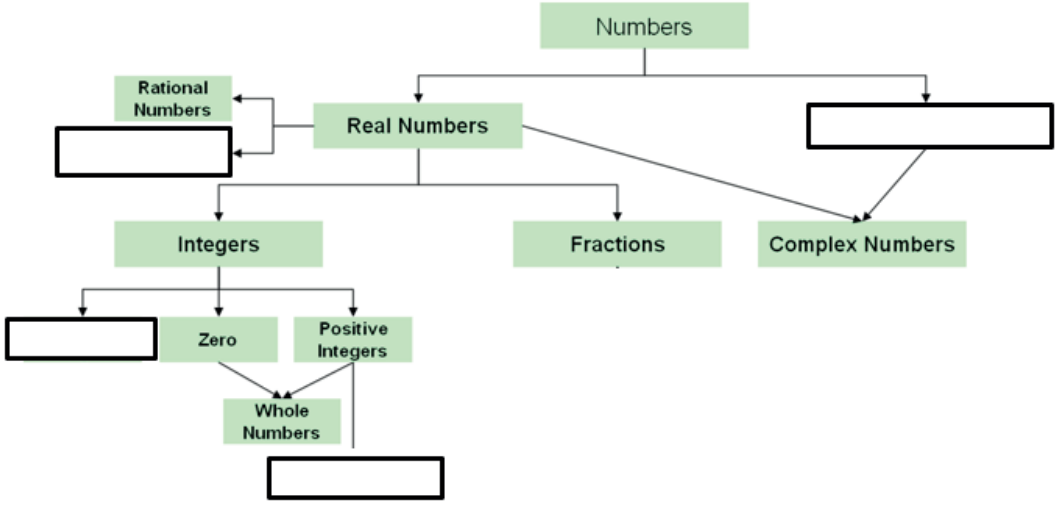


Repeated Vertex (Vertices)	Repeated Edge(s)	Open	Closed	Name
Yes	Yes	Yes		Walk (open)
Yes	Yes		Yes	Walk (closed)
Yes	No	Yes		Trail
Yes	No		Yes	Circuit
No	No	Yes		Path
No	No		Yes	Cycle

Picture source: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Attila_Csaszar/publication/322253099/figure/fig2/AS:586089540304896@1516984462841/Elementary-definitions-of-graph-theory-useful-to-understand-characteristics-of.png
Table source: https://i.stack.imgur.com/YL2u5.png

Task: Students inspect the picture and table and try to explain/define the main terms. It could be designed as a competition with teams of students taking turns in defining and guessing the expressions related to graphs. Students are encouraged to use appropriate structures for defining, mainly relative clauses, prepositional phrases, passives, and so on. This activity can be also used for comparing and contrasting, both in speaking and writing. To extend the task, students may be given the table with the first row empty and think of relevant criteria useful for defining individual items in the table.

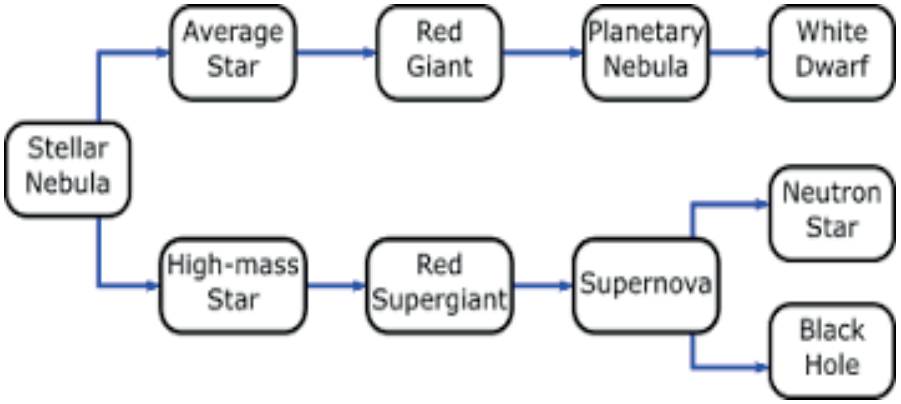
c) Classifying (tree diagram)



Source: https://static.giantbomb.com/uploads/original/6/60551/2307764-math.png)

Task: First, students look at the classification of numbers and try to complete the missing items. After that, they describe the chart using appropriate lexical items, such as comprises, includes, belongs to, is divided into, and so on. Finally, they think of other concepts they can classify in mathematics or other disciplines, create a similar diagram in pairs or groups, and present it to the class.

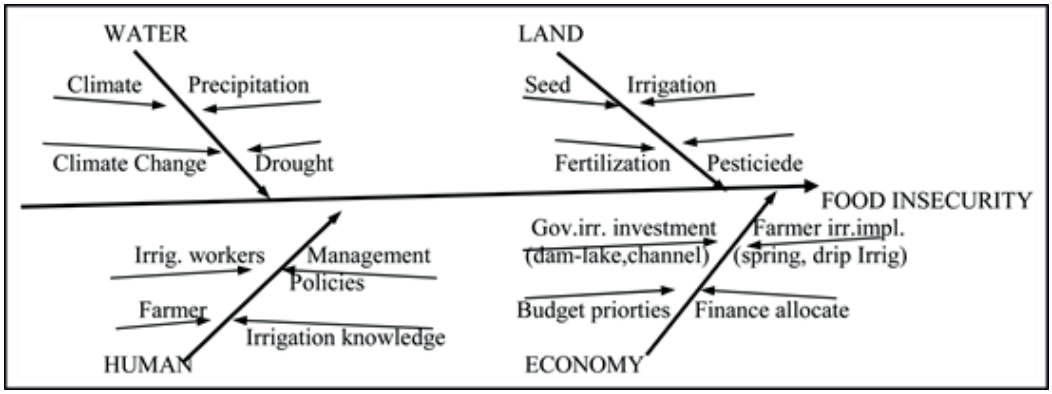
d) Sequencing or process description (flowchart)



Source: https://study.com/academy/lesson/average-star-definition-life-cycle-quiz.html)

Task: Students may obtain just the individual stages of the life cycle of a star and put these stages into logical order. They may work in pairs or groups; after the task completion, they may circulate around the class checking and comparing their results. If their order is different, they need to justify their decision. Alternatively, students may obtain different processes or sequences related to the same topic and present the process, using expressions like firstly, consequently, concurrently, finally, and so on.

e) Cause-effect relationship (fishbone diagram)



Source: https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=104436)

Task: Again, there are more possibilities of working with this diagram. Students can be either given various causes and effects and arrange them to form such a diagram, then they explain in speaking or writing why they decided to make such a structure; alternatively, they receive the empty Fishbone diagram related to a specific topic and think of and arrange possible causes and effects themselves. When presenting their results, they use phrases such as is related to, leads to, affected by, and so on. This example works well for the students specialising in financial mathematics and mathematics combined with economics.

These graphs can be employed in various ways as students may either simply describe contents and data in words, i.e. interpret graphs at a descriptive level, or be also content creators, rearranging material and sorting the important from the less important factors (Friel 129) depending on the context and purpose of the given graph. These tasks can develop both speaking and writing skills as the students are supposed to summarise the information contained in individual graphs in speaking and/or writing.

Both Bachelor and Master students integrate graphs and diagrams as visuals in their presentations and written assignments. For the purposes of their presentations, we practise simple and accurate descriptions of their visuals, stressing the need to explain all the main aspects with precision and clarity. Science students need to realise that for them as experts in their topic, the visual representation of their data may be clear and straightforward; however, to make the information contained in graphs available also to experts from other fields or even laymen, they should be able to summarise the graph content succinctly and understandably. They also need to employ their critical thinking skills to discuss not only what the graph shows but also what it means or indicates in the context of their topic or research.

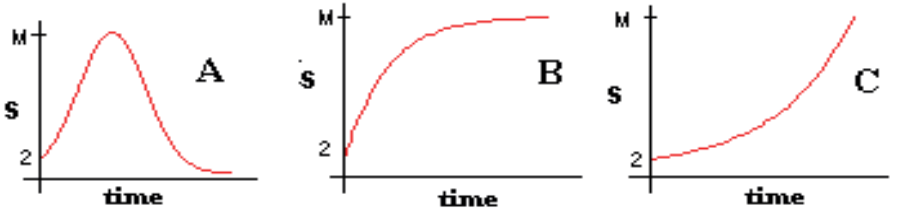
Graphs in Master level courses

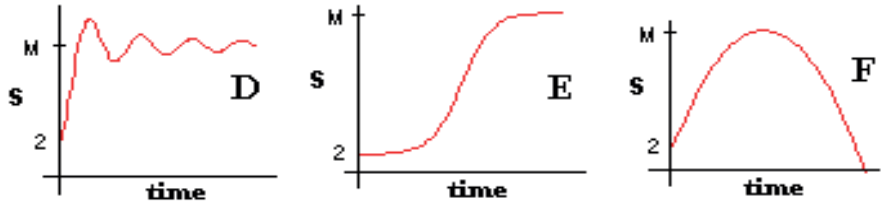
For more advanced students, it is useful to integrate graphs and diagrams in more complex and creative tasks that provide the students with the opportunities to employ their analytical, critical, and subject-specific skills. Therefore, students identify some of the possible outcomes and consequences, or attempt to "read beyond the data", which means predicting or inferring from the representation to answer implicit questions (Curcio 384). This way, students can develop critical sense as a skill to analyse data and their interrelations rather than simply accepting the initial impression given by the graph (Monteiro 33). Students usually acquire these abilities in their subject-specific lessons and are glad to extend their comprehension of graphs in specific contexts as a part of their English-language instruction. Using this method, they can realise how important it is to refer to the graphs correctly in English and explain to their audience what the graph illustrates.

An example of such an activity is "The spread of a rumour". It includes speaking, describing graphs and visuals and subject-specific vocabulary, and can be applied in lessons based on ESP or in general English lessons for students interested in science and data interpretation. I use this activity in my course of English for Mathematicians attended by students of all branches of mathematics. As we teach both Academic English and subject-specific terminology, this activity naturally combines both of these approaches. Discussing graphs and visuals enhances the debating and presentation skills of students as they first try to solve the problem based on visuals, discuss the best alternatives in their groups, and then present their opinions to the class. It also includes critical thinking and analytical skills because the students try to interpret and understand the real-life situation and then opt for the best solution. The aim of the exercise is to discuss and describe graphs in a creative and engaging way. Students can consolidate their knowledge of vocabulary, structure and grammar patterns and offer their own solution to the problem that they share and discuss.

To give students a starting point for the discussion, I ask them to think about this concrete problem: Suppose two students at your school start a rumour. How could we describe the spread of a rumour throughout the school population? It is possible to give students more hints so that they could use more mathematical expressions, i.e. assume that M is the population of your school, and that M is sufficiently large that it makes sense to model discrete numbers of students with a continuous function. For less scientifically inclined students, it suffices to draw a simple coordinate system with the x axis showing time in hours and the y axis showing the number of rumour-aware students (mentioning that the starting point at the y axis is 2). Students work in groups and try to come up with suggestions for possible line graphs describing the situation.

Alternatively, students can just compare six graphs and decide which of these are realistic and explain why they think so:





Source: www.maths.duke.edu/ode

Students consider the possibilities of the graph interpretation in relation to the given situation. The most realistic graphs are B and E; however, under specific circumstances, also a graph C may apply, as it shows the rumour spreading exponentially outside the school population. Graphs A and F are less likely, meaning that the rumour-aware students forget the information too quickly, unless the x axis indicates time in days or years. The D graph is most improbable because it fluctuates violently, showing possible memory lapses of rumour recipients.

After the graphs discussion, students try to think about the conditions or variables affecting the rate of rumour spread. I ask them to think of at least three significant variables, and the students usually come up with some of the following:

a) How interesting or juicy the rumour is.
b) The starting time of the rumour-spread, i.e. during the lesson or break.
c) Whether the rumour spreads just by word-of-mouth or whether electronic means and social media are employed as well.
d) The type of school and the way students interact, i.e. do they have lessons just with their groups or classes, or do they mix a lot.

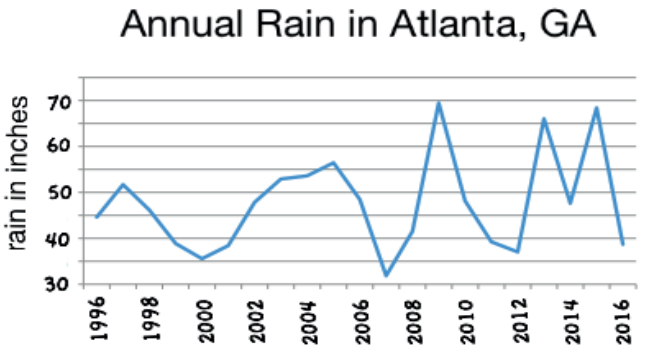
This task is a less controlled exercise involving speaking in groups with the aim to consider the authentic, real-life situation, that can be modelled using a graph. Students like it as they can be creative, practise functional language and try to address a concrete problem.

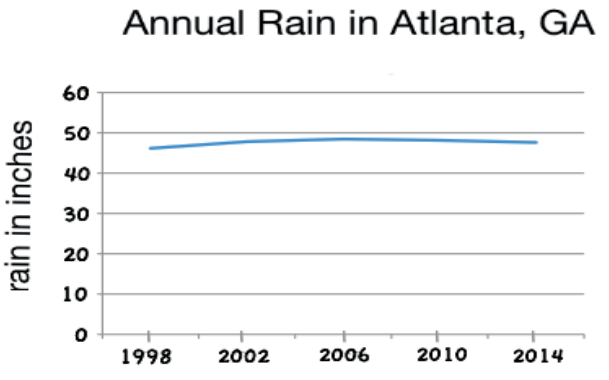
Critical interpretation of graphs

STEM students, as future data experts, should evaluate graphs critically and correct the common misconceptions that arise from the inaccurate or biased interpretation of data sets. Therefore, science students are expected to "be able to question unrealistic claims made by the media or others" and to adopt "a questioning attitude that can apply more sophisticated concepts to contradict claims made without proper foundation" (Watson 109). Recent examples of such unrealistic claims include the misleading interpretation of data and predictions based on them during the Covid-19 pandemic when some media and news outlets presented misleading information visualisations that manifested into an inaccurate interpretation of the severity of the pandemic or overstating or understating the concerns of the disease (Zak 1). By realising how the media bias works in information visualisations, we can understand how to decrease these biases and comprehend what a visualisation is trying to convey. Therefore, visual and graph literacy is essential to determine which graph or diagram to believe.

To motivate students to think critically about visual representations of data, I provide two sample tasks in which they can use their subject-specific knowledge and higher thinking skills of analysis and evaluation.

In the first example, two graphs below show very different pictures of the rainfall in Atlanta. The task is to explain how and why each graph could be distorted.





Source: http://www.weather.gov/ffc/rainfall_scorecard

Students work in pairs or groups and share ideas about graphs. The obvious problem is scaling – the first graph does not start at zero; therefore, the minor differences appear to be exaggerated. On the other hand, the other graph only plots one data point for every 4 years, when the inches of rain were most consistent. This data was cherry picked, i.e. purposefully selected to suit the needs of the analysts. To interpret the data correctly, it might be helpful to know if and what kind of variation other cities in the same area experience from year to year.

The other example shows a table with the results achieved by the well-known basketball player LeBron James, who has achieved high scores in the course of his career. The table below lists his average points per game for seasons 2003/04 – 2016/17.

03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
20.9	27.2	31.4	27.3	30.0	28.4	29.7	26.8	27.1	26.8	27.1	25.3	25.3	26.4

Source: http://www.basketball-reference.com/players/j/jamesle01.html

Students work in pairs or groups and try to answer two questions below:
a. How could you distort this data to emphasise the worst of his performance?
b. How could you distort this data to emphasise the best of his performance?

What other information might help you make this point? The answers can be as follows: Ways to emphasise the worst of LeBron James's performance may include expanding the vertical axis by using increments of 0.2 or 0.5, starting the scale at 20 or 25 points, and/or skipping his first season. Ways to emphasise the best of LeBron James's performance may include starting the vertical axis at zero, and using an increment of 2 points on the y-axis. If might be helpful to know what the average number of points per game is for other players.
(Two tasks adapted from: https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-spot-a-misleading-graph-lea-gaslowitz/digdeeper)

Conclusion

As graphs and visual representation of information are omnipresent, it is very useful for STEM students to be able to discuss, interpret, and analyse graphs not just in their mother tongue, but also in English. Apart from providing a useful and applicable knowledge and command of various language functions, the practice of graph analysis develops and enhances the higher and lower order thinking skills, such as comparing and contrasting, classifying, sequencing or analysing. It also develops the ability to think critically, evaluate, structure, and interpret information. Even if some authors, such as Daniel Willingham (6), believe that certain critical thinking skills are domain specific, in the case of graphs, there probably is a wide transferability across all STEM disciplines and even beyond them, as some students may, in the future, become educators or science popularisers. They should be, therefore, able to distinguish authentic from the deceitful, fake news and unbiased authenticity, tendency to manipulate or reveal the truth. It is one of the important goals of language teachers to develop these critical skills in their students through the language instruction.

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Markéta Dudová

English for Specific Purposes: A Literary Approach

Abstract: *The relationship between literature and second language teaching is longer and more complex than it might look at first sight. Literature had a pervasive presence in the teaching of foreign languages over the last century, serving multiple purposes, and enjoying a position largely conditioned by geopolitical situations and power shifts in academic disciplines. Though literature seems to be virtually absent from the language classroom today, the current interest in creativity and critical thinking, defined as "21st century skills," calls for a reconsideration and reevaluation of the role of literature in foreign language teaching. This article wants to answer the question if literary texts can be included into an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. Given the long-lasting animosity between the sciences and the humanities, ESP, with its emphasis on specialized vocabulary and the students' interests in science and technology, indeed seems to be predisposed against incorporating literary texts into course materials. Yet, this article will argue that the use of literature in ESP can be beneficial for the ESP teacher as well as for the students. Literature can have the potential to redirect students' perspective, encouraging them to be more creative and playful, resulting in their making new connections across disciplines.*

Combining literature and second language teaching might seem surprising, nonetheless, the relationship between these two disciplines is longer and more complex than it might look at first sight. As documented by Claire Kramsch and Olivier Kramsch in their article "The Avatars of Literature in Language Study", an analysis of articles published in the *MLJ* between 1916 and 1999, literature had a pervasive presence in the teaching of foreign languages over the last century, serving multiple purposes, and enjoying a position largely conditioned by geopolitical situations and power shifts in academic disciplines (553). Though literature seems to be virtually absent from the language classroom today, the current interest in creativity and critical thinking, defined as "21st century skills," calls for a reconsideration and reevaluation of the role of literature in foreign language teaching.

As Kramsch and Kramsch reconstructed, the first two decades of the 20th century saw literature as "the uncontested source discipline for the teaching of modern languages" (554). The decline of literature in language study began after the end of WWI despite the fact that the ability to read in a foreign language remained the main goal for learning a foreign language (Kramsch and Kramsch 559). The reason why literature began gradually losing its influence in language study was that reading started to be perceived as a goal in itself and as such it became dissociated from literature. The weakening position of literature is aptly illustrated by the fact that the growing research in reading, which encompassed researchers from diverse fields like phonetics, educational psychology or eye tracking studies, did not include literary scholars. The factors that contributed to the split between reading and literature included the rise of social studies in academia as well as the perception of literary studies as an elitist endeavor, linked to the concept of the nation-state, with an emphasis on the aesthetic value of literary texts (560). The way literature was taught at literature departments in the US at that time also exacerbated the gap: in contrast to writing assignments on the grammar, style and form of literary texts, class discussions were mostly done in English rather than the target language, thus further intensifying the bridge between foreign languages and ideas (558).

During WWII reading literature was seen as a comforting activity in difficult times and its potential for fostering critical thinking through a careful analysis of texts was also recognized. However, despite "its potential for political, economic, and social education, literature had an increasingly hard time justifying

itself to the national war effort" (563). In the end, the US State Department "turned to linguists, not to literature professors" to teach the military forces a foreign language, as grammatical competence was viewed as a reliable, scientifically measurable description of language mastery, as opposed to literary interpretation (563). Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, literature then continued to lose its academic battle due to the rise of linguistics and its overwhelming influence across the humanities, the so-called "linguistic turn," which in the end led to the unquestioned position of linguistics as the source discipline for language study (566).

Whereas in the humanities it was linguistics that earned acclaim, the end of WWII also witnessed an unprecedented growth in the scientific, technical and economic sphere, producing a world that needed to be unified by a language. For various reasons, but mainly the economic power of the US, that role was given to English. The emergence of English as a world language brought about a change in foreign language teaching, giving rise to a distinctive approach named English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The key component of an ESP course is the focus on the specialist content which must be highly relevant to students' areas of interest. Richards points out that the "concern of ESP with *delicacy of context* is something that distinguishes it from ELT in general" (in Robinson 5). An ESP course necessarily imposes several challenges on the teacher. First, the teacher must deal with specialized content, language and terminology. Second, the teacher is not in the position of the primary knower of the content of the material. Such challenges inevitably raise doubts, including self-doubts, as to whether the teacher will be able to cope with the specialized content (79). The self-doubts about the teacher's competence are usually reinforced by the fact that, since its beginnings in the 1960s, ESP has been mainly associated with English for Science and Technology (EST), two exceptionally demanding disciplines. For a time, ESP and EST were regarded as almost synonymous and even from today's perspective, English for Science and Technology still enjoys a preeminent position within ESP (Hutchinson and Waters 7). Its significance might be illustrated by Swales' comment on the ESP development: "With one or two exceptions [...] English for Science and Technology has always set and continues to set the trend in the theoretical discussion, in ways of analysing language, and in the variety of actual teaching materials" (in Hutchinson and Waters 9).

The well-established connection between ESP and science complicates the question about the possibility of using literary texts as an ESP course material. If literature is felt unwelcome in courses of General English, what role could literature possibly play in an ESP course, whose aim is to produce a syllabus which gives the highest priority to science language and terminology? If literature is perceived as useless or "extraneous to everyday communicative needs" of language learners in a General English course (Kramsch and Kramsch 566), then literature and the ESP approach might indeed look as being "mutually exclusive" (Hirvela 237). Literature, or the arts, and the sciences have been traditionally conceptualized as two poles of the intellectual divide, as famously captured in a 1959 essay by C.P. Snow *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, "(L)iterary intellectuals at one pole – at the other scientists, (…). Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension – sometimes (…) hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding" (Snow 4). Given the long-lasting animosity between the sciences and the humanities, using a literary text in an ESP course would therefore mean to speak about literature in the bastion of the "other culture." The very character of ESP, with its emphasis on scientific vocabulary and the students' interests in science and technology, indeed seems to be predisposed against incorporating literary texts into course materials. And yet, the idea that literature has no place in ESP or that it has been absent from it seems precipitous and misleading. Literature has always existed in the ESP approach in one way or another. It might exist in ESP in a rather cryptic form, but the truth is, literature has been present there since the very establishment of ESP as an approach to foreign language teaching.

A book on ESP by Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters from 1987 can serve as an illustration of this point. Their book is a revisionist text that tried to undermine the then dominant notion of ESP as a distinct approach within language study by defining not what ESP *is* but rather by defining what ESP *is not*: ESP "is *not* a special form of the language. (…) ESP is *not* just a matter of Science words and grammar for Scientists. (…) ESP is *not* different in kind from any other form of language teaching. (…) There is, in other words, no such thing as an ESP methodology, (…) (only methodologies) that could just as well have been used in the learning of any kind of English (18). Such a bold redefinition of the ESP approach should be enough for one book; Hutchinson and Waters, nonetheless, provide the reader with other clues that allow for a new, hidden, discourse to emerge. A discourse that hints at the possibility of literature and ESP to coexist. Interestingly, each chapter in their book opens with a motto: disregarding a couple of Chinese proverbs (though this is a genre of folk literature) or Karl Marx's quotation, nine out of the thirteen chapters start with a citation written by authors as diverse as Aesop, Shakespeare or Robert Burns. Moreover, Hutchinson and Waters even use a phrase from Rudyard Kipling's poem *I Keep Six Honest Serving Men* as a theoretical tool on which ESP teachers should build their course design (21).

The mottos taken from literary texts in the book can serve as an analogy to the cryptic existence of literature within ESP, revealing another, hidden, in the language of literary criticism, one might say subversive, narrative underlying the structure of ESP. What is meant by the subversive presence of literature in ESP can be illustrated by looking closely at the essay, "The Learner and Teacher of ESP," where Peter Strevens poses a nearly philosophical question "Who is the ESP teacher?" (41). Philosophical as it is, he, nonetheless, gives a purely pragmatic answer: An ESP teacher is almost always "a teacher of General English who has unexpectedly found him/herself required to teach students with special needs. The experience is often a shock!" (41). The reason why the ESP instructor experiences the shock is, Strevens claims, that their training in English is more likely to be in literature than in language (41). Waters and Hutchinson, when explaining the difficulties most teachers experience in comprehending ESP subject matter, stretch the argumentation even further by approximating ESP teachers to "reluctant settlers in the new territory. They would prefer to be teaching Literature and Social English in the comfortable environs of ELT but have been obliged by economic pressure to emigrate" (162), thus stressing the fact that most ESP teachers are recruited from people whose educational background is in literature. Without a doubt, the literary background of ESP teachers does not mean that they are unable to assimilate into unknown territory or that they do not have desire or enthusiasm to learn about the new area. Nevertheless, it might be naive to assume that their educational background in literature does not inform their teaching – or that literary studies have not affected the ESP methodology at all.

The ESP teacher usually assumes a great variety of simultaneous roles – besides serving the role of a researcher, course designer, tester, evaluator and the actual teacher, the ESP teacher, due to the lack of an adequate coursebook is, above all, a materials *writer* (Robinson 1, *italics mine*). As the writer of the materials, the teacher necessarily imposes their authorial voice, a certain narrative structure, on the lesson material. The teacher selects and arranges data and makes it more comprehensible by organizing it into a coherent, consistent unit with a discernible beginning, middle, and end. In other words, the lesson is structured similarly as a literary text. A fleeting glance at an average English coursebook or a lesson plan reveals that a language lesson tends to be opened by lead-in activities, questions or simple tasks introducing the central issue, be it a grammatical problem or a conversation topic. The main topic is thus clearly delineated from the rest of the lesson, which, by the same token, ends in concluding exercises or activities to provide the student with some sort of a closure. The operations or strategies employed for creating materials or lesson plans are thus literary in nature. Such literary strategies underlie production

of any writing, not just literature, as demonstrated by Hayden White in his influential book *Metahistory*, where he has exposed the fictional character of historical accounts due to their strong reliance on narrative for meaning. The language teacher, in the same way as a writer of a literary (or any) text, arranges data by assigning items in "a specific motific characterization" (White 7): some of the items are assigned to be inaugural, others to be central, transitional or terminating. For example, conditional sentences exist "out there", without having any specific function as a lesson element. The author of the materials, nonetheless, arranges them into "a hierarchy of significance," to use White's terminology (White 7). By selecting them, the teacher gives them a specific role as a lesson element to create a comprehensible set of activities with formal coherence to achieve the desired effect. The ESP approach thus contains a literary dimension, depending on the figure of the teacher whose education in literary studies is likely to inform their role of teacher, course designer and materials writer.

The literary dimension of language lessons is rarely acknowledged as there has been the tendency to view literature as something special and distinct from everyday life. Such a notion was one of the reasons for excluding literature from foreign language classes, as the language of literary texts has been seen as "far removed from the utterances of daily communication" (Collie and Slater 2). Besides being labeled "elitist," literature in foreign language lessons is usually seen as an unnecessary embellishment and as such "reserved for the most advanced level of study" (Collie and Slater 2). Mark Turner, author of *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*, nonetheless proposes a different approach. *The Literary Mind* strives to rectify the widespread misconception that our everyday activities have little to do with literature. Although literary texts may be special, "the instruments of thought used to invent and interpret them are basic to everyday thought" (Turner 7). Turner undermines "the common view, firmly in place for two and a half millennia, (seeing) the everyday mind as unliterary and the literary mind as optional" (v-vi). In his view, the literary mind interprets every level of our experience and our everyday thought and rational actions depend upon it. Our actions of reasoning, predicting, planning, evaluating or explaining are "essentially literary" (5). The literary mind "shows up everywhere, from telling time or reading Proust" (7). For Turner, literature is thus the fundamental instrument of the mind. What we mistakenly classify as "literary" is in fact a capacity of the human mind that is indispensable to human cognition generally, making our everyday life possible in the first place (3). Since we rely on the same cognitive strategies as those used for the invention or interpretation of literary texts, organizing a lesson as a unit with a discernible beginning, middle, and end with the intention to create a coherent whole is a consequence as well as a necessity that follows from the very nature of the human mind (5).

Though Turner's ideas about the literary capacity of the human mind, supported by insights from the field of cognitive sciences, might seem daring, a similar line of thought, attempting at the explanation of how the mind works, could be detected in the work of many literary theorists even before the emergence of cognitive studies. As Nicholas O. Pagan notes, there was a group of scholars who dealt with the notion similar to Turner's "literary mind" decades before him. Wolfgang Iser, proponent of the reader-response theory, for instance, was one of them (157, 173). Whereas in the past, the attempts to link literary studies together with cognitive science were scattered and often made in isolation from one another, after the emergence of what is called "cognitive literary criticism" the focus was mainly on literary analysis performed from the perspective of neurosciences. Nonetheless, the interdisciplinary relationship has also brought about a change in the dynamics between the two disciplines, shifting the focus from the concern of what cognitive sciences can tell us about literature to that of literature itself being interesting and important to scientists (Biwu 411-3). As James J. Bono notes, the relationship is no longer about the influence of science on literature but quite a different trend could be found, opening up

"an alternative universe where relations between science and literature are dominantly symmetrical and where a focus on the divergence of history of science and literature and science gives way to plotting their multiple and unpredictable convergences and interdependencies" (Bono 556). By recalibrating the focus, the possibility that literature has shaped or can shape scientific developments is now also taken into consideration (556). Literary studies, with their sensitivity to language, literary and discursive strategies, have drawn intensive attention to performative dimensions of scientific practices. As a consequence, not only was science unveiled to be a form of discourse that employs literary-linguistic practices to produce knowledge (Bono 555), in addition, it has also turned attention to the underlying practices behind scientists' daily work and communication, which are more important than it might seem. Besides practical laboratory skills, much of the day-to-day scientific work in fact consists of interpreting data, in other words, of various ways or techniques of "'reading' particular kinds of data," be it collecting, observing, recording, categorizing data or analyzing statistics (Bono 557).

The importance of the literary mind and reading, in all its forms – be it categorizing or analazing - to science and scientific research, together with the points discussed above, namely the literary underpinnings of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the literary dimension of teaching materials and lesson plans, the literary capacity of the human mind and of our conceptual system, as well as the revised relations between science and literature as symmetrical and interdependent equals, seem to fully justify the use of literature in the ESP classroom. Besides being beneficial for students, bringing literature into the ESP classroom is undoubtedly an advantage to the ESP teacher as well. For the ESP teacher, with an educational background in literary studies, using literature in the classroom could alleviate their sense of being overwhelmed by the narrowly defined subject matter, allowing them to shift their focus away from low-level tasks, such as mere identification and reproduction of facts, stemming from their lack of field-specific knowledge. Instead, it enables them to emphasize interpretation (Robinson 85), aligning language lessons more closely with 21st-century educational goals. The incorporation of literary texts can also benefit students by exposing them to diverse perspectives within their discipline, broadening their horizons, fostering creativity, and encouraging them to make interdisciplinary connections in a more dynamic and playful manner. Literature can show science students "the other culture," and in turn, by respecting their needs and interests, it can combine the best of the two worlds. Literature in an ESP course could build a bridge between these two intellectual domains. And while introducing students to new perspectives within their own discipline, literature could simultaneously bring teachers, the "reluctant settlers" in the ESP territory, closer to their home.

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Petra Ivenz

Sociolinguistics and Pragmatic Linguistics Courses in Slovak English Teacher Training Programs

Abstract: *The European Union emphasizes equipping students with intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in foreign language learning, including sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Based on the results of research studies conducted in Slovakia over the last 12 years, the development of ICC and within it, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences is often overlooked in Slovak elementary and high schools. Therefore, this study focused on 10 Slovak universities providing English teacher training programs to see whether they offered sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses. By attending the courses, future teachers should be better equipped with the needed competences to improve and develop the sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences of their future students. The study compared publicly available data from before and after the 2022/2023 accreditation in Slovakia. The results of the document analysis showed that before the new accreditation, three universities did not offer any sociolinguistics and pragmatic linguistics courses, six universities did not offer any pragmatic linguistics courses (while offering sociolinguistics courses), and one university did not offer any sociolinguistics courses. After 2022/2023 accreditation, three universities do not provide any sociolinguistics and pragmatic courses, three universities offer sociolinguistic courses, one university offers only a pragmatic course, and four universities provide both sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses. The findings highlight the need for further focus on sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences to better prepare future English teachers.*

Introduction

Historically, foreign language education focused mostly on linguistic proficiency. However, this approach shifted in the late 20th century as intercultural communicative competence (ICC) gained prominence (Musgrave 2013, Napitupulu and Shinoda 2014, Surkamp and Viebrock 2018 among others). For decades, the European Union has strived to equip students with intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as they engage with foreign languages. This educational endeavor emphasizes the advancement of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences alongside linguistic proficiency (CEFR 2020).

Byram (1997) argued that ICC involves the ability to engage in foreign languages with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. ICC encompasses sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and linguistic competence, emphasizing the understanding of language differences and cultural connotations. Acquiring ICC is essential for effective communication across cultures, emphasizing the need to navigate varied social contexts and values (Fantini 2020). According to CEFR (2020), sociolinguistic competence refers to the understanding and abilities necessary to navigate the social aspects of language usage. This includes aspects such as linguistic cues indicating social relationships, conventions of politeness, variations in registers, and differences in dialects and accents within and across different language communities. Pragmatic competence involves the practical application of language in communication. It studies the meaning of what is being said (conveyed) rather than the literal meaning of words and sentences. Pragmatic competence includes aspects such as turn-taking, flexibility, and fluency (CEFR 2020, Horváthová and Pokrivčáková 2023).

Numerous research studies were conducted to see whether teachers develop students' ICC during their foreign language lessons. Furthermore, these studies examined whether it is important to incorporate

such activities and exercises aimed at this development. As soon as 2007, Franklin et al. completed a study for the European Commission by cooperating with twelve European universities. The teams at the universities contacted teachers of foreign languages at elementary and high schools. It was discovered that 93% of teachers lacked specific guidance concerning the development of their ICC skills.

Recent research studies conducted at elementary and high schools worldwide suggest that the results are similar to the older studies. Even though teachers realize the importance of developing students' ICC, they rarely do it (Chau and Truong 2019, Fitriyah 2020, Kök̈er and Gülmez 2018, Maíz-Arévalo and Orduna-Nocito 2021, Nindya, Widiati and Khoiri 2022, Safa and Tofighi 2021, Zerzová 2012, 2018). Teachers indicated several reasons for not including such activities in their lessons, specifically, lack of time during the lessons, curriculum, and not enough intercultural knowledge and education. Teachers' views show that the importance of equipping them with ICC during their university studies is one of the crucial points since many of them indicated that they lacked any education on ICC.

As for Slovak research, in 2014, Reid observed lessons and conducted interviews with teachers at elementary schools. The results showed that teachers included some sociolinguistic (politeness, impoliteness, the use of *please* and *thank you*) and pragmatic linguistic information (socializing in writing letters, postcards, and greeting cards) in their lessons. However, only 48% of the observed lessons aimed to develop pupils' ICC. This may seem like a high number; however, teachers were informed about what Reid was to observe. Furthermore, only 33% of the interviewed teachers stated that intercultural education was as important as the linguistic part of language learning.

In 2017, Sándorová conducted a research study at Slovak high schools. She discovered that even though most sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences were developed, many important parts of both sociolinguistic and pragmatic linguistics were omitted (positive, negative politeness, differences between accents and dialects, etc.). Moreover, Sándorová conducted interviews with the teachers, and she discovered that these teachers did not understand the importance of implementing intercultural communication in their lessons. In addition, they did not develop their ICC at universities when they were students.

Pauliková (2021) interviewed teachers at Slovak elementary and high schools. The interviewed teachers admitted that developing sociolinguistic competence was as important as developing linguistic competence. However, only half of the interviewed teachers revealed that they worked on developing the sociolinguistic competence of their students. As for pragmatic competence, teachers stated that it was not as important. Only half of the interviewed teachers included activities to develop the pragmatic competence of their students.

Lastly, Ivenz (2024) interviewed teachers at Slovak elementary and high schools. She discovered that the interviewed teachers did implement some aspects of sociolinguistic and pragmatic information in their lessons. Mainly, teachers incorporated *greetings* and *addressing, idioms,* and *polite phrases.* Furthermore, teachers stated that they realized the importance of the development of ICC for their students and many of them admitted that they do it often in their lessons. Moreover, Ivenz (2024) asked whether teachers had their own ICC developed when they were studying at universities and only 37% answered *yes.* The rest of the teachers said that they acquired their knowledge by living in English-speaking countries, reading books, watching movies/ TV series, videos, etc.

In the light of university teachers and their views on this problem, the results are similar to the ones from elementary and high schools. University teachers usually acknowledged the importance of implementing and developing ICC, however, they were not sure how to do so (Fernández-Agüero and Chancay-Cedeño 2019, Özı◖k, Ye◖ilyurt and Demiröz 2019). Considering all teachers and their approaches

to the development of ICC, it has been suggested that future English language teachers should first develop their own ICC and only then they will be able to develop ICC for their students (Abdulfattah 2024, Bayyurt and Yalçın 2022, Haregu, Filatie and Chanie 2024, Ivenz and Reid 2022 among others). Based on this widespread recommendation, this article analyzed study plans of Slovak universities to see whether sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses are offered to future teachers of the English language.

