



# patchwork

ISSUE 4

Edited by the students from the Department of English,  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

PUBLISHER

**Department of English  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Zagreb**

ISSUE #4

**ISSN 1849-7772 (Print)  
ISSN 1849-7780 (Online)**

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# — Foreword

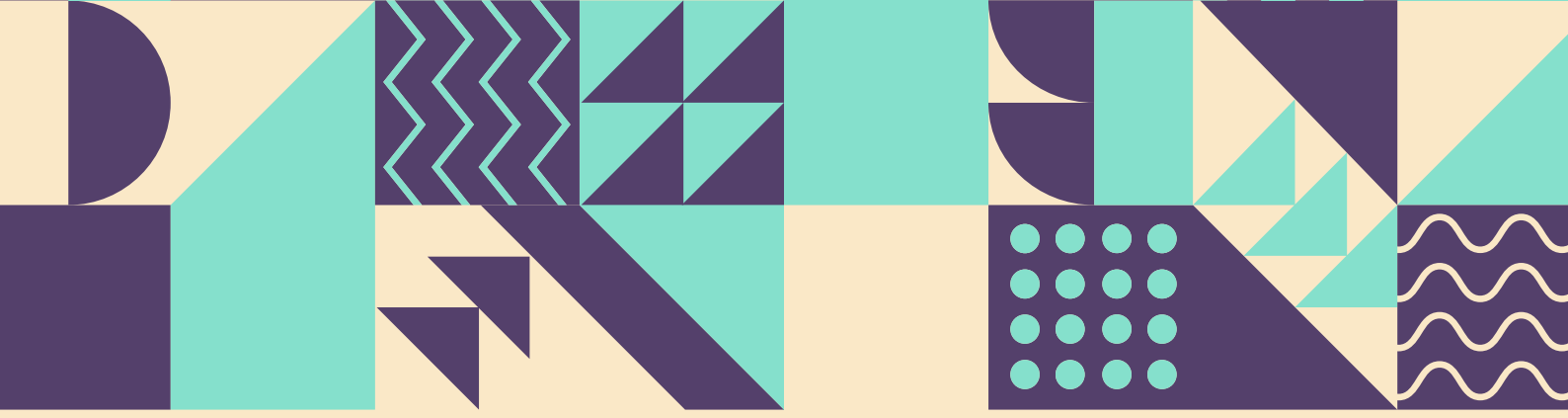
Dear Readers,

It is with great joy that we present to you the fourth issue of Patchwork Student Journal. We have again gathered a collection of outstanding works written by our colleagues, all of whom have collaborated with us throughout the entire publishing process in order to bring this fourth issue to life. Following the tradition of the previous issue, not only did we have a tremendous honour of receiving numerous works written by our colleagues from the University of Zagreb, but also we have received various papers from other national and international universities. Moreover, we have been offered assistance and mentorship by the wonderful academic staff of our own Department of English, University of Zagreb, and the professors from the University of Zadar. We have also re-established great collaboration with the PhD students from various national universities, with hopes of building stronger and better bridges between BA, MA, and PhD students. The present issue is, therefore, the product of the hard and prolific work from ourselves, the editors, our authors, as well as our collaborators, all of whom have helped us in so many ways, and we will never be able to thank them enough.

This project was first created by our colleagues Ana Popović and Dorotea Sinković with the aim of creating a platform that would provide the students of our Department with an opportunity to express themselves, learn and improve their investigative and academic writing skills. We are also incredibly grateful to both Ana and Dorotea for trusting us with taking over the wheel with this issue and bringing new ideas to the table. We have since divided our journal into two different annual issues, one being a regular issue and the latter a form of a cooperation with the English Student Club. We have also redefined our visual identity, and extended the scope of our journal to various social media sources. However, we would never have been able to develop any further without the immense help from our Department, and especially Assoc. Prof. Iva Polak, who has stood by us every step of the way. We are also very thankful to our wonderful Advisory Board and our lecturers, all of whom have devoted their time and energy to go through every line of each paper that you are about to read and study it in great detail, in order to help our authors improve their content to the best of their ability.

Finally, we leave you with this issue with hopes that you will enjoy the read and maybe even feel inspired to embark on your own writing endeavour. In the meantime, we will be anxiously waiting!

The Editorial Team



# 01

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**The Importance of Error Correction  
in Foreign Language Learning**

## REVIEW PAPER

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# The Importance of Error Correction in Foreign Language Learning

The aim of this paper is to provide a theoretical and practical overview of different types of error correction, to discuss various factors affecting error correction in class, and to highlight the benefits of error correction. In contemporary language teaching, different types of error correction are implemented in the classroom: explicit and implicit techniques, oral and written correction, and non-verbal techniques such as gestures and facial expressions. According to the Noticing Hypothesis, proposed by Schmidt, corrective feedback becomes internalised input only when learners notice it, a point any foreign language teacher should keep in mind when correcting their learners (qtd. in Truscott 103). When choosing which type of feedback to implement, teachers should talk with their learners to see which method suits them best and also consider their individual differences, such as age, proficiency, attitude towards language learning, and motivation. In conclusion, there is no single right way of correcting learners' errors. It is the teacher's task to cultivate learners' positive attitudes towards error correction and to find a method which a particular group of learners will accept and which will be optimal for the group.

## KEYWORDS

**error correction, communicative language teaching, individual differences**

## INTRODUCTION

Error correction is an indispensable part of the foreign language classroom, but one that at the same time raises many concerns. Some of the concerns surrounding error correction are when to correct learners and when error correction should be avoided, what type of corrective feedback is best to use, and how much error correction should be used in a particular situation.

Foreign language teaching has changed over the past and shifted from "an explicit focus on the language itself" to placing focus on "expression and comprehension of meaning" (Lightbown and Spada 430) since, according to Krashen, approaches focusing on the latter lead to high proficiency in the L2 because, in that case, the language instruction is conducted in a "natural" environment (qtd. in Lightbown and Spada 430). This approach, however, does not lead to grammar accuracy, which is why contemporary foreign language teaching includes a form-focused approach as well as the communicative-based approach and tries to use different types of feedback depending on the circumstances in order to implement both meaning and form (Pawlak 12).

Corrective feedback can be written and oral. However, it is usually oral feedback that is of topical interest in various disciplines and theoretical frameworks and an issue concerning many teachers since the teacher has to make immediate decisions as to whether to correct a learner's erroneous utterance or not and which feedback technique to use.

