University of Latvia

Baltic Journal of

English Language, Literature and Culture

Volume 14
2024
ISSN 1691-9971

University of Latvia

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture

Volume 14

Riga 2024

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture, Volume 14. Riga: University of Latvia, 2024. 172 pages.

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture is a multidisciplinary international scientific journal in general linguistics, applied linguistics, literature and culture.

Editor-in-Chief: Andrejs Veisbergs (University of Latvia, Latvia)
Managing editor: Monta Farneste (University of Latvia, Latvia)

EDITORIAL BOARD
Karen Brown Campbell (Grayson College, USA)
Leo Tak-hung Chan (Guangxi University, China; Lingnan University, Hong Kong)
Mihaela Culea (Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacau, Romania)
Adam M. Croom (University of California, Berkeley, USA)
Kenan Dikilitas (University of Stavanger, Norway)
Ina Druviete (University of Latvia, Latvia)
Giovanni Iamartino (University of Milan, Italy)
Indra Karapetjana (University of Latvia, Latvia)
Delphine Letort (Le Mans University, France)
Vilmantė Liubinienė (Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania)
Sangeeta Pant (Chitkara University, India)
Gunta Roziņa (University of Latvia, Latvia)
Jānis Sīlis (Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, Latvia)
Ömer Şekerci (Süleyman Demirel University, Turkey)
Crispin Thurlow (University of Bern, Switzerland)
Phalangchok Wanphet (Nord University, Norway)
Jonė Grigaliūnienė (Vilnius University, Lithuania)
Aristi Trendel (Le Mans University, France)
Enn Veldi (University of Tartu, Estonia)
Pattamawan Jimarkon (University of Stavanger, Norway)
Edward Owen Teggin (Diponegoro University, Indonesia)
Edit Willcox-Ficzere (Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom)

LANGUAGE EDITORS
Christina Uhlich

Layout: Ineta Priga

The journal uses a double-blind review process: all papers are reviewed by at least two blind-reviewers.

No part of this journal may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Web site: https://journal.lu.lv/bjellc
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024

The journal is covered in Scopus (since 2023), ERIH PLUS; NSD Index (since 2018); Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index, provided by a Clarivate Analytic company (since 2017); EBSCO: Central and Eastern European Academic Source, EBSCO Discovery Service; EBSCO Humanities Source (since 2015), Index Copernicus, DOAJ, the MLA Directory of Periodicals and indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine), CROSSREF, ROAD Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources, WorldCat, Sherpa/Romeo, Scilit, LINGUIST List, Google Scholar.

ISSN 1691-9971 (Print)
ISSN 2501-0395 (Online)

© University of Latvia, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tatjana Bicjutko and Indra Odiņa
Teacher Educators' Foreign Language Anxiety in Face-To-Face and Online Modes 4

María Pilar Alberola Colomar and Andrea Menn
A Virtual Exchange to Boost Students' Intercultural Communication Skills in English 21

Ewelina Feldman-Kołodziejuk
Cancer Narrative with a Difference: Elaine Feeney's *As You Were* 35

Iryna Kachur
Existentialist Motifs of Alienation and Death in McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* 51

Łukasz Nieroda
The Portrayal of the Polish-Lithuanian Peasantry in the Memoir Accounts of British Travelers (1764-1795) 70

Esmaeel Ali Salimi and Seyed Mohammadreza Mortazavi
Impoliteness in Twitter Discourse: a Case Study of Replies to Donald Trump and Greta Thunberg 86

Adriana Elena Stoican
The Dynamics of Transcultural Insight in Jhumpa Lahiri's Literary Universe 108

Ömer Şekerci and Müjde Demiray
Loneliness and Humour in Aziz Nesin and Neil Simon: a comparative study 121

Edward Owen Teggin and Shofi Mahmudah Budi Utami
Andy Adams and Western Myth: the frontier and his *Log of a Cowboy* 135

Andrejs Veisbergs
The Changing Meanings of Political Terms and Their Reflection in Dictionaries 154

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 4–20
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.01 © University of Latvia, 2024

TEACHER EDUCATORS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE MODES

TATJANA BICJUTKO and INDRA ODIŅA
University of Latvia, Latvia

Abstract. The internationalisation of universities and the ensuing policies mandating English as a medium of instruction made European universities impose corresponding requirements demanding a certain level of English language proficiency from their academic staff. Similarly, university-based teacher educators became subject to specific foreign language demands. This research focuses on university-based teacher educators who have been actively taking part in enhancing their academic English. The COVID-19 pandemic made for a prompt shift from face-to-face to online learning, providing for a comparison between the two learning environments. Since affective factors, including learning anxiety, may impact the success of language acquisition, the study addresses foreign language anxiety experienced by teacher educators when acquiring English for Academic Purposes in different learning modes. The research was conducted as a survey with the data obtained through administering the adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to 80 respondents from the 7 universities working in teacher education, furthered by 4 online semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal overall low levels of anxiety, with a small increase in communication apprehension. Although there is no conclusive evidence about the decrease in anxiety in remote studies, the interview results are clearly demonstrative of the possibility of combining face-to-face and online learning modes.

Key words: English for Academic Purposes, English medium instruction, face-to-face, foreign language anxiety, online, university-based teacher educators

INTRODUCTION

With a vision for 'a Europe in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders' (European Commission, 2017: 11), mobility and internationalisation turned into beacons of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The enormous growth in English-taught programmes at European universities (Wächter and Maiworm, 2008; Wächter and Maiworm, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018) raised several problems related to English medium instruction (EMI),

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

that is, the use of English for teaching academic subjects in places where the majority of the population speaks other languages than English. Thus, EMI programmes, mobility, and the governing 'publish or perish' principle made the English language proficiency indispensable for work in academia.

The possibility of significant financial and public returns provides a powerful incentive for the post-industrial knowledge society to invest in higher education (HE) (OECD, 2017a; OECD, 2017b; OECD, 2018). To promote the EHEA's sustainable development through increasing its HE quality, internationalisation and labour market relevance, the European Council has been allocating significant funds to help national governments with the professional development of their academic personnel. After addressing urgent needs in digitalisation, the supporting programmes often focus on bridging the linguistic gap, offering English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for HE staff. In Latvia, this has been realised within an EU-funded project under the specific objective No. 8.2.2 of the Operational Programme Growth and Employment: 'To strengthen academic staff of higher education institutions in strategic specialisation areas' (Finanšu ministrija [Ministry of Finance], 2021).

Among the academic staff, those who prepare, mentor and support aspiring and practicing teachers, or teacher educators (TEs), are an undeniably special group with direct influence on the whole system of national education (EC, 2013; UNESCO, 2014; EC, 2019; OECD, 2019). Implementing the EU's strategic decisions and maintaining the quality of the teaching workforce, TEs are inevitably under the pressure of public expectations (EC, 2018). The growing body of research on TEs' professional development has been focusing on their professional trajectories (Guberman et al., 2021), the doubt and uncertainty resulting from the tension between institutional expectations to engage in both high-quality teaching and research (Czerniawski, Guberman and MacPhail, 2017; MacPhail et al., 2019), as well as typical obstacles such as high work load and lack of time and motivation (e.g., Shagrir, 2017). With research on the linguistic skills of academic staff in the context of EMI being in its prime (see, e.g., Kalnbērziņa, 2017; Carrió-Pastor, 2020; Dimova, Kling and Drljača Margić (eds.), 2023), there has been no systematic study of TEs' language proficiency, even though it has stopped being mere functional utility or even an exclusive concern of their home universities (Bicjutko and Goba, 2020). Although in Latvia continuing professional development is mandatory for all university personnel (Cabinet of Ministers, 1995), 160 academic hours of professional development programmes do not mention the enhancement of language proficiency, though they allow for reporting international mobility as well as participation in conferences (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018: ch. III, para. 16). Thus, the research on the enhancement of TEs' English proficiency is topical, and for a clearer picture, both systemic level and individual perspectives should be taken into consideration.

The success of language acquisition is a multifaceted phenomenon, with foreign language anxiety (FLA) being among the affective factors potentially correlating with learners' performance. Despite nearly four decades of researching FLA,

studies have usually focused on formal education and the FLA levels of children and young adults (see MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; MacIntyre, 1999; Horwitz, 2001; Dewaele, 2007; Horwitz, 2010; Lu and Liu, 2011, etc.). In the university context, foreign language learning anxiety has been researched for supporting staff (Tappoon, 2019), and there has been research on teachers' foreign language anxiety experienced by non-native teachers of English (e.g., Horwitz, 1996; Kim, S.-Y. and Kim, J.-H, 2004; Suzuki and Roger, 2014; Machida, 2019; Liu and Wu, 2021). Being a very specific, hardly homogenous, and highly reflexive group of learners, TEs may add a different dimension to the study of the phenomenon. Finally, the experience of rapid transfer from the traditional face-to-face ground to the uncharted terrain of online studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic offered a research opportunity for comparing two modes of mastering EAP in terms of related FLA.

Thus, the study attempts to elicit data on the FLA experienced by TEs of HE institutions in Latvia while enhancing their English language proficiency within their work-based continuing professional development. The research aims at comparing the levels of language-skill-specific anxiety and its variation in face-to-face and online modes with the following research questions put forward: What are the levels of FLA experienced by university-based TEs in the EAP course? What are the trends in response to the mode of conducting the course for EAP enhancement of TEs from the FLA perspective?

Answering these questions makes it possible to define the benefits and drawbacks of EAP acquisition in different environments from the FLA perspective and give tentative recommendations for conducting future EAP programmes for university-based TEs.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND ITS MEASUREMENT

With a view to the current need for English proficiency in general and in academia specifically, university personnel must have been under pressure, which may have been reflected in their FLA levels while enhancing EAP at their workplace. Language anxiety is a complex psychological construct, and, as 'the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language' (MacIntyre 1999: 27), it is clearly an affective factor in foreign language acquisition, impacting cognitive functioning and memory, as well as causing other detrimental effects on learning.

The research on FLA as a specific type of anxiety was backed by understanding anxiety more generally and informed by the three approaches to its study, namely, the trait, state, and situation-specific perspectives (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Whereas trait anxiety is a stable predisposition to experience anxiety across situations and time, state anxiety is a temporary reaction to an event. The third type, situation-specific anxiety, is triggered by a specific set of stimuli and can be seen as trait anxiety in a well-defined context (ibid.), with speaking in a class and taking an examination being common situations in the context of education.

Having distinguished FLA as triggered by learning a new language, E. K. Horwitz, M. B. Horwitz and Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). This standardised quantitative tool for measuring an individual's response to specific stimuli related to the context of language learning consists of 33 statements. The 24 positively worded and the 9 negatively worded items are designed to make the respondent reflect on a certain language learning situation and rate their experience on a 1 to 5 Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree). Total scale scores range from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety. With significant part-whole correlations, the total scale aims at assessing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation related to language anxiety.

Overall, the FLCAS yields reliable scores on negative language learning experience (Tran, 2012), provides for developing recommendations and, despite 'a plethora of studies throughout the [nearly four decades of] looking at this affective factor through all types of lenses including: psychology, psycholinguistics, testing, and education' (Brennan, 2014: 65), remains the most frequently used and adapted instrument. Hence the choice of the FLCAS as a tool for this study, where measuring and comparing FLA levels in face-to-face and online foreign language classrooms may help determine a more conducive environment for the special group of TEs as well as design ways to improve their learning process.

METHODOLOGY

1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research was conducted as a survey, and the data were collected with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a questionnaire and an open-ended interview. The main instrument used in the study was the 33-item FLCAS (Horwitz, E. K. et al., 1986), which was translated into the state language using the back translation technique and adapted to the specific context of TEs' English language enhancement as part of their professional development. The resulting instrument was pilot-tested by 7 participants, which led to minor changes in the wording of several questions.

The questionnaire was expanded by a demographic section containing questions about workplace, gender, age, mode of conducting the attended courses (face-to-face, online or both) and their level, namely, B1, B2, C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale, or 'other'. The final question concerned the level of course completion at the time of the survey, i.e., whether the respondent had already completed the course, continued attending it, had temporarily postponed or interrupted their attendance, with the possibility to comment on their choices. As teacher education is a comprehensive, dynamic and inherently interdisciplinary field, no question specifying the respondents'

type of involvement (e.g., by subject or level) was asked. The demographic section was deliberately kept to the minimum in view of the respondents' lack of time. The questionnaire ended with an invitation to comment on their English language learning experiences and to participate in further research on their language acquisition. The final draft of the questionnaire was provided with an introduction containing a note on anonymity and confidentiality, thus guaranteeing the informed consent of the research participants. The complete questionnaire was posted online using Google Forms in March 2021. Then, the link, accompanied by a letter, was sent via WhatsApp and email to the contacts in the biggest HE institutions in Latvia providing programmes in teacher education. Further distribution of the questionnaire was conducted using the snowball sampling method.

After obtaining data from the questionnaires, 4 participants were chosen and invited for an interview. The main criterion was their experience of the transition from a face-to-face to an online environment while attending their English language course. Reflecting on their EAP acquisition, the interviewees would be competent to assess the differences between the two learning modes in general and in terms of FLA levels in particular. Before the interview, the candidates received a letter of explanation with a consent form to sign. The semi-structured interview consisted of 13 open questions, starting with the interviewee's involvement in teacher education and particulars of the attended course organisation, and then focusing on anxiety and nervousness experienced in the EAP classroom. The interviewees were asked to reflect on the causes, effects, and coping strategies for FLA, as well as to make recommendations for improving the process of EAP acquisition and English proficiency enhancement as part of their professional development. The interviews were conducted after a considerable amount of time had passed since the completion of the questionnaire, namely, in the period between December 2021 and March 2022. The time space allowed for the experience to 'sink in' and for the interviewees to reflect on it.

The TEs' answers to the questions in the FLCAS were analysed with the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet programme to obtain the mean, mode, median, and standard deviations (SD). Subsequently, the researchers fully transcribed the respondents' answers to the semi-structured interviews and, to reveal patterns in the statements made by the interviewees, conducted a 'key word analysis', as described by Nunan (1992: 146). Cross-referencing the data obtained in the analysis served for triangulation of the results and allowed to draw certain conclusions as well as offer recommendations to elaborate professional development courses for enhancing TEs' English proficiency in the future.

2 RESEARCH SAMPLE

After 7 respondents piloted the FLCAS, in total 73 members of the academic staff from the 7 HE institutions in Latvia providing programmes related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence, aka teacher education programmes, filled in the questionnaire (see Figure 1). Among them, 15 were male

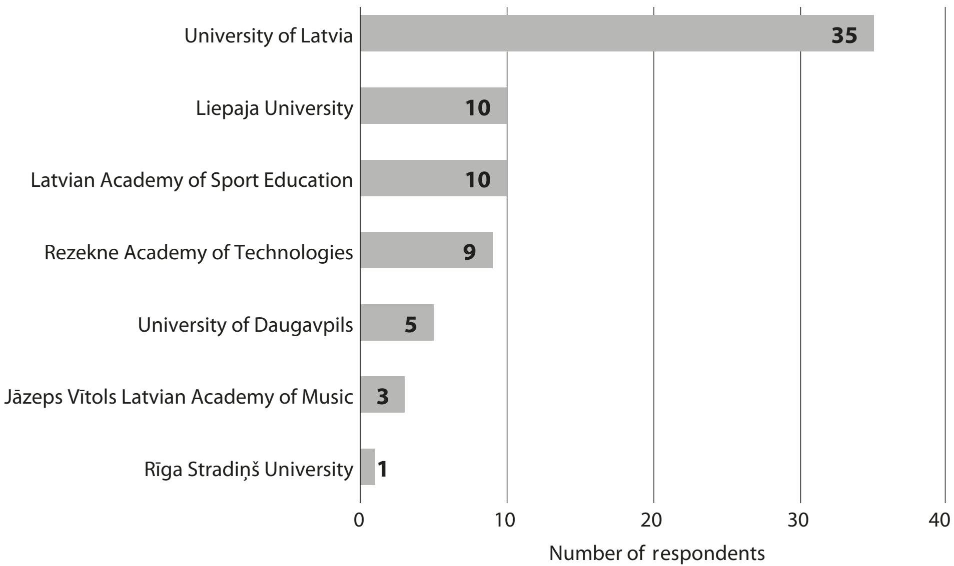

Figure 1 **Research participants per higher education institution (N = 73)**

and 58 were female, which is representative of the general situation in education in Latvia, though the male/female ratio in HE, and particularly in sciences, is less skewed (MoES, 2020; LIAA, 2022).

Concerning the age of the respondents, the most representative group of the TEs (31 respondents) were in their fifties, whereas the second biggest group (23 respondents) were in their forties. The rest of the research population consisted of 17 people above 60 years old, 7 respondents in their thirties and only 2 less than 30 years old. The distribution corresponds to the general trend of ageing professorship in Latvia in general and in teacher education in particular (OECD, 2016; MoES, 2020).

The enhancement of TEs' English proficiency in the framework of the EU initiatives in question started in a regular face-to-face mode in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic hit Latvia in 2020, and it led to the rapid transition to delivering all the studies online, thus providing the groundwork for changing the mode of the ongoing EAP courses. The following years were marked by a mixed environment in view of the changes in the epidemiological situation as well as the choices made by a particular group. Thus, among the respondents, 27 people attended regular classes, 50 experienced the mixed mode of conducting their course, and only 3 participants were exposed to the fully online environment, with 2 of them still attending their studies at the time of completing the questionnaire.

Overall, the respondents can be seen as highly motivated to enhance their EAP proficiency, as, at the time, only 1 participant interrupted his studies and 2 had postponed their attendance for a while. As concerns the termination, the respondent

regretted the necessity to take such a decision ('even though the teacher was very good'), whereas one postponement was caused by a sick leave, and the second one was due to the shift from face-to-face to online mode both at work and for the EAP course: 'Working remotely requires much more energy. [...] There is no desire or physical energy to spend extra hours on the computer'. Still, the decision is temporary, as there is an expressed 'desire to continue learning English'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

The questionnaire provided rich data on TEs' FLA that could be analysed in relation to external and internal factors. First, the reliability coefficient of the modified FLCAS was assessed. Measured by Cronbach's alpha, it demonstrated an internal consistency of 0.96, which is rather high in absolute terms and higher than the alpha coefficient of 0.93 demonstrated by the original scale (Horwitz, E. K. et al., 1986). Except for question redundancy, there may be other explanations, which will be examined later in the discussion of question wording and the responses to the open question.

As demonstrated by the results, the overall FLA experienced by TEs when studying EAP as part of their continuing professional development is not high (see Table 1). Low levels of FLA had already been registered for academic and research staff in higher education institutions in Latvia, with inconclusive evidence on the differences between FLA in face-to-face and online environments (Bicjutko and Odiņa, 2021). As E. K. Horwitz (2008: 235) explained, learners 'with averages around 3 should be considered slightly anxious, while [those] with averages below 3 are probably not very anxious'. Only respondents who score 4 and above can be recognised as seriously anxious. Thus, only 9, or about one eighth, of the 73 research respondents demonstrated an average above 3, with the highest being 3.8. The results are in line with the results of the previous research linking anxiety to different learner variables such as age, level of education, and the number of spoken languages, with more educated learners scoring lower on FLA (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014).

With the mean close to the median, the dataset has a nearly symmetrical distribution. The average scores by type of anxiety do not differ much, with the test anxiety average being particularly close to the overall (2.41 and 2.42, respectively). While the TEs seem to be the least afraid of negative evaluation, scoring 2.26 on average, communicative apprehension, or 'a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people' (Horwitz, E. K. et al., 1986: 127) is the most strongly expressed category of anxiety, with a score of 2.53, respectively. Still, its average is below 3, which puts it within the borders of a moderate reaction.

Considering the questions that scored the highest, '1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class' is the leader, with

Table 1 **TEs' FLA scores**

	Number of questions	MIN	MAX	MEAN	MEDIAN	SD	Average score
Overall	33	33	142	79.71	77	24.85	2.42
Communicative Apprehension	11	11	49	27.81	27.5	9.35	2.53
Test Anxiety	15	15	66	36.07	34	11.79	2.41
Fear of Negative Evaluation	7	7	28	15.83	16	4.9	2.26

Table 2 **FLCAS items with the highest/lowest means**

HIGHEST SCORES				LOWEST SCORES			
Item No.	**SUM**	**MEAN**	**SD**	**Item No.**	**SUM**	**MEAN**	**SD**
1	219	3.17	1.33	4	133	1.90	1.12
11	216	3.1	1.1	20	133	1.90	1.07
8	214	3.06	1.30	3	128	1.83	1.06
14	208	3.0	1.2	19	111	1.6	0.9
2	209	2.99	1.28	31	91	1.32	0.65

a mean of 3.17. This and one more item (question no. 14) from the top five belong to the group of statements correlating with communicative apprehension. It is of note that the following four high scorers are negative or reversed questions, namely, '11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes' (MEAN = 3.1), '8. I'm usually at ease during tests in my English class' (MEAN = 3.06), '14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers' (MEAN = 3), and '2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class' (MEAN = 2.99) (see Table 2). The negative phrasing of statements may prompt a more sincere response and therefore lead to an acknowledgement of higher rates of anxiety.

On the other end of the spectrum are the statements '4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language' and '20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class', both with a mean of 1.9. Closing the list are the statements '3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class' (MEAN = 1.83), '19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make' (MEAN = 1.6), and the lowest scoring '31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language' (MEAN = 1.32). Thus, the extreme means differ by 37 per cent, which is a significant amount. It is worth noting, however, that the wording of the lower-scoring items is conspicuous in its exaggerated nature, and their translation has raised multiple debates between the researchers.

The items in the target language cause a stronger impression, particularly the choice of verbs (e.g., in statement no. 4: 'Tas mani biedē/-ēja' [It frightens me]; in statement no. 20: 'mana sirds dauzās/-ījās' [my heart is pounding]; in statement no. 3: 'Es trīcu/-ēju' [I tremble]; and in statements no. 19 and 31: 'Es baidos/-ījos' [I am afraid]), and as such, the statements may seem culturally unacceptable for the respondents. Logically, some perceived the scale as 'negatively biased', which may have raised the wish to prove the opposite: 'To be honest, the questions in this questionnaire seemed quite strange [...] I think that nobody, at least in our group, had problems with nervousness, fear of speaking, stress, because the atmosphere was very positive, understanding and fun'. Furthermore, the proof of controversial reactions to the wording may be that the biggest difference between mean and median for the 33 items occurs for statements 3 and 19 (0.83 and 0.6, respectively).

The (over-)emotional language may also be the reason for the high Cronbach alpha, as the TEs, both lecturers and researchers themselves, must have immediately grasped the intention of the questionnaire and may have automatically created a better image of themselves to save face. Several disparaging comments left at the end support such an interpretation, with participants being quite critical of the statements' clarity ('The formulation of the questionnaire questions is too messy. One gets the feeling that some questions in the questionnaire aim at making the respondent lose their vigilance') or the repetitiveness of the whole instrument. The later trait, however, is also mentioned in combination with the perceived aimlessness and wrong focus of the questionnaire: 'The questions of this questionnaire do not seem logical and are repetitive [...] what do emotions have to do with the content and quality of the courses, which, in my opinion, are much more important questions regarding these courses?'. According to one of the respondents, the data cannot be considered valid as the questions are 'about feelings and not about content and reasons'. Such an opinion testifies to the fact that despite the explicit mention of the FLCAS and its purpose in the introduction, some respondents had formed their expectations guided by the questionnaire title, namely, *Questionnaire on Experience of Improving English*.

Overall, the resulted dataset does not show any statistically significant correlation between the respondents' sex, age, English proficiency, and form of study and their overall FLA levels and anxiety by group (see Table 3).

Although the sample is not large and the scores may be skewed by several outliers, some observations are worth sharing. As in previous studies (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014), more proficient and older respondents demonstrated lower levels of anxiety, as evidenced by the negative correlation (see Table 3), except that age positively correlates with communicative apprehension. The latter fact could be easily explained by the rapidly growing presence of English in all spheres of life and, consequently, bigger exposure and communicative experience (and presumably lesser anxiety when communicating in English) for each following generation. However, the obtained data do not allow for strong claims and require further research.

Table 3 **Correlation between respondents' sex, age, form and level of studies and FLA levels**

	Sex	Age	Form of Studies	English Level	Commu-nicative Appre-hension	Test Anxi-ety	Fear of Negative Evalu-ation	Overall
Sex	1							
Age	−0,008	1						
Form of Studies	−0,168	0,003	1					
Level	−0,256	0,002	0,099	1				
Commu-nicative Appre-hension	0,000	−0,153	0,286	−0,193	1			
Test Anxiety	0,231	0,028	−0,088	−0,396	−0,043	1		
Fear of Negative Evaluation	0,146	−0,096	0,003	−0,250	−0,058	0,860	1	
Overall	0,265	−0,141	−0,190	−0,332	−0,005	0,885	0,814	1

Table 4 **FLCA levels demonstrated by female and male respondents**

	FEMALE			MALES		
FLCA	**MEAN**	**MEDIAN**	**SD**	**MEAN**	**MEDIAN**	**SD**
Communicative Apprehension	29.02	29	9.77	23.57	24.5	6.21
Test Anxiety	37.07	34	12.35	32.50	33.5	9.16
Fear of Nega-tive Evaluation	16.49	16	5.04	13.29	14	3.60
Overall	82.58	78	26.02	69.36	72	17.37

Despite the correlation between sex and FLA levels being not statistically significant, overall, females tend to demonstrate higher levels of anxiety (see Table 3). It is also noticeable that the male FLA distribution appears to be slightly negatively skewed, with the means being consistently smaller than the corresponding medians, whereas the female FLA distribution shows the opposite trend. The skew is perceptibly bigger for the test anxiety of the female respondents (MEAN = 37.07; MEDIAN = 34), and for them, the data on all types of FLA are more dispersed than for their male counterparts (cf. SDs in Table 4).

Concerning FLA in different learning environments, the learners in face-to-face and mixed-form courses experienced lower levels of FLCA than the ones in fully online courses (see Table 5). As there were 3 respondents who had attended

or were still attending their EAP course fully online at the time of the survey, the data cannot be considered representative, and neither may be the average with an overall FLCA mean of 81 (as against 82.38 for the face-to-face mode and 77.93 for the mixed one) demonstrative. Furthermore, the respondents with purely online experience were enrolled in their course in the middle of the pandemic, which was an emotionally taxing time '[i]f only because of technical problems' in the beginning. However, the fact that the respondents demonstrated lower levels of anxiety in the mixed environment is worth noticing.

With the means close to the corresponding medians, the distribution appears to be normal for both face-to-face and mixed modes, with test anxiety being most strongly positively skewed. Additionally, the mix of environments provided for slightly lower dispersion, as evident when comparing the standard deviations in Table 5.

The comments given by the respondents indirectly confirm the quantitative findings. The bias against online classes is evident, with a marked preference for in-person classes as they took place 'before the emergency', and '[t]he effectiveness of the Zoom sessions is [perceived as] lower than if they were held face-to-face', which might be due to multiple technical problems in the transitional period. One respondent is adamant that 'English classes should not be held online, [as] it is impossible to concentrate'. Other comments are less categorical, conceding that even if 'online classes are not the same as face-to-face classes, [they] also help you to remember things and to refresh your vocabulary, as well as to recall various grammar and vocabulary "tricks"'.

Attendees of both traditional and mixed-format courses admit some anxiety, but 'mostly only in the first few lessons, when the people were unfamiliar, the teacher unknown and the environment unfamiliar'. Irrespective of mode, it is the atmosphere in a group that is most important, and when 'the group members are familiar, stress and fear are reduced'; in a collegial atmosphere, 'these courses are definitely not stress-inducing'. Whereas 'the perpetual lack of time' is the most

Table 5 **FLCA by mode of experience**

FLCA	**FACE-TO-FACE**			**MIXED**			**ONLINE**		
	MEAN	**MEDIAN**	**SD**	**MEAN**	**MEDIAN**	**SD**	**MEAN**	**MEDIAN**	**SD**
Communicative Apprehension	29.31	29.00	10.87	26.73	26.00	8.60	29.67	30.00	0.58
Test Anxiety	36.08	33.00	14.15	36.05	34.00	10.62	36.33	34.00	25.90
Fear of Negative Evaluation	17.00	16.00	5.75	15.15	15.00	4.33	15.00	13.00	3.46
Overall	82.38	78.00	29.96	77.93	75.00	22.17	81.00	77.00	9.64

often mentioned stress-inducing factor, the professionalism of the instructors is a part of the recipe for an anxiety-free learning environment. However, the balance may be easily destroyed, as it happened with one of the respondents during the oral proficiency assessment in the online final exam, when '[e]verything suddenly turned upside down'. This account is interesting for its detailing of anxiety: 'The scenarios of my school days were fully activated—anxiety, reluctance to look stupid, unfamiliar tasks and the unusual type of examination only added to it. I hadn't experienced anything like that in terms of anxiety since my school days.' The examination mode may not have been so distressing (if at all) if it were not for the 'unfamiliar tasks and the unusual type of examination', as well as the high stakes of the assessment results.

Thus, although the results are far from conclusive, they point to the positive trend in receiving the mixed mode of studies and allow for the formulation of the questions in need of clarification in the interview.

2 INTERVIEW DATA

The interviews served to elicit a range of anxieties experienced by TEs attending the EAP course in the framework of their on-site continuing professional development and, first of all, personal anxieties, such as 'low self-esteem', 'endangered self-concept and competitiveness', 'shyness and lack of confidence' in the context of foreign language learning. The range of social anxieties such as 'fear of negative evaluation', 'fear of making mistakes and embarrassment' and 'fear of sounding "dumb" and being laughed at' were expressed to a lesser extent. Obviously, being experienced TEs themselves, they often felt not allowed to make mistakes, though a positive environment in the classroom allowed them to overcome the initial discomfort and biased attitude towards themselves.

The interviewees' strong beliefs about learning in general and language learning in particular often hinder EAP acquisition, leading to set views on their cognitive abilities, excessive caution, and high expectations both for themselves and for the English courses. FLA related to 'the necessity to demonstrate C1 level', 'the sword of Damocles' of high-stakes testing ahead, only aggravated the situation and was strongly marked in the interviews.

Further probing into the causes of the experienced FLA provided the answer to the research question about the online format being more accommodating of learners' needs. Given appropriate technological and methodological solutions, several benefits of enhancing EAP online were repeatedly mentioned, namely:

- lesser threat to the positive face
  The respondents acknowledged that there was 'no need [for] introduction[s] and [making a] positive impression', as well as a lesser need to work on one's social image in the online mode overall; they were 'feeling safer behind the screen' because of 'less visibility'. 'The freedom of switching off the camera' and using technology as an excuse reappeared in two interviews.

- 'better time management'
  The online course is seen as less time-consuming, as it allows participants to save time on commuting and could be more 'easily adjusted to the busy schedule[s]' of TEs and the demands of their private lives. Its accessibility did not seem to be particularly threatened by technical problems, as often marked in previous studies. Further, 'comfort' and 'convenience' were two key words that reappeared in all interviews.
- 'more productive'
  Online foreign language acquisition is conducive to on-task behaviour and is more productive timewise. The flexibility of multimedia (the possibility to incorporate new ways to learn with videos, audio, interactive grammar correction tools, automation, chat boards, mobile, instant messaging in WhatsApp, webcams, the Moodle platform, etc.) increases participants' retention rates, and asynchronicity (incl. lesson recordings) allows for revision and learning at one's own pace. Being autonomous learners, TEs highly appreciated a 'customised learning experience instead of the fixed curriculum approach'.

On the downside, the respondents mentioned 'the need [for] new teaching methods' and, particularly, for 'structured group interaction', as well as 'some practicing time' to answer demands of digitalisation. The latter one may not be an issue three years after the end of the pandemic and the afterwave of digital practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The research on the levels of FLA experienced by TEs enhancing their EAP in the framework of their continuing professional development in different modes demonstrated overall low levels of anxiety with a slight increase in communicative apprehension. The variation within different gender and age cohorts is slight but predictable in view of the previous research. What is most important is that the study allowed a comparison of the levels of FLA in face-to-face, mixed, and online modes and clarified the benefits and drawbacks of different environments for foreign language acquisition from the perspective of FLA. Although there is no conclusive evidence about purely online courses, some conclusions and recommendations could be made.

Thus, the studied group of university-based TEs values the online mode for its accessibility and convenience. They appreciate the asynchronous options and the flexibility of multimedia on offer, both features supporting a customised learning experience, TEs' autonomy, and the self-directed nature of their learning. The multimedia experience and multitude of new software may become overwhelming for language learners, but insufficiently developed methodology could be discussed with the instructors, thus establishing a community of practice and enriching both parties to the learning process. New, customised EAP

approaches for TEs are to be developed further, and it is better done as a communal effort of both language and education professionals.

Concerning the FLCAS as a tool, it needs further adaptation for adult audiences, and FLA in the online mode should be further examined with the possible elimination of stress factors such as the pandemic and others. The focus on different age groups and the comparison of their FLA levels may add a new dimension to EAP acquisition theory. Finally, in view of TEs' expanding participation in EMI and Erasmus exchanges, research on their teacher FLA would be appropriate, as it might add to recommendations on TEs' continuing professional development.

REFERENCES

Bicjutko, T. and Goba-Medne, L. (2020) English language policy in relation to teachers and teacher educators in Latvia: insights from activity systems analysis. *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, 45: 60-76. Available from https://www.journals.vu.lt/acta-paedagogica-vilnensia/article/view/22824/22099 [Accessed on 10 September 2023].

Bicjutko, T. and Odiņa, I. (2021) From classroom to online: foreign language anxiety of academic personnel. In *International Online Conference on MOOCs, Language Learning and Mobility: design, integration, reuse: book of abstracts*, 9-10 April 2021 (p. 3). Naples: Fenice. Available from: http://www.mooc2move.eu/event.php?opt=abstracts&id=7 [Accessed on 10 September 2023].

Brennan, R. P. (2014) *The Effects of Verbal Working Memory Training on Language Comprehension in Older Adulthood*. PhD Thesis. Urbana: University of Illinois. Available from: http://hdl.handle.net/2142/50700 [Accessed on 10 March 2021].

Cabinet of Ministers (2018) *Noteikumi par pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un pedagogu profesionālās kompetences pilnveides kārtību* [Regulations on the Necessary Education and Professional Qualifications for Pedagogues and the Procedure for Improving the Professional Competence of Pedagogues]. Regulations No. 569. Latvijas Vēstnesis, 182. Available from https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301572/redakcijas-datums/2018/09/14 [Accessed on 15 June 2021].

Cabinet of Ministers (1995) *Augstskolu likums* [Law on Higher Education Institutions]. Adopted 2 November 1995. Latvijas Vēstnesis, 179. Available from https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums [Accessed on 25 August 2021].

Carrió-Pastor, M. L. (ed.) (2020) *Internationalising Learning in Higher Education: the challenges of English as a medium of instruction*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Czerniawski, G., Guberman, A. and MacPhail, A. (2017) The professional developmental needs of higher education-based teacher educators: an international comparative needs analysis. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40 (1): 127-140. Available from https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2016.1246528 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

Dimova, S., Kling, J. and Drljača Margić, B. (eds.) (2023) *EMI Classroom Communication: a corpus-based approach*, 1st ed. Abingdon and New York, NY: Routledge. Available from https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003349150 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

Dewaele, J.-M. (2007) The effect of multilingualism, sociobiographical, and situational factors on communicative anxiety and foreign language anxiety of mature language learners. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 11 (4): 391-409. Available from https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069070110040301 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

Dewaele, J.-M. and MacIntyre, P. D. (2014) The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4 (2): 237-274. Available from https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.5 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

[EC] European Commission (2019) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages*. Available from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A272%3AFIN [Accessed on 2 September 2023].

[EC] European Commission (2018) *The European Education Area: report*. Flash Eurobarometer 466. Available from https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/313250 [Accessed on 2 September 2023].

[EC] European Commission (2013) *Supporting Teacher Competence Development for Better Learning Outcomes*, Education and Training. Available from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/teachercomp_en.pdf [Accessed on 22 September 2021].

Finanšu ministrija [Ministry of Finance] (2021) *Operational Programme 'Growth and Employment'*. Available from https://www.esfondi.lv/en/regulatory-enactments-and-documents/2014-2020-planning-period/operational-programme-growth-and-employment [Accessed on 15 May 2021].

Guberman, A., Ulvik, M., MacPhail, A. and Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. (2021) Teacher educators' professional trajectories: evidence from Ireland, Israel, Norway and the Netherlands. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44 (4): 468-485. Available from https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1793948 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

Horwitz, E. K. (2010) Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language Teaching*, 43: 154-167.

Horwitz, E. K. (2008) *Becoming a Language Teacher: a practical guide to second language learning and teaching*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Horwitz, E. K. (2001) Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21: 112-126. Available from https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190501000071 [Accessed on 20 October 2021].

Horwitz, E. K. (1996) Even teachers get the blues: recognizing and alleviating language teachers' feelings of foreign language anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29 (3): 365-372. Available from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1996.tb01248.x [Accessed on 2 September 2023].

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B. and Cope, J. (1986) Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2): 125-132. Available from https://doi.org/10.2307/327317 [Accessed on 20 January 2021].

Kalnbērziņa, V. (2017) Local lecturers, international students and their linguistic compatibility. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 7: 74-86. Available from https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.07.2017.05 [Accessed on 11 September 2023].

Kim, S.-Y. and Kim, J.-H. (2004) When the learner becomes a teacher: foreign language anxiety as an occupational hazard. *English Teaching*, 59 (1): 165-185. Available from http://journal.kate.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/kate_59_1_9.pdf [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

[LIAA] Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (2022) *Latvia Sets an Example on Women in Science*. Available from https://investinlatvia.org/en/news/latvia-sets-an-example-on-women-in-science [Accessed on 22 January 2024].

Liu, M. and Wu, B. (2021) Teaching anxiety and foreign language anxiety among Chinese college English teachers. *SAGE Open*, April-June, 11 (2): 1-12. Available from https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211016556 [Accessed on 24 January 2024].

Lu, Z. and Liu, M. (2011) Foreign language anxiety and strategy use: a study with Chinese undergraduate EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2: 1298-1305. Available from https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.2.6.1298-1305 [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J. and Dearden, J. (2018) A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, 51 (1): 36-76. Available from https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350 [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

Machida, T. (2019) How do Japanese junior high school English teachers react to the teaching English in English policy? *JALT Journal*, 41 (1): 5-26. Available from https://jalt-publications.org/sites/default/files/pdf-article/jj2019a-art1.pdf [Accessed on 24 January 2024].

MacIntyre, P. D. (1999) Language anxiety: a review of the research for language teachers. In D. J. Young (ed.) *Affect in Foreign Language and Second Language Teaching: a practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere* (pp. 24-45). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

MacIntyre, P. D. and Gardner, R. C. (1991) Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: a review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41: 85-117. Available from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1991.tb00677.x [Accessed on 10 September 2023].

MacPhail, A., Ulvik, M., Guberman, A., Czerniawski, G., Oolbekkink-Marchand, H. and Bain, Y. (2019) The professional development of higher education-based teacher educators: needs and realities. *Professional Development in Education*, 45 (5): 848-861. Available from https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1529610 [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

[MoES] Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia (2020) *Academic Career Framework for Latvia: ideas paper*. Available from https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/4729/download [Accessed on 22 January 2024].

Nunan, D. (1992) *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

OECD (2019) *Working and Learning Together: rethinking human resource policies for schools*, OECD reviews of school resources. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from https://doi.org/10.1787/b7aaf050-en [Accessed on 10 October 2023].

OECD (2018) *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

OECD (2017b) *In-Depth Analysis of the Labour Market Relevance and Outcomes of Higher Education Systems: analytical framework and country practices report*. Paris: OECD. Available from https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/LMRO%20Report.pdf [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

OECD (2017a) *Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance: conceptual framework and data*, Enhancing Higher Education System Performance. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from https://web-archive.oecd.org/2017-05-02/432814-benchmarking%20report.pdf [Accessed on 12 September 2023].

OECD (2016) *Education in Latvia, Reviews of National Policies for Education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available from https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264250628-en [Accessed on 22 January 2024].

Shagrir, L. (2017) Teacher educators' professional development: motivators and delayers. In P. Boyd and A. Szplit (eds.) *Teachers and Teacher Educators Learning Through Inquiry: international perspectives* (pp. 159-180). Kraków: Attyka

Suzuki, H. and Roger, P. (2014) Foreign Language anxiety in teachers. *JALT Journal*, 36 (2): 175-200. Available from https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ36.2-2 [Accessed on 22 January 2024].

Tappoon, A. (2019) Anxiety in an English training course for Thai supporting staff at an academic institution. *The 5th Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology Academic Conference 2019 (TNIAC 2019)*, 478-482. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337210741_Anxiety_in_an_English_Training_Course_for_Thai_Supporting_Staff_at_an_Academic_Institution [Accessed on 22 January 2024].

Tran, T. T. T. (2012) A review of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's theory of foreign language anxiety and the challenges to the theory. *English Language Teaching*, 5 (1): 69-75. Available from https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/13878/9524 [Accessed on 10 September 2023].

UNESCO (2014) *UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021*. Available from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000231288 [Accessed on 10 September 2023].

Wächter, B. and Maiworm, F. (2014) *English-taught Programmes in European Higher Education: the state of play in 2014*. Bonn: Lemmens.

Wächter, B. and Maiworm, F. (2008) *English-taught Programmes in European Higher Education: the picture in 2007*. Bonn: Lemmens Medien.

Tatjana Bicjutko (M. Hum., researcher in Applied Linguistics) is currently working at the University of Latvia. Her research interests include teaching EAP and ESP, multilingualism in language education and language management at the level of university.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9894-7555

Email: tatjana.bicjutko@lu.lv

Indra Odiņa (Dr. Paed., Prof. in Higher Education) is currently working at the University of Latvia. Her research interests include internationalization of teacher education, competence approach in education, teachers' professional identity and career, English language teaching methodology, mentoring.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4681-8487

Email: indra.odina@lu.lv

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 21–34
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.02 © University of Latvia, 2024

A VIRTUAL EXCHANGE TO BOOST STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH

MARÍA PILAR ALBEROLA COLOMAR
Florida Universitaria, Spain

and

ANDREA MENN
Jade University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Abstract. How can universities enhance their students' internationalisation at home? The need to find teaching methodologies that boost students' intercultural communication skills without travelling abroad has motivated the present study, carried out by two English lecturers from Florida Universitaria in Spain and Jade University of Applied Sciences in Germany. Research was divided into two stages: first, a deep analysis of the intercultural experiences organised in the past at both universities; and second, the implementation of virtual encounters with students from different cultures as tools to promote interculturality at the home university. This paper aims at showing the impact of those exchanges on boosting students' intercultural communication in English. Two groups of undergraduate students, during their English classes, worked synchronously on topics related to essential aspects of intercultural communication. The main teaching objectives of the Virtual Intercultural Communication (VIC) exchange were to increase participants' motivation for knowing other cultures, to raise their intercultural awareness, to foster their capacity to change perspectives, and to improve students' English language skills and their digital abilities. Through the outcomes achieved, students' self-reported feedback, and lecturers' observation, it can be concluded that virtual exchanges are effective tools to improve students' intercultural communication while they meet the English learning objectives.

Key words: intercultural communication, virtual exchange, English communication skills, ICT in education, motivation

INTRODUCTION

After years of collaboration between Jade University of Applied Sciences (Jade UAS) (Germany) and Florida Universitaria (Spain) in the organisation of international

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

student exchanges within the ERASMUS programme, the two coordinators of the experience presented in this paper realised the importance of providing an international opportunity to those students who were not able to travel abroad. Internal statistics of the Jade UAS show that, in spite of many years of promoting student mobility within and also out of the European Union, the mobility goals of the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD (Online 1), have not been reached, so that only a minority of students (about 10-15%) take the opportunity to study or do practical training abroad. The reasons for not going abroad are manifold. Students face barriers such as physical or mental issues, fewer opportunities owing to their financial, educational, cultural, or regional background, or having a family that must be taken care of, to mention a few. This is not only an observation of the two universities involved in this project, but these are also challenges that most European universities have to face.

How can universities enhance internationalisation at home and allow certain target groups, who have previously been excluded, to gain international experience? The need to find teaching methodologies that boost students' intercultural communication skills without travelling abroad has motivated the present study carried out by two English lecturers from Florida Universitaria and Jade UAS. The research method followed was divided into two stages. First, a deep analysis was carried out of the intercultural experiences that had been organised at both universities in the past, such as International Weeks, in which lecturers from other countries taught students for a few days, or International Fairs on the university premises, among others. Evidence showed that a closer interaction between students from different cultural backgrounds was necessary to make them feel the importance of fruitful intercultural communication in their personal and professional futures. This led to the second stage, in which setting up a virtual exchange between undergraduate students from both universities was envisaged as the most effective way to promote interculturality at the home university, following the initiative taken by the European Union in this regard. The EU has named *inclusion and diversity* as one of their four top priorities for the new Erasmus+ generation 2021-2027 (*Implementation guidelines: Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy*, 2021: 12). In order to be more inclusive, new measures have to be taken, and offering more opportunities for virtual exchange is one of them. As stated in the Erasmus programme guide:

> Virtual exchange projects consist of online people-to-people activities that promote intercultural dialogue and soft skills development. They make it possible for every young person to access high-quality international and cross-cultural education (both formal and non-formal) without physical mobility. While virtual debating or training does not fully replace the benefits of physical mobility, participants in virtual exchanges ought to reap some of the benefits of international educational experiences. (The European Commission, 2023: 205)

As Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007: 417) explain, the concept of internationalisation is a process of communication and interculturality in which students are exposed

to interactions focused on intercultural content. The actual travel to other countries is not the only possibility to gain international experience; through a virtual exchange, the practice of intergroup communication is guaranteed, and as Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007: 415) claim, this intergroup communication is the only way in which students can improve their speaking abilities and put into practice the content learned in intercultural communication classes.

This paper aims at showing the impact of virtual exchanges on boosting students' intercultural communication in English from their home university. The virtual exchange programme here described was called Virtual Intercultural Communication (VIC) and was organised by two English lecturers at Florida Universitaria (Spain) and Jade UAS (Germany). So far, there have been three editions of the VIC (2021, 2022 and 2023) in which two groups of undergraduate students from their universities worked synchronously online on the acquisition of intercultural communication skills.

The main teaching objectives of the VIC were the following five: first, to increase participants' motivation for learning about new cultures by creating an international scenario in which they could use English in a more natural way than in a regular English course, students were from different countries; second, to raise students' intercultural awareness, working with partners from several different nationalities on topics related to interculturality was the ideal setting to make them aware of cultural differences; third, to foster students' capacity to change perspectives about people from other countries; fourth, to improve participants' English language skills, the activities were adapted to the learners' English level and designed to help them get the most out of the VIC; and fifth, to improve the digital skills of both students and teachers, given the fact that part of the participants were in Germany and part were in Spain, the only possibility for collaboration was teaching online. Since the use of technology was essential as well as a challenge, improving IT skills was also a key objective.

The present paper is a descriptive presentation of the VIC as a pedagogical proposal to help students improve their communication across cultures in English. First, the theoretical background that substantiates this virtual exchange will be explained. Then, the process followed to develop it will be detailed. After that, the results obtained through feedback questionnaires and observation will be analysed. Finally, conclusions and further action to be taken will be put forward.

INTERCULTURALITY IN EDUCATION

There is no denying that the development of intercultural competence is necessary for students to succeed professionally and personally in the globalised society in which they are immersed, but as Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007: 414) claim, 'there is little reflection on what intercultural competence entails, and on how intercultural learning can be fostered at university level'.

Certainly, interculturality should be integrated into all individuals' education; in fact, it should take up a major part in the curriculum, not only at the university but at all educational levels. There are many advantages to including interculturality in the syllabus of the different educational levels; Barros and Kharnásova (2012: 111) list some of them, such as that it is enriching for everybody since it enables better coexistence, it develops empathy, and it helps understand the world and oneself in the present society, which is characterised by multiculturality.

Not only does the syllabus matter, but as Babaii (2018: 51) puts it, 'the attitude behind intercultural education matters'. Thus, genuine respect for all cultures is essential. Holliday (2018: 4) supports the notion that, behind the design of an intercultural education course, it is essential to consider people's intercultural background and how it can develop through their interactions with other people instead of focusing on the particularities of the different cultures.

Focusing particularly on the intercultural communication competence, which is the core of the present study, Spitzer (1997: 379) describes it as an 'impression that behaviour is appropriate and effective in a given context'. Chen (2014: 19) designed a triangular model that explains how to be interculturally competent. According to this author, people must know their own and their counterparts' cultural conventions and must show a positive attitude towards respecting and accepting cultural diversity. Additionally, Chen claims that people must act in an appropriate and effective way throughout intercultural interactions.

However, it is rare to find university subjects specifically based on intercultural communication apart from the modules belonging to the languages departments. Interculturality is a key factor in foreign language learning, as Barros and Kharnásova (2012: 97) support. Furthermore, for Avgousti (2018), nowadays, the main goal of a foreign language learner is to be an intercultural speaker, and the way to achieve this is to know their own culture and other cultures. Analysing the interrelation between language learning and intercultural communication in more detail, Cetinavci (2012: 3447) considers that to communicate successfully with people from different cultures, not only a proficient use of the language is necessary, but also the speaker's cultural awareness is essential when the language, in this case English, is used in countless interactions worldwide.