Methodology

This study aimed to reveal whether Slovak universities offer more sociolinguistic and pragmatic linguistic courses to future teachers of the English language since its last accreditation in 2022/2023 compared to the previous accreditation. To determine the outcomes of this article, study plans of English language teaching programs at Slovak universities were analyzed according to the available data.

Research Sample

This study employed purposeful sampling to analyze study plans from ten Slovak universities offering English teacher training programs. The researcher applies this type of sampling to "choose potential participants and sites that are positioned to present the required information" (Ngulube 2021, 349). Even though purposeful sampling can be used with broad samples, it is usually used for a smaller scale (Russell Bernard 2000). The emphasis is put on similarity, where all the selected participants meet a "predetermined criterion of importance" (Palinkas et al. 2015, 17).

In this research, documents were chosen based on common criteria. The used documents were study plans from ten Slovak universities that offered English language teaching programs in early 2022 when this part of the research was completed. The list of the universities is as follows: Catholic University of Ružomberok (KU), Comenius University in Bratislava (UNIBA, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education), Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education), J. Seyle University (UJS), Matej Bel University (UMB), Pavol Jozef Šafárik University (UPJS), Trnava University (TRUNI), University of Prešov (UNIPO), University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius (UCM), and the University of Žilina (UNIZA).

From the academic year 2022/2023, universities started to operate according to a new accreditation. At the beginning of 2024, there were still universities that did not make their new study plans public, but the majority of the Slovak universities have their study plans available. Namely: Catholic University of Ružomberok (KU), Comenius University in Bratislava (UNIBA, Faculty of Arts), Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education), J. Seyle University (UJS), Matej Bel University (UMB), Pavol Jozef Šafárik University (UPJS), Trnava University (TRUNI), University of Prešov (UNIPO), and the University of Žilina (UNIZA). The information is missing from UNIBA's Faculty of Education, as no detailed information could be found. On the UCM's website, the overview of the study programs is available but that is all that can be accessed on the website without giving a password.

Research Procedure

The document analysis started by gathering study plans from Slovak universities. The information in the provided study plans was then categorized and coded accordingly. The study was interested in which universities provided lessons on sociolinguistics and pragmatic linguistics. Thus, two categories were created: *sociolinguistics* and *pragmatic linguistics.* Within this part, the focus was put on finding which courses aimed at the development of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences of future English

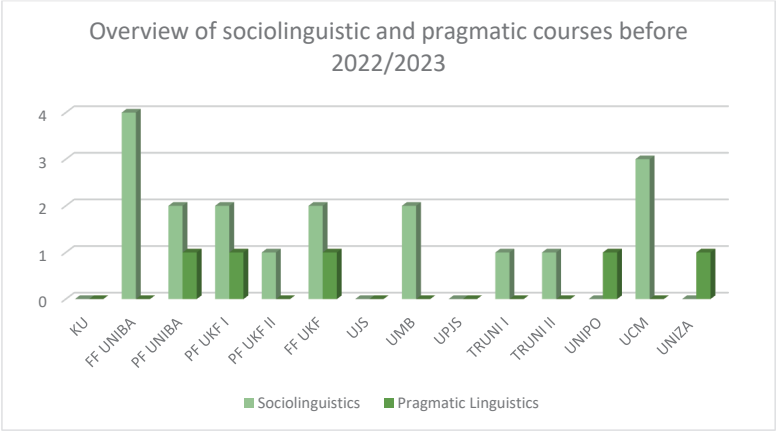
teachers. In the second part of the research, the research analyzed study plans after 2022/2023 accreditation in the same way. The results were compared.

Course titles were analyzed due to limited access to detailed syllabi.

Results

Based on the information from the provided study plans, Graph 1 was created for a better illustration of the data. This graph focuses on sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses offered at Slovak universities before the new accreditation which started in the academic year 2022/2023.

Graph 1. Overview of sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses before 2022/2023



Graph 1 shows that sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses were the least represented courses in the university curricula. Four universities offered no courses in the sociolinguistics category: KU, UPJS, UNIPO, and UNIZA. Universities UKF (the Faculty of Education-double major) and TRUNI (single and double majors) offered one course in this category. In addition, UKF offered a course called *Sociolinguistics,* and TRUNI offered a subject called *American English.* As for universities that offered more than one course in this category, UNIBA (the Faculty of Arts) offered four courses (*Phraseology, American English, Conversational Situational English,* and *Sociolinguistics).* UNIBA (the Faculty of Education) offered two courses (*English Language Phraseology* and *Sociolinguistics).* UKF (the Faculty of Education- single major) offered two courses (*Sociolinguistics* and *Contrastive Phraseology*) and UKF (the Faculty of Arts) offered two courses (*Phraseology* and *Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language*). UMB offered two courses (*Phraseology* and *Sociolinguistics*), and finally, UCM offered three courses (*Verbal and Non-verbal Communication and Listening Comprehension, Standard English and Varieties of the English Language,* and *Chapters of Phraseology of English Language*).

The results are even worse in the second category, pragmatic linguistics, as nine universities did not provide any pragmatic courses. These universities are KU, UNIBA (the Faculty of Arts), UKF (the Faculty of Education- double major), UJS, UMB, UPJS, TRUNI (both single and double majors), and UCM. The rest of the universities (UNIBA- the Faculty of Education, UKF- the Faculty of Education- single major, UKF- the

Faculty of Arts, UNIPO and UNIZA) offered one course in this category. The subject was called *Pragmatic Linguistics* or *Pragmatic Aspects of Language.*

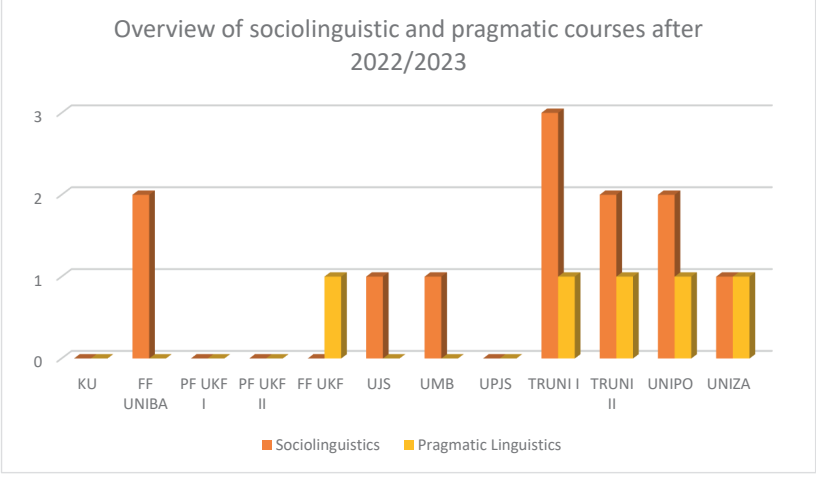
Only two universities (UNIBA and UKF- Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education) offered courses in both categories at the same time.

Furthermore, study plans showed whether sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses were offered as compulsory or compulsory electives in Slovak universities. Compulsory courses need to be chosen by students for them to have enough credits. Compulsory elective courses do not have to be chosen, they can usually be chosen by students depending on their interests or needs in their studies. At some universities, however, compulsory elective courses need to be chosen by students, so they have enough credits for their future studies.

From the documents, it was identified that most of the universities offered these courses as compulsory electives. These universities include UNIBA (Faculty of Arts), UKF (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education), TRUNI and UCM. Two universities (UMB and UNIPO) offered one sociolinguistic and one pragmatic course as compulsory courses. For two universities (UNIBA- Faculty of Education and UNIZA), no information on courses being compulsory or compulsory electives was available.

In Slovakia, universities started to operate based on a new accreditation from the academic year 2022/2023. When writing this part of the study, it has been more than a year and a half since the beginning of the new accreditation, however, not every university has made their new study plans public. Nine universities have updated their study plans. Graph 2 was created to illustrate whether any changes occurred in the new accreditation and whether more sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses are being offered to future English teachers in Slovakia.

Graph 2. Overview of sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses after 2022/2023



Graph 2 shows that three universities do not offer any sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses, namely KU, UKF (Faculty of Education both single and double majors), and UPJS. While KU and UPJS did not offer these courses even before, PF UKF did and they went from two sociolinguistic courses and one pragmatic

course in single major to zero, and from one sociolinguistic course in double major to zero as well. Three universities (UNIBA- Faculty of Arts, UJS, and UMB) offer only sociolinguistic courses. While before, UNIBA offered four sociolinguistic courses, after 2022, it offers only two (*British English*, *Sociolinguistics*). This trend is seen also at UMB. Before it offered two sociolinguistic courses and now it offers only one (*Sociolinguistics*). As for UJS, we can see a positive change, as before, they did not offer any sociolinguistic courses (and pragmatic courses) but now they offer one (*Phraseology*). At UKF, the Faculty of Arts, one pragmatic course called *Socio-pragmatic Aspects of Language* is offered. Compared to the previous accreditation, it lost two courses and combined pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence into one course.

Three universities (TRUNI- single and double majors, UNIPO and UNIZA) offer both sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses. This is one of the most positive changes that were encountered. While before 2022, in both single and double majors TRUNI offered only one sociolinguistic course, nowadays, it is three sociolinguistic courses (*American English, Current forms of English, Sociolinguistics*) for single major and two sociolinguistic courses (*American English, Current forms of English*) for double major. One pragmatic course (*Pragmatic linguistics*) is offered to students studying either of the majors. As for UNIPO, while before they did not offer any sociolinguistic courses, nowadays, they offer two- *Chapters of Sociolinguistics I* and *II*. They offered one pragmatic course and that stayed the same. Lastly, UNIZA used to offer only pragmatic courses and nowadays it offers both sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses.

Similarly to the previous accreditation, universities offer sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses as compulsory elective courses. However, some courses are compulsory for students, namely at TRUNI a single major in *Current Forms of English* is compulsory (while in double major, it is a compulsory elective), at UNIPO, *Pragmatic Linguistics* is compulsory, and the same course is compulsory at UNIZA.

It is worth mentioning that before 2022, universities did not provide any further information about the courses available online, so the course titles were analyzed• After 2022, some universities (UNIBA- Faculty of Arts, UKF- Faculty of Education, and UMB) started to provide the syllabi online. This availability has provided transparency and made it easier to verify course content.

Discussion

Based on the results of the research study, there are several outcomes. Key findings include:

- Sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses were underrepresented in Slovak university curricula before the 2022/2023 accreditation.
- Most universities offered minimal to no courses in these categories with some offering only one or two courses.
- Compulsory elective courses were more common than compulsory courses. Therefore, students did not have to choose these courses if they did not need them or were not interested in them.
- After the new accreditation, some universities showed improvements while others remained stagnant, and some even went backward.

Universities like UNIBA (Faculty of Arts), UJS, UMB, and UNIZA have either maintained or even slightly increased their offer of sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses. Positive changes were observed at TRUNI, where the number of sociolinguistic courses increased significantly for both single and double majors. On the other hand, there were instances of reductions of the courses that happened at UKF (Faculty of Arts) that decided to combine sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses into one course. Even though sociolinguistics and pragmatics are closely connected, the author of this study does not see this as a

positive approach. Very negatively, at UKF (Faculty of Education) they decided to completely omit sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses. Before 2022, they offered three in total for a single major and one for a double major. Another negative point is that some universities (KU and UPJS) continued to offer no sociolinguistic or pragmatic courses.

After 2022, most universities have their courses as compulsory electives. However, some universities decided to offer compulsory sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses, reflecting the importance of these topics in the education of future teachers of the English language (Lerdpaisalwong et al. 2023, Rushdi et al. 2023, Sánchez Ruiz 2018, Soyhan 2022, Strotmann and Kunschak 2022, Turabay et al. 2023).

It is necessary to mention the implications and limitations of this research study. The findings highlight the importance of ensuring comprehensive coverage of sociolinguistic and pragmatic topics in teacher education programs. Universities should introduce mandatory sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses to ensure comprehensive teacher preparation.

The limitation of this study is that even though some universities offer course information publicly (after the accreditation), we can never be sure what is taught in the courses without observing them.

Further research should evaluate the effectiveness of these courses in enhancing teacher ICC.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the status of sociolinguistic and pragmatic linguistic education in Slovak universities, particularly focusing on teacher preparation programs. The findings reveal a significant difference in the occurrence of sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses across universities, with some institutions offering minimal to no courses in these crucial areas. While there have been positive developments in course offers after the accreditation in September 2022, such as increased offers at certain universities, challenges persist, as evidenced by the continued absence of these courses at some institutions. The fact that sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses are offered as compulsory electives highlights their importance in teacher education, but further efforts are needed to ensure comprehensive coverage and preparation of future English language teachers. To meet the needs of globalized education, Slovak universities must prioritize integrating sociolinguistic and pragmatic courses into teacher training programs. This will ensure that future teachers are equipped to develop ICC in their classrooms, and consequently, develop ICC of their future students.

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Jiří Lukl

Form of First Referring Expression as an Indicator of Referential Importance in Discourse

Abstract: *This paper presents findings of an analysis focusing on the forms of referring expressions by which referents are introduced into the discourse for the first time. The question that the paper will specifically address is whether such first referring expressions can indicate how important, or prominent, in the discourse the referent will subsequently be. Referential importance is understood to be an expression of the number of occurrences of a given referent in a particular text. As a hypothesis, it is assumed that more uniquely salient expressions (e.g., proper names) will tend to introduce more important referents, while indefinite expressions will tend to introduce referents which contribute very little to the development of the discourse. Finally, it is assumed that definite expressions will tend to contribute to the development of the discourse to an intermediate degree. Previous research (e.g., Fraurud, 1996; Sanford et al., 1988) suggests that this indeed seems to be the case, though only proper names were considered in depth. The analysis in the present paper was performed on a manually collected corpus of approximately 9, 400 words that comprises five texts of various genres.*

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the correlations between referent occurrence frequency (as it is sometimes somewhat inaccurately termed; cf. Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* 89) and the form of referring expression when the referent is first introduced into the discourse. It is assumed the first occurrence—and its referring expression—is capable of indicating the importance of the referent in subsequent discourse.

The paper's starting point is Chafe's concept of referential importance. He introduced the concept to account for cases of discourse-new referents appearing in the subject position, which would contradict his notion of the *light subject constraint*: the fact that subjects function as starting points of an utterance and as such carry only light informational load (*Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* 82ff., cf. also "Givenness, Contrastiveness…" 44; Halliday and Matthiessen 79). This is based on the perceived constraints of human cognition and the difficulties of human minds to process utterances that begin with a heavy informational load, which discourse-new referents do carry. Cases of new referents introduced in the subject position would therefore be significant counterexamples to the light subject constraint. Chafe, however, proposes that such new subjects are of trivial importance in the overall discourse: typically, they are fleeting occurrences which do not develop the topic of the discourse in any significant way and leave the discourse (and the recipients' conscious minds) as soon as they enter it. Thus, the light subject constraint is maintained.

In addition to trivial referents, Chafe proposes two further degrees: primary and secondary. The full gamut is therefore as follows:

1. Primary referents: central referents, main characters/topics;
2. Secondary referents: episodic referents, supporting characters, sub-topics;
3. Trivial referents: unimportant referents, fleeting mentions.

The notion of referential importance should not be thought of as merely a device for explaining away subject referents that carry heavy information. As reference is one of the primary means of cohesion in discourse (Halliday and Hasan 308-14), referential importance, i.e., differences between referents based on how significant their contribution to the development of the discourse is, must play a significant role in how a particular discourse is structured. As such, there will tend to be a small number of referents of primary importance forming the basic fabric of the discourse; a larger number of secondary—episodic referents developing the central ones in particular ways; and many trivial referents providing richness of detail, but individually having negligible impact.

Generally, it has been assumed that the different degrees of importance can be determined, or at least estimated, by the number of occurrences of a given referent in the discourse. The higher the number of occurrences, the more important a referent is, and vice versa. This view has been directly or indirectly accepted by many scholars (Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* 89; Fraurud 82; Wright and Givón 9). Chafe, however, further proposes that the expression with which a referent is introduced into the discourse can also serve as an indicator of importance. Thus, for example, proper names would introduce primary referents, whereas simple indefinite NPs would introduce trivial referents. This view is again at least partly supported by other scholars. As Fraurud notes with specific regard to proper names:

to give something a proper name is also, in a sense, to give it a higher status. ... the use of a proper name rather than a description may raise what may be called the 'discourse status' of the referent. It has been shown that introducing (human) characters by means of a proper name increase the probability of subsequent reference and the accessibility for pronominal anaphora (81-82).

Similar views are expressed by Sanford et al. (44). Simultaneously, Chafe notes that a clear correlation between referential importance and first referring expression likely only exists in the discourse of traditional folk tales and that such correlation is weakened in modern speaking and writing (*Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* 89).

The question that persists then is whether such correlation could be identified in general modern English usage. This paper therefore attempts to provide a tentative answer by testing the correlation between first occurrence referring expression and referential importance as expressed by frequency of occurrence in various types of modern English discourse.

The following hypothesis is offered: 1) that proper names (and proper name-like expressions) correlate with high (primary) referential importance; 2) that definite NPs correlate with intermediate (secondary) referential importance; and 3) that indefinite NPs correlate with low (trivial) referential importance.

In the following section, the corpus used in the analysis will be presented. Subsequently, the method applied in the analysis will be described. The results of the analysis will be presented next, followed by a general discussion and preliminary conclusions.

2. Corpus

The analysed corpus was collected manually and comprises 9,395 words. It contains five different texts: first, a tonetically transcribed passage of a recorded informal spoken conversation taken from *A Corpus of English Conversation* (Svartvik and Quirk); it is designated as (Spoken) in the paper. The second sub-corpus is an excerpt from the fantasy novel *A Clash of Kings* (George R. R. Martin, first published in 1999); it is designated as (Daenerys) in the paper, after the central character of the excerpt. The third sub-corpus is a passage from the gangster novel *The Godfather* (Mario Puzo, first published in 1969); it is designated as (Godfather). The fourth sub-corpus is an excerpt from the popular science book *The Fabric of the*

Cosmos (Brian Greene, first published in 2003); it is designated as (Relativity), after the central topic of the chapter from which the excerpt is taken. Finally, the fifth sub-corpus is an excerpt from one chapter of the second book in the five-volume series *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (published in 1998; the chapter in question written by Glyndwr Williams); it is designated as (Pacific), after the topic of the chapter. The corpus metadata are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Corpus Metadata

Sub-corpus	Word Count	Number of Utterances	Total No. of Referents	Total No. of References
(Spoken)	2035	253	135	556
(Daenerys)	1873	185	243	673
(Godfather)	1805	127	210	528
(Relativity)	1851	94	221	560
(Pacific)	1831	105	253	461
TOTAL	**9395**	**764**	**1062**	**2779**

3. Method of Analysis

The initial stage of the analysis involved identifying the referents and all their occurrences. There have been many varied views on the question of what counts as a referent and what counts as a referential expression (see Bach, "What Does It Take to Refer?" for a succinct discussion). For the purposes of this paper, concrete as well as abstract entities are considered as referents; additionally, specific referents, generic referents, and entity classes (e.g., *~John is a teacher*, where *a teacher* is a class) are recognized.

All the occurrences of each referent in the corpus were then manually tagged in a simple excel spreadsheet. The tagging was used to facilitate the calculation of the number of occurrences for each referent in the corpus. The first occurrence of each referent was then identified and its form of referring expression specified. It was determined that the first occurrence referring expressions generally fall into three distinct categories: *unique*, *identified*, and *indefinite*. The category of *unique* reference can further be subdivided into *unique (proper)* and *unique (common)*. The category of *identified* reference is further subdivided into *identified (anchored)* and *identified* (*inferable*). There were also several anomalous types of first referring expression (e.g., pronouns, clauses), which were not considered in the analysis.

The categories have the following characteristics. The *unique* category comprises those cases where there is an exclusive or near-exclusive relationship between the expression and the referent, i.e., there tends to be only one possible referent that can be associated with the given expression. The expression can either be a proper name NP (*proper*)—see example 1—or a common noun NP (*common*) which, nevertheless, unmistakably points to a single – and therefore unique – individual or, more commonly, an inanimate entity, e.g., *the earth*, *the electromagnetic force*, *o-level*, *divine right*, *the horizon*. Alternatively, it may be an expression whose one-to-one relationship (their name-like quality; Fraurud 80; cf. also Hajičová et al. 128) to its referent is clearly established by the context of the given discourse. In the present corpus, this is the case of the expressions *the nation* in (Godfather), which in the context of the novel clearly refers to the referent United States of America[1]—see example 2—and *the navy* in (Pacific) which in the context of a book about the British Empire clearly refers to the British navy—see example 3.

1) And it was the work of **James Clerk Maxwell** that set the stage for Einstein's dramatic insights. (Relativity)
2) The death of Santino Corleone sent shock waves through the underworld of **the nation**. (Godfather)
3) Despite such exhortations, and the fact that by 1751 Anson was First Lord of the Admiralty, **the navy** failed to establish any specialist surveying service, or even a hydrographic office on the French model to supervise the publication of charts. (Pacific)

The *Identified* reference category pertains to referents which, when introduced, are readily identifiable for the recipient; however, unlike in the previous category (and its two sub-categories), these referents are identifiable because their appearances are primed intra-textually prior to their first occurrences. The sub-category of *anchored* reference involves referents which are identifiable because they use already established referents as their textual "anchors": they are referred to by way of referring to another referent (Bach, *Thought and Reference* 68). Consequently, they are most often formally expressed by a common noun, with or without modifiers, accompanied by a possessive pronoun or a noun in the genitive case, e.g., *light's motion*, *Maxwell's results*, *her swollen breasts*, *her silver mare*. The sub-category of *identified (inferable)* reference encompasses referents which are identifiable either due to their inferability from context (e.g., *the needle* in example 4 is readily identifiable because it can be inferred that each compass has a needle) or due to the NP creating a "narrower category within which the referent becomes unique" (Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time* 99). This is usually achieved via modifiers, as in example 5, where the postmodifier "of the hrakkar Drogo had slain" narrows the very broad category of "skin" to a very specific category in which there exists only possible interpretation of the reference, i.e., the one and only skin that belonged to the hrakkar (a steppe lion) which was slain by Drogo.

4) When you look at a compass, how is it that **the needle** swings around and points north even though nothing seems to nudge it? (Relativity)
5) so her handmaids garbed her in **the skin of the hrakkar Drogo had slain**, the white lion of the Dothraki sea. (Daenerys)

It is to be noted that the two possibilities for *identified (inferable)* referents correspond to Prince's non-containing and containing inferables, respectively (236-37).

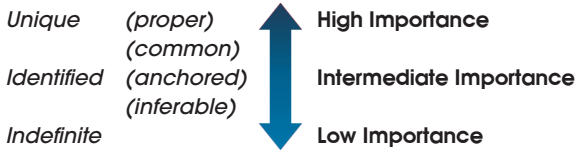
Finally, the *indefinite* reference category relates to referents which are introduced into the discourse without any of the cognitive or contextual "hooks" of the previous categories. They are "new" in the most obvious sense of the word. Formally speaking, they are typically expressed by a common noun, modified or unmodified, with the indefinite article for singular count nouns, the "zero" article for singular non-count nouns and plurals, or by other determiners with indefinite meanings, such as in example in 6:

6) be'cause there was **some PECÙLIAR (ə:) con'vention about HŸPHENS** which 'just… (Spoken)

Following the initial hypothesis, the categories established can be given on a scale (Figure 1). The scale assumes that high referential importance is generally associated with referents belonging to the *unique* reference category (i.e., proper names and proper name-like expressions); that intermediate referential importance is associated with referents belonging to the *identified* reference category (definite NPs); and that low referential importance is associated with referents belonging to the *indefinite* reference category (indefinite NPs). For the purposes of this paper, it is generally understood that referents of high (primary) referential importance have an occurrence frequency of 10 and more; referents of intermediate

(secondary) referential importance have an occurrence frequency of three to nine; and referents of low (trivial) referential importance have an occurrence frequency of one or two.

Figure 1 Scale of First Occurrence Referring Expression in Relation to Referential Importance



The scale and its categories have been inspired by, and adopted elements from, similar scales found in literature, though those are primarily concerned with various approaches to, and notions of, givenness, rather than exclusively first occurrence and referential importance. These include the *scale of phonological size* (Givón 18), *Givenness Hierarchy* (e.g., Gundel 150-52; Gundel et al. 275ff.), the already mentioned Prince's *Assumed Familiarity* (233-37), and the *Accessibility Hierarchy* of Mira Ariel (e.g., "Referring and Accessibility" 80-85; "The Function of Accessibility" 449ff.; "Referring Expressions" 20-23).

For each reference category, median and mean occurrence frequencies were calculated. These two values reveal the most general tendencies of referents in each category. The median expresses the value which an average referent in a category is most likely to have. The mean, and specifically its greater or lesser divergence from the median, can then indicate the presence of outlier referents, especially those with significantly higher occurrence frequencies. A complementary analysis focused on the distribution of referents across categories and frequency groups (referential importance groups). The goal was to determine the proportions of referents of each category (*unique, identified, indefinite*) in each frequency group (10+ occurrence frequency, 3-9 occurrence frequency, 1-2 occurrence frequency).

The results are presented and discussed below.

4. Results

4.1 Hypothesis 1: *unique (proper)* and *unique (common)* correlate with high (primary) referential importance

Tables 2 and 3 present the statistical data for the five sub-corpora in terms of *unique* reference. In both tables (and the tables to follow), "No. of referents" lists the number of referents identified that are introduced into the discourse by a given referring expression. "Median frequency" refers to the median occurrence frequency per one referent, while "Mean frequency" refers to the mean occurrence frequency per one referent. The tables also include examples of first referring expressions from each sub-corpus.

Table 2 Corpus Data for Unique (Proper) First Referring Expression

SUB-CORPUS	NO. OF REFERENTS	MEDIAN FREQUENCY MEAN FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Spoken (S)	14	2.5 5.9	*Bill's, Marilyn, Kyd, Beryl Martin, Harold, Miss Baker*
Daenerys (D)	28	2 8.6	*Daenerys Targaryen, Gentle ser Willem Darry, Ser Jorah Mormont, her handmaid Doreah*

Godfather (G)	16	4 12.3	*the Bocchicchio Family, Don Corleone, Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton, Hagen*
Relativity (R)	10	6 6.5	*James Clerk Maxwell, the English physicist Michael Faraday, Albert Einstein*
Pacific (P)	31	2 3.5	*the Pacific, Commodore George Anson's, William Dampier, The Royal Society, London*
TOTAL	99	3 7.1	

Table 3 Corpus Data for Unique (Common) First Referring Expression

SUB-CORPUS	NO. OF REFERENTS	MEDIAN FREQUENCY MEAN FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Spoken (S)	5	2 2	*linguistics, o-level, phonetics, maths*
Daenerys (D)	5	6 5.4	*the sun, the red lands, the night lands*
Godfather (G)	1	9 9	*the nation*
Relativity (R)	21	2 3.8	*the electromagnetic force, the luminiferous aether, light*
Pacific (P)	5	1 2.8	*the navy, divine right, the horizon, Government*
TOTAL	37	2 3.8	

The data indicate that *unique* referents in both sub-categories display relatively higher medians and means, with *unique (proper)* having a median value of three and a mean value of 7.1 and *unique (common)* having a median value of two and a mean value of 3.8. This suggests that the referents introduced into the discourse in this manner tend to persist, and therefore tend to be more important. However, neither the medians nor the means convincingly suggest *primary* importance. Therefore, to properly account for these numbers, especially the stark difference between the medians and the means for *unique (proper)* referents, the data require closer inspection.

The large discrepancy between the mean and the median in the case of *unique (proper)* referents, apparent mainly in the first three sub-corpora (the genres of spoken conversation and narrative fiction) is caused by several outlier referents with extremely high occurrence frequencies. In (Spoken), the mean average is increased especially by the referents Bill (27 occurrences), Marilyn (13 occ.), Grace (10 occ.), and Beryl (nine occ.); in (Daenerys), by Daenerys (132 occ.), Doreah (20 occ.), Pono (14 occ.), and Khal Drogo (12 occ.); and in (Godfather) by Bocchicchio family (62 occ.), Don Corleone (58 occ.), Tom Hagen (16 occ.), and Mafia (12 occ.). These referents then display the proposed correlation between high (primary) referential importance as expressed by occurrence frequency and first occurrence proper name NPs.

However, the lower median values for the corpus in general, and for (Spoken), (Daenerys) and (Godfather) in particular, indicate that there also many referents in this group that exhibit occurrence frequencies of one or two. When examined closely, such referents are either locations (names of cities: Astapor, Yunkai, Meereen, Rome, Palermo, Chicago, London, Cambridge), characters in negligible roles, who, however, are "always present" (Aggo, Jhogo, Rakharo), or characters important or familiar in the context of the overall narrative, but not very important in the given section (Aegon, Rhaenys, Meraxes, Santino Corleone, Michael Corleone, Sollozzo).

The situation is similar in the (Pacific) sub-corpus, which, however, includes fewer referents with extremely high occurrence frequencies, and the mean average is therefore proportionally lower (3.8). The only two referents with occurrence frequencies above 10 are Pacific (22 occ.) and William Dampier (14 occ.)

In (Relativity), however, the general tendency of *unique (proper)* referents found in the rest of the corpus is not upheld. Not only are the mean and median values very similar to one another, but they are also comparatively high. The only referent with a single occurrence is Henry More; most referents occur six or more times: James Clerk Maxwell 23 times; Albert Einstein 11 times; Albert Michelson, Edward Morley, Isaac Newton and Michael Faraday each six times.

These referents are in an interesting juxtaposition to the *unique (common)* referents appearing in the same sub-corpus. In the (Relativity) sub-corpus, *unique (common)* referents are abundant: there are 21 such referents, which accounts for over 50 per cent of all *unique (common)* referents in the entire corpus. This is clearly due to the character of the discourse topics of the text: they are various physical concepts or phenomena, which, in most cases, are introduced with name-like common NPs. So, for instance, there is only one possible referent corresponding to the expression *the electromagnetic force*, or to the expression *the luminiferous aether*. *Light* in the context of a discussion of the general phenomenon, i.e., an electromagnetic wave in the visible spectrum (as opposed to some specific light, e.g., the light of a passing car), is also *unique (common)*. In contrast, the expressions *magnetic fields* and *electric fields* are not *unique (common)*, since they are type representations (generic referents) of the various concrete magnetic and electric fields in the world: the analysed excerpt itself includes multiple specific referents of these type representations, e.g. *the earth's magnetic field.*

Now, both the *unique (common)* and *unique (proper)* sub-categories in (Relativity) include several referents with high occurrence frequencies. Those in the *unique (proper)* sub-category have already been mentioned. Instances from the *unique (common)* sub-category include: the luminiferous aether (16 occ.), light (12 occ.), and space (eight occ.). However, while the high occurrence frequencies, and indeed the relative abundance, of *unique (common)* referents is due to the fact that they are the discourse topics and together represent the text's macrostructure, in the case of the *unique (proper)* referents, all of which are either physicists or philosophers, the high frequencies are the result of the fact that, intuitively, they function as enablers: they are responsible for the discoveries of the concepts that are being discussed, but they are rather in the background, enabling the concepts themselves to take the main stage.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: *identified (anchored)* and *identified (inferable)* correlate with intermediate (secondary) referential importance

Tables 4 and 5 present the statistical data for the five sub-corpora in terms of *identified* reference.

Table 4 Corpus Data for Identified (Anchored) First Referring Expression

SUB-CORPUS	NO. OF REFERENTS	MEDIAN FREQUENCY MEAN FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Spoken (S)	18	1 2.1	*this group, last year, his manner, Bill's thesis, his PhD*
Daenerys (D)	73	1 2	*her dragons, her soft golden hair, Aegon's dragons, Your dragon eggs, its fearsome head, Vhagar's breath*
Godfather (G)	36	1 1.7	*whose president, his regime, his cigar, their Consiglieres*
Relativity (R)	28	1 1.7	*earth's edge, light's motion, Maxwell's results, Faraday's key breakthrough, your wool scarf*
Pacific (P)	23	1 1	*Anson's return, its lure, their pardon, Magellan's ships, Commodore George Anson's squadron of six ships*
TOTAL	178	1 1.8	

Table 5 Corpus Data for Identified (Inferable) First Referring Expression

SUB-CORPUS	NO. OF REFERENTS	MEDIAN FREQUENCY MEAN FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Spoken (S)	11	2 1.7	*The immediate reaction I got, the summer school, the phone, the diploma people*
Daenerys (D)	60	1 1.9	*the skin of the hrakkar Drogo had slain, the best of Drogo's herds, the lands of the Lamb Men*
Godfather (G)	45	1 1.4	*the power of the Mafia, the planners, the lighter equipment, The death of Santino Corleone*
Relativity (R)	49	1 1.7	*the needle, the mathematical underpinnings of these interrelationships, the equipment, the compass casing*
Pacific (P)	78	1 1.3	*the shores of Chile, Peru, and Mexico, the silver*
TOTAL	243	1 1.5	

The data show that both *identified (anchored)* and *identified (inferable)* have median values of one. They also have mean values below two. This suggests that the *identified* category as a whole generally includes referents that do not persist in the discourse, excepting some outlier referents, e.g., *her dragons* (42 occurrences), *whose president* (16 occ.), *Newton's absolute space* (seven occ.). In the established parameters, the low median and mean values indicate low (trivial) referential importance. The originally

proposed hypothesis is therefore contradicted: the *identified* category seems to include referents of low referential importance, and not referents of intermediate importance, as was originally assumed.

The paper will now consider this category in more detail. First, the (Daenerys) sub-corpus interestingly contains by far the highest number of *identified (anchored)* referents: 73. The reason for this abundance is that they are all entities that exist in some semantic relation to the central protagonists of the text, especially the referent DAENERYS: they are referents that are first expressed as, e.g., *her dragons*, *her heart*, *your dragon eggs*, *her faith*, *her nipples*, or *her father*. Even some referents that are ultimately introduced via proper names have accompanying common NPs with possessive determiners, e.g., *her splendid brother Rhaegar, her handmaid Doreah*. In relation to the referent DOREAH, there are referents introduced as *her soft golden hair*, *her lips and hands*, *her horse*, and *her saddle*. For DRAGONS OF DAENERYS, there are referents introduced as *their wings*, *their heads*, and *their sight*. Lastly, for KHAL DROGO, there are *Drogo's pyre* and *Drogo's people*. These referents are generally of three types, depending on the nature of the semantic relationship to the central referent: 1) the relation of possession (*her dragons*, *her horse*); 2) a filial relationship (*her father*, *her mother*); and 3) part-whole relation (*her nipples, her soft golden hair*, *their wings*). Referents of the same relationship types are found in the other sub-corpora as well, especially (Godfather): *their Consiglieres, their own trucks*, *his ashtray, his children*. Unless a referent introduced in this manner is given prominence of its own (e.g., DRAGONS OF DAENERYS, introduced as *her* dragons, with 42 occurrences), these referents are typically only involved in brief descriptions or singular events, which explains why they are so abundant on the one hand (they provide depth of detail in the narrative), but evanescent on the other (they do not play a significant role in the discourse and typically do not persist beyond their first and only occurrence).

Referents in the Identified (inferable) sub-category are even more numerous, in this case especially in (Pacific). The overall abundance of such referents is not unique to this corpus, as similar findings have been reported elsewhere: as Hellman mentions, "first-mention definites are in fact quite common" (196). Simultaneously, identified (inferable) referents exhibit low occurrence frequencies: their majority (191 out of 243) occur only once.

As has already been suggested, identified (inferable) referents are of two types. These correspond to Prince's containing and non-containing inferables. Significantly, of the 243 referents introduced into the text as identified (inferable), only 34 are introduced via an unmodified theNP. These referents, or rather, the forms of their first occurrence, are almost exclusively non-containing inferables[2] and so are identifiable through plausible inference (Prince 236). One such reference (the needle) has already been shown in example 4. Similarly, the reference the silver in example 7 is identifiable because the schema of a capture of a treasure galleon involves acquiring large quantities of precious metal, such as silver; and the referent of the introduction in example 8 is identifiable because the author of the text once again relies on the reader's ability to realize that books throughout history have typically had introductions.

7) The next year Commodore George Anson's squadron of six ships sailed for Cape Horn and the South Sea on a voyage which left few survivors, but which was saved from total disaster by the capture of the Acapulco treasure galleon off the Philippines. It took thirty-two wagons to carry **the silver** from Portsmouth to London after Anson's return,… (Pacific)
8) In 1748 the long-awaited official account of Anson's voyage appeared, and was in its fifth edition by the end of the year. (…) **The Introduction** stressed the value of accurate charts, global recordings of magnetic surveys, and proper surveys taken from naval vessels. (Pacific)

The majority of identified (inferable) referents, however, are containing inferables. Extensively modified NPs are common, e.g.: The first volume of John Campbell's mammoth collection of voyages and travels; the magical catchall substance of which heavenly bodies were imagined to be made; the mistake of assuming that Don Corleone could be held cheaply because of his past misfortunes. Their abundance especially in the written sub-corpora, together with their low median and mean occurrence frequencies, naturally stem from the tendency towards condensation and nominalization (Quirk et al. 1288-92). Such condensation may even specifically serve the purpose of limiting the occurrence frequencies of referents intended to be of low referential importance. As an example, the approach of global conflict with France compresses the required information into a single reference and eliminates the need to linger on trivial information over several utterances (as in the constructed example 9).