The corrective feedback techniques that teachers in communicatively oriented classrooms have at their disposal include explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition (Lyster and Ranta 46). The teacher should keep in mind, however, that these techniques should be chosen not only according to the particular learning situation, but also to the individual differences among the learners in terms of intelligence (or intelligences), aptitude, learning style, personality, motivation, attitudes, etc. (Lightbown and Spada 57–67), as learners will react differently to different types of error correction depending on their individual characteristics. This seems to complicate corrective feedback processes even more, as the teacher usually has to deal with more than 20 learners per class who all have different learning styles, abilities, motivation, personalities, etc.

This article is divided into eight sections dealing with issues connected to error correction while providing theoretical background and research findings. Our experiences gained during teacher training, an obligatory part of the Teaching Stream graduate programme at the



Department of English (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb) during which students of English visit elementary and secondary schools and/or faculties, observe classes, and have the opportunity to teach, will also be included in order to raise questions about the important topic of corrective feedback as well as to help future colleagues and teacher trainees who are struggling to find their path in the world of teaching.

**Section 1** discusses attitudes towards errors in the contemporary foreign-language classroom. It explains what teachers and learners should do in order to make error correction a facilitative experience. **Section 2** mentions criteria for correcting errors and suggests what types of errors should be corrected and in which situations. It also briefly presents the Noticing Hypothesis and its importance for language acquisition. **Section 3** describes and exemplifies how error correction is used in a communicative language setting which encourages learners to speak without hesitation. **Section 4** explains how nonverbal metalinguistic cues are used to draw attention to learners' errors and how they differ depending on the learners' age. **Section 5** suggests research-based methods of providing written error correction and highlights the importance of learners' self-correction. **Section 6** discusses the application of sociocultural theory in the context of early language learning and recommends types of feedback for young learners. **Section 7** examines how individual differences such as proficiency, age, and motivation affect error correction and how different methods of error correction are applied in elementary and secondary school. Finally, **section 8** presents types of feedback that learners prefer based on scientific findings as well as first-hand experience.

## **1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ERRORS IN THE CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Error correction is one of the most delicate aspects of foreign language teaching but one that can hardly be avoided. The process of mastering a foreign language involves making lots of errors; hence errors and error correction are an integral part of any foreign language lesson. However, many teachers feel rather uncomfortable correcting their learners, especially when oral feedback is concerned, as they believe "overt correction can harm learners' self-confidence as well as heighten their anxiety levels to an extent that is detrimental to language learning" (Mackey et al. 501).

Making errors in a foreign language classroom can sometimes be an embarrassing experience and can cause the learner to refrain from saying anything in the target language so as to avoid making any further errors. However, it is often not the error correction itself that induces this

feeling, but the general idea that errors are something bad, something that should be avoided at any cost. A confirmation of this idea can be found at school, where it is easy to notice that primary school learners usually tend to be less afraid of making errors and being corrected as opposed to high school or university learners. This might suggest that, in the process of growing up, one learns to interpret errors as a negative occurrence because the word *error* has connotations of somebody having done something wrong, and nobody likes doing things wrong.

And while the older language teaching methods such as the Audio-Lingual Method indeed viewed learners' errors as something undesirable that was to be avoided (Larsen-Freeman 47), in the "new look" at errors and learning and teaching foreign languages, "the creative use of language that is . . . based on trial and error" is encouraged (Mitchell 13). In other words, according to modern teaching methods and principles, learners should be given space to "use language creatively by testing [their] hypothesis[es] about the rules" (Mitchell 15), and accordingly, learners' errors should be welcomed, as it has been found that "errors enhance later memory for and generation of the correct responses, facilitate active learning, stimulate the learner to direct attention appropriately, and inform the teacher of where to focus teaching" (Metcalfe 620). However, practice is very often not in line with theory, and many foreign language learners and teachers do not perceive errors and the ensuing error correction as a means of making progress in the foreign language acquisition process.

It can be argued that errors and error correction are an opportunity for the learners to develop their interlanguages. On the other hand, refraining from making any errors and simplifying one's sentences so as to say only what one is sure is correct or refraining from producing any sentences in the foreign language in question is usually nothing but counterproductive. It is therefore indispensable for foreign language teachers to discuss with learners the importance of making errors and being corrected, to create an atmosphere where errors are accepted as an integral part of learning and to develop a sense of how to apply corrective feedback so as not to make the learners feel uncomfortable. This may eliminate negative feelings surrounding errors for both the teacher and the learners and make the learners value errors and corrective feedback and start seeing them as an effective and efficient way to acquire a non-native language.

## **2. ERROR CORRECTION CRITERIA AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NOTICING**

Apart from making sure that their learners understand the importance of corrective feedback, it is important for teachers to establish

a set of principles that will help them decide on the types of errors and situations that require corrective feedback as well as on the techniques they are going to use.

One of the authors concerned with error correction mentions certain principles that should guide error correction and highlights the importance not only of the teacher's intuition when dealing with errors, but also of the learners' feedback (Amara 62). This means that teachers should also consider the learners' preferences when it comes to corrective feedback and not rely solely on their own knowledge. Some other principles introduced by James include using corrective techniques that are aimed at enhancing the learners' accuracy in expression. Moreover, error correction should not be face-threatening to learners, and their affective factors should be taken into consideration (qtd. in Amara 62).

The most common criterion when it comes to deciding whether to correct an error or not seems to be the "seriousness" of the error, that is, its appropriateness for the proficiency level of the learners. If the error is something the learners at a particular level of language acquisition are definitely supposed to have acquired, then the teacher usually reacts to the error to avoid the fossilisation of an incorrect form. However, if the error is something that is not expected from the learners at that level of proficiency, the teachers tend to ignore the error.

The second criterion that teachers commonly use when deciding whether to correct or not is the kind of situation or the task the error was made in. Teachers usually do not correct errors in fluency-based tasks, such as open-class discussions, when learners are expected to make longer and more complex statements or when the content of their speech is more complex and requires more concentration. On the other hand, if the focus of the activity is on practicing a particular language area, then the teacher tends to give corrective feedback.

In general, the teachers observed during teacher training usually use negotiation of meaning instead of correcting the learners' errors. Comparing the techniques of error correction used in elementary school and in high school or at the university level, a few differences can be noticed. However, what was most interesting was the fact that some of the observed teachers in elementary school often used implicit techniques of error correction, such as echoing or recast, which often went unnoticed by the learners. They decided to correct the learner's error based on the aforementioned criteria, but the technique they used was not effective. The reason why these instances failed is well explained by the Noticing Hypothesis.