Considering all the above-mentioned ideas, both coordinators of the VIC, in their positions as English lecturers, found that the most appropriate way to set up an intercultural communication programme was to integrate it into the syllabus of the English subjects they were teaching, which implied working together with their respective groups of students. This context added validity and relevance to the exchange because students viewed the VIC as a part of their English module and, in consequence, important for their university course.

The idea of collaboration between the respective German and Spanish institutions arose at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, when the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic forced universities to teach online. Lecturers, as well as students, had become familiar with the IT tools for online teaching and learning. This created the ideal scenario to work on interculturality

over a distance with people from different nationalities and backgrounds, given the fact that travelling was not an option.

Avgousti (2018: 2) stresses the importance of technology in learning foreign languages and how online intercultural exchanges can be effective in developing students' intercultural communication skills because they can bring together online learners from different cultures. Nevertheless, despite the advantages, there are also drawbacks; Avgousti (2018: 2) highlights a few, such as the lack of stability in project partners, restricted support, and practical difficulties, but she thinks that its benefits outpace the difficulties. Researchers like Svenkerud and Källstöm (2012: 27) also highlight the importance of the information and communication technology (ICT) to make intercultural projects possible. They point out their low cost but recommend blended courses because of the importance of using face-to-face interaction to achieve good results in collaborative learning, with advantages such as the fact that face-to-face promotes group dynamics, positive interdependence, positive interpersonal skills, and attitudes, as well as individual accountability. Nowadays, however, most of the disadvantages listed above have been overcome through the online tools currently available. The collaborative experience presented in this paper would not have been possible in any other way but online, given the distance between participants.

Finally, another essential part of fostering interculturality in education is motivating students to learn about other cultures. To achieve a high degree of motivation, the activities designed must be carefully planned to incorporate the most appropriate motivating factors. In the VIC described in this study, the three main factors incorporated were: creating tasks that students felt relevant to real life; using teamwork as the basis of collaboration; and using technology to make the exchange more interesting and effective. Additionally, the exchange was designed taking into consideration the five ingredients that Williams and Williams (2011: 18) proposed to increase students' motivation: student, teacher, content, method or process, and environment. From the perspective of the content, the motivational impact of projects such as the VIC can be high. Allen (2021: 228), in his study, defends the claim that 'participants are motivated to study intercultural communication for reasons such as general interest and self-reflection'.

DESCRIBING THE VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

The VIC was designed for a group of undergraduate students from interdisciplinary backgrounds. As stated in previous sections, the universities involved were Florida Universitaria (Spain) and Jade UAS (Germany), with one English lecturer per university as coordinator.

There have been three editions until now: the first one in 2021, when, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tuition was still online for both universities, and students as well as lecturers got connected from home. The second, in 2022, was the most complicated in terms of communication as Spanish students were already having

lessons face-to-face in the classroom, but wearing face masks was still compulsory. Instead, the students from Jade UAS were learning online from home and, therefore, did not need to wear masks. This made speaking and understanding hard. In 2023, both groups of students had their lessons face-to-face in their respective institutions, and finding enough spaces in the universities where students could connect alone was an issue. These different circumstances made the organisation of the VIC a challenging experience.

The number of students ranged from 32 in 2021 to 37 in 2022 and 34 in 2023. Only a few of them took part in more than one edition. In 2021 and 2023, there were participants from eight different nationalities, both universities considered, whereas people from only seven countries took part in 2022. During the three years, there were participants from Spain, Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Morocco, Greece, Iran, Turkey, Cameroon, Lithuania, Egypt, and Tunisia. This ensured a good representation of different cultural backgrounds throughout the sessions.

The two subjects in which the VIC was integrated were English for Specific Purposes (for Degrees in Tourism and Education) at the Spanish university and English for Intercultural Presentations and Negotiations (for Engineering and Business Degrees) at the German university.

The VIC was designed as part of the course syllabus in both universities and integrated into the students' course assessments. The exchange took place during regular class hours, matching timetables at both universities. There was no alternative to organising a synchronous exchange, owing to time constraints. Every edition of the VIC was divided into two sessions (2 hours each) over two consecutive weeks in February. This was the most convenient period in terms of organisation.

The three VICs focused on intercultural communication in English, although this topic was approached from different perspectives each year. This was due to different reasons: First of all, it was necessary to find topics that were relevant to all the heterogeneous student groups. Secondly, the previous knowledge of the students coming from up to 13 different cultural backgrounds and higher education traditions had to be taken into consideration. Thirdly, the contents of the VIC had to be adapted to the contents of the courses, which were taught separately at both Florida University and Jade UAS. Also, the experiences in the courses and the feedback of the students were always elaborated on to improve the upcoming course. The three VICs have to be regarded as 'work in progress' to gain new teaching and learning experience, to practice different methods, and to adapt the contents to the prerequisites and needs of the students.

In the first edition of the VIC, students jointly worked on the importance of intercultural competence and the influence of stereotypes. Since intercultural competence can be regarded as a key competence of the 21st century, as stated by the Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation (Online 2) and the Fondazione Cariplo (Online 3), students' awareness of this topic should be intensified. The lecturers worked on intercultural knowledge and skills by offering them an opportunity to apply and improve their communication skills in the English language. Additionally,

the participants were provided with some comprehensive cultural knowledge, mainly about Spanish and German cultures. Due to the fact that students with a variety of cultural backgrounds also participated, more perspectives could be included. To train students' ability to manage conflicts, the use of *critical incidents* can be helpful, as described by Schumann (2012: 55). Examples were taken from the Mehrsprachigkeit und Multikulturalität im Studium [Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Education] (MuMiS) project database (Online 4), hosted at the University of Kassel. *Critical incidents* are defined in this project as 'intercultural misunderstandings, which are kept in short stories as case studies of human behaviour in interaction. They offer introspective insights in the context of intercultural perception, interpretation and evaluation'. Students had to analyse the conflicts and regard them from different cultural perspectives. Afterwards, different options for solving the problems had to be developed. In so doing, they gained a higher level of intercultural competence. They had to shift their frame of reference from their own culture to other cultural perspectives, and with such improved understanding, they could empathise with diverging perspectives on conflict situations. As an external outcome, they had become more aware of different hidden cultural rules and more cautious about violating them.

In 2022, the VIC was based on intercultural negotiations, getting students to hold a meeting in which they had to negotiate in groups about a case study on sustainable tourism. Again, one of the outcomes was not only improved language skills in the field of negotiations but also a greater sensitivity towards cultural differences in preparing and conducting negotiations, or, as Varmer and Beamer (2011: 332) summarise it, 'To negotiate effectively, intercultural negotiators do not only need special communication skills, they also need to understand both their own and the other's team culture'.

In the third VIC (2023), students worked on the structure of oral presentations and the use of visual aids. Different cultural preferences as to the features of presentations like data load, visual impact, legibility, and use of colours were analysed and discussed. The methodology was based on collaborative learning through multiple group tasks; short input sections alternated with longer group works, which gave students a lot of time to practice their communication and problem-solving skills in mixed cultural groups.

Zoom and Microsoft Teams were used as teaching platforms for the exchange and organisation meetings. All the collaborative tools they offer, such as breakout rooms, whiteboards, questionnaires, material sharing, and chat, were used to apply the methodologies that were proven more effective in meeting the exchange objectives, namely, learning by doing, problem solving, and collaborative work. The authors of this paper agree with Fetcher (2010: 420) that it is a challenge to teach explicit and procedural knowledge in a virtual room: students should not only acquire explicit knowledge, but they should also be enabled to experience intercultural differences and reflect on them.

The following activities were designed to meet the teaching objectives that motivated the present experience: the objectives related to raising intercultural

awareness and changing students' perspectives were approached from a problem-solving perspective in which specific topics were chosen for discussion. For better results, the lecturers carefully created the work teams to ensure multiculturality among the members. This gave participants the opportunity to debate and observe their partner's reactions and opinions, giving them a wide array of examples to discover cultural differences. A particular effort was made by the two coordinators to build up an atmosphere of confidence and collaboration to encourage students to express their point of view freely and even talk about their background. Some input was given by the lecturers at the beginning, but it was kept to a minimum to let students develop their own ideas.

In relation to the aim of improving students' English language level, students were tasked with activities that used specific vocabulary about intercultural communication, negotiations as well as oral presentations and covered the four essential communication skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), as Table 1 shows.

As it can be seen in Table 1, students were able to practise listening with videos, in interactions with other coursemates, and with the lecturers. Reading practice was encouraged by reading the theoretical input provided as well as the information from the case studies analysed. Speaking was generally encouraged through discussions, debates, group work, presenting information, brainstorming, and sharing ideas, as well as answering questions posed by the lecturers or other students and giving examples. Finally, students were tasked with giving feedback, answering some questions in written form, taking notes when necessary, and writing a final report.

Improving the IT skills of both students and teachers was essential, given the distance between the two groups of students. All the participants had to learn how to work on Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The former was used for the virtual classes, and the latter for organisation meetings. Since the sessions were planned

Table 1 **Activities to practise the four communication skills**

SKILLS	ACTIVITIES					
LISTENING	video	interaction with students/ teachers				
READING	theory/ input	case study description				
SPEAKING	discussions/ debates	group work	presenting information	sharing ideas	giving examples/ answering questions orally	meeting negotiations
WRITING	feedback	answering questions in writing	taking notes	report writing		

to apply the collaborative work methodology, there were activities to be carried out with the whole class and others in groups; therefore, participants had to learn how to set up and work in breakout rooms, how to use the whiteboard, how to answer online questionnaires, and how to share materials.

The results obtained from the actions taken to meet the previously mentioned four objectives led to the achievement of a more general goal: increasing students' motivation for other cultures as a result of the application of the motivational factors involved in the VIC.

In terms of assessment, each university applied different tools in coherence with the overall assessment system of their English subject in which the VIC was inserted. Nevertheless, three criteria were common to both universities during the VIC: attendance, active participation and good performance in the activities and outcomes. After the exchange, both coordinators adapted the results to their subject assessments and tasked participants with further assessment tools. In the case of the German university whose English module was assessed by a final presentation, the contents of the VIC were included in the presentation; therefore, they were part of 100 per cent of the overall mark. In the case of Florida Universitaria, the VIC was an element of the continuous assessment mark and accounted for 10 per cent of the total mark of the English module.

RESULTS OF THE VIRTUAL INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

The results of the virtual exchange can be interpreted from two perspectives: on the one hand, in terms of participants' feedback, and on the other hand, considering the results students obtained in the assessment tasks carried out by each lecturer.

As far as participants' feedback is concerned, their opinion matters, as it is a key aspect of improving the VIC in future editions. Students had to complete a questionnaire at the end of the VIC. Different tools were used for its administration, depending on the circumstances. In the first edition, lecturers had more experience with the use of Zoom, and this platform was chosen for all aspects of the exchange, including the satisfaction form to complete. In the second, students wrote their answers directly on the whiteboard (also in Zoom) since the satisfaction questionnaire was a part of the last activity in which learners had to share their opinions with all the other participants. This enabled the coordinators to get students' feedback as well as be present in the discussions that led to that feedback. Finally, in the third VIC, a Google Forms questionnaire was designed because the coordinators wanted to explore other possibilities beyond Zoom.

The content of the satisfaction questionnaire was the same in the three years, but two more questions were added to the 2023 VIC. In the first edition, the lecturers' main interest was having opinions and suggestions from the participants without limiting them with closed questions. Qualitative information was more important than quantitative. Therefore, the coordinators decided to ask these five open

questions: What have we done? What have you learned? What did you like? What didn't you like? What could be improved?

Once the information collected in the VIC 2021 was analysed for the second edition (2022), the organisers decided to continue with the format of open questions. However, the fact was that sometimes students did not make the effort to answer the open questions with complete information, so carrying out a quantitative analysis was seen as an interesting possibility to obtain reliable feedback from those students who did not present extensive information. Consequently, in the third edition (2023), the lecturers decided to add two closed questions on top of the open ones. These questions targeted two aspects that were essential for the organisers: whether the learners liked the overall virtual experience and if they felt they had learned something.

The feedback obtained will be presented in the following paragraphs, organised by question and edition of the virtual exchange. The first question, *What have we done?,* was asked to make students reflect on the tasks carried out as well as the process. There were no relevant differences in the answers obtained in the three editions, but they were too varied to be listed here. The information collected helped the lecturers identify the students' perceptions of the methodology applied and the percentage of contents that they had taken in. According to the details students provided in their answers, coordinators could also identify which tasks were more relevant to them.

What have you learned? was the second question. It is interesting that, in the three editions, apart from aspects relating to language learning, they highlighted topics concerning interculturality such as how to interpret stereotypes, other people's customs and different behaviours. These answers showed a good level of intercultural awareness achieved throughout the virtual exchange.

To the question *What did you like?* in the three editions, all the participants unanimously pointed out meeting new people from other nationalities as the most attractive part of the VIC. Regarding methodology, basically students liked solving problems and working in multicultural groups, but some suggested having more diversity in activities as well as more open, less structured tasks. On the whole, students described the VIC as interesting and enriching.

What didn't you like? was the fourth question. Nobody disliked the whole experience, but there were some specific examples that bothered students. First, the language barrier: although most participants had a level between B2 and C1, there were still some people below those levels, which sometimes limited the discussions. This was one of the reasons for the lack of participation by some students. Other learners mentioned different degrees of personal involvement and distractions owing to the use of mobile phones while working. A few technical hitches were also highlighted; problems with connection and background noise were the most prominent. The fact that not all participants had their cameras on was also annoying for some. Although these are drawbacks, they can also be seen from a positive perspective, as students had the opportunity to grasp what the concept of *diversity* involved when working with people from different backgrounds, maturity, language level, involvement, and computing literacy.

The answers to the question *What could be improved?* in the three editions pointed at solving technical hitches, allotting more time for the students from the other university to be better acquainted with one another, and trying to arrange in-person exchange visits in the future, either in Germany or in Valencia, to continue working together. Additionally, in 2021, some group members recommended reviewing the group formation since they found their group did not fit and wanted to have more participants in the VIC. Also, in that edition, it was decided that better preparation of students before the VIC was important.

In 2023, when the two closed questions were added, as Table 2 shows, the responses to *Did you like the experience?* were extremely positive. Of all participants, 100 per cent liked the VIC; the majority (82.2%) were enthusiastic about the VIC, and they found it very interesting as well as innovative and wanted to participate in further editions, as written in the space provided for comments after the question, whereas 17.8% simply stated that they liked the whole experience. Participants were asked to rank their preferences from most satisfactory to least satisfactory. What students liked the most was meeting young people from other cultures (66.9%); online collaboration was the second option in the ranking (14.5%); and interaction during groupwork was the third option (10%). The topic, particularly oral presentations, was in last place (8.6%).

Regarding the second closed question asked in the VIC's third edition, *Have you learned something?*, 28.5 per cent admitted to having learned a lot, 57.1 per cent said that they learned some new things, and 14.3 per cent learned a few things. Nobody said that they had not learned anything new. These percentages are logical considering that the topic was 'oral presentations in intercultural scenarios' and some students had taken a short course on this theme in previous years, although with a lower level.

To obtain more information, a session for group reflection in students' own classes and face-to-face with their lecturer once the VIC had finished was arranged. Comments confirmed students' satisfaction and all the information summarised above, but it was extremely interesting because more details and examples than in the written questionnaire were provided by participants.

The success of the VICs was also confirmed by the assessment results, as everybody passed the exchange in the three editions. Two aspects were taken into consideration to evaluate students' performance: their attendance and

Table 2 **Responses to closed questions (VIC 2023)**

Did you like the experience?	*I liked it a lot* 82.2%	*I liked it* 17.8%	*I didn't like it* 0%	
What did you like best?	*Meeting people from other cultures* 66.9%	*Online collaboration* 14.5%	*Interaction during group work* 10%	*Topics* 8.6%
Have you learned something?	*A lot of things* 28.5%	*Some new things* 57.1%	*A few new things* 14.3%	*Nothing* 0%

participation, as well as the results obtained in the tasks assigned during the VIC and afterwards (as explained in the section about the exchange description). At least 90% of the students attended all the sessions. Nobody missed more than one session, and if somebody did, they sent a justification to their teacher. This percentage was consistent in the three editions, which shows the high degree of interest and motivation awakened by this experience.

The high quality of the outcomes produced during the three virtual exchanges, as well as the marks obtained by students in the assessment tasks assigned by each coordinator to their respective groups once the VIC had finished, confirmed the effort and commitment of all the participants in the three editions.

CONCLUSIONS

The VIC has proved to be an effective methodological approach to helping students improve their intercultural communication skills at their home university. Informal discussions with students after the VIC and the way they approached interculturality throughout the rest of the semester showed evidence of a higher level of intercultural awareness, beyond the level they had before taking part in the VIC. Students, for example, showed more respect for other cultures; they had gained insight into their own culture and other cultures. Undoubtedly, inclusive mobility took place where everybody felt integrated into a multicultural group and learned about cultural differences, customs, habits, etc. The VIC even raised students' curiosity to travel abroad as soon as circumstances permitted it. Nevertheless, apart from virtual encounters, research must go on to find other alternatives that complement these exchanges, and universities must provide a holistic plan to guarantee students' intercultural competence throughout their degree.

As for the other aims of the project here presented, results also show that the language-related objectives have been met. Apart from learning specific vocabulary and working on essential communication skills, the VIC, in the three editions, had a positive washback effect on the English subjects. Lecturers noticed that after the VIC, the attitude towards speaking in class and participating in debates had changed, particularly for those students who lacked self-confidence, in that they became more participative in the subsequent English classes.

In relation to the use of online teaching tools, nowadays the variety is so wide that all the activities planned were carried out. Learning about the use of such tools was challenging for lecturers and students, but they enabled the former to bring together online learners from different cultures.

Both partners have gained extensive experience in how to organise a virtual exchange, and they fully met the teaching as well as the internationalisation objectives.

Concerning organisation, from the teachers' point of view, it is essential to know the partner you are going to collaborate with previously for a successful experience, since organising the team-building activities and dealing with students' different

intercultural expectations and behaviours were especially challenging. All in all, lecturers as well as students are willing to repeat this experience.

To improve the VIC in the future, there is a need to gain more knowledge about IT programmes, to analyse assessments, and to introduce more evaluation tools. It is also necessary to tackle some organisational issues.

On the whole, the VIC experience, in its three editions, was challenging but highly rewarding and motivating for stakeholders, lecturers and students.

REFERENCES

Allen, T. J. (2021) Exploring students' perceptions about intercultural communication education: rethinking the design and facilitation of a course in Japan. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 4 (3): 213-233. Available from https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v4n3.475 [Accessed on 10 November 2022].

Avgousti, M. I. (2018) Intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges: a systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31 (8): 819-853. Available from https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1455713 [Accessed on 17 September 2022].

Babaii, E. (2018) Multiculturalism: an asset or a problem? Implications for intercultural education. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 1 (2): 45-53. Available from https://dx.doi.org/10.29140/ice.v1n2.65 [Accessed on 3 November 2022].

Barros García, B. and Kharnásova, G. M. (2012) La interculturalidad como macrocompetencia en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras: revisión bibliográfica y conceptual [Interculturality as macrocompetence in foreign languages teaching: bibliographic and conceptual review]. *Porta Linguarum Revista Universitaria de Didáctica de las Lenguas Extranjeras*, 18: 97-114. Available from https://doi.org/10.30827/digibug.23242 [Accessed on 24 March 2023].

Cetinavci, U. R. (2012) Intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46: 3445-3449. Available from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.082 [Accessed on 7 September 2022].

Chen, G. (2014) Intercultural communication competence: summary of 30-year research and directions for future study. In X. Xiaodong Dai, X. and G. Chen (eds.) *Intercultural Communication Competence: conceptualization and its development in cultural contexts and interactions* (pp. 14-40). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Eisenchlas, S. and Trevaskes, S. (2007) Developing intercultural communication skills through intergroup interaction. *Intercultural Education*, 18 (5): 413-425. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980701685271 [Accessed 10 July 2021].

Fetcher, D. (2010) Virtual classrooms. In A. Weidemann, J. Straub and S. Nothnagel (eds.) *Wie lehrt man interkulturelle Kompetenz?* [How can intercultural competence be taught?] (pp. 417-432). Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Holliday, A. (2018) Designing a course in intercultural education. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 1 (1): 4-11. Available from https://dx.doi.org/10.29140/ice.v1n1.24 [Accessed on 3 October 2022].

Implementation Guidelines: Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy' (2021) Available from https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy [Accessed on 13 June 2023].

Schumann, A. (2012) Critical incidents als Forschungsinstrument und als Trainingsgrundlage [Critical incidents as research tool and as a basis for training]. In A. Schumann (ed.) *Interkulturelle Kommunikation in der Hochschule* [Intercultural Comunication at College] (pp. 55-79). Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Spitzer, B. H. (1997) A model of intercultural communication competence. In L. A. Samovar and R. E. Porter (eds.) *Intercultural Communication: a reader* (pp. 375-387). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.

Svenkerud, J. A. and Källström, E. (2012) Collaborative learning in multicultural settings. *Advances in Higher Education*, 1 (4): 7-33.

The European Commission (2023). *The Erasmus+ Programme Guide*. Available from https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/node/4199 [Accessed on 22 May 2023].

Varmer, I. and Beamer, L. (2011) *Intercultural Communication in the Global Workplace*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Williams, K. and Williams, C. (2011) Five key ingredients for improving student motivation. *Research in Higher Education*, 12 August: 104-122. Available from http://scholarworks.csustan.edu/handle/011235813/645 [Accessed on 20 September 2010].

INTERNET SOURCES

[Online 1] Available from https://www.daad.de/de/der-daad/was-wir-tun/fortbildung-expertise-und-beratung/datenerhebung-von-studienbezogenen-auslandsaufenthalten/auslandsmobilitaet-zielquoten-und-formen/ [Accessed on 12 January 2023].

[Online 2] Available from https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Presse/imported/downloads/xcms_bst_dms_30238_30239_2.pdf [Accessed on 2 January 2023].

[Online 3] Available from https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/it/index.html [Accessed on 2 January 2023].

[Online 4] Available from https://www.uni-kassel.de/mumis/www.mumis-projekt.de/mumis/index.php/critical-incidents.html [Accessed on 2 June 2023].

María Pilar Alberola Colomar (PhD in Genre Analysis). Currently teaching English for Specific Purposes at Florida Universitaria (Valencia, Spain). Research is focused on innovation in second language acquisition for specific purposes (motivation, assessment, digitalisation, and intercultural communication).

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1236-6520

Email: palberol@florida-uni.es

Andrea Menn (MA in English Linguistics, Spanish Literature and Business Studies). Head of the International Office at the Jade Hochschule (Germany). Since 2008, she has taught intercultural communication and participated in various projects on curricula development and digitalisation.

https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5425-6294

Email: menn@jade-hs.de

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 35–50
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.03 © University of Latvia, 2024

CANCER NARRATIVE WITH A DIFFERENCE: ELAINE FEENEY'S *AS YOU WERE*

EWELINA FELDMAN-KOŁODZIEJUK
University of Białystok, Poland

Abstract. Elaine Feeney's novel *As You Were* offers the story of a terminal cancer patient who forsakes any medical treatment. Narrating the final moments of her protagonist's life, the author breaks with the traditional cancer novel formula in which a bellicose stance is prescriptive. Instead, the heroine's stay at a hospital ward with other female patients constitutes Feeney's point of departure for writing a state-of-the-nation novel. The article discusses how the merging of different literary traditions, such as cancer narrative, literature of witness, or experimental fiction, allows the author to paint a poignant picture of Irish society, in which women, whose rights were historically curbed, empower each other through telling their life stories as well as reclaiming the life tales of their lost sisters. The analysis focuses on metaphors and narrative strategies that customarily underpin cancer stories and which can be identified in the novel. Secondly, the subversion of the cancer narrative is taken under scrutiny to demonstrate the experimental character of Feeney's novel. Subsequently, the ethical dimension of storytelling is given critical attention and the work's status as a state-of-the-nation novel is elaborated on.

Key words: cancer narrative, illness narrative, Irish literature, feminism, trauma

INTRODUCTION

Elaine Feeney's debut novel *As You Wer*e, published in 2020, offers the peculiar story of a terminal cancer patient who refuses to share her diagnosis with anyone but a magpie. Contrary to the expectations inherent in the typical cancer narrative, the reader does not accompany Sinéad Hynes in her fight against the fatal disease. Instead, her individual tale turns out to be one of the strands Feeney weaves into the tapestry of trauma experienced by Irish women in the twentieth century. While the author employs a number of literary genres to recount the protagonist's plight, namely, cancer narrative, literature of witness and experimental fiction, all of these nonetheless coalesce into a state-of-the-nation novel focused on the historical oppression of women in Ireland. The aim of the article is to discuss how the merging of different literary traditions allows Feeney to paint a poignant picture of the society in which women, whose rights were significantly curbed until

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

the final decade of the previous century, empower each other through sharing their own life experiences as well as unearthing the stories of their lost sisters. The initial analysis focuses on metaphors and narrative strategies that customarily underpin cancer stories and which can be identified in the novel. Secondly, the subversion of the cancer narrative is taken under scrutiny to demonstrate the experimental character of Feeney´s novel. Subsequently, the ethical dimension of storytelling is given critical attention. Finally, the article elaborates on the status of Feeney's work as a state-of-the-nation novel.

THE CONVENTIONAL CHARACTER OF THE NARRATIVE

In *Reading and Writing Cancer*, Susan Gubar (2016: 32) observes, 'The shock of mortality that illness triggers can flood patients not only with dread of the future but also with memories of the past´. Predictably, then, the narrative structure of *As You Wer*e alternates between the present day, that is, Sinéad´s confinement to a hospital ward, and multiple flashbacks from her personal past. Among those reminiscences, some seem to be willed and contemplated, but the recurring italicised type of memory gives the impression of violent intrusions that cannot be fended off. These heartbreaking analepses that commence as early as on page three and continue throughout the novel are told in the voice of Sinéad´s late father, a tyrant and a wife-and-child batterer. Incorporating these painful recollections from which the heroine tries to distance herself, Feeney subscribes to the common assumption that Sontag derided in her focal essay *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), namely, attributing cancer to repression. Even though the author most likely aimed to use the heroine´s troubled past as a credible explanation for her refusal of treatment due to emotional self-neglect, the inclusion of these repressed memories that violently resurface gives ammunition for reading Sinéad´s cancer as self-inflicted. If, as Sontag (1978: 22) states, 'According to the mythology of cancer, it is generally a steady repression of feeling that causes the disease´, it might be the heroine´s unexpressed rage that is eating her up cell by cell.

As a child survivor of domestic violence, Sinéad has developed an array of protective mechanisms to keep her emotions at bay or regulate them effectively through substitution. One of them includes listening to sorrowful music, which enables her to alleviate her misery through reliving someone else´s pain. The other evasive technique the heroine employs when life overwhelms her is engaging in casual sex with other men, 'No strings. Sad. Mad. Bad.´ (Feeney, 2021: 186). These sexual exploits are never meant to break Sinéad and Alex´s marriage, hurt her spouse and/or make him jealous. They are nothing but emotional regulation, or per chance, a form of sabotaging herself through yielding to her father´s chorus that rants relentlessly in her head: 'you are indeed, solid fucken useless´ (ibid.: 282). Sinéad is convinced she does not deserve the life she has. As is often the case with child survivors of parental abuse, the heroine is trapped between the desire

to appease her father and the urge to liberate herself from his expectations and posthumous control. To prove him wrong and demonstrate that she is in fact capable of beginning and ending a task, Sinéad builds a successful career specialising in real estate. Yet, when she becomes a mother, her work commences to play another role in her life, namely, it transforms into a safe haven where things can be controlled, unlike in mothering. 'My business was really my addiction', admits the protagonist and adds, 'the act of parenting was so brutal' (ibid.: 90-91). Needless to say, becoming a parent is always a stressful, even though joyous, event. But for those who experienced emotional deprivation in childhood, having children of their own opens old wounds, seriously undermines the belief in one's parental abilities and frequently results in heightened perceived vulnerability (Edelman, 2006: 211). Sinéad seems to have suffered from similar anxieties; she was 'sad with the manic stress, sad with the rejection, sad with the crippling brutality that having mortal children brings with it' (Feeney, 2021: 91). Unable to participate fully in the happy-sad rollercoaster that bringing up children equates to, the heroine 'left most of that to Alex' (ibid.: 91), assigning herself the role of a family provider. Securing her family's financial situation and providing three of her sons with 'The Things' (ibid.: 90) becomes her ultimate parental goal. However, in catering for the prospective needs of her children, the protagonist engages in a compensation mechanism that involves a powerful projection of the financial deprivation she herself suffered as a child onto her sons. Additionally, the heroine believes she needs to maintain her job so that she would never 'have to rely on a man leaving money on the counter' (ibid.: 90) the way her mother did. Therefore, having developed such an assemblage of detachment techniques, Sinéad feels totally at a loss when faced with the terminal cancer diagnosis. Since she is in complete denial of her emotions, the protagonist is not capable of embracing the new situation other than through further withdrawal.

It seems hardly coincidental that of all possible terminal diseases, Feeney chose lung cancer to afflict her heroine with, for, as Sontag (1978: 18) observes, 'A disease of the lungs is, metaphorically, a disease of the soul'. In doing so, the author of *As You Were* foregrounds the perilous notion that 'Disease is the will speaking through the body, a language for dramatizing the mental: a form of self-expression' (ibid.: 44). This, in turn, implies that in denying her 'hidden passions' (ibid.: 45) and anger, Sinéad has brought cancer upon herself, and her refusal of treatment may be read alongside Sontag's resentment at the blame put on cancer patients:

> Such preposterous and dangerous views manage to put the onus of the disease on the patient and not only weaken the patient's ability to understand the range of plausible medical treatment but also, implicitly, direct the patient away from such treatment. Cure is thought to depend principally on the patient's already sorely tested or enfeebled capacity for self-love. (Sontag, 1978: 47)

The protagonist's capacity for self-love, severely diminished by the experience of emotional, verbal and physical abuse—'Dinnertimes. Father's hands. Mother. Throat. Neck. Choking. Dancing off the ground.' (Feeney, 2021: 147)—was also undermined

by her father's constant reminders not to attach herself to any animal that he bred on the farm. Parting with ponies was particularly difficult for young Sinéad, while her tears were met with her father's crude remark that this experience would make her tougher. Retrospectively, the heroine bitterly comments on the consequences of these harsh words: 'But later it made loving harder. I was always ready to let go' (ibid.: 213). As a result, rather than investigate various therapies that could buy her time with family, the protagonist forsakes any treatment as well as fails to inform anyone about her terminal condition. Giving up on herself, Sinéad exemplifies the dynamics of cancer treatment Sontag writes about, yet, simultaneously, the novel constitutes a rather uncommon plot in cancer literature that generally tends to gravitate towards the stories of valiance, fight and survival. Interestingly, as Judy Z. Segal (2007: 4) observes, 'nearly thirty years after Sontag (1978, reprinted 1990) impugned the military metaphors in which cancer is publicly narrated, *battle* has become so entrenched as a description for the experience of cancer that it seems natural, not a metaphor at all'.

The choice of lung cancer has yet another metaphorical meaning, which resonates with Feeney's novel's core issue, that is, women's rights. At a critical moment in the narrative, Sinéad suffers from respiratory failure and is taken into an intensive care unit for resuscitation. Fully conscious but struggling for breath, suspended in the liminal state between life and death, the protagonist feels 'the waters of annihilation close above [her] head', borrowing the imagery of death as drowning from Woolf's essay "On Being Ill" (2002: 3), which functions as one of the novel's epigraphs. Unable to respond, the heroine hears the medical staff discussing her condition. Herself totally composed, almost lulled to the movement of submerging and resurfacing, she watches the surrounding mayhem as if separated by a glass pane. The reader's perspective is far from detached in the reception of this frenetic scene, which is delivered as a series of broken interjections of doctors and nurses, all outraged at Sinéad's negligence. While cheering for the heroine to stay alive for some emotional resolution, one cannot miss out on the point the author is trying to make altogether, which is the lack of agency and subjugation of the female body to male power. Unable to articulate a single word of protest due to her respiratory failure, the protagonist is subjected to the decisions of those in power, in this case, hospital doctors. Her body is pumped with liquid medicine, electrified and a tube is pushed into her throat, all of which are administered and decided for her, assuming her silent consent, and all of which can be interpreted as metaphors of sexual violence. The figurative meaning of this dramatic scene becomes conspicuous when the narrator says, 'They shove something down my throat. I gag. I gag up my tongue. I gag up my tits, my tummy, my vagina' (Feeney, 2021: 211). The control of women's voice and their bodies, especially their reproductive capacity and sexual exploitation, is the issue Feeney in fact addresses. The fictional scene of resuscitation is steeped in the author's own biography. Due to her negligence, the writer had a near-death experience that also involved respiratory failure. It was de facto Feeney herself who heard the outraged registrar yelling to someone, 'How did she let herself get into this state?' (Donnelly, 2020: n.p.). Retrospectively, the writer admits she

was shocked by the extent of her self-abandonment; however, she anticipates that 'the ill logic of carrying on no matter what' (ibid.) will be relatable to many of her readers. The sacrifices women make especially for the sake of the presumed well-being of their families is central to the novel and will be elaborated on extensively in the final section of the article.

The scene of resuscitation, which functions as the novel's climax, is a moment of transformation and, eventually, liberation for Sinéad. Firstly, her husband learns about her terminal diagnosis so she no longer has to hide her uttermost secret from him. Secondly, having confided in Alex and shared her experience of domestic violence with someone for the first time, the heroine decides to abandon her victim position and take responsibility for her own life. She ultimately plucks up the courage and tells her inner father 'to fuck off' (Feeney, 2021: 282). Following the logic of cancer as caused by repression, the protagonist's confrontation with her paternal figure becomes predictably a cathartic release. She finds her own voice and hushes her paternal superego, establishes clear ego boundaries and initiates her emotional healing process. Hers is just one of the narrative strands of patriarchal abuse of women that Feeney intertwines in the discussed novel, yet, her experience of a cancer patient most explicitly points to the cancerous metaphor that permeates *As You Were* as a whole, namely, patriarchy seen as a carcinoma that feeds on the tissue of women, consuming them cell by cell.

EXPERIMENTAL CHARACTER OF THE NARRATIVE

Feeney's choice of lung cancer as a narrative frame places her novel outside the mainstream of women's cancer literature, which is dominated by three carcinomas: breast, uterine, and ovarian. According to Mary K. DeShazer (2005: 3), 'These three cancers provide the focal topic for hundreds of narratives, memoirs, poems, and plays written each year by women in English-works that break silence about this disease, challenge its stigmatization, and retrace its boundaries'. These gender-specific cancer tales, which tend to universalize a female experience of facing a malignant diagnosis and aim to empower women in their battle against the disease, are frequently products of what Barbara Ehrenreich (2001: 50) dubs 'the breast cancer cult'. Adamant about perpetuating stories of survival, breast cancer culture, which predictably is a lucrative business, belies the ordeal many female cancer patients go through by 'normalizing cancer, prettying it up, even presenting it, perversely, as a positive and enviable experience' (ibid.: 53). The well-established format of the battle with and victory over feminine cancer (Segal, 2012: 301, 310) is in no way compatible with lung cancer stories. Even though lung cancer is one of the most common causes of cancer-related deaths worldwide (Roulston, Davidson, Kernohan, and Brazil, 2018: 2115), as Kaptein and Thong (2018: 3687) evidence, 'the disease is not often a subject in works of art'. The researchers blame this lacuna on the stigmatised nature of the disease as the one caused by smoking. In their analyses of the sparse artistic works that

thematize lung cancer, Kaptein and Thong single out two reactions characteristic of lung cancer sufferers, namely, 'virtual absence of rage and anger as an initial psychological response' and 'resignation and withdrawal from the social world' (ibid.: 3687). The unemotional stance that these patients adopt, reminiscent of affective distancing, lends an air of veracity to Feeney's heroine, who coolly refuses to undergo any life-prolonging therapy. Moreover, the choice of a lung cancer that is not typically seen as a feminine carcinoma allows the author of *As You Were* to avoid the pitfalls of the often infantilised and sentimentalised format of breast cancer survival tales that fall into Barbara Ehrenreich's (2001: 43) category of 'pink kitsch'.

The two epigraphs that precede the novel come from Virginia Woolf's essay "On Being Ill" (2002) and Mike McCormack's dystopian novel *Notes from a Coma* (2005), respectively. Their actual meaning, however, seems to be as significant as Feeney's choice of a modernist and a postmodern writer to frame her narrative. The author's use of modernist and postmodern narrative strategies to capture the mayhem of Sinéad's disease puts the novel in the category of 'women's experimental cancer fiction' (DeShazer, 2005: 8), which is defined in the following terms:

> As distinct from popular fiction, with its linear narratives and sentimental sensibility toward illness, dying, and women's relationships, experimental cancer fiction typically features characteristics of modernist and postmodern fragmentation: textual lacunae, stream-of-consciousness technique, fluid and/or multiple narrative voices, poetic lyricism, and an emphasis on the transgressive power of language and memory. (DeShazer, 2005: 173)

All of the listed hallmarks of experimental narrative can be identified in *As You Were*, whose segments of text and dialogues are double spaced as if the narrator was pausing to take a deep breath as a result of her respiratory difficulties or to recollect her thoughts to retell the story in an orderly manner. The reminiscences of diverse moments of her life that constantly flood Sinéad's mind, as well as the life stories of her hospital inmates that are inadvertently intertwined with hers, push the storyline back and forth in time in an unpredictable way. Punctuation is arbitrary for the most part of the novel, serving more as an emotional marker rather than a comprehension-enhancing device. The lists Sinéad almost compulsively produces when contemplating a certain object or phenomenon are reminiscent of Woolf's narrative technique of a free flow of thoughts and associations. Yet, some of them bring to mind the protagonist of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1982), Del Jordan, who produces lists as a way of commemorating her home town and the people that inhabited it. Once a writer, Del looks back on her life and oeuvre only to realise that 'no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together—radiant, everlasting' (Munro, 1982: 249). Similarly, some of Sinéad's analepses catalogue places and objects that once existed in abundance and overwhelmed her but now

have to be left behind. The monologues of the protagonist's father also take the form of a stream of consciousness, with commas being the sole punctuation mark.

Nevertheless, the supreme example of this modernist literary device is the final scene, which, as the author herself confirms in one of the interviews, is a tribute to Joyce's *Ulysses*, precisely Molly Bloom's soliloquy (Feeney, 2021: n.p.). However, its tender poetic lyricism and celebration of a reminiscence's capacity to teach us how to yield when time comes are definitely indebted to Woolf, resonating strongly with her concept of 'the moments of being'. Perversely, the final moments of the protagonist's life bring increased awareness of her existence, which is in stark contrast to the way she felt most of her life, that is, distancing herself emotionally, wrapped 'in a kind of nondescript cotton wool' of non-being (Woolf, 1985: 70). The indelible memory of the demise of an old ewe, which comes back to Sinéad a few moments before her own end, reveals itself to have held a precious life lesson for the protagonist. Belatedly, she recognises the hidden pattern of life and death beneath the cotton wool, which, according to Woolf, can be unveiled through writing.

In addition to the aforementioned facets of experimental cancer fiction, *As You Were* is also told in multiple narrative voices. Though the novel features first-person narration, it constantly lends voice to other female inmates, whose stories have remained unheard thus far. At some point, the plots of Margaret Rose, Jane Lohan and her lost lover Ann gain the same gravity as Sinéad's plight, inviting reflection on the changing position of Irish women since the 1950s until now. Yet, the multiple perspectives also serve another purpose. The polyphonic character of the hospital ward, where the medical staff, patients and their visitors all enter the same confined (narrative) space—often unsolicited—frequently results in utter chaos, thus mimicking the disruption that incurable disease brings with it (Frank, 1997: 97). Since, as it has been evidenced in the previous part of the article, Sinéad has been suffering from control issues due to her traumatic childhood, she is unwilling to relinquish the authoritative grip on her life even when faced with a terminal diagnosis. Although the heroine manages to hide her secret and, by ignoring her deteriorating condition, maintain control for some time, her situation changes dramatically when she ends up hospitalised.

Sinéad views the hospital as a hostile rather than a hospitable place, reminiscent of 'Victorian dramas or *Prison Break*' (Feeney, 2021: 18). It is the space inhabited by people who experience the crisis of control for 'Illness is about learning to live with lost control' (Frank, 1997: 30). Despite all the efforts taken by the hospital administration to turn it into a place with predictable routines of meals and doctor's visitations, it is a manic environment subject to the capricious nature of disease that results in sudden respiratory or heart failures, resuscitation and, not infrequently, death. It is the institution that belittles patients, whose course of treatment is decided for them and without them by specialists. It is the place where 'the line between selfhood and thing-hood [...], organic and inorganic, me and it' (Ehrenreich, 2001: 45) is blurred and the patient is tantamount to their disease. This loss of subjectivity and agency terrifies Sinéad the most, and, in a desperate attempt

to retain any control, she decides to practise her choice by refusing any therapy that could delay her otherwise imminent death: 'no one will ever tell me. What. To. Do. Ever.' (Feeney, 2021: 236). The protagonist's rejection of further medical treatment resonates with general findings about female lung cancer patients, who, as studies show, 'tend to value quality of life more than just prolonged life', are 'more likely than men to have planned more specific late-in-life activities' and are less likely 'to repeatedly visit medical facilities to complete their cancer treatment series' (Deviany, Ganti, and Islam, 2021: 118). Although her initial motives for withdrawing from treatment do not necessarily stem from the conscious rejection of 'a bellicose stance that damages the life left to be lived' (Gubar, 2016: 71), in the course of her hospitalisation, the heroine learns to appreciate the value of living in the moment and being with and for others through experiencing '[sisterhood] of those who bear the mark of pain' (Frank, 1997: 49). Only when she lowers all her defences is she ready to embrace therapy that will prolong her life, provided it can be administered on an out-of-hospital basis. Importantly, unlike in many cancer stories that portray the malignant disease as a catalyst for a fuller and more self-reflective life and attribute it with transformative powers, *As You Were* does not glorify the cancer experience in any way. As Segal (2012: 303) points out, 'Having cancer is misrepresented when it is represented as an enriching, ennobling experience', and Feeney seems to be perfectly aware of that. What brings about a change in the protagonist's worldview is the act of witnessing other women's abuse and mistreatment and partaking in their pain through attentive listening. Bed-ridden and 'cornered' (Feeney, 2021: 291) in a hospital ward, the protagonist cannot practice her escapism or detachment any longer and is inadvertently forced to watch the drama that abruptly unravels in front of her eyes. The result of her immersion in and embracing of the suffering of other female patients is the first-person narrative she spins in *As You Were*, which also has an ethical dimension.

STORYTELLING AS AN ETHICAL PROJECT

Upon her arrival at the hospital ward, the heroine hates the place, for 'The air was lumpy and heavy, and it was hard to get a decent breath in. Or out' (ibid.: 56). Her initial reaction is to come back home as quickly as possible, far away from the place where people 'were trained to keep you alive, like vultures' (ibid.: 60). To distract herself but also distance herself from her new neighbours, she employs a number of techniques that involve googling things, playing 'what if' games with herself, texting her husband and listening to music on her earphones. Thus, initially, she displays the characteristics of what Arthur W. Frank terms a 'monadic body, understanding itself as existentially separate and alone' (Frank, 1997: 36). Yet, before she knows it, Sinéad is totally mesmerised by the life dramas of her ward inmates, especially middle-aged Margaret Rose and elderly Jane Lohan, whose stories stay in central focus for the most part of *As You Were*. In the beginning, her role is that of an inadvertent viewer in the spectacle of life, but with time and due to her personal

involvement, it will transform into an act of witnessing. Feeney's ward is indeed one grand theatre stage with a motley crew of villains, clowns, onlookers and tragic heroines who would not have met otherwise. For the hospital, as 'a place where hierarchies are shattered, illness being the great leveller' (Donnelly, 2020: n.p.), brings together people from all walks of life, of all ages and economic backgrounds, stripping them all of the luxury of privacy and infrequently dignity. This egalitarian setting allows the author to intertwine the plots of different generations of women, whose life experiences differ significantly due to the historical context they grew up and lived in. Through the inclusion of three heroines, that is, Jane, Margaret Rose and Sinéad, Feeney manifests the significant shifts in the position of Irish women that have taken place over the last seven decades, from utter marital subjugation and removal of children from unmarried women, through decriminalising homosexuality in 1993, lifting the constitutional ban on divorce in 1995, legalising same-sex marriage in 2015, to, ultimately, granting women access to abortion up to twelve weeks of pregnancy without reason in 2019 (Bloomer and Campbell, 2022). Thus, within less than a century, the initially conservative society of the Republic of Ireland, whose national identity was based on 'sexual purity and strong family life' (Daly, 2023: 2), has transformed into one of the very few progressive states worldwide that allow abortion on demand up to twelve weeks, alongside Canada, Cuba, Australia and New Zealand (Bloomer and Campbell, 2022: 1).

In the aforementioned essay "On Being Ill", Woolf (2002: 11) writes, 'There is, let us confess it (and illness is the great confessional), a childish outspokenness in illness; things are said, truths blurted out, which the cautious respectability of health conceals'. Serious disease and ensuing hospitalisation result in the creation of a liminal space where patients await their doctors' decree. The anxiety this suspension breeds is often alleviated through confiding in someone—that is, through storytelling. The epitome of Woolf's observation is Jane Lohan, whose 'childish outspokenness' (Woolf, 2002: 11) can be blamed on her old age and possibly dementia. Her character is a constant source of humour that skilfully balances the outright horrors of her past. In her extreme performances, Jane is the embodiment of chaos, a madwoman in the ward, Feeney's own Bertha Mason. Her mental instability resonates with Sontag's pronouncement that 'In the twentieth century, the repellent, harrowing disease that is made the index of a superior sensitivity, the vehicle of "spiritual" feelings and "critical" discontent, is insanity' (1978: 35). In the light of Jane's life story, fraught with violence and abuse, her mad condition can be read as either an involuntary outcome of her past traumas or a willed exile. Abandoned by all of her nine children and constantly worrying about her husband, Jane is a lonesome elderly lady. As the readers soon learn, her life changed irreversibly when, several decades ago, she confessed to her then would-be husband, Tom, that she could not marry him, for she was in love with another woman. In order to avoid the scandal of breaking the engagement and calling off the wedding, her prospective mother-in-law forced the young to marry. She threatened to reveal Jane's lesbianism, which would result in her institutionalisation in 1950s Ireland. On the very first day of their life together,

Tom decided to demonstrate his rage at being manoeuvred into this marital union, shoving Jane against the window frame and leaving 'the long narrow line, the shiny snail-like track that ran from the crown of her head to the bridge of her nose' (Feeney, 2021: 335). He also promised to 'knock all of that dirty American slut, Ann Hegarty', out of her, calling them both 'fucking dirty rotten devil whores' (ibid.). In *Marital violence in post-independence Ireland, 1922-96* (2019), subtitled 'A living tomb for women', Cara Diver reflects upon the dynamics of historical marital abuse:

> Marital violence was sanctioned and controlled through Irish culture during the years from 1922 to 1965. Social, religious, and economic pressures made it difficult, and often impossible, for an abused wife to escape her husband's violence. Indeed, a battered woman had no access to divorce facilities and few legal options available to her; she likely did not work outside of the home and was thus kept in a state of financial dependence; and she faced enormous social and religious pressure to stay with her husband, whatever his sins. By failing to provide victims of wife beating with any real refuge, Irish society ignored and even condoned male violence. Only in the 1960s and 1970s, with the help of significant cultural shifts, was the plight of the battered woman eased, but not erased. (Diver, 2019: 34)

In the light of Diver's research, Jane's plot can be read as representative of her generation rather than a singular case of marital violence. To wield power over his wife, Tom had her prescribed first injections, then tablets that would make her sleep for most of the time. When Jane refused to take them, both the doctor and her spouse threatened to separate her from the children on the grounds of her mental instability. Incapable of deserting her offspring, with no one to aid her, even though 'Everyone in the parish knew' (Feeney, 2021: 337), she surrendered and tried to perform her wifely and motherly duties as well as she could. It is in the hospital that she forgets to take the tablets she has been on for decades, and by chance, this is why her memories of the past, along with her thus far suppressed emotions, erupt so violently, taking the form of a confession.