9) ~ A global conflict was approaching. It was with France.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: *indefinite* correlates with low (trivial) referential importance

Table 6 presents the statistical data for the five sub-corpora in terms of *indefinite* reference.

Table 6 Corpus Data for Indefinite First Referring Expression

SUB-CORPUS	NO. OF REFERENTS	MEDIAN FREQUENCY MEAN FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Spoken (S)	67	1 2.2	*some slips, some peculiar (əː) convention about hyphens, some research*
Daenerys (D)	70	1 1.4	*an infant girl, a knight's armor, cooked meat, water from her own skin, a long night's journey*
Godfather (G)	110	1 1.8	*a meeting of all the Families in the city, a cold drink, one aide, A Bocchicchio*
Relativity (R)	94	1 1.9	*magnetic fields, two deep discoveries, a region of space, computers, a compass, iron filings*
Pacific (P)	111	1 1.6	*individual explorers, a bridge between continents, a boy, a tale of treasure-seeking on the high seas*
TOTAL	452	1 1.8	

As with the identified category discussed earlier, the median value for the indefinite category is one. Simultaneously, the mean value is also below two. In this case, however, these numbers indicate that the originally proposed hypothesis is confirmed: the referents in the indefinite category tend to be of low (trivial) importance.

Considering he *indefinite* category in more detail, it is first to be noted that these referents are by far the most abundant. They also somewhat surprisingly have higher mean values than *identified (inferable)* referents. This is mainly due to the presence of several referents introduced via indefinite NPs that exhibit higher occurrence frequencies. These include the following referring expressions and their referents: *only about half a dozen people* (in the context of the discourse, this phrase refers to GENERIC STUDENTS; 20 occurrences) and *some slips* (the referent has eight occ.) in (Spoken); *an infant girl* (six occ.) in (Daenerys); *a meeting of all the families in the city* (10 occ.) and *a high police official* (eight occ.) in (Godfather); *magnetic*

fields (13 occ.) and *four powerful equations…* (10 occ.) in (Relativity); and *a group of pirates* (14 occ.) in (Pacific). Despite their higher frequencies, many of these referents intuitively have merely episodic roles, which is underscored by the fact that all their occurrences are typically concentrated within a single limited stretch of discourse, most typically in one paragraph. All the references to the referent GROUP OF PIRATES, for instance, appear within a single illustrative quote from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. On the other hand, three of these referents do acquire a more permanent status in the discourse, which signals that they are also referentially important. This is the case for *four powerful equations* and *magnetic fields*, both of which contribute to the topic of the discourse of (Relativity) in a significant way; *a meeting of all the families in the city*, which, it might be argued, is one of the core topics of the (Godfather) extract; and the GENERIC STUDENT referent: as the analysed extract concerns studying, this referent naturally appears in a prominent position.

4.4 First referring expression categories and frequency groups

So far, it has been shown that, across the entire corpus, all first occurrence referring expressions have surprisingly low median values: one for *identified* and *indefinite,* two for *unique (common)* and three for *unique (proper)*. It has also been shown that each category includes referents with significantly higher occurrence frequencies, which translates into higher mean values when compared to the medians. It might therefore be revealing to approach the issue in terms of the frequency groups. Rather than observing the average occurrence frequency values for each reference category, this section will consider the distributions of each referent category over the three frequency groups. The results are given in table 7.

Table 7 First Referring Expressions Across Frequency Groups

	Unique (proper)	Unique (common)	Identified (anchored)	Identified (inferable)	Indefinite
10+ occurrences	16 (16.1%)	3 (8.1%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (1.1%)
3-9 occurrences	35 (35.4%)	12 (32.4%)	20 (11.3%)	20 (8.2%)	70 (15.5%)
1-2 occurrences	48 (48.5%)	22 (59.5%)	156 (87.6%)	223 (91.8%)	377 (83.4%)
TOTAL	**99 (100%)**	**37 (100%)**	**178 (100%)**	**243 (100%)**	**452 (100%)**

The results corroborate what the preceding discussion has revealed: referents in identified and indefinite categories overwhelmingly exhibit low occurrence frequencies (1-2 occurrences) and are therefore of low (trivial) referential importance. There certainly are referents that belong to these two categories and that exhibit intermediate (3-9) or high (10+) occurrence frequencies; these referents are, however, much less common.

For unique reference, the proportions of high and intermediate occurrence frequencies on the one hand, and of low occurrence frequencies on the other, are much more balanced, where especially for unique (proper), it is almost exactly equal. This again suggests that referents introduced in this manner (and again, especially those introduced via proper name NPs) have a much higher tendency to persist in the discourse and be of higher referential importance. Nevertheless, it is significant that even in the unique reference category, the majority of referents exhibit low occurrence frequencies. This is likely due

to the role referents and their varying degrees of importance play in the structuring of discourse, as has already been suggested at the beginning of the paper. To maintain cohesion, there can only be a limited number of high-frequency referents. In other words, there can only be a limited number of discourse topics (Lambrecht 36ff.) which "glue" the text together. The exact number will naturally depend on the length of the discourse—this might bear further investigation. On the other hand, the number of referents that develop the topics (referents of intermediate/secondary importance) or provide richness of detail (referents of low/trivial importance) is not limited in this manner. Using many trivial referents does not break cohesion: it merely elaborates the narrative or the topic discussed.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions may be offered. It can be said that referents introduced into the discourse as *unique* (via proper names or name-like NPs) are more likely to persist in the discourse and so be of primary importance. This tendency has been revealed by the median and mean values, as well as by the distribution of referents in the five reference categories across occurrence frequency groups. The first hypothesis has therefore been confirmed. Referents introduced into the discourse as *indefinite* (via indefinite NPs) tend to be evanescent and so are of low referential importance. The third hypothesis has therefore also been confirmed. Referents introduced into the discourse as *identified* (via definite NPs) tend to be equally non-persistent and therefore also of low referential importance. The second hypothesis, then, has been contradicted by the data.

It is impossible to state these tendencies in more precise terms, however: for one, many *unique* referents with low occurrence frequencies (low importance) have been identified: these included referents of places, referents in negligible roles which are, however, "always there", and referents of general "historical" significance, which, however, are not important in the particular sections of discourse under investigation. On the other hand, although rare, there were *identified* and *indefinite* referents with high occurrence frequencies. Such cases will need to be properly accounted for in order to fully map the patterns of speaker choices of first occurrence referring expressions in relation to referential importance.

Notes

(1) Capital letters such as in this case are used to distinguish referents. This is done to avoid confusion with the referring expressions.
(2) The exceptions are nominalized adjectives expressing generic referents, i.e., *the sick*, *the stupid*, and cases where the definite article is combined with ordinal numbers, e.g., *Three days into the march, **the first man** died.*

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LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Tomáš Eštok

Queer Marxist Reading of Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* Four Decades Later

Abstract: *This paper explores the intersections of queer theory/politics and Marxism in Larry Kramer's play,* The Normal Heart. *Set against the backdrop of the 1980s AIDS crisis, Kramer's most prominent play presents not only a devastating health calamity but also a profound social and ideological crisis. The analysis aims to explore how the characters' socio-economic statuses influence their capacities to respond to the AIDS epidemic, thus drawing a parallel to today's socio-economic stratifications within queer communities. By examining the play through the lens of Queer Marxism, it becomes evident that the playwright's political program has the potential to inspire and inform the modern queer political movement and the American Left, both of which are currently intersecting at an exceeding rate. However, this potential is not often seeded in what The contains, but rather, what it chooses to omit or even misconstrue. While the play provides a comprehensive account of what queer liberation in the 1980s United States had to combat and contains elements of radical street politics which seem to be in almost full retreat within the 21st-century queer liberation movement, it suffers under the weight of homonormative talking points and the lack of calling for unified solidarities built upon a solid economic analysis.*

On June 5, 1981, the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention described five cases of a rare lung infection in previously healthy gay men in Los Angeles, California. This report marked the beginning of a decades-long fight against a disease now known as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In the entire world, and the US in particular, the HIV/AIDS crisis was not only a medical emergency, but also a political, social, and cultural battleground. Even though there is no inherent connection between homosexuality and HIV/AIDS, the mere fact that homosexual men were the first to be diagnosed with the disease was enough to forever cement the image of AIDS-spreading gays in the public consciousness. Michael Bronski (225) details three devastating consequences this had on queer Americans: the association of gay male identity with a deadly disease deeply exacerbated stigmatization; this stigma prompted discriminatory policies in insurance, employment, and education, notably barring HIV-positive children from schools; and the demonization of AIDS patients, especially those within marginalized groups, resulted in scant media attention and governmental support for education or coverage of the crisis. Just like any other epidemic, this one also became intertwined with broader moral and political contexts, with the metaphorical comparisons to the plague coming alive almost immediately, given that "(p)lagues are invariably regarded as judgments on society, and the metaphoric inflation of AIDS into such a judgment also accustoms people to the inevitability of global spread. This is a traditional use of sexually transmitted diseases: to be described as punishments not just of individuals but of a group. (…) Interpreting any catastrophic epidemic as a sign of moral laxity or political decline was as common until the later part of the last century as associating dreaded diseases with foreignness" (Sontag 142).

In the face of the Reagan administration's neglect of the HIV/AIDS crisis, grassroots organizations were compelled to step in. A key moment in this movement occurred on January 12, 1982, when a group of gay men met in Larry Kramer's apartment in New York City and established the organization known as the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). Among its founders, Paul Popham, a banker, took the role of president. However, Popham's more conservative tactics in addressing the epidemic contrasted sharply

with Kramer's aggressive approach, eventually leading to Kramer's departure from the organization. This conflict provided a backdrop of activism and dissent that influenced the creation of *The Normal Heart*, reflecting the intensity and complexity of the early responses to the AIDS crisis. The play itself has earned its author an undeniable place in the American queer literary canon, first and foremost because of its confrontational narrative style that was largely unheard of on the American stage. The contemporary reviews reflect this almost without failure. Writing for The New York Times, Frank Rich writes that "there can be little doubt that "The Normal Heart"' is the most outspoken play around – or that it speaks up about a subject that justifies its author's unflagging, at times even hysterical, sense of urgency" (Rich). Even in academic circles, Kramer's contribution to literature is closely connected to his "increasingly high-strung bleating (which) inspire(s) in contemporary readers feelings of admiration and disavowal" (Drake 196). The script itself is almost completely void of metaphors. Nothing gets to hide behind symbolism (bar the isolated symbol of the spilled milk), as that would irreversibly alter Kramer's primary intention to show the audience the simple truths of living with a life-altering disease that attacks your body and allows attacks from the outside, at the hand of the very society you need help from. All the dialogs in the play are therefore plain and direct. If there is a monolog, it is usually an angry rant instead of a thought-provoking soliloquy.

Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* appears within a rich context of American drama that explores themes of homosexuality and AIDS. As described by Cheryl Black and Sharon Friedman (89), early productions in gay and lesbian theatre were characterized by their experimental and campy nature, often staged in non-theatrical venues such as cafés and bars, which later became home to Off-Off-Broadway theatre. Works like Mart Crowley's *Boys in the Band* (1968) and Jane Chambers's *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (1980) explored the themes of homophobia and the hidden lives of their characters, reflecting the social realities of their era. The 1980s brought a significant shift with the onset of the AIDS crisis, prompting playwrights like Kramer to address the epidemic directly in plays such as *The Normal Heart*, alongside contemporaries like William Hoffman's *As Is* (1985). These works not only portrayed AIDS-induced human suffering but also critiqued societal misconceptions and governmental indifference, encapsulating the urgent socio-political climate of the time.Undoubtedly, upon its debut in American theaters in 1985 at Public Theater in New York City, The Normal Heart assumed a critical role in acquainting audiences with the profound struggles faced by gay men, decimated not only by the impersonal assailant of the HIV virus but also by a tangible and deliberate form of violence—socio-political apathy that verged on conscious malevolence. The year this play appeared on stage, HIV was already tearing through the world and, of course, the United States. By 1985, the CDC recorded more than 20,000 known cases of HIV/AIDS. Not until four years after the first cases were discovered and publicized, Ronald Reagan mentioned the word "AIDS" publicly for the first time. It was not until around this time that the development of the first widely accessible diagnostic test offered a glimmer of hope for better managing the epidemic. In 1985, the first international AIDS conference in Atlanta brought together 2,000 clinical researchers, healthcare professionals, and public officials to discuss issues like heterosexual transmission risks and the global scope of the epidemic. Despite its scientific focus, the conference faced criticism for excluding activists, community organizers, and people living with HIV/AIDS from key decision-making processes, revealing broader societal challenges in addressing the AIDS crisis. In many ways, it was precisely in 1985 that a huge shift in the perception of the epidemic appeared. As noted by David Salyer, in the general consciousness, "(Rock) Hudson's death in 1985 was (the general public's) first exposure to AIDS. Then, America's extreme political right wing and the usual pack of pseudo-Christian evangelical jackals seized the opportunity to demonize gay men. Reagan advisor Pat Buchanan proclaimed, "The poor homosexuals — they have

declared war against nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution." In the absence of any prudent, discerning national leadership on the subject, people living with HIV or AIDS were routinely divided into two categories: "innocent victims" and "people who deserve to get AIDS"" (qtd. in Gillett 33).

As with any politically charged theatrical work, it launched a political project that endures, inviting evaluation against the evolving landscape of political consciousness and its expanding vision. Reviewing his life and writings, it cannot be claimed that Kramer, unlike Tony Kushner, for example, would be a self-proclaimed playwright of the Left. Kramer's personal politics are surely not conservative and are deeply rooted in some form of radical militancy, often focused on the liberation and emancipation of minorities, perhaps best described as neo-liberal. The choice to read the play through the lens of the political Left is purely deliberate, stemming from a desire to see if and how politically engaged art from the 1980s can maintain its relevancy some forty years later, at a time when the concepts such as queer anti-capitalist movements are hotly contested and debated. This paper aims to succinctly explore the possibilities and limitations of The Normal Heart as they appear today, almost forty years after its publication and premiere, with regard to still developing queer and leftist politics. How and to what degree can today's queer liberation be informed by the play and the political project contained therein?

Marrying queer and Marxist politics has never been an easy task, but still a pivotal one, as finding a way to introduce the concept of a queer Marxist future invites us to reimagine the foundations of society beyond the constraints of current capitalist structures and heteronormative logic. The intricate relationship between capitalism and queer identities, as explored by Kevin Floyd in his paper, *Making History: Marxism, Queer Theory, and Contradiction in the Future of American Studies*, and, in the present decade, Holly Lewis in her book, *The Politics of Everybody*, underscores the necessity of a dialectical approach that scrutinizes how economic systems shape, commodify, and often limit queer expressions and communities. Floyd's analysis, focusing on the historical entanglements of queer theory and Marxism, reveals the embedded contradictions of capitalism that both enable queer visibility and constrain its radical potential. Similarly, Lewis's critique of the mainstreaming of queer movements within neoliberal agendas highlights the urgent need for queer politics to reclaim its transformative power by aligning more closely with anti-capitalist, leftist principles. The gay liberation movement, emerging as part of the New Left in the late 1960s and 1970s, sought to dismantle societal norms and legal restrictions that oppressed queer individuals. This movement challenged not only sexual and gender norms but also aligned with broader struggles for civil rights, feminism, and anti-imperialism. As described by Valocchi (456–459), the political Left influenced the early gay liberation movement by providing a framework of coalitional politics and a multidimensional analysis of oppression, which included heterosexism alongside capitalism, racism, and sexism. The ideological resources from the New Left allowed gay activists to develop a collective identity that linked their struggle for sexual liberation with broader revolutionary goals. Additionally, the organizational flexibility of the New Left facilitated the emergence of the Gay Liberation Front, which embraced a multi-issue, revolutionary approach to activism. A queer Marxist future, therefore, envisions a world where the liberation of queer identities and communities is intrinsically linked to the dismantling of capitalist structures, advocating for a society that champions economic justice, social equality, and the eradication of all forms of oppression. This future demands a reevaluation of our collective priorities, encouraging solidarity across diverse movements to forge a path toward a more equitable and inclusive world.

One of the principal critiques of Kramer's magnum opus has always been its inclination towards what we now recognize as homonormative tendencies. Homonormativity can be described as the adoption of heteronormative ideals and constructs within LGBTQ+ culture and identity. It operates under

the assumption that the norms and values of heterosexuality should be emulated by homosexual individuals, thereby selectively privileging cisgendered homosexuality that conforms to societal norms of coupling and monogamy as more acceptable or worthy of social recognition. Lisa Duggan (50) characterizes it as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption." The play's lead character and Kramer's mouthpiece, Ned Weeks, vocally admonishes the history of gay activism for not focusing on civil rights, but what he calls "promiscuity":

> NED: I said we're all cowards! I said rich gays will give thousands to straight charities before they'll give us a dime. I said it is appalling that some twenty million men and women don't have one single lobbyist in Washington. How do we expect to achieve anything, ever, at all, by immaculate conception? I said the gay leaders who created this sexual liberation philosophy in the first place have been the death of us. Mickey, why didn't you guys fight for the right to get married instead of the right to legitimize promiscuity? (Kramer 86)

This single line both corroborates and problematizes the critique of Kramer's approach to the political nature of the matter at hand. The final two sentences, without doubt, stand as a prime example of what Dirk Visser (190) criticizes with the following assessment: "Larry Kramer's AIDS discourse is laden with the same moral connotations of guilt and retribution that once surrounded the plague. (…) Kramer underlines these connotations by surrounding AIDS with the rhetoric of irresponsible lifestyles and illness as retribution." This criticism stems from the fact that Kramer loses sight of the AIDS crisis as an entity existing outside of the realm of morality. Additionally, relating fast-spreading infectious diseases to the plague is nothing new in our society, but it is usually a forte of those whom Kramer himself would, alongside his partners at ACT-UP, fight against. During the height of the AIDS epidemic, people "most committed to drawing moral lessons from the AIDS epidemic, such as Norman Podhoretz, are those whose main theme is worry about America's will to maintain its bellicosity, its expenditures on armaments, its firm anti-communist stance, and who find everywhere evidence of the decline of American political and imperial authority" (Sontag 150–151). Even Kramer's contemporaries and colleagues took a critical stance on the playwright's portrayal of AIDS. Robert Chesley outright condemns Kramer's writing, saying: "Read anything by Kramer closely. I think you'll find that the subtext is always: the wages of gay sin are death. (…) I am not downplaying the seriousness of Kaposi's sarcoma. But something else is happening here, which is also serious: gay homophobia and anti-eroticism" (qtd. in Emery 74). It could be asserted that what Chesley called gay homophobia closely corresponds with today's definition of heteronormativity as defined beforehand. In his possibly understandable rage, Ned repeatedly reiterates heteronormative talking points, sometimes more subtly, and sometimes very bluntly: "When are we going to admit we might be spreading this? We have simply fucked ourselves silly for years and years, and sometimes we've done it in the filthiest places" (Kramer 100). Even outside the textual reality of *The Normal* Heart, the play itself preserves the legacy of homonormativity and its twin sibling homoliberalism, defined as the advancement in economic, political, and social rights for homosexuals who conform to normative behaviors and appear heterosexual, often marginalizing other sexual minorities viewed as unable to assimilate. It succeeded in "redirecting the queer agenda toward a pragmatic, integrationist program of homoliberalism. This is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that two recent award-winning revivals of The Normal Heart, one off-Broadway (at the Public Theater in 2004) and one on Broadway (at the Golden Theater in 2011) did little

to foment political outrage about the persistence of AIDS or its transformation into a global phenomenon but succeeded in generating considerable amounts of money and support for same-sex marriage referendums" (Warner 25). A more nuanced representation of homonormative proclivities within the play is Ned's relationship with his brother Ben. Even though Ned's character is "out and proud", he repeatedly seeks approval from him, which means that "what seems to be Ned's proud voice of anger proves to be the frustrated voice of a gay man still ridden by self-guilt, who fails to get his brother's approval for his way of life. He may not be a closeted gay man, but he has not succeeded either in freeing himself from straight prejudice" (Visser 183). Similarly, Kramer might be an "out and proud" playwright hell-bent on portraying what living with AIDS means for the society, but he (inadvertently) turns to the heterosexual world as if to seek its approval, trying to convince it that gay men belong to the "boys' club". It would be easy to end the analysis of Kramer's play on this note, but a question arises: What purpose would that serve? *The Normal Heart* has its position in the queer literary canon and that position is undeniable. It can be admired, and it can be dismissed. It can also be approached from none of these angels. I believe the issues connected with the play's shortcomings can be utilized in shedding some light on the previously mentioned effort to intersect queer and Marxist politics.

David Bergman (128) postulates that Kramer has "(a) habit of responding to political events as personal affronts, of transforming impersonal bureaucracies into individual bogeymen." I see this statement as only half-right and argue that *The Normal Heart*, although not outwardly and possibly not even consciously, includes some levels of critique aimed at the systemic failures of the 1980s neo-liberal, capitalist society. The aforementioned Ned's line starting with the critique of "rich gays" fits in handily. Given the intricacies of the argument, it can be said that Kramer, through Ned's exhortations, anticipates a critique similar to Lewis's observations on the economic disparities within the queer community: "Should we be surprised that the queer rich have failed to fund social justice foundations for the queer poor and instead use their money to selfishly advance their own propertied interests? Take out the word queer and we find the status quo" (Lewis 235). Despite appearing to embrace a homonormative perspective, Kramer inadvertently sets the stage for a dialogue that transcends mere individual blame, pointing towards systemic critique. This perspective echoes Lewis's contention that the struggle for queer rights cannot be divorced from broader class struggles. Hence, Kramer's work, when viewed through the prism of Lewis's critique, suggests that true progress requires solidarity beyond the confines of the queer community, advocating for a collective approach that addresses the root causes of oppression.

It is precisely the absence of such solidarities in *The Normal Heart* that stands behind the inefficacies of Kramer's political program. Even at points where the possibility of establishing them is mentioned, Kramer chooses a rather grotesque cop-out and does not revisit the idea anywhere else in the play:

> MICKEY: I'm worried this organization might only attract white bread and middle-class. We need blacks…
> TOMMY: Right on!
> MICKEY: …and… how do you feel about lesbians?
> BRUCE: Not very much. I mean, they're… something else.
> (Kramer 30)

That being said, Kramer rightly points out the necessity for organized queer street politics. Ned repeatedly beseeches Bruce to engage in picketing the white house, engaging in civil disobedience, and tying up the traffic. Additionally, he criticizes the retreat of gay men into their own safe spaces:

NED: Bruce is in the closet; Mickey works for the Health Department; he starts shaking every time I criticize them—they won't even put out leaflets listing all the symptoms; Richard, Dick, and Lennie owe their jobs somehow to the mayor; Dan is a schoolteacher; we're not allowed to say his last name out loud; the rest are just a bunch of disco dumbies. I warned you this was not a community that has its best interests at heart.
(Kramer 50)

Historically, the fear of being outed and facing subsequent employment discrimination was a significant concern for many gay men, which is reflected within Kramer's narrative. In today's Western world, while coming out still presents its challenges and risks, it has undeniably become a more navigable path for many. This evolution raises questions about the current retreat from more radical demands within the queer movement. Through the characters of Bruce, Mickey, Tommy, and others, Kramer blames fear and, paradoxically enough, the need to please the heteronormative world. But what is to be "blamed" nowadays? Holly Lewis (211–212) offers insight into this phenomenon, suggesting that as safe spaces became essential refuges from societal prejudices, universities emerged as pivotal sanctuaries for the queer movement and other identity-based movements. With the diminishing of accessible public spaces, universities not only provided a protected environment for education and self-reflection but also boasted a rich history of activism. However, the transition towards academic settings did not catalyze a revolution as much as it fostered support networks and introspection opportunities. The decline of street activism and gay liberation is often attributed to the ascendancy of postmodernism, which prioritizes fragmentation and particularity over unity and relation. Yet, it is critical to acknowledge that the move away from organized queer street politics was not solely influenced by academic discourse. The broader socio-economic context, characterized by neoliberal reforms, the privatization of public spaces and media, and targeted attacks on working-class unity, likely played a more significant role in this shift. At this junction, it is important to mention the incongruent nature of the origins of queer theory as such. While it is generally accepted that it was born within the confines of academia and drew inspiration from Foucaultian thinking, post-structuralism, and post-modernism, Stein and Plummer (181) disagree that it is solely the product of this new queer movement, stating that "(it) is indirectly related to the emergence of an increasingly visible queer politics, a confrontational form of grass-roots activism embodied in ACT UP, Queer Nation, and other direct-action groups during the last decade."

Within *The Normal Heart*'s two-hour run, the author frequently revisits the topics of money, wealth, and economic distribution both on personal and wider, social levels. There is a running dispute between Ben Weeks and his brother Ned on the former's dream to build an expensive house where he would move with his family and the latter's inability to secure regular income. Later on, Ned becomes furious with his brother, accusing him of unwillingness to help him and his cause. Among personal reproaches, Kramer placed a very concrete money-related point of contention: "…two million dollars—for a house! We can't even get twenty-nine cents from the city" (Kramer 74). Even in one of the closing scenes of the play, where nearly-dead Felix visits Ben Weeks, Kramer focuses on Felix's will and his desire to bequeath his sea-side piece of land to Ned, along with the money from his insurance policy. Concurrently, Dr. Emma Brookner fights with presumably an NIH representative over their unwillingness to fund her research:

EMMA: The paltry amount of money you are making us beg for—from the four billion dollars you are given each and every year—won't come to anyone until only God knows when. Any way you add

all this up, it is an unconscionable delay and has never, never existed in any other health emergency during this entire century.
(Kramer 77)

Kramer seems to understand the importance of money and wealth distribution, rightfully pointing out the detrimental impact of the initial withholding of proper funding on battling the AIDS crisis. Still, his critique of wealth inequality does not go deeper, allowing grace and understanding for why gay men "fell into the orgy rooms and we thought we'd found heaven" (Kramer 102). But what was the cause behind so many young queer people finding themselves in these "orgy rooms"? Naturally, existing in communities and fostering healthy social networks was not as easy as it is nowadays, at least in the US. The possibilities for the queer youth to function in safe and open spaces were largely limited by their income. "Open lesbian and gay life has thrived primarily in commodified forms: bars, restaurants, stores, coffee shops, commercial publications, certain styles of dress and personal grooming, commercialized Pride Day celebrations with corporate sponsorship" (Sears 104). Ned's belief that gay men should have moved away from hidden, unsanitary places to safer places was and still is contingent upon economic and social standing. It is apparent that "the queerer you are, the fewer safety nets exist to hold you up or bounce you back from the abyss" (Hollibaugh). Back in the 1980s and 1990s, this was particularly true for low-income African American men.

The African American men who contracted AIDS problematize Ned's proposed root of the problem and its solution even further. For these men, the simplistic suggestion that altering sexual behavior alone could control the spread of AIDS ignores the complex interplay of socioeconomic factors that uniquely affected them. Tony L. Whitehead's research illuminates this complexity, stating, "Factors related to poverty, cultural differences, differential access to care, and distrust of the formal health care system, combined with other factors, are making the challenge of AIDS a difficult one, particularly with regard to African Americans and other ethnic minorities" (Whitehead 412). This highlights how deeply socioeconomic status and racial inequalities influenced the capacity of individuals to modify behavior in line with public health directives. In the context of HIV/AIDS, the economic disenfranchisement experienced by low-income African American communities left little room for the implementation of public health advisories that seemed more feasible in economically stable, predominantly white populations. Thus, while Kramer's play might critique the promiscuity within the gay community as a vector for AIDS, it overlooks how access to resources that could prevent the disease's spread was not merely a matter of public health policy but of racial and economic justice.

Even today, *The Normal Heart* remains one of the most influential queer literary pieces in the American canon, especially when concerning politically engaged drama and literature informed by the 1980s AIDS crisis. Kramer's playwrighting is strengthened by his work as an activist and his lived experience as an eye-witness to the horrors of the epidemic. His program for queer politics, formulated on the basis of visceral outrage, has undergone much scrutiny over the years, and today, at a time when queer politics in the United States is aligning its trajectory with the politics of the Left, it is up for inspection again. *The Normal Heart* appears to include glimmers of what modern queer politics could incorporate into their program – a starting point or a blueprint originating in the decade of massive queer emancipation and resistance, but there are certain limitations and gaps that become visible over time. The play sometimes lapses into a homonormative perspective, emphasizing conformity to heteronormative ideals within the gay community, which can marginalize more radical elements of queer activism. Additionally, Larry Kramer's focus on a specific segment of the gay community—predominantly affluent, white men—overlooks the

diverse and intersectional experiences of the broader LGBTQ+ spectrum, including women, people of color, and transgender individuals. These aspects underscore a critical reflection on the play's relevance and adaptability to contemporary queer politics, which seeks to embrace a more inclusive and intersectional approach in its fight against ongoing and new forms of marginalization.

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Tomáš Hostýnek

New Perspectives on Octobriana – the Return of an Enigmatic Comic Book Superhero

Abstract: *The objective of the presented paper is to investigate the latest iterations of Octobriana – perhaps the most elusive and enigmatic comic book superheroine with a distinctly Czech (Czechoslovakian) origin. A character that Petr Sadecký once conceived of as the embodiment of the ideals of the Russian Revolution, battling against both Soviet and American oppression, has since witnessed a number of remakes or re-imaginings thanks to virtually non-existent copyright laws. The most recent attempts at bringing this character back to life have been made by Canadian/UK Publisher Dead Good Comics in a series titled Octobriana and the Russian Underground published from 2021 onwards, and by Marek Berger and Ondřej Kavalír in a comic book simply titled Octobriana in 2023. Rooted in comic book methodology – e.g. narratology, semiotic analysis and New Historicism – the author will explore storylines, visual aspects, symbols, plot devices and other relevant features of these particular comic books with the intent to compare and contrast both versions of Octobriana. Such a comparative analysis may help offer new perspectives on the study of comic books, various superhero tropes, the East-West dynamic, and counter-factual past, present and future.*

1. Introduction to Female Comic Book Superheroes

Comic book superheroines have, historically speaking, always experienced more challenges when appealing to a wider readership than their male, and oftentimes more successful, counterparts. This coming-of-age struggle for recognition has accompanied female-led comic books since their very beginnings and may well have emanated from a multitude of reasons, possibly owing to stereotypes, prudishness or conservatism (Prokůpek 1). Thus, superheroines have battled not only their foes, but also stigmatization, prejudices and social norms that would take decades to overcome. While the origins of comic books as a pop-culture medium can be traced to the 2nd half of the 19th century, it took almost another hundred years before a stand-alone series starring a woman as its main protagonist would emerge (Prokůpek 2).

This primacy belongs to *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle,* a feminine version of Tarzan, whose fantastic stories featuring an athletic, blonde-haired woman in a revealing outfit were first published in America as early (or as late) as 1942 (Fiction House), a few months prior to the much-anticipated arrival of a DC Comics icon – *Wonder Woman.* Although there are no specific circulation data from the first two decades of *Wonder Woman*'s comic book series, in 1960 the general circulation of one issue was estimated to be at approximately 210 000 copies, making it a rather lower-tier superhero book at DC. This number further plummeted to mere 52 145 copies by 1984.[1] Such mediocre numbers pale in comparison to the circulation of e.g. *Captain America* whose sense of patriotism and resolve in the face of Nazi Germany captivated voracious readers to the point of selling nearly one million copies with every single issue (Hostýnek 2024: 2, Kukkonen 100–104). This further demonstrates the uphill battle female superheroes experienced en route to comic book mainstream.

A breakthrough moment establishing comic book heroines as a legitimate concept occurred roughly two decades later with the advent of *Barbarella*, a beautiful astronaut whose stories were conceived by Jean-Claud Forest in France and published in 1964. *Barbarella*, a product of the sexual revolution of the

'liberal 60s' rose to stardom thanks to her iconic laser gun as well as a relaxed attitude to sexual dalliances, while never appearing too lascivious or one-dimensional (Prokůpek 2). In her encounters she relied on her sex appeal as much as her intelligence in order to thwart dastardly plans of her enemies. It was precisely this emphasis on attractive visuals, overt sexualisation, skin-tight outfits, but also remarkable inventiveness and creativity that Sheena, Wonder Woman and Barbarella all have in common. Barbarella's pioneering success inspired the creation of well over a hundred comic book heroines (Saraceni 10–15), while Forest's original formula penetrated beyond the confines of the Iron Curtain and reached the keen eyes and ears of several Czechoslovakian writers and illustrators, who sought to borrow inspiration from the French original. Among those stood out Petr Sadecký, an alumnus of cinematography at the Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

1.1 The Origins of Octobriana – a Cold War Anti-Hero

Owing to the liberal atmosphere of Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s during which the manacles of the Iron Curtain were briefly lifted, enabling many to more freely interact with the West, Sadecký was touring Western Europe and became captivated by Barbarella's adventurous escapades. Prokůpek (5) opines that upon Sadecký's return, his enchantment with the French femme fatale motivated him to entertain the idea of creating his own comic book series with the alleged intent of selling it to a Western publisher and make profit. After having invited his high school friends Burian and Konečný that were meant to provide the visuals for a project codenamed *Amazona*, Sadecký began working on the script.

However, this friendly cooperation would soon come to a halt, because as early as 1967 Sadecký, possibly motivated by the allure of self-enrichment, double-crossed his friends, migrated abroad and took the unfinished project with him without informing either Konečný or Burain. Such a cowardly instance of intellectual theft, though, found fertile soil in Great Britain and the USA. Sadecký, in an imaginative turn of events, decided to rebrand Amazona as *Octobriana*, augmented her original appearance by adding an instantly recognizable symbol on her foreheard – a red communist star, and presented her as a product of a fictional Soviet underground group called People's Political Pornography (PPP, Prokůpek 5). Thus, Octobriana, a blonde-haired, scantily clad superheroine with imposing physical features, whose name was clearly referencing the events of the October Revolution in 1917, and who was supposed to symbolize Pre-Stalinist communism (in what the author humorously titled vanilla communism), was born.

Sadecký managed to have a book published titled *Octobriana and the Russian Underground* which contained two unfinished stories – *The Living Sphinx of the Kamchatka Radioactive Volcano 1934* and *Octobriana and the Atomic Suns of Comrade Mao* released first in Great Britain in 1971 and the following year in the USA (Sadecký). While Octobriana's true origin story is surrounded by an air of enigma, it allures to a combination of Soviet engineering and Mayan legends. In her stories the original Octobriana travels in a round-shaped time machine, defies the unstoppable marching of time, protects the down-trodden and fights against all forms of oppression (Sadecký 2–5). These and other aspects – such as mercilessness, anti-systemic defiance, scarcity of text, Cold War setting, or visual grittiness – are what many later adaptations of Octobriana have in common, such as *Octobriana* (published in Great Britain between 1996–1997) or *Octobriana: The Samizdat Edition* (2011). Importantly, Octobriana's stories, i.e. the brand, have remained unprotected by copyright laws, possibly thanks to her Communist origins and the notion of collectivism.

This has subsequently resulted in numerous adaptations as well as re-imaginings of her story, and greatly contributed to her resilience and longevity as a comic book icon (Prokůpek 8–12). Enchanted by her power of determination, British singer and actor David Bowie intended to make a movie about

her in 1974. Octobriana's tattoo also decorates the arm of Billy Idol.[2] While Sadecký's business gambit did pay off, his fraud was unravelled quite early on. Nevertheless, period media outlets took little interest in it and so 'his' character has stood the test of time. Burian and Konečný – Sadecký's initial co-workers – experienced severe discomfort and persecution in a 1970s Czechoslovakia due to allegations of collaboration, and would take years to have their reputations restored (Prokůpek 7–8).

2. Introduction to the study of comic books – an analytical framework

Comic books represent a combination of textual and visual aspects that function as a symbiotic whole. In other words, both parts bear commensurate significance. This means that any analytical framework ought to take this duality into account. Comic books, therefore, are best understood as an inter-disciplinary, multimodal medium that, consequently, also requires an interdisciplinary framework to work with, borrowing both from literary theory and visual arts (Kukkonen 20–25). For the purposes of the subsequent analysis of the two most recent adaptations of Octobriana the author devised a special framework tailored to the needs and specifics of comic book research, consisting of a set of three distinct instruments.[3]

Firstly, the literary theory of New Historicism introduced by Stephen Greenblatt (1989) will provide an instrumental anchor; one that examines both how the author's times affected the actual work and how the work itself reflects the author's times, while in turn recognizing that a work or product must be judged in the context in which it was written (Greenblatt 50–53). In this regard, the original Octobriana and its latest adaptations abound with historical as well as counter-factual references that borrow from, reflect, or comment on the cultural zeitgeist. Greenblatt further emphasizes the importance of context and the cultural and socio-political conditions surrounding a particular artefact (Greenblatt 58–62).

Secondly, the semiotic analysis will allow for an advanced interrogation of the meanings and messages that a particular medium communicates to the reader. Given the dual nature of comic books as products that feature both textuality and visuality, this particular tool will put into perspective various aspects and details of Octobrianas' journeys, ranging from symbols, objects, to icons and heavy stylization of the comic book visuals. Works by Saraceni (2003), Kukkonen (2013) and Mikkonen (2017) will be instrumental in better grasping the interplay between symbols (e.g. typed writing with a neutral visual side) and icons (realistic pictures and their form in which the reader perceives them, Saraceni 25–27, Mikkonen 150–152, Resslová 35–43).