The Noticing Hypothesis, proposed by Richard Schmidt, suggests that noticing grammatical details is a necessary condition for learning because only that part of input which is consciously noticed can become intake and be used in acquisition (qtd. in Truscott 103). To understand the Noticing Hypothesis, it is important to be aware of the distinction between input and intake. While input refers to the language that learners are exposed to in its entirety, it is only intake, the part of input that is internalised by the learner, that leads to acquisition (Gass and Selinker 305). This suggests that learners need to be aware of their own errors and notice the corrective feedback used by the teacher for language acquisition to take place.

According to the experiences of pre-service and in-service teachers, different groups of learners react differently to various techniques of error correction, so, as Amara (61) suggests, it might be useful to talk to learners about corrective feedback and reach a common decision about the technique the teacher is going to use. Otherwise, there is a great risk that it goes unnoticed, which means that it does not serve its sole purpose of becoming part of learner intake. However, teachers should be careful not to react to their learners' errors too often and not to interrupt the flow of communication in the classroom, as, after all, it is communication that is the ultimate goal of foreign language learning.

### **3. ERROR CORRECTION IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

As a future teacher, I have to admit that one of my greatest challenges will be the way in which I correct my learners. Luckily, the latest trends in language teaching are more inclined towards a communicative classroom setting where the aim is to encourage one's learners to speak regardless of their imperfect utterances. A fine example is Lightbown and Spada's research on the development of oral English with native speakers of French in fifth and sixth grades (aged ten to twelve) at an elementary school in Quebec. What they found was that form-based instruction within a communicative context contributed to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance. Furthermore, the findings of the study suggested that accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative skills were probably best developed through instruction that was primarily meaning-based but in which guidance was provided through timely form-focus activities and correction in context (443). This can be thrilling to a teacher who prefers a communicative classroom setting where there is ample time for the learners to do the talking and for the teacher to engage them in the role of an encouraging listener. Like it or not, as a teacher, one will have to lay stress on the communicative aspect of the lesson, and when one finds

the right method, one will be able to cope with the most difficult tasks, error correction included. Let us observe how this kind of communicative strategy actually aids one's efforts in correcting learners' errors. One thing that most teachers can agree upon is to avoid intimidating the learner into sheer muteness on each following occasion. An easy way of handling the situation when the learner is babbling out an error-ridden jumble of peculiar phrases and non-existent grammar is simply to do nothing. Of course, by nothing it is meant that one should not interrupt them. Instead of immediately correcting the errors, the teacher should pay attention to the message that the learner intends to get across. Consequently, the teacher will be able to engage the learner in a brief conversation and ask them questions about it. Here it is crucial that the teacher makes a subtle move that makes the learner aware of the errors they have just made. One strategy could be asking something along these lines:

T: I like the way you described the boy, but I did not quite understand what you meant by saying that he *received* [/rɪ'saɪvd/] the gift?

S: Well he received [/rɪ'saɪvd/] it . . .

T: Actually, you would pronounce that verb a bit differently in English.

S: Oh, he *received* [/rɪ'si:vd/] it!

T: There you go.

In the given example, the correct pronunciation of the verb has been arrived at fairly easily. In case the same error pattern recurs, one should listen it out until its end and start over again. It is preferable to opt for this kind of combination of metalinguistic feedback and clarification request instead of recasting the correct structure immediately. The decision lies in the fact that the learners get an opportunity to notice the error themselves, which increases the likelihood that they will use the correct structure in the future. Likewise, this kind of configuration allows the teacher to move away from the focus of class attention, as was the convention of traditional language teaching, and shift into a more facilitative role of one who supervises the most important part of the lesson, namely what the learners are saying and how they are saying it. Needless to say, the same strategy will not apply in all circumstances. Specifically, if one is teaching vocabulary or grammar structures that are still relatively fresh to the learners. In those cases, the teacher should not shy away from the good old collective "repeat-after-me". The teacher can easily make this a fun exercise if they tell their learners to repeat it several times, first neutrally, then mock-dramatically, then in a Scottish dialect, etc.

It is doubtful that the perfect technique of error correction will be universally accepted, but what can be claimed is that a teacher can easily devise a strategy within the communicative sphere of classroom experience and personalize one's correcting according to the situation. At least the learners will not be stressed out to such an extent each time the teacher calls out their names when the time comes for them to speak in front of others.

#### **4. NONVERBAL ERROR CORRECTION**

There is absolutely no perfect formula or recipe for error correction. What can be specifically problematic are questions such as which form of error correction is the most appropriate, when teachers should correct the learners, which errors they should correct and which not, and other similar questions. Throughout the teacher training that young future teachers undergo, their mentors rarely give them explicit advice on how to correct learners' mistakes. What is more, the different mentors in various schools that the teacher trainees visit rarely use the same error correction strategies. Moreover, what can be noticed is that many language teachers use certain metalinguistic cues that, even though they are not verbally expressed, the learners seem to react well to them. As Wang and Loewen (1) demonstrated in their study of teachers' nonverbal behaviour and corrective feedback in ESL classrooms, teachers use an abundance of such nonverbal metalinguistic cues to draw their learners' attention to language errors. These metalinguistic cues include hand gestures, pointing, affect displays, nodding, and the like.

The types of error correction that I experienced from my mentors differed according to the age of the language learners that I observed. For instance, the errors of young learners in elementary school were approached differently than the errors that secondary school learners made. Since young learners in elementary school were still not aware of the errors that they made and were not familiar with the metalanguage that could make them understand these errors, most of the errors were corrected explicitly by the teacher saying the right solution. On the other hand, most of the error correction techniques that I witnessed in secondary schools included elicitation, repetition, metalinguistic feedback, and clarification requests when it came to grammatical mistakes such as the use of a wrong preposition or a wrong tense, and implicit error correction, mostly in the form of recasts, when it came to erroneous pronunciation. The most interesting forms of error correction were precisely the aforementioned metalinguistic cues which seemed to be very effective in drawing the learner's attention to a certain linguistic error. Some of the metalinguistic cues that my mentors used included

hand gestures, nodding, pointing, and facial expressions to indicate that something was wrong. According to Lyster, as referred to in an article by Katayama, precisely the techniques of elicitation and metalinguistic clues draw the learner's attention more effectively than explicit error correction (76). Moreover, according to Hostetter and Alibali, nonverbal behaviour and metalinguistic feedback can have a great impact on language learning because they "help capture attention, provide redundancy, or engage more senses by grounding speech in the concrete, physical experience" (qtd. in Wang and Loewen 1).