Importantly, embedded in Jane's story is Ann Hegarty's experience of Magdalene Laundries, the trauma shared by more than thirty thousand Irish women. Ann, who was Jane's love interest, left for America in the 1950s only to come back a year later unwed and pregnant. She was placed at the Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, which she was forced to leave, having given birth to a boy that was taken away from her to be accommodated with her distant relatives and raised as their child. Ironically, like other women who allegedly received institutional help, she could not walk freely unless she paid 'the one hundred bounty or release fee, demanded by the Church for her keep while in confinement' (ibid.: 175). Since she did not have that amount of money, Ann was compelled to repay her debt by working at one of the Magdalene Laundries. Soon, she hanged herself. The image of her lover's limp body suspended in mid-air has haunted Jane all her life, the way the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990) felt

the posthumous presence of her doppelganger, her predecessor in the Commander's house, who, prior to taking her own life, had left her successor with an encoded message in pseudo-Latin: 'Nolite te bastardes carborundorum' (Atwood, 1990: 62), which should translate as 'Don't let the bastard grind you down'. The suicidal deaths of Ann and Offred's predecessors can be read as acts of silent protest, as their challenge thrown into the face of an oppressive system that denied them their basic right to control their own bodies. Atwood's quasi-Latin inscription has become a ubiquitous slogan chanted worldwide, including in the Republic of Ireland, by women protesters dressed in the characteristic red cloak and a white winged bonnet worn by the titular handmaid (Beaumont and Holpuch, 2018: n.p.), thus magnifying the novel's message of female resistance to male oppression. In *As You Were*, the private tale of approximately ninety-year-old Jane uncovers collective trauma that has affected not only the thirty thousand women that were put through the ordeal of Magdalene Laundries but also their offspring and families. Reminiscing about Ann to her hospital companions, Jane voices the until recently silenced experience and becomes a spokesperson for those who were gagged. As Connolly observes, 'Because the religious orders have not opened their archival records, [...] Ireland's Magdalene institutions continue to exist in the public mind primarily at the level of *story* (cultural representation and survivor testimony) rather than *history* (archives and documents)' (2021: 307-308). Therefore, telling Ann's story is the only form of commemoration available to Jane. In an angry tirade, she vents out all her outrage at Bishop Browne, whom she dubs the 'General of Misogyny' (Feeney, 2021: 171), the Catholic Church and the State for making the lives of Irish women a living hell. Ironically, she does not see her husband as her own oppressor, blaming herself for failing him and sinning. Predictably, Jane's national and personal identity are steeped in the Catholic faith, which until the last decade of the twentieth century strictly defined the boundaries of propriety for the Irish. As the authors of the report entitled *Ireland and the Magdalene Laundries* (2021) observe, 'The allegiance of the overwhelming majority of Free State (and later Irish Republic) citizens to the Catholic Church was deep; the people had a profound and intimate attachment to the moral teachings, metaphysical view, folk and canonical rituals, and consolation provided by a much-loved Church' (McGettrick, Katherine O'Donnell, Maeve O'Rourke, James M. Smith and Mari Steed, 2021: 9).

Although significantly younger than nonagenarian Jane, Margaret Rose is also a pious and devout Catholic, with a wide array of prayers to aid those in need and a quasi-altar surrounding her hospital bed. Yet, she comes across as more selective as to which church doctrines she acknowledges or chooses to circumvent for the sake of her own children. She is a strong matriarch who is intent on protecting her daughters from male power and abuse. When her underage daughter Niquita gets pregnant by a boy who, according to Margaret Rose, means nothing but trouble, she arranges for her brother to take his niece secretly to an abortion clinic in England. Unwilling to divorce her abusive husband, who for years has been alternating between his wife and his long-standing lover, Margaret Rose resolves to ensure that her daughters do not end up in dysfunctional relationships themselves.

The arrival of her raging husband at the hospital ward, spitting words of contempt and outrage at his grandchild being murdered, is both preposterous and chilling to a similar degree. The self-righteousness of the father, who has not been around for most of his children's lives yet feels entitled to control their choices and pass moral judgement, is a bleak reminder of the Irish past, when, commencing with the Free State, Irish men established 'their new-found powers of self-governance by demonstrating control over the firepower of militarized men and the sexuality and reproductive powers of women, in particular the bodies of impoverished women and their children' (ibid.). Intertwining the plots of Sinéad and her hospital inmates, the author spins a tale of atrocities Irish women have been historically subjected to, including, until recently repressed from the official narrative, the operation of the Magdalene Laundries (Pine, 2011: 48). 'Mandated by the Irish state beginning in the eighteenth century, they were operated by various orders of the Catholic Church after independence until the last laundry closed in 1996' (Connolly, 2021: 307). Bearing cancerous metaphors in mind, the union of church and patriarchy is portrayed in Feeney's state-of-the-nation novel as the carcinoma that corrupted the tissue of Irish society. For, as Mary E. Daly states, 'the idea of large families and the laws banning contraception (as well as prohibition of divorce and abortion) was actually elevated to stand as a symbol of Ireland's national identity' (2023: 1).

Sinéad, like the author herself, is a declared atheist (Carragher, 2015: n.p.) and does not find any consolation in religious thinking, perceiving her hospital companions' prayers more as magic rituals involving 'the mitten of Padre Pio or a drop of blessed oil of St Thérèse of Lisieux or even a lock of St Francis of Assissi's hair, even a hair of one of his pets' (Feeney, 2021: 132). The protagonist's fictional struggle might have been informed by the figure of Irish writer Nuala O'Faolain, who, in the face of metastatic cancer that affected her lungs, brain and liver, refused chemotherapy that would prolong her life. According to Bridget English, the radio interview in which O'Faolain, an agnostic, openly shared her fear of dying and the lack of solace in the absence of an afterlife 'revealed the extent to which modern Irish society generally silences and marginalizes the voices of the dying' (2017: 1). Many of O'Faolain's disconcerting observations, especially those on the meaninglessness of professional achievements or the futility of art in confrontation with death, mirror the despondence of Sinéad, omnipresent in the initial passages of the novel. While the iconic broadcast did not conclude on a positive note, offering little consolation to listeners, in *As You Were*, Feeney proposes the act of witnessing and storytelling as a way of grappling with mortality and as an alternative redemption. As Dori Laub observes,

> Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes a listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other*—in the position of one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for for a long time. (Laub, 1992: 70-71)

Although Sinéad does not initially share her story, relegating herself to the role of listener to Jane's and Margaret Rose's tales, she is nonetheless transformed by her sojourn at the populous hospital ward and the act of empathetic listening. Jane, on the other hand, must have waited all her life to ultimately confide her and Ann's story in someone who would truly hear her. Towards the end of her hospitalisation, the protagonist no longer constitutes Frank's (1997: 36) aforementioned 'monadic body' because she has unwittingly forged the dyadic relation with her companions, which recognises 'that even though the other is a body outside of mine, [...] this other *has to do with me, as I with it'* (ibid.: 35; emphasis in original). Prior to her cancer, Sinéad saw herself as separate from the world, even from her family. Not until she recognises the larger generic pattern of abuse shared by generations of Irish women behind Jane's and Margaret Rose's tales can the heroine view her own traumas as both individual and collective experiences. In that respect, illness that brings all female characters to the ward functions rather as a metaphor for being afflicted with something undesirable and outside one's control, a metaphor for precarity and vulnerability. However, Feeney's choice of a hospital ward as the novel's social milieu is in no way unsound for the dynamics that operate in this place and foster exchanging confidences and story-telling (ibid.: 36).

At the beginning of her stay in hospital, Sinéad discloses that she ceased reading books once she left her family home. The stories she devoured in her childhood and adolescence offered safe refuge from an abusive domestic environment. Yet, in adult life, they had nothing to offer but disillusionment and disappointment, for they could not deliver on their promises of rescue and escape. In a refusal to practise empathy, 'Dickens made me feel like I was exaggerating, because there was no workhouse. Or undertakers' (Feeney, 2021: 138), and as a protest against the futility of literature in alleviating one's pain and solving problems, the heroine turned away from literature. Yet, the testimony of Jane, including Ann's tragic plight, and the vicissitudes of Margaret Rose's family life cause the protagonist to embrace books anew, namely, by producing a narrative that will pay tribute to the victims and survivors of patriarchal oppression. After all, *As You Were* is a first-person narrative spoken in Sinéad's voice, and since it relates the moment of her death, one can assume the story is told posthumously. In *Negotiating with the Dead*, Margaret Atwood (2002: 156) argues that 'not just some, but all writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination with mortality—by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead'. Mortality predictably permeates Feeney's novel, yet the contemplation of the heroine's impending demise does not verge on morbidity. What the reader gets instead is a poignant tale about the necessity for bonding and interconnectedness, the only bona fide life values. As a late storyteller, Sinéad is endowed with the knowledge of the Underworld and has come back to share her wisdom with the living. The use of the past tense in the narrative additionally supports the retrospective view of the narrator, who ultimately managed to overcome the chaotic experience of cancer and give her life story a coherent structure (Frank, 1997: 97-114). If the protagonist is deceased, then,

by extension, one can stipulate that Feeney must have evoked her spirit to haunt the reader with her tale. And it is a disconcerting story, indeed. It is a cautionary tale, lest the generation of young (Irish) women take for granted the newly gained freedoms the way Offred and her contemporaries did prior to the rise of Gilead. Storytelling as a form of commemorating wounds endured and lives destroyed becomes a moral obligation in Feeney´s novel that involves taking an ethical stand.

The journey Feeney´s protagonist makes masterfully portrays the transition through four victim positions that Atwood delineated in her analysis of female agency and empowerment through storytelling. Position one involves denial of one´s victimhood; position two entails an acknowledgement of one´s victimhood but treats it as something beyond one´s control; position three acknowledges one´s victimhood and simultaneously refuses to see it as inevitable; whereas the final position requires becoming a creative non-victim (Atwood, 1972: 36-39). Initially, Sinéad buries or represses her childhood experiences of domestic abuse, thus denying her victimhood. When the violent memories featuring her livid father resurface, she commences to link her unemotional attitude to life with the deprivation she suffered, slowly recognising herself as an individual victim of her paternal figure. The heroine enters position three, the moment she realises through Jane´s and Margaret Rose´s stories that her own abuse forms only one element of a collective female experience, while her father´s sadism is representative of a larger framework of toxic patriarchal masculinity. The suffering of others forces Sinéad to take a stand and speak against female oppression, to give voice to those who have been historically silenced, and to speak from the Underworld as a creative non-victim.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite exploiting conventional metaphors of cancer, lung disease or insanity, *As You Were* decries the standardised cancer narrative formula that prescribes "the bellicose stance" (Gubar, 2016: 71) and unwavering optimism on the part of the patient. Inflicting her protagonist with advanced terminal lung cancer, Elaine Feeney strips her novel of all hope of recovery. Moreover, employing modernist and postmodern narrative techniques, which are characteristic of 'women´s experimental cancer fiction´ (DeShazer, 2005: 8), the author successfully captures the feelings of chaos and the impression of one´s world falling apart that accompany a patient with a terminal diagnosis. Yet, Sinéad´s fatal condition is not intended to fill the reader with despondency. Paradoxically, rather than mourning the protagonist´s impending demise, the reader becomes a witness to her transformation, watching the heroine acknowledge the past abuse, overcome emotional numbing and enter a dyadic relationship with her husband and others. The emotional healing that ultimately occurs is mediated through the '[sisterhood] of those who bear the mark of pain´, where pain can be understood as medical conditions that brought the female characters to the hospital ward but also as a metaphor for the collective

experience of atrocities and abuse Irish women have been subjected to. In doing so, Feeney complicates the unequivocal genre categorisation of *As You Were* since it is a cancer narrative and a state-of-the-nation novel to similar degrees. Above all, nonetheless, it constitutes a compelling story of female experience as a daughter, wife, mother and friend, marked by vulnerability and resistance.

REFERENCES

Atwood, M. (1972) *Survival: a thematic guide to Canadian literature*. Toronto: House of Anansi.

Beaumont, P. and Holpuch, A. (2018) How *The Handmaid's Tale* dressed protests across the world. *The Guardian*, 3rd August. Available from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/03/how-the-handmaids-tale-dressed-protests-across-the-world [Accessed on 20 March 2023].

Bloomer, F. and Campbell, E. (2022) *Decriminalizing Abortion in Northern Ireland*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Carragher, A. (2015) Elaine Feeney should come with a trigger warning. *HeadStuff*, 15 October. Available from https://headstuff.org/culture/literature/elaine-feeney/ [Accessed on 20 March 2023].

Connolly, L. (2021) Honest commemoration: reconciling women's 'troubled' and 'troubling' history in centennial Ireland. In O. Frawley (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (pp. 300-314). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Daly, M. E. (2023) *The Battle to Control Female Fertility in Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press.

DeShazer, M. K. (2005) *Fractured Borders: reading women's cancer literature.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Deviany, P. E., Ganti, A. K. and Islam, K. M. M. (2021) Factors associated with treatment refusal and impact of treatment refusal on survival of patients with small cell lung cancer. *Oncology*, 35 (3): 111-118.

Diver, C. (2019) *Marital Violence in post-independence Ireland, 1922-96: a living tomb for women*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Donnelly, N. (2020) Life, death and the secrets that lie between. *The Irish Times*, 15th August. Available from https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/life-death-and-the-secrets-that-lie-between-1.4318688 [Accessed on 20 March 2023].

Edelman, H. (2006) *Motherless Mothers: how losing a mother shapes the parent you become.* London: HarperCollins.

Ehrenreich, B. (2001) Welcome to Cancerland: a mammogram leads to a cult of pink kitsch. *Harper's Magazin*e, November: 43-53.

English, B. (2017) *Laying out the Bones: death and dying in the modern Irish novel.* New York: Syracuse University Press.

Feeney, E. (2021a). Irish writer Elaine Feeney on setting her darkly funny debut novel, *As You Were*, entirely in a hospital. *Open Book*, 3rd November. Available from https://open-book.ca/News/Irish-Writer-Elaine-Feeney-on-Setting-Her-Darkly-Funny-Debut-Novel-As-You-Were-Entirely-in-a-Hospital [Accessed on 20 March 2023].

Frank, A. W. (1997) *The Wounded Storyteller: body, illness and ethics.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Gubar, S. (2016) *Reading and Writing Cancer: how words heal.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Kaptein, A. A., and Thong, M. S. Y. (2018) Portraying a grim illness: lung cancer in novels, poems, films, music, and paintings. *Supportive Care in Cancer,* 26: 3681-3689.

Laub, D. (1992) Bearing witness, or the vicissitudes of listening. In S. Felman and D. Laub (eds.) *Testimony: crises of witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (pp. 57-74). New York, NY: Routledge.

McGettrick, C., O'Donnell, K., O'Rourke, M., Smith, J. M. and Steed, M. (2021) *Ireland and the Magdalene Laundries: a campaign for justice*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Pine, E. (2011) *The Politics of Irish Memory: performing remembrance in contemporary Irish culture.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Roulston, A., Davidson, G., Kernohan, G. and Brazil, K. (2018) Living with life-limiting illness: exploring the narratives of patients with advanced lung cancer and identifying how social workers can address their psycho-social needs. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 48 (7): 2114-2131.

Segal, J. Z. (2012) Cancer experience and its narration: an accidental study. *Literature and Medicine*, 30 (2): 292-318.

Segal, J. Z. (2007) Breast cancer narratives as public rhetoric: genre itself and the maintenance of ignorance. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*, 3 (1): 3-23.

Sontag, S. (1978) *Illness as Metaphor.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

BOOKS ANALYSED

Atwood, M. (2002) *Negotiating with the Dead.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Atwood, M. (1990) *The Handmaid's Tale.* London: Virago.

Feeney, E. (2021) *As You Were.* Dublin: Penguin Random House.

McCormack, M. (2005) *Notes from a Coma*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Munro, A. (1982) *Lives of Girls and Women.* London: Penguin Books.

Woolf, V. (1985) *Moments of Being.* New York, NY: A Harvest/HBJ Book.

Woolf, V. (2002) *On Being Ill.* Ashfield, MA: Paris Press.

Ewelina Feldman-Kołodziejuk holds a Ph.D. from the University of Białystok, Poland, where she is currently employed as an assistant. Her primary area of academic interest is North American literature and culture, with special focus placed on Newfoundland and Labrador.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1205-1510

Email: e.feldman@uwb.edu.pl

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 51–69
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.04 © University of Latvia, 2024

EXISTENTIALIST MOTIFS OF ALIENATION AND DEATH IN MCCARTHY'S *BORDER TRILOGY*

IRYNA KACHUR
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

Abstract. The article closely reads Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* in light of the existentialist motifs of alienation and death. The aim of the study is to analyse the literary representation of these motifs in the trilogy. The applied methodology involves close reading, which facilitates identifying the motifs of death and alienation in the novels; character analysis, focused on exploring the main characters' experiences of death and alienation; and comparative analysis, which is used to compare the representation of the existentialist motifs in the novels. The study reveals that in *The Border Trilogy*, the existentialist motif of alienation manifests itself through the desire of the main characters to free themselves from social conventions and to mend the wrongness of the world they live in. This motif takes forms of madness, alienation from other characters, and isolation from society. The protagonists, looking for their place in the world, face hardships, encounter resistance, and therefore constantly feel estrangement. In the novels, the existentialist motif of death serves for a better understanding of human nature and is one of the driving forces of the protagonists' existence. This motif manifests itself through blood and bones, dreams, natural and violent deaths, the extermination of nature, and the disappearance of established traditions. Symbolising the end of existence, death prompts the main characters to search for the purpose of their lives and strive for authenticity.

Keywords: Cormac McCarthy, *The Border Trilogy*, existentialist motifs, death, alienation

INTRODUCTION

The feeling of alienation connected with death prevails in a modern world full of endless wars and military conflicts. The global turmoil is reflected in literature, where prominent writers question the principles of society, emphasising existential issues about the aim and value of human life. Among them is Cormac McCarthy, a legend of the modern American western genre, who contributed to world literature in his pursuit of understanding the notions of alienation and death, inter alia. The author's novels often delve into themes of darkness and

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

violence, revealing the most depressing and disgusting flaws of the world while also examining metaphysical questions about the capacity for good and evil in human nature and the place of humanity in the universe. The author explores the legacy of American history that is marked by invasion, conquest, slavery, racism, the exploitation of the poor and the working class, and the attempted genocide of Indians in the US and Mexico (Spurgeon, 2011: 3). McCarthy uses diverse literary strategies to develop this range of literary themes. In his novels, the writer skilfully blends elements of Shakespearean language, which is characterised by the use of archaic words and figurative language, with Hemingway's simplicity of style, which reflects McCarthy's preference for minimalistic and direct prose (ibid.). Additionally, the writer incorporates Faulknerian sentence structures by crafting extended complex sentences through subordination (Gugin, 2016: 89) and employs atypical punctuation. This includes a refusal to use commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, etc., as the author believes that good writing does not require unnecessary distractions. Besides, McCarthy's works are known for unforgettably ambiguous opening and closing scenes and well-written dialogues, which make it obvious who is speaking due to the use of regional dialects (Spurgeon, 2011: 3-4). In order to preserve the local colour and authenticity of the narrative, some conversations are written in Spanish, as, for example, in *The Border Trilogy*, where the main characters quite often speak with Mexicans in their native tongue.

The Border Trilogy, which includes the novels *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994) and *Cities of the Plain* (1998), may be perceived as a magnificent example of realism in which the problems of society are represented in the light of the lives of mid-20th-century cowboys. The scene takes place in two countries, the USA and Mexico, which share the same border but are very dissimilar in their culture, politics, and way of life. The time span of the novels comprises the period from the end of World War I to the early 1960s. Chronologically, *The Crossing* presents the subject line in the period between World War I and World War II, while the events in *All the Pretty Horses* take place in 1949 and 1950, and the last novel, *Cities of the Plain*, is set in 1952.

The novels of *The Border Trilogy* have already been a subject of academic interest for such scholars as Bloom (2004), Arnold and Luce (2001), Lincoln (2009), Hillier (2017), Estes (2013), O'Sullivan (2014), Spurgeon (2011), Owens (2000), Tavlin (2017), and others. While their studies have shed light on essential aspects of the novels, such as recurring themes, genre, the author's distinctive style, and the philosophical foundation of his storytelling, the books have not yet been thoroughly analysed in light of the existentialist motifs, specifically those of death and alienation. Thus, the aim of the study is to explore the literary representation of the existentialist motifs of death and alienation in *The Border Trilogy*. The methodology involves close reading, which helps identify motifs of death and alienation in the novels; character analysis, focused on examining the main characters' experiences and existential dilemmas; and comparative analysis, which aids in comparing the representation of existentialist motifs in the novels.

The Border Trilogy raises philosophical questions about the nature of human relations, the value of life and the inevitability of death, the fatality and presence of a choice, love, and devotion. The main characters are looking for their place in the world, which is why they cross and recross the border between America and Mexico. Their journeys result in a re-evaluation of their core values and principles; their road life evokes in the protagonists the feeling of detachment, teaching the boys to accept the imminence of death. The main characters question the value of human life and search for the essence of their existence.

The Border Trilogy belongs to the western genre. This genre is characterised by a more romanticised depiction of the West and its problems; the events usually take place in the western US territories (Saricks, 2001: 351), also known as the frontier. The protagonist is mostly a cowboy with an iron will and strong convictions who is not devoid of human frailties. The hero strives to rectify the evil in the world, even if it may lead to violence in the end; he wants to take revenge and/or has to fight for survival in a harsh and lawless world (ibid.: 352). However, in the novels, the stereotypical cowboy Stoicism is reshaped into a deep and lasting philosophy of life (Hillier, 2017: 99), which the protagonists adopt and practice. The landscape is generally alien and hostile for newcomers, so they ought to go through a myriad of perils to achieve their aim (Saricks, 2001: 355). Dialogues are sparse and laconic, which corresponds to the disposition of cowboys as people of action and few words.

To achieve that, McCarthy uses the basic formulas of the genre: the novelist avoids unnecessary sentimentality, cursory nostalgia, and underserved happy endings (Bloom, 2009: 74). The western, for McCarthy, serves to explore the relationships between being and witness, truth and desire, violence and empathy. Each of the novels in *The Border Trilogy* starts in a naturalistic manner, but as the main characters cross into Mexico, elements of nightmarish surrealism come into play (Wood, 2016: 179), intensifying the conventional struggle between right and wrong that the protagonists must confront. John Grady Cole and Billy Parham both have moral convictions and are guided by their own principles, although there is an inner conflict regarding their actions and motives (Bloom, 2009: 75). Even though they both are fond of horses, the protagonists have somewhat different worldviews shaped by their life experiences and past, which determine their estrangement from humanity and death drive. Their contrasting perspectives complement each other, adding depth to their characters and enriching the author's exploration of morality, alienation, and loss of life within the western landscape.

Initially, all the novels in *The Border Trilogy* were imagined as a single screenplay entitled *Cities of the Plain* (Lincoln, 2009: 101). Later, they evolved into three different books, each with its own distinctive features. *The Crossing* is the darkest of them all and delves more into metaphysical inquiries about the nature of culture and identity (Spurgeon, 2011: 12). *All the Pretty Horses* resembles an adventure story with teenagers full of enthusiasm and vigour who endeavour to lay their path to a better future but see the world through rose-coloured spectacles, believing that they may easily overcome any obstacles just because they wish it wholeheartedly. However, gradually, the novel evolves into a realistic story that questions

the cornerstones of a society in which humanity is a derelict and corruption is a virtue, where life is marked by misery, estrangement, agony, demise, and murder is a common thing. Together with *The Crossing*, the novel has the structural characteristics of a Bildungsroman, encompassing themes of initiation, maturity, and self-awareness (Owens, 2000: 61). The narrative in the novels is built upon two border paradigms: the myth of progress (*All the Pretty Horses*) and the primitive-pastoral myth (*The Crossing*). The stories revolve around romantic heroes; in the first myth, the hero embodies national hopes for the future while simultaneously battling the Other to defend Anglo-American dreams (ibid.: 66). This reference is quite deft in the context of the exploration of the motif of alienation in *The Border Trilogy*, inasmuch as the protagonists of the novels withstand their national identity abroad, thus fulfilling one of the aspects of the American dream. Namely, it is the right to become a self-made person. In the second myth, the timeless themes of human connection with nature, the allure of the wilderness, and the challenges of existence in a rugged landscape are investigated (ibid.: 68). *Cities of the Plain* explores the nature of human relations and the consequences of human action or inaction. Both protagonists adamantly hold on to their core cowboy self-identities: John Grady embodies the legendary cowboy on a quest for a lost homestead, while Billy remains a steadfast saddle companion, striving to harmonise the demands of idealism with the challenges of reality (Arnold and Luce, 2001: 200). In the novel, the cowboy codes, which form the behavioural patterns of the protagonists, are renovated to embody ideas that extend far beyond the confines of the classical Western frontier in US-American literature. It reflects a broader national identity concept while exposing a significant American anxiety regarding the perceived fragility of that very identity (ibid.: 201). Thus, the search for belonging of the main characters reflects not only an individual struggle but also the collective concerns of a nation.

All the novels are built around the border and its crossing. Thus, the main characters, the teenagers, not only live at the frontier but frequently cross the borderline between the two countries. In the first book, *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady and Lacey Rawlins set off on their journey to Mexico to become cowboys, as in America all the ranches are slowly disappearing due to technological progress and cars are gradually supplanting horses. On their way, the boys meet a thirteen-year-old wanderer, Jimmy Blevins, who, in the end, becomes the cause of their imprisonment. Looking for a land of wonder, they find poverty and dereliction; searching for freedom, they end up in prison. Facing cruelty and death, all their illusions vanish. After the murder of their newly-gained road-fellow Blevins, Rawlins and Grady sorrowfully return home, estranged from society and each other.

In *The Crossing*, Billy Parham crosses the frontier three times, and each journey is eye-opening and heartbreaking, as he never achieves what he intends to in the first place. The first time, Billy comes to Mexico to save the wolf that he has caught, but only manages to bring to the mountains the wolf's dead body. The boy reveals that the world is far from being kind and sympathetic. Having come back, the young

cowboy finds his family dead and their horses stolen. The only relative left is his younger brother, Boyd, with whom Billy sets off for another journey, a fruitless attempt to disgorge property. In the end, Billy again returns to America, but alone, as Boyd has run off with a Mexican girl. For the last time, Parham crosses the border to find his brother, but he has been long dead, so the only thing he restores are Boyd's remnants that he buries in his homeland.

In the last book, *Cities of the Plain,* Billy Parham and John Grady are employed on a ranch in Texas, not far from the border. The friends do the job they love above all else in the world—looking after horses—and from time to time cross the border to go to a bar or a whorehouse. Grady, who has a romantic disposition, falls in love with a whore, which eventually leads to his and her fatal deaths. After the loss of his friend, Billy goes to Mexico, where, as an outcast, he aimlessly wanders across the country.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In existentialism, alienation is a separation from one's true being, which means that a person lacks authenticity and is unable to perceive themselves as ultimately free and responsible (Michelman, 2010: 31). On the other hand, estrangement creates possibilities for a higher existence (Hegel, 1998: 206). For example, when individuals experience a sense of disconnection from their usual reality, they may gain a new perspective and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. Also, alienation arises when a person becomes consciously aware that the image they have of themselves does not align with how others perceive them (Barnes, 1968: 128). Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) stresses that one may achieve authenticity only by extracting oneself from alienating social conventions and taking responsibility for one's own life through a solitary confrontation with death and anxiety (Heidegger, 2008: 295; Michelman, 2010: 32). Thus, alienation could mean that a person cannot find their own place in the world, therefore feeling lonely and abandoned. This is the fate of the protagonists in *The Border Trilogy,* who, after the confrontation with harsh reality, become disillusioned, and their worldview is shattered. They can neither find their own place in society nor free themselves from its conventions; thus, they end up estranged from both people and the world. Their alienation makes the main characters reconsider their own lives in search of the meaning of their existence.

Death, in existentialism, is considered not as a physical event or biological process but rather as the awareness that one is going to die. The awareness of death is a constitutive of existence that is not merely a physiological state of presence and that has its connection to the awareness of freedom and to the exercise of authenticity (Michelman, 2010: 112). Jaspers (1969: 118) believes that death is one of the limit situations that serves for the emergence of existence. In the presence of death, life deepens, and existence becomes more self-assured (ibid.: 199). As a contingent fact, death is associated with facticity, and life's finitude plays a role in

determining freedom (Sartre, 1956: 546). According to Heidegger, a full existential awareness of death is a necessary condition for authenticity, as death gives one's life a properly finite and personal perspective (Heidegger, 2008: 294; Michelman, 2010: 112). In *The Border Trilogy*, the protagonists observe the interconnectedness of life and death. They become aware that the existence of life is only possible due to the existence of death, as the final form of life is death. All creatures, including human beings, will eventually die, and only the understanding of the finitude of existence, which is solely the prerogative of intelligent beings, makes them appreciate their lives. Each character's quest for identity, purpose, freedom, and a place in the world is inextricably linked to their acknowledgement of mortality. It is in this stark confrontation with the finitude of existence that they affirm the significance of their own lives.

PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

1 EXISTENTIALIST MOTIF OF ALIENATION

In *The Border Trilogy*, alienation is not limited to one dimension but rather spans across different realms of existence. It takes several forms, namely madness, estrangement from people, and isolation from society. This multifaceted depiction of alienation provides a deeper understanding of human emotions and relationships, showing how it influences their perception of the universe and their role in it. The experience of estrangement serves as a catalyst for the main characters self-discovery and a deeper understanding of both themselves and the world around them.

A form of escape from the turmoil and conventions of the world, madness allows an individual to detach from reality. When a person is overwhelmed with suffering, the only way to forget pain is to descend into madness. In *Cities of the Plain*, a rancher, Mr Johnson, begins to lose his sanity after the tragic loss of his daughter: 'The old man is getting crazier and crazier' (McCarthy, 2011b: 11). Being unable to cope with his sorrow on his own and receiving no solace from the world, the man gradually alienates himself from society. However, formally, he remains within the community despite his mental state, while in *The Crossing*, Billy meets a hermit who lives in isolation. The man is eccentric in his own way; through the story he tells young Parham, the older character reveals the sorrow and grief of his own life, to escape from which he has chosen insanity: 'Such a man is like a dreamer who wakes from a dream of grief to a greater sorrow yet. All that he loves is now become a torment to him' (McCarthy, 2011a: 149). Madness, for the hermit, is also a way to keep living in the alienated world that has rejected him. Similarly, Billy feels like an outcast in the harsh reality where he is forced to execute the wolf to free her from suffering. This experience deeply unsettles his mental wellbeing, driving him to seek salvation in the wilderness. A chance meeting with the Indians, who respect lunatics believing that they have a unique connection to the spiritual world: 'All of whom may well have thought him mad for the regard with which they

treated him. They fed him and the women washed his clothes and mended them and sewed his boots' (ibid.: 136), which only intensifies Billy's sense of estrangement. His experiences of solitude and moments of apparent madness become integral to his evolving understanding of identity and purpose, giving him a new perspective on the world. However, insanity is not always an individual matter. If it becomes prevalent within an entire community, it can lead to the exclusion of certain groups of people from society. In *All the Pretty Horses*, Dueña Alfonsa highlights the absurdity of the world and the madness of men who degrade women by denying them their social rights, thus leaving them on the outskirts of society in the first half of the 20th century: 'Society is very important in Mexico. Where women do not even have the vote. In Mexico they are mad for society and for politics and very bad at both' (McCarthy, 2001: 231). This connection between personal mental alienation and its potential impact on the country highlights the intricate interplay between individual experiences and the broader dynamics of society. Thus, madness, as a form of alienation, reflects the emotional turmoil that can lead to isolation and disconnection, affecting both individuals and specific social groups.

Alienation from people and isolation from society are closely connected, as they often reinforce and exacerbate each other. When an individual experiences estrangement from others, it can lead to a sense of isolation and exclusion from society. This isolation, in turn, intensifies the feeling of detachment from society's norms, values, and interactions. In *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady experiences estrangement when he realises that his efforts to overcome the primordial alienation of a foreign country and make it his new home (Tavlin, 2017: 117) are in vain. His distinct cultural background and limited understanding of Mexican traditions, nuances, and unspoken rules mark him as an outsider. Therefore, his relationship with Alejandra, the daughter of a rich ranch owner, is doomed not only because they belong to different social classes and have dissimilar positions in society, but also due to the cultural gap between them. In Mexico, the role of a woman is strictly defined and constrained by societal norms. Alejandra's aunt, mentioned above, Dueña Alfonsa, warns Grady about that: 'I want you to be considerate of a young girl's reputation [...] Here a woman's reputation is all she has' (McCarthy, 2001: 136). However, he tries to challenge the world, to eliminate injustice, and to marry his mistress, but in vain. The primordial traditions cannot be so easily overruled, and the cultural gap cannot be so easily bridged. The protagonist experiences disappointment and solitude due to the loss of the person he loves: 'He felt a loneliness he'd not known since he was a child and he felt wholly alien to the world although he loved it still' (ibid.: 282). John's frustration further leads to his detachment from society, where he has no place.

Grady's estrangement has deep roots: his mother, the first woman he loved, abandoned him when he was an infant, as John's father recalls: 'We were married ten years before the war come along. She left out of here. She was gone from the time you were six months old till you were about three' (McCarthy, 2001: 25). John's mother, weary of the rural life and driven by her dreams, leaves the family, creating a void in Grady's soul and sparking a yearning for acceptance and validation. His father

feels guilt for not recognising the differences between him and his wife, instead focusing solely on their shared love for horses, which he believes to be the crucial bond between them: 'Your mother and me never agreed on a whole lot. She liked horses. I thought that was enough. That's how dumb I was' (ibid.: 24). Horses play a significant role in the trilogy, symbolising the beauty and independence of nature while also reflecting the innate human longing for freedom—the freedom that John so eagerly pursues and that his mother finally attains. The reference to horses in the title signifies the connection between humans and the wilderness. This wilderness constantly tests John, much like he attempts to tame horses. Moreover, the title of the novel directly refers to an African American lullaby, *All the Pretty Little Horses*, creating the atmosphere of a nursery rhyme (Estes, 2013: 139). One of the lines, 'poor little baby crying momma', serves as a reference to the harsh lives of slaves. During that time, mothers were often separated from their children to perform exhausting work. Similarly, the main character is separated from his mother and thrust into an alienated world, which, over the course of the story, will change his naïve view and shatter his perception of the world.

Similarly to *All the Pretty Horses*, in *Cities of the Plain*, John Grady experiences alienation due to his inability to find his own place in the absurd reality and the loss of his beloved person, Magdalena. Though the girl is a prostitute, she differs from those whores who have no moral standards and welter in vice. Despite working as a prostitute since her early teens, she has managed to preserve her childish disposition and optimistic worldview. Afflicted with epilepsy, Magdalena always feels like an outcast, even in the whorehouse, where other women treat her as if she is cursed:

> The girl's mouth was bloody and some of the whores came forward and dipped their handkerchiefs in the blood as if to wipe it away but they hid the handkerchiefs on their persons to take away with them and the girl's mouth continued to bleed. They pulled her other arm free and tied it as well and some of them were chanting and some were blessing themselves and the girl bowed and thrashed and then went rigid and her eyes white. (McCarthy, 2011b: 73)

Comparable with John, the young girl is alienated from her surroundings, and her very right to exist is denied by her master Eduardo: 'What are you […] You are nothing' (ibid.: 185), which leads to feelings of estrangement and despair. John sees the wrongness in this world in which children are forced to hard labour or prostitution, where a person can easily become someone's property and human life has no value at all: 'She had been sold at the age of thirteen to settle a gambling debt. […] Then they sold her to the prisoners for what few pesos they could muster or traded her for cigarettes' (ibid.: 140). Therefore, Grady strives to free Magdalena from her alienation and give her and his life a new meaning and purpose, but the odds are not in their favour. Finally, he sacrifices his life to revenge her, as he is no longer able to live alone in the alien world: 'When I seen her layin there I didn't care to live no more. I knew my life was over' (ibid.: 261). Thus, not being able to free themselves from the conventions of the existing society, the main characters fell prey to them.

In *The Crossing*, Billy's alienation and isolation from society are caused by his strangeness. Parham is different from other people in the way he treats animals. Unlike the majority, who view them as mere tools or pests, Billy engages with them on a personal level, which is exemplified by his conversation with the wolf: 'He talked to her a long time [...] he said what was in his heart. He made her promises that he swore to keep in the making' (McCarthy, 2011a: 108). His attitude towards animals reveals his empathy and desire for harmonious coexistence with the environment. Billy tries to capture the essence of the world through the perception of another creature:

> He tried to see the world the wolf saw. He tried to think about it running in the mountains at night. He wondered if the wolf were so unknowable as the old man said. He wondered at the world it smelled or what it tasted. He wondered had the living blood with which it slaked its throat a different taste to the thick iron tincture of his own. (McCarthy, 2011a: 53)

The young cowboy seeks to understand another living being in order to gain a deeper comprehension of his own existence. However, his strangeness is strikingly evident to others: 'I was always just like everbody else far as I know. Well you aint' (ibid.: 70), which leads to his exclusion from society. As Cant (2008: 196) states, the protagonist fails to overcome isolation despite his heroic efforts; thus, much of the time he is completely forlorn contemplating his purpose in life. The death of his parents and his brother's desertion with the girl he rescued intensify Billy's feeling of estrangement: 'For the enmity of the world was newly plain to him that day and cold and inameliorate as it must be to all who have no longer cause except themselves to stand against it' (McCarthy, 2011a: 340). His life has lost its lure, and Parham decides to volunteer for the army, but he is rejected because of his medical condition (a heart murmur). Thus, society once again deprives him of his choice and leaves him without a sense of belonging. Boyd's death acts as the culmination of Billy's overwhelming feelings of isolation and alienation. Despite the differences they have, Parham still loves his brother, who is the only person linking the protagonist to reality, and his death signifies the end of Billy's previous life: 'He seemed to himself a person with no prior life. As if he had died in some way years ago and was ever after some other being who had no history, who had no ponderable life to come' (ibid.: 392). Thus, the severity of the world results in alienation and loneliness for the main character.

John Grady and Billy Parham confront a world that starkly contrasts with their idealised childhood outlook. For the protagonists, the Old West frontier embodies their imagined version of the past (Bloom, 2004: 21), which they try to restore. However, the transformations that the world undergoes lead to alienation of the main characters as America turns into a nation of consumption rather than manufacturing, and the protagonists cannot easily accustom to the new reality, in which the old working practices and traditional forms of living seem not to be valued anymore (O'Sullivan, 2014: 147). Therefore, in pursuit of an unattainable cowboy pastoral, the protagonists cross the border.

But in his search for his own place, John Grady comes to the realisation that his perception of Mexico is flawed—it is not the country of his dreams. The land is hostile and alien, as are the people who inhabit it. In *The Crossing*, Billy Parham arrives at the same conclusion, emphasising the foreignness of the country: '[...] the international boundary line into Mexico, State of Sonora, undifferentiated in its terrain from the country they quit and yet wholly alien and wholly strange' (McCarthy, 2011a: 76). In *All the Pretty Horses*, the striking disparity between American and Mexican mentalities serves as an additional source of estrangement for John: 'It is not that he is stupid. It is that his picture of the world is incomplete. In this rare way. He looks only where he wishes to see' (McCarthy, 2001: 192). The protagonist struggles to adapt to a foreign land with its distinct traditions and laws, yet his efforts are in vain, reinforcing the notion that a person may only truly feel at home where they have grown up:

> They said that it was no accident of circumstance that a man be born in a certain country and not some other and they said that the weathers and seasons that form a land form also the inner fortunes of men in their generations and are passed on to their children and are not so easily come by otherwise. (McCarthy, 2001: 226)

Paradoxically, departing from Mexico, John finds himself once again without a sense of belonging, left with a feeling of rootlessness and displacement: 'But it aint my country [...] Where is your country? he said. I dont know, said John Grady. I dont know where it is' (McCarthy, 2001: 299). Once more, the harsh reality tests his resilience against adversity, taking from him the people he loves and overwhelming his soul with despair and estrangement. Similarly, in *The Crossing*, Billy faces an unforgiving world, experiencing the loss of his entire family, and encounters nonacceptance in a foreign country: 'They looked like what they were, outcasts in an alien land. Homeless, hunted, weary' (McCarthy, 2011a: 305). Grim and hostile surroundings mirror his detachment: 'The landscape lay gray under a gray sky' (ibid.: 401), serving as a visual representation of the emotional isolation that he experiences. In *All the Pretty Horses*, Grady's emotional turmoil is also reflected in the natural world: 'He looked at the place where they were, the strange land, the strange sky' (McCarthy, 2001: 176). On returning to America, the terrain around him appears wild and deserted: 'He [...] took the road north, a mud track that wound up through the barren gravel hills' (ibid.: 285), which further intensifies his feeling of alienation. The vast emptiness surrounding the protagonists serves as a constant reminder of their isolation and the void left by the loss of their loved ones, deepening their longing for a sense of belonging that remains elusive.

2 EXISTENTIALIST MOTIF OF DEATH

In *The Border Trilogy*, death is an inseparable part of human existence that does not always come naturally and can take the form of a war, revolution, natural disaster, or homicide. It manifests itself through various facets: blood and

bones, dreams and reality, natural death or violent murder. It stands not only as the end of an individual's existence but also signifies the extinction of nature and the disappearance of former traditions.

Blood and bones become powerful symbols of the finitude of life. In *All the Pretty Horses*, scattered animal remnants highlight the natural order of life and death: 'In the draws were cattle dead from an old drought, just the bones of them cloven about with the hard dry blackened hide' (McCarthy, 2001: 52). They indicate the inevitability of the decay of all living beings, which may happen at any time and for various reasons. Similarly, the bones of Billy's relatives in *The Crossing* serve as a reminder of omnipresent death, which claims both the young and the old without distinction: 'In the country they'd quit lay the bones of a sister and the bones of his maternal grandmother' (McCarthy, 2011a: 3). However, for Billy, his brother's bones also serve as a remembrance of him: 'He gathered the bones in his arms' (ibid.: 409). That is why he decides to rebury Boyd in their homeland with his family. Moreover, bones hold significance beyond representing physical death; they also function as evidence that a person is still alive, which is exemplified in *Cities of the Plain*: 'The flesh and bone living under the cloth of her dress' (McCarthy, 2011b: 139). The use of symbolism deepens the intricate relationship between life and death, underscoring how the portrayal of bones acts as a potent reminder of the delicate nature of the human body and its proneness to deterioration.

Often paired with bones, blood represents both vitality and mortality. In *All the Pretty Horses*, it symbolises not only the physical life force, highly valued by the protagonist: 'What he loved in horses was what he loved in men, the blood and the heat of the blood that ran them' (McCarthy, 2001: 6), but also functions as a marker of identity and heritage. Thus, realising that he has been given a blood transfusion, 'They put Mexican blood in me' (ibid.: 210), Rawlins starts to fear losing his national identity and being associated with Mexicans, even though he has been dreaming of becoming a cowboy in the country. However, his fear is groundless, as Grady states: 'Hell, it dont mean nothin. Blood's blood' (ibid.: 211). The same concept is conveyed in *The Crossing*, emphasising that blood merely serves as evidence of one's existence. Therefore, when Billy tries wolf blood, he arrives at the conclusion that it is like his own: 'The blood which tasted no different than his own' (McCarthy, 2011a: 129). This marks the initial step towards comprehending his mortality. Alone in the forest, the main character contemplates his existence once again, even going so far as to cut his hand: 'he made a cut in the heel of his hand with his knife and watched the slow blood dropping on the stone' (McCarthy, 2011a: 133). This act reassures Billy that his body is a mortal shell that will eventually be shed. Likewise, in *Cities of the Plain*, John Grady acknowledges his mortality and close demise by observing his own blood: 'in that alien land where he lay in his blood' (McCarthy, 2011b: 258). This experience prompts him to realise that he will depart from this world without truly attaining the sense of identity and belonging he has yearned for. Thus, blood acts as a powerful reminder of the fleeting nature of life and the inevitability of death.

The other element of the death motif, a dream, is a gateway to the subconscious, which allows a person to glimpse at death and hidden fears and desires. In *The Border Trilogy,* dreams illuminate the protagonists' inner world and add complexity to the narrative while being rich in symbolism and allegory. In *All the Pretty Horses*, Alejandra's dream about John's death is not only an undoubted manifestation of her trepidation but also bears a metaphorical meaning representing their future separation: 'I saw you in a dream. I saw you dead in a dream' (McCarthy, 2001: 252). The prophetic power of a dream can also be observed in *The Crossing*, as Boyd foresees the destruction of his family through symbolic elements: 'There was this big fire out on the dry lake. [...] These people were burnin. The lake was on fire and they was burnin up. [...] I had the same dream twice' (McCarthy, 2011a: 37). The image of the burning lake reflects the ruin and death that will soon engulf his home, emphasising the interconnectedness of dreams and reality. In the novels, a dream serves as a link between different worlds, helping the living meet the dead. Thus, being far away from his homeland, in his slumber, Billy sees his father and learns that he has passed away: 'His father stood looking toward the west where the sun had gone and where the wind was rising out of the darkness' (ibid.: 115). While in *Cities of the Plain*, Parham confronts deceased Magdalena, who fruitlessly attempts to warn him about Grady's injury: 'He had a dream in which the dead girl came to him hiding her throat with her hand. She was covered in blood and she tried to speak but she could not' (McCarthy, 2011b: 259). Her dreadful appearance indicates that she has been violently murdered. In *All the Pretty Horses*, John encounters in his sleep dead Blevins, and they discuss the nature of death: 'He'd dreamt of him one night in Saltillo and Blevins came to sit beside him and they talked of what it was like to be dead and Blevins said it was like nothing at all and he believed him' (McCarthy, 2001: 225). The protagonist finally acknowledges that death means the finitude of existence and the loss of individuality. Similarly, in *The Crossing*, in one of his sleeps, Billy attempts to explore the nature of death from his murdered brother, yet he does not reveal this enigma:

> In the dream he knew that Boyd was dead and that the subject of his being so must be approached with a certain caution for that which was circumspect in life must be doubly so in death and he'd no way to know what word or gesture might subtract him back again into that nothingness out of which he'd come. When finally he did ask him what it was like to be dead Boyd only smiled and looked away and would not answer. (McCarthy, 2011a: 411)

Boyd subtly hints that death signifies the end of life, a truth that can only be fully comprehended through personal experience. However, a living being cannot survive their own death (Heidegger, 2008). Even death faced in a dream fails to unveil its true essence, for upon waking, one returns to the reality of life, much like Billy: 'I woke from that world to this. Like the traveler, all I had forsaken I would come upon again' (McCarthy, 2011b: 290). Thus, through dreams, the main characters contemplate the mysteries of mortality and seek further understanding of the interconnectedness between life and death.

Death, in *The Border Trilogy*, also symbolises the disappearance of former traditions and beliefs. In *The Crossing*, the old Mexican woman complains about the shift in morality, pointing out that the new generation forgets their roots and casts aside religion: 'She said that the young nowadays cared nothing for religion or priest or family or country or God' (McCarthy, 2011a: 89). The values and cultural heritage that once provided a foundation for the community are disregarded, which presents a threat to the collective identity and shared beliefs that give meaning to the existence of a nation. A similar transformation can be observed in the USA, where once-established traditions have also become a thing of the past. In *All the Pretty Horses*, which opens with the funeral of John's grandfather, death is perceived as an ordinary occurrence that is noble and even desirable:

> His grandfather was the oldest of eight boys and the only one to live past the age of twenty-five. They were drowned, shot, kicked by horses. They perished in fires. They seemed to fear only dying in bed. (McCarthy, 2001: 7)

However, the demise of the grandfather not only signifies the finitude of life but also bears a symbolic meaning, as it denotes the end of the family business and the extinction of former traditions. Ranches start to disappear across the whole country, and the profession of a cowboy slowly becomes obsolete. In *Cities of the Plain*, the protagonists are confronted with the changes in society and start to contemplate their identities: 'What would you do if you couldnt be a cowboy?' (McCarthy, 2011b: 219). Thus, as old ways fade away and new perspectives emerge, the main characters are challenged to adapt and seek meaning in the face of these profound changes.

Death as a physical termination of life, in the novels, rarely comes naturally and more often is an act of murder. At the beginning of their journeys, the protagonists do not take death seriously, as they are still young and full of optimism and hope. In *All the Pretty Horses*, the main characters perceive it as remote, vague, and unlikely to happen in the near future, which is why they do not fear it: 'I aint afraid to die' (McCarthy, 2001: 194). However, in Mexico, Grady and Rawlins reveal extreme poverty and unemployment due to revolutions and learn a vital lesson: that the world is ruthless and unforgivable, especially to those who are weak. The wisdom shared by Dueña Alfonsa with John further illuminates the stark realities of the world:

> But I have seen the consequences in the real world and they can be very grave indeed. They can be consequences of a gravity not excluding bloodshed. Not excluding death. I saw this in my own family. (McCarthy, 2001: 136)

Society still follows archaic traditions and believes in vendetta, notwithstanding the law. Thus, for killing a man, Blevins's life has been taken despite his young age. John and Rawlins are sent to jail as his accomplices, although they are innocent. There, the young cowboys learn the real nature of the world, in which corruption

substitutes for justice and money may redeem one's sins. In prison, the boys conceive that a human life has no value at all, and in order to survive, one should discard humanity:

> Underpinning all of it like the fiscal standard in commercial societies lay a bedrock of depravity and violence where in an egalitarian absolute every man was judged by a single standard and that was his readiness to kill. (McCarthy, 2001: 182)

Being involved in mortal combat with a cuchillero, John is forced to kill him; otherwise, he may die himself. Such is the law of this ruthless world—kill or be killed—which is observed in the natural world and serves to demonstrate the principle that the fittest survives. The following scene becomes a poetic parallel to this law in the text of the novel:

> A pack of dogs was coming up the street at a high trot and as they crossed in front of him one of their number slipped and scrabbled on the wet stones and went down. The others turned in a snarling mass of teeth and fur but the fallen dog struggled up before he could be set upon and all went on as before. (McCarthy, 2001: 255)

McCarthy anthropomorphises this episode: with the example of animal behaviour, the novelist states the ground law of human beings. The fight for survival is a primal instinct that transcends time and culture, revealing the darkest aspects of human nature, which find their manifestation in war and death: '[...] each armed for war which was their life and the women and children and women with children at their breasts all of them pledged in blood and redeemable in blood only' (ibid.: 5). It reinforces the harsh reality that in a world where vulnerability is exploited and weaknesses can lead to one's downfall, individuals must often make agonising choices to secure their own wellbeing.