Thirdly, narratology as a branch of literary theory will prove essential in capturing the overarching story, cross-references to Octobriana's other stories, as well as more personal, nuanced (sub)plotlines. As far as crafting a good story is concerned, comic books appear to have much more in common with TV shows or serial stories – in terms of structure, gradation, cliff-hangers. McCloud (7–8) opines that it is the very duality of comic books which profoundly impacts their narrative structure. On the one hand, comics are sequences of pictures that, accompanied by a text, tell a story. On the other, the readers are exposed to all depictions on one page simultaneously (Saraceni 74–75). This implies that the spatial positioning of images and narration are inextricably intertwined and should not be separated from one another. Indeed, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Together, this three-prong strategy should offer greater insight into the two abovementioned versions of Octobriana, the ways they communicate with the original, differ from each other, and, in some parts, resemble.

3. *Octobriana and the Underground* (2021)

In 2021, Canadian-British publisher Dead Good Comics began producing a brand new two-part series of Octobriana titled *Octobriana and the Underground*, which has been principally written and edited by Stu Taylor; a long-time comic book savant involved with the character since the early 1990s. Taylor can be credited with resurrecting this superheroine from slumber in late 2021 with the release of *Octobriana with Love*, itself a fitting wordplay on one of James Bond's famous espionage movies *From Russia with Love*. These new adventures of Octobriana loosely build up on the story of *Octobriana with Love*, and all editions can be purchased digitally at the official website *octobrianacomic.com* (the only legal distribution platform), as there is currently no paperback distribution planned. At this website there is also a special section dedicated to Octobriana's past, paying tribute to her Cold War origins and an act of intellectual theft. Taylor thus presents avid readers with a fully established comic book superheroine with a long history of fighting on behalf of the down-trodden, who "(...) leading a rag-tag group of freedom fighters, (...) travels the dimensional highways in her Wonder Machine, disrupting authoritarian regimes, overturning tyrants."[4]

Interestingly, rather than create a brand new origin story for his character, Taylor opted for the so-called retconning (retroactive continuity) of Octobriana's earlier stories and borrowing certain elements of the Czechoslovakian original. 'Retcons' represent a well-established literary device employed by authors of fictional works to increase their creative freedom by adjusting, re-purposing or downright contradicting 'facts' established by a canonical work of fiction before.[5] The underlining assumption behind many such 'retcons' is that the new story is worth telling despite breaking continuity with the original. This relatively common practice has been well documented in both Marvel and DC comic books, as well as books by Arthur C. Clarke (*Space Odyssey*) or even Doyle's own *Sherlock Holmes* series.[6]

The story of *Octobriana and the Underground* is set in a dystopian Britain ruled by Eleanor Powell's authoritarian Britannic Party. In the opening scene we witness Octobriana carrying a Ukrainian flag on a non-descript battlefield in the near future, possibly paying homage to one of the ongoing conflicts of today (Taylor 1). The reader is also introduced to Octobriana's appearance and battle outfit consisting of a pair of military jeans and a tank top. While this gear would hardly stand the hardships of modern warfare, the reader is later assured of Octobriana's immortality, thus making the choice of her outfit purely symbolic. Futhermore, she dons long blonde hair, the iconic red star on her forehead, and happens to be a physically imposing, athletic character with sensual curves akin to Sadecký's original manuscript. Nevertheless, her general appearance appears more tamed, polished, colourful and better suited to young audiences than the original. What follows is a convoluted, multi-layered plot revolving around Lucretia Hussain, a young vlogger destined to inspire a rebellion against Eleanor Powell. By having Octobriana and her team explore various parallel dimensions, alternative and counterfactual timelines, her escapades seem to have more in common with Marvel's *What if...?* television series that also centre on the idea of 'multiverse' or with the recently announced *LEGO Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy*, than with Sadecký's storytelling grounded in Cold War geopolitics.[7] The only constant in an ever-changing narrative is, ironically, Octobriana's mode of transportation into different eras and realities – the Wonder Machine, a ball-shaped space ship of mysterious origin. Nonetheless, *the Underground* remains nothing short of ambitious as it pits Octobriana and her loyal team against a cosmic witch called Baba Yaga helped by Mother Russia, who both threaten to terminate Hussain and destroy the very fabric of reality.

Taylor thus aptly borrows from Russian mythology as well as actual history by e.g. casting Rasputin as a supporting character.

Throughout this two-part series Octobriana, while always eager to use violence, maintains her sense of humour, quips, and delivers 'smacking one-liners' when facing her enemies. Her personality then appears to be based more on Tony Stark, Marvel's beloved comic book icon, rather than, e.g. Batman or Wonder Woman. While the story does not lack gravity or depth, Octobriana, the immortal hero, considers most of the perils a mere fun romp and thrill. However, she cares deeply about her 'comrades', feels physical pain, displays remarkable courage and leadership as the team seeks to complete the mission that was entrusted to them, and helps save multiple realities, including their own. Language-wise, Octobriana frequently swears, uses profane language as well as numerous Russian borrowings – e.g. 'comrade', 'bozhe moi (12), 'ryadovoy' (27), 'roubles' (21) that keep reminding the reader of her Russian origin.

Despite all the swearwords and action sets, though, our protagonist remains caring, principled and morally good with occasional smiles. This clear demarcation between good and evil is also complemented by the visuals. The antagonists are usually black-clad, physically repulsive with an unnatural colour palette (e.g. shades of purple and violet). Speech bubbles show a standardized pattern of black text against a white background with additional information provided in differently coloured rectangles. This goes in line with McCloud's (62–64) concept of 'narration as showing' in that visual narration serves to convey story information, too. As mentioned earlier, the entire two-part series *the Underground* presents itself more as family-friendly entertainment that would probably received a PG-13 rating were it a movie, because there are scarcely any displays of bloodshed, grittiness or graphic brutality. Octobriana's journey ends with the promise of another action-packed sequel.

4. Octobriana – the Czech re-imagining (2023)

In 2023, a Czech artistic duo consisting of Marek Berger and Ondřej Kavalír, both seasoned comic book creators, published their own voluminous adaptation of Sadecký's comic book character titled simply *Octobriana*, in a clear attempt to venture into uncharted territory and craft not only a new origin story for our superheroine, but also tell a compelling tale set against the backdrop of the Cold War. This Czech adaptation of Octobriana is thus best understood as a soft 'reboot' that maintains Octobriana's iconic appearance as well as several established devices (e.g. enigmatic cosmic powers or the Wonder Machine – here nicknamed the Kugelblitz) while offering a fresh perspective on a counter-factual, alternative history of the Cold War with this superheroine at the epicenter of a looming nuclear Armageddon (Berger, Kavalír 1–10).

The story takes place in the years 1971 – 1973 and presents us with an alternative geopolitical reality on the brink of an all-out war between the United States of America governed by President Ronald J. Dixon and the Soviet Union led by General Secretary Boris Brežnin. While their names remain purely fictional, a keen reader may uncover a strand of wordplays inspired by the 'actual' Cold War (e.g. Dixon vs. Nixon, Brežnin vs. Brežněv, etc.). This interplay of popular culture and geopolitics can be referred to as meta-convergence (Dittmer, Bos 9–15).[8] On p. 45 we, the readers, are introduced to Octobriana's origin story which is linked to Nazi-occupied Ukraine and shows a nameless, prodigious, highly intelligent child with a unique birthmark; a child that was immaculately conceived and born to a Ukrainian priestess after having been struck by lightning in the middle of a field. Liberated by the Soviet Union, this enigmatic child is then educated and raised under Soviet auspices and given her proper name – Octobriana – devised by Joseph Stalin in his moment of epiphany. Octobriana becomes a secret agent, and a weaponized tool

of Soviet expansionism that is regularly dispatched on high-stakes, perilous missions when all other means fail. However, she is soon abducted by a Nazi sleeper cell hiding in a clandestine base somewhere in Amazonia in an attempt to make her shift her allegiance. In a surprising turn of events she then taps into the supernatural powers of Lilitu (markedly similar to the original deity from Sumerian mythology) – a cosmic being bent on terminating mankind – confronts her, triumphs and sacrifices herself to bring about an era of peace, thus giving humanity one more chance. The end of the story hints at Octobriana's potential rebirth, but the Czech artistic duo has yet to announce any plans for a sequel. Therefore, the overall story appears more self-contained than in the case of *the Underground* and also more filtered through the minds of characters, possibly alluring to Mikkonen's concept of focalization (Mikkonen 145–169).[9]

Even this version of Octobriana conveys a sense of physical superiority, yet she also appears more mature, hard-line and merciless than the British-Canadian iteration. While the plot features a number of supporting characters, they mostly pale in contrast to Octobriana's lone wolf mentality, sexual ambivalence and the responsibility she carries squarely on her muscular shoulders. Interestingly, every chapter in this comic features a distinctly coloured subtone, thus evoking a particular sensory response (e.g. the red filter for scenes taking place in Moscow, the green filter for Amazonia, the blue filter for the Arctic Ocean). Unlike the British-Canadian Octobriana, the Czech adaptation relies majorly on gritty, disturbing and evocative visuals best suited for a mature audience, even featuring nudity and graphic bodily harm in numerous stripes. Furthermore, 'Czech' Octobriana demonstrates a scarcity of text, lending it a movie feeling. Several pages possibly serving as establishing shots are completely devoid of any speech bubbles. The remainder of the text is dotted with the usage of profanities, Russian and German borrowings ('Willkommen, mein Fraulein!', 30) as well as clever worldplays.[10]

In this regard both 'Octobrianas' share the same approach to crafting believable atmosphere by using language borrowings and having the heroines swear in their native tongue. Emerging from both comic books is the following question: 'What does it mean to be a hero?' Each Octobriana would answer this question differently. The former one would possibly emphasize the comfort she finds in having a team she can absolutely trust, the latter one would probably highlight her iron resolve in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. The author of this text is convinced that the dichotomy between the two 'Octobrianas' analysed above is best understood through the prism of the differences (as well as similarities) between Marvel and DC Comics. The former Octobriana's adventures certainly appear more Marvel-esque given their light-hearted nature, more colourful palette and a group of misfits led by a well-established Octobriana who serves one-liners and grins, whereas the Czech re-imagining would most likely receive a PG-18 rating owing to its graphic, violent visuals. Furthermore, its DC-like nature is complemented by taking itself considerably more seriously and having the hero be a subject that others act upon, only to gradually empower her in a coming-of-age story of searching for one's place in the cosmos. Both 'Octobrianas', while disparate in their intents, represent thought-provoking adaptations of perhaps the most enigmatic of all Cold War heroes, raise public awareness about a superheroine once deemed completely gone, and excel at exploring themes that matter to 21st century readers. Welcome back, Octobriana!

5. Conclusion

The objective of the presented article was to conduct a comparative analysis of two recent adaptations of an (in)famous comic book superheroine of Czechoslovakian origin – Octobriana. The initial chapter focused on briefly outlining the history of female comic book heroes and the many struggles and

challenges they have had to face when appealing to mainstream readers. Due attention was paid to the adventures of Sheena, Wonder Woman and Barbarella that all served as progenitors of a distinct sub-genre of comic books and inspired Petr Sadecký to craft his own superheroine from beyond the Iron Curtain. After a series of dramatic events including e.g. an intellectual theft Octobriana's original stories were published first in Britain and then in the USA. Soon, this heroine became a pop-culture icon, stood the test of time and continued its existence through many subsequent, loose re-imaginings.

The two adaptations subjected to our analysis – *Octobriana and the Underground* (2021) published by British-Canadian company Dead Good Comics and *Octobriana* (2023) created by Berger and Kavalír in the Czech Republic in 2023 – represent the most comprehensive iterations of the Czechoslovakian original in more than three decades. To properly investigate and contextualize both of them, the author devised an analytical framework consisting of three distinct tools – Greenblatt's New Historicism, semiotic analysis and narratology. Further embellished by and rooted in relevant literature, e.g. Saraceni's *The Language of Comics* (2003), Mikkonen's *The Narratology of Comic Art* (2017) and McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1994), the author then combined insights from the abovementioned books with the three complementary analytical devices so as to produce a multi-faceted, comparative analysis of both pop culture artefacts.

At first glance, both modern 'Octobrianas' demonstrate many similarities, especially in terms of physical appearance – muscular features, blonde hair, highly athletic and sensually developed bodies as well as the red star of the forehead – thus paying homage to her original features from 1971. Also, they both inhabit and travel in a giant flying ball equipped with advanced technology (the wonder machine or Kugelblitz). Furthermore, their lines contained within speech bubbles are frequently dotted by Russian borrowings, wordplays, and the usage of profane language without any filter. Both storylines – while ultimately resulting in dramatically different outcomes – feature global stakes and counterfactual timelines of the past, present and future. Counterfactuality itself thus happens to be a dominant plot device for these two stories. Anglophone as well as Czech Octobriana showcases the toughness of character, strong resolve and the determination to succeed against all odds.

Yet the way these two 'Octobrianas' pursue to achieve their objectives differs considerably. The former one is best understood as an established freedom fighter leading a rag-tag team of loyal side characters against oppressive regimes across space and time, whereas the latter one gained reputation as a Soviet spy working solo, who went rogue. While equally ambitious, Czech Octobriana appears more grounded in a parallel version of the Cold War and embarks on a more strenuous path of self-discovery in hopes of finding her true self. The Czech version also offers a new, re-imagined origin story of Octobriana and, while majorly borrowing from the 1971 original, presents a self-contained, standalone narrative. In *the Underground* Taylor opted for retconning his Octobriana with her past adventures, making the series feel more episodic crowned with a cliffhanger ending, quite unlike the movie 'vibe' Czech Octobriana conveys given the scarcity of text and multitude of establishing shots throughout the issue. The many disparities between these two 'Octobrianas' can, in the end be best grasped using the Marvel vs. DC Comics dichotomy. The Canadian-British version produced a quippy, sarcastic and more light-hearted heroine who sets on a cosmic, multi-dimensional freedom rave accessible to a young audience (with no blood involved), as opposed to Czech Octobriana who maintains a serious, tight-lip and mature composure even when surrounded by gory and graphic scenes of violence suitable, first and foremost, for adult readers. Ultimately, both adaptations succeed at capturing the spirit of the original, albeit in different ways, and offer contemporary readers a unique chance to acquaint themselves with updated versions of an enigmatic superheroine; versions that, perhaps inadvertently, complement each other and send a love letter to the original. *Vive la Octobriana*.

Notes

(1) The exact numbers are available at the following website: https://www.comichron.com/titlespotlights/wonderwomanvol1.html.
(2) As mentioned by Dead Good Comics on their website: https://www.octobrianacomic.com/.
(3) Many have also made a case for including comic books in school curricula – see Decker, Castro 2012 or Hostýnek 2024 – especially in courses dealing with general history.
(4) This vivid description is available at the following website of the British-Canadian publisher Dead Good Comics: https://www.octobrianacomic.com/.
(5) For a brief history of the word retcon, see the following website: https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/retcon-history-and-meaning.
(6) Interestingly, several videogames also had to be modified in the wake of 9/11 attacks so as to remove scenes referencing, both textually and visually, the Twin Towers. For more on this topic, see Hostýnek 2013.
(7) For a more detailed probe into characterization and narrative continuity, see Mikkonen's eponymous chapter (pp. 70–92).
(8) Dittmer's and Bos' book *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity* provides a comprehensive account of discourse and growing convergence surrounding pop-culture artefacts and their overreach into the real world.
(9) For more information on narrative techniques, see Kukkonen's chapter 'The Way Comics Tell it: Narration and Narrators (31–54)'.
(10) For more on the many ways popular culture artefacts operate with slangwords, abbreviations and even coin new words, see Hostýnek 2018 or Duff, Zappa-Hollman 2012.

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Antony Hoyte-West

Anxiety and Loss in a Brexit-era Novella: An Examination of John Fuller's *Loser*

Abstract: *The Brexit referendum of 2016 was a defining moment in the complex relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe. With 52% of the votes in favour of Britain's departure from the European Union, after over four decades of membership the United Kingdom became the first nation to leave the supranational bloc. Accordingly, this led to a great deal of socio-political, economic, and emotional upheaval as the country dealt with this momentous change and its implications for wider society both at the macro and micro levels. Its significance has also been dealt with widely in arts and culture, and this contribution examines the 2021 novella* Loser*, by the prize-winning author John Fuller. Through the prism of Brexit and the strong political and personal emotions it stirs, the book focuses on Graham, a grieving widower who struggles to adjust to this new reality. In exploring the interlinkage between the personal and the political, this study details how Graham's private expression of loss, grief, anger, and social marginalisation are portrayed, and how this and other events in the work can be related to the broader complexities of the wider Brexit debate.*

Introduction

As is widely-known, the Brexit referendum of 23 June 2016 represented a watershed in the complex relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe. After a lengthy and contentious campaign, 52% of the electorate voted in favour of Britain's departure from the European Union, and thus the UK became the first nation to leave the supranational bloc. Having joined the then European Economic Community (EEC) (alongside Denmark and the Republic of Ireland), in 1973 as part of that organisation's first wave of enlargement (see Álvarez López), the almost half-century ties between the UK and the continent thus entered a new era. Accordingly, the Brexit referendum presaged enormous socio-political, economic, and emotional upheaval in both the British and the European contexts. This momentous change had significant implications for wider society both at the macro and micro levels and to this end, the phenomenon also provoked numerous artistic, creative, and cultural responses, including in literature. The present study briefly examines one such work, the 2021 novella *Loser*, by the acclaimed author and Oxford professor John Fuller. Through close analysis of the text through the principal character of Graham, the article aims to provide an overview of the role anxiety and loss play in the novella amid the ever-evolving backdrop of Brexit.

Brexit: A brief summary

The Brexit referendum took place after a time of unusual political change in the United Kingdom. After many years of Labour government under Tony Blair and subsequently Gordon Brown, a Conservative-Liberal Democrat government under the leadership of David Cameron was elected in 2011. Indeed, coalitions were unusual under the Westminster parliamentary system, which favours strong majorities through the first-past-the-post electoral system (Prestwich et al. "Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Rule"). Negotiations with the Scottish National Party, which enjoyed a significant majority in the devolved Scottish Parliament, had led to a 2014 referendum on independence for Scotland, which resulted in a clear

majority (55%) choosing to remain in the United Kingdom (Rosney). Then, subject to growing pressure within the governing Conservative party and elsewhere, calls for a referendum on Britain's EU membership culminated in the events of summer 2016.

It is important to underscore that the Europe question has always been important in recent British society, particularly since World War Two. Whilst the overwhelming majority of continental Europe was invaded by Nazi Germany, Britain (under the leadership of Winston Churchill) remained a bastion against Adolf Hitler and was ultimately victorious against the Third Reich. The ensuing decades after the war were a time of immense and unparalleled change. Britain had been the pre-eminent global political and economic power with a vast empire that spanned the globe, but by the early 21st century it had entered the post-colonial era (Prestwich et al. "Britain Since 1945"). In addition to the loss of its empire and its socioeconomic and political primacy, the country also experienced de-industrialisation, with the exit or winding-up of primary and secondary industries such as mining and manufacturing leading to post-industrial social and economic problems in many affected areas (Warren et al.; Beatty & Fothergill, etc.).

It is also crucial to note that British society had also undergone enormous changes which came to the fore at the time of the Brexit referendum. These included immigration, initially from former British colonies and subsequently (following the post-2004 enlargement of the European Union) increasingly from former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (D'Angelo & Kofman 178). A further factor was the poor economic situation after the 2008 collapse of Lehman Bros and the global economic crisis, which caused the government to introduce wide-ranging austerity measures that affected the population; however, growing inequality and the rich-poor divide also proved problematic (see e.g., Tihelková "Unsafe as Houses"; Tihelková "Framing the 'Scroungers'"). In addition, the general sense of disquiet was amplified by various political scandals such as issues involving the parliamentary expenses of different Members of Parliament (Flinders).

A previous referendum on Britain's membership of the organisation had taken place under Harold Wilson's Labour government in June 1975, just a couple of years after the country had joined the then EEC under Edward Heath's Conservative administration, with over two-thirds (67%) voting in favour of continued membership (BBC "On This Day"). However, since then Britain's links with Europe had remained fractious. Britain remained outside several flagship EU policies, such as the Schengen zone and the common Euro currency, and the issue of EU membership was particularly important for the Conservative party; this stretched back to the 1980s and Margaret Thatcher's government, including her famous phrase "I want my money back" when referring to the EU rebate (BBC "Thatcher and Her Tussles with Europe"). In addition to several major political figures being against Britain's membership of the EU, a vocal section of the media was also against the organisation, where it was often portrayed as an overbearing negative external influence that was unduly meddling in British domestic affairs (see e.g., Alkhammash). Accordingly, contentious debates between the 'Leave' and 'Remain' camps – often invoking the spirit of the Second World War (see e.g., Bonnet) – took place up to the very day of the referendum on 23 June 2016. Though the result was often interpreted as being a 'surprise' (Cohn) – i.e., politicians may have felt that the populace would vote to maintain the status quo), the reasons underpinning it have been attributed to a mixture of populism, migration, political and cultural divisions, as well as conflicts between different value systems (e.g., Bartnik et al. "Wstęp" 12) and a weakened sense of a holistic European identity (see Carl et al.).

After much debate, discussion, and polemic at the domestic and European levels, Britain eventually left the EU on 31 January 2020; therefore, it is now considered a "third country" in EU parlance (see European Council). From a British perspective, this has ushered a prolonged period of uncertainty for

the country, no doubt complicated by the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northern Ireland question and the existence of customs borders in the Irish Sea, as well as domestic issues such as the death of the reigning monarch, Elizabeth II, on 8 September 2022, and the rapid succession of prime ministers around that time (Middleton). Noting the brief nature of this summary, there is of course a wide literature on Brexit comprising studies and analysis from many different perspectives and, at the time of writing, it seems that its legacy will certainly have an impact on British and European policies for many years to come.

Brexlit and John Fuller's *Loser*

The years since the Brexit referendum have been a time of uncommon instability for the United Kingdom. Indeed, many people took the decision personally, and – on the part of some sectors of society – there was a significant amount of soul-searching even a sense of anxiety and/or loss. As mentioned above, this has provoked manifold literary and cultural responses (see e.g. Alonso Alonso "A Posthuman Approach to BrexLit"; Beck; Eaglestone, etc.). Many of these have been the subject of academic analyses – as demonstrated by the chapters which feature in the 2018 edited volume *Brexit and Literature: Critical and Cultural Responses* (Eaglestone). Noting the existence of the double portmanteau term 'Brexlit' – i.e., literature inspired by the Brexit phenomenon (see e.g., Ashbridge; Culea & Suciu; Alonso Alonso "Posthuman Intersections in BrexLit"), it can be said that a new and growing genre of literature has emerged based on this stimulus which typically explores the intersection of themes pertaining to immigration, social class, uncertainty, and interpersonal conflict. By way of example, in 2021 the Polish journal *Porównania*, published by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, released a bilingual thematic issue devoted to the topic. Among its many contributions in English and Polish, these included examinations of Brexit in poetry (Pomeroy), drama (Kębłowska-Ławniczak), as well as in novels (Ferguson; Bartnik et al. "Krzywe lustra kryzysu" etc.). Indeed, reflecting that the implications of Brexit not only impact Britain but also other European nations, articles also feature analyses of literary responses from the continent, as demonstrated by the studies on Italian literature (see Karp; Rygielska)

As an example of a response to Brexit from a British writer, the 108-page novella *Loser* was published in 2021 by Shoestring Press. As detailed elsewhere, the book is by the prize-winning poet and author John Fuller (b. 1937) who is emeritus professor of English at the University of Oxford and an emeritus fellow of Magdalen College, one of the oldest colleges of the University (see British Council - Literature). As detailed in reviews of the book (e.g., Ovans; Hoyte-West "Book Review"), *Loser* is primarily the story of Graham, a grieving retiree in late middle-age; his cellist wife, Maddie, has recently died. It is an account of how he struggles to adjust to the loss of Maddie against the background of Brexit, with the main character displaying the interlinkage between the political and the personal. Graham is quite a difficult character; clearly very much to the right of the political spectrum, social class and money are important to him, and he also displays a somewhat alarming lack of compassion. Starting with his numerous grumblings about various related topics, the pivotal event in the story is when he brutally attacks a homeless person who breaks into in his shed (where his wife used to practice her instrument). Instead of seeking medical assistance, Graham leaves the severely injured young man there, seemingly in a state of suspended animation (the motif of Schrodinger's cat is a recurrent theme throughout the novella) which in many ways could be regarded as a metaphor for the general state of limbo after the Brexit referendum. The novella is also characterised by an interesting cast of secondary characters, such as Graham's children (who live away and with whom he has a distant relationship), as well as his neighbours, including the

local minister, Father Eustace, who provides moral weight to the novella and ultimately plays a key role at the book's denouement.

Portrayals of anxiety and loss in the novella

In examining the depictions of anxiety and loss in the novella, it is to be acknowledged that these are important and fundamental human emotions. For millennia, feelings of grief and loss have been one of the core themes of literature, as Aeneas's descent into the Underworld in search of his beloved Dido demonstrates (Virgil). On the other hand, anxiety – or at least, the medicalisation of it – could arguably be considered as a product of the 20th century (Starkstein 259-287). In the current century, this has been shown by the increasing prevalence of stress and panic (see Salecl, Rebughini, etc.) which has led scholars to observe the development of a "global anxiety culture" (Schapira et al.). This has been exemplified by the reactions to the threat and preventative measures caused by the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme of anxiety features in the novel from early on: "On occasions when Graham woke with a start from terrible dreams and found his chest fluttering, he vowed to make an appointment with his GP" (Fuller, p. 15). Here, the metaphor of his fluttering chest (his heart is not mentioned) evokes the imagery of a trapped bird captured in his chest – perhaps, in some way, an allusion to later on in the novella when the badly-injured homeless man is trapped in the pod. With its notion of waking up from unsettling dreams, the first part of the sentence also seems to allude indirectly to the famous opening line of Franz Kafka's early 20th century novella *Die Verwandlung* – "Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte" (Kafka "Die Verwandlung" 5)[1] – itself a horrifying tale of physical and emotional transformation.

Anxiety also features in Graham's subsequent appointment with his local doctor, a relative newcomer to the area but who has – much to Graham's discomfort – made himself at home socially, including among Graham's circle of acquaintances. In the surgery, Graham details his symptoms but opts for levity to mitigate his own worries:

> He decided to make another joke, a deliberate one this time. "Aren't we all anxious these days?" he said. "With this wretched government and everything."
>
> "Ah yes," said Dr Driffield. "The cut-backs. Quite."
>
> Graham hadn't meant cut-backs at all. He was thinking of the failure to deliver Brexit. Was his doctor, who didn't seem to drink gin or scotch like everyone else, a lefty? (Fuller 17)

Again, this scene blurs both personal and public anxieties. Graham's own unease at being examined by a doctor whom he has run into in distinctly non-medical social settings is also juxtaposed with wider societal anxieties not solely about Brexit and the drawn-out political process of cutting the ties with Europe, but also the legacy of austerity and the funding cuts to numerous areas of public and social services. As such, Graham's anxiety here serves to mirror the general disquiet both at the micro and the macro levels.

Another pervasive feature that illustrates the omnipresent role of anxiety is the usage of Graham's blood pressure readings at the end of certain sub-sections – "That evening his blood pressure was 190/69" (Fuller 36). These alert the reader to the fact that Graham is not well and suffering from hypertension. Therefore, it is unsurprising when, after attacking the homeless man and leaving him badly hurt, Graham

is admitted to hospital "with a suspected stroke" (Fuller 64), which is later diagnosed as a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). In this regard, given that it may be traditionally thought of as being linked to anger (e.g., see Everson et al.), Graham's high blood pressure could thus be a physical manifestation of his deep-rooted rage and resentment both with regard to his personal life as well as political events.

To turn to the second theme explored in this study, as previous reviews have also highlighted (see Hoyte-West "Book Review"), the concept of loss plays an important role in the book. Indeed, this is demonstrated directly to the reader through the novella's stark and impacting title – "Loser". The Cambridge Dictionary defines a 'loser' variously as "a person (...) that does not win a game or competition", "a person who is always unsuccessful at everything they do", "a person that you have no respect for:", or as "someone (…) that is in a worse position or has less value at the end of a process (Cambridge Dictionary). As has been explored elsewhere – for example, in the title of the well-known reality show *The Biggest Loser* (Hoyte-West "Weighty Words") – the multiple definitions of the noun encompass a wide variety of different aspects, many of which can be applied to various facets of Graham's character. This is clearly demonstrated at the opening of the novella, when he finds himself in his late wife Maddie's shed and is suddenly overwhelmed by her absence:

> But then, as on several earlier occasions, he had simply stood there in the middle of the pod and induced himself to weep. He didn't fully cry, but stood there clenching and unclenching his fingers with a tragic rictus on his face which he could see in his mind's eye, and felt to be appropriate to his feelings. "The poor widower", he thought, "reduced to indecision." (Fuller 1-2)

It is clear, therefore, that Graham is obviously in the deep throes of grief, and perhaps some of his cantankerousness and irascibility could be attributed to this. As such, noting that the "emptiness of the room seemed like a rebuke to the emptiness of his life" (Fuller 37), Graham's loss seems to accentuate his latent feelings of inadequacy: "Graham was reminded, in a flood of self-pity, how in fact his whole life had been a protracted escape from the emotional constraints of his childhood, the uncertainties, the wish to please" (Fuller 39). As detailed in a recent article in *The Guardian* newspaper profiling the American sociologist and author Corey Keyes, childhood experiences of trauma can lead to feelings of emptiness in adulthood (see Fox), and this seemingly contributes to Graham's own sentiments of feeling like he is a 'loser'. This is demonstrated by his emotional response and concomitant feelings of insignificance when he discovers an old diary of Maddie's and finds out that he is not mentioned in it at all. The complexes he has are also highlighted through his difficult relationship with his children, including a disastrous attempt to please his son and his son's new girlfriend when they come for a brief visit – in other words, he has lost the chance to have a deep and meaningful relationship with his own children.

Graham's mental state is also highlighted at other instances, with the concept of loss playing a key role:

> There were times when Graham wondered what it would like to lose his mind. He would stand in the middle of his living room not knowing why he had come in there when the moment before he had been sitting in the kitchen. He must have come to fetch something, but he had no idea what it was (Fuller 36).

Finally, the attack on the homeless man represents the culmination of Graham's pent-up anxieties, grief, and loss. In his rage at discovering the young man on his property, his temper gets the better of him: "He was losing it, was he?" (Fuller 60). Having lost his composure and embarked on a physical

attack, Graham becomes relentless in his savagery: "He went on kicking. And kicking. And kicking" (Fuller 62). Afterwards, when the gruesome event is over, Graham "had no rational thoughts about what had just occurred but he was aware that he had lost control of himself" (Fuller 62). And, taken in broader terms, there is also the impact of the consequences of Graham's behaviour – the loss of another person's life. Ultimately, at the novel's denouement, these combined losses can be said to coalesce into an omen of the potential loss of Graham's liberty, as incarceration is the presumable outcome of losing his cool.

Some concluding observations

To summarise, Graham's expressions of anxiety and loss are portrayed in various ways in *Loser*, and both aspects are intertwined with each other. On a personal level, his anxiety is depicted through recurring blood pressure readings, as well as through his visit to the doctor, the diagnosis of high blood pressure, and his subsequent TIA following the attack. At the macro level, as noted by his conversation with the doctor, it is fomented by his response to perceived political failures regarding the Brexit process. As suggested by the book's title, the multifaceted nature of loss is portrayed in the work. This includes not only the loss of his wife through her death, but also Graham's insignificance to the world and the loss of a relationship with his son and daughter. Linked to his poor health (and by extension, his anxiety), the novel also moots the possibility of Graham losing his own life; yet it is through his loss of control – and the loss of someone else's life as a result – that leads to the loss to the potential (and probable) loss of his liberty and personal freedoms. Accordingly, through the flawed character of Graham, the emotions of anxiety and loss in *Loser* help to provide an interesting portrayal of personal responses to Brexit at the micro level. As such, in adding to the development of the new genre of Brexlit, John Fuller's novella opens up distinct possibilities for further comparative research on literary reaction to phenomenon, as Britain, its culture, and its society proceed firmly into the post-Brexit era.

Notes

(1) In the English translation by Willa and Edwin Muir, the opening is rendered as follows: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams" (Kafka "The Metamorphosis" 89).

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In Love with Cleopatra on English Restoration Stages

Abstract: *The present study discusses two late early-modern versions of the Cleopatra story written for the English stage: Charles Sedley's* Antony and Cleopatra *and John Dryden's* All for Love *(both premiered in 1677). While modern criticism sometimes considers these plays as adaptations of Shakespeare's* Antony and Cleopatra *(c. 1604–8), this study argues that both of them offer a unique vision of Cleopatra's myth that is informed by the contemporaneous political climate in the country rather than by Shakespeare's tragedy. While Sedley's* Antony and Cleopatra *offers a critical image of King Charles II and his international policies (especially by means of criticising his relationship with his French mistress Louise de Kérouaille), John Dryden's* All for Love *gives an idealised image of the relationship of Charles and his mistress by casting it as heroic love.*

In her exquisite study on the reception of Cleopatra and her story in Renaissance England, Yasmin Arshad maintains that, by the end of the 16th century, the Ptolemaic Queen "had captured the European literary and artistic imagination in an unprecedented way" (8). Among the main stimuli for Cleopatra's cultural revival, so to speak, that Arshad mentions are the vernacular translations of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* that became the standard textbook of Roman history for early-modern European authors. Indeed, Thomas North's English rendition of Plutarch first appeared in 1579 and enjoyed its fifth edition by 1631, becoming the main source for Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Similarly, Jacques Amyot's 1559 French version inspired playwrights such as Robert Garnier, Nicolas de Montreux and, several decades later, Pierre Corneille. Moreover, the discovery of the so-called Cleopatra statue (in fact, the female figure was later identified as Princess Ariadne) in 1512 and its purchase by Pope Julius II "had an immediate influence on the literary and visual sphere", inspiring a number of Renaissance paintings, engravings and poems "portraying the Egyptian queen's suicide, often showing her death erotically" (Arshad 9). In short, Queen Cleopatra became a staple of shared European cultural consciousness and one of the best-known and most-alluded figures from classical antiquity.

If we focus just on the portrayal of Cleopatra on English Renaissance stages, we nowadays tend to see it chiefly through the prism of the Queen's "infinite variety", attributed to her by Domitius Enobarbus in Shakespeare's aforementioned tragedy (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.246). The English dramatic tradition of (re-)imagining Cleopatra's myth, however, had been much longer and richer than a single play. The first English attempt to turn Cleopatra into a dramatic character was made by Mary Sidney, sister to the courtier and poet Philip Sidney and a prominent literary figure of the Elizabethan age herself. In 1590, Mary Sidney translated Robert Garnier's tragedy *Antoine* (1578), focusing on the last hours of the lives of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Her English version (published in 1592 as *Antonius, A Tragoedie* and in 1595 as *The Tragedie of Antonie*) inspired the poet Samuel Daniel's closet drama *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* that begins with Mark Antony's death and ends with Cleopatra's suicide and which, although never staged for general audiences in its time, reached at least nine printed editions between 1594 and 1611. It was perhaps the success of Daniel's tragedy that inspired (the otherwise unknown) Samuel Brandon to write *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (probably never staged either and published only once in 1598), a re-telling of the story from the perspective of Mark Antony's wife and Cleopatra's rival. Yet another closet drama on the same theme was written by Fulke Greville, a politician during the reign of Elizabeth I and James I, who after the fall of Lord Essex in 1601 burnt the

manuscript of his play (which is often called *Antony and Cleopatra* in literature, although we do not know the original title) out of fear that it might be construed as a commentary on contemporaneous politics rather than a work of art (Rees 30). As we will see, the story of Cleopatra was especially prone to a political interpretation in the early-modern period, not just in Greville's case. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, which was written and staged at some point between 1604 and 1608 (see the discussion in Shakespeare 69–75), was thus the first Renaissance dramatic version of Cleopatra's story in English for non-elite audiences – but certainly not the last one: in the late 1610s, John Fletcher and Philip Massinger wrote the tragedy *The False One*, dealing with the romance between Cleopatra and Julius Caesar and the political machinations surrounding them, and in 1626, Thomas May's early Caroline play *The Tragedie of Cleopatra Queen of Aegypt* was staged (to be printed in 1639), showing Cleopatra as a "decadent and monstrous queen" to promote May's republican ideals (Arshad 215–16).

Somewhat less discussed (although not entirely obscure) is the reception of Cleopatra in the Restoration period, that is, the period between the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 and the end of the 17th century, when the Queen of Egypt proved to be no less appealing to contemporaneous artists, audiences and even politics than in the previous decades. Between the Interregnum and the end of the century, the English Plutarch with Cleopatra's story enjoyed numerous reprints, both in single- and multiple-volume editions. In 1663, an adaptation of Pierre Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1642), dealing with Cleopatra's relationship with Julius Caesar and her ascension to the Egyptian throne, was staged "with Great Applause" (Philips, title page) as *Pompey* at Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin (and subsequently by the Duke's Company in London). Its author was the respected poet Katherine Philips (who is sometimes credited as the first professional English female playwright) and the production, again, had strong political resonances in the atmosphere of complicated relationships between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland in the wake of the Cromwellian conquest of the country (1649–1653). In 1672, the Duke's Company staged yet another translation of Corneille's tragedy, *Pompey the Great*. One of its co-translators, Charles Sedley, in early 1677 wrote for the same company his version of the latter part of Cleopatra's story, titled *Antony and Cleopatra*. While Sedley's play was apparently successful (see Sedley, *Antony and Cleopatra* 190), it seems to have been soon suppressed by John Dryden's neo-classical tragedy *All for Love or, The World Well Lost*, first produced by the competing King's Company in December of the same year, that covers the fall of Antony and Cleopatra and the nature of their romantic relationship. The title page of the playbook famously boasts that *All for Love* was "Written in Imitation of *Shakespeare*'s Stile" (Dryden 2); thus it has been – largely unjustly – often labelled as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* rather than an independent dramatic piece. Dryden's play established itself as the go-to version of Cleopatra's myth for English audiences until well into the 19th century when Shakespeare's older tragedy "(began) to emerge from obscurity" (Novak 365). The special interest that the aforementioned Sedley had in Cleopatra's story, however, is evidenced by the posthumous 1702 publication of *Beauty the Conquerour: or, the Death of Marc Antony*, a revised version of his *Antony and Cleopatra* with some plot and character alterations and choruses between the acts (and the title page proudly advertising that the play was written "In imitation of the *Roman way of Writing*", perhaps to distinguish the play from the "Shakespearean" version of the story by Dryden (Sedley, *Beauty the Conquerour*, title page)). While never produced, this version, if nothing else, shows how persistent and versatile Cleopatra's story was during the Restoration period and how naturally it found (or rather regained) its home in the sphere of contemporaneous English drama and theatre.