I personally try to avoid correcting errors by explicitly giving the right solution because I believe that this does not make the learners notice and meditate the error. I always try to encourage learners to infer the right solution on their own because I believe that leads to deeper processing of knowledge. What I like to do is repeat the erroneous utterance in a questioning tone or to indicate with a grimace that something is wrong because I believe that this makes the learners think about the error that they have just made and look for the right solution and correct their own error. Furthermore, by drawing learners' attention to certain errors using my personalized set of metalinguistic cues, for example, by using a special facial expression with a particular type of error, learners do not feel discouraged, and I manage to keep a light-hearted atmosphere in the classroom and the right answer seems to become more entrenched in their memory.

Taking into consideration all of the above-mentioned facts and drawing from my own experience, I think that there is no "magic formula" when it comes to error correction. Each teacher needs to find a balance between correcting their learners' errors and letting them state their views and communicate in a foreign language. In my opinion, error correction is not something that can be learned or picked up from our mentors during teacher training. I think that each teacher needs to find their own perfect solution to this problem after he/she becomes familiar with his/her learners and sees what works best for them.

## **5. WRITTEN ERROR CORRECTION**

Aside from verbal and nonverbal corrective feedback, another essential part of error correction which was not introduced during our teacher training is written error correction. Although it may be difficult and time-consuming, written error correction helps develop individual interactions between teachers and learners that are rarely possible in the everyday foreign language classroom; therefore, in the following part there will be a short discussion on how to provide written error correction,

what methods could be useful and what other factors should be taken into account when giving written feedback.

Every teacher has a different view on how to correct their learners, and this also applies to written feedback. However, there is no question that the learners actually benefit from this type of feedback. According to Corpuz, a research that supports using written correction is Bitchener's study from 2008 that investigated whether targeted written correction will improve the participants' accuracy (26). The results showed that three groups of ESL learners who received direct error correction outperformed the control group that did not receive corrective feedback (Corpuz 26). Furthermore, a problem arises when deciding how to correct learners' written compositions. According to Corpuz, there are two specific methods when providing written correction (32). A teacher can either explicitly show the error by providing the correct form, or he or she can do it implicitly by underlining, encircling, giving marginal commentary, or using correction codes (Corpuz 32). Some researchers argue that implementing the explicit type of correction reduces the number of learners' errors, while others disagree (Corpuz 33). The results, for instance, from two studies in 1997 and 2001 that were conducted by Ferris showed that all participants preferred implicit written correction through the use of codes that indicated their errors (qtd. in Corpuz 38). Therefore, it is still not clear which method is more effective. However, when applying any of the aforementioned feedback methods, learners' preferences should be taken into account. It is important for teachers to talk to their learners about written correction in order to find out which method suits them best. When teaching a small group, one can take into consideration learners' individual needs, but when teaching a larger group, one has to apply the methods the majority prefers.

One interesting topic of research is the effectiveness of giving learners the opportunity to correct their own errors in written compositions. Makino's study from 1993 investigated to what degree cues are helpful and what type of cues are more effective in self-correction. The findings of the study showed that all subjects were able to correct their errors to some extent, but the more detailed the cues were, "the higher the ratio of learner self-correction" was achieved (Makino 339). Regarding the type of correction, the teacher used underlining, which showed "a marked effect on the correction of the inflectional morphemes" (Makino 340). Therefore, Makino notes that self-correction has been shown to be highly effective with grammatical errors (340). It gives learners a chance to reflect on their writing and to notice incorrect structures. By giving learners the opportunity to self-correct, they are not just passively receiving the teacher's feedback. On the other hand, self-correction also depends on the learner's level of proficiency because it may not be helpful for some



at all. It can be argued that more detailed cues should be given to less proficient learners while less detailed ones should be given to more advanced learners (Makino 340).

Research shows varying results regarding which method of written error correction should be implemented because learners' preferences should be taken into account as well. Learners should be given a chance to self-correct when provided with teacher cues, and teachers should check if they understand them. There are no preferred types of written error correction because some may benefit from direct feedback, and others from implicit feedback. In order to know what kind of feedback to implement, teachers should directly ask their learners about written error correction and make sure that they can understand their feedback. Giving written feedback is certainly difficult, but one should keep in mind that it serves as a basis for the learner's further improvement. Taking everything into account, pre-service teachers will certainly benefit if written error correction is introduced as a part of their teacher training because it will enable them to experience the difficulties that may arise.

## 6. EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ERROR CORRECTION

One of the theories that is often used in the area of early language learning is sociocultural theory. Even though this theory can be applied to any age group of learners, it is especially beneficial when working with young learners, as it strives to explain (early) human development and the learning processes. With young learners we tend to use less explicit error correction methods, not only because of their lack of metalinguistic knowledge, but also because we do not want to discourage them from the learning process. This group of learners acquires language through play, and keeping the corrective feedback implicit and casual helps maintain this learning atmosphere. This is where sociocultural theory comes into play.

One of the main concepts of sociocultural theory is scaffolding, i.e. giving learners the *exact* amount of help they need in accordance with their developmental level, and this also includes giving feedback and error correction. In this equation, the distance between the actual developmental level (*what learners can do on their own*) and the potential developmental level (*what learners can do with guidance*) is then called the zone of proximal development, as defined by Vygotsky himself (86). Teachers should provide support and guidance to assist the learner, and the learning process should be a collaborative one which includes both the teacher and the learner (Rassaei 420). This means that different means should be used to elicit the correct form from learners, helping them only as much as they need. Application of this theory in the classroom

environment can be very challenging, especially with (very) young learners, since they have limited metalinguistic knowledge, not to mention very short attention spans. As teacher trainees, we desperately lack instruction in working with very young learners, even though many of us end up working with them at some point during our careers. We are not trained in how to get our young learners' attention, how to keep it, or how to get it back after losing it just seconds later. In other words, the collaborative aspect and the constant negotiations which are crucial in contemporary applications of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development are very difficult to persist in when it comes to teaching (young) children.