After encountering death in such proximity, John Grady's perception of mortality undergoes a profound transformation. The very act of taking another person's life forces him to confront the inherent fragility of human existence. He begins to fear death as the ultimate end of his own life. Consequently, having awoken in the hospital, he initially doubts whether he is still alive, and the primal dread grips him. Yet, with the eventual realisation of his existence, a sense of relief emerges:

> He half wondered if he were not dead and in his despair he felt well up in him a surge of sorrow like a child beginning to cry but it brought with it such pain that he stopped it cold and began at once his new life and the living of it breath to breath. (McCarthy, 2001: 203)

The awareness of his own mortality and the unavoidability of death draw Grady back to horses, which, he believes, are fearless of death: 'They were none of them afraid horse nor colt nor mare and they ran in that resonance which is the world itself and which cannot be spoken but only praised' (ibid.: 161-162). For John, these animals encompass a positive and mystical perception that underscores

the interconnectedness and harmony among all living beings (Hillier, 2017: 101). Horses represent John's desire to release himself from the conventions of society and find the aim of his existence. However, by taking human life, Grady loses his childish innocence and, through his entire life, must bear the heavy burden of a deadly sin: 'When I was in the penitentiary down there I killed a boy [...] It keeps botherin me' (McCarthy, 2001: 291). Redemption he may find only in death, which is the final healer: 'In the end we all come to be cured of our sentiments. Those whom life does not cure death will' (ibid.: 238). Thus, the world remains indifferent to his struggle and pain, proving that life is just an instant that ends with death:

> As if to slow the world that was rushing away and seemed to care nothing for the old or the young or rich or poor or dark or pale or he or she. Nothing for their struggles, nothing for their names. Nothing for the living or the dead. (McCarthy, 2001: 301)

Similarly, in *The Crossing*, death dominates society and leads to endless bloodshed: 'A world construed out of blood and blood's alcahest and blood in its core' (McCarthy, 2011a: 75). The ruthlessness of the world is represented in the description of the violent extermination of people, exemplified by the terrible fate of the defenders of Durango:

> The captured rebels stood in the street chained together with fencewire like toys and this man walked their enfilade and bent to study each in turn and note in their eyes the workings of death as the assassinations continued behind him. (McCarthy, 2011a: 284)

Human life is of low value when it comes to the ambitions of those in power. This harsh reality becomes even more evident when considering the historical context of the indigenous population of America, which has been almost extirpated and whose rich cultures and ways of life have been brutally disrupted. Indians fell prey to the greed and prejudice of Europeans and were forced to live on the margins of society:

> Nation and ghost of nation passing in a soft chorale across that mineral waste to darkness bearing lost to all history and all remembrance like a grail the sum of their secular and transitory and violent lives. (McCarthy, 2001: 5)

Animals have also been treated violently by people, who have been destroying their natural habitats and transforming them into fields, farms, villages, and cities for centuries. In the novel, wolves have been recklessly exterminated, which pushes them to the verge of extinction in the areas that have been theirs for millennia:

> The beast who dreams of man [...] of that malignant lesser god come pale and naked and alien to slaughter all his clan and kin and rout them from their house. A god insatiable whom no ceding could appease nor any measure of blood. (McCarthy, 2011a: 17)

Knowing that wolves are rare, Billy decides to save the one he captures. However, from the moment she is taken from him, the wolf's fate is predetermined. Thus, to release her from needless suffering, Billy makes the agonising decision to kill her: 'He [...] walked toward the wolf [...] and took aim at the bloodied head and fired' (ibid.: 126). As Lincoln (2009: 120) points out, the wolf's death represents a deep sorrow for savage terror and the transient beauty of all living beings. Altering the protagonist's worldview, it reveals that life can be abruptly extinguished, sweeping away all aspirations and dreams in an instant.

The world in *The Crossing* is severe and hostile to the main character, with death acting as a compelling force within it. The revelation of the finitude of one's life gives it a deeper meaning, highlighting the intricate relationship between life and death and emphasising the need to confront mortality in order to truly understand the value of existence: 'Death was the condition of existence and life but an emanation thereof' (McCarthy, 2011a: 390). However, the violence with which the protagonist is confronted undermines his childish beliefs in humanity. First, his parents are violently murdered, and their property is stolen. Following that, in a foreign country, his brother is killed. Finally, Billy witnesses the catastrophic consequences of the human desire for destruction, as exemplified by the terrifying false dawn of the world's first atomic bomb test:

> The road was a pale gray in the light and the light was drawing away along the edges of the world [...]. He looked out down the road and he looked toward the fading light. Darkening shape of cloud all along the northern rim. (McCarthy, 2011a: 436)

Thus, death is at the core of the world, shaping its very essence and influencing the lives of its inhabitants. It acts as a powerful catalyst for change, prompting individuals to re-evaluate their beliefs, confront their fears, and seek deeper meaning in the face of mortality.

In *Cities of the Plain*, on the one hand, death is a natural process that puts the world in order; that is why it should not be feared but taken for granted: 'Every man's death is a standing in for every other. And since death comes to all there is no way to abate the fear of it except to love that man who stands for us' (McCarthy, 2011b: 290). On the other hand, it is the aftermath of wars and revolutions that always results in ruin and immense bloodshed: 'There were thousands who went to war in the only suit they owned. Suits in which they'd been married and in which they would be buried' (ibid.: 65). Although no battles take place in the book, there are several allusions to them. John's coworker Troy, for example, is a war veteran who survived World War II but lost his brother, and Mr. Johnson is a witness of a Mexican revolution: 'I saw terrible things in that country. I dreamt about em for years' (ibid.: 65). Extreme violence can also be observed in the description of a hunt on stray dogs that kill calves. Similarly to the hunt for wolves in *The Crossing*, it not only refers to the cruel slaughter of animals devoid of their natural habitat by people but also serves as a metaphor for the extermination of indigenous tribes, whose lands were likewise seized by immigrants. The cruelty of a scene depicting

the death of the last dog is a stark reminder of the brutal forces at play in both nature and human society, where life can be extinguished with ruthless efficiency: 'The big yellow dog rose suddenly from the ground in headlong flight taut between the two ropes and the ropes resonated a single brief dull note and then the dog exploded' (McCarthy, 2011b: 168).

However, this grim reality extends beyond the natural world or battlefields; it finds expression in everyday life through acts of murder, thereby highlighting the omnipresent potential for violence. Thus, Magdalena has been killed by Eduardo's men because the pimp cannot acknowledge her right to freedom and happiness. The latter finds it impossible for a prostitute to have her own free will, and John's desire to revenge his beloved seems to him ridiculous; thus, he gives Grady a choice: 'Change your mind, he said. Go home. Choose life. You are young' (ibid.: 249). However, the protagonist remains determined and, adhering to his cowboy principles, chooses death instead: 'I come to kill you or be killed' (ibid.: 249). In accordance with Sartre's (1956: 547) idea of personal freedom to choose one's death, John's decision to die on his own terms can be viewed as an assertion of his existential autonomy. With this final act, the protagonist transcends the constraints of a violent and unforgiving world, affirming his existence as a self-determined person.

CONCLUSIONS

The existentialist motifs of alienation and death revealed in the trilogy illuminate the universal struggle of individuals to find meaning and authenticity in the harsh realities of existence. Experiencing alienation, the main characters grapple with their own isolation and the challenge of finding their own place in an unfamiliar territory. In the novels, alienation takes the forms of madness, estrangement from people, and isolation from society, thereby emphasising the fragility of human relationships and the complexities of forming authentic connections in a world shaped by societal norms and marked by suffering. The protagonists struggle to eliminate the conflict between reality and their expectations, which impels them to search for their place in the world and the aim of their existence. Similarly, the motif of death, symbolising the inescapable end of life, prompts the characters to confront their own mortality and seek authenticity in their brief existence. In the novels, death manifests itself through bones and blood, which serve as a reminder of human mortality; dreams that act as a conduit between the worlds of the living and the dead; natural death, which puts the world in order; and violent murder, which reminds one of the cruelty of society. Additionally, it takes forms of potential extinction in nature, which is exemplified through the extermination of species and the disappearance of former traditions and beliefs. Hence, death marks not only the end of a living being but also of a community, society, and nation. Thus, McCarthy's portrayal of alienation and death transcends the confines of fiction, inviting readers to contemplate their own struggles for meaning and belonging in

a world often defined by isolation and mortality. These existentialist motifs continue to resonate as profound and timeless reflections on human existence, inspiring further exploration of their significance in literature.

REFERENCES

Arnold, E. and Luce, D. (2001) *Cormac McCarthy Companion: the Border Trilogy*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Barnes, W. (1968) *The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism*. Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series.

Bloom, H. (ed.), (2009) *Cormac McCarthy: Bloom's modern critical views*. New York, NY: Infobase Publishing.

Bloom, H. (ed.), (2004) *Bloom's Guides: Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses*. New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers.

Cant, J. (2008) *Cormac McCarthy and the Myth of American Exceptionalism*. London: Routledge.

Estes, A. (2013) *Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces*. Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi.

Gugin, D. (2016) The blood of a nomad: environmental stylistics and *All the Pretty Horses*. In L. Jillett (ed.), *Cormac McCarthy's Borders and Landscapes* (pp. 83-94). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Hegel, G. (1998) *Phenomenology of Spirit* (trans. A. Miller). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Heidegger, M. (2008) *Being and Time* (trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson). New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

Hillier, R. (2017) *Morality in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction: souls at hazard*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Jaspers, K. (1969) *Philosophy*, vol. 2 (trans. E. Ashton). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lincoln, K. (2009) *Cormac McCarthy: American canticles*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Michelman, S. (2010) *The A to Z of Existentialism*. Lanham: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

O'Sullivan, O. (2014) *Cormac McCarthy's Cold Pastoral: the overturning of a national allegory*. PhD thesis. Sussex: University of Sussex.

Owens, B. (2000) *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Saricks, J. G. (2001) *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*. Chicago and London: American Library Association.

Sartre, J.-P. (1956) *Being and Nothingness* (trans. H. Barnes). New York, NY: Philosophical Library.

Spurgeon, S. L. (ed.) (2011) *Cormac McCarthy: All the Pretty Horses, No Country for Old Men, The Road*. London and New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Tavlin, Z. (2017) Borders, landscapes, and the earth: eco-phenomenology and *All the Pretty Horses*. In C. Eagle (ed.), *Philosophical Approaches to Cormac McCarthy: beyond reckoning* (pp. 109-125). London: Routledge.

Wood, D. (2016) *Frontier Justice in the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Cormac McCarthy*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

SOURCES ANALYSED

McCarthy, C. (2011a) *The Crossing*. London: Picador.

McCarthy, C. (2011b) *Cities of the Plain*. London: Picador.

McCarthy, C. (2001) *All the Pretty Horses*. London: Picador.

Iryna Kachur (PhD student) is currently working at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University. Her research interests include American literature and comparative literature.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4110-5629

Email: i.kachur@kubg.edu.ua

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 70–85
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.05 © University of Latvia, 2024

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN PEASANTRY IN THE MEMOIR ACCOUNTS OF BRITISH TRAVELERS (1764-1795)

ŁUKASZ NIERODA
University of Szczecin, Poland

Abstract: The article analyzes the descriptions of Polish-Lithuanian peasants found in travel literature penned by British visitors to Poland during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski. It aims to present the literary image of peasantry and comment on the Britons' attitude towards the problems they faced. The authors whose works are analyzed are William Coxe (historian and tutor), John Lind (associate of a Polish king), Nathaniel Wraxall (traveler and ex-merchant), James Harris (a future diplomat), Joseph Marshall (a mysterious figure, probably a merchant) and John Williams. Villagers are generally described as miserable human beings struggling with poverty, cruelly exploited by their lords in a condition resembling slavery. The authors' attitude is sympathetic to the difficulties of peasant lives. Britons appreciated attempts to extricate them from their plight in the belief that emancipation was ethically desirable and would render their work more productive.

Key words: memoirs, diaries, British travel writing, peasants, peasantry, Poland, the Commonwealth of Both Nations

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The aim of the following article is to present the British portrayal of peasant life in Poland and Lithuania in the reign of their last monarch, Stanisław August Poniatowski (ruling in 1764-1795), during which Poland-Lithuania disappeared from the political map of Europe as a result of three successive partitions (1772, 1793 and 1795). The sources selected for analysis are written accounts, generically referred to as memoir accounts, authored by travelers from Great Britain who actually visited the country and thus had a chance to eyewitness the reality of village life in the region. Since 1569, the Polish-Lithuanian territories had been united in a federative superstructure known as the Commonwealth of Both Nations, which internally consisted of two monarchical states, the Kingdom of

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, having one elective king and supreme legislative organ (the Diet) but still retaining numerous other separate offices.

The research is intended to show the British perception of the socio-economic position of peasants in Poland-Lithuania as well as the Britons' own private opinions concerning the problems described (for example, the institution of serfdom or prospects of emancipation), thus revealing their mindset. The remarks Britons made have also been contextualized in an attempt to explain where their beliefs might have come from. For this reason, the narrative below is intertwined with references to the findings of modern historiography.

THE BRITISH PORTRAYAL OF THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN PEASANTRY

Diary entries describing the lives of Polish-Lithuanian peasants arguably belong to the saddest fragments of these publications: misery, poverty and enslavement are recurring themes. The Commonwealth of Both Nations did not have a good press for its treatment of simple villagers; the plight of peasants in the country was an important argument the partitioning courts utilized to lessen the odium they risked incurring because of their attempts to dismember the Commonwealth of Both Nations. Indeed, western political literature teemed with criticism of their social position (Kot, 2017: 186-188). It was, however, neither the partitioning powers nor 18th-century British travelers who were the first ones to draw Europe's attention to the problem. The conviction about peasants' enslavement had reigned supreme in British literature and travel accounts at least since the Renaissance (Zins, 2002: 7, 213, 220). The belief was not characteristic of the British alone, but it was common among observers from numerous countries over the ages (Jasnowski, n.d.: 88-93, 183-191; Libiszowska, 1960: 293). An Irish traveler of the 17th century, well acquainted with Poland, used the term 'slavery' with full conviction (Connor, 1698: 168, 186), and so did Britons in the following one.

Such a point of view was not groundless. Peasants in the nobility's private domains were almost entirely subject to their lords (they had not been protected by kings since 1518 [Ihnatowicz, Mączak, and Zientara, 1979: 265]), and the only advantage they gained from the 18th century legislation up until the enactment of the Constitution of 3 May was a prohibition of sentencing them to death by their masters' courts, while their murder was made a capital crime (Michalski, 1984: 369). Polish thinkers themselves, those more enlightened at least, criticized the severity of peasants' subjection because of its immorality as well as its adverse effect on the whole community and the state. Even they often acknowledged that the bondage of serfs was comparable to slavery (Skrzetuski, 1784: 135; Frycz Modrzewski, 2003: 398-399; Maroń, 2012: 126-127; for more examples, cf. Janicki, 2021: 10-12). Usually, however, they did not agitate in favor of the total abolition of serfdom but proposed limited reforms or even less, simply appealing to the conscience of noble owners and trying to convince them to treat their peasants

better (Leszczyński, 2020: 262-272). It is therefore not surprising that, on the verge of the Commonwealth's downfall, even those Britons who had a good reason to approach partitioning courts' announcements with due caution had to accept the validity of this claim. All of the travelers who addressed the problem pointed out the hardships that peasants in Poland daily struggled with, and all those who tried to define their social status called them slaves.

Even the authors who cannot be accused of being pre-biased but sought to develop their own independent view acknowledged the terrifying condition of peasantry. Harris, present in Poland prior to the Bar confederation, when Russia was dictating Polish legislation, partly seeing through the Empress' intrigues and sympathizing with the Polish king, speaks in no uncertain terms about the material living conditions of the village population. Travelling through the westernmost province of Greater Poland, he notes:

> Villages, such as they are, frequent; but the greatest poverty reigns. No houses, but huts: all the family in one miserable room. The head of it has a sort of mock bed; the rest lie on the floor; and the children that have the advantage to be small enough, creep into the oven. The only comfort they seem to enjoy is, a thorough plenty of fuel, they being able to procure wood, merely for the pains of fetching it. (Harris, 1844: 11)

He says nothing, however, about the relations between a peasant and his lord.

Wraxall's first described encounter with the peasantry takes place in the vicinity of Cracow. The circumstances are quite exceptional, as it was a wedding that he had the good fortune to witness. The event must have seemed extraordinary to him, because he chose to describe it in much detail, both in terms of the behavior of the people involved and their clothing:

> I was a witness, two days ago, in a cottage not far from this city, to the revelry and festivity observed on the marriage of two Polish peasants. The bridegroom was a tall, handsome young man; and the intended bride, though not beautiful, might be termed very agreeable in her person. She wore a jacket laced with gold, which fitted exactly to her shape; and while it modestly concealed her neck, betrayed the formation of her figure. Her hair, parted on the crown of her head, was ornamented with a cap, composed of gold thread, and a garland of flowers. Behind, her hair, in great quantity, fell down on her back, braided with rose-coloured ribands. When I came into the room, it was filled with peasants of both sexes, half intoxicated. The young bride supported herself against the wall, while her lover, quite unrestrained by the presence of so many spectators, paid his court to her by every testimony of drunken and savage pleasure. He leaned against her, howling, whistling, singing, and hallooing by turns in her ear. From time to time, he presented glasses of beer which she never refused. But, when he attempted to take liberties with her person, she affected

> to oppose his caresses, and to repulse his freedom. At a little distance, was seated the bride's mother, in a pleasing state of partial inebriation, regarding attentively the two lovers. Round them were several young men, who attended on the bridegroom; and six Polish girls in waiting on the bride. These females were dressed exactly like her, having circlets of flowers about their heads, and several rows of coral round their necks. In the adjoining room, a number of peasants, male and female, were engaged in dancing. The men wear enormous boots, fortified with iron heels, which they strike continually against each other. It formed altogether a most entertaining exhibition of barbarous mirth. (Wraxall, 1806a: 401-402)

Wraxall was not the only Briton who witnessed a peasant marriage. Years later (but in the Napoleonic period), James (1817: 364-365) did, too. Both describe the ceremony as a joyous celebration, fully absorbing the participants. James (1817: 364) notes that his presence was not even noticed in all the jubilation captivating the attention of those present at the ceremony. The two weddings, a few decades apart, are the only circumstances under which peasants are described as reveling in authentic happiness in an otherwise dull life. This sad fact notwithstanding, Wraxall's narrative is nonetheless judgmentally condescending. What emanates from the excerpt is a clear feeling of cultural superiority. Even setting aside the last quoted sentence with its unambiguously expressed opinion (the wedding as a scene of '*barbarous* [emphasis mine] mirth'), it is evidently manifest, which is perhaps not strange. The excerpt confirms the accusations filed against the Poles very often: drunkenness and sexual frivolity. The peasants in the room are 'half intoxicated', the groom is outright drunk and gives in to his desires under the influence of alcohol, and the bride never refuses to consume yet another glass of beer passed by her husband. Even the mother of the bride is in a 'pleasing state of partial inebriation'. The groom, undaunted by the presence of wedding guests, his mother-in-law, and their watchful gaze, makes explicit sexual advances. The bride does not comply, but, as the author writes, the feeble resistance offered is only feigned: she only '*affected* [emphasis mine] to oppose his caresses.' Her own mother remains indifferent to these actions and enjoys herself nearby. The language used is therefore not surprising: the groom is driven by 'savage pleasure'; he does not simply sing, but among his vocalizations one can hear primitive 'howling', 'whistling', 'hallooing'. James' narrative is free from such disparaging undertones.

The intoxication witnessed by Wraxall is hardly unexpected. The nobility encouraged their peasants to drink as much as possible; it sometimes happened that a peasant would not receive his lord's permission to marry unless he bought from his tavern a prescribed quantity of liquor—the wealthier he was, apparently, the more he was obliged to buy (Burszta, 1950: 88). Janicki (2021: 248; trans. mine) quotes a fragment of Wraxall's description to show 'how such a celebration might have looked'. Sometimes lords also hosted similar festivities for their own

entertainment; like Wraxall, they must have believed that celebrating peasants constituted 'a most entertaining exhibition of barbarous mirth'. However, Wraxall describes himself only as a witness to the wedding, not an active participant. He would have probably been shocked to find out that wealthy Polish aristocrats, including Stanisław August himself, sometimes stooped to partaking in such festivities (Burszta, 1950: 109-110).

Other impressions immortalized by Wraxall, traveling in the Kingdom of Poland (from Greater Poland to Lesser Poland) through rural areas between Warsaw and Cracow, are not much different from what other travelers saw. Wraxall was struck with disappointing scenery similar to that witnessed by Harris. He had difficulty finding houses of nobility; what he came across in abundance were 'hovels of peasants [which] are made of the same materials' (wood), and there were 'the Poles, among whom depopulation, oppression, and misery, [which] appear under every possible shape, manifest in their looks and their whole appearance, the utmost poverty' (Wraxall, 1806b: 2). It is also possible that some of the hovels he saw might have belonged to impoverished noblemen, but it is something that Wraxall seems to be unaware of. The noble estate was financially well diversified, and it was not even required to own land to be a nobleman and to enjoy most of the class privileges as long as one was able to prove that his ancestors were noblemen; the membership in the estate was simply based on the inheritance of the status. Consequently, the lives some nobles led were indistinguishable from those of peasants (Maciszewski, 1986: 33; Davies, 2005: 156).

Coxe's (1787: 208) description of rural areas and rustic life in Austrian Poland is the same except for the distribution of population. It is also emphasized that wooden hovels were 'wretched beyond description, [...] full of filth and misery', with 'the appearance of extreme poverty'. However, the land was not dotted with villages as Greater Poland seemed to be in Wraxall's diary; there are few of them (ibid.: 208-209). Later on, their portrayal becomes even worse: 'the peasants were perfect slaves; their habitations and appearance corresponded with their miserable situation; I could scarcely have figured to myself such objects of poverty and misery' (ibid.: 308). All that could be seen inside their houses were bare walls. It is therefore not surprising that he also assessed husbandry as not effective (ibid.). Roaming Lithuania, Coxe is again surprised at how destitute the peasantry was, but at the same time resigned to and capable of living with no material comforts whatsoever, procuring and manufacturing everything from wood (ibid.: 346-347). It is striking how similar the accounts are, all of them highlighting the sole presence of all-wooden hovels and the misery and poverty of their inhabitants without any notable exceptions to the rule, as if there was literally nothing else to be found in the landscape of the Polish countryside.

A different kind of peasant dwelling is presented by Marshall (1773: 238-239) in the description of Lithuania. Those are cone-shaped buildings made chiefly of turf instead of wood, with an opening at the top to let the smoke out. People are said to live with cattle in the same room. It is also to be learned from Marshall that there existed a myth about peasants using ploughs made only of wood for fear of

iron damaging the crops. The author refutes it by claiming he did see ploughs with iron elements as well as all-wooden ones deeper in the country.

What is also noted by the British is the dehumanizing subjection of peasants to their masters. Strikingly, Williams (1777: 638) informs his readers that subjection seemed to have transformed its victims into a 'race of beings of an inferior nature'. What Williams means is an intellectual inferiority, but Lee (1872: 40) also notices apparently physical changes resulting from serfdom: looking worse than cattle, 'they are such mere moving clods of stinking earth. This certainly must be the effect of slavery; there cannot be so monstrous a physical difference betwixt man and man.' Wraxall (1806b: 132) notes that they were tied to the land, sold, and bought together with it, and in fact 'constitute[d] indeed a part of the [landed] estate'. Coxe (1787: 191) pays attention to the same aspect of Polish serfdom, which he believes made the number of peasants the factor that affected most the value of an estate, with them being thus objectified and monetized like 'cattle'. Marshall (1773: 190-191) speaks of them like tools used by a lord for land cultivation, 'who belong to him as much as the trees which grow on the soil', and likens their social position to that of African slaves (ibid.: 243). Williams (1777: 642) goes even further, saying that 'the situation of the negroes in many of our West-India plantations is superior to theirs'. In all of those accounts, the most numerous social stratum is presented as the living property of land-owning nobility. Scandalous as it might be, there is not much exaggeration in likening peasants to a farmstead's inventory or cattle; these comparisons made by the British travelers were not different from the Polish landowning nobles' perception of their serfs (Janicki, 2021: 17-19). Even the apparently most shocking remarks likening the fate of peasants to African slaves in America are not entirely out of place; it was not only British observers for whom the lives of both groups seemed similar. A Polish visitor to the French West Indies expressed the opinion that a black slave's life under a 'reasonable master' was less pitiable than that of a Polish, Hungarian, or Russian peasant. Their lot, he continues, could be easier than among 'a greater part of European peasants' (Węgierski, 1982: 55-56).

Nonetheless, there were groups within the Polish peasantry whose position was definitely better. It seems they were a non-conspicuous minority. Polish historian Tadeusz Korzon (1897: 355) posits that since the noble-owned serfs were most numerous while their position was by far the worst and thus most shocking, foreigners—not too well acquainted with the internal structure of the class—tended to attribute the characteristics of their condition to all the peasants of Poland-Lithuania. The observation applies to British travelers as well. Marshall (1773: 190), for instance, claims that peasants were allowed to work on their small allotments of land three days a week to feed their families, all the remaining time farming their lords' fields: '[T]his is a representation of all estates in Poland in time of peace.' Williams (1777: 639), on the other hand, states that 'every slave or farmer' was burdened with a 5-day corvee, could not leave his allotment, and was obliged to serve his master in whatever he wished. Both accounts are gross generalizations. Setting aside the fact that the extent of corvee varied even among noble-owned

serfs (Korzon 1897: 357) (in fact, it sometimes varied even within the same estate [Ihnatowicz et al., 1979: 265]), not all of them belonged to noblemen, and not all of them worked corvee.

There is, however, one traveler more committed to detail than the rest. This author, whose diary is most nuanced, is Coxe. He distinguishes a few degrees of peasants' subjection in Poland: the least severe, he reports, was the one oppressing descendants of German settlers planted in Poland on German law, paying quit-rents and still then entitled to certain privileges, thanks to which their life was easier and lands were better cultivated. The middle condition, he continues, was the bondage of Polish peasants laboring on Crown lands, who enjoyed the right to file a complaint against an abusive *starost* (note 1). The worst was the lot of those belonging to individual nobles, whose power over their serfs was barely limited (Coxe, 1787: 191-195). It could be argued that Coxe fails to unambiguously assert that the first group mentioned by him was in fact free (Korzon, 1897: 352) (while he heavily implies that they also fell under the category of serfdom) and skips one distinct subgroup (peasants on Church lands), but his classification and gradation are generally correct (ibid.: 354-355, 357).

Coxe and Lind were also aware of recent legislation that was intended to protect villeins' lives by the introduction of the death penalty for nobles guilty of murdering serfs. Up to that point, they only had to pay a fixed fine in the Kingdom if they killed a serf belonging to someone else (Janicki, 2021: 264-267). For Lind (1773: 37), it was a step forward of great civilizational value; the law, he declares, 'restores to him [a serf], at least, the rights of man'. Coxe (1787: 195) attaches as much importance to the problem as Lind does, but, aware of the imperfections of the newly passed law, he is much more pessimistic, believing that serfs were still denied the rights due to them. According to the diarist, the reality remained as grim for peasants as it had been before, because the requirements necessary to convict a noble were so unlikely to be met that the law was unenforceable and thus nugatory for all intents and purposes (note 2). The traveler was right. The law did not even specify who was eligible to file a lawsuit. What is more, to sentence a nobleman to death, the law required the testimonies of two other nobles. It was obviously hardly possible for a peasant to find two such witnesses willing to testify against a member of their estate (Korzon, 1897: 360-361). The case shows a huge mental gap between the British and the Poles. While the former saw the protection of all human lives as an obvious corollary to what they seemed to understand to be inherent human dignity, Coxe (1787: 195) grieved that in Poland there was still a great body of nobility who 'scarcely consider [peasants] as entitled to the common right of humanity'. In England, however, the principle of legal equality had already been established (Marshall, 1956: 50), and both authors probably still remembered the events of 1760, when an aristocrat was lawfully hanged in Tyburn for killing a servant (Lipoński, 2003: 344).

Strangely, almost no one writes what peasants were like as people, i.e., in terms of their personalities. Williams (1777: 638), however, remarks that they were

illiterate religious bigots not attracted to learning, whose obedience to the clergy was unquestioning.

Toil, misery, serfdom, and poverty are the characteristics that the diarists point out unequivocally. What makes Wraxall's diary exceptional is his reiteration of arguments put forward by Polish nobility in defense of the prevailing state of affairs and the disclosure of his own attitude towards it. Wraxall was the only diarist who took it upon himself to present the picture from the point of view of those that the diarists held responsible for the plight of peasants and then to address their reasoning.

> Every peasant, even the meanest, is provided by his lord with two oxen, two horses, and a cottage. In case of fire, the house is rebuilt; and if they die, the beasts are replaced by their owner. A certain fixed portion of their time and labour is appropriated to their Lords, and the remainder they are at liberty to convert to their own profit and purposes. The number of days destined for their masters, varies in different provinces, and on different estates. But in none is the proportion so severe or exorbitant, as not to leave them time sufficient to cultivate their own little land. In some parts of Poland, the peasants often become rich, or at least perfectly easy in their circumstances. Their poverty and wretchedness are not therefore, say these persons, the inevitable and necessary result of their condition. It arises more from their national and characteristic indolence, drunkenness, and want of industry or exertion. Such are the arguments and facts which are here advanced. (Wraxall, 1806b: 132-133)

The passage above is indicative of Wraxall's imperfect knowledge of the social relations in Poland and the true depth of the peasant predicament. Sometimes serfs were due to work for their masters more than six days a week, and the property considered theirs was never truly safe (Ihnatowicz et al., 1979: 267; Janicki, 2021: 144-152). As Coxe (1787: 194), better acquainted with the situation, explains, 'peasants belonging to individuals are at the absolute disposal of their master, and have scarcely any positive security, either for their properties or their lives'. The equipment or cattle received from the lord was not gifted but lent. The nobleman could take it away from a peasant if he wished to and thus precipitate his ruin (Janicki, 2021: 107-110). Apparently not knowing it, Wraxall accepted these explanations at face value, but nonetheless he did not consider them sufficient to justify the social system existing in Poland:

> Admitting however all their [above quoted arguments'] force, they only prove how insufficient is every private or partial emancipation, in order to rouse and animate man, unless accompanied with the solid blessing of civil and political liberty. While the Polish people are altogether strangers to that distinction, they can never rise to their proper rank in society, not be justly accounted other than slaves. (Wraxall, 1806b: 133)

The author agitates here in favor of radical emancipation. What he means is that access to assets is not enough to extricate people from their civilizational backwardness. Emancipation, he says, must be extensive and has to extend to their civil and political rights, which, being treated like farm equipment and unable to rise in social hierarchy, they obviously did not have. Wraxall, perhaps because of the excuses offered by the Poles, is therefore a rigorous proponent of a radical path towards emancipation. Wraxall's opinion seems to be based on the conviction that a lord's aid such as this, if not entirely successful in producing a desirable outcome, only fuels the belief in their incapacity to be free and provides a rationale for their continuing exploitation.

Thanks to the inquiries of William Coxe, it might seem that Wraxall's suppositions were in part verified empirically, and the British public learned of their veracity. Coxe cites an experiment carried out by magnate Andrzej Zamoyski, who, he relates, freed some of his serfs and replaced corvee with rent payment. Having received relevant information from Józef Wybicki (who, in turn, had made research on the results of the reform personally and was invited to Zamoyski's estates by the owner himself [Borkowski, 2017: 123]), Coxe (1787: 196-198) says the reforms resulted in a substantial increase in the birth rate and the revenue generated by the villages, as well as peasants' respect for the law, self-reliance, and a feeling of responsibility for their labor and work environment. The recently bestowed freedom is said to have incentivized them to become more independent and determined to fend for themselves as they became responsible for themselves. Some of these statements are actually put forward in Józef Wybicki's *Listy Patriotyczne* [Patriotic Letters] (1955: 116, 174-176) (note 3). One of the remarks invoked by Coxe, allegedly made by an emancipated peasant about the newly gained incentives motivating them to work diligently, is identical with a remark also quoted by Stanisław Staszic, an admirer of Zamoyski's reforms (cf. Coxe, 1787: 197-198 and Staszic, 1816: 16) (note 4). Unfortunately, referencing Coxe two decades later, George Burnett bluntly contradicts this more than favorable outcome on the authority of the reformer's son—a short article on Burnett's account on the subject and his opinion on peasant reform was published in a journal issued by the Museum of Bieżuń (the Bieżuń estates were the ones that Coxe and Burnett were referring to) (Krzyżewski, 2017). It does not, however, detract from Coxe's reliability as an author. Although Coxe is not entirely correct while saying that peasants were freed (serfdom was diluted but not abolished), the reform seems to have yielded the expected results before the partition: the rent was generally paid on time, the lord did not have to worry about profits, his involvement in the administration was not burdensome, the population grew, trade blossomed, and people were content (Orłowski, 1967: 129-131)—they still lived, obviously, without any political rights, at that time not even advocated by Wybicki (1955: 91-92). Following the partition, however, the troubles began to accumulate. The villages were sacked by the Prussians, left by Zamoyski, and leased. By the 19th century, they generated only a fraction of the profit they were supposed to yield (Orłowski, 1967: 133). Coxe himself seems to have believed that the active participation of a lord in the process of transition

was necessary for success, and so it did not suffice to emancipate the peasants and rest on laurels.

> Prince Stanislaus, nephew to the king of Poland, [...] has enfranchised four villages not far from Warsaw, in which he has not only emancipated the peasants from their slavery, but even condescends to direct their affairs. [...] [H]e explained to me, in the most satisfactory manner, that the grant of freedom was no less advantageous to the lord than to the peasant, provided the former is willing to superintend their conduct for a few years, and to put them in a way of acting for themselves; for such is the ignorance of the generality among the boors, arising from their abject slavery, and so little have they been usually left their own discretion, that few at first are equal to the proper management of a farm. (Coxe, 1787: 199-200)

The author appears to have been convinced that peasants given freedom and left to their own devices would not naturally transition into rational husbandmen because of years of slavery. The proper path to follow, then, should be to ease them into the new role under appropriate guidance.

There is, however, one more account that seems to corroborate the beneficial prospects of emancipation. While travelling through the Russian-Polish borderlands during the tumultuous years of Bar confederation prior to the first partition, Marshall noticed interesting developments. Polish peasants living near the border on the lands then under Russian military control did not seek to stay in Poland but insisted on being allowed to settle in Russia and even rushed to flee whenever an opportunity arose. This, he explains, was understandable on the account of slavery 'in the utmost extent of the word' that they were subjected to at the hands of their Polish lords at the time of peace (Marshall, 1773: 188). He even had the good fortune to inspect a Polish peasant colony in Russia (upon Volga). Marshall's (1773: 154-155, 158) description is as follows: the colony was partly financed by the Empress; emigrant families are said to have been provided with cattle and equipment to start a settlement, planted as tenant-freeholders, and allowed to multiply their belongings in return for rent payments after a five-year exemption period (foreign colonists were indeed granted privileges of this kind in Russia under Empress Catherine [Blume, 1961: 482-483]). The result of this undertaking entirely contradicts the accusation of Polish peasants being suffused with 'national and characteristic indolence, drunkenness, and want of industry or exertion' attributed to the bulk of them by Wraxall's serfdom-defending interlocutors. The whole colony 'pleased me [Marshall] better, than any thing [sic] I had seen in Russia.' The author describes the effects:

> The farms were all under culture, and subdivided by the people themselves. [...] Their farms were in general in good order, and they seemed to be extremely diligent and industrious in their management. Some of them had vastly increased their cattle, keeping as many, as they

> pleased on the adjoining forest: some had more than twenty sheep, ten cows, and six oxen; but they had greatly increased their farms, which the Empress allows, provided the former portion is all in culture. They all seemed to be perfectly happy, being entirely free from all oppression by being on the lands of the crown; and there is no doubt, but they will in time yield a fine revenue, without any severity being employed. (Marshall, 1773: 154-155)

Elsewhere, Marshall also notes that the Poles under the imperial jurisdiction were eager to switch to the system of enclosures, whose benefits they were aware of (ibid.: 193). The recipe for amelioration, Marshall concludes on the basis of his observations in the colony described above, was to grant freedom to peasants and to allow them to work safely in the knowledge of the security of their rights and possessions, which means that greater freedoms had to be granted by those lords' they were directly subordinate to (ibid.: 156). Marshall's beliefs are thus consistent. In his opinion, all it took to improve the well-being of peasants and generate more profits for landowners was to allow for more liberty and security of property among serfs. The change, however, had to be enforced in practice, and the peasants needed to have actual independence. The problem, therefore, lay in the attitude of the lords and their encroachments.

Yet another traveler whose account does not support the idea that indolence was a natural characteristic of a Polish peasant is Williams. While he does admit that they were apathetic, he considers this fault to be a direct consequence of their social and legal standing: 'the wretchedness of their situation makes them indolent and careless about life, as they have reflection enough to perceive that coarse food and raiment are all they can expect in this life' (Williams, 1777: 642). Williams (ibid.) then goes on to explain that as slaves they had no incentive to develop their talents and work efficiently, finally concluding that 'two millions of people, who would work moderately on the cultivation of the ground, and were to enjoy the fruits of their labour, would do as much as six millions of the Poles in their present situation' (ibid.: 649).

One additional facet worth mentioning is Coxe's interest in the impact serfdom had on peasants' self-esteem, depriving them of their human dignity and teaching them self-abasing social manners. Juxtaposing their conduct with Swiss peasants, he claims that such degradation was neither an inherent feature of peasantry nor was it in any way necessary; its development was caused by nothing else but purely external conditioning—brutal servitude they were forcefully subjected to (Coxe, 1787: 347).

What testifies to Coxe's genuine sympathy with peasantry and his revulsion against serfdom is his assessment of Casimir the Great, whom he considers to be one of the greatest monarchs ever. Although he admits that the king had numerous claims to greatness, the one he admires most was his dedication to mitigating the hardships of peasantry, which, Coxe relays, earned him the nickname of 'the king of the peasants'—'perhaps the most noble appellation that ever was bestowed upon a sovereign' (ibid.: 223, 226). Coxe was not the only author to invoke this monarch's concern for the wellbeing of the peasantry and express his admiration.

Casimir the Great was indeed described as such, but, ironically, among the Polish nobility that made use of this title, it was not a compliment (Wilamowski, Wnęk and Zybilkiewicz, 1998: 59), as Williams (1777: 249) is well aware.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The portrayal of peasantry is unequivocal: They were oppressed slaves struggling in humiliating destitution. It could be argued that slavery is not the best term to use to refer to the condition of Polish peasants. Unlike chattel slaves, Polish serfs were not auctioned off to the highest bidders at marketplaces, and, at least in theory, there were customs that they could cite in their defense against the encroachments of their masters. Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that they were gifted or even sold individually (separately from their farmsteads), but such transactions seem to have been rare or disguised as donations (Leszczyński, 2020: 157-160; Janicki, 2021: 272). In Russia, for contrast, they were sold openly at markets (Szpoper, 2013: 30), which may explain why they are never mentioned by the travelers as victims of human trafficking, although it is emphasized that they were in fact farmstead tools bought and sold together with the land. As noted, peasants living in noble private domains were largely not even protected by public law, so the associations between slavery and serfdom in Poland are not groundless.

The authors' strong reactions and strident language may be explained by the fact that serfdom in England had been nonexistent for two centuries, since the reign of Elisabeth I (Lyon, 2016: 227). What is more, although serfdom was by no means a phenomenon confined to eastern Europe, in France and Germany (European countries the British were more familiar with), it was less severe. In general, the further west the British cast their gaze, the more diluted serfdom was. Unlike in Poland, it was common there for serfs to be able to appeal to state authorities if a conflict arose between them and landowners (Leszczyński, 2020: 235). Thus, it cannot be surprising that the social relations in Poland-Lithuania (or Russia) seemed particularly shocking and inspired such a strident language. On the other hand, even Britain was not without sin. Scottish miners continued in serfdom up until 1799 (Watson, 1985: 516), and there were about ten to fifteen thousand black chattel slaves residing in England, who were manumitted only in 1772 thanks to Lord Mansfield's court ruling (and even this date is controversial; some scholars believe that the ruling did not abolish slavery but simply limited the power of an owner over his slave) (Cotter, 1994: n. p.).

The critical attitudes presented by the authors seem to have two different sources. First, they were motivated by humanitarian reflections: a peasant was seen as a person whose sheer human dignity was violated by the severity of his serfdom. Secondly, such an organization of labor was believed to be economically inefficient, depriving an enserfed peasant of any incentive to apply himself to his work, thus in fact impoverishing the whole country. Social relations such as those were thought of as anachronistic vestiges of feudalism.

NOTES

Note 1. A starost was a royal official at the local level (a representative of the government), a holder of lands comprising the territory of the *starostwo* assigned to him. *Starostwa* (plural) were Crown lands supposed to be granted for life as a reward (source of income) for distinguished service or, after 1774, leased for fifty years. Starosts administered the lands and collected the money generated by them, paying only a tax to the budget (Gloger, 1978: 272-273; Augustyniak, 2015: 91-92).

Note 2. The problems pointed out by Coxe are also emphasized by Wybicki (1955: 185-186), who most likely inspired Coxe's criticism. The inefficiency of the law was not difficult to predict because a similar regulation, without much effect, had already been introduced in Lithuania (Korzon, 1897: 358-361).

Note 3. Coxe quotes the exact same numbers relating to the birth rate as Wybicki in his *Listy patriotyczne* [Patriotic Letters], with one exception. In the last period mentioned, Coxe gives the number of people born 585, while Wybicki gives 535. This does not affect his line of reasoning, though, and it is also likely that it might have been an editor's mistake or a typo. In his narrative, Coxe, informed by 'a person who has visited the abbe's estate at Pawlowo', also mentions the examples of successful emancipation carried out by Joachim Chreptowicz and abbe Paweł K. Brzostowski; again, the informant, now not revealed by name, seems to be Wybicki. Stanisław Poniatowski's (nephew to the king) reforms (as the diarist says, inspired by the English example) are not overlooked either (cf. Coxe, 1787: 198-199 and Wybicki, 1955: 178-180). Wybicki himself was aware of Coxe's references to his publication. In his memoirs, Wybicki (1881: 106) says that an 'Englishman Kok [sic.]' used his remarks on the peasantry from *Listy* in his travelogue. Unfortunately, the misspelled surname is the only clue concerning the identity of the traveler. According to Opałek (1955: cxiv), the mysterious Kok was James Cook, but, in the light of the information above, it seems Wybicki meant William Coxe.

Note 4. Each publication in Staszic's *Dzieła* [Works] has a separate pagination.

REFERENCES

Augustyniak, U. (2015) *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH.

Blume, J. (1961) *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Borkowski, R. (2017) Ojciec, Przyjaciel, Nauczyciel: kim dla Józefa Wybickiego Był Andrzej Zamoyski [A Father, Friend, Teacher: what Andrzej Zamoyski was to Józef Wybicki]. *Bieżuńskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, 31: 117-126.

Burszta, J. (1950) *Wieś i Karczma: rola Karczmy w Życiu Wsi Pańszczyźnianej* [Village and Tavern: the role of a tavern in the life of a corvee-based village community]. Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza.

Connor, B. (1698) *The History of Poland in several Letters to Persons of Quality*, vol. 2. London: Dan Brown.

Cotter, W. R. (1994) The Somerset Case and the Abolition of Slavery in England. *History*, vol. 79 (255): 31-56.

Davies, N. (2005) *God's Playground: a history of Poland*, vol. 1. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Frycz Modrzewski, A. (2003) *O Poprawie Rzeczypospolitej* [On the Improvement of the Commonwealth]. Piotrków Trybunalski: Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie Filii Akademii Świętokrzyskiej.

Gloger, Z. (1978) *Encyklopedia Staropolska Ilustrowana* [An illustrated Old-Polish Encyclopedia], vol. 4. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

Ihnatowicz, I., Mączak, A. and Zientara, B. (1979) *Społeczeństwo Polskie od X do XX Wieku* [The Polish Society from the 10th to the 20th Century]. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza.

Janicki, K. (2021) *Pańszczyzna: Prawdziwa Historia Polskiego Niewolnictwa* [Corvee: a true history of Polish slavery]. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.

Jasnowski, J. (n.d.) *Poland in the Eyes of the Western Travellers during the Period of Grand Tour (1550-1850)*. København: Instytut Polsko-Skandynawski.

Korzon, T. (1897) *Wewnętrzne Dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta, 1764-1794* [Internal History of Poland during the Reign of Stanisław August, 1764-1794], vol. 1. Kraków: Księgarnia L. Zwolińskiego i S-ki.

Kot, S. (2017) *Rzeczpospolita Polska w Literaturze Politycznej Zachodu* [The Commonwealth of Poland in the political writing of the West]. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR.

Krzyżewski, W. (2017) Opinia George'a Burnetta o Oczynszowaniu Chłopów przez Andrzeja Zamoyskiego [George Burnett's Opinion on Peasant Rentification carried out by Andrzej Zamoyski]. *Bieżuńskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, 31: 37-42.

Lee, C. (1872) *The Lee Papers*, vol. 1. New York: New York Historical Society.

Leszczyński, A. (2020) *Ludowa Historia Polski* [People's History of Poland]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WAB.

Libiszowska, Z. (1960) Gospodarstwo Wiejskie w Polsce w XVII Wieku w Opinii Cudzoziemców [A Village Farmstead in 17th Century Poland in the Opinion of Foreigners]. *Kwartalnik historii kultury materialnej*, 8 (3): 277-298.

Lipoński, W. (2003) *Dzieje Kultury Brytyjskiej* [History of British Culture]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Lyon, A. (2016) *Constitutional History of the UK*. Padstow: Routledge.

Maciszewski, J. (1986) *Szlachta Polska i jej Państwo* [Polish Nobility and its State]. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

Maroń, G. (2012) Filozofia Prawa Ks. Piotra Skargi [Piotr Skarga's Philosophy of Law]. *Ius Novum*, 2: 114-130.

Marshall, D. (1956) *English People in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Longman, Greens and Co.

Michalski, J. (1984) Sejm w Czasach Panowania Stanisława Augusta [The Diet during the Reign of Stanisław August]. In J. Michalski (ed.) *Historia Sejmu Polskiego* [The History of the Polish Diet] (pp. 350-419). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydanictwo Naukowe.

Opałek, K. (1995), Wstęp [Introduction]. In K. Opałek (ed.) and J. Wybicki *Listy Patriotyczne* [Patriotic Letters] (pp. iii-cxxii). Wrocław: Zakład im. Ossolińskich.

Orłowski, R. (1967) Oczynszowanie W*łościan w* Dobrach Andrzeja Zamojskiego [Peasant Rentification in Andrzej Zamojski's Estates]. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, 1 (7): 119-140.

Skrzetuski, W. (1784) *Prawo Polityczne Narodu Polskiego* [The Political Law of the Polish Nation], vol. 2. Warszawa: Scholarum Piarum.

Staszic, S. (1816) Pochwała Andrzeja Zamoyskiego [Praise for Andrzej Zamoyski]. In *Dzieła Stanisława Staszica* [Works by Stanisław Staszic] vol. 4 (pp. 1-46). Warszawa: Drukarnia Rządowa.

Szpoper, D. (2013) Kwestia Chłopska w Cesarstwie Rosyjskim oraz w Królestwie Polskim w Dobie Panowania Aleksandra I [The Peasant Problem in the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Poland during the Reign of Alexander I]. In L. Mażewski (ed.) *System Polityczny, Prawo, Konstytucja i Ustrój Królestwa Polskiego 1815-1830* [The Political System, Law and Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland 1815-1830] (pp. 27-52). Radzymin: Wydawnictwo von Boroviecky.

Watson, J. S. (1985) *The Reign of George III*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Węgierski, T. K. (1982) Listy do Przyjaciółki w Paryżu, Pisane w Formie Dziennia Podczas Podróży do Martyniki w r. 1783 [Letters to a Friend in Paris, written in a Form of a Diary during a Journey to Martinique in 1783]. In W. Kula (ed.) *Ameryka Łacińska w Relacjach Polaków* [Latin America in Polish Travel Accounts] (pp. 49-62). Warszawa: Interpress.

Wilamowski, M., Wnęk, K. and Zybilkiewicz, L. A. (1998) *Leksykon Polskich Powiedzeń Historycznych* [A Lexicon of Polish Historical Proverbs]. Kraków: ZNAK.

Wybicki, J. (1881) *Pamiętniki Józefa Wybickiego* [Józef Wybicki's Memoirs]. Lwów: Księgarnia Gubrynowicza i Schmidta.

Wybicki, J. (1955) *Listy Patriotyczne* [Patriotic Letters], K. Opałek (ed.). Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Zins, H. (2002) *Polska w Oczach Anglików XIV-XVI Wiek* [Poland in the Eyes of Englishmen, 14th-16th centuries]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

TEXTS ANALYZED

Coxe, W. (1787) *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark. Interspersed with Historical Relations and Political Inquiries,* vol. 1. London: T. Cadell.

Harris, J. (1844) *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury, containing an Account of his Missions at the Court of Madrid, to Frederick the Great, Catherine the Second, and at the Hague; and of his Special Missions to Berlin, Brunswick, and the French Republic,* vol. 1, [J. H. Harris] the third Earl of Malmesbury (ed.). London: Richard Bentley.

James, J. T. (1817) *Journal of a Tour in Germany, Sweden, Russia, Poland, during the Years 1813 and 1814*, vol. 2. London: John Murray.