The present article will discuss the two main Restoration versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story: Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's *All for Love*. Although both the pieces are still, by some

critics, seen as Shakespearean adaptations (see Owen 163), each offers a unique view of Cleopatra's myth that seems to be firmly placed in the context in which the plays were written. While the seeming parallel of the plays with Shakespeare (whose *Antony and Cleopatra* was never revived for the stage in the Restoration and never published in a separate impression) has been a subject of a number of studies, it seems to be more productive to consider them within the framework of Charles II's court and his policies which both the works seem to allude and, directly or indirectly, comment on. To serve this purpose, both Sedley and Dryden reshaped the image of Cleopatra and her relationship with Mark Antony and created unique visions of the two central characters of the story and their motivations, which is to a large extent independent of Shakespeare's achievement some seven decades earlier.

Antony and Cleopatra and *All for Love* opened in a politically tense atmosphere. In 1670, King Charles signed an unpopular alliance with his first cousin, King Louis XIV of France. Among the secret provisions of the treaty was Charles's promise to declare himself a Catholic and reunite the Church of England with the Church of Rome. Between 1672 and 1674, in alliance with France, England fought the naval war with the Dutch Republic, to the dismay of the English Parliament. Although Charles declared himself the winner, the conflict was a political disaster for England. In 1673, Charles's brother and heir presumptive to the throne, James, a Catholic convert, married the devout Catholic Mary of Modena. At Easter 1673, James attended an Anglican mass for the last time, failing to take the Anglican sacrament. Although the conditions of the secret treaty with Louis indeed remained secret for another century, a suspicion was growing in the country that the alliance with France was "part of a great plot to bring in Popery and arbitrary government" (Miller 119). Moreover, since the early 1670s, Charles had a French Catholic, Louise de Kérouaille, as his principal mistress, whom he granted a number of titles, including that of the Duchess of Portsmouth. The Duchess's nationality and religion made her widely suspicious among the English, and she soon became "the most powerful and the most unpopular of the mistresses of Charles II" (Pinto 116). The animosity between the court and the Parliament, along with the strong anti-Catholic sentiments across the nation, ultimately led to the (entirely fabricated) accusation of Roman Catholics in 1678 of a plot to assassinate the King and replace him with his Catholic brother – a political crisis that brought the country to the brink of another civil war and influenced the political development in England for at least decades to come.

Although originally a member of the "merry gang" of aristocratic wits associated with Charles's court and the King's personal friend, by the late 1670s, Charles Sedley as a member of Parliament joined the Whig cause that advocated for the supremacy of Parliament rather than the King and opposed the freedom of religion, especially for Catholics living in the country. Sedley was apparently furious when, at some point shortly after 1678, his own daughter, Catherine, became a mistress of King Charles's brother, James, who made her the Countess of Dorchester in 1686. During the 1688 Glorious Revolution that replaced James II on the throne with his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange, Sedley famously took the side of Parliament against the King, remarking, "Well, I am even in point of civility with King James. For as he made my daughter a Countess, so I have helped to make his daughter a Queen" (Pinto 174). This episode, of course, took place more than a decade after the premiere of Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra* and hardly could be applied retrospectively to assess Sedley's sentiments about the Duchess of Portsmouth; however, it demonstrates that for Sedley (and not only him) the intimate and political spheres were by no means separate and that the former could have a detrimental effect on the latter, especially when ruling the country was involved.

What we can be certain about, however, is the association of the Duchess of Portsmouth with Cleopatra at the time that both Sedley and Dryden wrote their plays. Novak points out that, in the Restoration, "Cleopatra was sometimes used as a subject by painters trying to depict ideal beauty" and calls attention

to anonymous complementary verses on the Duchess comparing her to another Cleopatra, whose beauty has the power to make Britain glorious in the same way as the first one made Egypt (Novak 373). Sedley's dramatic representation of Cleopatra is, however, much less flattering. She is cruel and capricious and, in the first exchange between her and Antony (the play begins after the lost battle of Actium, perhaps a reminder of the aforementioned Anglo-Dutch War), she demands that Antony execute the son of Seleucus, a commandant of one of the Egyptian border-fortresses and an apparent traitor, to secure her "love and honour" (Sedley, *Antony and Cleopatra* 1.2.183). Antony refuses, stating that "'Twere cruelty to kill the Innocent" (1.2.199) and, rather, begs Cleopatra for the boy's life. This episode is symptomatic of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship, in which Antony is dependent on Cleopatra at the expense of his political and military duties. When, in the final battle of Alexandria, Antony learns that Cleopatra is taken prisoner, to the dismay of his army he flies to assist the Queen rather than pursuing his advantage over Octavius Caesar:

> *Ant*(*ony*). My Queen ingag'd! To her relief lets fly,
> Death has more Charms near her, than Victory.
> Me in her Cause, the Legions that withstand,
> Must fall like Corn, before the Reapers Hand.
> *Can*(*idius*). Must we again a Victory forgo;
> This Queen was born to be our Overthrow.
> (4.2.40–45)

In the Roman camp, everyone is offended by Antony, who "makes a Queen the Partner of his raign" to the disgrace of Rome, explicitly stressing Cleopatra's "foraign race" (2.2.49–51) – a remark that might easily be construed as an allusion to Charles's foreign mistress. Not only that: for the Romans, Antony's "dotage on the Queen" (3.1.36) is something that not only contradicts Roman honour and code of conduct, but is also against natural order:

> (*Agrippa.*) was it ever seen
> A Woman rul'd an Emperor till now?
> What Horse the Mare, what Bull obeys the Cow?
> Nature that Monster Love does disavow(.)
> (3.1.37–40)

The shortcomings of Antony are even graver considering that Sedley depicts him as the sole defender of Rome against the tyranny that would come with his fall: as it transpires, Octavius Caesar has been using his sister as a mere pretext for the conflict with Antony, admitting in an aside that "Empire's our real quarrel, but I must / Her (Octavia's) virtuous Mind with no such secret trust" (2.2.72–73). Octavia, however, finds out her brother's real motives and, in a speech unique among other Cleopatra plays, presents herself as a fierce advocate of the Parliament (here in the form of the Roman Senate) against the arbitrary government, raising some of the main concerns of the English Whigs of Sedley's time:

> (*Octavia.*) To gain my friends, my Quarrel you pretend,
> But universal Empire is your end.
> *Rome*'s once great *Senate* now is but a name;

While some with fear, and some with Bribes you tame.
Men learn at Court what they must there repeat,
And for Concurrence, not for Council meet.
At least all such as think of being great,
They blindly labour at their own ill fate,
And dig up by the roots the tottering State.
(4.1.97–105)

Sedley's play is far from a romance in any sense of the word. His Cleopatra is an opportunist who takes advantage of Octavius Caesar's messenger's enchantment with her to make him "Swear to inform, what he (Octavius Caesar) will do with me" if Antony falls (3.2.183), disregarding both her country and her love; his Mark Antony is an easy-to-manipulate weakling whose "interest does her (Cleopatra's) Councel sway" (1.2.21); Octavius Caesar is a usurper, who wants to "seize the Empire", which he will either "die or hold" (3.1.111). Flaws of these characters have sparked a civil conflict among "Parties" and "Factions" (5.1.246) – a very contemporaneous and evocative terminology – that, with Octavius's victory, is settled but serves as a powerful warning. Susan J. Owen argues that "Sedley's treatment of the issue prefigures Whig tragedy" (163), a politically topical genre that became frequent during the Exclusion Crisis when the English Parliament repeatedly attempted to exclude James from succession (1679–82). The critical message of Sedley's piece is underscored by Octavius Caesar's final tercet over Antony and Cleopatra's corpses, "Let no man with his present Fortune swell / The Fate of growing Empire who can tell? / We stand but on that Greatness whence these fell" (5.2.192–94). While Shakespeare's Octavius Caesar laments the death of a "pair so famous" (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.359) that evokes pity even in their enemies, Sedley's Caesar's words are but a grim warning for the ones in power against Antony and Cleopatra's fate.

Unlike Sedley, Dryden remained on the King's side during the years of crisis. The title page of the playbook of *All for Love* proudly calls the author "Servant to His Majesty" and the work is dedicated to Thomas Osborne, a Tory (Royalist) politician and peer and one of the leading figures in Charles's government in the 1670s. During the Exclusion Crisis, Dryden wrote pamphlets and poems lampooning Whig politicians, especially their leader, the Earl of Shaftesbury. In the mid-1680s, Dryden even converted to Catholicism and, following the Glorious Revolution, he refused to take the oaths in support of the new regime, which cost him his offices of Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal (King 3–4). Since his play immediately followed a highly politicised version of the same story, it is only logical that the differences in both playwrights' personal ideologies are reflected in the different ideologies of their works.

What Dryden's and Sedley's pieces have in common is their focus on the last phase of the conflict between Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar, following Antony's loss at Actium and ending with the deaths of the central couple. While Sedley, however, is generous with his treatment of space and time, constantly switching between the Roman and the Egyptian camps and including both battles and more intimate scenes, Dryden adheres to the Aristotelian unities and confines his action to Alexandria on the last day of the lives of Antony and Cleopatra in a single story-strand. This creates space for an introspective Antony, whose main dilemma throughout the play is what virtue he should pick and follow: whether honour, represented by his general Ventidius, friendship, represented by his old comrade Dollabella, family, embodied by Octavia and her and Antony's children, or love, in the form of Cleopatra.

Dryden's Cleopatra could hardly be further from her parallels in Shakespeare's or Sedley's plays. She is not an evil temptress, a Machiavellian queen or a coquette for whom Antony is a mere toy: Dryden

turned her into a faithful lover, whose feelings for Antony surpass sensual passion. When Cleopatra fears that she has lost Antony forever, she tells her maid Iras,

(*Cleopatra.*) my Love's a noble madness,
Which shows the cause deserv'd it. Moderate sorrow
Fits vulgar Love; and for a vulgar Man:
But I have lov'd with such transcendent passion,
I soard, at first, quite out of Reasons view.
And now am lost above it –
(*All for Love* 2.1.17–22)

The "nobility" of Antony and Cleopatra's love for each other lies at the very core of *All for Love*. The "Imitation of *Shakespeare*'s Stile" to which Dryden subscribes is less based on Shakespearean prosody or language, as some critics have argued, but rather on the centrality of a dominant passion that defines the tragic hero – such as Hamlet's grief (or anger, depending on how we see him), Othello's jealousy, Lear's wrath or Macbeth's fear and pathological ambition. Shakespeare never defined a great tragic hero by his romantic feelings, not even Antony or Cleopatra, whose relationship is according to Shakespeare everything but noble. In fact, with the exception of his early tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* about a pair of children, whose story certainly evokes pity but hardly makes them tragic heroes, he never gave love a prominence in his tragic plots. For Dryden, however, "Love, being an Heroique Passion, is fit for Tragedy", especially because "Love is the Passion which most Predominates in our Souls" (*Heads of an Answer* 166, 180). In this respect, Dryden "imitated" Shakespeare's style, but not "recreated" it and rather filled it with his own vision of the genre.

Indeed, Dryden makes it obvious throughout his play that "to love well" is of a greater value than all other virtues and that it is a natural excuse for "losing the world well". This sentiment, however, is not universally shared or understood among the characters. Dollabella chides Antony for loving Cleopatra "too well" (3.1.237); Octavia accuses Cleopatra of making Antony, among other things, "cheap at *Rome*" and "scorn'd abroad" (3.1.452–53), not understanding that "she who loves him best is *Cleopatra*" (3.1.457). The notion of "loving well" is best expressed by the dying Antony, who, in Cleopatra's arms, emphasises that their mutual bond surpasses the material world, power, friendship or military glory – qualities to which everyone else seems to appeal:

(*Antony.*) Think we have had a clear and glorious day;
And Heav'n did kindly to delay the storm
Just till our close of ev'ning. Ten years love,
And not a moment lost, but all improv'd
To th' utmost joys: What Ages have we liv'd!
And now to die each others; and, so dying,
While hand in hand we walk in Groves below,
Whole Troops of Lovers Ghosts shall flock about us,
And all the Train be ours. (…)
This one kiss more worth – Than all I leave to Caesar.
(5.1.389–402)

Such a concept of heroic love, of course, necessitated changes in the characterisations of both Antony and Cleopatra, who in Dryden's play make the couple worthy of this noble passion. Dryden's Antony loves Cleopatra, in his own words, "Beyond Life, Conquest, Empire" (1.1.423) and rejects "This Gu-gau World" (2.1.446) when he learns that Cleopatra refused Octavius's offer of Egypt and Syria in exchange for forsaking Antony and joining his army instead. Cleopatra herself, as mentioned above, has lost much of Shakespeare's unfathomable "serpent of old Nile" (1.5.26) and her ostentatious splendour to become a true lover. When prompted by her eunuch Alexas to inspire jealousy in Antony by pretending to be attracted to Dollabella, Cleopatra protests:

> *Cleop*(*atra*). Can I do this? Ah no; my love's so true,
> That I can neither hide it where it is,
> Nor show it where it is not. Nature meant me
> A Wife, a silly harmless houshold Dove,
> Fond without art; and kind without deceit;
> But Fortune, that has made a Mistress of me,
> Has thrust me out to the wide World, unfurnish'd
> Of falshood to be happy.
>
> (5.1.89–96)

Characterising Cleopatra as a "Wife" and a "houshold Dove" is surely unusual and in sharp contrast to her image both in Sedley and Shakespeare (and most of the other predecessors of Dryden, especially Plutarch). However, envisioning her in this way was not entirely without a precedent in the English tradition: in Sidney's *Antonius, A Tragoedie* (or *The Tragedie of Antonie*), Cleopatra invokes her bond with Antony, which is according to her stronger than the one to her own children, explicitly calling herself a "Wife kindhearted":

> *Ch*(*armion*). Liue for your sonnes. *Cl*(*eopatra*). Nay for their father die.
> *Ch*(*armion*). Hardharted mother! *Cl*(*eopatra*). Wife kindhearted I.
> *Ch*(*armion*). Then will you them depriue of royall right?
> *Cl*(*eopatra*). Do I depriue them? no, it's dest'nies might.
>
> (Sidney, *The Tragedie of Antonie*, sig. C2^{r})

Although there does not seem to be a direct link between Sidney's and Dryden's plays, Dryden's Cleopatra, too, sees death as the ultimate bond between herself and Antony – a bond that supersedes all the secular law and has the power to rid her of the mark of a "faithless Prostitute", as Octavia, from the position of Antony's lawful wife, calls her (4.1.389):[(1)]

> *Cleop*(*atra*). I have not lov'd a *Roman* not to know
> What should become his Wife; his Wife, my *Charmion*;
> For 'tis to that high Title I aspire,
> And now I'll not die less. Let dull *Octavia*
> Survive, to mourn him dead: my Nobler Fate
> Shall knit our Spousals with a tie too strong
> For *Roman* Laws to break.
>
> (5.1.412–18)

The difference between the overall messages of Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's *All for Love* is underscored at the very end of both plays. As quoted above, the last words of Sedley's play belong to Octavius Caesar, who sees in Antony and Cleopatra (physically present on the stage) a warning for those who would indulge in vice as they did. Dryden ascribes the final words to the Priest Serapion, who (again over the corpses of the couple) observes that "the Lovers sit in State together, / As they were giving Laws to half Mankind" and, calling them a "blest Pair", prophesises that "Fame, to late Posterity, shall tell, / No Lovers liv'd so great, or dy'd so well" (5.1.508–19). While Novak maintains that, in *All for Love*, Dryden "shows how sensual passion on the level of a monarch and his mistress might be viewed as an heroic emotion" and does it "(w)ithout any necessary parallel with Charles II's relationship with the Duchess of Portsmouth" (375), in the early 18th century, the dramatist and vocal critic of the state of the English stage of the time John Dennis expressed his dismay over the glorification of the central couple's suicide by a high priest, "tho' that Priest could not but know, that what he thus commended, would cause immediately the utter Destruction of his Country, and make it become a Conquer'd and a *Roman* Province", accusing Dryden of intentionally following "the Design of *White-Hall*, at the time when it was written, which was by debauching the People absolutely to enslave them" (163). While Dennis's words sound somewhat extreme and simplistic to a modern audience, the truth is that Dryden's lack of critique of Antony and Cleopatra, especially when juxtaposed with another play on the same topic that makes a clear link between Roman history and the court of Charles II, could certainly be construed as a political statement by itself. The question remains whether the quick suppression of Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra* by Dryden's *All for Love* (a play that was otherwise scarcely revived in Dryden's lifetime and gained its popularity only in the 18th century) was just a matter of quality and popularity of the latter among the audiences or if any form of (self-)censorship took place as well.

The two late 17th-century English Cleopatra plays discussed here are a great example of how Restoration playwrights utilised old material for their particular artistic and ideological purposes. While it would be tempting nowadays to consider these pieces as derivates of Shakespeare – especially if one bears a Shakespearean title and the other boasts of being written in Shakespeare's style – it is more productive for an informed reading of them to place them in their historical and political contexts and see them as original pieces with their own integrity, stressing unique themes and bearing unique messages. If nothing else, for a modern audience they remain an interesting testimony to the cultural significance of the story of Cleopatra in the late 17th century and beyond and how, through the array of possibilities that the Egyptian Queen (or, rather, her imagined version embedded in English cultural consciousness) offered to both the artists and audiences, she indeed continued to possess the "infinite variety" ascribed to her by Shakespeare decades earlier.

Notes

(1) In contrast with the Renaissance, where Cleopatra was played by "Some squeaking Cleopatra boy" (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.219), in the Restoration period, both Cleopatra and Octavia were delineated not only by the play-text, but also by the presence of actresses on the stage and their particular ways of embodying the female parts. The surviving cast lists from the period are indicative of how these roles were possibly understood at the plays' openings. Elizabeth Bowtell, who played Dryden's Cleopatra in the original cast, was, according to a contemporaneous testimony, "a very considerable Actress; she was low of Stature, had very agreeable Features, a Good Complexion, but a Childish Look. Her Voice was weak, tho' very mellow" ("Bowtell, Mrs Barnaby,

Elizabeth née Ridley", 261). Her rival, Octavia, in contrast, was played by Katherine Corey, an actress about a generation older and "(a)n amply-built woman" who specialised in the roles of "nurses, serving women, governesses, mothers, scolds, and bawds" ("Corey, Mrs John, Katherine, née Mitchell", 494). Mary Lee, who played Cleopatra in Sedley's play, gained popularity in "romantic and tragic roles and breeches parts", but also played coquettes such as Mrs Loveit in George Etherege's *The Man of the Mode* and Cressida in Dryden's version of *Troilus and Cressida* ("Lee, Mrs John, Mary, née Aldridge, later Lady Slingsby", 200). Sedley's Octavia was played by Mary Betterton, who in the 1670s had a "penchant for playing the sweet young girl or good woman", not, however, avoiding the roles of "dynamic and tormented females" ("Betterton, Mrs Thomas, Mary, née Saunderson", 97).

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Jan Suk

Towards Expanded Theatre: Phenomenological Reflexions of Goat Island *The Lastmaker*[1]

Abstract: *The present paper examines the multifaceted nature of the devised oeuvre of the American collaborative performance group Goat Island. The analysis of their last performance* The Lastmaker *(2007) will be conducted by utilizing the methodology of phenomenological reduction to address the experience of mediated performance recordings. To embrace such performance experience, both Antonín Komárek and Jan Suk in a dialectical approach employ the term expanded theatre, a theatre performance experience understood in a broader context than the traditional proscenium experience* hic et nunc*. Theatre productions that are mediated or broadcast, which has been accelerated due to COVID 19 pandemic restrictions, invite such a transversal phenomenological reading that may challenge the classical and foster new approaches to contemporary performance and theatre.*

During the COVID 19 pandemic, theatre experienced an unprecedented challenge on a global level. Most of the venues around the world were closed down and besides mere hibernation, theatre moved to the online space, either in the form or pre-recorded productions which were disseminated via the Internet, or in the form of online streaming performances which were frequently shot on the stage. Nevertheless, the theatre-related covid void experience, has contributed to a certain deterritorialization, where the post-covid theatre expended far richer from the classical here and now *in situ* experience.

Not only has theatre deterritorialised from its production it has also manifested a great new level of consumption. Audiences got used to witnessing theatre productions from the privacy of their domicile venues, often accompanying this experience with luxuries of incessant food and drink consumption, as well as their newly gained liberties of coming, going, pausing and replaying, rewinding or fast forwarding, and ultimately sharing. The overall theatrical experience thus entered a new dimension and therefore calls for new approaches to its understanding.

The present paper is thus an attempt to articulate the need to perceive theatre in the broader perspective, as an extended medium; secondly, due to the increased domestic theatre consumption, it also advocates the phenomenological reading of such projects. The theoretical findings will be illustrated in the performance of *The Lastmaker*, the ninth and the last performance of the American avant-garde theatre troupe Goat Island. In order to mediate at least a minimal attempt at sharing the paper is a result of the dialectical sharing experience of Jan Suk and Antonín Komárek; with both parts of their experience clearly delineated. When, throughout the article, the personal pronoun "I" appears, it refers to the authorship of Jan Suk.

Analogously, as a response to the need for new forms of theatre witnessing, I would also depart from the need for a new approach to academic writing. Here, I would refer to "Process Phenomenologies," where Susan Kozel argues that

> I confront the accusation that academic writing deadens, dampens, or diminishes experience into the accepted discourses academic research. Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk aptly characterizes the problem with the mode of writing most often used for scholarly journals, books, or catalogues as adopting the detached intellectual style of "a dead person on holiday." "Naturally," he elaborates,

"we do not mean dead according to undertakers, but the philosophically dead who cast off their bodies and apparently become pure intellects or impersonal thinking souls" (Sloterdijk, *The Art of Philosophy* 3, In Kozel, 55-56).

The aforementioned quote calls for a revising of approach to academic writing within the scope of phenomenology. In her essay, Kozel goes on to believe that "phenomenological reflection sets in motion a process of translating, transposing, or transgressing lived experience into writing. Usually writing, I should say. Sometimes a phenomenology first produces drawings, scribbles, murmurs, or gestures. Or a big blank of confusion. A nothing that is something" (55). Thus, the following text attempts to illustrate the performing of phenomenological bracketing by both Suk and Komárek, "dead on holiday." Providing the reader (you) with "a nothing that is something," following a trajectory or a spiral (🌀) of phenomenological reduction: expanded theatre, phenomenology & performance, oat Island's *The Lastmaker*: in our individuated reflections.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is a key concept in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, referring to the process of bracketing, the so-called *epoché* or suspending our natural attitudes and presuppositions about the world to focus purely on the structures of conscious experience. The first step in order to bracket is to suspend all judgments about the external world and take a neutral stance toward beliefs about reality (Husserl, ix). The second moment of the phenomenological reduction is what Fink terms the "reduction proper;" he says, "under the concept of 'action of reduction proper' we can understand all the *transcendental insights* in which we *blast open captivation-in-an-acceptedness* and first recognize the acceptedness *as* an acceptedness in the first place" (41). Here, the attention is redirected from *what* is perceived (the object) to *how* it is perceived (the experience itself). This shifts focus to the intentional structures of consciousness, i.e., the ways in which objects appear to us.

The bracketing can thus foster an unbiased, rigorous, first-person analysis of experience, helping to uncover the conditions of meaning-making; in other words, how things appear as meaningful to us. In theatre context, *epoché* enables the pure experience of perceiving the performance, most notably the flow of perception, embodiment, temporality, intentionality, or the interplay of presence and absence. In the case of Goat Island performance productions often challenging conventional theatrical structures, thus requiring the audience to engage in a different kind of perceptual experience, the tool seems apt. Particularly, I believe, phenomenological reduction can help uncover the structures of experience when witnessing it. Instead of analysing its thematic content or artistic meaning, we (Komárek and Suk) will bracket assumptions about narrative, representation, or conventional theatre to focus on the lived experience of perception, embodiment, and temporality during the performance.

In the following lines, we attempt to suspend judgments about what theatre *should* be and focus on how *The Lastmaker* appears as a series of lived, embodied phenomena: instead of interpreting movements as symbols, we attend to them as they unfold, observe how time and rhythm shape our experience, and seek the interplay of presence and absence within the clear performer-audience boundary. Furthermore, we focus on the phenomena of temporality: how Goat Island's work stretches, compresses, or disrupts time through repetition and slowness, or how performers' performers' fatigue, breath, and repetition provide space for understanding bodies as sites of labour, endurance, and failure. We believe that phenomenological reduction of Goat Island's *The Lastmaker* (2007–09), as an unconventional performance

utilising fragmentary, non-linear, and physically rigorous performing can help uncover the structures of experience. Instead of analysing its thematic content or artistic meaning, we will bracket assumptions about narrative, representation, or conventional theatre and thus focus on the lived experience of perception, embodiment, and temporality during the performance in its expanded theatrical form.

Expanded Theatre

To kick off, I would like firstly to navigate within the terminological realm which I call the expanded theatre. In 1979, Rosalind Krauss, the art historian, published an essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," where she outlines the structural parameters of sculpture, architecture, and landscape art through a precise diagram. Via her meticulously devised diagram, she defines what sculpture is and shows that "sculpture is rather only one term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities" (Krauss 38). The essay further explains that looking back over the previous century the definition of art and sculpture has become much broader. For Krauss the traditional logic of sculpture transformed into a deterritorialised becoming, to use the Deleuzoguattarian discourse. Krauss concludes by observing that instead of creating "logical" or narrative-based works, sculptors are able to express their own personality and convey their voices in their work in an unprecedented way. Not only Duchamp's *Fountain* started an era of unpredictable sculptures and installations, it manifested a shift from mere retinal perception of visual art. In this context, it is a phenomenon that Krauss calls a 'combination of exclusions': a notion she introduces to maintain that sculpture needs a landscape or another context to be viewed, and thus understood.

Parallelly with the novelty trends in sculpture, Gene Youngblood in his seminal *Expanded Cinema* (1970) suggested video be considered as an art form and thus was influential in establishing the field of what is called media arts. Yet, the original term was arguably coined in the mid-1960s by the US filmmaker Stan Van Der Beek, when artists and filmmakers started to challenge the conventions of spectatorship, creating more participatory roles for the viewer. They chose to show their works not in cinemas but in art galleries, warehouses and in the open air, and invented different ways of experiencing film through multi-screen projection, thus leading to multisensory perception. Ultimately, a similar trend in redefining spectatorial conventions has also been appearing within the context of theatre studies.

However, the most crucial insight into the realm of expanded theatres can be attributed to Jonas Mekas, the pioneer of experimental cinema and avantgarde projects, who in his famous essay "On Expanded Cinema" fosters the idea of both expanded cinema and theatre forms rethink the questions of What is art? What should art do? (124), etc. by presenting avant-garde projects ahead of time, putting dreams into reality, and fusing Artaud theories, the happenings and environment experiences into a new kind of theatre (119). Like films, Mekas goes on to argue, that theatre cannot be "wrapped up, canned, and shipped … for previewing: those days are gone" (140). This 1964 essay thus stands out as a first-of-a-kind manifesto for embracing new radically different forms of visual representations and paving the way for other possible ways to address such a phenomenon.

More recently, in the light of constant theatrical evolutionary flux, there are other attempts to redefine the understanding of what theatre is; these include e.g. Hans-Thies Lehmann's Postdramatic theatre which strives to develop an aesthetic logic of the new theatre (18) by embracing an unassembled plethora of influences that surpasses the mere existence of dramatic text by accentuating a theatre production's effect and affect amongst the spectators rather than to remain true to the text. Lehmann's conception

has also brought about the need to locate the newly rediscovered spectator in the context of the creative strategies of these state-of-the-art theatre trends. Secondly, these attempts simultaneously blur the distinction between theatre and performance.

In this context, I would like to revisit Alan Read's *Theatre in the Expanded Field: Seven Approaches to Performance* uses Richard Southern's *The Seven Ages of the* Theatre (1962) as a template, providing rich, eclectic studies of performance from premodern to postmodern era. Each of the approaches reads like a performance monologue, teasing out the thesis that performance, "in the expanded field" of all human interaction, serves as a cultural irritant, celebrating contingency and playfulness. In his project, Read, rather than a parallel, draws the distinction between performance and theatre.

Performance:	**Theatre:**
Simultaneity	Linearity
Autobiography	Character
Authenticity	Acting
Revelation	Invention
Impotency	Potency

(adapted from: Alan Read, *Theatre In the Expanded Field*, 2013, xx)

From the above shown it is clear that unlike performance, Read advocates theatre's potential to change as well as highlights its ability to shed light on various socio-political issues. In this respect, following Read's logic, theatre is far more performative than the performance itself, Yet, to clarify this even further, it is inevitable to address the notion of the theatrical.

A fitting example of a discourse on theatricality tied to a particular idea and experience of theatre is Michael Fried's polemically (anti-)theatrical art criticism in his *Art and Objecthood.* Here Fried systematically examines anti-theatricality at work in specific examples of theatre, from Brecht to Artaud. For Fried the essential aspect of the spectatorship is located in the sensibility or mode of being which he characterized as corrupted or perverted by theatre. Fried identifies grace in presentness of theatre. Besides temporality, another indispensable part of the theatrical experience is the space.

In the context of the spatial, I would like to refer to Samuel Weber's writings on theatricality called *Theatricality as Medium*. There Weber sees the split space of stage and auditorium as inseparable yet distinct. The irreducibility of this division marks the intrusion of the outside on the ostensibly self- contained interior of a place or work. Directed towards others, as Weber puts it, "the space of the theatrical scene… is no longer simply an interior space." As part of this scene, "subjects are no longer authentic, no longer at home, no longer fully in control. Inside and outside are no longer simply binary opposites" (246–7). The blurring of here and there appears undeniably challenged by the new online theatrical forms.

What happens with the features of theatre Philip Aulander's liveness, or Peggy Phelan's unrepeatability of a performance in the advent of online theatre productions? Bill Blake speaks points out the necessity to understand theatre with the respect of the digital. To clarify, he revives the famous observation by Peter Brook: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all is for an act of theatre to be engaged (9)." Yet the four constituents of theatre experience, the performer, the audience, a particular place and time are being challenged by the networked world, Blake warns (ix). The networked world, arguably, invites for a new understanding of the phenomenon.

Most particularly in connection with online theatre production, it is Barbara Fuchs who advocates "in-person theater seems very precarious, as the possibility of even distanced productions recedes before the reality of Covid-19's enduring reach. With vaccination underway, the wait is now bounded, yet the resilience and adaptability of the theater of lockdown see more essential than ever" (181). The resilience and adaptability aim for the survival of the fitter theatre..

So why not recall (the) theatre to be expanded? Theatre in its multiplicity and also deterritorialising force? Once again, revisiting Alan Read's argument delineating theatrical and performative trajectories emphasizes certain binary opposition between the two. Space, time, material, Postdramatic, experience. One of the chief aspects of such an expanded art form is undeniable the spectator. Analogously, Jonas Mekas's perspective of expanded theatre is rooted in an avant-garde, participatory, and multi-sensory approach to performance. Instead of passive spectatorship, the audience becomes immersed in the performance by employing spatial movement, sensory stimulation, and interactive elements, resulting thus in integral layers of experience.

The rejection of passive consumption in favour of immersive, multi-sensory engagement calls for new modes of perception and, hence experience. Thus, in the light of the above-mentioned, I would also highlight the context of the repeatability as well as the unique personal experience, and individualized perception. This is when phenomenology comes to the fore: "phenomenologies are not born whole and complete; they are rather uncooked and messy at first" (Kozel, 55):individuated uncooked mess, this is it.

To proceed, Giuseppe Torre in his *An Ethico-Phenomenology of Digital Art Practices* navigates between the digital and the personal hence phenomenological perception. Elaborating on Merleau-Ponty, Torre argues that phenomenological remedy consists of moving beyond the subject-object dichotomy by promoting first-person perception of the structures to enable the experience of the real (26). Phenomenology can be thus seen as epistemology grounded in the first-person sensory experience, as Torre goes on to argue (27), a process connected with that of individuation.

Individuation is a process challenging one's identity is not far divorced from Guattari's "collective assemblage of enunciation" (8).[2] Torre observes that the digital part practitioner is an individual … destruction…does not reconstruct a new piece of technology but attempts to find a renewed piece of the self among the gaps of the million shattered pieces of irreparably broken mirror called digital (72). This understanding underpins certain low-fi immanent poetics accentuating idiosyncratic creative oscillation between the work and its recipient.

Phenomenology & Performance[3]

Phenomenology "is nothing other than the advent of a new wonder, the wonder before the truth is of experience" (Engelland, 156). In short, Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. In the context of performance, phenomenology refers to the study of lived experience and perception: how performance is not just something we watch but something we encounter, feel, and experience in real-time. Rather than analysing performance as a symbolic or representational act, a phenomenological approach focuses on the immediate, embodied, and sensory experience of both performers and spectators.

According to Andy Clark in his preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "We live in an age of tele-presence and virtual reality. The sciences of the mind are finally paying heed

to the centrality of body and world. Everything around us drives home the intimacy of perception, action and thought" (i) Performance and phenomenology propose that the world is fundamentally mysterious as well as the site of all that we can know. According to Bleeker, "both performance and phenomenology engage with experience, perception, and with making sense as processes that are embodied, situated, and relational" (1). Merleau-Ponty repeatedly accentuates that the role of phenomenology is to awake our sensitivity to phenomena which will give us the experience of the world coming into being, the very world which precedes knowledge (ix).

Central to the phenomenological approach is the unravelling of the relationship between the world and the experiencing subjectivity. This is the aim of what Husserl calls the phenomenological reduction, or *epoché*, which has served as the starting point, albeit subsequently abandoned by many phenomenologists, for phenomenological reflection. Commenting on Husserl, Jacques Derrida noted that "phenomenological reduction is a scene, a theatre stage" (86). A space. While discussing the (spatial) relationship between a theatre production and the spectator, Jacques Rancière "stultification of the audience,"[4] a priori distribution (12).

Furthermore, the importance of our environment and the things in it for human experience led Heidegger to reflect on the ways in which technology transforms how the world appears to us. The essence of technology, he famously claims, is not *technological* but is instead given in how technology reveals itself (319). With this notion of revealing, Heidegger draws attention to the intimate connection between what technology does and knowledge. In his *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty claims that "must plunge into the world instead of surveying it, it must descend toward it such as it is instead of working its way back up toward a prior possibility of thinking it; which would impose upon the world in advance the conditions for our control over it" (38–39). This plunge into the world embraces the possibility that experience cannot be solved: it is inexhaustible, incomplete, and mysterious.

In the following lines, I will attempt to embrace the understanding of space through mediatized experience. Not only the audience experience of space, but also of actors as the objects of individuated (mediatized) spectatorship in the work of Goat Island. A central aspect of Goat Island's performance philosophy was the focus on the body as the primary site of meaning-making. I believe that their work can be examined through the lens of phenomenology, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories of embodied perception. Rather than treating the body as a neutral vehicle for expression, Goat Island foregrounded its materiality: its gestures, exertions, and vulnerabilities—emphasizing the visceral experience of movement and presence. This corporeal focus challenges traditional dualisms between mind and body, performer and spectator, and subject and object. By doing so, their performances generated an experiential immediacy, wherein meaning emerged through the sensory and kinetic engagement of both performers and audiences. Their work can be seen as an exploration of what performance scholar André Lepecki describes as "corporeal dramaturgy," wherein movement itself becomes a primary form of meaning-making, rather than being subservient to linguistic or narrative structures.

Whilst discussing narrative structures of a space, the issue of time is at hand. The phenomenon of temporality is being addressed by mainly scholars, but in the context of the digital and/or Goat Island, it is e.g. Swen Steinhäuser, who sees the originality or Goat Island's project in their "one-of-repetition" (134). Additionally, it is Goulish himself who claim 'restraint of onstage presence', letting the performers 'occupy functional roles – as facilitators, translators, mediators, stage- hand(s and) stand-ins' (2010, 34). Here, I am afraid the issue temporality and embodiment are beyond the scope of the present papers. In their own words, Goat Island has sought to describe their exposure to acting as the uncanny mode of a half-interiorized (re)enactment. Goulish goes on to describe the liminal state of actors/performers as 'a zone

of indiscernibility… (i)n the proximity of both learning and unlearning' might indeed amount to a certain ethos and politics of the expanded field of this artistic and scholarly practice (55).