It has been said earlier that, as teachers, we should strive to use various methods of error correction depending on our students' needs; however, research has also shown that different types of feedback have different success rates with young children's language acquisition. For example, a study by Chapman et al. published in 1986 compared three types of feedback – acceptance, correction with joint labelling, and correction with explanation. Even though correction with joint labelling may seem as a good feedback strategy (*That's not a car. That's a truck.*), it may lead to acceptance of both terms as signifiers for the same toy (Chapman et al. 103). The same applies to young learners of English as L2 who do not comprehend negative forms of sentences yet. This study found the third type of feedback to be the most successful in helping children learn labels (Chapman et al. 113). It not only provides the child with the appropriate label but also gives additional information about the target word (description of the object, relationship with other objects, etc.), which shifts the attention from the wrong label to the correct one and makes children more interested in the target word. This method is very useful with young children, as repetition of the wrong word in any way will often be understood as confirmation. Recast can also be very effective, especially with a change of intonation, or again in combination with additional questions and information about the target word.

As with any other age group of learners, it is important to see which methods work best for our learners, but with young learners, learning how to improvise during lessons is crucial, and trying new methods and strategies is a must to keep the lesson dynamic and interesting. It has already been said that the form of error correction as well as its frequency highly depends on the context and should always be adapted to the learners, and this is exactly what the sociocultural theory strives to do, arguing that the corrective feedback should be attuned to the learner's needs and his/her zone of proximal development (Rassei 420).

## 7. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND ERROR CORRECTION

When discussing error correction, the main focus, naturally, is on the learners, who can be observed both as a group and as individuals. In order to get behind error correction and how it affects learners, it is also necessary to take into account individual differences such as intelligence, language aptitude, motivation, risk taking, beliefs, age, proficiency, and memory (Kartchava and Ammar 86–87). Individual differences affect the way a person notices error correction, and subsequently, they affect how a person benefits from it. Individual differences also encompass learners' attitudes towards error correction. Various studies have dealt with the topic, the general result being that the learners' attitude was positive, and they even preferred more error correction. Research conducted by Chenoweth, Day, Chun and Luppescu offer some interesting insights, such as the finding that the learners found error correction as "facilitating – even necessary – for the improvement of their oral English" (85). Furthermore, a study conducted by Kartchava and Ammar helped to form the conclusion that "learners' positive attitudes towards CF [correction feedback] can positively affect the noticing of CF in the classroom" (104).

While doing my teacher training, I gained experience both in elementary school and high school. First off, I was interested in the method my mentors would be using to approach children of different ages. In the elementary school classes, my mentors mostly focussed on the negotiation of meaning, which, we would say, is easier on beginner learners who are children. Even though error correction and feedback are needed for improvement, one always needs to be careful not to discourage learners and turn them away from learning. Kartchava and Ammar reached the conclusion that learners are more likely to notice corrective intent in the form of recast, especially if they believed in the importance of feedback (104). My mentors would often allow the learners to finish the sentence and encourage them to speak in general. They would mostly use recasts or repetition, and the learners often repeated the right form. In my opinion, the learners did not feel agitated and continued to participate in the lesson, which serves as the basis of my conclusion that they did not think of those ways of error correction as rough or severe, but the opposite, as helpful and stimulating.

In the secondary-school classes that I attended, the situation was a bit different. The teacher used error correction more freely and more directly, and the methods varied, while the correction was more explicit. Among the various methods used, repetition was surely employed, while the method of clarification request was also included in the lessons. One could argue that, since the secondary-school learners are cognitively more developed, there is a need to include more explicit error correction,

since at that point this could strongly facilitate true error correction and the intake of the right form. However, in some classes, the learners in general were not that interested, and in my opinion, they did not pay much attention to error correction, either. I would not say they felt ashamed, but they were unmotivated to participate in general, and their individual differences, this time in the form of motivation, affected error correction. Still, there were some classes who showed true interest and surprising knowledge, and while in those classes error correction was often not even needed, when it was, the learners embraced it and it was obvious that they were genuinely trying to take in the right form – they repeated it and corrected themselves. The occurrence of self-correction may point to positive attitudes towards error correction. However, as has been argued above, since numerous factors, including individual differences, affect the way one notices and uses error correction, the topic is open for debate and further research.

## **8. HOW DO LEARNERS REACT TO ERROR CORRECTION?**

Giving feedback can be done in different ways with the ultimate goal that, after the teacher has drawn the learners' attention to some element(s) of language, these elements be incorporated into a learner's developing system (Gass and Selinker 359). During teacher training, young teachers learn in class how different types of feedback may impact learning. However, they are unprepared when they start their teacher training in their second year of the master's programme, which is when they get hands-on experience. They are taught and instructed on various techniques of error correction; they are told and they intuitively know that they should be mindful of their learners' feelings, motivation, and further intake of knowledge. However, what concerns them is the amount of error correction that should be done during lessons and how learners perceive and react to error correction.

In a study released in 2007 titled *Students' Perceptions of Oral Error Correction*, conducted at six Japanese universities on first- and second-year students of Japanese, Akemi Katayama found that the learners had strongly positive attitudes toward teacher correction of errors. After Katayama analysed the learners' responses, she found that 92.8% of the learners agreed that their errors in speaking should be corrected. The most frequently cited reason for this positive attitude toward error correction was that error correction brought learners to an awareness of their errors and that error correction helps them learn Japanese (68). When it came to general preferences for correction of different types of errors, the learners stated that correcting only errors that interfere with communication is not sufficient and that selective error correction does

not help learners improve their accuracy in speaking Japanese (69). The learners also stated that they think peer correction is beneficial to them (70). Finally, when it came to general preferences for particular types of classroom error correction in speaking, grammatical errors ranked first in order of preference for correction, closely followed by vocabulary and errors in pragmatics. A total of 84.5% of the respondents favoured the explicit error correction method, in which the teacher explained why the utterance was incorrect (73).

Some of my colleagues, who were fortunate enough to be able to do their teacher training at an elementary school, at a high school, and at a university, had the opportunity to see how error correction varies in different groups of learners. One mentor at an elementary school would point behind her back when the seventh-graders made a mistake, indicating that the sentence should be in the past tense. Katayama noted in her study that a teacher's metalinguistic clues or elicitation moves that facilitate self-correction may draw learners' attention to correct-incorrect mismatches more effectively than his or her recasting or explicit correction (76). Sometimes the above-mentioned mentor would use repetition (when someone did not pronounce the -s in the third person singular or got an article wrong) and elicitation (when someone could not think of a word), but mostly she used recasts (found to be the most favoured error correction method in Katayama's study) in order not to interrupt the flow of communication, especially in lower grades. These types of feedback were appropriate, adapted to each grade (as their age had to be taken under consideration), and the learners never felt humiliated. However, things are done differently in high school, as observed among seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds, who have already acquired sufficient metalinguistic knowledge. These classes were dynamic, and the mentor mixed various types of corrective feedback together. Peer correction was profusely used together with the mentor providing metalinguistic feedback about a mistake, making clarification requests and using repetition and recasts, but he rarely used explicit error correction. Another teacher, who taught at a university, used the same strategies as the high-school teacher. She taught first-year undergraduates, so the age difference was not great. Both of them created warm and friendly atmospheres that allowed their learners to relax (and even joke at times) but maintained authority, so the learners always took them and the feedback they gave seriously.