[Lind, J.] (1773) *Letters concerning the present State of Poland. With an Appendix containing the Manifestoes of the Courts of Vienna, Petersburgh, and Berlin. And other authentic Papers*. London: T. Payne.

Marshall, J. (1773) *Travels through Holland, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lapland, Russia, the Ukraine, and Poland, in the Years 1768, 1769, and 1770. In which is particularly minuted, the present State of those Countries, respecting their*

Agriculture, Population, Manufactures, Commerce, the Arts, and useful Undertakings, vol. 3. London: J. Almon.

Williams, J. (1777) *The Rise, Progress, and present State of the Northern Governments; viz. the United Provinces, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, and Poland,* vol. 2. London: T. Becket.

Wraxall, N. W. (1806a) *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna, in the Years, 1777, 1778, and 1779,* vol. 1. London: T. Cadell, and W. Davies.

Wraxall, N. W. (1806b) *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna, in the Years, 1777, 1778, and 1779,* vol. 2. London: T. Cadell, and W. Davies.

Łukasz Nieroda (MA in English, PhD in literature) currently works at the Institute of Philology at Stanisław Staszic State University of Applied Sciences in Piła. His research interests include British history and travel literature.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3455-0129

Email: lukasz.nieroda@gmail.com

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 86–107
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.06 © University of Latvia, 2024

IMPOLITENESS IN TWITTER DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF REPLIES TO DONALD TRUMP AND GRETA THUNBERG

ESMAEEL ALI SALIMI
and
SEYED MOHAMMADREZA MORTAZAVI
Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

Abstract. Twitter (X) is a popular social media platform that allows users to express their opinions and interact on various topics, including politics. However, Twitter can provide a space for impolite and aggressive language use, especially when the issues are controversial or polarizing. This study analyzes the replies to two controversial and similar tweets, namely Donald Trump's tweet to Greta Thunberg and Greta Thunberg's tweet to Donald Trump. Ninety-seven tweets that impolitely took issue with the original tweets were collected and coded for their moral order themes and pragmatic functions. Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework was consulted as a threshold to include or exclude reply tweets in the data analysis. The results show that the replies invoked moral order expectations in three overarching categories in the responses to both parties: *age-appropriate behavior, respect and manners,* and *concern for the common good*. As far as the pragmatic functions were concerned, *criticism of personal characteristics, criticism of supporters, criticism of relatives* (to Trump only), *praise of the opposing party, directing, mockery,* and *ideology denial* (to Thunberg only) were performed. The study discusses how users took offense through language in a highly polarized political context.

Keywords: moral order, pragmatic function, strategies, impoliteness, Twitter, offense

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have challenged conventional ways of communicating about politics and prominent mediums in the contemporary world in the past ten years (Alizadeh Afrouzi, 2021). Twitter is one of the most widely used social media platforms for political discussions, which has enabled political actors to engage in meaningful political exchanges and mobilize the public (Jaidka, Zhou and Lelkes, 2019: 345). However, Twitter can also be a provocative and hostile environment,

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

where impoliteness and incivility (see Note 1) can arise (Terkouraf et al., 2018: 43). Moreover, when the audience is not physically present, anyone can read a digital artifact on social media and react to it in various ways.

One of the most controversial and influential political figures on Twitter is Donald Trump, the former president of the United States. 'What FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd U.S. president] was to radio and JFK [John F. Kennedy, 35th U.S. president] to television, Trump is to Twitter' (Online 1). Donald Trump can also confirm this statement, as he wrote in a tweet: 'Thanks—many are saying I'm the best 140-character writer in the world' (Trump. D. J., 2012). The media and academic attention to his Twitter account rose further after his 2016 presidential campaign. Trump has been known for his unconventional use of Twitter, which has attracted much media and academic attention (cf., e.g., Ott, 2017; Clarke and Grieve, 2019; Ross and Caldwell, 2020; Wells et al., 2020; Nordensvard and Ketola, 2021).

This paper examines how some Twitter users reacted to one of Donald Trump's (DT) tweets mockingly addressing Greta Thunberg (GT), a 16-year-old climate activist, and another by GT mockingly addressing DT, both of which seem to have provoked some of the replies on both fronts.

On December 12, 2019, DT responded to a tweet from someone who had applauded GT for being called Time's Person of the Year (Online 1). This happened after DT's administration's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement soon after he took over the office, which sparked many criticisms. Moreover, at the United Nations summit on climate change in 2019, GT censured the world leaders for their inadequate efforts to combat global warming by saying, 'How dare you?' (Online 2) and calling it a 'betrayal' of the world's youth. DT's tweet reads:

[1] So ridiculous. Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old-fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill! (Trump. D. J., 2019)

GT did not respond to DT's tweet directly. Still, she changed her Twitter bio to read: 'a teenager working on her anger management problem' and 'currently chilling and watching a good old-fashioned movie with a friend'. In the aftermath of that tweet, many Twitter users and activists reacted to it and described it as 'pathetic, immature, bitter, and impulsive,' etc. Further, almost a week before that, on December 5, 2019, DT's wife and the then First Lady of the United States, Melania Trump, had criticized Stanford Law Professor Pamela Karlan for making a remark about Melania and Donald's 13-year-old son, Barron, during her impeachment hearing testimony (Ross, 2019: paras. 1-5). She had initially tweeted:

[2] A minor child deserves privacy and should be kept out of politics (Trump. M., 2019).

After DT's tweet, many called Melania 'hypocritical' in their replies to DT's tweet. Almost a year later, on November 5, 2020, the US presidential election was still undecided, as several states were still counting the votes. DT, trailing behind his

opponent Joe Biden, tweeted a demand to 'STOP THE COUNT!' (Online 3). He claimed there was 'widespread fraud' and 'corruption' in the election process (ibid.). GT seized this opportunity to throw DT's words back at him. She tweeted:

> [3] So ridiculous. Donald must work on his Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Donald, Chill! (Thunberg, 2020)

She tweeted this, most possibly as a way of recycling DT's mockery of her and turning it against him. She also used the same punctuation and capitalization as DT did in his original tweet. In some of the replies to her tweet, some took offense and called it 'outraged,' 'rude,' 'crude,' and 'grumpy.' This study approaches this topic from the perspective of pragmatics, specifically impoliteness theory and moral order analysis. It is argued that DT and GT's tweets violated the respondents' expectations about how they should behave on social media and treat others. The way respondents performed various instances of impoliteness to challenge DT and GT's faces is also analyzed.

Impoliteness has been widely studied in various contexts and genres (e.g., Saz-Rubio, 2023). However, there is still a need for more empirical research on how impoliteness is perceived and responded to by different audiences and stakeholders (Haugh, Kádár, and Márquez Reiter, 2022: 118-120). In particular, there is a gap in the literature on how impoliteness is manifested and negotiated in political discourse on social media platforms such as Twitter, where politicians can directly interact with the public and vice versa. As a microblogging platform, Twitter introduces unique elements that can significantly impact impoliteness dynamics. The constraints of a 280-character limit, the rapid pace of interactions, and the potential for content to go viral within seconds all contribute to an environment where communication is often succinct, direct, and immediate. This brevity can sometimes lead to bluntness and sharpness in responses, creating an atmosphere where impoliteness may manifest differently than in more traditional, long-form communication. Furthermore, Twitter's open and public nature means that political figures and the general public can engage in direct exchanges. This immediacy and accessibility may intensify the emotional and moral responses to political statements and actions, influencing the deployment of (im)politeness strategies.

Additionally, Twitter's use of hashtags, mentions, and retweets provides users with tools to amplify their messages and reach broader audiences. This amplification feature can have implications for impoliteness, as it may influence the strategic choice of language and rhetoric.

Moreover, currently, little research explores how impoliteness is related to moral order judgments, i.e., how people evaluate others' behavior based on their moral norms and values (Parvaresh and Tayebi, 2018: 105; Tayebi, 2016: 15). Therefore, this study contributes to filling these gaps by analyzing a case of impoliteness (in replies to tweets 1 and 3) in a Twitter discourse from both an interactional and a moral order perspective.

To achieve our aim, we address the following research questions: (1) What moral order expectations are explicated or implicated by the replies?; and (2) What pragmatic functions do the replies perform to respond to DT's tweet?

One topic that has garnered academic interest among scholars is the reactions of politicians, including DT, to climate change and the activism of climate change activists (Nordensvard and Ketola, 2021: 1). However, very little attention has been paid to how the public reacted to his tweets that were deemed impolite or inappropriate. Thus, this study attempts to unveil part of this truth that occurred on Twitter and unearth the moral features explicated and the pragmatic functions performed. Notably, this study does not attempt to exonerate or blame any parties; rather, it attempts to unveil the characteristics of witnesses' responses to an impolite tweet.

IMPOLITENESS AND MORAL ORDER

This section briefly reviews the relevant literature on impoliteness theory and moral order analysis and how they can be applied to studying political discourse on Twitter.

1 IMPOLITENESS

Impoliteness has been gaining popularity in research among scholars (Şekerci, 2023: 125). Impoliteness can be defined as 'the use of communicative strategies that are intended or perceived to attack face or increase face loss' (Culpeper, 2011: 23). Face is the public self-image a person claims in an interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). Impoliteness can be intentional or unintentional, depending on whether the speaker aims to cause face damage. It can also be direct or indirect, depending on whether the face attack is explicit or implicit. 'Impoliteness is sustained by expectations, desires, and beliefs about social organization' (Culpeper, 2011: 254).

Impoliteness can be analyzed at different levels of interactional structure, such as speech acts, super-strategies (Culpeper, 2005: 41-42), or their pragmatic functions (e.g., Matley, 2018; Tayebi and Parvaresh, 2014; Salimi and Mortazavi, 2023). According to Culpeper (2005: 41-42), super-strategies are the general ways of implementing impoliteness, such as bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness. However, along with the discursive turn in (im)politeness research, Culpeper re-engineered his framework to include conventional impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness (2011), to which this study has resorted in the analysis.

2 MORAL ORDER

Moral order is a concept that refers to the shared norms and values that regulate the conduct of individuals and groups in a society. It is based on natural law, a set of universal principles governing human behavior and morality. In other words,

it is a socially constructed set of expectations that guide our sense of right and wrong, good and bad. The moral order is reflected in a patterned set of verbal and non-verbal actions that indicate our alignment or disalignment with certain moral values and norms (Domenici and Littlejohn, 2006). Moral order is implicit in most interactions but can become explicit when a transgression violates some expectations. According to the sociological perspective, morality is a characteristic of social groups rather than individuals: *should* and *ought* are calls to behave in certain ways that originate from society, not the individual (Dant, 2012: 44).

Be that as it may, moral order is not a fixed or static phenomenon but rather a dynamic and contested one. Different societies and cultures may have other moral orders, and even within the same community, there may be conflicts and challenges to the dominant moral order. For example, the rise of social media and digital communication has created new opportunities and dilemmas for moral expression and judgment, especially concerning political discourse and public figures. Moral order can be related to impoliteness in two ways: first, impoliteness can be seen as a form of moral transgression that breaches some moral norms of politeness or civility; and second, impoliteness can be seen as a form of moral judgment that evaluates others' behavior based on moral standards (Haugh, 2007: 308). In both cases, impoliteness can trigger moral talk or moralizing discourse that explicates or implies the moral order expectations relevant to the interaction (Bergmann, 1998: 279-288). For example, in a study, it was found that participants were offended as some of their expectancies were not met, namely, interpersonal expectations, deference entitlement, reciprocity, and ritual-based expectations (Tayebi, 2016). Another study analyzed the comments left on the official Facebook page of an actress who had posted a nude photograph of herself and found the moral order expectations of having prudency, demonstrating awareness of, and avoiding causing, emotional discomfort, upholding one's honor, having decency, and demonstrating positive jealousy (Parvaresh and Tayebi, 2018).

3 TWITTER AND IMPOLITENESS

Twitter-based impoliteness in politics needs more attention for several reasons. First, the availability of online data from multiple commentators on Twitter means that the same event can be interpreted differently by others (Terkourafi, 2019: 6). Second, impoliteness and incivility can arise when political issues are at stake (cf., e.g., Terkourafi et al., 2018).

The recent literature on impoliteness has emphasized online communication, especially Twitter, thanks to its text-based medium, which provides researchers with enough verbal evidence to investigate impolite occurrences (Oz et al., 2018). For instance, Hemphill, Otterbacher, and Shapiro (2013: 877) checked 380 members of Congress' Twitter accounts and found that they use Twitter to advertise their political positions. Twitter has also empowered individual users to address their representatives directly and publicly (Theocharis, Barberá, Fazekas and Popa, 2020: 2). In their study, Theocharis et al. (2020: 1) used tweets that mentioned

the members of Congress, indicating 18 percent incivility in the tweets that spiked when controversial policy debates and events occurred. In another study, 500 tweet events addressed Spanish and English Prime Ministers. They found that English respondents used sarcasm and implicated impoliteness to attack the negative face of the Prime Minister, while Spanish respondents used insults and rectification to attack the positive face of the Prime Minister (Saz-Rubio, 2023).

Ott (2017: 60) takes the discussion further and argues that 'Twitter ultimately trains us to devalue others, thereby cultivating mean and malicious discourse.' This feature on Twitter, Ott argues, 'breeds dark, degrading, and dehumanizing discourse; it breeds vitriol and violence; in short, it breeds Donald Trump' (ibid.: 62). Social media has been integral to DT's campaign, as proven in many studies (Clarke and Grieve, 2019: 1). DT's Twitter account has been the recipient of multiple studies (e.g., Ott, 2017; Clarke and Grieve, 2019; Ross and Caldwell, 2020; Wells et al., 2020; Nordensvard and Ketola, 2021). For example, Clarke and Grieve (2019: 1-3) studied how DT's style of tweeting shifted from 2009 to 2018 due to his communicative goals. These stylistic patterns represented the degree of conversational, campaigning, engaged, and advisory-style discourse (ibid.: 1). Ross and Caldwell (2020: 12-13) conducted an appraisal study of DT's tweets from the Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective and concluded that he uses appraisal in various ways to undermine and attack his opponents.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data for this study are described.

1 DATA COLLECTION

Twitter's prominence as one of the most popular and extensively utilized social media platforms for political discourse cannot be overstated, especially for politicians. Therefore, we chose Twitter as the data source for this study, as we were interested in how Twitter users expressed their offense-taking and carried out pragmatic functions of impoliteness and moral judgment in response to controversial and provocative tweets by DT and GT.

The study focused on the tweets that came in reply to two original tweets: one by DT telling GT to 'chill' on December 12, 2019, and another by GT telling DT to 'chill' on November 5, 2020. These tweets were selected because they were similar in content and tone, and they triggered a lot of reactions from Twitter users and activists who disapproved or approved of their mocking of each other.

The impolite replies that had taken offense at the original tweets were collected and analyzed using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. Notably, the tweets that did not impolitely address the original tweets, such as those that agreed with them, praised them, or were off-topic, were excluded. Culpeper's

framework on impoliteness (2011) was used to filter out those tweets that were not impolite. In this framework, conventionalized impoliteness refers to explicitly rude and offensive behaviors, such as insults, threats, curses, dismissals, etc. Implicational impoliteness refers to implicitly rude and offensive behaviors, such as sarcasm, innuendo, digs, etc. Implicational impoliteness can be divided into three subtypes: form-driven, convention-driven, and context-driven. Form-driven impoliteness occurs when a behavior's surface form or semantic content is marked and suggests a negative meaning. Convention-driven impoliteness occurs when there is a mismatch between the context projected by behavior and the context of use (external mismatch) or between different parts of the behavior (internal mismatch). Context-driven impoliteness occurs when an unmarked or absent behavior mismatches the context and violates the expectations of the interlocutors. Table 1 summarizes the model of impoliteness proposed by Culpeper.
Due to the difference in the numbers of followers between GT (5.3 million as of November 6, 2023) and DT (87.4 million as of November 6, 2023), DT received significantly more replies than GT. Therefore, the data collection process differed slightly for each line of replies. For the replies to DT, the responses were collected and analyzed simultaneously until saturation was reached in themes, which was 72 tweets. Saturation is a state in qualitative research where no new codes or themes emerge from the data, indicating that the sample size is adequate for the research question (Guest et al., 2006: 59). Culpeper's impoliteness framework was applied

Table 1 **Culpeper's (2011) framework on impoliteness**

Impoliteness main type	Impoliteness formulae type		Example
Conventional impoliteness formulae	Insults	Personalized negative vocatives	'You f*** moron'
		Personalized negative assertions	'You are such a hypocrite.'
		Personalized negative references	'your little hands'
		Personalized third-person negative references	'She's a nutzo.'
	Pointed criticisms/complaints		'that is total crap.'
	Unpalatable questions or presuppositions		'– why do you make my life impossible?'
	Condescension		'that's childish.'
	Message enforcers		'– do you understand [me]? (tag)'
	Dismissals		'get lost'
	Silencers		'Shut your stinking mouth.'
	Threats		'I'm gonna straighten you out.'
	Negative expressives		'Damn you.'
Implicational impoliteness	Form-driven		—
	Convention-driven		—
	Context-driven		—

to filter out the irrelevant tweets. For the replies to GT, all the responses were checked, and those that did not take offense and offensively addressed her using Culpeper's impoliteness framework were filtered out. As a result, 35 tweets were obtained. It was acknowledged that the number of tweets for GT was almost half as many as those for DT. However, this can be justified, as the aim was to derive common categories of moral order expectations and pragmatic functions for both lines of replies rather than separate ones. Therefore, the quantity in number is not considered an issue in a qualitative study, as no statistics were dealt with. Additionally, the number is beyond the researchers' control, as GT has received fewer replies.

2 DATA ANALYSIS

For the first research question, the researchers coded the parts of the tweets that explicitly stated or implied what they construed as inappropriate in GT and DT's tweets. As mentioned earlier, some of the tweets might not have taken offense at GT or DT's tweets but performed an impolite act in their responses. It was also identified how they explicated or implicated their moral order expectations, i.e., how they expressed their sense of right and wrong, good and bad, based on their moral values and norms. Open coding was utilized to generate initial codes from each line of replies, such as anger management (GT), respect for autistic people (DT), concern for climate change (DT), refrainment of attention seeking (GT), etc. Then, axial coding was conducted to group these codes into broader common categories, such as respect and manners.

For the second research question, the researchers coded and labeled the pragmatic functions that the users fulfilled to respond to DT's tweet in an impolite or offensive way. The 'pragmatic functions' label was adopted following Matley (2018) and Tayebi (2014). Pragmatic functions can go beyond the literal or conventional meanings of words and sentences and depend on context, situation, intention, expectation, etc. For example, when a speaker says, 'It's cold in here,' they may have the pragmatic function of requesting the hearer to close the window or turn on the heater, even though they are not explicitly saying so. Pragmatic functions are general and can include one or several speech acts that serve a common communicative goal. For example, when a respondent criticizes DT or GT, they may perform several speech acts, such as asserting, expressing opinions, questioning motives, etc. Still, together, they have the pragmatic function of criticizing personal characteristics.

An iterative process of coding and analysis was followed, where the codes and categories were constantly compared and refined. Moreover, MAXQDA's features were used to visualize and explore the data in different ways, such as using word clouds, code matrices, etc.

Several strategies were adopted to ensure the credibility and dependability of the study's findings. Two coders (the authors) independently coded a sample of 20 tweets from each line of tweets using MAXQDA's inter-coder agreement

function. Any discrepancies or disagreements were discussed and resolved by revising the coding scheme or the coding process during joint coding sessions until a consensus was reached on all the coded segments.

RESULTS

To answer the first research question, the section below discusses the explicit or implicit labels the participants gave to show that their moral order expectations have been violated. To answer the second research question, we discuss the general pragmatic functions of the tweets and their instances, followed by sample extracts from the tweets.

1 APPEALING TO MORAL ORDER

Some have taken issue with the tweets of both parties and labeled them as 'insulting', 'name-calling', 'using children', 'bringing children to politics' for DT, and 'calling a president by first name (while she should not)', 'yelling', 'grumpiness', and 'immaturity' for GT. These features constitute a face-threat to both parties involved because they can damage both DT's and GT's public images and identities. Therefore, it can be said that appealing to moral order shows how the Twitter face-threat witnesses' expectations are violated and how they have clarified their perceived norms. Some replies have used the word 'yelling' for both parties, which seems to be something that they might have considered while reading the tweets. To them, these features, such as outraging and yelling, are breaches of moral and societal norms and should be avoided. Table 2 shows how individuals might expect DT and GT to behave in their tweets based on the analysis of the reply tweets.

Table 2 **Moral order expectations of online participants**

Moral order expectations from both GT and DT	Subcategories for DT and GT	Moral order expectations
Age-appropriate behavior	Refrainment from politics (GT*) Education prioritization (GT) Responsible adult behavior (DT**)	This expectation stems from the belief in age-specific societal roles, responsibilities, and competencies.
Respect and manners	Respect for girls and children (DT) Anger management (GT) Respect for autistic people (DT)	This expectation is based on the principle of treating all people with dignity and consideration.
Concern for the common good	Concern for climate change (DT) Refrainment from attention seeking (GT)	This expectation assumes people should prioritize the world's well-being over their interests.

* (GT) directed at Greta Thunberg
** (DT) directed at Donald Trump

1.1 AGE-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

This expectation is based on the assumption that different age groups have different roles, responsibilities, and competencies in society and that they should act accordingly. For example, some of the replies to GT's tweet suggest that she should behave like a 'typical teenager' who focuses on school, friends, and entertainment rather than politics, activism, or climate change. They also imply that she should defer to the authority and expertise of adults, especially the president, and not address him by his first name or criticize him publicly. On the other hand, some of the replies to DT's tweet seem to suggest that he should behave like a mature and responsible adult who is supposed to be 'respectful,' 'rational,' and 'dignified,' rather than 'childish,' 'impulsive,' and 'petty.'

1.2 RESPECT AND MANNERS

This expectation is based on the principle that all human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and consideration, regardless of their differences or disagreements. For example, some of the replies to GT's tweet have called her 'grumpy' with an 'anger management' problem, suggesting that she should work on her own behavior rather than blaming others. One tweet that replied to GT reads, 'he's always much calmer than you ever have been.' Another reply to GT reads, 'you need to learn some manners.' On the other hand, replies to DT seemed to expect him, as the President of the United States, to uphold this principle and to be a role model for others. For example, one reply suggested that DT 'should be ashamed of [his] very angry and obviously biased public pandering' by 'using a child to do it.' Some tweets also imply that he should not attack or mock a minor, especially a girl with Asperger syndrome, and that he should accept his defeat (for not being named Time's Person of the Year) gracefully and peacefully.

1.3 CONCERN FOR THE COMMON GOOD

This expectation is based on the idea that individuals or groups should act in ways that benefit the well-being of the larger society rather than their own interests. For example, some of the replies to GT's tweet appeared to express concern regarding her attempt to seek 'attention' from the public and win a 'Nobel prize' at any cost. For example, one tweet claimed that her supporters are those countries that pay no attention to climate change and where 'the pollution goes unchecked.' On the other hand, it appears that some tweets suggest that DT's policies or behavior pose threats to the common good, such as 'denialism', 'inaction', or 'destruction'. For example, one tweet reads, 'Just think how passionate you are about money and winning.'

2 PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS PERFORMED IN THE REPLIES

Table 3 shows the pragmatic functions of the tweets that have taken offense at DT and GT's tweets. It should be noted that the replies to GT are separate from the responses to DT and are not necessarily made by the same respondents.

Table 3 **The general pragmatic functions of the replies to the original tweet**

Pragmatic function	Examples* in replies to Trump	Examples* in replies to Thunberg
1. *Criticism of personal characteristics*	'rape', 'failed political career', 'old age', 'financial gains', 'embarrassment and disgrace', 'psychological issues', 'miserable', 'absolute ghoul', 'lack of maturity'	'anger', 'bitter all the time' 'aggressive' 'a brat', 'crude', 'rude', 'outraged' 'yelling', 'grumpy'
2. *Criticism of supporters*	'lying', 'smoke and mirrors' 'ignoring'	'… since she is Greta you have to applaud what she says' 'You and your backers have to drop your attempts at the Nobel Prize.' 'idiots made her popular.'
3. *Criticism of relatives (DT)*	'using children', 'hypocrisy', 'unworthy of the title'	—
4. *Praise of the opposing party*	'this young girl beats out YOU for the cover of Time magazine.' 'She's 17 and doing what she can to save the planet', '@ GretaThunberg outdoes Trump every time she speaks—and the world is better for it.'	'he's [Donald Trump] always much calmer than you ever have been.'
5. *Directing*	'Stop. She's a child. Please stop.' 'Lay off the kids.'	'Chill Greta, chill!! Go to school and let politics for the adults!' 'Stay quiet, greta'
6. *Mockery*	'What does this man say?' (Smiley face, smiley face)' 'Your entire, miserable life' 'Fartypants'	'LOL what are you? 16? U tweet like a teenager. Oh, wait...' 'This coming from a very angry looking little girl yelling 'How dare you' shall I find the pics?'
7. *Ideology denial (GT)*	—	'There is no climate change made by people honey... Stop talking.'

* in some categories, there are samples from more than one tweet.

There are seven general pragmatic functions found in the tweets. They are briefly elaborated and exemplified in the following sections.

2.1 CRITICISM OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The first pragmatic function includes those replies that attacked GT and DT's personal characteristics. They believed that DT and GT possess the features mentioned in Table 3, with the possible implication that DT does not occupy the moral high ground to address GT in such a way. The same is true in the other lines of replies to GT. For example, tweet [4] characterizes GT as 'irritating,' and tweet [5] portrays DT as 'low.'

> [4] If there is a human name for irritation or headache..then it will be definately Greta Thunberg. Idiots made her popular for no reasons. A barking dog is much better than her (Biswas, 2020).

The tweet can be considered a serious case of criticism of personal characteristics of GT. The tweet exaggerates the degree of 'irritation' or 'headache' GT causes to the tweeter by using the phrase 'a human name for.' One possible implication is that GT is 'synonymous with these negative sensations' and is 'universally disliked or annoying.' The tweet goes on to suggest that her supporters are 'idiots' who have made her 'popular for no reasons.' The tweet also compares her to a 'barking dog,' which can suggest the possible cultural implication that she is making noise without any value. It can be examined in light of Culpeper's impoliteness framework, showcasing a series of personalized negative vocatives (e.g., 'Idiots'), personalized negative assertions, and personalized negative references (e.g., 'barking dog'). To the researcher's understanding, there were no implicit or explicit moral order expectations.

> [5] Just when you think Trump can't go any lower... he always finds a way (Belcamino, 2019).

The tweet can be considered a criticism of the personal characteristics of DT. It claims that DT is a 'morally and politically corrupt' leader who constantly 'sinks to new lows' in behavior and performance. The tweet also expresses the tweeter's 'disbelief and frustration' at DT's actions and words. When analyzed in light of Culpeper's impoliteness framework, the tweet contains some conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as pointed criticisms or complaints. For example, the tweet uses the phrase 'can't go any lower,' a pointed criticism that attacks DT's quality and reputation. The tweet also uses the word 'always,' a message enforcer emphasizing the frequency and consistency of DT's negative behavior. The tweet also uses the word 'he,' a personalized third-person negative reference that distances the tweeter from DT and shows disrespect. A possible moral order expectation of the tweet from DT is that he should respect GT and her views.

2.2 CRITICISM OF SUPPORTERS

Another pragmatic function was to criticize supporters. In the replies to DT, it was believed that DT supporters were 'lying,' 'ignoring,' and 'hiding' or 'embellishing the truth.' In the replies to GT, the supporters are featured as 'idiots' and 'not cautious about pollution.' These tweets can take the attack one level deeper and aim at those who form DT or GT's base, on which they rely. Tweets [6] and [7] are cases in point.

> [6] It is embarrassing that a brat who does not reach 18 is so crude and rude but since she is Greta you have to applaud what she says (Alana, 2020).

The tweet is a criticism of supporters of GT and maintains that she is a 'brat' who is 'crude and rude,' possibly implying that her supporters are 'hypocritical' and 'foolish' for applauding what she says. The tweet contains several conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as personalized negative assertions, pointed criticisms or complaints, and condescension. For example, the tweet calls GT a 'brat,' which can be a personalized negative assertion that attacks her personality and maturity. The tweet also uses the phrase 'crude and rude', a pointed criticism or complaint that attacks her manners and etiquette. It also uses the word 'since,' which could be a condescension that might imply that GT's supporters have a 'biased' or 'irrational' reason for supporting her. The tweet appears to use form-driven impoliteness, which involves using marked or mismatched forms that imply a negative meaning. The use of the word 'you,' a mismatched form, can mean the tweeter addresses GT's supporters directly and aggressively. The moral order expectations of the tweet from GT could be that she should be quiet and act age-appropriately.

> [7] Absolutely. How is it that the rest of the world can see DJT for what he is, but not his supporters? Could it be those smoke & mirrors some people refer to as #FoxNews, or maybe it's the Repub members of Congress & #Barr who are willing to lie (Deal, 2019).

The tweet is a criticism of supporters of DT. In addition to DT, the writer has specifically addressed some supporters, such as Republican members of Congress, Fox News, and William Barr, the United States' Attorney General (2019-2020). The author of this tweet questions their integrity and refers to them as parties who embellish the truth. One implication is that the tweet maintains that his supporters are also 'deluded' and 'misled' by his propaganda and lies. The tweet exhibits both types of impoliteness, but mainly implicational impoliteness. The tweet contains conventional impoliteness formulae, such as unpalatable questions or presuppositions, and pointed criticisms or complaints. For example, the tweet asks, 'how is it that the rest of the world can see DJT for what he is, but not his supporters?', which is an unpalatable question that might imply that Donald DT's supporters are 'ignorant' or 'irrational,' and that, probably, they are in the minority of the world's opinion. The tweet also uses the phrase 'smoke & mirrors,' a pointed criticism or

complaint that implies that DT's supporters are deceived or manipulated by his media outlets or allies, such as Fox News, the Republican members of Congress, and Barr, the Attorney General.

The tweet uses the acronym 'DJT,' a marked form with the possible interpretation that the tweeter does not respect or recognize DT's title or authority and that the tweeter is mocking or ridiculing his name or identity. The tweet also uses hashtags, such as '#FoxNews' and '#Barr,' which are mismatched forms that imply that the tweeter is using social media conventions to expose or criticize DT's sources of support or influence. The moral order expectations of the tweets from DT and his supporters can be that they should be honest and accountable for their actions and words and acknowledge and address the issue of climate change (concern for the common good).

2.3 CRITICISM OF RELATIVES (DT)

This category was only seen in the replies to DT. The tweets in this group seem to have been affected by Melania Trump's tweet [2], which criticized bringing children into politics. They attributed characteristics such as 'hypocritical' to her. Again, it seemed that the hashtag #Bebest, originally used to support Melania Trump's campaign, has been used against her [6].

> [8] Nothing like going after a young girl with Asperger Syndrome to drive home the point that you are fit for office. #BeBest my ass. For the last 4 years, I've been saying impeachment cannot come fast enough, and now it's finally here. #thursdaythought (O'Reilly, 2019).

The tweet is a criticism of the relatives, which is, in this case, the wife of DT. The tweet possibly argues that DT is 'an insensitive' leader who targets a young girl with Asperger syndrome, a developmental disorder that affects communication and social interaction. Another interpretation is that the tweet expresses the tweeter's contempt for and anger at DT's wife, Melania Trump, who has launched a campaign called 'Be Best' that aims to promote the well-being of children and prevent cyberbullying. The tweet contains conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as negative expressives and dismissals. For example, the tweet uses the word 'ass,' which is a negative expressive that can express the tweeter's possible 'disgust' or 'disdain'. The tweet also mockingly uses the phrase '#BeBest my ass,' which is most possibly a dismissal that rejects Melania Trump's campaign and suggests that it is 'hypocritical' or 'ineffective.' The tweet also contains convention-driven implicational impoliteness, such as internal and external mismatches. For example, the tweet uses the expression 'Absolutely,' a conventionalized politeness formula that normally expresses agreement or approval. Still, in this context, it is used sarcastically to express disagreement or disapproval. External mismatches occur when the context projected by a behavior mismatches the context of use. For example, the tweet uses the hashtag '#BeBest,' which normally expresses support or admiration for Melania Trump's campaign. However, it seems to be ironically

used to express criticism or mockery in this context. The moral order expectations of the tweet from DT and his wife are that they should respect and protect GT and other children. This appeal to moral order appears to base the premise on the 'rightfulness' of the impeachment.

2.4 PRAISING OF THE OPPOSING PARTY

Praising the offended party can be seen as reclaiming the face of the party who might have lost their face. Tweets [9] and [10] are instances.
[9] You're having a laugh aren't you. You tell others to chill, he's always much calmer than you ever have been (Pothecary, 2020).
The tweet is a praise of the opposing party of GT. From one vantage point, this tweet can imply that GT is a 'hypocritical' and 'aggressive' person who tells others to chill, while she is 'less calm' than DT. The tweet contains conventional impoliteness formulae, such as unpalatable questions. For example, the tweet asks, 'you're having a laugh aren't you?', an unpalatable question that might imply that GT's tweet is 'absurd' or 'ridiculous', and that she is not 'serious' or 'sincere'. The moral order expectation is presumably respect and manners, in that it requires GT to be 'respectful' and 'humble' for her activism and her views, that she should not mock or attack DT, and that she should not tell others to chill or to stop speaking out.

[10] She has more humanity in her pinky finger than you've ever had in your entire, miserable life (Trinity, 2019).

The tweet is a praise of the opposing party of DT. The tweet praised GT and her 'positive' attributes despite her disease and criticized DT's 'negative' characteristics despite his long life, which has been 'miserable.' Children with autism can have a shorter index finger (2D) than their ring finger (4D). The tweet contains some conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as a personalized negative assertion. For example, the tweet uses the phrase 'your entire, miserable life,' a personalized negative assertion that attacks DT's personality.

2.5 DIRECTING

Directing is a pragmatic function that gets the addressee to perform or carry out a particular course of action. There are examples in tweets [11] and [12] below.

[11] Chill Greta, chill!! Go to school and let politics for the adults! (Cox, 2019).

The tweet is directing GT. It argues that GT should chill, go to school, and leave politics to the adults, with the possible implication that she is too 'young,' 'naïve,' and 'emotional' to be involved in such serious and complex issues. The tweet contains some conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as condescension and dismissal. For example, the tweet uses the word 'chill,' which can be considered condescension and probably implies that GT is 'overreacting' or being 'irrational.' The tweet also uses the phrase 'go to school,' a dismissal that can suggest that GT

is 'immature' or 'uneducated.' As far as implicational impoliteness is concerned, the tweet uses the word 'adults,' which is an unmarked form that contrasts GT's age and status with those of the tweeter and DT, implying that she is 'immature' or 'inferior.' The moral order expectations of the tweet from GT are that she should behave in an age-appropriate manner and not interfere with or challenge the authority or expertise of adults.

[12] Stop. She's a child. Please stop (Jili, 2019).

The tweet is directing DT and argues that he should stop, as GT is a child. The tweet seems to contain a conventionalized impoliteness formula, namely silencers. For example, the tweet uses the word 'stop,' a silencer implying that DT should be quiet or cease his actions. The tweet also contains context-driven implicational impoliteness, such as unmarked behavior and absence of behavior. For example, the tweet uses the word 'please,' an unmarked behavior that normally expresses politeness or request, yet in this context, it is probably used sarcastically to express impatience or annoyance. It appears that the moral order expectation is to respect GT and other children and, presumably, that he should behave more compassionately and ethically as the leader of the United States.

2.6 MOCKERY

The tweets in this category have tried to mock both parties in a jocular manner in such a way that can imply 'lack of importance,' 'seriousness,' 'knowledge,' maturity,' etc. Presumably, for example, 'angry looking little girl' is used in reply to GT, or 'fartypants' is used in response to DT to downgrade either one of the parties mockingly. Mockery can be separated from criticism of personal characteristics because it can convey a sense of laughter and humor, while criticism possesses a more serious tone. For example, tweets [13] and [14] can illustrate the point.

[13] LOL what are you? 16? U tweet like a teenager. Oh, wait... (Danann, 2020).

The tweet is a mockery of GT, as it mocks her age and style of tweeting, with the plausible implication that she is 'immature' and 'inexperienced' and that her tweets are 'childish' and 'irrelevant.' The tweet seems to entail conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as personalized negative assertions and pointed criticisms. For example, the tweet uses the phrase 'what are you? 16?', which is a personalized negative assertion that appears to question GT's maturity and competence. The tweet also reads, 'U tweet like a teenager,' a pointed criticism that negatively evaluates GT's communication and expression. To the researcher's understanding, there were no implicit or explicit moral order expectations.

[14] Seems like you're the one with anger issues and impulsive behaviors (Shoug, 2020).

The tweet can be seen as a mockery of DT's tweet. By reversing the accusation and suggesting that DT himself exhibits 'anger issues' and 'impulsive' behaviors,

the tweet challenges the validity of DT's criticism of GT. The phrase 'seems like' implies doubt or skepticism, casting doubt on the validity of DT's criticism. Additionally, the use of 'you're the one' directly targets DT, creating a mocking tone that challenges his original statement. This implicit comparison between DT's behavior and what he criticized in GT adds to the mockery, highlighting potential 'inconsistencies' or 'hypocrisy' in DT's remarks. The tweet uses implicational impoliteness by indirectly criticizing DT's behavior and convention-driven impoliteness by creating a mismatch between the projected contexts of DT's accusation and the response. DT's original tweet projected a context of GT needing to work on her anger management, while the response projects a context of DT himself having 'anger issues' and 'impulsive' behaviors. It seems to implicitly appeal to the moral-order expectation that he should exercise respect and manners.

2.7 IDEOLOGY DENIAL

Ideology denial was defined as opposing the ideology GT held that human activities cause climate change. This category was only seen in replies to GT.

[15] There is no climate change made by people honey... Stop talking (Mediha, 2020).

The tweet seems to deny the ideology of GT, which appears to be that human activities cause climate change. The tweet denies the existence of climate change caused by human activities and tells GT to 'stop talking,' with the possible implication that she is 'wasting her time and annoying others' with her activism.

The tweet appears to contain conventionalized impoliteness formulae, such as silencers and condescension. For example, the tweet uses the phrase 'stop talking,' a silencer implying that GT should be quiet or cease her actions. The tweet also uses the word 'honey,' which could be a condescension that implies that GT is 'naïve' or 'inferior.' It also contains some context-driven implicational impoliteness in that it can mean that GT is 'ignorant' or 'delusional' about climate change. The moral order expectations of the tweet to GT could be that she should show 'respect' and not interfere with or challenge the 'authority or expertise of the adults' and that she should not express her views or emotions publicly or provocatively.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the impolite tweets that replied to GT and DT's tweets and took issue with them. The researchers aimed to identify the moral order expectations and the pragmatic functions performed. In determining the tweets as impolite, Culpeper's framework on conventional and implicational impoliteness was consulted to filter out the tweets that could be deemed neutral or polite in tone. Various means of conventional and implicational impoliteness accompanied the moral order expectations and pragmatic functions. The results found three

overarching categories of moral order expectations: age-appropriate behavior, respect and manners, and concern for the common good in replies to DT and GT. Regarding the pragmatic functions, criticism of personal characteristics, criticism of supporters, criticism of relatives (to DT only), praise of the opposing party, directing, mockery, and ideology denial (to GT only) could be determined.

Twitter can be grounds for promoting mean discourse that devalues others (Ott, 2017). Twitter's characteristics can promote the intended effects of the message: the use of acronyms such as 'U' for 'you,' 'LOL' for 'laughing out loud,' the use of hashtags, emojis, and punctuation marks to express emotions, attitudes, and opinions, such as '#BeBest,' '(Smiley face smiley face),' and the use of references, quotations, and mentions to connect or contrast with other users or sources, such as '@realDonaldTrump,' '@GretaThunberg', are features that Twitter (X) offers in promoting one's discourse. The findings of this study contribute to the literature on moral order and impoliteness in online communication, especially in the face of an existing conflict where respondents can voice their dissent towards any content they deem 'inappropriate,' especially when produced by a famous figure. The findings demonstrate how Twitter users respond to a perceived face threat by influential figures and how they use different processes and strategies to challenge, resist, or subvert the face threat. The findings also reveal how Twitter users construct their own moral order through their tweets and align themselves with or against certain parties based on their values and beliefs. The moral expectancies can be similar or different from context to context, so this study does not purport any generalizations. However, one category of moral order, namely respect and manners, was also found in a Facebook study (respect and decency) by Parvaresh and Tayebi (2018). The findings also show how the participants' expectations are influenced by factors such as the political socio-political standing, age, gender, and health conditions of the face-threat initiator and recipient.

CONCLUSION

This study is a preliminary step to tap into the pragmatic functions of the content of the tweets that impolitely replied to impolite tweets. This study attempts to propose a new aspect to study impoliteness and find out how impoliteness can produce retaliatory impolite discourse (see, however, Bousfield, 2007; Dobs and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2013; Culpeper and Hardaker, 2017; Nuessel, 2022).

This research delves into impoliteness dynamics on social media, exploring influences like power, ideology, emotion, and reciprocity. Future Twitter studies can explore different instances of impoliteness and compare moral order categories. The findings can benefit social media users, educators, and policymakers by enhancing their understanding of online communication risks and benefits. This knowledge can potentially inform strategies for managing or preventing face-threatening situations. The findings could be of use to educators to raise cultural awareness of impoliteness. The educators can include tweet samples in coursebooks

for learners to form their evaluations of the appropriacy of tweets. This allows learners to analyze and compare impoliteness types, encouraging them to write their tweets in diverse contexts. Ideally, such activities might lead to fostering intercultural communicative competence, critical thinking, and digital literacy.

The limitations of this study are mainly related to the scope and method of data collection and analysis. The study focused on two tweets that do not represent the general patterns of pragmatic functions and moral order expectations on Twitter. The study also relied on a qualitative approach, which may not capture the quantitative aspects of the data, such as the frequency or distribution.

Future studies could expand on the data collection and analysis scope by examining more tweets from different sources or topics or using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Additionally, future studies could investigate the effects of face-threat and facework on Twitter on the offline behavior or attitude of the respondents or other stakeholders. The pragmatic functions and moral order expectations found in this study can be used to compare the findings in similar or dissimilar contexts.

NOTES

1. While there are very subtle differences between incivility and impoliteness, it can be said, briefly put, that we take incivility to imply a violation of social norms or expectations, while impoliteness suggests a violation of interpersonal standards or expectations.

REFERENCES

Alizadeh Afrouzi, O. (2021) Social media and journalistic discourse analysis: 2019 Venezuelan presidential crisis. *Discourse and Communication,* 15 (1): 3-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481320961660

Bergmann, J. R. (1998) Introduction: morality in discourse. *Research on Language & Social Interaction,* 31 (3--4): 279-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.1998.9683594

Bousfield, D. (2007) Beginnings, middles and ends: a biopsy of the dynamics of impolite exchanges. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 39 (12): 2185-2216. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.11.005

Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clarke, I. and Grieve, J. (2019) Stylistic variation on the Donald Trump Twitter account: a linguistic analysis of tweets posted between 2009 and 2018. *PLoS ONE,* 14(9): 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222062

Culpeper, J. (2005) Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: the weakest link. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture,* 1 (1): 35-72. https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.35

Culpeper, J. (2011) *Impoliteness: using language to cause offence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, J. and Hardaker, C. (2017) Impoliteness. In J. Culpeper, M. Haugh, and D. Z. Kadar (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness* (pp. 199-225). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dant, T. (2012) *Television and the Moral Imaginary: society through the small screen.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dobs, A. M. and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P. (2013) Impoliteness in polylogal interaction: accounting for face-threat witnesses' responses. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 53 (1): 112-130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.05.002

Domenici, K. and Littlejohn, S. (2006) *Facework: bridging theory and practice*. London: Sage.

Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L. (2006) How many interviews are enough?: an experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods,* 18 (1): 59-82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Haugh, M. (2007) The discursive challenge to politeness research: an interactional alternative. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 3 (2): 295-317. https://doi.org/10.1515/PR.2007.013

Haugh, M., Kádár, D. Z. and Márquez Reiter, R. (2022) Offence and morality: pragmatic perspectives. *Language and Communication*, 87 (A): 117-122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2022.07.005

Hemphill, L., Otterbacher, J. and Shapiro, M. A. (2013) What's congress doing on twitter? *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, CSCW* (pp. 877-886). New York: Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/2441776.2441876

Jaidka, K., Zhou, A. and Lelkes, Y. (2019) Brevity is the soul of Twitter: the constraint affordance and political discussion. *Journal of Communication*, 69 (4): 345-372. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz023

Matley, D. (2018) 'Let's see how many of you mother fuckers unfollow me for this': the pragmatic function of the hashtag #sorrynotsorry in non-apologetic Instagram posts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 133 (1): 66-78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.06.003

Nordensvard, J. and Ketola, M. (2021) Populism as an act of storytelling: analyzing the climate change narratives of Donald Trump and Greta Thunberg as populist truth-tellers. *Environmental Politics,* 31 (5): 861-882. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1996818

Nuessel, F. (2022) Language, pragmatics, and emotions: the case of impoliteness. In S. Petrilli and M. Ji (eds.) *Exploring the Translatability of Emotions* (pp. 255-277). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91748-7_10

Ott, B. L. (2017) The age of Twitter: Donald J. Trump and the politics of debasement. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 34 (1): 59-68. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1266686

Oz, M., Zheng, P. and Chen, G. M. (2018) Twitter versus Facebook: comparing incivility, impoliteness, and deliberative attributes. *New Media & Society*, 20 (9): 3400-3419. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817749516

Parvaresh, V. and Tayebi, T. (2018) Impoliteness, aggression and the moral order. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 132 (1): 91-107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.05.010

Ross, A. S. and Caldwell, D. (2020) 'Going negative': an appraisal analysis of the rhetoric of Donald Trump on Twitter. *Language and Communication*, 70 (1): 13-27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2019.09.003

Ross, M. (2019) Melania Trump, justifying husband's attack on Greta Thunberg, never cared Be Best was 'hypocritical,' new book says. *The Mercury News*. December 13. Available from https://tinyurl.com/bd32u5ya [Accessed on 13 September 2023].

Salimi, E.A. and Mortazavi, S.M. (2023) 'I keep forgetting you're still alive': unmasking impoliteness in the Xsphere. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly,* 37 (1): 18-33. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2023.38.02

Saz-Rubio, M. M. del. (2023) Assessing impoliteness-related language in response to a season's greeting posted by the Spanish and English Prime Ministers on Twitter. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 206 (1): 31-55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.01.010

Şekerci, Ö. (2023) Culpeper's impoliteness strategies in Neil Simon's Biloxi Blues. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 13 (1): 125-141. https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.13.2023.09

Tayebi, T. (2016) Why do people take offence?: exploring the underlying expectations. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 101 (1): 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2016.05.006

Tayebi, T. and Parvaresh, V. (2014) Conversational disclaimers in Persian. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 62 (1): 77-93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.09.011

Terkourafi, M. (2019) Im/politeness: a 21st century appraisal. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 1 (6): 1-17. https://doi.org/10.13458/j.cnki.flatt.004629

Terkourafi, M., Catedral, L., Haider, I., Karimzad, F., Melgares, J., Mostacero-Pinilla, C., Nelson, J. and Weissman, B. (2018) Uncivil Twitter. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 6 (1): 26-57. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00002.ter

Theocharis, Y., Barberá, P., Fazekas, Z. and Popa, S. A. (2020) The Dynamics of political incivility on Twitter. *SAGE Open*, 10 (2): 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020919447

Wells, C., Shah, D., Lukito, J., Pelled, A., Pevehouse, J. C. W. and Yang, J. H. (2020) Trump, Twitter, and news media responsiveness: a media systems approach. *New Media and Society*, 22 (4): 659-682. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819893987

INTERNET SOURCES

[Online 1] Donald Trump, the emperor of social media (2016) *Billmoyers,* April 29. Available from http://tinyurl.com/4y8633mk [Accessed on 13 September 2023].

[Online 2] Trump mocks teen climate activist Greta Thunberg after TIME honor (2019) *Politico,* December 12. Available from http://tinyurl.com/bdedpmw7 [Accessed on 13 September 2023].

[Online 3] Greta Thunberg pokes fun at Donald Trump's election reaction with 'chill' tweet (2020) *Independent,* November 6. Available from http://tinyurl.com/msx293yh [Accessed on 5 November 2023].

TEXTS ANALYSED

Alana (2020) 6 November. Available from https://twitter.com/yinotrjera/status/1324538880796827648 [Accessed on 16 March 16 2024]

Belcamino, A. (2019) 12 December. Available from https://twitter.com/AngelaBelcamino/status/1205119939763429376 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Biswas, P. (2020) 7 November. Available from https://twitter.com/ParanoidPrasoon/status/1324897013478010881 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Cox, C. (2020) 12 November. Available from https://twitter.com/CostinCox/status/1326979222460649480 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Danann (2020) 6 November. Available from https://twitter.com/DanannOficial/status/1324479784949305344 [Accessed on 16 March 2024].

Deal, S. (2019) 12 December. Available from https://twitter.com/SallyDeal4/status/1205210309855571968 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Jili (2019) 13 December. Available from https://twitter.com/mommaJ444/status/1205227814041063424 [Accessed: 7 March 2024].