Yet, what must be noted is that Goat Island has been a representative of an American theatre coming out of the two hundred years of melodramatic wasteland.[5] Originally, Goat Island was a Chicago-based collaborative performance group founded in 1987 and incorporated in 1989 as a non-profit organization to produce collaborative performance works developed by its members for local, national, and international audiences. Despite the company's productions' specifically American framework of reference, they effectively communicate ideas that are pertinent for a major part of the Western world, including post-communist countries such as Slovakia, where social and political discourse. (Lacko, 30). Actually, there has been a growing scholarship on Goat Island taking place in continental Europe, see below.

As an example of an American avant-garde performance troupe, the Chicago-based collaborative performance group active from 1987 to 2009, Goat Island is renowned for its highly distinctive approach to performance art. Their work is characterized by intimate, low-tech, and intensely physical performances that blend found and composed texts, appropriated images, and pedestrian movements influenced by Judson Dance. This unique methodology has been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, focusing on their creative processes, pedagogical approaches, and contributions to performance art.

There are various publications addressing the multifaceted nature of Goat Island' oeuvre. The existing scholarship on Goat Island focuses predominantly on collective creative processes challenged by traditional hierarchical theatre-making structures, the productive possibilities of failure, slowness, and minimalism in performance, political and ethical dimensions, and pedagogy, and archival/curatorial practices. Specifically, Lowe (2020) discusses the exhibition and curatorial practices surrounding Goat Island's archival materials. Additionally, Rachel Anderson-Rabel in her dissertation investigates how Goat Island's refusal to imitate itself influenced contemporary collective performance practices.

Most comprehensively, Sara Jane Bailes in her *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure* explores the role of "failure" as a creative and political strategy in Goat Island's work. Another significant work embracing their work is *Small Acts of Repair: Performance, Ecology, and Goat Island* by Matthew Goulish and Stephen J. Bottoms, who examine how Goat Island's performances engaged with themes of ecology, small-scale interventions, and social critique. Furthermore, Peggy Phelan in her *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* discusses how Goat Island's work fits into the broader landscape of performance that challenges mainstream narratives. Thea Brejzek and Lawrence Wallen (2018) demonstrate how performance groups like Goat Island use space and movement innovatively.

The originality of our project, however, is to employ the strategy of bracketing, phenomenological reduction applied. In the light of what Susan Kozel advocates, "I suggest that a phenomenology itself is performed; it is not simply a methodology applied to performance" we pursue to performed phenomenological bracketing below.

Goat Island's *The Lastmaker*

The *Lastmaker* (2007) was Goat Island's ninth and final performance, composed by the group with an ending in mind. Therefore, the performance explores themes of endings, memory, and the passage of time, reflecting Goat Island's preoccupation with endurance, physicality, and the interplay between history and personal experience. The title, *The Lastmaker*, alludes to the idea of creating or marking "lasts": final moments, memories, or acts, suggesting a meditation on endings and the legacy left behind.

In addition to the elements of the performance itself, the timing and the title of *The Lastmaker* marked Goat Island's emphasis on process and continuance. On 15 May 2008, Lin Hixson and Matthew Goulish participated in a discussion at Stanford University, led by Peggy Phelan, about Goat Island's work. Describing the group's decision to separate after *The Lastmaker*, Goulish remarked on the fittingness of the ending after Goat Island's ninth performance piece. Nine, Goulish stated, is the largest numeral; after the number nine, it is just more of the same. The group's agreement to finish at the point of greatest potentiality suggested Goat Island's refusal to imitate itself, to do "more of the same." The title *The Lastmaker* echoed similar ideals through words rather than numbers. Goat Island united the ideas of finality, materiality, and endurance in the word "last"; combined with "maker," which conjures a sense of creating through time and synthesizing disparate parts into a whole, *The Lastmaker* named the process of an ensemble that chose transformation rather than ending.

The Lastmaker is structured as a series of fragmented, non-linear scenes that weave together movement, spoken text, and symbolic gestures. The performers engage in physically demanding, repetitive actions, and the piece combines these movements with historical and literary references, personal anecdotes, and reflective monologues. The performance is permeated by a sense of nostalgia and finality, as the characters appear to be reckoning with both personal and collective endings.

Throughout the piece, the performers enact scenes that evoke a sense of ritual and commemoration. They seem to be cataloguing or marking "lasts," whether these are the last of particular actions, the last remnants of a memory, or the final moments of a shared experience. The fragmented scenes are interspersed with spoken reflections on aging, loss, and the passing of time, creating a meditation on the process of letting go and the importance of memory.

The black stage floor bore the scuffs of previous performances and was empty save for the white rehearsal tape that demarcated the playing space. It was a space where the seams showed; Hixson made no effort to disguise the mechanics of the performance, preferring to leave the vestiges of rehearsal and performance in plain view. This, coupled with the audience's constant view of other spectators, created a conscious climate that expected, even encouraged, the audience to view the performance as a journey resulting from constant rehearsal and discovery. With the scuff marks and rehearsal tape, Goat Island marked the space as a place of work through time, transforming the stage floor into a legible document that simultaneously invoked past and future rehearsal and performance.

The piece celebrates the resilience required to face impermanence and honours the ritual of remembering. By focusing on endurance and repetitive actions, Goat Island emphasizes the physical and emotional labour involved in confronting finality, suggesting that the process of letting go is as much about embracing change as it is about preservation.

Ultimately, *The Lastmaker* offers a contemplative exploration of the tension between the transient and the lasting. Through its minimalist staging, repetitive movements, and poetic reflections, the performance speaks to the ways people create meaning from endings and the importance of preserving memories, even as they fade. In marking "lasts," Goat Island suggests that each ending is a part of a larger continuum, a cycle that connects past, present, and future, reminding us that life is an ongoing process of transformation and renewal.

Antonín Komárek's Reflections

The movement of the camera made me feel claustrophobic. Not being able to choose where to pay attention took some of the authenticity of the live performance. I like to look at the technical background,

e.g., how do actors move behind the stage or how does the lightning work in the room. This strict viewpoint of static or semi static camera takes the freedom away but offers more detailed close-ups.

The changing viewpoint allowed to observed form as many seats as possible. At some point during the screening, I felt like watching a movie. The varied sequences of close-up and wide shots accelerated the flow of the performance noticeably.

The decision to film from both sides of the split auditorium was very confusing for me. The symmetrical black and white stage with no fixed props looked the same from both sides. When the camera switched sides of the auditorium, the stage inverted and for a few moments I was lost in space, a thing I would not expect from a theatre performance.

The fact that I watched the performance on a bigger screen with a good audio system allowed the performance to feel more alive. The greatest wall breaking element was the audio recording of the footsteps. During the dancing sequences the stomping and sliding of boots created an illusion of being there with the actors. I didn't feel this way while rewatching the performance on a notebook.

The costume of the Saint Francis of Assisi was in contrast with his speech. The brown frock was in opposite with Francis' accent and tone of his replicas.

Heartbeat like repetitive sounds during the sequence of building Hagia Sophia with expressional dance indicated passing of time thought stages Francis described in the beginning. As the time went closer to the present it intensified, got quicker and uniform. The actors synchronized into unity, losing some of the originality and seemingly improvised gestures they had during chaotic phase.

All of the actors have Dickies trousers and light shirt. To differentiate they used pieces of clothes sech (sic) as green cap for further characterization of the roles introduced.

The leitmotif is in my opinion the relationship between a human and a religion. Exploring Christianity though (sic) telling jokes about Christ and Moses or building Hagia Sophia with human bodies.

The final scene might describe a duality, a multiple choice of a human, balancing on a shaky ground, for his believes (sic). A man with a saw standing in between of a man holding a wooden plank and a woman holding a model of Hagia Sophia. I think that it describes the decline of religion. The man is holding a saw, I believe he would choose the plank rather than the religion represented with the model.

Jan Suk's Reflections

While Antonín's phenomenological observation revolve chiefly and primarily on the cinematic gaze of the spectating audience, my observation tends to be embodied far more into incoherent screams and shouts; a mere manifesto.

I have seen two versions, both recorded. The first comes from the 20. June 2008 In TRANSIT Festival, Haus der Kulturen Welt, Berlin, while the second form the Work in Progress, June in 2005 incomplete versions; both have been acquired with the kind assistance from the Goat Island digital archive.

Immediately I was reminded of a poetic generosity that can be found in Joseph Beuys's *I Like America* and *America likes Me (1974). A certain kindness, almost a pedagogical appeal mixed with self-appointed certainty. This momentum was underscored by a* clearly designated performing area, a certain arena setting where spectators can watch both the performers as well as the other co-present audience members; the entire set is highly geometrical, even a mathematical rendering (see the figure below).

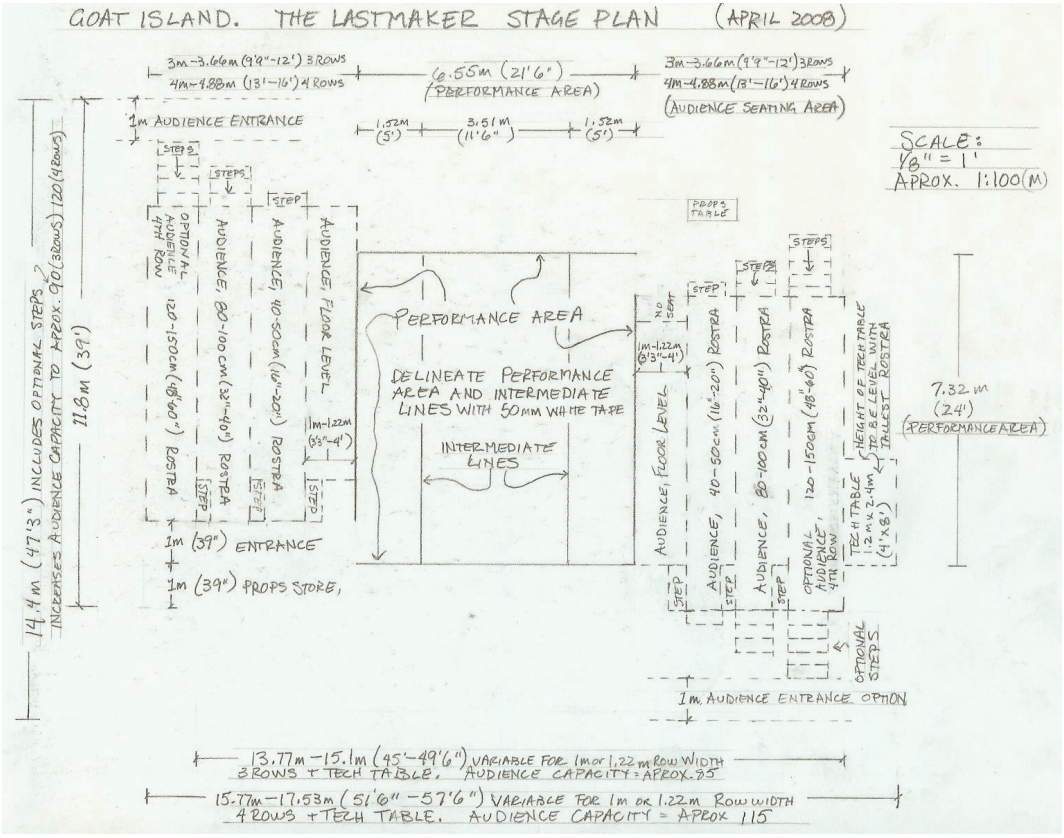

Fig. 1. Goat Island. *The Lastmaker*, Stage Plan (April 2008). Goat Island Archive.

I will now fuse both viewing experience into one chunk mixing my imperfect memories with collapsing desire. Still, I recall the initial opener of the pre-produced version by an usher reading in proxy the address by Lin Hixson, the director of the piece. Thus, the proxy introduction, summoning the presence in the absence, encapsulated the dramaturgical foci of the project: the company's research trip to Hagia Sofia, the Church-Mosque-Museum, a venue and creating then a certain performance in response, operating as movements encountered on different plains.

Thus, the triad performance trajectory, a triple life indeed, consists of three parts: Part I is a dance in 13 rounds x 39 movements, a second part features a polyphonic set of instructions based on responses from contributors; a journey/quest without any. This part is marked by a certain exteriority or absence of representation, a ritual of passage. Part III presents an archive of overlapping histories, ghosts of the museum, farewell to the stage, the issue of lastness, as advocated above. The piece feels a clear closure, a sort

of parallel to Prospero's metatheatrical parting epilogue/audience appeal at the end of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own,
> …
> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands.
> …
> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
> As you from crimes would pardoned be,
> Let your indulgence set me free (V,i).

Like Shakespeare, who is asking his audience to release him with the help of the clapping of spectators' hands, Goat Island, in an utterly idiosyncratic and postmodern way, begs for the same. Goat Island's signature statement is "we have discovered the wors by making;" in their final piece, *The Lastmaker*, it seems they want, in the last instance, their audience to ultimately unmake their making.

Conclusion

Our manifestative stream of consciousness, "Uncooked and messy rexflexions," based on utterly plain phenomenological reduction: bracketing AKA *epoché*, hence idiosyncratic perception experience suspending all judgments about the show is our lastness: ending here as well. Indeed, as Antonín Komárek and I have attempted is an appeal for performative projects, which we are being made to watch mediatized, network-screened/shared, or provided differently in proxy, to be understood in a broader context, as unique pieces of the phenomenon which can be labelled as the expanded theatre. In our reflective screams and shouts of dead academics on holiday, we strive to highlight that despite the troupe's disbanding, Goat Island's work continues to resonate within the fields of contemporary performance and experimental theatre, not only through their documented performances but also through the impact of individuated experience. We hold that by emphasizing process, interdisciplinarity, and non-linearity, the group has been challenging traditional paradigms of performance, positioning themselves within a broader discourse of performativity and cultural critique. We hope our reflexions have illuminated sufficiently that phenomenology can help to identify that Goat Island performances still maintain the enduring power of collaborative and experimental performance-making even in the mediated Post-COVID 19 here and now.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

(1) I am well aware that "reflection" would be more a suitable term here. Yet, I am referring here to the observation done by a friend of Matthew Goulish, the co-founder and co-director of Goat Island, who in his *39 Microlectures: In Proximity of Performance*, recalls in the connection with successful Hollywood film titles: "If you want a really big hit, you need to have an X in the title" (17). Thus the "reflexion" in the title my paper stands as a sort of *homage* to Goulish-cum-Goat Island.

(2) I have discussed at length the Deleuzoguatarrian treatment of contemporary theatre in my *Performing Immanence: Forced Entertainment* (DeGruyter 2021); the issue of "collective assemblage of enunciation" particularly in 68, 165.

(3) I am using the ampersand here on purpose to delineate a closer relationship between the two entities.

(4) The full quote goes like this: "the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student. This device allowed the jumbled categories of the pedagogical act to be sorted out, and explicative stultification to be precisely defined. There is stultification whenever one intelligence is subordinated to another. A person— and a child in particular— may need a master when his own will is not strong enough to set him on track and keep him there. But that subjection is purely one of will over will. It becomes stultification when it links an intelligence to another intelligence. In the act of teaching and learning there are two wills and two intelligences. We will call their coincidence stultification." This makes the student dependent on the master. Rancière also calls this "Enforced stultification" (7). The emancipatory master, on the other hand, teaches students only that he has nothing to teach them.

(5) A highly original treatment of American drama is a recent publication by Tomáš Kačer, which examines particularly the pre-O'Neallean 200 years of dramatic nothing, or as he himself puts it a two-hundred-year wasteland. See Kačer, Tomáš. *Dvousetletá pustina: Dějiny starší americké dramatiky.* Karolinum, 2019.

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Tetyana Varvanina

"Reason, Nature, Art, and Wit" in Buckingham's Enduring *Rehearsal*

> One of the most influential works of late seventeenth-century English criticism.
> —Paul D. Cannon, "Restoration Dramatic Theory and Criticism"

> The *Rehearsal* is Buckingham's masterpiece and the basis of his fame because, like all the great burlesque works of the Restoration and eighteenth century, it compels us to laugh at something in ourselves.
> —John H. O'Neill, *George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*

George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham (1628–87), played various roles on the Restoration stage. He was a prominent courtier of Charles II, a powerful politician in the Cabal ministry, a consistent supporter of religious toleration, and a literary figure. An integral member of the king's "merry gang" of court wits, the duke presided over his own intellectual circle, which included John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester. While much of the narrative surrounding Buckingham fixates on the notorious episodes of his life, such as his cohabitation with Lady Shrewsbury, whose husband he fatally wounded in a duel, many of these stories are exaggerations or half-truths. Beneath the public scandal lies a frequently overlooked fact: Buckingham—"Pope's 'Great Villiers,' Dryden's 'Zimri,' Butler's 'Duke of Bucks,' and Mulgrave's 'Merriest man alive'" (Love 366)—was much more than the sum of his sensationalized experiences.

The paper pays tribute to the duke's once immensely popular burlesque play *The Rehearsal*, aiming to glean insights into its author's personality. Through the prism of his farce, Buckingham emerges as a man of discerning taste, a skilled playwright, and a refined arbiter of literary art whose critiques are marked by wit and elegance. A testament to the duke's creativity and originality, *The Rehearsal* warrants a modern revival to allow present-day audiences to rediscover its brilliance and celebrate Buckingham as a versatile grandee with a touch of literary genius.

Origins, Genre, and Legacy

The Rehearsal is thought to have originated collaboratively within the Buckingham circle, with the duke as its primary creator. Unfortunately, the content of the lost proto-*Rehearsal* of circa 1664—or Hume and Love's "Ur-*Rehearsal*"—remains unknown. The purpose of the work (whether it primarily served as a literary or political farce or a fusion of both) and the reasons behind its transformations in the decades following its creation represent intriguing aspects of academic investigation (336, 333).

The first draft of *The Rehearsal*, which later underwent radical changes, was scheduled for staging in 1664. Unfortunately, the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London disrupted theater operations, which led to the play's removal from the stage (Burghclere 258). Despite these challenging circumstances and the fading of some targets of Buckingham's initial satire into oblivion, *The Rehearsal* finally debuted in December 1671, performed by the King's Company at Drury Lane Theater, and was first printed in June 1672. Four more editions appeared during the duke's lifetime, and all five were published anonymously (Hume and Love 333, 394).

Despite being credited to Buckingham, the play was probably a collaborative effort of his literary coterie. Its prominent members and Buckingham's most likely coauthors were Martin Clifford, the duke's

friend, secretary, and later headmaster of the Charterhouse, and Thomas Sprat, the duke's chaplain and subsequently the Bishop of Rochester, also known for writing *The History of the Royal Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (1667). Plausibly, poets such as Samuel Butler, Edmund Waller, and Abraham Cowley were also, if peripherally, involved. However, "barring the discovery of fresh evidence," as Hume and Love observe, "we will never have any certainty about who did exactly what in concocting *The Rehearsal*" (339–40).

Designed as a rehearsal of a nonsensical play staged by its creator Bayes and watched by two gentlemen spectators, the burlesque inspired several later well-known works of a similar kind. Like Clive's *The Rehearsal: Or, Bays in Petticoats* (1750), Garrick's *A Peep Behind the Curtain: Or, The New Rehearsal* (1767), and Sheridan's *The Critic: Or, A Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779), "many eighteenth-century burlesques are the 'rehearsal plays' that follow the example of George Villiers, duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*" (Senelick).

In the century following its creation, *The Rehearsal* gained in popularity. Five revised quarto editions appeared before Buckingham's death, and 12 more editions were printed in the eighteenth century. Although only six performances were documented before 1700, the play enjoyed numerous stagings afterward. With 92 performances, its popularity peaked in the 1740s but gradually declined in the 1770s (O'Neill 119–20).

Interestingly, the piece seems to have garnered attention beyond the British realm, as Buckingham's early twentieth-century biographer noted. Drawing on a letter by Sir R. Paston to his wife, dated December 16, 1671, Lady Burghclere wrote:

The approbation the piece elicited was not confined to this island. Its fame spread to France, and the Royal Maecenas, who had led the applause at the "Tartuffe," now condescended to banter the great Colbert, assuring him "he would be out of fashion" if he did not give a successful comedy to the world, like the Prime Minister of England, "who had gotten a great deal of honor by writing a farce!" (259)

Indeed, *The Rehearsal* was often labeled as a farce (Holland 111). In the prologue, Buckingham classifies his brainchild as a "short Mock-play" (line 1). However, the artistic form that the work is usually associated with is burlesque, which employs two distinct approaches. It either addresses serious subjects with frivolity, in which case it becomes travesty, or adopts a lofty style to discuss trivial matters, thus transforming into mock epic. Notable illustrations of travesty include Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* with its caricature of chivalric romances, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which partly parodies Homer's *Odyssey*. By contrast, Swift's *The Battle of the Books*, Byron's *Don Juan*, and Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* exemplify mock heroism, whose grand, ironic style contrasts deliberately with its undignified subjects (Baldick 100, 338, 236).

Regarding which work rightfully claims the title of the first English burlesque, William D. Adams names Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1611), which satirizes stories of knightly love that were popular at the time. "Our first burlesque, then, was a satire upon exaggerated fiction. Our second was a satire upon extravagant plays," Adams writes, referring to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Rehearsal,* respectively (4). However, there is a significant distinction between the work by "the gifted literary Dioscuri" and Buckingham's farce. The former "is not wholly a travestie, but it (only) contains a travestie within itself," while the latter is an out-and-out burlesque (4).

The Rehearsal's Reformative Prologue

The prologue to *The Rehearsal*, "the pioneer of a tradition of dramatic burlesque upon the English stage" (Yardley), dismisses contemporary fashionable dramas as "a Posie made of Weeds instead of Flowers" (line 2). While these plays offer second-rate entertainment, some viewers "thought 'em Roses" (4), relishing them as quality performances. The prologue blames the deplorable state of stage affairs on playwrights

who ignore the guiding force of "Reason, Nature, Art, and Wit" (12). This neglect of the virtues on the poets' part results in the creation of two kinds of plays: bombastic tragedies, whose absurdity provokes laughter, and dull comedies, reducing their audience to tears. The former—preposterously pompous serious dramas—become the butt of *The Rehearsal*'s ridicule.

Traditionally, a prologue reveals the author's intentions, which are, here, to cultivate more refined theater audiences, helping them "grow wise" (24). Through his "comedy … innocent of a single gross or suggestive word" (Burghclere 258), Buckingham aims to educate the playgoing public and teach them to discern and reject inferior material, thereby reforming the stage. Buckingham argues that both tragedy and comedy provide entertainment and, importantly, fulfill a moral function. Opposed by Dryden and championed by Shadwell, this viewpoint sparked considerable debate.

In his introduction to *The Indian Emperor* (1665), Dryden contends that "delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy: Instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights" (6). This statement shatters the equality between pleasure and instruction as the ends of literary art, prioritizing pleasure. Favoring poetry over prose, Dryden rejects prose as "too weak for the government of serious plays" as "it is too near the nature of converse" (7). Advocating for the elevated style of verse, he promotes affectation and artificiality.

In contrast, in his preface to *The Humorists* (1671), Shadwell opposes Dryden's stance on the hierarchy of art's ends, namely Dryden's pleasure-centered approach:

I must take leave to dissent from those, who seem to insinuate that the ultimate end of a Poet is to delight, without correction or instruction: Methinks a Poet should never acknowledge this, for it makes him of as little use to Mankind as a Fidler, or Dancing Master, who delights the fancy onely, without improving the Judgement.

In *The Rehearsal*, Buckingham reinforces Shadwell's position and presents a model for theater that balances wit and instruction, rejecting the empty spectacle of the Restoration heroic drama.

A Puzzle of Identities: Bayes

Following the prologue, which outlines the author's didactic aims, Buckingham presents a five-act caricature of substandard dramatic art, set within the context of a rehearsal. Bayes, the arrogant architect behind the rehearsed play-within-the-play, is central to the comic spectacle and is portrayed as "an imperfect creation who frequently disagrees with much of what his creator (Buckingham) stands for philosophically and aesthetically" (Gravitt 35).

The playwright Bayes embodies naiveté, verbosity, and petty vengefulness, typifying "fellows that scorn to imitate Nature; but are given altogether to elevate and surprise" (Villiers, 1.1.34–35). Despite his lofty claims, Bayes's superficial, sensational, and anti-intellectual play brims with "no-meaning" (1.1.39–40) —"Fighting, Loving, Sleeping, Rhyming, Dying, Dancing, Singing, Crying; and every thing, but Thinking and Sence" (1.1.41–42). Virtually every dramatic episode by the vainglorious Bayes is, in his own words, "the Scene of Scenes" (4.1.226), and nearly every line that he pens "is worth all that my (his) brother Poets ever writ" (4.2.79–80).

According to Burghclere, under the name of "Bilboa," Buckingham initially ridiculed Sir Robert Howard, the author of *The Duke of Lerma;* however, in the final version of *The Rehearsal*, Bayes became a satire of Dryden (258). In the 1660s, Howard and Dryden—brothers-in-law and literary collaborators—often clashed over issues such as the suitability of rhyme for serious drama, the merits of ancient versus modern literature, and the relevance of Aristotelian unities in contemporary theater. Their debates extended beyond their artistic differences, encompassing broader questions of interpretative control over the text. While Dryden

argued for the creator's authority over his work, Howard, "an early champion of reader-response theory," put it into the hands of the audience (Cannon 22–23). Being more moderate in drawing parallels between Bayes and Dryden, O'Neill observes that "there is no evidence which proves conclusively—or even makes probable—the supposition that he (Bayes) is a personal caricature of the poet laureate" (107).

The literary critique within *The Rehearsal* had long prevailed in its studies until George McFadden highlighted (and Margarita Stocker developed later) its political undercurrents:

What Buckingham did was to deflate attempts to glorify or to elevate an unsuccessful regime. … The caricature of Arlington as Bayes, though it was applied popularly to Dryden, nevertheless stuck damagingly, among those who counted, to its primary target. Finally, much of the farcical nonsense of *The Rehearsal* … had a broad applicability to Charles's regime. … The treatment of royalty in *The Rehearsal* is unprecedented in the English theatre. In its lighthearted way, *The Rehearsal* is the sign of an important development in the nation's progress toward responsible government. (128)

McFadden identifies Bayes as Lord Arlington, a minister in Charles II's "Cabal" and an adversary of Buckingham. Furthermore, he reads the absurdity unfolding within the burlesque's inner narrative as a satirical portrayal of Charles's reign. However, the evidence linking the playwright protagonist of *The Rehearsal* to the duke's political rival rests solely on one detail—the shared characteristic of a nose patch. As O'Neill notes, there is not "a single explicit statement by any contemporary observer which equates Arlington with Bayes" (108).

Championing Reason: Johnson and Smith

In The *Rehearsal*, two gentlemen of quality—the man-about-town Johnson and his countryside friend Smith—attend the rehearsal and critique its absurdities. Embodying urban sophistication, Johnson emerges as a censor of "all the impertinent, dull, fantastical things" (Villiers, 1.1.7–8), scorning "the company of those solemn Fops; who, being incapable of Reason, and insensible of Wit and Pleasure, are always looking grave, and troubling one another, in hopes to be thought men of Business" (1.1.13–16). This critique echoes Buckingham's own disdain for political and social rivals. Indeed, Johnson functions as the second Villiers's literary self-portrait. Bearing a close resemblance to his aristocratic maker, this literary incarnation and fictional doppelgänger of Buckingham's is a quintessential man of pleasure, as follows from Johnson's self-revelatory *régime de vivre*: "(I) eat and drink as well as I can, have a She-friend to be private with in the afternoon, and sometimes see a Play: where there are such things … such hideous, monstrous things, that it has almost made me forswear the Stage" (1.1.22–25). A close affinity between the two is evident in their shared reverence for the holy triumvirate of reason, wit, and pleasure.

The play's artistic and critical views draw on the classical tradition, particularly Aristotle and Horace, who advocate for literature that both pleases and instructs. The epilogue to *The Rehearsal* underscores the inspirational legacy of the ancients, emphasizing wit and sense as essential qualities of distinguished writing:

The Ancients Plotted, though, and strove to please
With sence that might be understood with ease;
They every Scene with so much wit did store
That who brought any in, went out with more.
(lines 5–7)

Classical thought posits that a literary work of art should be coherent, logical, and entertaining. Besides, it should emanate from nature and follow reason (O'Neill 87–89). A recurring motif in Buckingham's works,

"reason" permeates *The Rehearsal*: featuring in the prologue, it weaves its way through the core of the text into the epilogue. Thus, the prologue to the farce asserts that the guidance of reason, alongside nature, art, and wit, is indispensable for achieving commendable literary outcomes. The epilogue, in turn, makes a heartfelt plea to banish the tandem of foolishness and witless verse from the stage and reinstate their esteemed antitheses:

> Wherefore, for ours, and for the Kingdoms peace,
> May this prodigious way of writing cease.
> Let's have, at least, once in our lives, a time
> When we may hear some Reason, not all Rhyme:
> We have these ten years felt its Influence;
> Pray let this prove a year of Prose and Sence.
> (lines 15–20)

Here, prose serves as a conduit for reason and imparts sense. In contrast, having reigned for a decade, heroic rhyme is viewed as a usurper at the service of unreason. However, the deliverer of the epilogue hopes that this "amoral violence and linguistic absurdity" (Hughes 198) is but a transient affliction. Synonymous with meaning, significance, and coherence, "Sence," the celebrated companion of prose, was esteemed by the Restoration court wits "more important than form or florid decoration; they approved of neatness, clarity, and brevity, and despised romantic luxuriance, turgidity, and bombast" (Wilson 177–78). They broke with "the Elizabethan love tradition" and, in so doing, "gave up also the Elizabethan prosody, with its expanded figures of speech, its lengthy similes, metaphors, and conceits" (94). These very attributes of pomposity—such excesses as "*Roman* Cloaths, guilded Truncheons, forc'd conceipt, smooth Verse, and a Rant"—saturate Bayes's pretentious "Heroick Scene(s)" (Villiers, 4.1.228–29) devoid of substance.

Fashionable from the Restoration until the mid-1670s, Restoration heroic drama was not a monolithic trend. Rooted in epic and romance and characterized by bombast and lofty themes of love, duty, honor, and courage, the genre evolved through three stages. Pioneered by Davenant and the Earl of Orrery (later Lord Broghil), the genre was further refined by Dryden, who, unlike Orrery, viewed contemporary politics and morality with skepticism. Finally, a new wave of dramatists emerged. Inspired by Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), they reshaped the genre to reflect the growing sense of political turmoil. The initial enthusiasm for Charles II's restoration, celebrated in many plays of the 1660s, such as Edward Howard's *The Usurper* (1664) and Orrery's *The History of Henry the Fifth* (1664), proved short-lived. In contrast to the heroic age depicted in these plays, the Restoration era came to represent political instability, disillusionment, and moral decline (Derek Hughes 195–210).

Bayes's Artistic Methodology: Deception and Vacuity

As the mastermind behind the "hideous, monstrous things" (Villiers, 1.1.24–25) that repel discerning audiences, Bayes crafts his works adhering rigidly to three principles. By converting prose into verse and vice versa, appropriating clever remarks, and adding far-fetched twists to others' works, thus altering them beyond recognition so that "no man can know it" (1.1.101–102), he claims other minds' artistic products for himself and brands them as his own. Oblivious to his faults, Bayes openly boasts of his disgraceful methods, confessing to blatant plagiarism and exposing his creative impotence and intellectual powerlessness. However, it would be incorrect to assert that Bayes lacks imagination and creativity completely. This apology for a playwright

can demonstrate a considerable amount of both to confound his audience with absurd novelties.

Bayes prefers verse, arguing that "the subject (of his production) is too great for Prose" (4.2.74). However, this claimed greatness is hollow. When Bayes proudly declares: "Well, Gentlemen, I dare be bold to say, without vanity, I'l shew you something, here, that's very ridiculous, I gad" (1.2.34–36), his epithet "very ridiculous" is particularly apt. When his auditors seek clarification, Bayes refuses to provide any. Instead, he offers a storyline as a surrogate for substance, exclaiming in astonishment: "How, Sir, the meaning? do you mean the Plot" (1.1.59).

However, Bayes's plays have no plot. Aiming "to out-do all my (his) fellow-Writers, whereas they keep their *Intrigo* secret till the very last Scene before the Dance," the innovative dramaturgist prefers to "begin the Play, and end it, without ever opening the Plot at all" (2.3.39–43). While Johnson is disillusioned with the vacuity of Bayes's spectacle, devoid of intellectual depth and value, his less discerning provincial companion Smith searches for meaning and coherence in the cast's chance utterances and the chaotic production's wild incongruities.

A self-proclaimed stage reformer, Bayes is a mere intellectual pirate without talent or vision. He appropriates others' creations and manipulates audiences with deceitful tactics to feign theatrical success. Moreover, he shamelessly boasts about his trickery, such as distributing explanatory sheets to the audience and orchestrating applause to create an illusion of success. Bayes's self-congratulatory attitude and lack of remorse for his fraudulent behavior are amusingly striking. His upside-down perspective leads him to view his actions as commendable foresight and clever practicality.

Nevertheless, displaying admirable self-restraint, Smith and Johnson treat Bayes with courtesy despite his questionable professional ethics, monstrous stupidity, and talent for eliciting adverse reactions. Indeed, this small-time Machiavellian stands as an antipode of the duo of friends, whose refined manners, intellect, and taste contrast with Bayes's absurdity and serve as a paragon of conduct. As Paul Trolander and Zeynep Tenger note, the two gentlemen's "values—civility, tentative assertion, indirection, communal judgment, collaborative exchange—are essential to the well-being of theatrical practice and community," and their "understated style is nothing more than what Restoration audiences and practitioners would have assumed was the best practical method for signaling to an author that his or her methods were deficient and needed amendment" (109, 107).

The play's rehearsal-within-the-play, replete with "incredibly wild scenes of unmotivated action, bellowing rant, horseplay and slapstick, and silly debates on love and honor" (Wilson 159), provides a setting for Bayes's interaction with the aristocratic pair. Indeed, their dialogue—structured as such but essentially Bayes's near-monologue—is pivotal to the essence of the play. The ambitious playwright, too human by nature, takes center stage. The friends' ironic yet polite and tactful questions expose not only Bayes's deficiencies, but also unappealing traits of human nature in general and the shallowness of contemporary trends. At times, readers may expect that the dialectic exchange between Bayes and the two gentlemen will lead the "laureate" to intellectual enlightenment and aesthetic remorse. However, Bayes, obtuse and superficial, remains impervious to irony and is too complacent to reflect critically on himself and his "craft."

Eternal Themes and Modern Echoes: *The Rehearsal's* Enduring Appeal

When discussing why modern readers who may not be well-versed in heroic drama or familiar with Dryden's life find *The Rehearsal* attractive, G. Jack Gravitt suggests that its appeal for contemporary audiences lies in its modernity, namely in its anticipation of the Theatre of the Absurd. Gravitt highlights the use of "absurdist" literary techniques in the play, such as "structural involution (a self-referential

character of work, exemplified by a play-in-a-play form of drama), plotlessness, devalued language, and the equivalent of what is today called 'Black Humor'" (Gravitt 30).

If *The Rehearsal* were more widely known, its enduring modernity would undoubtedly resonate with modern audiences as it did for over a century after its 1671 stage debut. However, due to the play's obscurity, modern theatergoers have hardly any opportunity to assess its merits fully and give their verdict on the work despite its once-impressive performance history in the London theaters. There survives hardly any evidence of the seventeenth-century stage life of the play, with records becoming more consistent around 1705 when the theaters began advertising regularly in *The Daily Courant.* Between 1704 and 1777, the burlesque was performed nearly three hundred times. In 1778, it was condensed into three acts and eventually displaced by Sheridan's *The Critic*. Since then, sporadic professional and amateur productions have been recorded. Hume attended one such amateur college staging and "found that it proved entertaining even to those members of the audience who were totally unacquainted with the literary targets" (Hume and Love 354, 363, 380).

Hume and Love note that eighteenth-century correspondence (for example, of Horace Walpole), newspaper articles (like those in *The Spectator),* and pamphlets frequently allude to Bayes and other characters and episodes from *The Rehearsal.* The play's numerous reprintings and continued presence as a "stock play" in London theaters during the eighteenth century attested to its enduring popularity and iconic status. Although *The Rehearsal* is deeply rooted in Restoration cultural and political events and satirizes contemporary real-life figures and trends, it holds significant potential to transcend its historical moment. Related to literary and dramatic criticism, aesthetics, artistic integrity, civilized social interaction, and personal qualities like vanity and hubris, its themes remain timeless. Buckingham's editors argue that the play can be enjoyed and understood effectively without detailed knowledge of its targets. They encourage present-day readers to engage with the burlesque without over-relying on explanatory aids, as "to read Buckingham's play with one eye on the text and the other on footnotes about sources is to rob the play of its vitality" (334, 392, 394).

This perspective aligns with the universalist viewpoint advocated by Sheridan Baker, who considers *The Rehearsal*

> a work that reaches the necessary orbit of any great literature, where temporary historical particulars become permanent depictions of something permanently true about human nature, so that we can see in a wildly comic play three centuries old some home truths about ourselves and our seemingly very different scene. Though criticism has virtually ignored it, *The Rehearsal* is indeed permanent in this way. (160)

Baker celebrates the all-embracing nature of *The Rehearsal,* campaigns against an excessive preoccupation with the historical context of the oeuvre, and urges the reader to focus on its timeless themes rather than becoming fixated on the elusive accuracy hidden within its ambivalent lines. O'Neill reinforces this point through his analysis of the play's playwriting protagonist: he finds that Bayes's character is inherently amusing and does not specifically lampoon any individual, as evidenced by the enduring popularity of *The Rehearsal* long after the passing of Buckingham's contemporaries. Instead of targeting a particular person, O'Neill observes, Bayes symbolizes "the creative ego" (109).