All in all, if teacher trainees compare the results from this study with their own teacher training experience, they will come to the conclusion that learners have generally positive attitudes toward error correction and that teachers should not avoid it but rather adapt it to their learners' age and the aim of the task of a particular lesson. The most important thing, in my opinion, is to make learners aware that everybody makes mistakes

and that their teacher corrects them for their own well-being. Moreover, once the teacher finds the feedback type(s) the learners react to best, he/she should stick to them.

## CONCLUSION

Corrective feedback a crucial aspect of foreign language teaching, but also one of the most complex decisions the teacher has to make in a foreign language classroom. However, based on the personal experiences of pre-service teachers and scientific findings, the first thing to do, even before deciding on the appropriate error correction technique, is to prepare the learners to receive corrective feedback and regard it as part of learning a foreign language. Having a positive attitude towards corrective feedback is the first step in making error correction a necessary part of language acquisition.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the learners notice the teacher's correction following their error, because, according to the Noticing Hypothesis, it is only that part of the corrective feedback that is noticed by the learner that turns into intake, the internalised part of the input (Gass and Selinker 305). Teachers should also take into consideration the fact that even error correction can and should be provided within a communicative context so that their learners will have as many opportunities to be involved in meaningful communication in the foreign language as possible (Lightbown and Spada 443).

Apart from correcting learners' errors verbally, teachers have the choice of using nonverbal techniques of error correction, which are also unobtrusive in nature. They can use various gestures, facial expressions, pointing, and other metalinguistic cues that do not interfere with the communication flow and do not deprive the learners of valuable speaking time (Wang and Loewen 1). Besides, such techniques can be humorous and contribute to a friendly atmosphere in the classroom.

Another aspect of corrective feedback, which is perhaps neglected in the education of young teachers, is written error correction. As in verbal correction, teachers also have an abundance of techniques to choose from when correcting written compositions. What might be the most useful, however, is self-correction, which provides the learners with the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their errors and eventually learn more from them than if the correct solution is simply provided by the teacher (Makino 340). The teacher is there to give cues, and it is the learners' task to come to the correct form. This statement is in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of language acquisition, which suggests

that teachers should use scaffolding when providing corrective feedback. This means that they should give their learners the amount of help they need to correct their own errors and no more than needed (Vygotsky 86). However, this is nearly impossible when working with young learners. Corrective feedback becomes a real challenge in the classroom of very young learners, due to their lack of metalinguistic knowledge, short attention span, and other factors. This is why teachers who work with this group of learners need to be even more patient and combine various types of feedback until they find methods which suit their learners best. Apart from age, there are a number of other individual factors, such as the learners' intelligence, language aptitude, motivation, attitudes towards language learning, and proficiency, that teachers should take into account when choosing the appropriate method of error correction (Kartchava and Ammar 86–87). Due to the individual differences among learners, which determine how they notice and perceive corrective feedback, one technique which has proved to be excellent for one group of learners may be completely useless in another group.

All in all, the conclusion can be reached that there is no right way of correcting learners' errors. It is the teacher's task to find a method which both serves its purpose – providing a basis for further language acquisition – and is well accepted by their group of learners.

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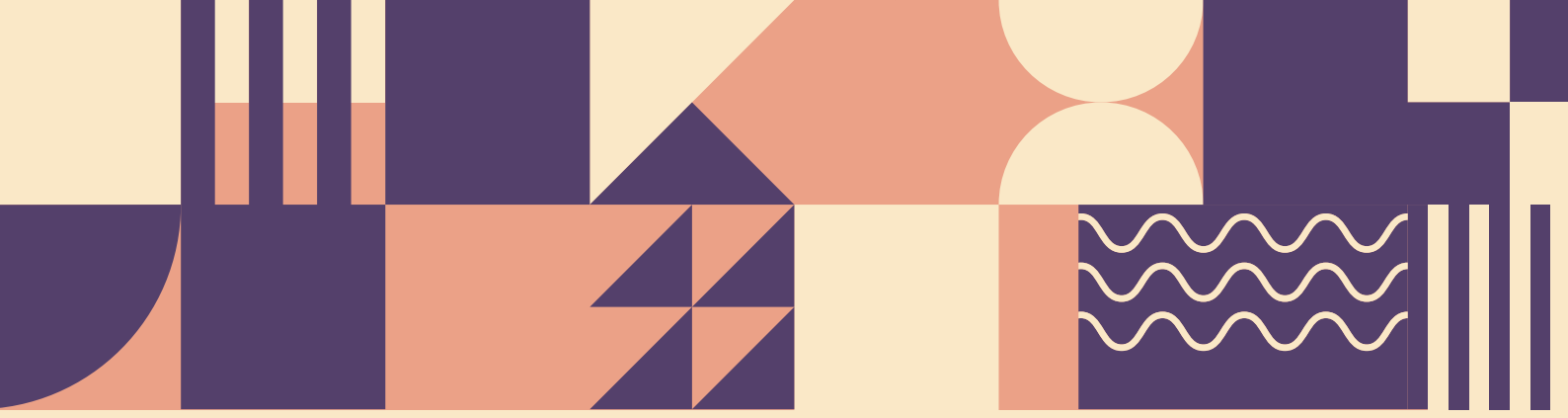
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**02**

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**Barbara  
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**The Mind Is Its Own Place: Trauma  
in *Warrior* and *Moby-Dick***

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# The Mind Is Its Own Place: Trauma in *Warrior* and *Moby-Dick*

Literary texts are often employed to help flesh out themes and characters in films. One example of this is the usage of quotes from Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* in the film *Warrior*, directed by Gavin O'Connor and released in 2011. The film follows the development of relationships between two brothers and their father. One of the brothers, Tommy, and the father, Paddy, are U.S. veterans. A prevalent theme in the film is, as the title suggests, their dealing with the combat trauma they experienced. In relation to that, understanding trauma, the lack of that understanding, and the isolation which stems from that lack are explored. What makes the novel particularly suitable in this context is the fact that it also tackles trauma. Both Ahab and Ishmael have suffered traumatic events, and both deal with them in different ways. Ishmael tries to work through it by constructing a narrative about it, while Ahab spirals out of control as he continues to view the whale as the personification of all evil. In that sense, a parallel could be drawn between his acting out and Tommy's engaging in soft risk-taking and entering the MMA tournament, with the difference that for Tommy it turns into an opportunity to start working through.