Mediha (2020) 8 November. Available from https://twitter.com/Mediha04gmxde1/status/1325447200516829185 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

O'Reilly, H. F. (2019) 12 December. Available from https://twitter.com/AynRandPaulRyan/status/1205113893166600192 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Pothecary, A. (2020) 13 November. Available from https://twitter.com/MsAnnaPothecary/status/1327062554183610371 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Shoug (2020) 4 January. Available from https://twitter.com/shougarifi/status/1213505239195824130 [Accessed on 16 March 2024].

Thunberg, G. (2020) 5 November. Available from https://twitter.com/GretaThunberg/status/1324439705522524162 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Trinity (2019) 13 December. Available from https://twitter.com/TrinityResists/status/1205239935285878790 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Trump, D. J. (2012) 10 November. Available from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/267286471172562944 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Trump, D. J. (2019) 12 December. Available from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1205100602025545730 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Trump, M. (2019) 5 December. Available from https://twitter.com/FLOTUS45/status/1202344441924571136 [Accessed on 7 March 2024].

Esmaeel Ali Salimi (Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, Associate Professor) is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English Language and Literature, faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. His areas of research interests include Pragmatics, Second Language Research, and Second Language Acquisition.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5432-9547

Email: easalimi@atu.ac.ir

Seyed Mohammadreza Mortazavi has a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. His areas of interest include Pragmatics of Politeness, Discourse Analysis, and Second Language Teacher Education.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2552-1657

Email: m_mortazavi@atu.ac.ir

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 108–120
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.07 © University of Latvia, 2024

THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSCULTURAL INSIGHT IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S LITERARY UNIVERSE

ADRIANA ELENA STOICAN
Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

Abstract. Blending literary and cultural studies, the essay discusses the manners in which Jhumpa Lahiri's literary universe constructs a gradual unfolding of a layered transcultural vision.

The paper argues that in the shift from fictions of migration to autobiographical narratives of self-redefinition, the Bengali-American author advances cultural scenarios of transformation that enable the reshaping of cultural identities through the transcendence of fixed cultural loyalties. Invoking perceived lacks in their native cultural traditions and intuiting the incompleteness of cultures, her characters are haunted by the urge to cross cultural boundaries in order to gain a sense of personal fulfilment. Ultimately, Lahiri herself replicates this pattern as she relocates to Italy and writes in a new language (Italian).

The last stage in Lahiri's transcultural scenario is represented by an attempt to dissociate cultural specificity from the notion of identity, as she takes refuge in the realm of abstraction through minimalist aesthetics. Relying on a close reading of her texts, the essay will scrutinise the author's peculiar outlook on transculturality, which appears to embrace various cultural spaces while seemingly avoiding specific attachments. The analysis aims to establish whether Lahiri succeeds in transgressing the very idea of cultural belonging in her quest for a freeing path.

Key words: belonging, Hinduism, incompleteness, minimalism, transcendent, transcultural

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this essay is to provide a comprehensive account of Jhumpa Lahiri's transcultural vision by focusing on the author's recent drive to abstraction and minimalism that surfaces in her works. The present discussion blends cultural studies with literary studies so as to interpret concrete examples of transcultural messages encoded in the author's fictional and autobiographical texts. Therefore, the methodology involves close readings of the primary texts, filtered through various cultural theories. Theoretical perspectives on transculturalism aim

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

to define it as an alternative to the separatist implications of multiculturalism, advancing the idea that one should explore potential networks between cultures (Epstein, 1999; Papastergiadis, 2000; Hannerz, 2001; Schultermandl and Toplu, 2010; Gilsenan Nordin, Hansen and Llena, 2013). An important premise of the transcultural discourse is the awareness of cultures as incomplete structures (Epstein, 1995) that triggers the impulse to explore alternative cultural meanings. Epstein's (1999: 24) notion of 'transculture', a dimension situated beyond all cultures, perfectly renders the transcendent core of a transcultural vision.

The transcultural goal of moving beyond cultural difference valorizes a focus on 'transboundary interconnections' and 'cultural flows' (Dagnino, 2013: 143), facilitated by the transnational regime of 'neo-nomadic trajectories' (ibid.: 131). Not surprisingly, then, a plethora of cultural theorists argue for the relevance of cultural commonalities in dialogues with cultural others (Papastergiadis, 2000; Neumann, 2003; Appiah, 2007; Pieterse, 2009; Berg, 2011). One way of designating the successful outcomes of transcultural interactions is the notion of 'creative pluralism' (Epstein, 1995: 303) as a fusion of cultural differences. Other voices conceive the effects of transculturality as 'the formation of multifaceted, fluid identities resulting from diverse cultural encounters' (Gilsenan Nordin et al., 2013: ix) or 'both a product and a contact zone of flows and entanglements that underpin cultural dynamics' (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer, 2011: 9).

Considering the processes of cultural flows, interactions and blending inherent in transcultural literature, it is important to note the association of transcultural sensibility with contemporary patterns of transnational mobility (Dagnino, 2013). This aspect is especially relevant in Lahiri's case, since both her personal history and her oeuvre include transnational border crossings, nomadic relocation, 'multiple identifications, de-centred attachments and simultaneous being here and there' (Vertovec, 2009: 5-6). Having presented the theoretical pillars of the present analysis, the essay continues with a gradual unfolding of Lahiri's facets of transculturality.

LAHIRI'S TRANSCULTURAL REPERTOIRE: ABSENCES, COMMONALITIES, CREATIVE PLURALISM

In the first collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri introduces the first stage of her transcultural understanding, namely the intuition of a lack within both the Bengali and the American cultural spheres. The mechanism by which she hints at this incompleteness is the foregrounding of a character's apparent neutral assessment of both cultural worlds, which indirectly reveals missing values in each system. An example of this kind is provided by an American child's (Eliot's) perception of Mrs. Sen, the Indian wife of a Bengali immigrant who chooses to babysit the boy at her place. As Eliot compares the Bengali housewife with his single, working mother, he appreciates Mrs. Sen's care, warmth, and daily cooking practices that are missing from his mother's profile. At the same time, however,

Mrs. Sen's car accident is contrasted with his mother's confident driving, which suggests that independence and self-reliance are perceived as desirable features that are missing from Mrs. Sen's profile. Eliot's innocent comprehension of these different models of womanhood creates the impression of a puzzle, in the sense that both of them are configured as incomplete: while the Bengali version appears to lack the values of female assertion and independence, the American counterpart does not include the cultivation of community and family bonds. While Eliot does not formulate a conclusion of this kind, the implicit message is that both cultural systems are likely to benefit from a process of self-transcendence. More precisely, the cultural values perceived as missing from each system may indicate the necessity to move into the space of transculture, where each side of the encounter may become enriched by the other.

This prerequisite for transcultural insight seems vital in Lahiri's overall identity framework, as suggested by its role at an autobiographical level, as illustrated by *In Other Words* (2016). While attempting to describe the complicated dynamics of her linguistic triangle (Bengali-Italian-English), the author keeps referring to a perceived void, an unsettling absence in her cultural profile: 'Because of my divided identity, or perhaps by disposition, I consider myself *an incomplete* person, in some way *deficient*' (Lahiri, 2016: 113, emphasis added). On the one hand, this gap appears to be a source of permanent concern, while on the other hand, the sensation of an unfinished cultural self is also a trigger for a strong creative drive that stimulates cultural transformation through contact with alterity.

Another path to transculturality is the acknowledgement of cultural commonalities, best depicted in the short story *The Third and Final Continent*. Here, the American and Bengali cultural models find unexpected common ground in the intersections between Hindu and Puritan gender assumptions. The present argument continues with the claim that the transcultural facets discussed so far—the intuition of cultural incompleteness, the transcendent urge and the identification of cultural commonalities—make room for the possibility of transcultural dialogues by means of creative pluralism.

Irrespective of generation, the cultural transformation experienced by Lahiri's characters illustrates Epstein's take on transcultural changes as identity renewal through recognition and internalisation of cultural otherness: 'I would name such a project "creative pluralism," because it does not limit itself to the simple recognition of other cultures' integrity, but goes so far as to consider them all necessary for each other's further development' (Epstein, 1995: 303). The most fascinating twist is provided by Lahiri's personal continuation of her fictional heroes' transcultural strategies and transnational itineraries. As illustrated by *In Other Words*, the author's relocation to Rome represents a path to free reinvention, beyond familiar expectations. Besides the novelty of the autobiographical element, *In Other Words* adds a new angle to Lahiri's transcultural vision, namely the 'drive to abstraction' (Lahiri, 2016: 221). On the one hand, one may assume that this is an exercise in stylistic innovation, an illustration of Lahiri's versatile approach as a writer. On the other hand, this urge for abstraction can also be discussed

in relation to Lahiri's quest for transcultural redefinition. If *In Other Words* may be considered a kind of debut in abstract art, Lahiri's novel *Whereabouts* (2021) illustrates her strong attachment to this artistic choice. This book, written in Italian and translated into English by the author, is an abstract, minimalist creation whose main character is a solitary, anonymous woman, placed in an unidentified location. The next section will consider the main implications of minimalism in literature in order to decipher Lahiri's immersion into a realm of no particularities.

MINIMALIST AESTHETICS: A TRANSCULTURAL IDEAL?

A first connotation of minimalist art that overlaps with transcultural premises is the idea of going beyond or against something familiar. The innovative perspectives introduced by minimalism contested the values and prestige associated with art through the rejection of 'stylistic flourish, but also, to an important degree, the very idea of "art", as it is traditionally conceived' (Motte, 1999: 12). By focusing on the notion of smallness and simplicity, the minimalist outlook rests on 'understatement' (Botha, 2017: 51) and advances the idea of 'reduction in relation to some more or less explicit norm' (Motte, 1999: 1). The radical, transgressive nature of the minimalist enterprise intersects with the equally innovative outlook of transcultural creations, as both approaches aim to contest a commonly accepted state of things.

The minimalist concern with the small is also correlated with an interest in simplicity; hence, this discourse has often been criticized for its 'ordinariness', 'banality' (Houamdi, 2019: 56) and 'artistic vacuity' (Motte, 1999: 4) that supposedly turn it into 'anti-art' (Strickland, 2000: 13). However, supporters of minimalism claim that the apparent nihility of minimalist creations is the result of removing excessive ornament/rhetoric in order to grasp a sense of truth: 'Vacuity is the surface effect of a deliberate process of eschewal and restriction intended to clear away conventional rhetoric in an attempt to approximate the essential' (Motte, 1999: 4). This creative potential of the void can certainly be correlated with Lahiri's sense of hollow identity, which prompts her to enrich her cultural frame. In an attempt to comprehend Lahiri's stylistic shift to minimalism, the next section will discuss the paradoxes of minimalist aesthetics and their peculiarities.

The minimalist undertaking invites one to explore a complex universe of contradictory strategies and creative goals. As they aim to uncover profound meanings by removing superfluous elements of form, minimalists rely on a clear paradox, rendered through the famous aphorism 'less is more' (Barth, 1986, cited in Motte, 1999: 4). This reductive approach to form defines the minimalist philosophy as a radical proposition surfacing through 'aesthetic radicalism' (Botha, 2017: 39), as 'a critique of traditional norms [...] that pushed the frontier of the new aesthetic' (Motte, 1999: 8-9). More specifically, this urge to lessen formal expression is justified by the belief that there is a sense of 'essence' (Motte, 1999: 9) and 'immanence' (Botha, 2017: 172) that can be brought to light 'through the instantiation of the radical, nonreferential work' (ibid.: 74).

Therefore, the radical contours of the movement involve a deconstructive stance meant to transcend formal appearances and grasp meaning beyond material expression. It follows that minimalist art relies on an inherent contradiction that blends avant-garde radicalism with a transcendent, essentialist stance. If this is the case, it is reasonable to ask whether this discrepant aesthetics is to be found in *Whereabouts*. Is the main character haunted by the same transcendent impulse as the rest of Lahiri's characters? What framework of cultural identity can be constructed in the absence of a precise indication of cultural boundaries? Is Lahiri's literary minimalism another facet of her transcultural message, and if it is, how does it work?

LITERARY MINIMALISM IN *WHEREABOUTS*

Minimalist fictions are discussed in terms of 'bare-bone narratives' (Strickland, 2000: 14) as 'open, simple, clear' stories (Krasniqi, 2018: 56). Another feature of this genre is its inherent incompleteness that results from the minimalist writers' adoption of the '*via negativa* (negation path)' (Houamdi, 2019: 56, italics in the original), which involves the urge to reduce matters of form, subject and language. A related outcome of this drive to lessen all effects is the impression of anonymity that permeates minimalist art whose simplified vision is associated with a less marked authorial imprint: 'For what has been renounced—flourish, embellishment and affect—are what we normally take to be the more obvious effects of personal style' (Motte, 1999: 7). One may argue that minimalism's 'aesthetic impulse towards omissions and absences' (Houamdi, 2019: 67) creates a sense of a fundamental deficit imbricated in their texture. This paper argues that the conceptual lack of minimalist fiction strangely resonates with Lahiri's and her characters' awareness of an inherent gap within their identity scaffolding. The present analysis aims to establish whether one can identify ways in which minimalist aesthetics may serve to encode Lahiri's transcultural vision.

Whereabouts is a first-person narration of a woman's daily life, placed in various contexts, which make up a total of forty-six facets of her quotidian experiences, e.g., at the office, on the street, in spring, in the pool, at the hotel, nowhere, etc. The setting is vague, the linear plot unfolds mainly in an unknown city, and the narrator refuses to name any spatial coordinates. Naturally, characters in minimalist writings seem to lack complexity; they are portrayed as detached, passive observers. Although they are usually placed in difficult situations, crossing painful life events, these characters are usually silent, unresponsive and unwilling to directly account for their inner lives. Therefore, all the stylistic elements in *Whereabouts* point to a minimalist enterprise that configures an enigmatic female character. At the same time, the novel indicates Lahiri's continuous preoccupation with familiar themes, although identity processes are no longer conceived in terms of concrete cultural references.

More specifically, *Whereabouts* actually reiterates one of Lahiri's previous thematic concerns (the cultural tension between individualism and collectivism),

as it presents a single woman who attempts to reconcile the choice of enjoying independence with the necessity, and sometimes need, to establish connections imposed by her life in a non-specific cultural community. Thus, whether at work, in the street or at home, this mysterious character is configured as a detached observer, albeit curious about the lives of others. For example, in the section entitled *On the Street*, the nameless woman is captured in a sudden change of her quotidian trajectory as she follows a couple who are in the middle of an argument:

> *I spot them on the street*, in the middle of a crowd of pedestrians waiting for the light to change: the couple who live around the corner, my friend and the kind man I cross paths with now and again on the bridge. *I quicken my pace to catch up to them*, I think of saying hello, but then I realize that they're having an argument [...] *I start to follow them***.** I don't go into the store I was heading to, it's not urgent. (Lahiri, 202: 35, emphasis added)

This kind of attitude illustrates the paradoxical blend of the protagonist's need for privacy and seclusion (she keeps at bay) and the impulse to get involved, however marginally, in other people's lives.

A similar ambivalence is rendered in the chapter entitled *In the Hotel*, which describes the heroine's travels to a conference. Although she appears to engage in communication with no one, the narrator is intrigued by a male scholar who has a room next to hers and rides the same elevator. Their brief interaction can be considered a minimalist encounter since it lacks verbal communication; however, despite the woman's withdrawnness, she cannot help formulating hypotheses about the stranger's life. Given that he lives in an adjacent room, she can infer certain things about his activities:

> It's only at this time of night that he reveals another aspect of himself: he has long talks on the telephone, speaking rapidly and heatedly in another language. *With whom? His wife? A friend? His publisher?* His company reassures me though he doesn't interest me sexually, it's not about that. I think of the melancholy in his eyes, that wanting look. Eyes, bright but distant, that are about to close for six or seven hours. (Lahiri, 2021: 39, emphasis added)

How can one account for the lead character's simultaneous desire to know more about a stranger's life and her unwillingness to engage in communication? This inconsistent attitude may illustrate the simultaneity of the need for solitude/privacy and the impulse to reach out to others. In other words, the hyper-individualist model, centered exclusively on self-preservation and detachment, briefly intersects with the frail but equally valid disposition to form a sense of bonding.

Along similar lines, an even more illustrative episode is depicted in the section entitled *At the Beautician*, which apparently presents a banal visit to the cosmetologist. As the main character goes to the beautician, she is taken aback

by the beauty of a new employee. While she patiently waits for the nail treatment to be finished, the nameless customer experiences intense feelings of connection with the beautiful foreigner:

> She proceeds to work on my nails [...] I don't look at myself in the mirror while she perfects this one part of my body. I don't want to spoil the moment, or this contact between us. I'd like to appreciate her attention and nothing else, so I try to focus exclusively on her, *acknowledging that though we're united we're two separate people*. (Lahiri, 2021: 38, emphasis added)

This instance suggests the need for meaningful bonds that cuts across individualism and one's need for isolation. Although the two women are perfect strangers and distinct individuals, the intense feelings of connection experienced by the anonymous observer imply that hyper-individualism and solitude cannot provide a complete model of survival.

Another way of suggesting the contrast between individual versus group-oriented versions of female identity is rendered in the chapter entitled *On the Balcony*. This fragment depicts the meeting between the main character and a friend of hers, a woman who, unlike the narrator, is also a mother and a wife. This friend without a name feels overwhelmed by the necessity of dealing with the challenges of family life and her professional nomadism. Her visit to the leading character's tidy apartment is pictured as a refuge from family responsibility, an interlude dedicated to the self:

> I think in the end all I need is a little *corner to myself*. I'd love a tiny apartment like yours [...] One day she confessed that, in spite of her fear of planes, she loves the nook she occupies in flight, the seat that becomes her bed, the lamp behind her shoulder, everything she needs at arm's reach. (Lahiri, 2021: 30, emphasis added)

Although the friend appears to feel guilty for her frequent travels that prevent her from acting as a perfect mother, at the same time, readers get the feeling that she secretly loves the freedom afforded by her professional journeys.

The examples analysed suggest that *Whereabouts* deals with the female predicament of having to balance the need for self-preservation with the roles that imply dedication to others. While listening to her friend's complaints, the narrator cleverly observes that the former immerses in professional nomadism precisely to get away from family obligations:

> But then she starts talking about her husband's family, and the vacation she has to take with them in August to celebrate an important anniversary of her in-laws. 'I wish I didn't have to go, after three days with them I start to lose it.' I almost ask: *Isn't that the case with your house? Isn't that why you're always traveling, every other week?* (Lahiri, 2021: 31, emphasis added)

Despite the effect of cultural dissolution intensified by minimalism, the underlying theme of *Whereabouts* is that belonging and non-belonging, solitude versus community life, and individualism versus group relations represent different facets of human interaction. Moreover, the transcendent urge typical of Lahiri's fictional characters and of her personal history is present even in a setting where there seem to be no obvious cultural pressures. Although the heroine leads the life she desires, free of family obligations and devoid of traditional female roles (obedient daughter, wife, mother), she eventually needs to leave this accustomed space:

> But something's telling me to push past the barrier of my life, just like the dog that pulled me along the paths of the villa. And so I heed my call, having come to know the guts and soul of this place a little too well. (Lahiri, 2021: 92-93)

Once again, one can state that *Whereabouts* continues Lahiri's thematic outline, albeit in a simplified form. As she makes it clear from the very motto of *Unaccustomed Earth*, the author cherishes human mobility as a necessary condition for renewal, a rejection of ossified structures and flattening habits (see Note 1). In renouncing familiar coordinates, the anonymous character seems to favour nomadic trajetories as remedies against becoming eroded by habitual patterns:

> Because when all is said and done *the setting doesn't matter*: [...] I've never stayed still, I've always been moving, that's all I've ever been doing. Always waiting either to get somewhere or to come back. Or to *escape*. I keep packing and unpacking the small suitcase at my feet. I hold my purse in my lap, it's got some money and a book to read. Is there any place we're not moving through? *Disoriented, lost, at sea, at odds, astray, adrift, bewildered, confused, uprooted, turned around*. I'm related to these related terms. These words are my abode, my only foothold. (Lahiri, 2021: 106, emphasis added)

What this passage suggests is that culture-specific contexts are less important than the individuals' impulse to transcend them. Why is transgression so important for Lahiri, even in a neutral setting that does not seem to constrain her female character? Is the transcendent urge a mere celebration of mobility/nomadism as a deconstructivist impulse to contest established norms and rigid values? On the one hand, the answer is yes, since the author has clearly embraced a radical stance, starting with *The Lowland*, a novel that celebrates transgression (see Note 2), and then continuing with her personal metamorphosis in Italy. On the other hand, names point to the idea of specificity as they 'participate in a hierarchy of value and are invested with specific cultural capital' (Botha, 2017: 63). In this context, the author's choice of discarding names reinforces the hypothesis that she aims to reject the very notion of cultural authority. However, this strategy may not be entirely feasible, considering that Lahiri's intense transgressive insight and the need to sink in cultural anonymity also echo the Indian transcendent doctrine

of 'spiritual non-dualism' (Sharma, 2007: 1). The next section of the essay further discusses the connections that can be established between minimalist principles and the transcendent implications of the non-dualistic system of the Hindu philosophical tradition known as Advaita Vedanta.

MINIMALIST ANONYMITY, NAMING AND INDIAN REFLECTIONS

Minimalist writers consider that naming implies a dissolution of purity, which contradicts their purpose of rendering an effect of neutrality, if not immaculateness: 'To speak is to act; anything which one names is already no longer quite the same; it has lost its innocence' (Sartre, 1965: 36).

This tension between naming and the refusal to accept a given name is also important to Lahiri, as suggested by her character's (Gogol's) struggles for self-redefinition (see Note 3). Considering the minimalist focus on anonymity, it is interesting to establish whether Lahiri resorts to this trope in order to reflect on matters related to her struggles with cultural identity and multiplicity. Moreover, what is very provocative in *Whereabouts* is a potential intersection between Western minimalist conventions and absolutism, 'the most celebrated tradition in Indian philosophy' (Sharma, 2007: 1).

A central preoccupation of this system of thought is the relationship between the ultimate (non-dual) reality of the 'absolute and limitless brahman' (Rambachan, 2006: 16) and the multiplicity of its manifestations in 'the empirical world of individual subjects and objects' (Sharma, 2007: 5). According to Advaita Vedanta (Sharma, 2007: 169), the plurality of the experienced world is rendered through the concept of *māyā*, a projection of duality, which may conceal the oneness of the ultimate truth under the veil of various names and forms. In this context, the concept of *nāmarūpa* [name and form] (Rambachan, 2006: 76) designates the manifest realm of diversity that has to be transcended in order to unravel the reality of its actual cause, *brahman*. As Rambachan (ibid.: 80) rightfully asserts, there are many interpretations in the Advaita tradition that have wrongly associated māyā with the material fabric of the world as different from the absolute brahman, indirectly creating a duality of the type brahman/māyā that is not supported by Shankara, the great exponent of the Advaita tradition.

Considering the manifested world as an expression (and therefore continuation) of brahman, it follows that the plurality of the lived experience and material forms should not be perceived as a barrier to genuine knowledge but as a challenge, a boundary to be crossed in order to achieve enlightenment, i.e., the awareness that brahman and the world are the same. In other words, if one goes beyond the multifaceted canvas of perceived reality, one understands the illusory nature of all pluralities and oppositions. At this point, one can find an alluring intersection between Lahiri's minimalist stance and this non-dual comprehension of the nature of the universe. Can one assume that Lahiri's transcendent disposition, through

her attempt to eschew roots, is, ironically, part of a Hindu transcendent scenario? If this is the case, one may state that Lahiri cleverly blends Western and Eastern traditions in order to foreground a highly valued Indian truth: naming and the consequential individuation create a sense of variety that may obstruct the path to absolute knowledge, the one devoid of labels and attachments of any kind. In analogous fashion, one may assume that Lahiri's implied minimalist message is that the different values assigned to different cultures conceal the transcendent common dimension, the equivalent of Epstein's transculture, situated beyond cultural differences. Still, the question remains: despite the contemporary global condition with all its nomadic implications, can we conceive identity in the absence of cultural references? The (negative) answer is obvious, and it cuts across the author's minimalist outlook; if one accepts the connection between her minimalist message and the Advaita Vedantic path, one can state that cultural belonging remains a valid coordinate despite one's (presumed and also privileged) ability to move freely across national and cultural borders. Even Lahiri's shift to the Italian language and her (temporary) resettlement to Rome suggest that utter transcendence of cultural specificity is not possible, even if the transcendent urge is manifest. Maybe we should understand her transgressive disposition more in the line of a critical discourse that aims to advise against rigidity and ossified attachments, rather than rejection of cultural references of any kind. Living without any cultural allegiances may be possible in a speculative realm, but it seems difficult to completely renounce cultural belonging at the level of lived experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considering the gradual unfolding of Lahiri's transcultural vision, one can state that her work illustrates the emergence of a segmented outlook, a synergetic effect of the different stages of her comprehension. First, her intuition of missing cultural coordinates makes room for a second step in Lahiri's transcultural frame, namely the actual crossing of borders (physical and cultural) with the purpose of fashioning a fuller identity. Once engaged in the process of navigating different cultural spaces, Lahiri's characters become aware of the importance of cultural commonalities as facilitators of communication between otherwise dissimilar cultural perspectives. This third step often results in the embrace of creative pluralism, a process of enriching one's cultural identity by taking over values from multiple cultural traditions. Last but not least, Lahiri's transcultural discourse culminates with her plunge into an abstract, minimalist style with the potential for multiple interpretations. On the one hand, the author's search for anonymity and lack of cultural specificity may represent a eulogy to the very principle of transcendence, as a vital transition from the familiar into the unknown. At the same time, the idea of cultural dissolution stands for an attempt to reject a conception of identity conditioned by fixed origins. What seems to unsettle Lahiri's apparent

desire for uprootedness and anonymity is the potential to identify the seeds of her minimalism in Hindu traditions of thought. This would imply that the impulse to shun one's loyalty to specific cultural references cannot function as a productive mechanism of identity negotiation. Notwithstanding the endless possibilities of mobilities afforded by the regime of globalisation, our identities cannot be totally detached from cultural contexts. However, what Lahiri may wish to communicate is that the transcendence of familiar boundaries is the ideal mechanism that enables an enriched self-understanding.

NOTES

Note 1. The motto chosen by Lahiri for *Unaccustomed Earth* is the following quote by Nathaniel Hawthorne that celebrates identity renewal through mobility: 'Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth' (Hawthorne, 2006: 19).

Note 2. An extreme version of radical transgression is provided by Gauri, the main female character of Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013). This novel is permeated by a strong disruptive stance, as it presents a young Bengali widow who has willingly relocated to America through a marriage with her brother-in-law. After giving birth to a daughter conceived during her previous marriage, Gauri deliberately transgresses the conditions of wife, mother and heterosexual person through the decision to abandon her family, seek refuge in an academic career, and have sporadic affairs with women. Therefore, *The Lowland* presents Gauri in a process of rebellion against all traditional Hindu roles assigned to a woman (wifehood, motherhood, and the housewife condition). Her adherence to individualist values is enabled by her relocation to America, which is perceived as a freeing context of reinvention.

Note 3. Gogol is a second-generation South-Asian American character in Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*, torn between the idea of accepting a given name associated with an imposed identity and the possibility of choosing a name and freely adopting a transcultural path.

REFERENCES

Appiah, A. K. (2007) *Cosmopolitanism: ethics in a world of strangers*. London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Berg, W. (2011) Transculturality. In B. Wolfgang (ed.) *Transcultural Areas*, Crossculture (pp. 7-15). Wiesbaden: VS Research.

Botha, M. (2017) *A Theory of Minimalism*. London a.o.: Bloomsbury Academic.

Brosius, C. and Wenzlhuemer, R. (2011) Introduction: transcultural turbulences: towards a multi-sited reading of image lows. In C. Brosius, and R. Wenzlhuemer (eds.) *Transcultural Turbulences: towards a multi-sited reading of image flows*, Transcultural research: Heidelberg studies on Asia and Europe in a global context (pp. 3-24). Heidelberg and New York: Springer.

Dagnino, A. (2013) Global mobility, transcultural literature, and multiple modes of modernity. *The Journal of Transcultural Studies*, 4(2): 130-160.

Epstein, M. (1999) From culturology to transculture. In E. E. Berry and M. Epstein (eds.) *Transcultural Experiments Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (pp. 15-30). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Epstein, M. (1995) *After the Future: the paradoxes of postmodernism and contemporary Russian culture*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Gilsenan Nordin, I., Hansen J. and Llena, C. Z. (2013) Introduction: conceptualizing transculturality in literature. In I. Gilsenan Nordin, J. Hansen and C. Z. Llena (eds.) *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, Cross/Cultures: readings in the post/colonial literatures in English, vol. 167 (pp. ix-xxvii). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Hannerz, U. (2001) *Transnational Connections: culture, people, places*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hawthorne, N. (2006). *The Scarlet Letter: Webster's Thesaurus Edition*. San Diego, CA: Icon Group International, Inc.

Houamdi, D. (2019) The changing face of minimalism in American literature. *Aleph*, 6(2): 55-73.

Krasniqi, M. (2018) Minimalism in literature: Musine Kokalari. *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 4(3): 55-60.

Lahiri, J. (2013) *The Lowland*. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lahiri, J. (2008) *Unaccustomed Earth*. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lahiri, J. (2004) *The Namesake*. London: Harper Perennial.

Lahiri, J. (1999) *Interpreter of Maladies*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Motte, W. Jr. (1999) *Small Worlds Minimalism in Contemporary French Literature*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Neumann, V. (2003) *Neam, popor sau națiune?: despre identitățile politice europene* [Kinfolk, People or Nation?: On European Political Identities]. Bucureşti: Curtea Veche.

Pieterse, J. N. (2009) *Globalisation and Culture: global mélange*. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Rambachan, A. (2006) *The Advaita Worldview: God, world, and humanity*, SUNY series in religious studies. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sartre, J.-P. (1965) *What is Literature?*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Schultermandl, S. and Toplu, S. (2010) A fluid sense of the self: the politics of transnational identity in Anglophone literatures. In S. Schultermandl and S. Toplu (eds.) *A Fluid Sense of the Self: the politics of transnational identity* (pp. 11-24). Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Sharma, C. (2007) *Advaita Tradition in Indian Philosophy: a study of Advaita in Buddhism, Vedanta and Kashmira Shaivism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Strickland, E. (2000) *Minimalism: origins*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Vertovec, S. (2009) *Transnationalism Key Ideas*. London and New York: Routledge.

TEXTS ANALYSED

Lahiri, J. (2021) *Whereabouts*. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lahiri, J. (2016) *In Other Words*. London a.o.: Bloomsbury.

Adriana Elena Stoican (Ph.D. in Literary and Cultural Studies, Lecturer) is currently teaching English for Business Communication at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Her research interests include literature of diaspora, South-Asian American studies and transnationalism. Her articles on South Asian American literature appeared in prestigious academic journals such as *English Studies at NBU, American, British and Canadian Studies, East-West Cultural Passage Journal of the ,'C. Peter Magrath' Research Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature,* and *Transnational Literature e-journal*.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9791-3540

Email: elena.stoican@rei.ase.ro

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 121–134
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.08 © University of Latvia, 2024

LONELINESS AND HUMOUR IN AZİZ NESİN AND NEIL SIMON: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

ÖMER ŞEKERCI and MÜJDE DEMIRAY
Süleyman Demirel University, Turkey

Abstract. This comparative study explores how Aziz Nesin and Neil Simon, representing different literary canons, treat and reflect upon the incorporation of loneliness and humour in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* [Let's Kill Me Honey!] (1970) and *The Odd Couple* (1965), respectively. Both playwrights examine the loneliness that has caught urbanised and atomised humans in two metropolises: Istanbul and New York. Simon deals with the values, concerns, lifestyles, aspirations and problems of middle-class people in his plays with domestic realism. In contrast, Nesin's plays explore lower-working-class people's values, concerns and struggles. Moreover, it focuses on how Nesin and Simon employ humour, as a Lingua Franca of comedy, in their works. The study emphasises the two playwrights' incorporation of the humour theories of *superiority*, *incongruity* and *relief* into the selected dramatic texts. The interactions between the characters in the two plays are analysed according to the three traditional humour theories by assuming a discourse-analytic approach. The study has exhibited that in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom*, all the humour theories have been explicitly observed. The humour largely stems from a case of mistaken identity, which creates incongruity. On the other hand, in *The Odd Couple*, humour is primarily evoked due to the incongruous characteristics of the roommates abandoned by their wives.

Key words: humour, loneliness, comedy, *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!*, *The Odd Couple*

INTRODUCTION

The literature survey demonstrates that a comparative study still needs to be done on the works of Nesin and Simon. The two modern playwrights, Aziz Nesin (1915-1995) and Neil Simon (1927-2018), have been chosen for this analysis because they both function as good representatives of comedy filled with wit, laughter and humour to depict modern humankind's loneliness and misery within their respective national and cultural contexts. It is particularly emphasised how Nesin and Simon incorporate the humour theories of *superiority*, *incongruity*, and *relief* into *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* [Let's Kill Me Honey!] and *The Odd Couple*, respectively. The interactions exchanged by the lonely characters in both plays depicted in

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

humourous situations are analysed according to the three traditional humour theories and the portrayal of loneliness.

Literature is a universal artefact that belongs to humanity irrespective of race, colour, geography, and cultural differences. Comparative studies are powerful tools for understanding other cultures and works of literature. Hajdu (2019: 1-2), in *World Drama*, contends that 'comparative literature has ceased to simply compare disparate literary phenomena to see similarities and differences long ago, tending rather to focus on actual connections between literary cultures'. By this token, Nesin represents the Eastern literary canon, while Simon is a representative of the Western literary canon. In comparative studies, the Eastern and Western literary canons benefit humanity. Western and Eastern literary texts should be read and interpreted as artefacts of humanity.

AZIZ NESIN AND NEIL SIMON

Aziz Nesin, a dissident, modernist, progressive socialist writer, human rights activist, anti-Islamist, and one of the most significant satirists of modern Turkey, perhaps of world literature, was a novelist, playwright, essayist, and humourist. He was born into a lower-class family in Istanbul. He wrote over one hundred books (Yüksel, 1997: 36). He is one of the most important Turkish authors whose works have been translated into more than thirty languages, according to the UNESCO Authors' Index. Many of his works, particularly his comedies, deal with the fight for the honour of his people and attacking the wrong and destructive policies of the government (Kabacalı, 2007: 111). Furthermore, Nesin extensively uses humour in his comedies to attract the audience's attention to the loneliness and misery of humankind. As a playwright, he delivers his messages to the audience by employing witty, satirical humour, triggering the audience to think critically.

Neil Simon was a Jewish-American playwright, screenwriter and television joke writer who grew up in New York. 'He still feels an almost doomed compulsion to live in New York.' (Bryer and Siegel, 2019: 9). He was named Marvin Neil and is regarded as one of the commercially most popular and famous dramatists in the history of American theatre. 'Having established himself as the pre-eminent craftsman of joke-filled urban comedy, Neil Simon continued to dominate that branch of the American drama through the 1980s' (Berkowitz, 2013: 173). Moreover, he is considered one of the most prolific playwrights in the history of American drama. Walden (1980: 77) writes, 'There is little doubt that Neil Simon is one of the most prolific, productive, and successful playwrights the United States has ever produced'.

Simon generally draws two-dimensional characters and is famous for his one-liners. Two-dimensional characters have little psychological insight (Egri, 1960: 34). Simon exhausts comic stuff rather than delving into the psychologies of his characters. His comedies abound with laughter and humour. In addition, they are

labelled as low comedy, appealing to the audience's senses rather than intellect. Simon's plays adopt a single conflict in their plots to propel the action. Şekerci (2023: 130) states that 'A typical dramatic text is based on conflict which propels the plot. The plot of a play develops on verbal and non-verbal conflicts involving characters'. As a master of one-liners, Simon was called the *Laugh Machine* of American theatre and Broadway. However, drama critics have not considered his plays serious enough to be a subject of literary criticism. Chanksy (2015: 178) explains the reason for this as 'Simon is often dismissed as a writer whose background in television made him an expert in the one-liner at the expense of any depth'. He produced numerous plays and movie screenplays and was granted many awards.

Both writers are very different in style, intellectuality, craftsmanship, ideology, and worldview. Nesin (2016: 501) is a radical socialist activist; he says, 'I am the writer of my class, I have to be like this'. On the other hand, Simon is an apolitical writer; he states, 'I am not very much of a political activist either. I have backed many candidates, given money to many candidates, and supported many propositions, but I don't much care for politics' (Simon, 1996: 364). Nesin and Simon are the leading representatives of the unity of opposites. Nesin is a communist, while Simon is a capitalist. Both playwrights use humour in their works for various reasons. 'The speaker in humourous discourse uses language to target an object, a person or a situation from the three worlds we live in: real, social and private, and conveys a message—social or political or general' (Genova, 2016: 38). Whereas Nesin uses satire as a powerful weapon to satirise social, political, and religious oppression, Simon hardly satirises American political or social superstructures in his works. Simon uses comic material (humour or laughter) to entertain the audience by combining simple opposites and reconciling them.

Both playwrights examine the sense of loneliness that caught urbanised and atomised humans in two metropolises: Istanbul and New York. Nesin was born in Istanbul and grew up there, and Simon was born in New York and raised there. The cities are inspirational in moulding and shaping their intellectual, artistic and literary worlds. Whereas Simon mainly depicts middle-class or upper-middle-class New Yorkers in his comedies, Nesin exhibits lower working classes, particularly from Istanbul, in his works. One of the most significant similarities between Nesin and Simon is their choice of comedy for contemplating and depicting modern humankind's loneliness by extensively using humour to alleviate the loneliness of their characters. Drawing humourous and lonely characters suggests that loneliness is a universal element of the human experience. They regard life as neither all comedy nor all tragedy. Moreover, they emphasise the importance of talking and communicating with one another to lessen the effects of loneliness. Nathan (1958: 86) contends, 'We talk to one another about our lives, which is our way of reaching after what is most really real by inwardness'. Nesin and Simon use humour, as a Lingua Franca of comedy, in their oeuvres for various reasons, such as exposing and examining social and individual anxieties, miseries, loneliness and entertainment. Furthermore, they use comedy as a catalyst. *Humour* and *laughter* are significant and distinctive characteristics of comedy.

HUMOUR/LAUGHTER THEORIES AND LONELINESS

Humour, as a style rather than a genre, dates back to ancient times. Plato, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, and many other philosophers wrote about humour (see Hobbes, 1840; Bergson, 1900; Freud, 1905; Palmer, 1994; Critchley, 2002; and Morreall, 2009, to name a few). Henri Bergson's *Laughter* (1900) is regarded as one of the first works written on humour (Sypher, 1980: 62). Clark defines it as the following:

> Humour is a family-resemblance concept: no one could hope to compile any short list of essential properties abstracted from all the many varieties of humour-human misfortune and clumsiness, obscenity, grotesqueness, veiled insult, nonsense, wordplay and puns, human misdemeanours and so on. (Clark, 1970: 20)

However, humour has been utilised to mean funny and hilarious since the 18th century (Stott, 2014: 171). Modern writers have employed humour for many purposes, such as exhibiting happiness, fun, human misfortunes, clumsiness, obscenity, absurdity, and whatever concerns humankind. There are three traditional humour theories: *superiority*, *incongruity* and *relief*. The *superiority theory* is one of the oldest theories. It goes back to Plato and Aristotle. It is 'an expression of a person's feelings of superiority over others' (Morreall, 1982: 244). This theory also means humans like finding humour in other people's misfortunes (Kulka, 2007: 326). The *incongruity theory* goes back to Aristotle, but Kant and Schopenhauer promoted its popularity. This theory presupposes that people laugh at incongruous things and find humour in inconsistent and incongruous circumstances (Morreall, 2009: 7). In addition, Billig (2005: 57) notices, 'Instead of seeking the origins of laughter within the motives of the person who laughs, incongruity theories have sought to identify those incongruous features of the world that provoke laughter'. The *relief theory* is based on the energy release model (Stott, 2014: 184). Spencer and Freud were the leading relief theorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stott puts it as follows:

> Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud saw the triggers of laughter not so much as are cognition of incongruity within scenarios or linguistic formulae, but as a symptom of division and struggle within the self, recognition, as it were, of incongruous selfhood. (Stott, 2014: 182)

Moreover, Freud states that we discharge excessive energy from our suppressed sexual and hostile desires towards others through jokes, witty remarks and humour. However, it is not easy to categorise the traditional humour theories in dramatic texts because they may overlap each other: '[They] characterise the complex phenomenon of humour from very different angles and do not at all contradict each other—rather they seem to supplement each other quite nicely' (Raskin, 1985, cited in Morreall, 2009: 9). It means that no matter how complex humour theories are, they act harmoniously in dramatic texts.

Turkish humour is based on playful, indirect, flexible, friendly and warm banter, while American humour is considered aggressive, inflexible and chaotic. It is given

under the mask of comedy. Bier (1968: 17) says 'American humour reflects American lifestyles and behaviours. And since Americans tend to lead fast-paced, chaotic lives, as an audience, we can understand and associate with humour on that level'. Humour and loneliness represent an excellent unity of opposites. Nesin and Simon aptly utilise humour in their works by delving into deeper impulses that manifest the loneliness of their characters' consciousness to make us accept that we are born alone and pass away alone. Loneliness has been one of the major themes of fiction and drama for ages. Lonely women and men are depicted in literary texts as a recurring trope. Alberti (2019:16) argues that 'Modern loneliness is a product of the nineteenth century, of an increasingly philosophical and industrial focus on the individual over the collective, on the self against the world'. Loneliness did not appear in English-written texts until the onset of the nineteenth century, as we perceive it today. The meaning of loneliness meant oneliness until the 1800s, and it did not have the psychological and emotional impact and meaning as it does today (Alberti, 2019: 18).

To debate loneliness and its historical development in length falls outside the scope of this study. Loneliness can be explored in societal, psychological, philosophical, and socio-economic contexts. The paper demonstrates the characters' loneliness as an accumulation of emotions according to their class and gender differences. There is a saying in monotheistic religions; it reads 'God alone exists in solitude', but Nesin and Simon's characters distort this saying. Additionally, Alberti's (2019: 3) contention supports it as 'the modern rise of loneliness as an epidemic and an emotional state'. The study examines the characters' loneliness in both plays according to their emotional trajectory, implying a negative state. Both plays demonstrate loneliness as a negative and dysfunctional part of the human soul, disconnecting individuals from others. Both playwrights depict domestic realism in their *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* and *The Odd Couple*, respectively, to attract our attention to the actualities of daily life. The two playwrights under scrutiny depict characters in both comedies who consent to being available and present to one another. In *The Odd Couple,* Felix Ungar and Oscar Madison play poker with their friends to relieve their loneliness and monotonous lives; similarly, in *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* Siyen and Diha talk to each other about their memories. The plays posit loneliness as an absence rather than an action because it exists in plain sight. Loneliness differs by class, gender and age. In both plays, the characters are different in age, class and gender. The two older women, Siyen and Diha, experience severe loneliness. At the same time, Oscar and Felix Ungar, who are relatively young compared to Siyen and Diha, experience the pain of loneliness with a less emotional impact.

ANALYSIS OF *HADI ÖLDÜRSENE CANIKOM!*

It is a two-act play depicting the fleeting illusion of happiness and hope for two old widows, Siyen and Diha. They have been next-door neighbours for fifteen years and are intimate friends. Both live alone on the damp basement floor of an old

building in an outer suburb of a big city. Siyen, aged 68, has been a widow for about twenty-three years. She has a son; they live apart and he financially supports her occasionally. She lives by herself on a small widow's pension. Moreover, she seems to have failed to overcome her late husband's memory. The death of her husband creates loneliness for Siyen, making her emotionally distant. She quarrels with the portrait of her late husband to alleviate her loneliness. Diha, 72, has been Siyen's next-door neighbour for about fifteen years. Likewise, she shares the same destiny as her friend and next-door neighbour. Diha has also been a widow for almost twenty-seven years. She lives on a rental income thanks to the inherited house from her father in the city centre. The two widows terribly suffer from a lack of a male partner to end their eternal miserable loneliness and hold on to life with their fellowship and distant memories. The older women seem to crave a romantic partner desperately.

One day, they hear a public notice broadcast on the radio. The radio announcer states that a psychotic killer knocks at the door upon detecting a woman living alone and introduces himself as a gasman to check the gas stove and gas metre to enter the house. After he steps in, he rapes the women, strangles them, and escapes. The serial killer, described on the radio as a handsome young man with green eyes, broad shoulders, a deep voice, and an attractive appearance, draws the attention of the widows, who have been yearning for a male for years. Both crave the opposite sex's affection. The tragicomic play revolves around the arrival of the true gasman, utterly opposite of the given description, whom Siyen and Diha mistake for the serial killer and get excited passionately to be with him even if it costs their lives.

Extracts

(1) SİYEN: I'm utterly tired of it. Almost always fighting, every day...

(2) DİHA (smiling): Loneliness has driven you mad. Fighting with a portrait?

(3) SİYEN: Why not? He is my husband, isn't he? What can I do about his death? Even if he is not here in person, all I can do is fight with his portrait. (Nesin, 1970: 9; all translations are the authors' unless indicated otherwise)

Siyen, living alone at home, seems to quarrel with someone else. Diha, her next-door neighbour, immediately appears in fear and anxiety to check if she is well. In turn 1, Siyen is lamenting her daily fight. However, she appeases her loneliness in her grief-ridden life by speaking and fighting with a portrait of her late husband. She accuses her husband of his early death and, thus, her lonely and miserable life. In turn 2, Diha, finding Siyen shouting at the portrait on the wall, gets relief and smiles. According to the *relief theory,* the character smiles when her excess nervous energy is discharged after discovering that her anxiety is inappropriate and pointless. She finds Siyen's behaviour humourous, and her smile is a sigh of relief.

(1) DİHA: Once he discovers there is nobody but a lonely woman at home... He... you know what... he rapes her...
(2) SİYEN: (with joy, as if she's received very good news) Really!...
(3) DİHA: But after that, he strangles her...
(4) SİYEN: Oh, that is so awful...
(5) DİHA: Wretched! All right, whatever you do is ok but what the hell you strangle them afterwards? Isn't it a pity? (ibid.: 19)

They talk about the news about the psychotic serial killer broadcast on the radio. In turn 1, Diha says that he rapes the lonely women after entering their houses. The Incongruity and Relief Theories operate here. According to the *incongruity theory*, an expectation in the audience is set up for this horrific news. However, Siyen's absurd and incompatible reaction in turn 2 and Diha's contradictory conventional implicature within the context violate the audience's former expectations and evoke humour. The characters' reactions run counter to the conceptual and mental patterns of the audience. The possibility of the arrival of a rapist-murderer is welcomed by the women seeking a man for their sexual desire. In addition, violating the audience's expectations and incongruity helps them release their pent-up excess nervous energy and find it pointless. It indicates the *relief theory*. They get relief and respond to it with laughter.

(1) SİYEN: Come and sit down dear, then, we could think about what to do.
(2) DİHA: (Sits down) It would be a disaster...
(3) SİYEN: If he didn't come up?
(4) DİHA: Either he did, or not... (ibid.: 20)

In turn 1, Siyen offers to make a plan regarding the rapist-killer if he arrives at their home. In turn 2, Diha's description of the situation as awful sounds logical. However, Siyen's question in turn 3 is absurd because it implies that the possibility of his non-arrival is a horrible scenario. In turn 4, Diha's supporting utterance increases the absurdity of the characters' expectations. The arrival of the psychotic and rapist serial killer can likely relieve their loneliness and boredom. According to the *incongruity theory*, the expectations of the audience are blatantly violated. Laughter is kindled in the audience. While they await one thing, they witness the opposite.

(1) DİHA: It's in the paper... Lots of news about it going on in the papers! Cab drivers abducting lonely woman passengers...
(2) SİYEN: No, they don't... Lies, fake news... They victimize poor cab drivers. I've taken cabs so many times at night by myself and gone to remote places. They have done nothing wrong to me. No abduction.
(3) DİHA: Absolutely right... I've also tried many times. They never do that. Our cab drivers are really very virtuous. (ibid.: 27-28)

Diha and Siyen are sitting at home and discussing the daily newspaper news. In turn 1, Diha reads aloud the news about the taxi drivers. They both reject the reliability of the news based on their hands-on experience. However, the news signifies a serious threat to the lonely women in the city, which should be a kind of fear and anxiety for them. In their exchanges in turns 2 and 3, they ignore the seriousness of the news and possible danger because they suppose that the rapist-killer might be a console for their loneliness, contrary to the audience's expectations. Consequently, the emotional or nervous energy of the audience disappears suddenly, so laughter is ignited by discharging the pent-up nervous energy, according to the *relief theory*. Moreover, the violation of the audience's expectations and the contradiction between the news and the characters' approach drive the audience into a dilemma. In terms of the *incongruity theory*, laughter is also triggered by the amusing mismatch, providing a mental jolt.

(1) GASMAN: Yes... What can I do with a little pension money?... I still have to work at my advanced age.

(2) SİYEN: (abhorred) You mean you do it for money?

(3) GASMAN: Of course, madam, it's a tiresome, even unpleasant, and unrelenting job, I know... Shall I do it for free and for the sake of love? (ibid.: 34)

In turn 1, the gasman explains why he still keeps working despite his old age and poor health. Siyen still presumes him as the rapist-killer, veiling himself as a gasman, and she gets perplexed by his answer in turn 2. The absurd exchange between them creates incongruity and triggers laughter. Working as a gasman at 70, just for love in turn 3, is a humourous motive provoking laughter and incongruity.