Essentially, there are two ways to approach *The Rehearsal.* One requires perseverance and diligence to navigate through the play's extensive explanatory apparatus, which uncovers the hidden messages. The alternative approach is to immerse oneself in the text, ignoring the introduction, notes, and keys, and savor the brilliant humor crafted by the cream of the crop of the Restoration wits. Regardless of the

path chosen by the audience, the play offers a rich and rewarding experience, a testament to the enduring genius of Buckingham and his collaborators.

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STUDENT SECTION

Klára Exnerová

The Black Prisoner's Wife in a Memoir

Abstract: *Prison literature is a specific genre of literary works, either written by incarcerated men or women or written about them. As African Americans are persistently incarcerated at a higher rate than any other ethnic group in the United States, a large portion of contemporary prison literature is produced by Black authors. This paper however focuses not on the prisoners themselves, but on their female partners. Although these women have been proven to be of major influence on the successful re-entry of the men into society, the topic of prisoners' partners has not been fully researched, especially in literature. This contribution analyzes a memoir* The Love Prison Made and Unmade: My Story *by Ebony Roberts, to establish how the Black prisoner's partner characterizes herself in what can be understood as a subgenre of prison literature. This paper argues that Roberts attempts to subvert several aspects of the stereotypical depiction of both the Black prisoners and their spouses, and by this, she is aiming to improve the overall perception of the African American community. Furthermore, it claims that the memoir also shows evidence of functioning as a trauma narrative.*

Introduction

"I cannot condone what he did, but I defend standing by him, I didn't commit his crime" (Moore 41). This is a quote from an interview with Jamie, one of many women in the USA whose husbands have been imprisoned and who have to battle not only the hardships connected with having their partner incarcerated but also the newly gained stigma that has been associated with being a prisoner's wife.

Prison literature is a specific genre of literature, which has existed since the beginning of incarceration itself. In the USA, the production of carceral texts has been rising exponentially ever since the revolutionary period of the 1960s and the emergence of what scholars have labeled mass incarceration (Franklin 51). At that point, two kinds of prison texts emerged: literature written by revolutionaries who were imprisoned mainly for their political ideology or activism, such as Martin Luther King Jr., and literature written by imprisoned criminals who turned into authors while and after experiencing prison. The latter group has been prevailing significantly with well-known representatives such as Malcolm X, whose autobiography has become one of the most important Black literary pieces (Franklin 51). Contemporary American prison literature takes various forms, including poems, songs, essays, and novels. Among the most widely written subgenres are, however, autobiographies and memoirs, mainly written by (ex-) offenders. This paper focuses on one of these subgenres – a memoir written by a prisoner's partner about both the prisoner's experience and the experience of the author during the time of her partner's incarceration.

Prison memoirs are a subgenre of memoirs, narrated either by the prisoners themselves, or someone else, commonly a relative or a spouse. Couser defines a memoir as "a nonfictional genre, which depicts the lives of real individuals" (15). Memoirs can serve different purposes as the author can choose the story they want to narrate and, mainly, how they want to narrate it, as opposed to autobiographies, which tend to be purely factual. Moreover, memoirs employ novelistic literary techniques when it comes to narrating and sharing stories, which further enhances the freedom of storytelling. Memoirs do not necessarily describe the author's own experiences but often include other people and their own stories as well. However, it must be noted that these are subjectively influenced by the author's point of view and therefore their accuracy may be debated (Couser 3-15). Among the main themes are life before

imprisonment, the carceral experience, changes of self-identity, racism, the criminal stigma, and systemic oppression of minorities, especially African Americans.

As prison memoirs' sole focus tends to be the experience of the prisoners themselves, there remains only a small space of focus on prisoner's relatives and spouses, despite an abundance of evidence on how some aspects of incarceration, especially stigma, affect them more profoundly than the prisoners themselves (Braman 11). Among the commonly perceived stereotypes are low education and intelligence, low self-esteem, or high dependency on the partner. Furthermore, according to several studies, families tend to experience a 'stigma by affiliation' (Phillips and Gates 287) and due to the negative influence of affiliation to a prisoner, combined with e.g. financial difficulties, coping with grief, and separation, families are said to be experiencing a so-called 'secondary prisonisation' (Kotova 1). While this phenomenon, whose importance remains heavily underestimated, is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers, the majority of studies remain in the spheres of sociology and psychology. Nevertheless, some researchers suggest that prison memoirs can be understood also as a form of trauma literature (Avieson et al. 213).

It has been proven that imprisonment often creates long-term mental health disorders (Belet et al. 493). For instance, post-traumatic stress disorder is much more prevalent in prisoners than in the general population ("Prisoner"). These conditions are often what leads prisoners, or ex-prisoners, to start putting their thoughts into writing, and sharing their trauma with others, whether it is in the form of a poem, novel, memoir, or any other form of writing (Avieson et al. 213). As memoirs are a way for the prisoners to cope with the trauma suffered in prison, it can be assumed that also memoirs written by prisoners' partners and families could serve the role of coping with their own trauma suffered by experiencing secondary prisonisation.

This contribution analyzes Ebony Roberts' *The Love Prison Made and Unmade: My Story* (2019), a memoir that focuses on the experience of the prisoner's partner. It is argued here that the memoir emphasizes the existence and mainly the influence of stigmatization of both the prisoners and their female partners and tries to subvert the stereotypical depiction of a prisoner's partner whose public identity is influenced by affiliation with a criminal. In this way, the memoir serves as a form of activism, as well as a way of the author's coping with the personal trauma suffered due to affiliation with a criminal.

Stigma and its influence on prisoners' partners

Affiliation stigma, or a 'courtesy stigma', is stigmatization based on a direct association with a stigmatized individual (Goffman 44); in this context, the association with a criminal. Implicit impacts of the courtesy stigma have been proven repeatedly. In some cases, relatives, especially parents, have been even blamed for not having prevented the offending behavior (Kotova 2). Courtesy stigma also varies depending on the crime committed by the offenders. Based on the research done by Moore, women whose husbands committed less 'socially acceptable' crimes, such as sex-related crimes (as compared to e.g. drug-related offenses), felt the effects of courtesy stigma to a larger extent. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that all women felt or experienced different treatment by society as a result of being associated with a criminal (45-46). In fact, the weight of the stigma often falls heavier onto the non-offending relatives, rather than the criminals themselves (Braman 11).

Courtesy stigma is typically most experienced by family members, mainly female spouses, and partners of the incarcerated. As Moore documents in her interviews with 35 women, who identify as prisoner's spouses, "society assumed that prison wives were not educated, that the women were being taken advantage of by the men in prison, and that prison wives had low self-esteem" (35). Besides low

education and self-esteem, among the commonly perceived stereotypes are intelligence, naivety, unattractive physical appearance, unfaithfulness (of both the partner and the prisoner), or dysfunctional relationships of the partners/spouses. Furthermore, a strong stereotype of the prisoner's criminal, menacing, almost bestial nature was present as well (Moore). Disregarding the actual nature of the stereotypes, it has been proven how the mere feeling of assumption of being perceived in a certain way might evoke the same emotions as actually experiencing the situation ("projection"). Hence, feeling stigmatized by society can cause similar emotions in the women as if directly experiencing the stigma. That feeling is amplified by the fact that most of the interviewed women have themselves stereotyped prisoners' partners prior to becoming one. Contrary to the assumed stereotypes described above, almost all women interviewed had achieved an education level above the GED or high school diploma, would not struggle to keep good employment, nor would comply with any other mentioned stereotype. Nevertheless, the experience of courtesy stigma had been felt by all the participants (Moore 35-38).

As this article focuses predominantly on African American prisoners and their partners, their general stereotyping in the US criminal justice system must be taken into consideration, as it can be assumed that race, alongside socioeconomic background, might play a role in the stigmatization of prisoners' partners and families. According to research conducted by Braman, stigma emerges on multiple levels. Within the prison context, visitors have repeatedly reported to be distancing themselves from "poor Black criminal 'ghetto' families" (Kotova 5). Outside of prisons, implicit Black stereotyping in the criminal justice system appears in various forms. The jury selection process has been proven to be influenced by subconscious Black criminal stereotypes (Levinson et al. 564) and Black socially disadvantaged defendants have been repeatedly poorly represented during judicial trials and less likely to receive a fair trial (Stevenson). These are mere few examples that demonstrate the disadvantages African American offenders face in the US criminal justice system. Based on the currently available data, Black people are incarcerated at a rate that is six times higher than white people ("Race"), and about 74% of Black offenders return to prison within the first five years after their release ("Recidivism"). It can be assumed that high numbers of incarcerated might negatively influence a societal perception of African Americans and therefore affect stigma as well.

When it comes to stigma tied to the socioeconomic background of Black families, it has been found that 'the presumption inherent in the stereotype (was) that for them – a low-income Black family in Southeast Washington, D.C. – criminality (was) not an aberration' (Kotova 4). To a certain extent, this might be tied to the data mentioned in the previous paragraph. Having committed a criminal offense excludes you from certain "privileges", such as voting (temporarily or permanently), serving on a jury, obtaining certain kinds of employment, or moving out of state (Alexander 92). Consequently, families might end up facing difficult financial situations, resulting in the entire family moving down the socioeconomic ladder. And as African Americans have the highest incarceration rates, Black families are affected the most, strengthening the stigma tied to low-income Black families.

Foucault and his work bring another perspective, through which the complexity of criminalization of African American communities can be looked at. He implements the idea of a panopticon into the criminal justice system by pointing out that disciplinary power is practiced through its invisibility (Foucault 22). This is achieved through constant surveillance both inside of prisons and after release; most ex-convicts are persistently reminded of their 'secondary citizen' status for a long time after release. As Foucault says: "Today, criminal justice functions and justifies itself only by this perpetual reference to something other than itself, by this unceasing re-inscription in non-juridical systems" (22). The continuous experience of surveillance and institutional control, as depicted in the panopticon, might create a sense of constant

contact with the criminal justice system for the members of African American communities. If so, the unceasing internalization of restriction and authority could negatively affect the ex-prisoners and their families to a significant extent, potentially keeping the "racially skewed prison population in a state of perpetual criminality" (Avieson et al. 219). Nevertheless, the stigma tied to Black communities is undeniably present.

According to a 2001 study, more than 90% of people believe in the accuracy of information regarding prisoners that is presented to them through media (Levenson 14-15). Studies of UK media found that prisoners tend to be depicted uniformly with a strongly negative discourse, with words like "thugs" or "murderers" which is then reflected in the public perception of the convicts as stereotypically highly dangerous, even though 70% of English offenders are incarcerated for non-violent crimes (Kotova 4). In the USA, the picture of African Americans historically presented by the media can be described as biased. Beginning with the minstrel shows or *The Birth of the Nation*, through Jim Crow until the recent times of the War on Drugs, Black Americans have been associated with criminal features (Alexander 45-48). Information and rhetoric served to the citizens by media therefore have had the political potential to influence public opinion on Black (ex-)felons, which could, even in the present, still result in a decrease in job opportunities, exclusion from communities, and separation from relatives for both the (ex-)convict and the partner. As a result, stigma might be understood as a tool of power against minorities and play a big role in the systemic oppression of minorities. By subverting the stereotyping by offering different perspectives on prisoners, the stigma perceived by society can be reduced, which is something African American prison literature has been striving to achieve. Ebony Roberts in her memoir is attempting to challenge the public perception of prisoners and their spouses and in this manner, one of the functions of her memoir could be serving as a form of activism.

The memoir and its activistic narration

The Love Prison Made and Unmade: My Story is a memoir written by Ebony Roberts in which she describes her experience of becoming a prisoner's partner, maintaining the relationship for several years of his remaining incarceration and then years after his release. She introduces the readers to a first-hand experience that is otherwise invisible and allows them a different, insider, perspective. She describes her first encounter with prisoners, which happened during a lecture she and her colleague led in a Carson City Correctional Facility, a Michigan prison. It is there where she meets Shaka Senghor, an inmate who attended the lecture and ended up being her partner of nine years. Her love story begins in chapter ten, where the first exchange of letters between her and Shaka happens. It must be again stressed that a memoir is a subjective narration crafted by its author to tell a specific story and evoke certain emotions in a reader. Critical theory also points out that memoirs tend to present several versions of oneself, which could interpret reality in various manners, often skewed or adjusted for an imagined future audience (Mack 58).

Despite presenting the text as a story about love and partnership, the first ten chapters are dedicated to Roberts' upbringing, which was traumatic and turned out to be a major influence on her life, especially when it comes to relationships and her activism related to African American oppression in the criminal justice system. In these chapters, she talks about her father, high school friends, and previous partners, who almost all engaged in criminal activity, and frames their stories with descriptions of the disadvantages they faced because of their race, which played a role in their committing a crime (Roberts 10-33). Roberts introduces criminals in a human and vulnerable manner, as desperate fathers, children, and brothers who make unfortunate choices or get caught up in someone else's trouble. By the time she starts writing

about her relationship with Shaka, the main plot of the memoir, the text is set in an environment that questions, if not refuses, the bestial stereotypical depiction of prisoners.

Roberts opens her novel with an author's note:

I looked up to the Black couples I read about. Like Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz. Like Ossie and Ruby Dee. Like Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver and Winnie and Nelson Mandela. Theirs was a love rooted in the Black struggle for liberation. A love that had a purpose. I wanted to have what I called a Black power fairy tale. So when I found Shaka, a brother who reminded me of Malcolm and Eldridge and Mandela, I fell in love. Never mind he was locked up.

But, this story started long before I met Shaka. It started in the cradle of my parents' marriage. It is there that I learned what women must do for the sake of having love and what we must do to keep it. (9)

Roberts sets her story within a meticulously prepared narrative. When she talks about herself as a child, she says she was a "Black girl trying to find (her) way in a world that assaults Black girlhood before (they) even become women, that tells (them) the fairy tales (they) read aren't for (them)" (Roberts 10). She describes her craving for a life that was full of "white knights and white horses and white picket fences" (10), not knowing that for her as a Black woman, that kind of life was not achievable. It is in the very first chapter that we learn how when she was a twelve-year-old her father, who was a heavy drinker, tried to shoot Roberts' own mother, on who he had cheated frequently, after an argument (10-11). Having believed her parents' love story of high school sweethearts was one of those fairytales, this incident, combined with similar stories she kept hearing from other Black girls and women while she was growing up, shattered most of Roberts' ideals of what being in a Black relationship looks like. It also formed a new perspective on what can be expected from Black men in relationships. However, the fact that a significant part of the memoir is dedicated to the author's traumatic experience suggests that her writing does, whether consciously or subconsciously, function as a form of coping with her past and potential PTSD connected to her childhood and early adulthood.

Roberts grew up in a poor district of Detroit during the crack epidemic of the 1980s. She grew up in poverty with bars on her windows, helicopters hovering above her house at night, and daily shootings happening all over Detroit. She says: "The fact that my brother and I made it through high school without incident – no babies, no bullets, no handcuffs – was no small victory" (33). Her first boyfriend killed himself recklessly in a game of Russian roulette and her second boyfriend was a drug dealer and user who ended up in a juvenile detention center for armed robbery (27). Her traumatic childhood and teenagehood drove her to a college outside of Detroit, where she began to explore her spirituality, her own identity as a Black woman, as well as the history and culture of African Americans, and what challenges being a part of this community imposes. It is also at college where she, for the first time, thought of her father and realized what being Black at that time and area meant: "I do not know the struggles he faced, structural or otherwise, because he did not speak of them, but my college studies helped me to understand the things he did not say. That day, sitting in front of my altar, he became whole in my memory, a Black man, not just my father, but a man in a society that makes it hard to be Black" (42). By first depicting her father as an unfaithful alcoholic who tried to kill her mother and then describing being able to see him as a struggling Black man, instead of a failing father, she makes the reader think outside of the criminal narrative of Black men and creates the space for a debate over the systemic disadvantages which might create environment where Black people are more likely to get caught up in the criminal justice system. Furthermore, considering Foucault, it could be argued that Roberts' activistic tendencies are rooted in her realization of the racially skewed mechanism of the criminal justice system, which could suggest, that her falling in love with a man experiencing systemic injustice, was highly probable.

Subverting the prisoner's stigma

Roberts devotes a significant portion of her memoir to subverting stereotypes of the Black prisoners. For the purposes of this article, the focus remains only on the stereotype of low education and indifference to recidivism, because those are crucial factors affecting the courtesy stigma, as well as the social perception of offenders and their families. Although it is true that most offenders ending up behind bars had not achieved a higher level of education, almost all of them achieve additional formal education in prison, with GED being a standard; and, in some cases, college coursework is also achieved (Moore 35-36). As higher education is not compulsory, the effort to achieve it nevertheless might signify a desire to successfully re-enter society after the release, thus undermining the potential perception of indifference towards recidivism. For African American prisoners, this is further enhanced by their desire to learn about Black history and injustice, so that after release they could serve in their communities as educators and volunteers who might prevent the incarceration of other disadvantaged African Americans (Key and May 1).

Senghor's intelligence and activist desire capture Roberts' attention. Ever since the beginning of their correspondence, activism has become the main topic of their conversation. Roberts is fascinated by how racial injustice was perceived by the prisoners. In one of the letters, Senghor wrote:

This brother gave me The Autobiography of Malcolm X and at the time I didn't know anything about Malcolm, so I thought it was some kind of gangster book. But once I started reading it, my whole view of life began to change. As I read about his powerful transformation from a street thug into an uncompromising voice of resistance, I realized the powers that lay dormant within me. When I entered prison, I was a very bitter and angry person and I did not care whether I lived or died. I blamed everyone else for the way my life had turned out. After finishing his book, I wanted to learn more about our history, culture, and religion. I became a voracious reader and spent countless hours in the library conducting research. With each book I read, I felt a part of me being redeemed. (58)

In this letter, Senghor shares his own experience with initial indifference and continues to describe how other inmates felt similar until they started learning about Black history, culture, and oppression. Similarly to Senghor, educating themselves sparked a desire to help other members of their community and to stay out of prison, once released from it. Senghor himself educated other inmates both while in prison and after, and until now engages in educating activities, such as lecturing at the University of Michigan ("Shaka").

As Roberts states earlier in the memoir, many Black offenders had been incarcerated young, mostly for drug-related crimes (Roberts 31-33). She shares these letters in detail with a purpose; she wants to emphasize that low education prior to prison does not equal low intelligence and threat to society. Quite the contrary, as many of the prisoners had been caught in unfortunate life circumstances, they ended up being eager to make efforts to change their living situation after release and never return to prison again. As Roberts says:

Shaka wanted the young guys in the hood to know about the Thirteenth Amendment and the truth about slavery. To know that they are pawns in a game. To know the streets aren't worth their freedom. He wanted them to choose a different path than he'd chosen. "Our children are being raised by the same system that failed us. That is a frightening thought. It's what drives me to work with at-risk youth." He told me he had written three novels that he believed would inspire the youth he hoped to influence. He called his books conscious street literature. (62)

This is one of the reasons why Roberts is captivated by Senghor. Despite knowing he had committed a second-degree murder, she sees the circumstances under which he was arrested – a young Black boy

caught in a street shooting. His desire to learn about and fight against the socioeconomic and racial injustice (he himself was impacted by) makes Roberts see behind the four walls of the prison and see the bigger picture instead. She writes about Senghor's desire to help other Black people and emphasizes that the prisoners recognize how education serves as a tool to achieve that. And that is also what she tries to show to her readers and one of the ways she undermines the stereotyping of prisoners.

Despite being a crucial part of the lives of prisoners' partners, in the memoir, the stigma experienced by Roberts is not discussed explicitly. Instead, Roberts gives subtle examples of her own encounters with stereotyping and stigmatization, but she never extends the encounters to other women. She gives a detailed depiction of herself throughout the timeline of the memoir. She is a light-skinned petite woman, educated with a PhD in psychology, who had been offered a postdoc at the University of California – Berkeley (43-49). She is an independent woman who manages a full-time job and community work, works at charity organizations, and later also becomes a manager of her partner's business, a loyal and dedicated partner, and a mother of their child. In one way, Roberts herself seems to be trying to deny many of the stereotypes as described by the research and studies mentioned in this paper. On the other hand, the detailed description of her success feels like an apologetic narration, trying to justify her relationship choices, by which she is attempting to cope with her later trauma stemming from her relationship with Shaka.

While Roberts does not write about being personally attacked due to her relationship choices, she shares the significant influence that courtesy stigma had on her life. She first experienced it fairly early in her relationship, at the moment she decided to confide in her mother. She is harshly dismissed with words like "You're a fool," and "I hope he doesn't come home and murder you" (84). Ever since then, she has avoided sharing her relationship with people and opted for lies instead. It is at the beginning of the thirty-first chapter that she discovers an online discussion forum for relatives and partners of incarcerated people. As she was reading through the forum, she found a large net of female partners, where women could advise and support each other. She says:

I found a sisterhood in the MWI, or Met While Incarcerated, group and that's where I spent most of my time. All the women in this group had met their boyfriend or husband after he'd gotten locked up. It was comforting to read about their struggles and how they coped with the loneliness, the judgments, the alienation. I didn't feel by myself on an island. I felt connected. I felt understood. (123)

What Roberts describes here is one of the impacts of stigma by affiliation. Similarly to Moore's study participants, alienation and separation from either relatives or community are one of the main results of the stigmatization. Some women feel forced to lie about their relationships, in order to avoid judgment or justification of their relationship choices (Moore 36). Some are affected by the stigma so heavily that they refuse to leave their own homes, as they fear their public perception (May 207).

As a result of experiencing courtesy stigma, Roberts cut herself off from most of her personal relationships and decided not to share this part of her life, which was becoming more and more significant, with other people:

I could always read the judgment on their faces. "Are you crazy?" "Have you lost your mind?" "What's wrong with you?" I know that's what people thought when I told them about Shaka, even though they didn't say it. Instead, they said nothing, their silence filling the room. And then the questions would start. "What did he do?" "How did you meet?" "When does he get out?" "Be careful" was usually how the conversation ended. (..) I was never ashamed of our relationship, but I was selective about who I shared Shaka with. I didn't want anyone burying seeds of doubt in my mind or forcing their fears on me the way Mama did. That meant much of my excitement about the things Shaka said, or a beautiful moment we

shared, I kept to myself. The last thing I needed was another opinion. "You can't be in love. He's in prison. What can he do for you?" "Girl, I ain't waiting on no man in prison. There are too many free men out here." I didn't expect people to understand. He was in the most wretched place on earth. And he'd taken a man's life. I just wanted them to trust my judgment. I wasn't reckless or irresponsible, or naïve. (106)

Apart from experiencing the courtesy stigma directly, she also experiences the projection of it, as she imagines what others think, without actually hearing them say it. She would not talk about her mental issues such as loneliness and alienation related to having an incarcerated partner, nor would she share the financial burden of handling expensive trips and regular phone calls to prison. In one instance, even her life was at risk when she got stuck in her car during a snowstorm on her way to visit Shaka. Had she been comfortable enough to share her intentions with someone close, the situation could have been avoided and hence her life would not have been endangered.

Roberts confirms the existence of courtesy stigmatization and proves that it is not necessarily conditioned by meeting stereotypes of a prisoner's partner. However, if the partner is in some way 'stereotypical', it can be assumed that experiencing the courtesy stigma might be amplified and the influence on one's life quality more significant. Furthermore, she shares deeply traumatic experiences caused by the nature of her relationship, strengthening the argument that her memoir is a trauma narrative.

Nevertheless, Roberts certainly provides these examples for a purpose. Being subjected to stereotypes and influences of stigmatization often changes the life circumstances of women significantly. Whether it is a financial burden, emotional burden, or alienation from the community, women must make compromises in these areas and hence often lower the quality of their lives. And as mentioned previously in this paper, it can be assumed that Black families would be more affected by courtesy stigma and the negative effects connected to it. Roberts describes her own work with socioeconomically disadvantaged families:

We charted buses and organized day-long trips to prisons across the state for families to visit their loved ones. I sent letters to the men on our mailing list. Tell your mama, your daughter, your wife to call us. For some, this would be their first time seeing their family in years, some for the first time since they got locked up. This is the way the system is set up – to separate families and keep them far away, so far that families have to scrape pennies together for a visit. (48)

She herself had been suffering with finances, at times not being available to visit Senghor for months, and she was a highly educated and well-employed woman (138). Prisoners' partners are not only the primary source of money for the inmates, but more importantly, they are their emotional and moral support. Prisoners' partners have been proven to have a significant effect on the recidivism of prisoners as, based on multiple studies, offenders who managed to re-enter society successfully have reported having excellent relationships with their partners and/or families (Bucklin qtd. in Moore 2). However, Roberts shows how the partner's support is not always possible, especially for those coming from disadvantaged environments, and therefore stresses that the burden these women carry as prisoners' partners has multiple layers, each of these being strongly tied to the courtesy stigma.

Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed several aspects of a memoir by Ebony Roberts called *The Love Prison Made and Unmade: My Story*. The memoir, despite being predominantly a story about the author's relationship with a prisoner, is set within a specific narrative, which dedicates a significant portion to Roberts' struggle of being a Black woman in a white society and intertwines stories that emphasize systemic injustice

experienced by African Americans in the USA. These conditions, as described by Roberts, create an environment in which young Black men are more likely to become incarcerated, as suggested by the Foucauldian theory. Furthermore, it has been discussed that incarceration comes hand in hand with a strong stigma experienced not only by the prisoners but mainly by their relatives and families. The so-called stigma by affiliation decreases the quality of life of the prisoners' relatives and also negatively influences maintaining harmonious family relationships, especially romantic relationships between the inmates and their relatives and/or partners.

Roberts describes her own experience as a Black partner of a Black prisoner, confirms the inaccuracy of the partners' stereotypes, and emphasizes the negative influence of courtesy stigma. By challenging some of the stereotypes of both the partners and the prisoners, namely the stereotype of low education, indifference to recidivism, naivety, or dependency on the partners, she attempts to reduce the stigma as perceived by society. In this manner, it can be argued that Ebony Roberts in her novel is attempting to change the public perception of prisoners and their spouses and therefore serve as a tool for the fight against systemic oppression of African Americans. Nevertheless, there is also a strong presence of evidence that her memoir is also a way of her coping with her traumatic life experience, and therefore could be classified as a trauma narrative.

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Bára Nejedlíková

Fan Fiction as Space for Consent Negotiation: Exploring Consent in a Harry Potter Fan Fiction *Manacled*

Abstract: *With the question of what constitutes consent being raised more frequently since the dawn of the new millennium, it is natural for women and queer individuals to discuss it more. However, this can prove to be quite difficult in a society in which consent is one dimensional. They have to turn to alternate spaces in which such discussion is welcomed and not shunned away. This paper sees fan fiction as one of such spaces and suggests that the predominantly women and queer-penned genre do not shy away from discussing topics that are often marginalised in mainstream media, or in some cases completely left out. Based on the contents of the Harry Potter fan fiction story, the analysis proposes that fan fiction can actually be quite helpful in consent negotiation. As the story acknowledges depictions of non-consent and dubious consent, it may help its readers to read it side by side with other texts in order to critically reassess what they know about consent and compare its portrayal in other media. Using fan fiction and its alternate spaces, the paper introduces the genre as a space for subverting, challenging, and reimagining dominant sexual scripts.*

Introduction

As a genre, fan fiction often stands in what could be considered morally grey areas for various reasons. The stories are often face criticism for its seemingly low-quality plotlines, (un)originality, and the overall morality in regard to the portrayal of its performing bodies. It is often the "fan" in fan fiction that faces the most criticism. Just like any professionally published literature, fan fiction offers a wide range of subgenres. There is no dispute that good and bad works exist in both. The problem seems to lie in the perception of the genre as a whole based on only a fraction of what it can offer. From a fan perspective, the stories that are criticised the most are interestingly the ones that copy mainstream published fiction the most. Romance novels are full of cliches and formulas, which are repeatedly used only with slight changes per story, yet they are not as heavily criticised as fan fiction can be. This raises a question whether the problem really lies in the supposed low quality of fan works, or if it is simply the prejudice against its authors as fans.

As a genre that is predominantly penned by women and queer individuals, fan fiction can be viewed as the voice of a minority (Busse 188). Regardless of the quality of the work, fan fiction still offers a view into the mostly female and queer community. The stories reflect the members' various wants and needs and therefore may offer an interesting insight. There are many reasons for writing fan fiction. Some authors may be simply dissatisfied with the fate of their favourite character and want to change some things. For some, fan fiction writing can also be a form of activism. It can be the writers' mission to raise awareness and stand up for what they believe in. The need for fan fiction often stems from the feeling of missing something. The authors may fall in love with a seemingly insignificant character and want more for, or from them. They can also interpret the original work differently from canon and pick up on any undertones which they feel were not discussed at length. It is not unusual for characters who represent minorities to be underdeveloped or glossed over. Same is the case with social issues that are, for the sake of entertainment, mostly ignored in mainstream media. This paper analyses a fan fiction story through the activist lens in

regard to discussions about sexual consent. It focuses on how sexual consent is depicted within the story and analyses possible interpretations of such scenes.

The analysed fan fiction story *Manacled* written by senlinyu on the internet site Archive of Our Own (AO3) is said by the author themselves to be a social commentary on the position of women in the society, and sexual consent. The contents of *Manacled* offer an alternate view at not only non-consent but also the less discussed so-called dubious consent. Its portrayal of rape challenges the notion of it as purely an act of passion, but rather supports the conceptualisation of it as an act of asserting dominance and power in society. The unexpected turn of the narration voice into retrospective shows rape as an act done by someone known to the victim, disputing the idea of rape as something foreign, and uncommon.

In addition to rape, the story also illustrates what is referred to as dubious consent. Dubious consent is a term that encompasses consent along with all the uncertainties, and ambiguities surrounding its discussion. It is the often the subtle details that are left out of the discussion, which are the most integral instrument in understanding sexual consent. Most discussion about sexual consent revolves around what constitutes consent, and what may have been missed in the conversation about it. It is, however, impossible to come to any conclusion without creating discussion among all involved.

Consent is constructed through culture and society; consent is dependent on what its members believe it to be. As the act of sexual intercourse requires two or more people, the discussion should naturally involve all the participants. The problem is that in a cisgender heterosexual man-ruled world, such definitions are proposed by men. Women and queer individuals are usually not involved in the discussion, but they are expected to follow the rules that were agreed on without their presence.

The one-dimensional approach to sexual consent is harmful in many ways and it should be actively sought to be changed. In this sense fan fiction can be extremely helpful as it is the voice of the left-out groups. This paper focuses specifically on the topic of sexual consent and raises the question whether the mainstream representation of consent is enough. It proposes that fan fiction as a genre may help open up further discussion due to its predominantly queer and female penmanship. Using fan fiction and its alternate spaces, the paper introduces the genre as a space for subverting, challenging, and reimagining dominant sexual scripts. It is the comparison between the seemingly trivial and fictional and the "real" one, that helps navigate the conversation about sexual consent. The eerie similarity of some fictional worlds with the real one can prompt the readers to read them side by side and compare.

A brief history of fan fiction, Archive of Our Own (AO3)

Fan fiction is often regarded as a fairly modern phenomenon that dates back to the 1930s and its publication in what is known as "fanzines" ("What is a Zine?"). Its popularity then skyrocketed in the 1960s. This paper, however, discusses the digital form of fan fiction published on the internet. As Andrea Horbinski notes, the evolution of the internet made fan fiction easily accessible as opposed to its print version. In the late 1990s, writers moved their works to newly developed open archives and webpages that offer a much easier access (255).

One of such open archives is Archive of Our Own, usually referred to as simply AO3. AO3 was established by the members of Organization for Transformative works in 2009 ("About the OTW"; Close and Wang 171; Fathallah 869). What makes AO3 a site of interest for research is its authorisation of all content across its platform. The lack of censoring and complete creative freedom is what differentiates it from other fan fiction sites (McCullough; Hellekson 130). Due to this, and fan fiction's characteristic as

a female and queer-penned genre, a close inspection of its contents can help better understand the needs and wants of women and queer individuals. In this way fan fiction can help create a better picture of the "other" sides.

Similarly to other sites, AO3 also runs on a tagging system that helps its users sort and organise through the published works (McClellan 44). This system allows readers to choose which works they may want to interact with, and showcases how varied the genre can be. The tags help provide the readers with useful information about the contents of the stories and help with their categorisation. The use of tags is an interesting phenomenon that deserves attention. When authors tag their story with something, it signalises that they are fully aware of what constitutes the tag. For illustration, senlinyu's *Manacled* contains depictions of sexual intercourse that was not preceded by discussion between the two parties involved. One of the characters forcibly begins the action while the other character does not voice out their consent. One of the characters is clearly raped, and the story is accordingly tagged as including rape/non-consent. The use of this tag shows that senlinyu know what constitutes rape and uses the tag correspondingly.

Such content awareness is sometimes missing in mainstream media, but it is almost always present in fan fiction. Fan fiction writers seem to be conscious of the effect their work may have on its readers and act accordingly. It is not uncommon to tag any potential trigger they can think of, to assure a safe space for their community. Some, in addition to tagging, even share their personal stand in what are called author's notes. These notes often inform the reader that while the story does contain certain elements, the author may not agree with some of them, or support them. This consciousness of the potential effects on one's readership makes fan fiction a lucrative space for further research.

Fan fiction as a genre

As the term fan fiction suggests, the genre is created by individuals referred to as fans. Scholar Henry Jenkins defines fans as individuals belonging to a certain subculture – a fandom (28). Such subcultures are formed through shared interests in various forms of entertainment. Fan fiction is one of the many ways of fandom practice and one of the most widespread ones as fan fiction works can be found in many fandoms. Jenkins also highlights that for someone to be considered a fan, some sort of intellectual and emotional involvement with the source material is crucial (66). This is seen as the driving force for fan fiction writing. The closeness and familiarity fans feel toward not only the narratives, but also the characters themselves, may motivate the need for reworking of the materials (Jenkins 76).

The emotional investment also suggests that the work may reflect the writers' own wants, needs, and beliefs.

Fan fiction as a genre is well-known for its use of canon. In this case, as defined by Sheenagh Pugh, canon is "the source of property used as material by (fan fiction) writers" (242). The focus of the fandom therefore becomes the focus of the fan fiction story and can either closely follow it (canon compliance) or deviate from it in any way (canon divergence). Most fan fiction is seen as canon compliant through its use of physical appearances of the appropriated characters and their mannerisms (45). Canon divergence is usually anchored in changes that have to do with the story's setting and other things that are *explicitly* stated in the original work. The change of things such as time, place, or sexuality of the character defies the canonicity of the work and situates it in an alternate universe.

A fan fiction work which "at some point deliberately departs from the canon on which it is based," is referred to as an Alternate Universe story (Pugh 242). Alternate Universe stories (AUs) often do this as a way

of exploring new and different scenarios, which would have been limited had the work remained canon compliant. Kristina Busse and Louisa Ellen Stein note that these works deviate from the source material and only keep it as a point of reference, often in the form of the performing characters (135). The new universe can be a completely different and fictional one and it functions as a replacement of the canonical world, but it can also be similar to the original one (McClellan 153). The alternate universe in this case substitutes the real/original world and the subsequent performance of the body adheres to the newly set rules.

This substitution is especially interesting in stories that are not set in what can be regarded as a purely fictional world many galaxies away, but rather ones that closely mirror the "real" world. The similarities between what is seen as completely "fictional" and what is seen as "real" can allow the reader to read the two side by side and compare them. The comparative reading of fan fiction stories alongside the real world, or mainstream published fiction, is what makes the genre so attractive for research. These new worlds often adhere to the rules of the real world and should not be viewed as completely separate from it. Once the prejudice against the "fan" in fan fiction is taken out of the equation, fan fiction is like any other literary genre. Since all literature is a product of culture, it cannot be disputed that fan fiction also mirrors, and influences it. Fan fiction often functions as sort of a counterculture for the mainstream, which can offer the reader with a different point of view on certain topics. Though fan fiction is written mostly for enjoyment, it can also serve various purposes. The aim of this paper is to show one of such purposes through a content analysis to show how fan fiction can contribute to the ongoing discussion about sexual consent.

Something that further separates fan fiction from mainstream published fiction is, as Francesca Coppa notes, the focus on the performing bodies. In fan fiction, it is the body, that creates and moves the plot of the story. Because of this, Coppa compares fan fiction to a theatrical performance in which body is the "storytelling medium" and simply acts out a script to the audience (240, 243). The character-centred narrative is what makes fan fiction so unique and of possible interest to scholars. As previously mentioned, fan fiction and especially AUs function as a space for exploration out of the bounds of what is known and firmly given. The use of alternate spaces, which defamiliarise the work from reality and give the reader a certain distance, is what allows them to inspect the fictional world in comparison to the real one.

The focus on the fictional body and its experience offers the option to explore the effects some events may have on the characters and compare it to own lived experiences. The similarity of the fictional characters' experiences can help the readers critically assess and possibly reevaluate their own. To illustrate, a look into a characters' mind while being sexually coerced by their partner and recognition of the situation as such can help the reader remember their own similar experience of being coerced. The character's recognition of the situation as unwanted and coercive can aid the reader to view their own experience as such. By reevaluating past experiences, their own understanding of sexual consent can change and can the newly gained perception can protect them in the future.

Sexual scripts, non-consent and dubious consent

Sexual consent as of now does not have a universal definition, as it mirrors the culture it is discussed in, and cultures and societies vary from another and are ever-changing. There is, however, little dispute that culture and especially popular culture can influence one's perception of what sexual violence and consent may be (Phillips 10). Such is also the case with the knowledge about how sex in general works within the surrounding cultural environment, and notably what constitutes the so-called dominant sexual

scripts. Ideas about sex are deeply rooted in heteronormativity. This is mirrored in the scripts, which function as a framework for the behaviour in what is deemed a sexual situation.