The aim of this essay is to look at the ways in which the film makes use of excerpts from the novel, enriching its exploration of trauma, in order to give more depth to the viewers' understanding of the symptoms of PTSD resulting from combat trauma.

### KEYWORDS

***Warrior*, *Moby-Dick*, structural trauma, combat trauma, PTSD**

Literary works are often used as hypotexts in films to aid or complicate their reading. The film *Warrior*, directed by Gavin O'Connor and released in 2011, makes use of a number of quotes from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (first published in 1851). The film deals with the interrelationships of three characters, a father and his two sons. Both the father and one of the sons are US veterans and suffer from PTSD. What particularly makes this novel appropriate to the topic of the film is the similarity in the professions of whalers and soldiers. Both are marked by strict adherence to hierarchy and by isolation, with the average whaling voyage lasting up to five years (Bercaw Edwards 88). In addition to that, both are narratives of trauma which involves the re-establishment of the symbolic order by means of constructing new myths about oneself and the world, as well as a need to be heard and understood. This essay aims to look at how *Warrior* makes use of excerpts from *Moby-Dick* to illustrate the effects of combat trauma in order to argue that canonical texts can be effectively used to deepen the viewers' understanding of the complexities of PTSD.

The film opens with shots of an industrial setting. The colour palette is markedly grey. The day seems peaceful enough, which is further emphasized by the extradiegetic music, the song "Start a War" by The National. However, though the melody is soft, the following lyrics point to a much more complex picture: "[w]e expected something, something better than before. We expected something more. Do you really think you can just put it in a safe behind a painting, lock it up, and leave?...Walk away now, and you're gonna start a war" (*Warrior* 00:00:51-00:01:21). Right at the beginning of the film, the themes of unfulfilled expectations, disappointment, avoidance, and conflict are established. At the same time, the viewers' attention is slowly directed towards the first of the main characters. A shot of a quiet street is followed by that of a church, apparently after some sort of a support-group meeting. The shot is framed by the windscreen of a car, with the racking focus moving from a rosary hanging from the rear-view mirror to the people leaving the church. The camera then follows an older man as he gets into his car and starts on his way home. A series of close-ups follows: he plays an audiocassette of *Moby-Dick*, the camera moving from his hand to his face, after which the rosary is seen again. This is how the viewers are introduced to Paddy Conlon, a veteran, and as will become apparent, a recovering alcoholic. A man's voice coming from the car radio starts reading, "Chapter 36. The quarter-deck. Enter Ahab: Then all" (Melville 257). This is accompanied by a close-up of Paddy's face, clearly establishing a parallel between the two characters. The audiocassette continues, "[i]t was not a great while after the affair of the pipe, that one morning shortly after breakfast, Ahab, as was his wont, ascended the cabin-gangway to the deck" (Melville 257). The first section of this sentence is heard as the rosary is in focus. These are the first cues to reading Paddy as Melville's Ahab.

Ahab is the captain of the *Pequod*, a whaling ship. On the previous voyage he lost his leg to the white whale, *Moby Dick*. Ever since then he's been "moody" and "savage", with the "hell in himself" driving him to hunt down the whale (Melville 257, 302). Later on in the book the readers also learn that he has trouble sleeping (he suffers from nightmares and night sweats, and sleeps three hours a day), gets worked up easily, and generally experiences a rollercoaster of emotions, ranging from a subdued pensiveness to manic behaviours and everything that comes with them (e.g. thrill-seeking by engaging in dangerous activities). All of these patterns of behaviour are symptomatic of PTSD. Paulson and Krippner define PTSD as "a condition that results from experiencing (or witnessing) life-threatening events that extend beyond one's coping capacity, emotional resources, and/or existential world view" (1). For Ahab, that life-threatening event is the loss of his leg. This loss, however, could also be interpreted as an absence materialised. In LaCapra's discussion of trauma, he emphasizes that loss and absence should not be equated, because "losses are specific and involve particular events" (700), whereas an absence is "the absence of an absolute that should not itself be absolutized or fetishized such that it becomes the object of fixation and absorbs, mystifies, or downgrades the significance of particular . . . losses" (702). In other words, the loss of Ahab's leg, a specific occurrence, functions as a metaphor for the absence of his ability to understand and control nature (the significance of the whale with respect to this will be elaborated later on in the essay). This structural trauma also serves to explain Ahab's monomania. When discussing the correlation of absence, loss, and anxiety, LaCapra claims that

[t]he conversion of absence into loss gives anxiety an identifiable object – the lost object – and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome...In converting absence into loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made 'us' lose. Therefore, to regain it one must somehow get rid of or eliminate those others – or perhaps that sinful other in oneself (707).

Ahab is frustrated over the fact that he cannot conquer nature. Therefore, he transfers the blame for it onto the whale that lost him his leg. What is interesting to mention here is that his prosthesis is "fashioned from the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (Melville 219), which could be interpreted as Ahab wanting to reassert his control over the traumatic event, as well as attempting to work the trauma through by means of re-constructing the story. When discussing the Lacanian notion of the real and its relation to trauma, Bistoien writes about how humans depend on language in the construction of identity and reality, and how, as a consequence, both identity and reality are bound to be identity and reality

of lack, owing to the impossibility of being fully rendered in language (69-70). The constant attempts to compensate for that lack fail, so a protective shield is formed by telling stories and constructing myths which "offer a promise of wholeness and closure" (59). After a traumatic event, one is forced to reinvent oneself and reality. And this is what Ahab does. He portrays himself as a tragic hero. His speech is lofty, he very often talks about his goal almost as of an epic undertaking, and there are sections of the book which are constructed almost like a play, with frequent asides being noted, etc. And his tragic flaw, the refusal to accept that man is not a ruler, but just another part of the whole that is nature, is what goads him on. He sees his journey as a necessity, something pre-ordained, and cannot rest. "[T]his smoking no longer soothes," (Melville 224) he says. He is "toiling, not pleasuring," his pipe doesn't offer any comfort, and so "[h]e tosses the still lighted pipe into the sea" (Melville 225). When at sea after his trauma, Ahab is never at peace. In that respect his compulsive returning to sea, the setting of the traumatic event, could be interpreted as acting out, as opposed to Ishmael's working through by narrativising.