(1) SİYEN: The postman has delivered a letter, a love letter... You take it out from your chest... It's not your chest, it's a mailbox... And you read the love letter... And of course, you've refused. (imitating Diha) I've refused him.

(2) DİHA: Then, don't you believe me?

(3) SİYEN: Believe what?

(4) DİHA: That I refuse them... (Siyen bursts into a long laugh as if she heard something very funny.) What? What are you laughing at? (ibid.: 45)

In turn 1, Siyen is mocking Diha because she writes love letters and sends them to her own address. She pretends to receive the love letters from her pseudo-admirers. She has already made up a love game to relieve her miserable loneliness. In turn 4, Siyen seems to burst into laughter heartily to ridicule her, and thus, she expresses her delight in the shortcoming of her love game. Siyen's awareness of her make-believe world gives her immeasurable joy. It is an indication of the *superiority theory*. Her malicious laughter is thrown at Siyen's misfortune and misery.

(1) DİHA: (Yelling) Shut up!.. (tears rolling down Diha's eyes, Siyen is laughing. they stay so for a while.) So what? So bleeding what?... I know that the portrait is not yours? (pointing to the portrait on the wall) Is it yours?
(2) SİYEN: (her laughter freezes on her face) Of course it is. Whose do you think?
(3) DİHA: (laughing louder) Come to my house and then, I'll show you whose portrait... Piya Töpi, the great artist, it's her portrait. She was a great star in her day... (ibid.: 46)

Diha revengefully retaliates against Siyen with the portrait on the wall. In reality, it is a film star's portrait. In turn 3, Diha laughs scornfully at Siyen, as does Siyen. According to the *superiority theory*, her awareness of the facts gives her the strength to belittle and mock Siyen, who is obsessed with her past.

(1) GASMAN: Women? I never even gaze at them...
(2) SİYEN: (Flirtatiously) Liar! Come on, don't dare fool me. I can see it in your eyes, what a womanizer you are... The way you look...
(3) GASMAN: (convulsively laughing) I'm short-sighted... (ibid.: 52)

In turn 1, the gasman explicitly rejects Siyen's suggestion that he is after women. Siyen's name-calling in turn 2 jolts him into hearty laughter in turn 3. According to the *incongruity theory*, the gasman finds it humourous, as he has never expected to be called a womaniser. A sudden violation of his expectations makes him laugh convulsively. He looks different because of his shortsightedness, but Siyen is not aware of it.

(1) GASMAN: (laughing) I swear I am the gasman...
(2) SİYEN: Don't believe you... You'd have strangled me long ago, if you were the gasman. (ibid.: 60)

Siyen coquettishly tickles the gasman to make him come closer to her, but to no avail. In turn 1, the ticklish man does not respond to her desire. In return, Siyen playfully regards strangling as rape, which the serial killer commits successively. She implies a sexual affair, but she fails to express it manifestly. According to the *relief theory*, she makes a sexually driven remark humourously by releasing her excess pent-up sexual energy.

ANALYSIS OF *THE ODD COUPLE*

It is a three-act play concerning the troubled round-the-clock domestic lives of utterly opposed roommates, Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar. Oscar Madison, 43, is a New York Post sportswriter and lives in a sizeable twelve-floor apartment

building on Riverside Drive, New York City. He is an easy-going, carefree, sloppy, irresponsible, and financially unorganised man. His wife, Blanche, was tired of all this, so she divorced him months ago. He throws weekly poker games to win money for his overdue alimony payments and to escape his loneliness, but he always loses. The poker games are held every Friday with his regular friends, Murray, Roy, Speed, Vinnie, and Felix Ungar, in his apartment, in an unbearable slovenliness which was once a lovely family apartment.

On the contrary, Felix Ungar, 44, is a news writer who is an obsessive-compulsive cleaner, a perfect cook, and highly tight-fisted. He is strictly pedant with petty finance, cooking and cleaning. His wife, Frances, fed up with him, decides to end their twelve-year-long marriage, and she kicks him out without having any pangs of conscience. Felix cannot stand the thought of a lonely life bereft of his wife and two children, so he has suicidal inclinations. Moreover, Oscar Madison, getting bored with loneliness and pitying Felix, offers him to move in until he pulls himself together. He seems to have rediscovered his compassion for Felix. The play humourously deals with two opposite characters' sharing the same apartment. Unfortunately, this mutual sharing leads to intolerable and inescapable arguments rather than helping them overcome their problems. They finally end up living apart after three weeks of companionship but remain poker friends as before.

Extracts

(1) ROY. (Opens the betting.) You still didn't fix the refrigerator? It's been two weeks now. No wonder it stinks in here.

(2) OSCAR. (Picking up his cards.) Temper, temper. If I wanted nagging I'd go back [to] my wife... (Throws them down.) I'm out... Who wants food? (Simon, 2010: 9)

Oscar hosts a regular Friday poker night at home and serves his poker friends some drinks and fast food. Almost all of them have family-related problems that cause them loneliness and alienation. That is why they come together to play poker to lessen their loneliness and have fun together. In turn 1, Roy complains about the hot-served beer and his broken refrigerator. Oscar's analogy between his poker friend and his estranged wife is somewhat unpredictable and humourous in turn 2. However, Oscar seems to have no sorrow or trouble because of his loneliness. On the contrary, he is quite satisfied with his peaceful life, with no one nagging or meddling. It is generally expected that he may long for the regular family life he used to have. His incompatible and odd analogy in turn 2 demonstrates incongruity. Moreover, it triggers laughter, as he seems complacent with his life.

(1) OSCAR. (Looks under bread.) I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches… Well, what do you say?

(2) MURRAY. What's the green?

(3) OSCAR. It's either very new cheese or very old meat.

(4) MURRAY. I'll take the brown (ibid.: 9)

Oscar serves Murray some sandwiches and asks which one he wants to have in turn 1. The colour green sounds awkward to Murray in turn 2, and he asks about its ingredients. In turn 3, Oscar's answer exhibits incongruity and absurdity; it violates the audience's general expectation and drives them to laugh as the possible reasons behind the colour, either new cheese or old meat, are incompatible. The implicature is that Oscar's loneliness leads him to a bohemian lifestyle.

(1) ROY. (Glares at MURRAY.) Are you crazy? You're not going to eat that, are you?
(2) MURRAY. I'm hungry.
(3) ROY. His refrigerator's been broken for two weeks. I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle. (ibid.: 9)

In turn 1, Roy warns Murray not to eat the sandwiches lest he get food poisoned. In turn 3, his response implies an absurd and illogical utterance related to the milk, and it violates the general mental pattern of the audience and provokes a mental jolt for laughter by creating incongruity and making them laugh at the absurdity of the situation. His hyperbolic remark in turn 3 on Oscar's slovenliness and dirtiness is highly laughter-evoking.

(1) OSCAR. Where are you going?
(2) FELIX. (Stops in the doorway. He looks at OTHERS who are all staring at him.) To the john.
(3) OSCAR. (Looks at others worried, then at FELIX.) Alone?
(4) FELIX. (Nods.) I always go alone! Why?
(5) OSCAR. (Shrugs.) No reason!... You gonna be in there long?
(6) FELIX. (Shrugs, then says meaningfully, like the martyr.) As long as it takes. (ibid.: 3)

Felix, deeply depressed upon being kicked out by his wife, arrives at Oscar's and wants to go to the bathroom. However, Oscar and his poker friends are aware of his sensitive and fragile character traits, and thus, they think he might commit suicide there. Their suspicion of his possible suicide makes them nervous and strained; however, the absurd questions posed by Oscar in turns 3 and 5 alleviate the strained nervous energy and render the exchange humourous, as indicated in the *relief theory*.

(1) SPEED. What do you mean, how? Razor blades, pills. Anything that's in there.
(2) OSCAR. That's the kid's bathroom. The worst he could do is brush his teeth to death. (ibid.: 24)

When Felix enters the bathroom, Oscar thinks he will unlikely commit suicide there in turn 1. Oscar's turn creates a humourous scene in a problematic situation and evokes laughter. According to the *relief theory*, laughter releases strained nervous energy

while the audience feels pity and fear. Still, later, it is found unnecessary and pointless, and the audience discharges their excess jumpy energy with laughter and is relieved.

(1) CECILY. People bring us their bodies and we do wonderful things with them.
(2) GWENDOLYN. Actually, if you're interested, we can get you ten per cent off.
(3) CECILY. Off the price, not off your body.
(4) FELIX. Yes, I see. (He laughs, they ALL laugh. Suddenly shouts towards kitchen.) Oscar, where's the drinks. (ibid.: 64)

The sisters Cecily and Gwendolen live together without male partners. They are upstairs neighbours. Oscar invites them to help Felix forget his estranged wife's memory as a kind of console and have some fun to lessen his depressing loneliness. Cecily says she works in a health club with her sister when Felix asks what she does. In turn 1, Cecily details her job at the health club. Gwendolen ironically offers a discount if he considers any operation. Cecily, an uninhibited woman, tells a sexually-driven joke and evokes laughter in turn 3. Her sexual trick and the discharge of excess energy refer to the *relief theory*. The release of energy is fulfilled with laughter.

(1) CECILY. Maybe you can mention Gwen and I in one of your news reports.
(2) FELIX. Well, if you do something spectacular, maybe I will.
(3) CECILY. Oh, we've done spectacular things but I don't think we'd want it spread all over the Telly, do you, Gwen? (ibid.: 64-65)

When Felix says he works as a news writer, Cecily coquettishly asks if they are newsworthy in turn 1. Unaware of her playfulness, Felix takes her question seriously and answers solemnly in turn 2. As a response, Cecily tells a sexual joke humourously to implicate her sexual drive and capacity. According to the *relief theory,* she tells a sexual joke to override her internal censorship of her pent-up sexual energy and again discharges her excessive nervous energy.

CONCLUSION

In *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!,* all humour theories have been explicitly observed. The humour largely stems from a case of mistaken identity, which creates incongruity. Moreover, the two old widows' incongruous and unexpected reactions to the horrible news on the radio and in the newspapers provide relief. Although the characters whose lives, ages, living standards, and fates are identical, they find a way to mock each other by establishing pseudo-superiority. However, they try to alleviate their miserable loneliness by being available to each other. In *The Odd Couple,* humour is largely evoked due to the incongruous characteristics of

the roommates abandoned by their wives. Hyperbolic criticisms uttered for Oscar's slovenliness and his carefree reactions to Felix's misery and suicidal mood provide a kind of relief. Although the characters are utterly opposite, they do not mock each other. They incessantly fight each other like cats and dogs.

The *incongruity* and *relief theories* have predominantly been observed in *The Odd Couple*, while the *superiority theory* has not been detected. The age, gender and class differences significantly affect the level and density of the characters' loneliness in both plays. In *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!*, the older characters are of low social standing, while those in *The Odd Couple* are much younger and from the middle class, so the loneliness does not impact the characters at the same density and level. However, at their advanced ages, Siyen and Diha are more sociable, optimistic, and cooperative with each other than Oscar and Felix. The two old widows are desperate to tackle their loneliness, but they have no means to reverse it. Oscar and Felix, though they have the means to alleviate their loneliness, do not exhaust it. Nesin's old and poor widows are still enthusiastically clinging to life with false hopes, make-believe worlds, and distant memories. Their bond of friendship also enables them to endure their loneliness, while Simon's middle-aged divorcés often have rows due to their opposite characteristics. Furthermore, they do not attempt to end their loneliness in their private lives, though they have professions and a social environment. Despite their loneliness, Siyen and Diha are full of life, while Oscar and Felix are more depressive. Both plays successfully depict how loneliness is incorporated into humour as a universal human element.

REFERENCES

Alberti, F. B. (2019) *A Biography of Loneliness: the history of emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bergson, H. (1980) Laughter: an essay on the meaning of the comic. In W. Sypher (ed.) *Comedy* (pp. 61-193) Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Berkowitz, M. G. (2013) *American Drama of the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bier, J. (1968) *The Rise and Fall of American Humour,* 1st ed. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart.

Billig, M. (2005) *Laughter and Ridicule: towards a social critique of humour*. London: Sage Publications.

Bryer, R. J. & Siegel, B. (2019) *Conversations with Neil Simon*. Mississippi: University of Press Mississippi.

Chanksy, D. (2015) *Kitchen Sink Realisms, Domestic Labour, Dining, and Drama in American Theatre*. Iowa: Iowa University Press.

Clark, M. (1970) Humour and incongruity. *Philosophy,* 45: 20-32.

Critchley, S. (2002) *On Humour: thinking in action*. London: Routledge.

Egri, L. (1960) *The Art of dramatic Writing*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Freud, S. ([1905] 2001) Jokes and their relation to the unconscious, In J. Strachey (ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 24. London: Vintage.

Genova, D. (2016). 'Ha-Ha' and 'Really?' or about the serious in the humourous in the TV comedy show *Masters of the AIR*. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 6: 35-46. https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.06.2016.03

Hajdu, P. (2019) World drama. *Neohelicon*, 46: 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-019-00482-5

Hobbes, T. (1840) Human nature. In W. Molesworth (ed.) *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Vol. 11 (pp. 1-77). London: John Bohn.

Kabacalı, A. (2007) *Gözyaşından Gülmeceye Aziz Nesin* [From Tears to Laughter Aziz Nesin]. Istanbul: Gürer Publications.

Kulka, T. (2007) The incongruity of incongruity theories of humour. *Organon*, 14 (3): 320-333.

Morreall, J. (2009) *Comic Relief: a comprehensive philosophy of humour*. Chicago: Wiley-Blackwell.

Morreall, J. (1982) A new theory of laughter. *Philosophical Studies*, 42: 243-254.

Nathan A. S. (1958) *Modern Literature and the religious Frontier*. New York: Harber & Bros.

Nesin, A. (2016) *Yol: Böyle Gelmiş Böyle Gitmez—I, Öz Yaşam Öyküsü*. [The Road: that is the way he has come, but that is not the way he is leaving—I: An autobiography]. Istanbul: Nesin Yayınevi.

Nesin, A. (1973) *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Mizahı* [Turkish Humour in the Republican Period]. Istanbul: Akbaba.

Palmer, J. (1994) *Taking Humour Seriously*. London: Routledge.

Simon, N. (1996) *Rewrites: a memoir*. New York: Touchstone.

Stott, A. (2014) *Comedy,* 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Şekerci, Ö. (2023) Culpeper's impoliteness strategies in Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues*. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture,* 13: 125-141. https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.13.2023.09

Walden, D. (1980) Neil Simon: toward act III?. *Melus,* 7 (2): 77-86.

Yüksel, A. (1997) Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosundan On Yazar [Ten Writers in contemporary Turkish theater]. Istanbul: Mitos Boyut.

TEXTS ANALYSED

Nesin, A. (1970) *Hadi Öldürsene Canikom!* [Let's kill me honey!]. Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası.

Simon, N. (2010) *The Odd Couple*. New York: Samuel French, Inc.

Ömer Şekerci (Prof.) has been working at Süleyman Demirel University, Türkiye since 2000. His main research interests are modern drama studies, linguistics, pragmatics, literary criticism, discourse analysis and literary theory.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9074-3841

Email: omersekerci@sdu.edu.tr

Müjde Demiray (PhD candidate) has been working at Süleyman Demirel University, Türkiye since 2019 and is currently doing her PhD on modern drama. Her research includes modern drama studies, linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5370-0049

Email: mujdedemiray@sdu.edu.tr

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 135–153
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.09 © University of Latvia, 2024

ANDY ADAMS AND WESTERN MYTH: THE FRONTIER AND HIS *LOG OF A COWBOY*

EDWARD OWEN TEGGIN
Diponegoro University, Indonesia

and

SHOFI MAHMUDAH BUDI UTAMI
General Soedirman University, Indonesia / Binghamton University, USA

Abstract. This article examines the position of Andy Adams' famous work, *The Log of a Cowboy*, through the lens of Western myth and the concept of coloniality. The novel has been critiqued in a variety of ways over the years, with reviews often citing the same factors in their evaluations. Foremost of these has been Adams' lack of finesse in his writing style, with his particular attention to what he deemed to be objective truth. In this study, the *Log* will be re-examined with the aim of providing a fresh insight into how veterans of the Western trails, such as Adams, viewed the dynamic space in which they lived and worked. Therefore, the concept of the frontier, viewed as a stereotypical assumption in both mythological and colonial terms, is used as a lens of investigation in order to critique Adams' descriptions and viewpoints. The study concludes that although Adams' intention was to create a work true to life on the trail, he ultimately permitted himself to become another speaker for Western stereotypes. It is proposed that seemingly innocuous literary works such as the *Log* can be included amongst discussions of colonial fiction in the wider field of American studies and, by extension, in the latter postcolonial sphere, through their construction of stereotypical discourses and the glorifying of trail life.

Key words: western trails, frontier, cowboys, cattle drives, colonial west

INTRODUCTION

Andy Adams' famous work, *The Log of a Cowboy* (henceforth *Log*), occupies a curious place in the history and literature of the American West. It is a work that has been both derided for its lack of style and character development and held up, in the words of Dobie (1926: 93), as 'the best book that has ever been written of cowboy life.' This remarkable dual position that Adams' work holds is due to his specific stylistic intent and approach to his subject. Adams' supposed aim was

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

to produce an account of the West as faithfully as he could remember his own experience of it. Adams was born in Thorncreek Township, Indiana, in 1859 to an Irish father and a Scottish mother. Running away from home at age 15, Adams worked several odd jobs in the West before his arrival in San Antonio, Texas, in c. 1882. For ten years after, he worked as a cowboy, driving horses up the trail from Texas to Kansas (Johnson, 1977: 203-204). It is from this working experience that Adams sought to describe life on the trail and communicate his less romantic view of frontier life. Whereas this devotion to accuracy and a 'true' depiction of life in the West is commendable, it has not served to create a novel that is renowned for its complexity or style.

It is perhaps strange that Adams should have sought to become a novelist given his lack of training as a writer or even given his limitations in terms of style. However, Adams is indeed responsible for seven major works between the years 1903 and 1927. Molen (1969: 24) has pointed to Adams' dissatisfaction with a production of Hoyt's play, *The Texas Steer*, as the genesis of Adams' writing ambitions, with him being keen to produce something more factual of his own. To this end, Adams was seeking to dismantle much of the myth associated with depictions of the American cowboy. Such myths were effectively stereotypes that were created in order to portray the otherness of those from outside the American settler identity. Thakur (2012: 241) has examined this strategy in detail for studies of colonial anxiety. According to Coffin (1953: 290-291), viewed through the prism of Rousseau's 'natural man' theory, the cowboy myth emerged as a result of Western local narratives and nationalism combined with an urge towards violence and individual law. The individualistic ideal is something also picked up on by Murwantono (2022: 194-195).

Whereas Adams chose the medium of fiction to tell his story, surprising given his desire for historical accuracy in his narrative, he seemingly failed to achieve critical success as either a novelist or historian through his restricted realism-styled work (Quissell, 1972: 211-212). Of the *Log* in particular, Carter (1981: 361, 369-370) has highlighted the apparent lack of historical research that Adams conducted prior to writing. This lack of research dovetailed with several key omissions from his trail narrative. Famous landmarks such as Chimney Rock, Colorado, were omitted entirely, and he fabricated seven Indian lakes along the trail (ibid.; Adams, 1903: 57-59). The *Log* and its descriptions, as such, cannot be said to be entirely factual, though this has not prevented some scholars from being fooled in the past. This was Adams' right as a novelist, of course, but it does serve to dent his supposed aim of historical accuracy, and it also connects Adams to the wider tradition of personal histories in the West (see Cavaioli, 1983; Morin, 2002; Grant, 2011;).

Considerations of historical accuracy also draw us, as Adams' readers, to look beyond the base narrative he has presented us with—a group of cowboys driving cattle up the trail from Texas to Montana—and consider what the wider context of such activity in the West was (Adams, 1903: 9, 40). For the purposes of this study, the West is viewed as a dynamic space that is not fixed in geographic terms. In agreement with White's (1993: 3-4) views, the West is seen as a space that developed

as a result of conquest and the mingling of diverse peoples over a number of years. Such a transformation of space is reminiscent of colonial processes that took place in European empires, particularly among privately interested individuals, with the ambition to dominate others and take possession of lands and revenues evident (Dirks, 2006: 27, 37-39). Therefore, Adams' *Log* serves not only Western reality but, most importantly, carries specific issues pertaining to disparate discourses, such as the emergence of western myth and how this is viable enough through the creation of narrative.

THE LOG AND AMERICAN COLONIALITY

The use of texts such as Adam's *Log* as a lens through which to view the American West presents an intriguing opportunity for critiquing nineteenth-century America. It is the concept of myth, surrounding both the cowboy and the burgeoning American state, that serves as the analytical prism in this regard. The United States' eighteenth-century evolution from settler colony to independent republic and its own journey in shaping national identity through the settling of Western territories have fed into the myth of the American West, portraying it as a place that was emblematic of an imagined American identity and concepts of freedom. At the outset, this study contends that the actions of the United States in settling the West and expanding its frontier into new territories amounted to colonial activity due to the process of settlement, the seizing of land, and the forced removal and othering of indigenous peoples. The resolution of such, however, is intimately tied up in the mythic dimension. Whereas Adams' narrative attempts to portray a factual account of 'real' cowboy life on the trails, what it has also achieved is the promulgation of an entirely different myth than the supposed romantic ideal of the cowboy. The cowboy, now held up as a mythic ideal of 'Americanness' taming a wild and uninhabited frontier, in turn serves as an instrument of the colonial process and the othering of indigenous peoples. The discourses created and maintained by writers such as Adams, his characters, and the viewpoints which developed in the wider American consciousness feed into the mythic colonial element.

The modern United States' difficult history with regard to the oppression and displacement of indigenous peoples, nineteenth-century territorial expansion, and aggression against neighboring states such as Mexico adds weight to the view discussed by Bender (2006: 45-46, 48-51) with regard to a specifically 'American' way of conducting empire. What has historically been termed 'internal colonialism,' and was more fully unpacked in the context of American exceptionalism by Mackenthun (2000: 36-37), firmly places the American West as a zone of colonial conflict. To contextualize colonialism for the purpose of this study, it may be seen as a series of acts leading to the control and domination, partially or in full, of territories and people belonging to another nation. This process often involved the physical transplantation of settlers and the exploitation of the land

and indigenous populations for the benefit of the metropolis. In the case of the American West, migrants from the East of America traveled along the pioneer trails to begin new lives in newly established territories, displacing the indigenous population in many cases. Returning to the creation of an expansionist American narrative constructed in the urban center surrounding the prospect of great riches in the new colonial space, it is evocative of the gentlemanly capitalist theory in which expansion into new colonial spaces was driven by privately interested individuals and networks in the metropolis (Cain & Hopkins, 1994: 85-6). In the American West example, this is observed in the infamous gold rush narratives and the construction of the Western railroads (Curtis, 2009: 278).

American coloniality is, however, a complicated matter due to the differing experiences of the American state and people following independence. The United States won its independence following the 1775-1783 American Revolutionary War, though the American state did not emerge out of an extractive system of colonial rule as in the case of other former colonies such as India or Indonesia, which went through a modern period of decolonization. Rather, it was a violent revolution fought between the colonial power and its own former settler population. For this reason, the situation of coloniality and postcoloniality in the American example cannot be taken as a like-for-like comparison with later colonial examples in Asia or Africa (see Cheyfitz, 1993: 118; Boehmer, 1995: 4; Klor de Alva, 1995: 247). This paper does, however, view the geopolitical behavior of the United States regarding the nineteenth-century Western frontier as colonial in nature due to the transformative nature of the process in terms of space, migration, and othering. Discussing the nature of colonial and postcolonial experiences in former colonies is, of course, also a fascinating and important field that can contribute to American studies. Innovations such as Weisman's (1995: 477-478) view that relationships between former colonies—the United States and Canada being his examples—can provide further context to the relationship between the two states. Such reassessments and critical reappraisals are at the heart of this study's aim in discussing Adams' *Log*.

The novel is of interest in the colonial sense in that Adams has sought to provide a factual description of life on the frontier for those living and working there. During much of the late nineteenth century, the West was a site of extreme change and colonial expansion. Again, the seizure of land, violence, and forced displacement of indigenous others are important factors here, and America's so-called manifest destiny and the right by divine ordination to colonize the continent foreshadow this (Pratt, 1927: 795-796; Deopujari, 1966: 490-491). Adams' work, whilst seeking to take the romance, myth, and exoticism out of the West, has instead acted to normalize the passive colonial processes that were at work on the frontier. Effectively, Adams and writers like him have succeeded in portraying the figure of the cowboy as a hero of the American way of life. Such descriptions not only reinforce existing stereotypes surrounding the process of othering but also lead their readership towards the viewpoint that American expansion in the West was a wholly positive action. For example, in Adams' (1903: 9) narrative, the 'circle-dot'

cowboys were driving cattle up the trail to the Blackfoot embassy for the benefit of the Blackfoot Indians of Montana who were placed on the reservation.

The reservation system can be seen as a determined colonial structure in that it was created in the 1850s in response to the American annexation of California, Oregon, and Texas in the 1840s. With these states then being considered new American territory, the former policy of moving Native Americans to the West needed reappraisal (Dippel, 2014: 2136). The use of cowboys as agents of colonization and colonial control can thus be established at this early juncture, but Adams' descriptions of the trail may also act as signifiers of the colonial experience. The concept of the dynamic frontier is key here, with the lack of effective government control in this space and the cowboys' interactions with Native Americans as intriguing elements. By using Adams' *Log* as a case study to discuss coloniality in the American West and, latterly, the postcolonial connotations, the great complexity of the colonial frontier is demonstrated, and new possibilities in postcolonial and migration studies are illustrated.

MYTH AND THE WESTERN NOVEL

In critiquing Adams' and his *Log*, Graham (1980: 293-296) has opined that whilst enthusiastic folklorists such as Dobie have held it up as a triumph, and others have mistakenly placed their faith in it as having complete factual fidelity, it is a work of fiction that lacks a critical standpoint and plot progression. Effectively, this means that there is no development of the characters or their contexts. This was a problem, as the Western literary industry expected characters to be presented in relation to the commonly held beliefs of the audience. By placing the cowboy within the canon of expected moral and natural values, the novelist could make their characters relatable to the reader(s) and, therefore, likely please them as well (Boatright, 1966: 11-12). By deliberately choosing not to pander to the expectations of the consumer, Adams immediately placed himself outside of popular expectations and made his product less desirable for a general reader. Even though, as Walker (1977: 276-279) has highlighted, the real cowboy was less of a romantic hero and more of a hardworking rural worker, the imagined and erroneous ideal of the cowboy aligned with what was expected by readers in urban settings. Walker's critique of Adams' *Log* identifies the importance of the cowboy myth in constructing the identity of the cowboy. In laying this out, he discusses that while Adams is adept at presenting what he describes as the 'cowness' of the setting, he also misses out on a great deal of detail. Whereas the narrative information may be very authentic and based on personal experiences, the cowboy remains a mere figure due to the lack of proper characterization (ibid.: 283-284). Despite Adams' desire to present a true account of the cowboy, he has perhaps failed to bring the cowboy to life in his novelization due to his stylistic limitations.

Adams' use of the circle-dot cowboys as a means to glorify the West as he remembered it is reminiscent of Kipling's famous use of his novel *Kim* to extol

the virtues of colonial service in British India. In Kipling's vision, India was a dynamic space full of excitement for young colonial servants. This, Parry (2002: 310-313) has concluded, was a concerted attempt to 'falsify the historical actuality by representing the internal state of India as a place that rejoices in its cosmopolitanism.' In both the Adams and Kipling examples, the characters are present in a distinctly colonial setting, including factors such as the interaction with diverse others and the transformative efforts of the subjugation of lands and peoples. The authors' aims were different, of course, with Adams pursuing his desire to construct a factual account of cowboy life and Kipling seeking to promote the opportunity to be had for young European men in the empire. The result in both cases, however, has served a similar purpose. Namely, the curation of a mythic narrative surrounding activity in the colonial space. The authors were seemingly unaware of the broader consequences of such processes, reflecting the trend of colonial actors throughout history, and were thus blind to potential postcolonial repercussions further down the line. The upshot of this was the dismantling of a symbolic discourse, the mythic element in this example, and the sudden appearance of truth. Acknowledgements of historic colonial exploitation in Africa, Asia, Australia, and South America have seen much greater discussion in recent years, though colonial processes in North America, as noted above during the nineteenth century, have been much slower to be recognized.

Adams' (1903: 31, 38, 71-83) cheerful descriptions of the circle-dot cowboys sitting around the campfire, telling tall tales, and harmoniously going about their work suggest an idealization of a mythic and rustic ideal. Their telling stories and reminiscing about old sweethearts are good examples of how the reality of life on the trail has been airbrushed in order to appeal to the mythic ideal. Whereas sociability around the campfire was indeed an aspect of cowboy life, the laid-back setting described by Adams was by no means the reality of every evening. Diarists who recorded their experiences crossing the trail have described high winds, storms, disease, and the unpredictable nature of animals as factors that negatively impacted their experiences (Letter from Finley McDiarmid to Constantia McDiarmid, 5 June 1850, University of California, BANC MSSC-B605; Raymond Herndon, 1902: 50, 92). It is a curious consideration that the West, while ostensibly offering artists and writers a myriad of possibilities, also brings with it a series of limitations based on readers' expectations. This is linked to the mythic connotations of the setting and the character of the cowboy, with consumers expecting the cowboy to be a cheerful outdoorsman triumphing over the adversity of the prairie. Adams' numerous references to the campfire are an example of this at work. Tellingly, however, the *Log*'s narrator briefly referred to the fact that 'a wet, hungry man is not to be jollied or reasoned with' (Adams, 1903: 154).

Adams and the *Log* are perhaps doubly disappointing in terms of the cowboy myth since his narrative did not fully pander to the mythic element of the West, nor did his style catch the imagination. De Pillis (1963: 291), in detailing the work of Smith on the West, however, has noted how he put forward the argument that the West was more important as a symbol and myth than as a 'real' place. Adams,

in attempting to sell his vision of the authenticity and accuracy of his West, misses the consideration that the mythic dimension, so important in the Western canon, is an enlargement and not a distortion of its reality (Walker, 1977: 295). One of the key passages in which Adams' novel has potentially managed to fulfill both the factual and mythic dimensions is in his description of Dodge City, Kansas, via the cowman McNulta below.

> I've been in Dodge every summer since '77 ... and I can give you boys some points. Dodge is one town where the average bad man of the West not only finds his equal, but finds himself badly handicapped. The buffalo hunters and range men have protested against the iron rule of Dodge's peace officers, and nearly every protest has cost human life. (Adams, 1903: 191)

Dodge City has a place in popular narratives of the frontier as a site of vice and a venue of frequent violence. The above quote very neatly demonstrates that this was also a consensus that Adams, as a former cowboy, held. Whereas cowboy mythology has been noted to exaggerate the folklore of the trail, Adams' depiction of Dodge, while certainly playing to mythical elements for the benefit of his readers, also contains nuggets of truth. Dykstra and Manfra (2002: 19) have assessed Adams' Dodge chapter and concluded that, whilst it was certainly a mix of fact and fancy, it also provides missing historical information about Dodge's law-reform experiment in the early 1880s. In the historical context, Adams' (1903: 195-196, 205-209) descriptions of a lecture hall riot, the assault on a dancing hall bouncer, and the prohibition of firearms in town ring true. As a result of correlations such as this, Dykstra and Manfra (2002: 38-40) have concluded that Adams was likely present at Dodge in 1882. Similarly, they have opined that he must also have received his information from both personal experience and oral histories since detailed narratives of Dodge, such as those he reproduced, were not readily available at the time of Adams' writing (ibid.). Graham (1980: 295), however, has critiqued Adams' chapter on Dodge as catering to the popular stereotype of the cowboy as a gunslinger.

Despite the desire for and facility with myth in the West, the argument that the life of a cowboy is less exciting than mythical narratives portray it seems apt. Atherton (1961: 2-4) has drawn attention to this in his study of cowboys and cattlemen, drawing the conclusion that, despite the popularity of the cowboy in fiction, the rancher was, in fact, the central character of the setting. Indeed, the reality of cowboy and Western life was noted to be one of great hardship and loneliness, with cowboys themselves being scruffy and leading a burden-filled life (Walker, 1960: 310-312). In Adams' telling, however, he has portrayed the lifestyle as also having the potential to be laid-back and easy-going if animals were well managed, with a distinct laissez-faire attitude adopted by the novel's foreman, Flood, quoted below. Whereas this description is perhaps idealistic and leans into the mythic element of the cowboy being in command of their surroundings and dominating nature, it also speaks to the practicalities of effective animal care and

management on the trail. This is something discussed in detail by Ahmad (2012: 165-167) in her work on mid-nineteenth-century emigrant wagon trains heading west across the plains.

The cowboy and his horse are, of course, inextricably intertwined in the popular imagination, with the mythic lifestyle and narrative always pairing the two together. Denoting the cowboy as being inseparable from his mount is not an isolated occurrence in terms of the history of horse and rider. Indeed, a horse was an essential piece of equipment throughout history for tasks ranging from herding to warfare. As such, there was a definite practicality to the relationship. It is perhaps more so the relationship between horse and cowboy that catches the imagination and breathes life into the mythic narrative. The horse, as such, has become essential to the identity of the cowboy. A similar relationship dynamic has also been noted by Ropa (2019: 10-11) in her examination of medieval knights and the social status surrounding their mounts. In popular representations of the cowboy and his horse, it is often the case that the cowboy and his individual horse, for example, The Lone Ranger and Silver, are held up as a mythic ideal. The reality, however, was that cowboys operated with a string of horses, which they continually rotated in order to prevent fatigue in any one animal, something also commented upon by Adams (1903: 14). Further dangers such as thirst, hunger, injury, theft, and toxic alkali water on the trail were also considerations.

> Boys, the secret of trailing cattle is never to let your herd know that they are under restraint. Let everything that is done be done voluntarily by the cattle. From the moment you let them off the bed ground in the morning until they are bedded at night, never let a cow take a step, except in the direction of its destination. In this manner you can loaf away the day, and cover from fifteen to twenty miles, and the herd in the mean time will enjoy all the freedom of the open range. (Adams, 1903: 28-29)

The idea of dominating the frontier surroundings and the vision that the cowboy was the hero figure of the space say much about the way in which inhabitants of the West and consumers of Western fiction viewed their role in the environment. That is to say that, as the above quote describes, the West presumably construed an imaginative place where settlers tried to conquer and saw the land as a place where the settlers could seize their freedom. It is also emphasized earlier that the way cowboys treated their herd indicated their freedom. In this sense, the West is not only described as an imaginative world but extensively denotes idealized individualism and independence.

As Paul (2014: 312-314) has articulated, the West has often been considered a sort of Edenic paradise made for settlement and homemaking. Such fanciful representations served to symbolize an idealized form of pastoral simplicity and independence based on subsistence farming. These descriptions necessarily pit the idealized rural West against the industrially urbanized East of America and portray the fallacy that American settlers had a predominantly rural heritage in

the frontier zone. Such representations play into Turner's (1989: 7) thesis regarding the belief that the frontier progressively civilized Western space and helped to create American national identity and democracy. Taniguchi (2004: 28-29), in her critique of Turner, has pointed out that, following the end of trailing and the growth of both railroads and industry, native peoples were increasingly pushed aside.

Turner's thesis argued that the process of settling the West and the American people triumphing over the wilderness would assist in the remaking of America in a mold far removed from European notions of aristocracy, landed interests, and empire. This is, however, yet another example of the Western myth masking the realities of the transformation. In moving west and conquering the rugged wilderness, American settlers and their government were actively colonizing the land and subjugating people in a very similar way to European behavior in the early modern era. The assumption that America was a republic that had broken free from colonialism and was therefore incapable of acting in a colonial-imperial manner was and is a very contentious one. The displacement of indigenous peoples, the intensive farming and mining of new territories, and the American annexation of Texas from Mexico in 1845 underline this. The imagined Western history in connection with the displacement of indigenous peoples also brings us to the focal point of this study, namely, American coloniality in works such as that of Adams.

THE CIRCLE-DOT COWBOYS AND THE COLONIAL

The importance of coloniality to this study and in the wider context of the American West is best viewed through the lens of marginalized indigenous peoples in the imagined space of the frontier. There has been a school of thought that has attempted to assign postcoloniality to the descendants of European settlers, though this has been dismissed by Boehmer (1995: 4) as misplaced. Conversely, as Kramer (2011: 1348) has argued, while modern Americans may have sought to distance themselves from empire and point towards republican ideals, the imperial has long been a useful tool in studies attempting to situate the United States in global history. This detachment from empire is understood as, as proposed by Bascara (2006: vii), model-minority imperialism, which becomes a new form of domination within the practices of colonial discourses in the context of modern America. Therefore, this postcolonial context does not necessarily situate an interplay of an 'East–West' relationship in the aftermath of British imperialism in the U.S., but rather a growing concern towards racial minorities in the U.S. affected by the existence of maintaining colonial ideology and discourses. In this regard, the U.S. is as ascendant as the empire through which colonial practices, particularly the westward expansion that displaced Native Americans, became viable and conspicuous.

It is contended that America's internal expansion and colonialism across the North American continent exposed indigenous peoples to colonial processes and, ultimately, postcolonial situations. This assumption dovetails with Bender's (2006: 45-47) comments on the American blind spot to historic colonial actions,

as well as Olund's (2002: 130-132) commentary on the vast social dislocations wrought in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This also includes the social process where the U.S. grew into one nation with an extensive and expansive spirit to 'tame' the wilderness in the West. However, the western expansion of the frontier was not merely a journey or travel; as Fussell mentioned, a journey or, more preferably, an 'exploration' in the context of postcolonial study does not intend to generate experience, but it has an agenda that constructs thought by gathering knowledge through this exploration (Thompson, 2011: 21). Therefore, this western expansion cannot be taken for granted simply as the 'American spirit' where civilization started in the West. Most importantly, this westward exploration, which idealised the spirit of frontiers, subversively created and perpetuated colonial discourses, which were legitimized by writings and other accounts that served this function. One of which is the narrative by Adams, which allows expressions about human mobility and how this movement displaced minority groups while also presenting juxtapositions in favor of the dominant group. Through this writing, it produces colonial ideology by signifying civilization as an indication of advancement in life. To this extent, it is particularly important to note that the western expansion is contextualized in postcolonial America, and through this process, social dislocations are palpably revealed in the *Log*.

> I shall never forget the impression left in my mind of that first morning after we crossed Red River into the Indian lands. The country was as primitive as in the first day of its creation. The trail led up a divide between Salt and North forks of Red River. To the eastward of the latter stream lay the reservation of the Apaches, Kiowas, and Comanches, the latter having been a terror to the inhabitants of western Texas. They were a warlike tribe, as the records of the Texas Rangers and government troops will verify, but their last affective dressing down was given them in a fight at Adobe Walls by a party of buffalo hunters whom they hoped to surprise. As we wormed our way up this narrow divide, there was revealed to us a panorama of green-swarded plain and timber-fringed watercourse, with not a visible evidence that it had ever been invaded by civilized man, save cattlemen with their herds. Antelope came up in bands and gratified their curiosity as to who these invaders might be, while old solitary buffalo bulls turned tail at our approach and lumbered away to points of safety. (Adams, 1903: 122)

The wilderness portrayed in this excerpt describes Adams' view of the American West as a geographic area with scenic nature and virginity of the land. This leads to constructing a picture of the 'wild' West, which somehow posits the frontier as those people of 'civilized' nature by expressing how primitive the Indians were. The *Log* furthermore contains colonial discourse through which 'travel to the west' juxtaposes significant dissimilarities; Adams uses strong expressions such as 'primitive' vs. 'civilized,' which, on the other hand, represent self and other. In depicting the Indians as primitive, the frontier is being contrasted with significantly

different communities by disparaging views towards Indians as 'other'—to an extent, a sense of othering the Indians exhibits the idea of, in colonial discourse, subjugating one's culture as inferior to another.

> Flood had read the letter, which intimated that an appeal would be made to the government to send troops from either Camp Supply or Fort Sill to give trail herds a safe escort in passing the western border of this Indian reservation. The letter, therefore, admonished Mann, if he thought the Indians would give any trouble, to go up the south side of Red River as far as the Pan-handle of Texas, and then turn north to the government trail at Fort Elliot. (Adams, 1903: 122)

It is also intriguing to see that this act of othering leads to misconceptions or stereotypical characteristics about Indians; the appropriation of Indians who were notoriously narrated as beasts or potentially being troublesome erroneously becomes a falsified fact. Ironically, this stereotype seems to be validated as truth and is perpetuated in narratives. Evidently, this legitimization of particularly Indian characters is presented in the *Log*. In the above excerpt, it is described that a group of cowboys plotted a strategic solution to overcome the 'troublesome' Indians, which is also mentioned repeatedly through the book. The repeated image narrated in the story created a discourse that this distorted narration is potentially harmful, which deceives people's perception of these Indians. This later is even more perilous because it is reproduced within the same discourse, what is known as colonial ideology.

In addition to the context of Adams and the *Log*, the most visible signifiers of coloniality and the colonial process are the circle-dot cowboys' interactions with and descriptions of indigenous peoples. There are several descriptions of these throughout the text, such as the one quoted below.

> He was a fine specimen of the Plains Indian, fully six feet in height, perfectly proportioned, and in years well past middle life. He looked every inch a chief, and was a natural born orator. There was a certain easy grace to his gestures, only to be seen in people who use the sign language, and often when he was speaking to the Apache interpreters, I could anticipate his requests before they were translated to us, although I did not know a word of Commanche…In dealing with people who know not the value of time, the civilized man is taken at a disadvantage, and unless he can show an equal composure in wasting time, results will be against him. (Adams, 1903: 137-138)

The crux of descriptions and stereotypes such as this is that they serve to distance the colonizer from the colonized. Effectively, this is the process of othering, which has been expanded on in the colonial arena by scholars such as Thakur (2012: 241) through the work of Bhabha. The narrator's description in the above quote seeks to describe the racial characteristics of the chief to a domestic audience. The inclusion of this description in the *Log*, rather than being intended

as an informative statement, appears to be an attempt to play to the mythic element of the West and thus increase interest amongst Adams' readership; the insatiable appetite of the readership for Western novels was likely a factor in this (Atherton, 1961: 3). In Walker's (1977: 295) view, such usage of the mythic component would be tantamount to the author's acceptance of such myths. This would be despite Adams' supposed desire for authenticity and factual accuracy. The mythic or othering aspect of Adams' description in the above quote, reinforcing the concept of the stereotype, appears more likely to be the primary thrust behind it due to the context of the character Wyatt Roundtree's later quotation regarding diverse others in North America: 'Speaking about Mexicans and Indians…I've got more use for a good horse than I have for either of those grades of humanity' (Adams, 1903: 182-183).

The racial descriptions and negative stereotypes put forward in the *Log* also align with wider narratives from European colonial empires; for example, descriptions of indigenous peoples as lacking a proper concept of time and appearing to be uncivilized from the colonizers' perspective. The work of Alatas (2013: 231-236) is particularly important here. This is further connected to Saïd's (1979: 1-3, 40) work on the concept of Orientalism and its use as a means of dominating others in the colonial space. Such representations lean into the mythic element of assumed identities once again. This can also be seen in the following excerpt:

> The town struck me as something new and novel, two thirds of the habitations being of canvas. Immense quantities of buffalo hides were drying or already baled, and waiting transportation as we afterward learned to navigable points on the Missouri. Large bull trains were encamped on the outskirts of the village, while many such outfits were in town, receiving cargoes or discharging freight. The drivers of these ox trains lounged in the streets and thronged the saloons and gambling resorts. The population was extremely mixed, and almost every language could be heard spoken on the streets. The men were fine types of the pioneer,—buffalo hunters, freighters, and other plainsmen, though hardly as picturesque in figure and costume as a modern artist would paint them. For native coloring, there were typical specimens of northern Indians, grunting their jargon amid the babel of other tongues; and groups of squaws wandered through the irregular streets in gaudy blankets and red calico. The only civilizing element to be seen was the camp of engineers, running the survey of the Northern Pacific railroad. (Adams, 1903: 335-337)

By exemplifying so-called empire attitudes, borrowed from Thompson's concept on othering, towards the Indians, they are excluded from the 'civilized' categorization. This in turn emphasizes that othering is inextricable in this account of American West narrative, as can be seen in the following illustration: 'The only civilizing element to be seen was the camp of engineers, running the survey of the Northern Pacific railroad' (Adams, 1903: 337). Adams utilized expressions by which

perceptions about one's culture are being excluded or 'othered'—Thompson argued that, to an extent, such narratives represent heroism for the civilized community as they tamed the wilderness of the West (Thompson, 2011: 145).

The creation of such stereotypes, reinforced by myth, can be identified as evidence of a symbolic discourse at work. In colonial terms, the creation of discourses was tied up with the acquisition of knowledge about subjugated peoples as a means of dominating them. Fundamentally, such control was born out of anxiety on the part of the colonizers, who could not adequately understand their surroundings and the indigenous occupants. The narrative that was created, such as the lazy native stereotype, was fixed on the colonizers' need to explain the other and self-other relationship with the colonized other in colonial terms. Anxiety, or perhaps more accurately, colonial anxiety, can be located at the point of intersection between the creation of knowledge as authority and the breakdown of that symbolic authority (Thakur, 2012: 242-243). The failure of a stereotype to be accurate or the continuous challenging of a discourse each time the other is encountered are good examples of this. As Bhambra (2007: 11) has noted, this also has consequences for the present day, as how we understand the past helps to shape future social policies. The presentation of settler Americans as modern and the indigenous population as not is at the heart of the problem, with modernity and civilization being contrasted against tradition and supposed barbarianism (Mignolo, 2011: 152).

Through the example of civilization in the *Log*, the narrative can be interrogated from two perspectives: first, that of the topography, and second, that of its inhabitants. The passage quoted below speaks of the wild and inhospitable climate that travelers in the West faced. The account of dried-out streams and the fissures they made in the earth suggests that the frontier was something to be feared and left alone. However, American activity in the region, particularly in the colonial sense, poses a problem here. There was clearly a desire to dominate the landscape for economic reasons, such as trailing, or for doctrinal issues related to Paul's (2014: 312-314) arguments on the myth of a pastoral heritage belonging to the American people.

> I think that when the Almighty made this country on the North side of the Brazos…the Creator must have grown careless or else made it out of odds and ends. There's just a hundred and one of these dry arroyos that you can't see until you are right onto them, They wouldn't bother a man on horseback, but with a loaded wagon it's different. (Adams, 1903: 109)

The next quote also leans into the alleged worthlessness of the land, yet it also glorifies the cowboys' attempts at mastering the landscape. The narrator claims that cowboys largely ignored the aesthetics of scenery along the way, though they observed elements related to their role (Adams, 1903: 123). This returns to the mythic representations of the cowboy as an American hero who was concerned with daring feats of action more so than the mundane reality of his

work (Atherton, 1961: 7-9). The presentation of a dangerous obstacle, such as the dried-up arroyos, and the cowboys' resolve to conquer them fed into this.

> I've made this drive before without a drop of water on the way, and wouldn't dread it now, if there was a certainty of water at the other end. I reckon there's nothing to do but tackle her; but isn't this a hell of a country? I've ridden fifty miles today and never saw a soul. (Adams, 1903: 58)

The descriptions of adverse conditions and hardship on the trail in the two quotes above are also of interest in terms of the colonial-migratory process of wagon trains to the frontier in the mid-late eighteenth century. Traveling west across the plains after outfitting at one of the jumping-off towns along the Missouri River, emigrants left their homes in the East with the intention of permanently settling in the West (Hartman, 1924: 2-3). Published travelers' journals, such as those of Ludlow (1859), Raymond Herndon (1902), Thissell (1903), and Porter (1910) demonstrate their encounters with topographical dangers throughout their journeys. The key point here, however, is linking the land itself to the colonial-migrational process. These emigrants traveled west with the specific aims of settlement, the construction of new communities, and the creation of wealth. This was part of the much larger process of internal colonization undertaken by the United States in the nineteenth century (Bender, 2006: 51-54).

These emigrants, and indeed their descendants, likely formed a part of the mythical cadre of Western heroes—the cowboys—that was chronicled and represented by writers such as Adams. Representations like these stand in stark contrast to the commentaries of indigenous peoples of the time, with perceptions of indigeneity likely being a product of stories inherited from colonists and colonialism (Healy, 2008: 4-5). The curious position of migration within the context of colonial processes is also something that needs consideration in this respect. Even though migration and colonization often go hand in hand within certain studies, Mayblin and Turner (2021: 1-3) have pointed out that references to colonialism are rare in scholarship on migration. This, they contend, is a serious omission, and it obviously does not sit easily when discussed in the context of the American West, particularly in examples of sanctioned ignorance, whereby indigenous histories are intentionally disregarded (ibid.). This may be discussed in terms of emigrants crossing the plains and attempting to colonize the frontier or through the displacement of indigenous peoples, whether nomadic or otherwise, as a result of the transformation of the frontier.

Adams' descriptions did not just draw attention to the topographical elements of the frontier; however, the descriptions given of peoples and communities are equally important. As can be seen in the below quote, Adams' narrative of a frontier settlement is one of a dynamic melting pot with a vast array of identities. The settlement in question was the fictional town of Frenchman's Ford, likely based on the location of Terry's Crossing between current-day Bighorn and Custer, Montana (Carter, 1981: 372-373). Such diversity also ties in with White's

(1993: 3-4) representation of the West, with the area being seen as a fluid and dynamic state characterized by the mixing of many peoples. Adams' description, however, appears more inclined to draw a comparison between Native Americans and the so-called civilizing element of the engineers surveying for the Northern Pacific Railroad. This can be seen as both the reinforcing of a discourse surrounding the lack of civilization on the part of indigenous peoples as well as an attempt to portray the coming of the railroads as a civilizing element in transforming the frontier.