These scripts give the cultural presupposition of what is needed for a situation to be considered a sexual one and discuss the expected behaviour during such situation ("Sexual Consent" 56). This can be useful as sexual scripts give an overall idea of what may be considered to be a sexual situation and what its participants can expect. However, it is often problematic as sexual scripts are not inclusive. According to Milena Popova, they are built on the notion that sex is a "penile-vaginal intercourse that happens between one cisgender man and one cisgender woman" ("Sexual Consent" 56). Dominant sexual scripts fail to cover sex between individuals that do not fall into the category of heterosexual cisgender, such as transgender and queer individuals. In this sense, sexual scripts are also harmful.

It is also often their depiction in popular media that can be problematic. The dominant scripts propose the biggest danger to individuals who are only beginning to learn about sex. Ashley Hedrick raises an important point in her work concerning sexual consent in Real Person Fan fiction (RPF) about the British boyband One Direction. She mentions that the fandom consisted of predominantly young women who only began their own sexual journeys. Her textual analysis of several RPFs noted several instances of non-consent or coercion in which many characters trivialised such experiences (374-5). At first, the characters labelled the experiences as unwanted, but they eventually ignored their initial feelings and forgave the perpetuators. This portrayal is quite common and normalised in popular media. Young impressionable people learn about the world around them through lived experience. If no objections are raised to the portrayal of sexual acts, then it is virtually impossible for them to view them as problematic. Most popular media show problematic scenes as deeply romantic, e.g. *The Notebook*'s Ferris wheel scene. This only sustains the idea that, for example kissing someone without asking for their consent is okay, and even the norm.

Another problem with the dominant sexual script is that it is viewed as a contractual, and most notably a linear one. Everything begins with kissing and touching, moves to undressing and ultimately ends with penial penetration and cisgender ejaculation ("Dubcon" 35, 66-7). This is problematic as such conception implies that once this sequence of events begins, it should come to finish at all costs. This perpetuates the notion that once consent is given, it cannot be withdrawn. Milena Popova further challenge this and raise the question of dubious consent by asking if a "yes" that is extracted through coercion, threats, or nagging can be considered to be a meaningful consent. They also note that explicit consent negotiation is sporadically shown in popular culture ("Sexual Consent 18, 76).

Fan fiction, however, provides alternate spaces for challenging, subverting, and reimagining dominant sexual scripts and consent. Nickie Phillips makes an interesting point in her book when she discusses the 2012 New Delhi rape case. She notes that "when sexual violence occurs in an "other" culture, it may be understood as a cultural and structural problem that implicates patriarchy, class, and neoliberalism" (75). Alternate realities in fan fiction are acknowledged as different and foreign, or to use Phillips' words "other". They offer their readers the chance to read them alongside/parallel to what is considered to be the reality and critically assess and compare them, should they want to. In this way, fan fiction challenges the dominant beliefs and can help individuals take a "much more intentional approach to issues of power and consent" ("Dubcon" 148).

The possible role of fan fiction in consent discussion can be illustrated through how often such topics are portrayed in the stories. As of May 22, 2024, the AO3 counts 359,351 works tagged as containing rape/non-con and 160,992 works with dubious consent. These numbers may not be fully representative of the full number of works portraying consent as tagging is at the writers' full discretion and both tags

can be used simultaneously in one work. However, these numbers still show that the tags are quite popular and stories that contain them make up a considerable portion of the genre. The frequency of the tags illustrates that in fan fiction the discussion of consent is not prohibited, but rather common.

Manacled

Manacled is the most popular heterosexual fan fiction within the Harry Potter fandom. It depicts a relationship between Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy, significantly departing from the canon. The story takes place in an alternate universe in which Lord Voldemort has won the Wizarding War and is currently working on efforts to repopulate the decimated wizarding community in the United Kingdom. According to its author senlinyu, the story is heavily inspired by the TV series "The Handmaid's Tale" based on Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel of the same title, in which women are forced to become surrogates for high-ranking officials. This is mirrored in Voldemort's obsession with pure blood families, who he decides should reproduce at all costs and should carry on the pure blood legacy. Senlinyu said that they wrote Manacled as a social commentary, but this comment has been since then wiped off all their social media and webpages.

To avoid any confusion while reading the analysis, it should be noted that the story is not written chronologically and contains many flashbacks that help the reader piece the whole reality together. The story begins with Hermione who agrees to give herself to Draco in exchange for intel, opening up the discussion about dubious consent. It then proceeds to show consent turned non-consent and ultimately consent again, giving plenty of space for discussion. The use of flashbacks within the story is an important device. The retrospective voice helps the reader navigate the discussion. Hermione was not raped by a stranger without a face. The perpetuator was someone she knew and was even intimate with in the past. This agrees with the fact that the majority of sexual violence is committed by people known to the victim ("Sexual Consent" 24).

(Non)-consent and dubious consent in *Manacled*

The upcoming analysis approaches *Manacled* as a work that stands as a social commentary on the questions of consent and possibly serves as its critique, similarly to the *The Handmaid's Tale* novel. The story is tagged as containing rape and non-consensual sex. The analysis goes further than just non-consent and also focuses on depictions of dubious consent, which is instrumental in the attempts to gain a better understanding of what sexual consent is.

In this story, Hermione is demoted in society as a member of the Resistance against Voldemort and is, in consequence of her stand against the now changed society, stripped of her human rights. She not only loses her freedom but also bodily autonomy as she is being prepared to become a surrogate for one of the pure blood families. As someone who challenges Voldemort's authority she is to be continually raped. This plot device challenges and questions the idea of rape as something purely carnal. Rather than merely a means of achieving sexual satisfaction, rape often revolves much more around dominance and power (Phillips 12). It also showcases the position of women and the power differences they encounter in their lives. The loss of bodily autonomy is also something not purely fictional as there have been various instances of women losing the rights to their bodily autonomy in recent history.

In Hermione's case the power inequality is shown in her transformation into a surrogate, who now has no autonomy to make decisions about her body. She is compelled to be quiet, obedient, and to

never resist bedding (Ch. 3). As both a woman, and the weaker individual, she is expected to submit. Her purpose as a member of the society is diminished to her body as a means of reproduction. She is, similarly to women in real life, a sexual object. There are expectations for her to be fully sexually active, but not on her own accord. All the power in this story is held by the male representatives of the elite families. One of the first scenes with Draco highlights this. Hermione is expected to have sex with him, but it is Draco who leads the whole encounter. The first rape scene showcases the assertion of power. There is a clear distinction between their social and literal positions as a pair. As a surrogate Hermione has to endure the act under Draco, bent over a table:

> She heard his belt click and then, without warning, he impaled her with himself.
>
> She tried to bite back the sob that forced its way up her throat, but the abrupt invasion caught her off guard. (. . .) Aside from where they were joined, he didn't touch her.
>
> (. . .)
>
> When he came, his movement grew uneven and rougher, and then he stilled suddenly with a quiet hiss.
>
> He stayed there for only a second before jerking away from her and striding back over to the bar.
>
> "Get out." His tone was sharp. (Ch. 6)

This scene is the culmination of the long struggle for power, which Hermione, as a member of Resistance, has lost. The fight is over, and Hermione is now in the theoretical and literal position under Draco. The act of rape is the climax and a reminder that she has no power anymore. As Draco jerks away from her, it shows that he has, in fact, no sexual interest in Hermione. He refuses to touch her anywhere even though he could, as she is at his complete mercy. Draco is only carrying out his duty which was given to him by Voldemort, someone in an even higher position than Draco. The lack of eye contact and other intimate actions which are often a part of consensual intercourse shows just how mechanical and detached the act of rape is in this case, and how assertion of power is the main driving force for this act. The complete absence of resistance on Hermione's part suggests that despite her not wanting to engage with Draco in any way, she still somehow does what is expected of her.

Senlinyu in addition to the rape itself, offer a look inside the victim's mind during the act, explicitly showing their point of view. This is especially important as there is a certain belief in what is called "token resistance". According to this, all women secretly want the sex during rape, or just sex in general ("Sexual Consent" 35). This can, especially if paired up with "positive" bodily reaction, be deeply problematic. Victims of sexual violence are disregarded unless they put up active resistance, but as senlinyu show, active resistance may not always be possible. Oftentimes, there is disconnection between the mind and the body, that prevents active resistance:

> Her body had anticipated it. Attuned and waiting. It was ready. Wanting.
>
> It was such a profound betrayal.
>
> Knowing her arousal was physiologically natural didn't ease the guilt.
>
> When the rape was clinical it was endurable. When the rape was drugged, it was endurable. But when it was just her, her own mind and physiology, it was the worst of all. It twisted and tore at something inside her.
>
> *I'm being raped and my body is enjoying it*, she thought bitterly and wanted to curl away. (Ch. 23)

Hermione body's involuntarily reaction to being raped is clearly at odds with her mental state and how she processes the act of being raped. She feels guilty for something she cannot control and blames herself. Throughout the story, to the readers' horror, she slowly becomes more and more resigned and tries to reason with herself about her situation. She goes so far as telling herself that rape is endurable in certain situations. This regression can be viewed as a critique of the prevalent victim blaming. It is clear than what Hermione has endured was in no way wanted, and yet she herself tries to reason with herself. Hermione views Draco's actions as acts without passion, referring to them as clinical. This supports the notion that rape in fact is not always about the sexual satisfaction and she is aware of it. Draco is a man of power as Voldemort's right hand, but he is also the one who is being forced into something he did not consent to. They are both Voldemort's pawns, who is the man in power and above everyone, and he is simply asserting their power over them. Hermione acknowledges this fact and tries to use it as a coping mechanism.

Further into the story we learn through flashbacks that Hermione and Draco's relationship actually started quite differently. Years ago, before Harry Potter lost the war, Hermione was actually an active member of the Resistance and worked as a healer. She experienced all the different horrors that came back from the battlefields and tried her hardest to stop the mindless killing. As her side was at a disadvantage because they refused to use the Killing curse, Hermione was again the weaker one. She actually pushed for the Order of the Phoenix to start using the Killing curse to prevent the causalities, but Harry refused. This alienated her from her friends as she was ostracised by them for going against everything they stood for and what made them different from Voldemort. Despite this, she was still an indispensable member but only two people understood this. Hermione felt seen by Moody and Snape and she trusted them deeply, which lead to her unfortunate fate.

The upcoming passage illustrates what can be classified as the sporadically discussed dubious consent. Non-consent is illustrated by the clear lack of consent, which was easily demonstrated at the beginning of the story. Dubious consent is, however, a much more complex problem that is rarely showed and defined. The question of power differences is often raised in regard to dubious consent. As someone who is basically in no position to refuse, did Hermione even have the option to not consent? Though Hermione voiced out consent, the events that preceded it definitely raise a question. Can her consent still be seen as meaningful after the reader sees her inner thoughts that precede her voicing something completely contradictory out? Draco proposes Hermione with something that could potentially save her life if she agrees to do what he demands:

> She stood there thinking until Moody spoke again.
>
> "There's not much I wouldn't do for the intelligence he could offer. But you have to agree. He wants you willing."
>
> No. No. Never.
>
> She swallowed the refusal. Her hands fisted until she could feel the outlines of her metacarpal bones beneath the skin.
>
> "I'll do it," she said, not letting her voice waver. "Provided he doesn't do anything to interfere with my ability to aid the Order. I'll do it." (Flashback 1)

Hermione clearly does not want to consent to the proposition made by Moody in Draco's stead. However, Draco is the High Reeve, he is right at the top in Voldemort's ranks, and he is willing to give intelligence in exchange for Hermione. We can see that Hermione clearly realises their position and

decides to agree against her best judgement. Through the flashbacks, Hermione is portrayed as someone who would do virtually anything to bring the war to an end and she sees this as a way of getting closer to her goal. This is an example of dubious consent as her words contradict her real thoughts. The question that arises is would she have done it if she were in a different situation?

From both the original books and the films, Hermione's distaste for Draco is obvious and mutual. A pure blood wizard and a mudblood are on completely different levels of the wizarding hierarchy. While they would not be considered typical enemies in the canonical work, they now very distinctly stand at opposite sites in the war, even if Draco is willing to provide intelligence. He could be the key to winning the war and he realises that they desperately need what he has to offer. That is why he requests Hermione in exchange. Draco knows he has the power to do so and if Hermione ever came to him "willing," as he asked, that would have meant that he has truly won over her. If Hermione agrees to his terms, to Draco it means that she is completely devoting herself and loses all her autonomy as his proposition obviously implied that she would have to submit herself sexually.

This expectation is further explored in the scenes after Hermione has agreed to be exchanged for Draco's intel and they begin to meet up secretly to assure that no one except for the two of them, Moody, and Snape knows about this arrangement. Draco is unchanged from their school days. He still views Hermione as someone lesser than him, and never an equal. He calls her a mudblood and revels in how she has to bite her tongue and cannot say anything to him because that would mean the deal is off. Draco is more than aware that Hermione is less than willing and that is what makes it more thrilling for him. He enjoys taunting and challenging her because he has that power over her that allows him to do so:

> "Kiss me," he said in clarification. "As a demonstration of your sincerity."
>
> (. . .)
>
> Hermione's whole body felt drenched with cold terror at the thought of reaching out and touching him. Of having him touch her with those cold, pale, murderous hands of his.
>
> Of pressing her mouth against his.
>
> (. . .)
>
> She hesitated. "How do you want me to kiss you?" she inquired.
>
> "Surprise me," he said, shrugging.
>
> (. . .)
>
> The coil of fear in her spine felt like a needle being driven down her back. Her heart was beating so forcefully it felt as though it were bruising itself against her ribs.
>
> She slid her arms up around his neck and pulled him down toward herself. He smirked and permitted it. (Flashback 3)

It is surprising here that Draco does not take what he can claim as his by force. This shows that to him, making Hermione his prize is more about exercising power over her. Both characters know that the transaction has begun, and it will inevitably end with Hermione succumbing on her own as she had already taken the first step that sealed her fate. Draco enjoys taunting her like this, not acting as the monster Hermione believes him to be. This is what makes the situation much more complicated as Hermione is explicitly given a choice to decline but she essentially cannot do so. She could have decided not to "demonstrate her sincerity" by refusing him. Draco seemingly gives her the choice but both of them know that it is just an illusion. Hermione needs Draco's help and therefore cannot refuse anything that would endanger her chances of helping her cause.

The linearity of the dominant scripts suggests that she has already consented once she kisses Draco the deal is officially consummated and will lead to Hermione completely succumbing to Draco and future agreement for any other events. This supports the idea that once women consent to something, they cannot take it back. It does not matter to Draco that Hermione's consent was not meaningful, it was still consent by the usual definition and its possible nuances are completely disregarded. This approach perpetuates the idea that consent voiced at any point is indisputable and unchanging. It does not matter whether the "yes" was coerced or threatened out, in this case "yes" means "yes".

The analysis aimed to show that consent is not one dimensional but much more complex and carries many nuances. The beginning of the story undeniably shows rape and how horrific it is for its victims. It however challenges the belief of it as a purely carnal act and rather shows it as an act of exercising power and dominance over weaker individuals. The switch in narrative into retrospective through the use of flashbacks shows rape as something that is done to Hermione by someone who she knew and, in the past, willingly engaged with in sexual encounters. This disputes the dominant belief that the moment consent is voiced, it cannot be withdrawn. It shines a new light on rape as a whole because Hermione was clearly raped, but she had also clearly consented to having sex with Draco in the past. Does their sexual history change this? It does not, as the act of rape in the previous chapters is indisputable. Hermione may had engaged in consensual sex with Draco in the past but that is not the case now. Each individual sexual encounter should always be judged in its individuality and *Manacled* supports this by showing the present but also the past. The story also directly illustrates several instances of dubious consent. By clearly showing internal thoughts of Hermione that contradict her voiced out consent, senlinyu indirectly raise the question of meaningful consent. It is safe to say that had Hermione not been in the situation she was in throughout the story, she would not have consented to subordination. The peculiar situation she was in as a person of virtually no power who stood against an individual with immense power put Hermione in a hard position. Though there was the option to decline, to Hermione and the ones she loved this was question of either staying alive or dying. Her consent therefore was not driven by lust or want but rather the need to stay alive to protect people she cared about.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this research is the necessity of the intention behind it. As fan fiction is read for enjoyment, many do not focus on possible undertones within the stories. This can be especially problematic in stories that depict abusive behaviour. There is no way to determine whether the author put such elements out of disagreement with them, and the intention of fuelling a discussion for change. Some authors and readers may have romanticised abusive behaviour and may actively seek out stories containing elements of abuse. As previously mentioned, some readers may be younger and fan fiction can be their introduction to the world of sex. Although sexual violence is present in popular media, it is often not done in such extent as it is depicted in some fan fiction. Detailed depictions of sexual violence between partners that are often glossed over by the characters themselves once they find their happy ending can be extremely problematic. In this way, fan fiction can do more harm than good. Unacknowledged depictions of serious topics and their trivialisation in stories can have bad consequences.

In the case of the analysed story *Manacled*, many fans argue that the somehow happy ending only romanticises abusive behaviour towards women. Similarly to other romantic stories, *Manacled* also features what can be called the "taming" of the hero. Draco is a heartless man, who does not change much throughout the story. He may love Hermione, but he does acknowledge all his flaws and behaviour,

and initially pushes Hermione away. Given how strong-willed and opinionated Hermione is in the source material, it can come as a surprise when she decided to romantically pursue Draco even after everything. At the end of the story, it is Hermione who has changed the most, as she accepted Draco for who he is and learned how to understand him and see beneath the cold surface (Dubcon 75). The "love overcomes all" approach in romance stories can potentially give wrong expectations

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the fan fiction genre as a possible medium for consent negotiation. As fan fiction is perceived as being a product of "other" cultures, it is a productive choice for discussing topics that are not represented in mainstream literature and popular culture. The genre is generally penned by women and queer individuals who often lack representation and voice in the society. Their experience of being shunned, however, does not apply to fan fiction writing as this medium is accessible to anyone, and is not ruled by the usual rules. In this way fan fiction can not only serve as a tool for self-identification and self-exploration, but also activism.

As the genre already operates within morally grey areas it has no problem bringing to surface topics that are ostracized, or not discussed at all in popular media. Though consent is discussed in some mainstream media, its portrayal is often incomplete and one dimensional. The omission of certain groups should invoke calls for an all-inclusive redefinition. Fan fiction can possibly offer this.

This paper analysed an alternate universe story to showcase that consent is a complex topic that should be discussed. The introduced framework of alternate universe stories as spaces that allow one to critically assess and read such stories side by side by with their mainstream counterparts offers an interesting perspective on fan fiction and its role in consent negotiation. It notes that by recognising the storylines as containing non-consent and dubious consent, fan fiction allows its readers to reassess what they know about consent and potentially help them form new opinions and approaches to this complex problem.

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REVIEWS

Helena Polehlová

Christopher Marlowe: *Edvard Druhý*

Translated by Filip Krajník, edited by Anna Hrdinová, illustrations by Klára Čampulková, introduction by Filip Krajník and Klára Škrobánková.Filip Krajník, 2023. ISBN: 978-80-11-03319-4

The relationship between rulers and the power entrusted to them, its abuse, and the clash of personal interests and political responsibility has troubled humanity throughout history. The 2023 Czech stage production of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* (*Edvard Druhý*), directed by Jakub Čermák and performed by the theatre company *Depresivní děti touží po penězích*, demonstrates that this topic remains relevant in the 21st century. Filip Krajník's new Czech translation, crafted specifically for this production, underscores a successful collaboration between the translator and director, initiated in the 2022 staging of *Hamlet* based on Krajník's translation.

Whether by chance or design, *Edward II* returned to the Czech stage a century after its debut. The first Czech performance, directed by Karel Hugo Hilar, premiered in 1922 and sparked passionate debate in the pages of the *Jeviště* newspaper.

The present publication is a notable achievement, offering a fresh translation of Marlowe's play, accompanied by an in-depth study that reconstructs the historical and literary context of Marlowe's life and work, along with a thorough analysis of the play. Additionally, Klára Škrobánková's study introduces readers to the relatively short production history of *Edward II* on Czech(oslovak) stages.

The title of the introduction, "Netradiční král v netradiční hře od netradičního autora", captures the untraditional and almost paradoxical nature of the play in the context of Elizabethan drama. The mysterious circumstances surrounding Marlowe's death and his unconventional life, possibly intertwined with service to the Privy Council, have long puzzled audiences and scholars.

In contrast to Marlowe's masterpieces such as *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, or *Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II* explores the psychology of an "outsider". Unlike the "politically conscious" Virgin Queen Elizabeth I, who at least publicly sacrificed her emotional and sexual life to serve her people, Edward, as the protagonist, is presented as her opposite. The king is depicted as weak and childish, driven by his passions and especially by his emotional, homoerotic relationship with the nobleman Piers Gaveston. When his protégé is exiled, Edward falls into anger, sorrow, and self-pity; when Gaveston is recalled, the king is absorbed in childish, passionate enthusiasm, rendering the political concerns of the English kingdom insignificant compared to his personal life.

Unlike Marlowe's strong, Machiavellian characters such as Tamburlaine or Doctor Faustus, Edward is largely controlled by barons and his court companions. Twice in the play, this subjugated position is explicitly acknowledged by Gaveston and Spencer the Younger: "Kdybych já byl král–" (*Edvard Druhý* I, 4, 27); "Být já král Edvard, (…) snášel bych / tyto urážky (…)?" (*Edvard Druhý* III, 2, 10-15). Edward's powerlessness reaches its nadir in the humiliating regicide scene, committed by the devilish character Lightborn, reminiscent of Mephistophilis in *Doctor Faustus*.

Unlike his son, the future King Edward III, who ultimately takes royal power and avenges the barons' disloyalty to his father and his mother's betrayal, King Edward II is unable to reflect on the faults that led to his downfall, lamenting, "Čím jsem se / provinil než přehršlí dobroty?" (*Edvard Druhý* V, 1, 122-123), a line that reveals his incompetence and naiveté at the moment of catharsis.

Filip Krajník's translation is a fresh one. Based on his previous work with the director, Krajník aimed to make the translation accessible to modern audiences while preserving the original text's complexity, including its wide range of registers, meter, and stage directions.

The language of each character aptly reflects their changing status: In Act II, devastated by the king's contempt and emotional neglect, the queen's poetic laments end with meticulously translated rhyming couplets (II, 4, 24-30 and II, 4, 60-70). By Act V, having gained political power through a plot with Mortimer the Younger, she speaks in terse lines and addresses her son manipulatively.

The king's language also mirrors his situational standing and emotional state. In Act I, he uses impassioned words to exalt Gaveston's presence: "To nevíš, kdo jsem? / Tvůj přítel, ty sám, druhý Gaveston! / Ani pro Hyla Herkules tolik netruchlil / jako já pro tebe od tvého vypovězení" (I, 1, 141–144) and "Tvá cena, sladký příteli, činí nad mými dary / a tak, abych ji dorovnal, přijmi mé srdce" (I, 160–161). In Act V, Edward's soliloquies convey a different tone. At the beginning of Act V, he mourns his kingship and impending death: "Nepřestaň zářit, slunce na nebi, / vládu ať nepřevezme tichá noc" (V, 1, 51-74), while later he delivers a Senecan speech invoking the spirits of the dead, seeking courage and peace as he approaches death: "Nesmrtelné síly, jež znáte bolestivou strast, / co čeká na mou zbědovanou duši, / ach, pohleďte zde na ty troufalce…; Duchové Spencerů, kdekoliv teď jsou, / mi přejí štěstí. Klid, to pro ně umírám" (V, 3, 37-39; V, 3, 44-45).

In terms of meter, Krajník's translation understandably does not strictly adhere to the original's compact blank verse. This flexibility allows the use of contemporary, multisyllabic words that enhance accessibility for modern readers and audiences, further supported by invaluable commentary clarifying Marlowe's frequent references to classical mythology.

I strongly believe that both students and the general public will find their way to *Edward II* through this exemplary edition, which offers a lively, readable translation and a compelling study. May this publication reach many enthusiastic readers, and may the translator and director's fruitful collaboration continue.

Jan Suk

Tomáš Kačer: *Dvousetletá pustina: Dějiny starší americké dramatiky*

Karolinum: Dramatica, 2019. 380 p. CZK 420. ISBN: 978-80-246-4413-4.

How can you write a book on nothing? Arguably, John Cage's most intriguing piece *4'33"* is a modernist experimental composition instructing the performers not to play any musical instruments; in other words, the spectating experience may lead to the experience of silence. Yet, this controversial piece, from my personally witnessed experience, leads to surprisingly enriching results. With his *Dvousetletá pustina* Tomáš Kačer performs the same; writes a book about two hundred years of seemingly nothing. Like Cage's composition, Kačer convincingly demonstrates that even two centuries of seeming void can be fundamentally intriguing territory.

In brief, *Dvousetletá pustina* presents a groundbreaking investigation into the overlooked history of American drama prior to Eugene O'Neill, most specifically, what happened on the American stage before the birth of American drama, i.e. before 28 July 1916 (9). By tackling what Gore Vidal famously called a "two-hundred-year wasteland (27)," Kačer not only reassesses the period but also bridges the gap between Czech literary scholarship and American cultural studies. This work, published by Karolinum Press, situates early American drama as both a mirror and shaper of the nation's evolving identity. I believe as such Tomáš Kačer has achieved a rare feat: he has illuminated a neglected chapter of literary history while making it accessible to a new audience. Not only does the book enrich Czech literary/dramatic scholarship but also invites further exploration of early American drama as a site of cultural negotiation and transformation.

The book is structured in two main parts, the first offering an in-depth chronological history and the second presenting an anthology of key dramatic works translated into Czech by Kačer himself. Part I covers milestones such as the satirical *Androboros* (1714) by Robert Hunter, often regarded as the first American play, through to the advent of realism and proto-modernism exemplified by Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* (1916). Chapters highlight pivotal genres like Revolutionary War propaganda, 19th-century melodramas such as Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859), and romantic dramas like John Augustus Stone's *Metamora* (1829), which interrogates frontier myths and indigenous representation.

Kačer adeptly ties these works to broader socio-political dynamics, noting how they address themes of identity, morality, and collective memory. The inclusion of melodramas advocating for abolitionism (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* by George L. Aiken) alongside social comedies reflecting anxieties about class and cultural mimicry (Anna Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*) showcases the diversity of dramatic forms during this formative period.

Kačer's most significant achievement is his ability to contextualize American drama as a vital part of the nation's cultural history rather than as a derivative or secondary literary tradition. Drawing on sources like *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre* and *Cambridge History of American Theatre*, Kačer situates early American drama within a transatlantic framework. He illustrates how it evolved in response to British influences while forging distinctively American themes, such as the tension between republican ideals and the realities of social stratification.

Kačer's exploration of melodrama as a dominant genre in the 19th century is particularly compelling. There he demonstrates how its emotional excess and moral binaries resonated with audiences navigating

the rapid changes of industrialization and westward expansion. Furthermore, his analysis of George L. Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* highlights its dual role as entertainment and social critique, engaging with abolitionist discourse while reflecting the racialized hierarchies of its time.

The book also critiques traditional historiographical biases that dismiss pre-O'Neill drama as artistically insignificant. By including less canonical works in his analysis, such as William Dunlap's *André* (1798) and Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787), he underscores the cultural significance of these texts in shaping early American theatre and public discourse. His attention to the theatrical conditions of the time, such as the itinerant troupes and makeshift playhouses of the colonial and early republican periods, adds depth to his argument.

Part II is equally vital, providing Czech translations of seminal texts that have largely remained inaccessible to non-English-speaking audiences. This section allows readers to engage directly with the material, offering an experiential understanding of its linguistic and thematic nuances. The inclusion of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* (1916) exemplifies Kačer's commitment to showcasing works that challenge gender norms and expand the canon beyond male-dominated narratives.

By emphasizing the importance of contextual and historical factors in understanding these plays, Kačer's translations serve not just as literary artifacts but as tools for broader cultural analysis. His careful attention to the complexities of translating humour, dialect, and period-specific idioms demonstrates a sensitivity to the challenges of cross-cultural scholarship.

Overall, Kačer's methodology is systematic and rigorous, drawing extensively from archival materials and existing critical scholarship. He engages critically with the idea of cultural hegemony, acknowledging the dominance of Anglo-American narratives while gesturing toward underrepresented voices, such as Native American and African American dramatists. However, these voices remain peripheral in the book, a limitation that reflects the scarcity of sources but nonetheless invites further investigation.

Additionally, while Kačer critiques Eurocentrism in literary historiography, his analysis occasionally reproduces its frameworks. The focus on English-language drama, for example, overlooks significant contributions from Spanish and French traditions in early America, which could have enriched the book's comparative perspective and broadened its appeal.

To conclude, *Dvousetletá pustina* is a seminal contribution to both American studies and Czech academic scholarship. Kačer succeeds in reevaluating an unjustly neglected period, presenting it not as a barren prelude but as a rich and multifaceted foundation for modern American theatre. His work challenges readers to reconsider the cultural and historical value of early American drama, underscoring its relevance to ongoing discussions about national identity, cultural memory, and artistic innovation. For scholars and students alike, this book is a pioneering and indispensable resource bridging geographical and disciplinary divides demonstrating that even "nothing" can be highly inspiring and performative.

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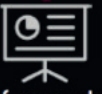

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As is tradition, the conference will consist of a combination of plenary lectures, parallel lectures, roundtables, seminars, posters, and the Doctoral Symposium. Details of each format and how to participate can be found below.

1. PLENARY LECTURES

A select group of renowned experts, representing the key disciplines of English Language, Literatures in English, and Cultural and Area Studies, will be invited by the Organising Committee to deliver plenary lectures. Each of these speakers has been chosen for their significant contributions to their respective fields.

2. PARALLEL LECTURES

In addition to the plenary lectures, approximately 12 parallel lectures will be featured during the conference. These lectures will be delivered by members of ESSE, nominated by their respective national associations as explained below. Each presentation will be 45 minutes in duration and those selected to present will receive a full waiver of conference registration fees.

We invite National Associations to propose candidates for the parallel lecture sessions. A maximum of two nominations per association will be accepted to ensure a diverse and balanced selection process. National

Associations should submit a description of their nominees' lecture topic along with a concise CV. Nominations should be submitted through the national association's President or designated representative and forwarded to the Academic Programme Committee (APC) by 1st May 2025 at esse2026@usc.es

Depending on the number of proposals received, the APC may implement a selection process. Key criteria will include the proposal's relevance and appeal to a broad academic audience, as well as its potential to engage with recent advances or fresh perspectives in English Studies. The APC will also prioritise achieving a balanced representation of key disciplines—English Language, Literatures in English, and Cultural and Area Studies—and striving for equitable representation of national associations wherever possible.

3. SEMINARS

Proposals for seminars related to the three fields mentioned above must be jointly submitted by two ESSE members from different national associations. In some cases, the APC may permit one of the convenors to be a non-ESSE member (for example, if they are based outside Europe), provided their involvement is deemed especially valuable for the seminar. Each seminar proposal must include the convenors' names, affiliations, email addresses, and a 300-word description of the seminar's topic (excluding bibliographical references). Please send your proposals via email to esse2026@usc.es by 1st May 2025.

The APC will consider the proposal's international appeal and its potential to engage with recent advances in English Studies as key selection criteria, while also striving for a balanced representation across key disciplines—English Language, Literatures in English, and Cultural and Area Studies— wherever possible.

Unlike roundtables, seminars are not pre-arranged sessions and will be featured in the APC's upcoming call for papers. However, convenors are encouraged to actively recruit potential contributors. The seminar format aims to promote interactive participation from both presenters and the audience. To foster engagement, presentations should be

delivered orally rather than read from a script. Further guidelines will be included in the corresponding call for papers.

Individual Seminar Contributions

The call for seminar contributions will be launched in September 2025, once the list of accepted seminars is finalised. Those wishing to submit a proposal must send a 300-word abstract (excluding bibliographical references) to the convenors of their chosen seminar by 31st January 2026. Information regarding the organisation of seminar sessions, including the number of papers per session, will be made available on the ESSE 2026 website in September 2025, along with the full list of seminars and contact details for the convenors.

Seminars will feature a range of academic papers and discussions. Each presentation should last 20 minutes, followed by a 10-minute discussion. Exceptionally, convenors may need to request shorter presentations to accommodate more participants in their sessions.

Participants at ESSE 2026 are limited to presenting a single paper during the conference, whether it is a sole-authored or co-authored contribution.

4. ROUNDTABLES

The aim of roundtables is to present topics and problems currently seen as shaping the nature of the discipline. At a roundtable, a pre-constituted panel discusses issues of fairly general scholarly or professional interest in front of, and subsequently with, an audience. In other words, roundtables are not sequences of papers but should rather be approached as debate sessions. Proposals should include a 500-word description of the topic (excluding bibliographical references) and the names and affiliations of at least three participants (including the convenor), who must be drawn from more than one national association. The maximum number of speakers will be five.

Please send your proposals to esse2026@usc.es by 1st May 2025.

5. POSTERS

Posters will be devoted to research-in-progress and project presentations. The aim is to provide additional opportunities for feedback and personal contacts. Further details will appear on the conference website in September 2025. Proposals of not more than 300 words (excluding bibliographical references) must be sent to esse2026@usc.es by 31st January 2026.

6. DOCTORAL SYMPOSIUM

A key feature of the ESSE Conference is the Doctoral Symposium, which upholds a tradition established in 2012. This event offers young scholars the opportunity to present their research and receive valuable feedback.

Information regarding the Doctoral Symposium will be announced in due time.

DEADLINES

Submission of proposals for **parallel lectures** from national associations to esse2026@usc.es	**1st May 2025**
Submission of proposals for **seminars and roundtables** from prospective convenors to esse2026@usc.es	
Submission of **individual papers** for seminars to seminar convenors	**31st January 2026**
Submissions of **individual posters** to esse2026@usc.es	
Registration will begin on 1st March 2026	

Please check the conference website for further updates at https://www.esse2026.com/

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Peter Luba is a PhD. Candidate at Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. He received his MA in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures from Charles University in 2021. His MA thesis Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, John Dewey, and the Creative Reader was awarded the Mathesius Award by the Vilém Mathesius Foundation for the Promotion of English and American Studies in Prague. In his current PhD. project (currently dir. doc. Erik Roraback, previously late David Lee Robbins, PhD.), he focuses on Euro-American pragmatism, the Trans-Atlantic exchange of ideas, and, above all, Art and Life. His areas of research include American pragmatism (Ralph Waldo Emerson), literary modernism (Friedrich Nietzsche), education and philosophy (John Dewey), and French theory (Jacques Rancière).
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Jiří Lukl focuses on information structure analysis of discourse, particularly on the role of reference and co-referential strings in cohesion. He received both his MA and PhD at the Department of English and American Studies, Masaryk University, Brno. In 2023, he successfully defended his PhD thesis, titled Referential Importance: Investigation Based on Quantitative, Intuitive, Lexicogrammatical and FSP Approaches. Since 2023, he has had a full-time teaching and research position at the Department of English and American Studies, University of Ostrava.
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Jan Suk is currently the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové. He has taught, lectured and published internationally (Stanford University, King's College, Roehampton, Leeds, Konstanz, Porto), and academically performed in Sri Lanka, Greenland, Nepal, Cyprus, Slovakia etc. on immersive theatre, Live Art, Gilles Deleuze & performance, especially within English context. He wrote a monograph intersecting philosophy with the theatre of Forced Entertainment. He is now working on another book devoted to the multifaceted work of Goat Island, an American avant-garde performance troupe.
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ETHICAL STATEMENT

Publication Ethics

The publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies* is an essential contribution in the development of a coherent and respected network of knowledge in the field of English Studies. It reflects the quality of the work of the authors and the institutions that support them. Peer-reviewed articles support and embody the scientific method. The Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové as the publisher of the journal *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies* takes its duties of guardianship over all stages of publishing extremely seriously and we recognize our ethical and other responsibilities. We are committed to ensuring that advertising, reprint or other commercial revenue has no impact or influence on editorial decisions. Therefore, any detected cases of misconduct, whether on the part of authors, reviewers or editors, will be vigorously pursued.

For responsibilities of authors and the Editorial Board, consult the journal webpage: http://pdf.uhk.cz/hkjas/publication_ethics.php

MISSION STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Mission Statement

Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies, as a peer-reviewed academic journal, aims to be a medium which brings together the results of current research of Czech and international scholars. It welcomes submissions of articles in the following fields:

- English Linguistics
- Anglophone Literatures and Cultural Studies
- English-teaching Methodology

The journal will publish both contributions presented at Hradec Králové Anglophone Conferences as well as other original unpublished papers. All submissions shall be the subject of double expert blind-review procedure whether they constitute beneficial contribution to the field of Anglophone studies.

Guidelines for Submissions

The manuscripts should be submitted in English in the range of 3000–6000 words, with references formatted according to the MLA 8th edition, see www.mla.org. Please note that submissions which do not conform to the MLA style with in-text citations will not be considered for publication. Authors are solely responsible for the correct use of English language. Each submission should be preceded by a 200-word abstract outlining the article and also short bibliographical information about the author.

There are two issues published per year. For Vol. 12 No. 1 and 2 to be issued in November-December 2025 please send the contributions in electronic form to Jan Suk or Helena Polehlová, the volumes' editors. Emails to editors of both the forthcoming issues in 2025 are Jan.Suk@uhk.cz and Helena.Polehlova@uhk.cz.

The deadline for contributions is 1 May 2025.

For more information about the periodical please contact Jan.Suk@uhk.cz

For more information, visit the journal's webpages: http://pdf.uhk.cz/hkjas/

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