Despite Adams' desire for historical accuracy in his novelization, it must be acknowledged that there are inconsistencies in his fiction. Adams himself had never been further than Dodge City, Kansas, on the trail, so it was only natural that he lacked first-hand knowledge of the countryside beyond (Carter, 1981: 369). Although a lack of imagination in the telling may be to blame, the paucity of people and signs of habitation on the trail are also intriguing. This lack of narrative regarding the surroundings is something that has also been commented upon by Carter (ibid.: 375), with him suggesting that this would have added depth to the novel.

> For native coloring, there were typical specimens of Northern Indians, grunting their jargon amid the babel of other tongues; and groups of squaws wandered through the irregular streets in gaudy blankets and red calico. The only civilising element to be seen was the camp of engineers, running the survey of the Northern Pacific railroad. (Adams, 1903: 334-335)

The key point to be articulated here is that the frontier and its moulding were fundamentally a process that impacted people. Towards the end of the novel, after the circle-dot cowboys arrived at the Blackfoot reservation, readers are given a clearer view of the distinct separation between the cowboys, as pseudo-colonial agents, and the indigenous people. Although Adams had never been on the trail north of Dodge City, his novelization has provided some very powerful signifiers of the relationship between colonizers and colonized in literary terms. The first of these returns to the racial aspect of his characters, with the narrator, Bob Blades, and John Officer engaging in a debate as to the gender of a young Blackfoot. Of this, several feminine qualities were listed by the narrator, and Blades went so far as to proclaim that the youth was his 'squaw' (Adams, 1903: 374-375). Whereas this term was commonly used in older literature such as the *Log*, it is today considered a racial and ethnic slur that is no longer acceptable. The Blackfoot in question ultimately transpired to be male, and the scenario was told as an amusing anecdote. The second example presented was that of a priest who had been a resident of the Blackfoot reservation for over 20 years and was attempting to convert the tribe to Christianity (ibid.: 376-377). The narrator praises the priest for his zeal and devotion, though the pressurized conversion of an indigenous people was a common tactic used by colonial powers in Africa, Asia, and South America as a factor of the colonial-imperial process (Copland, 2006: 1025-1026).

CONCLUSION

In discussing Adams' *The Log of a Cowboy* in terms of the mythic narrative and colonial connotations surrounding the frontier, this study has drawn attention to many of the problems facing Western literature of this type. First and foremost, it must be contended that this literary genre relies heavily on assumed stereotypes such as the masculinity and heroic stature of the cowboys, the seeming inevitability that he will overcome every hurdle in his way, and his designation as an emblem of American identity. So too, in tandem with this, is the placement of Native Americans into a marginalized sub-bracket of people who just so happen to occupy the same geographic space. Native Americans are often portrayed as others or aliens in their own land, and it has seemingly fallen to the cowboy, as the denizen of the American identity in the West, to be constantly compared against them in Western literature and film. This has particularly been viewed as part of a defined colonial stereotype linked to the process of othering.

This othering does, of course, have a darker meaning when it is considered that the American internal colonization of the continent in the nineteenth century removed and marginalized thousands of indigenous peoples. As Mayblin and Turner (2021: 14-15) have highlighted, scholars of migration tend to bypass race as a concept due to its association with histories of racial science. When such knowledge is discussed, it is almost always seen as something consigned to the past (ibid.). The past colonial migration and settlement of indigenous lands and stereotypical attitudes towards indigenous people do, however, continue to impact people's lives today. This study has seen ordinary actions in the frontier space through the lens of pseudo-colonial behavior, for example, the trailing of the circle-dot cattle from Texas to the Blackfoot reservation in Montana. The cowboys, via their passive action, underpinned the reservation system and enabled it to continue. So too, in the wider context of the frontier, the continued transformation of the Western space facilitated American settlement and the growth of American institutions. The engineers surveying for the Northern Pacific Railroad are also a good example of this.

Finally, in critical terms, it must be concluded that while Adams set out to produce a work that was authentic to the way of life on the trail, he has allowed himself to become another speaker for Western stereotypes. Whereas he was keen to demonstrate the ordinary trail work of the cowboy, he could not prevent himself from pandering to certain expected stereotypes. The chapter in Dodge City and his numerous stereotypical othering descriptions of indigenous peoples are a key part of this. The construction of stereotypical discourses and the glorifying of trail life mean, it is argued, that seemingly innocuous literary works such as the *Log* can be included amongst discussions of coloniality in the wider field of American Studies.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, D. L. (2012) I fear the consequences to our animals: emigrants and their livestock on the overland trails. *Great Plains Quarterly*, 32 (3): 165-182.

Alatas, S. H. (2013) *The Myth of the Lazy Native: a study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Atherton, L. (1961) Cattlemen and cowboy: fact and fancy. *Montana: the Magazine of Western History*, 11 (4): 2-17.

Bascara, V. (2006) *Model-minority Imperialism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bender, T. (2006) The American way of Empire. *World Policy Journal*, 23 (1): 45-61.

Bhambra, G. K. (2007) *Rethinking Modernity: postcolonialism and the sociological imagination*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Boatright, M. C. (1966) The beginnings of cowboy fiction. *Southwest Review*, 51 (1): 11-28.

Boehmer, E. (1995) *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cain, P. and Hopkins, A. (1994) *British Imperialism: innovation and expansion, 1688-1914*, New York: Longman.

Carter, H. L. (1981) Retracing a cattle drive: Andy Adams's *The log of a cowboy*. *Arizona and the West*, 23 (4): 355-378.

Cavaioli, F. J. (1983) Charles Angelo Siringo, Italian American cowboy. *Italian Americana*, 7 (2): 35-45.

Cheyfitz, E. (1993) Savage law: the plot against American Indians in Johnson and Grahams' *Lesse v. M'Intosh* and *The Pioneers*. In A. Kaplan and D. Pearse (eds.) *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (pp. 109-128). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Coffin, T. P. (1953) The cowboy and mythology. *Western Folklore*, 12 (4): 290-293.

Copland, I. (2006) Christianity as an arm of Empire: the ambiguous case of India under the Company, c. 1813-1858. *The Historical Journal*, 49 (4): 1025-1054.

Curtis, K. (2009). Producing a Gold Rush: national ambitions and the Northern Rocky Mountains, 1853-1863. *Western Historical Quarterly*, 40 (3): 275-297.

De Pillis, M. S. (1963) Folklore and the American West. *Arizona and the West*, 5 (4): 291-314.

Deopujari, M. B. (1966) 'America's manifest destiny & Mexico'. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 28. Mysore, India,* 31 December, 1966 (pp. 489-494).

Dippel, C. (2014) Forced coexistence and economic development: evidence from Native American Reservations. *Econometrica*, 82 (6): 2131-2165.

Dirks, N. B. (2006) *The Scandal of Empire: India and the creation of imperial Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dobie, J. F. (1926) Andy Adams, cowboy chronicler. *Southwest Review*, 11 (2): 92-101.

Dykstra, R. R. and Manfra, J. A. (2002) The circle dot cowboys at Dodge City: history and imagination in Andy Adams's *The log of a cowboy*. *Western Historical Quarterly*, 33 (1): 19-40.

Graham, D. (1980) Old and new cowboy classics. *Southwest Review*, 65 (3): 293-303.

Grant, F. R. (2011) With no companion but her horse: the Rocky Mountain Husbandman's traveling correspondents Anna Kline and Carolyn A. Murphy, 1889-1904. *Montana: the Magazine of Western History*, 61 (1): 60-70.

Hartman, A. W. (1924) The California and Oregon Trail, 1849-1860. *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 25 (1): 1-35.

Healy, C. (2008) *Forgetting Aborigines*. Sydney: NSW University Press.

Johnson, C. M. (1977) A dedication to the memory of Andy Adams: 1859-1935. *Arizona and the West*, 19 (3): 203-206.

Klor de Alva, J. J. (1995) The postcolonization of the (Latin) American experience: a reconsideration of colonialism, postcolonialism, and mestizaje. In G. Prakash (ed.) *After Colonialism: imperial histories and postcolonial displacements* (pp. 241-276). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kramer, P. A. (2011) Power and connection: imperial histories of the United States in the world. *American Historical Review*, 116 (5): 1348-1391.

Ludlow, F. H. (1859) *The Heart of a Continent: a record of travel across the Plains and in Oregon, with an examination of the Mormon people*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

Mackenthun, G. (2000) America's troubled postcoloniality: some reflections from abroad. *Discourse*, 22 (3): 34-45.

Mayblin, L. and Turner, J. (2021) *Migration Studies and Colonialism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Mignolo, W. D. (2011) *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: global futures, decolonial options*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Molen, D. H. (1969) Andy Adams: classic novelist of the Trail. *Montana: the Magazine of Western History*, 19 (1): 24-35.

Morin, K. M. (2002) Postcolonialism and Native American geographies: the letters of Rosalie La Flesche Farley, 1896-1899. *Cultural Geographies*, 9 (2): 158-180.

Murwantono, D. (2022) A study on the individualism accounts on American literature through reader response criticism. *Rubikon*: *journal of transnational American Studies*, 9 (2): 194-206.

Olund, E. N. (2002) From savage space to governable space: the extension of United States judicial sovereignty over Indian country in the nineteenth century. *Cultural Geographies*, 9 (2): 129-157.

Parry, A. (2002) Recovering the connection between *Kim* and contemporary history. In Z. T. Sullivan (ed.) *Kim: a Norton critical edition* (pp. 309-320). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Paul, H. (2014) *The Myths that made America: an introduction to American Studies*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Porter, L. H. (1910) *By Ox Team to California: a narrative of crossing the Plains in 1860*. Oakland, CA: General Enquirer Pub. Co.

Pratt, J. W. (1927) The origin of manifest destiny. *The American Historical Review*, 32 (4): 795-798.

Quissell, B. (1972) Andy Adams and the real West. *Western American Literature*, 7 (3): 211-219.

Raymond Herndon, S. (1902) *Days on the Road: crossing the Plains in 1865*. New York, NY: Burr Printing House.

Ropa, A. (2019). Mounts as social identifiers: describing knights and ladies through their horses. In A. Ropa (ed.) *Practical Horsemanship in Medieval Arthurian Romance* (pp. 8-37). City: Publisher.

Saïd, E. (1979) *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Taniguchi, N. J. (2004) *Castle Valley America: hard land, hard won home*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Thakur, G. B. (2012) Reading Bhabha, reading Lacan: preliminary notes on colonial anxiety. In S. Biswas (ed.) *The Literary Lacan: from literature to lituraterre and beyond* (pp. 240-258). London and New York: Seagull Books.

Thissell, G. W. (1903) *Crossing the Plains in '49*. Oakland, CA.

Thompson, C. (2011) *Travel Writing*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Turner, F. J. (1989) The significance of the Frontier in American history. In C. Milner (ed.) *Major Problems in the History of the American West* (pp. 2-4). Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath & Co.

Walker, D. D. (1977) Criticism of the cowboy novel: retrospect and reflections. *Western American Literature*, 11 (4): 275-296.

Walker, D. D. (1960) Reading on the range: the literary habits of the American cowboy. *Arizona and the West*, 2 (4): 307-318.

Weisman, A. P. (1995) Postcolonialism in North America: imaginative colonization in Henry David Thoreau's *A Yankee in Canada* and Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues*. *The Massachusetts Review*, 36 (3): 477-500.

White, R. (1993) *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

TEXT ANALYSED

Adams, A. (1903) *The Log of a Cowboy: a narrative of the old trail days*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Edward Owen Teggin (Ph.D. in History, Adjunct Lecturer) is currently affiliated with the Faculty of Humanities at Diponegoro University, Indonesia. His research interests include colonial and migrational anxiety, migration within colonial and imperial settings, and postcolonial theory.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0703-0099

Email: teggine@gmail.com

Shofi Mahmudah Budi Utami (MA in Literary Studies) is a lecturer in English Literature with the Faculty of Humanities at General Soedirman University, Indonesia. She currently studies Comparative Literature for her Ph.D. at State University of New York, Binghamton. Her main interest are literary and cultural studies, which she has written several publications on.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3629-7101

Email: shofimahmudah@live.com

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture Vol. 14, 2024: 154–170
https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.14.2024.10 © University of Latvia, 2024

THE CHANGING MEANINGS OF POLITICAL TERMS AND THEIR REFLECTION IN DICTIONARIES

ANDREJS VEISBERGS
University of Latvia, Latvia

Abstract. When observing media texts, one cannot help but notice that some political terms are used with a meaning widely different from that offered by mainstream middle-size dictionaries, which generally stick to the initial, sometimes etymological senses. Corpora analysis confirms the shift in senses and divergence of use. The aim of this paper is to analyse the meaning and use of two terms ubiquitous in the public sphere: *fascist/fascism* and *liberal/liberalism*, their original meanings, and subsequent changes in meaning and use. Though the limited space available for defining terms in a general explanatory dictionary makes it extremely difficult to reflect all ideological tinges and meanings, where a frequently used political term seems to have developed stable, different, even opposite meanings, this should be reflected by introducing ideological polysemy in dictionary definitions.

Keywords: ideological terms, political terminology, semantics, ideological polysemy, lexicography

INTRODUCTION

Many political and ideological terms have always had differing connotations according to the user's political stance, so it is hard to deduce what is meant without knowing the mindset of the speaker. However, with frequent slanted use, the denotational meaning may also be 'coloured'. It may shift, and the term may actually develop a different meaning while not losing the original one. This becomes a case of polysemy. The growing difference in the meanings creates a problem for lexicographers, whose task it is to observe language development, describe it and record the meanings in use. Ideological polysemy can be suggested as a solution for dictionaries. The paper will compare dictionary definitions of the two terms with their use in media.

Definitions of the terms will be sought in several middle-size mainstream English and American online dictionaries and several printed desktop dictionaries (both dictionaries for native speakers and foreign learners). References to

This is an Open Access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).
To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

The Oxford English Dictionary, 1st and 2nd editions, will also be used, though a thorough diachronic study of the early use of the terms falls outside the scope of this paper. It should be noted that most dictionaries tend to choose *fascism* as the main entry, with *fascist* usually referring to *fascism*, while *liberalism* is frequently given as a derivative under the main entry of *liberal*.

Several corpora are used to look at the meanings, among them the most prominent one: the web-based newspaper and magazine corpus *News on the Web* (NOW), with 18.4 billion words. Since the number of occurrences of the terms under scrutiny runs into tens of thousands and the meanings are often vague, it is not possible to draw straightforward or statistical data about the senses and their distribution. However, one can draw certain conclusions, namely, that the connotational and denotational meanings of these terms in use are far from the straightforward traditional senses provided in dictionary definitions.

The issue is naturally affected by the scope, size and specialisation of a dictionary. A general explanatory dictionary definition tends towards concision; an encyclopaedic dictionary or a specialised dictionary of political terms may afford much more scope to the definition or the clarifications; thus, there is a cline in the style of definitions (Geeraerts, 2003: 89).

IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS

At the end of the last century, Fukujama (1992) wrote of the end of history, which could by default also spell the end of ideology since the market economy (capitalism) seemed to be the only viable alternative for the diverse countries of the world. However, it is only for the postmodernists that history and ideology have come to an end, not for traditionalists, nationalists, fundamentalists, greens, antivaxxers, nativists, televangelists, Putinists and anti-Putinists, Europhiles and Eurosceptics, and, in a broader sense, for all people who possess strong political views and can compare them with others.

Today, with Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Islamic fundamentalism, the new authoritarianism, the woke movement, battles over political correctness and covid controversies, we can hardly speak of the end of history or ideologies. Moreover, ideologies have multiplied and become more hardline, aggressive, intolerant and divisive, and they have merged with various conspiracy theories to carry away millions of people since covid. And while the Communist experiment with collective property seems to have died, new trends connected with goods and merchandise are on the rise. Ideology scholar Hawkes (2003: 2) speaks of commodity fetishism and defines ideology as a 'systematic false consciousness' (ibid.: 7). Thus, 'there is no single and simple definition of ideology' (Pinnavaia, 2022: 142), but we can assume that an ideology is a set of systematic beliefs, assumptions and claims serving some social function that are expressed in linguistic form. Ideologies generally carry some common ground, common sense; they are 'shared' (van Dijk, 1995: 245), 'community-based' and 'commonsensical' (Verschueren, 2012: 10-12). Ideology

is associated with underlying patterns of meaning, frames of interpretation, world views, or forms of everyday thinking and explanation. And 'individuals assume that they share this meaning with other individuals' (ibid.: 11). Like paradigms in philosophy that are 'based on taken for-granted-premises', the commonsense nature of ideologies is rarely questioned. Ideology may be highly immune to experience; thus, reality may be very different from any individual's perception of it. When it comes to the use of language with regard to ideologies, 'the public sphere is an arena with never-ending struggles over meaning' (Verschueren, 2012: xi), for example, identification with a political party affects how individuals interpret the labels *liberal* and *conservative* (Conover and Feldman, 1981).

Since political activity is principally linguistic (Condren, 2017), this leads to massive manipulations of meanings by politicians and media, partly overlapping with a process that is now called weaponisation of language, which challenges the fundamental legal aspects of free speech (Stahl, 2016). The weaponisation of language today 'relies on a constellation of tactics that include: censorship, propaganda, disinformation, and mundane discourse' (Pascale, 2019: 910). Partisan hostility, the polarisation of views and network propaganda (Benkler, Faris and Roberts, 2018) wreak havoc with word meanings. Even the terminology of propaganda and disinformation itself is subject to this unclarity, as pointed out by Caroline Jack (2017: 13) in her 'Lexicon of Lies'—'ideal types, abstract generalized models' do not seem to work well. Occasionally, the term *logicide* is used to describe these insidious processes that can kill the everyday meaning of words, destroy the integrity of public information and deepen divisions.

RUSSIA AND THE NEW IDEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

A new level of language weaponisation has been reached in Putin's Russia, where the state media is actively engaged in pushing the Russian propaganda narrative, assisted by fake news campaigns, trolls, hybrid war, and regular and extended disinformation campaigns employing hate speech. It is well known that with consistent exposure over time, propaganda becomes a language that thinks for you (Klemperer, 2013).

Russia's information warfare comprises both traditional and new digital media (Lupion, 2018). This involves both coining new terms (*ukrofashisti* [Ukrainian fascists], *zhidobanderovci* [Jewish banderites], *ukronazisti* [Ukranian Nazis], *banderofashisti* [bandero-fascists], *narkogeinacisti* [narco-gay-Nazis], *evrofashisti* [eurofascists], *liberasti* [liberal pederasts], *Fashington* [Fascist Washington], *gomoseki* [homosexuals], *pindossi* [Americans, the origin of 'pindo' is uncertain], *Pindostan* [USA], *anti-Russia* [Ukraine], *Sorosites*, *vimirati* [dying emirates]), but also using old political memes with a changed meaning (*antifascists, junta, liberals, SS men, gays, homosexuals, terrorists, Anglo-Saxons, paedophiles, foreign agents, degenerates, parallel import, provocation*). Thus, in Russian political parlance, the term *liberal* is totally debased on a par with *fascist*. *Fascist* is a catch-all word, applied to anyone

with views different from the Russian regime's, for example, people protesting against war or even just questioning the need for it (a truly Orwellian paradigm: war is peace). *Antifascist* in Russian parlance is anyone supporting Russia's interests (including those attacking sovereign states), not to be confused with *antifa*.

This has a Soviet prehistory, as pointed out by Timothy Snyder:

> Stalin's flexibility about fascism is the key to understanding Russia today. Under Stalin, fascism was first indifferent, then it was bad, then it was fine until—when Germany invaded the Soviet Union—it was bad again. But no one ever defined what it meant. It was a box into which anything could be put. Communists were purged as fascists in show trials. During the Cold War, the Americans and the British became the fascists. And 'anti-fascism' did not prevent Stalin from targeting Jews in his last purge, nor his successors from conflating Israel with Nazi Germany. [...] Calling others fascists while being a fascist is the essential Putinist practice. Jason Stanley, an American philosopher, calls it 'undermining propaganda', I have called it 'schizofascism'. The Ukrainians have the most elegant formulation. They call it 'ruscism'. (Snyder, 2022)

This brings us to the issue of meaning, where it lies, and why and how it is liable to change.

MEANING—A PHILOSOPHICAL SIDESTEP

Bertrand Russell proposed that every individual perceives things differently; accordingly, we ascribe different meanings to words and talk of different things: 'a man's percepts are private to himself: what 1 see, no one else sees; what I hear, no one else hears; what I touch, no one else touches; and so on' (Russell, 1957: 562). As a consequence, 'when one person uses a word, he does not mean by it the same thing as another person means by it' (Russell, 1956: 195). These can be called private meanings (van Haaften, 1995); we all have them. But then, how can we communicate successfully? In a way, reacting to Russell's ideas, Wittgenstein (1986)—who in the beginning talked of the logical meaning aspects—later responded by criticising the strong individualistic and subjectivist tendencies of Russell's empiricism. He emphasised the social nature of meaning, the agreement on meaning: '[People] agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life' (Wittgenstein, 1986: #241). 'If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements' (Wittgenstein, 1986: #242).

Wittgenstein insists that the meaning of the word is its use; it hinges on its usefulness in context, not its ideal referent outside all possible contexts (definition). It depends on the conventional social discourse within which it is employed. Meaning depends on a background of common behaviour as well as shared practices

and context. Apart from *definition*, Wittgenstein also introduces *judgement*; that is, people might agree on a definition but have different evaluation of the phenomenon, for example, on free sex, gender change, political correctness, freedom of speech or forms of government.

This falls in line with the linguistic ideas of Saussure, who pointed out the arbitrariness of the sign, the fact that meaning is not inherent in the sign; meaning is almost always the result of conventions, and in addition, the individual can impose a meaning not fully shared by the community. Furthermore, meanings change, and the synchronic point of view of the speaker's community overrides the diachronic since it is the only reality for a normal language user (Saussure, 1959: 141).

MEANING CHANGE

More than 20 years ago, Veisbergs (2002) looked at the dictionary definitions of political terms, in particular at the superordinate concept (*genus proximus*) and concluded that there was a huge and unwelcome variation between the superordinate terms when dealing with -isms (view, belief, doctrine, ideology, movement, theory, practice, etc.). The situation has not changed much since then. Several reasons are possible for this, from the difficulty of agreeing on the right term to the fact that different entries are written by different people and there has not been sufficient editorial supervision.

What, however, seems to have changed is that some political notions have over time developed a great diversity of *differentia specifica*, on which there was more or less agreement in the past (at least in lexicography). Naturally, as societies change (and today the change is very rapid and often global), an ideology cannot survive if it is static (Finlayson, 2013: 199). Many political concepts do indeed change; they cannot be immutable. 'The meaning of political terms can shift with time, becoming broader or narrower or changing entirely' (Jarvis, 2014: 136); politics is a 'curious mixture of continuity, change, and repetition' (Robertson, 2004: VII).

Also, however, 'the study of (political) language has moved away from the normative aspiration for precision to emphasizing ambiguity and indeterminacy as its inherent attributes' (Freeden, 2013: 120). Recognising that the user's view to a large extent determines his understanding of the concept and term is a general postmodernist tendency. Since political terms are frequently used in rhetorical argumentation and emotional context, this leads to 'diverse meanings assigned to the same political terms' (Freeden, 2013: 120), and we can hardly speak of a universal understanding of these terms any more. For political terms, the perceptions of meaning can be widely different and might be viewed within the framework of Fillmore's (1977a, b) semantic frames or scenes and frames semantics, where the frame is an idealisation of a coherent societal or individual perception or experience. Thus, the meaning of lexemes is construed against a broader background of knowledge and interrelated concepts.

FASCISM AND FASCISTS

Discussions about the concept of *fascism* go back around 100 years (Griffin, 1995), when the term appeared in 1915 and Mussolini seized power in Italy in 1922. Perhaps the greatest expert on the understanding and interpretation of fascism, Griffiths (2000: 1) has concluded that fascism is probably the most misused and over-used word of our times. While most researchers agree on the historical meaning of fascism, namely Italian fascism and similar movements in many countries among which Nazism stands out, there is little agreement about its main features in more generalised usage. Is it left-wing or right-wing? Is it individualistic or a mass movement? Is it reactionary (backward-looking) or modernist (forward-looking)? (Davies and Lynch, 2002; Gottfried, 2016). However, there is a general feeling that it is the diametrical opposite of liberalism (see further, *liberal fascist*).

The terms *fascism* and *fascist* are applied to virtually any movement or idea that the speaker does not like. It is a pejorative word without any specific meaning, an insult for branding opponents. Historically, it was a term that various left-wing movements used to denigrate other left-wingers. In 1928, the Communist International labelled social democrats *social fascists* while the social democrats themselves accused the communists of becoming *fascist* under Stalin in light of their alliance with Hitler. 'The international investigation into the Katyn massacre was described as "fascist libel" and the Warsaw Uprising as "illegal and organised by fascists" [...] After the Second World War, Communist China and the USSR began calling each other fascist states' (Gregor, 2009: 9). In the USSR and the Eastern Bloc, the term *fascist* was applied to dissidents, and *anti-fascism* served to legitimise the ruling regimes. During the Barricades in Riga, Latvia (January 1991, after the unilateral declaration of independence from the Soviet Union), the Communist Party of the USSR declared fascism reborn in Latvia. Ever since the Euromaidan (power change in Ukraine), Russia has frequently described the Ukrainian government as *fascist*, ironically combining it with sinister Jewish influence as well as gay and LGBTI propaganda.

To the new Western left, the traditional Western society (Christian values, capitalism, traditional family and national identity) is fascist. The American right wing frequently uses it as an insult, implying that fascism is left-wing, socialist and liberal.

Besides, the word can be used in an apolitical sense for anything we do not like, mainly on the basis that it is perceived to be powerful and aggressive. This meaning is reflected in some English dictionaries.

The fact that the term has become a pejorative, an insult, was noted by the English writer and anti-fascist George Orwell as long ago as 1944 in his essay *What is Fascism?*:

> It will be seen that, as used, the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless. I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922

> Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley's broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else. [...] By 'Fascism' they mean, roughly speaking, something cruel, unscrupulous, arrogant, obscurantist, anti-liberal and anti-working-class. Except for the relatively small number of Fascist sympathisers, almost any English person would accept 'bully' as a synonym for 'Fascist'. [...] All one can do for the moment is to use the word with a certain amount of circumspection and not, as is usually done, degrade it to the level of a swearword. (Orwell, 2001: 321-324)

Gottfried reasserts this more than 80 years later: 'the term fascist has a specific historical meaning and should not be hurled at anyone who holds what are now unpopular opinions' (Gottfried, 2016: 3). A glance at corpus data today, however, shows that the situation has not changed, for example, NOW with 18.4 billion words offers 42,666 samples of *fascist* use. Though it is impossible to survey the meanings of all samples, one can see regular adjacent items: Biden, Trump, Haley, Cheney, Modi, etc. One can reckon that only about a quarter of use refers to the primary meaning of *fascist*. In the Latvian corpus (LVK), *fascist* is often bound to Russia, no doubt reflecting the geopolitical realities. The situation is even more pronounced in the reader's comments and chats.

The word appeared in *The OED Supplement* in 1933 (OEDS, 1933: 358), naturally only in its Italian fascism sense. A *Supplement* 40 years later refers *fascism* to *fascist* and defines the latter in four senses:

> original Italian fascists; members of similar organisations in other countries; persons of Fascist sympathies or convictions; (loosely) a person of right-wing authoritarian views. (SOED, 1972: 1036)

The Oxford English Dictionary 2nd edition did not change it (The OED, 1989a: 742). *Webster's Third* provides several senses for *fascism*:

(1) the principles of the Fascisti; the movement or governmental regime embodying their principles;

(2) a) any programme for setting up a centralized autocratic national regime with severely nationalistic policies, exercising regimentation of industry, commerce, and finance, rigid censorship, and forcible suppression of opposition;

b) any tendency toward or actual exercise of severe autocratic or dictatorial control (as over others within an organization). (WTNIDEL, 1993: 825)

Standard desktop dictionaries today often offer one generalised sense definition of *fascism* with varying keywords: *right-wing, nationalistic, dictatorial, extreme, militant* and *totalitarian*; sometimes other attributes are used: *anticommunist, racist, opposed to liberalism*. The *Cambridge Dictionary*, for example, defines fascism as follows:

> a political system based on a very powerful leader, state control, and being extremely proud of country and race, and in which political opposition is not allowed. (Online 1)

The *Longman Dictionary* entry is identical to the printed variant (Longman, 2014: 653):

> a right-wing political system in which people's lives are completely controlled by the state and no political opposition is allowed. (Online 2)

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and its printed version, apart from the general meaning, introduce a second definition:

(1) an extreme right-wing political system or attitude that is in favour of strong central government, aggressively promoting your own country or race above others, and that does not allow any opposition;
(2) (disapproving) extreme views or practices that try to make other people think and behave in the same way. (Online 3; Oxford, 2022: 567)

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, which is mainly aimed at native speakers, proposes a shorter one-sense lemma with an added historical reference to Mussolini:

> an authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government. (COED, 2011: 517)

A larger printed desktop *Oxford Dictionary of English* proposes two meanings (unchanged from the 2nd edition [ODE, 2003: 627]):

(1) an authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization;
(2) (in general use) extreme, right-wing, authoritarian or intolerant views or practices. (ODE, 2010: 635)

Merriam-Webster introduces a reference to Italian fascism in the general sense and also has the 'prescriptively prejudicial' meaning:

(1) a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition;
(2) a tendency toward or actual exercise of strong autocratic or dictatorial control. (Online 4)

Collins English Dictionary offers three senses, blending the political ones in the first sense while splitting the 'excessively prejudicial' one:

(1) any ideology or movement inspired by Italian Fascism, such as German National Socialism; any right-wing nationalist ideology or movement with an authoritarian and hierarchical structure that is fundamentally opposed to democracy and liberalism;

(2) any ideology, movement, programme, tendency, etc. that may be characterized as excessively prescriptive or authoritarian;
(3) prejudice in relation to the subject specified. (Online 5)

Thus, one can distinguish three to four senses in the term *fascism/fascist*. In specialised dictionaries and encyclopaedias, the generalised sense of *fascism* is often treated in a great variety of ways, testifying to the ongoing discussion about such keywords as *populism, unity, classless, opportunistic,* and *modernist* (Robertson, 2004).

LIBERALS AND LIBERALISM

Today, there are perhaps hundreds of types of liberalism as political strands of thought: *classical liberalism, agonistic liberalism, conservative liberalism, constitutional liberalism, cultural liberalism, democratic liberalism, green liberalism, muscular liberalism, national liberalism, neoclassical liberalism, neo-liberalism, ordoliberalism, secular liberalism, social liberalism, technoliberalism,* a. o.

Liberals and *liberalism* receive more versatile treatment than *fascism* in dictionaries, partly because *liberalism* has a longer prehistory than *fascism*. While Johnson's dictionary (Johnson, 1755) had no political sense for *liberals* as yet, it describes its predecessors, *whigs,* with the noxious term *faction*. This was better than an early explanation for *whig* in *Littleton's English-Latin Dictionary* (Littleton, 1703: 338): *Homo fanaticus, factiosus*.

Also, the early use of *liberal* was considered somewhat 'un-English, akin to continental *revolutionaries*' (The OED, 1933: 238), but later stabilised as a designation for the freedom-seeking and anti-state stance.

The Oxford English Dictionary 2nd edition (The OED, 1989b: 882) defines the political meaning of *liberalism* as the holding of liberal opinions. *Liberal* as an adjective is defined as 'favourable to constitutional changes and legal or administrative reforms tending in the direction of freedom or democracy; opposed to Conservative'; *liberal* as a noun repeats the 1st edition history of the term in British politics.

Webster's Third, among other meanings of *liberalism,* provides the following definitions:

(1) a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity;
(2) a theory in economics emphasizing individual freedom from restraint and usually based on free competition, the self-regulating market, and the gold standard;
(3) a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual and standing for tolerance and freedom for the individual from arbitrary authority in all spheres of life esp. by the protection of political and civil liberties and for government under law with the consent of the governed. (WTNIDEL, 1993: 1303)

Merriam-Webster today has slightly expanded sense 2 and considerably changed the reference to the government's role in sense 3, which is in stark contrast to the old meaning:

> *specifically*: such a philosophy that considers government as a crucial instrument for amelioration of social inequities (such as those involving race, gender, or class). (Online 10)

Both online and printed middle-size dictionaries tend to attempt to merge the old liberalism with its focus on individualism and the new socially oriented one, albeit not very successfully. Thus, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online*, likewise the printed book, offers three political meanings for *liberal*:

(1) willing to understand and respect other people's ideas, opinions, and feelings;

(2) supporting or allowing gradual political and social changes, opposite to conservative;

(3) allowing people or organizations a lot of political or economic freedom. (Online 6; LDCE, 2014: 1050)

Collins Cobuild provides the following for *liberalism*:

(1) is a belief in gradual social progress by changing laws, rather than by revolution.

(2) is the belief that people should have a lot of political and individual freedom.

Synonyms: progressivism, radicalism, humanitarianism, libertarianism (Online 7)

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (OALDCE, 2022: 903) emphasises the new strand in the definition of *liberal*: 'a person who supports political, social and religious change'. Its online version adds 'and the more equal sharing of wealth' (Online 8).

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (COED, 2011: 821) offers a slightly different lemma: '(in a political context) favouring individual liberty, free trade, and moderate political and social reform'. Interestingly, there is a reference to the 1st edition that defined the term as 'favourable to democratic reforms and abolition of privileges'. The same basic definition is available in the larger printed *Oxford Dictionary of English* (ODE, 2010: 1029), unchanged from the previous edition (ODE, 2003: 1009).

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines *liberalism* in two divergent senses:

(1) an attitude of respecting and allowing many different types of beliefs or behaviour;

(2) the political belief that there should be free trade, that people should be allowed more personal freedom, and that changes in society should be made gradually. (Online 9)

Merriam-Webster, among other meanings of *liberalism*, has the following (it is worth noting the reference to the government's role, which is in stark contrast to the old meaning):

(1) a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity;

(2) a theory in economics emphasizing individual freedom from restraint and usually based on free competition, the self-regulating market, and the gold standard;

(3) a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of the human race, and the autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties; *specifically*: such a philosophy that considers government as a crucial instrument for amelioration of social inequities (such as those involving race, gender, or class). (Online 10)

Liberals themselves seem to consider the following to be the core liberal values: individualism, rationalism, freedom, responsibility, justice and tolerance (Teehankee, 2005).

Larger or specialised dictionaries and encyclopaedias can give more space and more explanation; thus, the *Oxford Reference Dictionary* attempts to introduce differing views on *liberalism* into the lemma:

> A political ideology centred upon the individual, thought of as possessing rights against the government, including rights of due process under the law, equality of respect, freedom of expression and action, and freedom from religious and ideological constraint. Liberalism is attacked from the left as the ideology of free markets, with no defence against the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few, and as lacking any analysis of the social and political nature of persons. It is attacked from the right as insufficiently sensitive to the value of settled institutions and customs, or to the need for social structure and constraint in providing the matrix for individual freedom. (Online 11)

This shows that there are certainly two strands of liberalism, often contradictory in their basic outlook. This divide is prominent between British and American English, in a way making the term *liberalism* an intra-language false friend (Ķiršakmene, 2023: 70). This new division is best reflected in Wikipedia:

> In Europe and Latin America, liberalism means a moderate form of classical liberalism and includes both conservative liberalism (centre-right liberalism) and social liberalism (centre-left liberalism). In North America, liberalism almost exclusively refers to social liberalism. (Online 12)

However, NOW corpus (NOW) provide a plethora of quite different uses and meanings, illustrated by such phrases as *communist liberals*, *radical liberals*, *liberal fundamentalists*, *aggressive liberalism*, and numerous cases of *liberal fascists/ fascism*, which diverge from whatever any dictionaries or political scientists offer. The blending of *liberalism* and *fascism*, theoretically incompatible, is quite surprising and confusing. When there is a lack of clarity and agreement on meanings, communication may become totally cut off from reality, as was noted by Arendt (2006: 288) with regard to totalitarian discourse: 'Such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts together'.

THE LEXICOGRAPHER'S QUANDARY

The lexicographer is supposed to bring in clarity by observing the field (the descriptive approach) and stating what words mean, thus, to some extent, adopting a prescriptive stance (lexicography is now primarily descriptive, but once the definitions are decided upon, there is a prescriptive element to them). However, if people give a term differing meanings, connotations and judgements, often even opposite ones, what are dictionaries to do? With political terms, the juxtaposition of meanings is often black and white, but a dictionary cannot state that black is often also white. A more or less typical definition of *black* would be: of the very darkest colour owing to the absence of or complete absorption of light; the opposite of white. A similar traditional opposition could be the dichotomy *fascist* and *liberal*.

Ideological terms from time to time attract the attention of lexicography scholars (Carstens, 1994; Čermák, 2014; Moon, 2014; Pinnavaia, 2022), usually with a focus on learners' dictionaries and the debatable issue of neutrality. Moon (1989: 77) states that 'there is no such thing as a politically neutral definition'. Bejoint (2000: 131) states clearly: 'for words used to refer to social or political values or systems objective definitions are simply impossible'.

Dictionaries today, while generally following descriptive principles, are also subject to certain political correctness considerations (Müller-Spitzer, 2022). The bias of politically correct trends is as ideological as earlier bias against colonial peoples, the lower classes, menial workers, women, people with deviations, etc. Definitions 'are excluders as well as includers of meaning' (Freeden, 2013: 120). 'Ideology becomes part of the meaning of lexical items but is also compounded into mental structures—which may be different for different ideological groups' (Veisbergs, 2005: 538). 'Dictionaries, monolingual and bilingual, are packs of lies: white lies, perhaps, but lies nevertheless. Monolingual dictionaries set out to convey the impression that words have "meanings", rather than certain capacities to enter into meaningful contexts' (Manley et al., 1988: 281).

No dictionary is likely to be able to cover the whole range of perceptions, but this seems to underscore why there should be an attempt at 'neutrality of description' (Dieckman, 1989: 838) and at avoiding value judgement. As in other domains of lexicography, we can strive for perfection, but shortcomings, subjectivity and even errors will always be there.

IDEOLOGICAL POLYSEMY

Some political terms today seem to have very divergent and even entirely opposing meanings, and this could be viewed in the framework of polysemy. Polysemy may take untraditional forms, for example, it is common in terminology where ambiguity is unwelcome (L'Homme, 2020: 415). Then there are the Janus words, which have opposite meanings without controversy (*appropriation, fast, scan, sanction, oversight, handicap, bad*); for example,

appropriation

(1) acquisition/taking; *dishonest appropriation of property;*

(2) allocation/giving; *big appropriations for projects;*

sanction

(1) a penalty for disobeying a law or rule;

(2) an official permission or approval for an action.

Our specific brand of polysemy could be called ideological polysemy (Dieckmann, 1975, 1989). It is a fact that some terms have developed widely different meanings, and that in turn brings about the question of whether to add extra meanings in dictionaries or not. The option must certainly be considered, for example,

Liberal

(1) Someone who believes people should have a lot of political, economic and individual freedom to decide how to behave and think, and the government's role should be minimal;

(2) Someone who believes in the need of social change, a strong state and government involvement in furthering social equality.

Perhaps for some of the blatantly subjective terms one should introduce new emotionally charged connotational meanings: thus, for *fascism—any ideology of anyone whom I strongly dislike*; for *liberalism—an ideology viewed by many as allowing the rich and clever to disregard others*.

CONCLUSIONS

Language corpora show that many ideological and political terms that used to have well delineated meanings are today used with differing denotational and connotational meanings. 'Diverse meanings are assigned to the same political terms' (Freeden, 2013: 120) with no universal understanding any more. Moreover, there is a change in the forms of rhetorical delivery and argumentation (Finlayson, 2012). Meanings evolve over time; forms do not necessarily do so, and lexicography has to reflect these changes, both the general ambiguity and the sprouting of new

denotational and connotational meanings. Ideological polysemy can partly solve the quandary. In the case of *fascism*, dictionaries have taken the first steps in this direction; *liberalism* and many other political terms could follow suit. This should, of course, be matched with dictionary size: the more specialised and encyclopaedic the dictionary, the more information on varying senses should be provided.

REFERENCES

Arendt, H. (2006) *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Bejoint, H. (2000) *Modern Lexicography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benkler, Y., Faris, R. and Roberts, H. (2018) *Network Propaganda: manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carstens, A. (1994) The treatment of ideological polysemy in monolingual Afrikaans dictionary. *Euralex 94: Proceedings: Papers submitted to the 6th EURALEX International Congress on Lexicography in Amsterdam* (pp. 56-66). Amsterdam: EURALEX.

Condren, C. (2017) *Political Vocabularies: word change and the nature of politics.* Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

Conover, P. J. and Feldman, S. (1981) The origins and meaning of liberal/conservative self-identifications. *American Journal of Political Science*, 25 (4): 617-645.

Čermák, F. (2014) Totalitarian dictionary of Czech. In A. Abel, C. Vettori and N. Ralli (eds.) *Proceedings of the XVI EURALEX International Congress: the user in focus* (pp. 137-144). Bolzano/Bozen: Institute for Specialised Communication and Multilingualism.

Davies, P. and Lynch, D. (2002) *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and Far Right*. London: Routledge.

Dieckmann, W. (1975) *Sprache in der Politik: Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen Sprache* [Language in Politics: semantics and pragmatics of political language], 2nd ed. Heidelberg: C. Winter Universitätsverlag.

Dieckmann, W. (1989) Die Beschreibung der politischen Lexik im allgemeinen einsprachigen Wörterbuch [Political Vocabulary in the General Monolingual Dictionary]. *Wörterbücher, Dictionaries, Dictionnaires*, Vol. 1 (pp. 835-842). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Fillmore, C. (1977a) Topics in lexical semantics. In R. W. Cole (ed.) *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* (pp. 76-138). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Fillmore, C. (1977b) Scenes-and-frames semantics. In A. Zambolli (ed.) *Linguistic Structures Processing* (pp. 55-82). Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company.

Finlayson, A. (2012) Rhetoric and the political theory of ideologies. *Political Studies*, 60: 571-567.

Finlayson, A. (2013) Ideology and political rhetoric. In M. Freeden, L. T. Sargent and M. Sears (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (pp. 197-213). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeden, M. (2013) The morphological analysis of ideology. In M. Freeden, L. T. Sargent and M. Sears (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (pp. 115-137). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fukujama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Geeraerts, D. (2003) Meaning and definition. In P. van Sterkenburg (ed.) *A Practical Guide to Lexicography* (pp. 83-93). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Gottfried, P. (2016) *Fascism: the career of a concept*. Northern Illinois University Press.

Gregor, J. A. (2009) *Marxism, Fascism and Totalitarianism: chapters in the intellectual history of radicalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Griffin, R. (1995) *Fascism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Griffiths, R. (2000) *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Fascism*. London: Gerald Duckworth.

Hawkes, D. (2003) *Ideology*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jack, C. (2017) *Lexicon of Lies: terms for problematic information*. New York, NY: Data & Society Research Institute.

Jarvis, S. E. (2014) Political messages and partisanship. In K. Kenski and K. H. Jamieson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication* (pp. 133-146). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Klemperer, V. (2013) *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI Lingua Tertii Imperii: a philologist's notebook*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Ķiršakmene, E. (2023) False friends in interpreting: the case of English, French and Latvian. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture*, 13: 69-83.

L'Homme, M.-C. (2020) Revisiting polysemy in terminology. In Z. Gavriilidou, M. Mitsiaki and A. Fliatouras (eds.) *EURALEX XIX Proceedings*, Vol. 1 (pp. 415-424). Alexandroupolis Democritus University of Thrace.

Lupion, M. (2018) The gray war of our time: information warfare and the Kremlin's weaponization of Russian-language digital mews. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 31 (3): 329-353.

Manley, J., Jacobsen, J. R. and Pedersen, V. H. (1988) Telling lies efficiently: terminology and the microstructure in the bilingual dictionary. In K. Hyldgaard-Jensen and A. Zettersten (eds.) *Symposium on Lexicography III* (pp. 281-302). Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Moon, R. (1989) Objective or objectionable?: ideological aspects of dictionaries. *ELR Journal*, 3: 59-91.

Moon, R. (2014) Meanings, ideologies, and learner's dictionaries. In A. Abel, C. Vettori and N. Ralli (eds.) *Proceedings of the XVI EURALEX International Congress: the user in focus* (pp. 85-105). Bolzano/Bozen: Institute for Specialised Communication and Multilingualism.

Müller-Spitzer, C. and Rüdiger, J. A. (2022) The influence of the corpus on the representation of gender stereotypes in the dictionary: a case-study of corpus-based dictionaries of German. In A. Klosa-Kückelhaus, S. Engelberg, C. Möhrs and P. Storjohann (eds.) *Proceedings of the XX EURALEX International Congress* (pp. 129-141). Mannheim: IDS Verlag.

Orwell, G. (2001) *Orwell and Politics*. London: Penguin Books.

Pascale, C.-M. (2019) The weaponization of language: discourses of rising right-wing authoritarianism. *Current Sociology Review*, 67 (6): 898-917.

Pinnavaia, L. (2022) Identifying ideological strategies in the making of monolingual English language learner's dictionaries. In A. Klosa-Kückelhaus, S. Engelberg, C. Möhrs and P. Storjohann (eds.) *Proceedings of the XX EURALEX International Congress* (pp. 142-154). Mannheim: IDS Verlag.

Robertson, D. (2004) *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*, 3rd. ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Russell, B. (1956) The philosophy of logical atomism. In R. C. Marsh (ed.) *Logic and Knowledge: essays 1901-1950* (pp. 177-281). London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Russell, B. (1957) Physics and perception. In P. Edwards and A. Pap (eds.) *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* (pp. 559-565). New York, NY: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Saussure, F. de (1959) *Course in General Linguistics*. New York, NY: Philosophical Library.

Snyder, T. (2022) We should say it: Russia is fascist. *The New York Times*, 19 May.

Stahl, R. (2016) Weaponizing speech. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 102: 376-395.

Stötzel, G. and Wengeler, M. (1995) *Kontroverse Begriffe: Geschichte des öffentlichen Sprachgebrauchs in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Controversial Terms: the history of public language in the German Federal Republic]. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Teehankee, J. C. (2005) *Liberalism: a primer*. Manila: National Institute for Policy Studies.

Van Dijk, T. (1995) Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse & Society*, 6 (2): 243-289.

Van Haaften, W. (1995) Wittgenstein and the significance of private meaning. In P. Smeyers and J. D. Marshall (eds.) *Philosophy and Education: accepting Wittgenstein's challenge*. Philosophy and Education, Vol. 6 (pp. 171-186). Dordrecht: Springer.

Veisbergs, A. (2002) Defining political terms in lexicography: recent past and present. *The Tenth EURALEX International Congress*. Proceedings (pp. 657-667). Copenhagen: CST.

Veisbergs, A. (2005) Ideology in dictionaries — definitions of political terms. In H. Gottlieb (ed.) et al. *Symposium on Lexicography XI* (pp. 537-547). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Verschueren, J. (2012) *Ideology in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1986) *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

DICTIONARIES

[COED] *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2011) 12th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, S. (1755) *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London: W. Strahan.

Littleton, A. (1703) *Linguae Latinae Liber Dictionarius Quadripartitus*, 4th ed. London: Rawlins et al.

[LDCE] *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2014) 6th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

[OALDCE] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2022) 10th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[ODE, 2003] *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2003) 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[ODE, 2010] *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010) 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[The OED, 1933] *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) Vol. 6. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[OEDS] *The Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* (1933) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[SOED] *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (1972) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[The OED, 1989a] *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989a) 2nd ed., Vol. 5. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[The OED, 1989b] *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989b) 2nd ed., Vol. 8. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[WTNIDEL] *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1993) Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

ONLINE SOURCES

[Online 1] Available from FASCISM | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 2] Available from fascism | meaning of fascism in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English | LDOCE (ldoceonline.com) [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 3] Available from fascism noun - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 4] Available from Fascism Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 5] Available from FASCISM definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary (collinsdictionary.com) [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 6] Available from liberal | meaning of liberal in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English | LDOCE (ldoceonline.com) [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 7] Available from LIBERALISM definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary (collinsdictionary.com) [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 8] Available from liberal_2 noun - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 9] Available from LIBERALISM | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 10] Available from Liberalism Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 11] Available from Search Results for liberalism - Oxford Reference [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[Online 12] Available from Liberalism - Wikipedia [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

TOOLS

[NOW] *News on the Web Corpus*. Available from www.english-corpora.org. [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

[LVK] *Līdzsvarotais mūsdienu latviešu valodas tekstu korpuss 2022* [The Balanced Corpus of Modern Latvian 2022]. Available from LVK2022 | Korpuss.lv [Accessed on 30 October 2023].

Andrejs Veisbergs (Prof., Dr. Habil. Philol.) works at the University of Latvia. He is a Consultant of Oxford English Dictionaries and an accredited European Union interpreter. His research interests include lexicography, idioms, language contacts, translation and interpreting.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6107-2348

Email: Andrejs.Veisbergs@lu.lv

Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture. Volume 14, 2024

Published by University of Latvia Press
Aspazijas bulvāris 5-132, Riga, LV-1050, Latvia
www.apgads.lu.lv