Similar to Ahab, Paddy is a man that has been through a traumatic event which has left him permanently scarred and he is now in a constant state of turmoil. Although "[a]ctive membership in organised religion and one's internal spiritual belief system can give an individual an interpretative scaffolding" (Paulson and Krippner 13), the film hints that it will not help Paddy much longer. The camera follows his car journey home and sees him drive up his street as the cassette continues: "'It's a white whale, I say,' resumed Ahab, as he threw down the top-maul; 'a white whale. Skin your eyes for him, men; look sharp for white water; if ye see but a bubble, sing out'" (Melville 260). This is interspersed with shots where a man is seen sitting on Paddy's doorstep, implying a complex relationship at the very least. He takes some pills and washes them down with alcohol. In the ensuing scene we learn that the man is Paddy's son, Tommy. The whole exchange is filmed using medium and medium-long shots, as well as medium close-ups. The collocutor is always in the foreground, while the speaker seems to be trapped in the middle ground. A long take is used to establish a parallel between the father and the son, as the camera moves from Tommy holding out the bottle to Paddy, back to the bottle, and then to Tommy. Both have the same problem. Both, as will become apparent, use the same coping mechanism to deal with the effects of combat trauma. The scene finishes, and the title, *Warrior*, appears. This confirms the parallel and firmly establishes the problem of PTSD in the film. The interior scene which follows points out another problem symptomatic of PTSD. In one of the shots, Tommy is in the living room while Paddy is in the kitchen, framed by a doorway (as was Tommy in one of the exterior shots). The exits from those rooms point to different directions, and the shot is divided in half by a wall. All of this indicates feelings of isolation and

restriction, which are also indicative of trauma, as traumatised individuals avoid close emotional relationships (Degloma 110). This is also what Ahab, his chief, second, and third mate, and their harpooners feel. They are all Isolatoes, "each . . . living on a separate *continent* of his own" (Melville 216; emphasis added). Towards the end of *Moby-Dick* Ahab asks his chief mate, Starbuck, to look into his eyes and stand close to him, wanting to experience connection, needing for the other person to understand him.

The issues of understanding and making sense are dealt with throughout the whole novel. If one keeps in mind the fact that the story is narrated by Ishmael, himself the sole survivor of the foundering of the Pequod, it comes as no surprise to find that a lot of the chapters amount to a systematic attempt to explain the whale. Ishmael offers scientific facts, tries to systematise whales, looks at their anatomy, explains what parts can be used in what way, gives an overview of whales as motifs in art, etc. An especially telling chapter is "The Whiteness of the Whale", in which Ishmael thinks about the significance of whiteness and puts forward clashing arguments. It can symbolise beauty, regality, "divine spotlessness and power" (Melville 288), but albinism is repelling and evocative of the pallor of death. White is the absence of colour and all colours at once (thinking of the dispersion of light), it is "a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink" (296). Whiteness here is at the same time tempting and repelling, emptiness and fullness, a signifier which does not really have a (clearly definable) signified. The remark about atheism also seems to link whiteness with the idea of indifference. If there is no higher being that could hold man accountable, the man is left to his own devices. He is, in the context of *Moby-Dick*, abandoned. The white whale would in this reading be the vessel of cosmic indifference, so to speak. During the chase, Moby in no way shows interest in the Pequod. He ignores the whalers, at most giving a display of his strength as a warning and continues on his way "only intent upon pursuing his own straight path in the sea" (679). This indifference and inscrutability of the whale make him the perfect symbol of nature.

In the film, both Paddy and Tommy are Ahabs, but both are also each other's whale, in the sense that each reminds the other of the consequences of combat trauma (compare with the way Tommy was introduced). Neither can fully understand the other or a healthy father-son relationship because Paddy was not really present when Tommy was growing up, and Tommy does not really know what it means to have a father. By extension, if one thinks about the Lacanian idea of the father, it could easily be claimed that Tommy can now only associate authority with trauma. As Degloma points out, "[c]hildren are typically thought to be more vulnerable members of social groups, who given a traumatic environment of primary socialisation, are especially susceptible to derivative traumatic stress in childhood and later in life" (112). Having been



exposed to family violence (Paddy beat his wife), Tommy leaves home with his mother. After she falls ill and dies, Tommy joins the US Marines. Having lost his family, he tries to replace it with a different one, but one that has similar attributes to the original – strict hierarchy and association with violence. He is deployed to Iraq, where his unit gets caught in friendly fire, and only Tommy survives. Paul and Krippner point to the fact that “Iraq active duty combat veterans . . . went to war as a unit and came back as a unit. They have a built-in support system, with access to others who experienced the same phenomena” (32). It is this support system and the understanding that comes with it that Tommy loses. Haunted by survivor’s guilt, he promises Pilar, the widow of a fallen brother-in-arms, to do anything he can to help her family. He manages to enter Sparta, an MMA tournament, in the hopes of winning the five-million-dollar prize, which he would forward to her. He looks to his extended surrogate family for support he never had from his real family.

When he decides to leave home, Tommy asks his older brother, Brendan, to come with him as well. Brendan decides to stay behind, which damages their relationship seemingly irreparably. He also enters Sparta because he needs the money to prevent his family from losing their house. The film moves back and forth from one brother to the other, strengthening the parallel between the two brothers, as well as juxtaposing them. What is established as a constant, however, is that both of them continuously push Paddy away. Brendan refuses to let him see his family and cuts communication down to phone and mail. Tommy later calls him “just some old vet I train with” (*Warrior* 01:11:00-01:11:02) and says that “[h]e means nothing to [him]” (01:11:02-01:11:04), and when he decides to let Paddy train him, he makes it clear that he wants to let sleeping dogs lie. In one scene set in a diner, Tommy warns Paddy not to expect father-son bonding, to which Paddy sternly demands that Tommy hand over the pills he is taking, which as Paulson and Krippner note were widely administered to help cope but were largely unsuccessful in achieving that (21-22), and that he stop “threatening to walk every five minutes” (*Warrior* 00:29:21-00:29:24). Later on, when Paddy comes up to wake Tommy up in the morning to begin their training, Tommy is very quick to dismiss Paddy’s attempt to establish a closer relationship. Paddy comes up with a cup of coffee and Tommy’s old poster on which they used to keep track of his wrestling wins. One of the shots employs racking focus, showing first Tommy’s old trophies in the foreground, then moving further into the shot to bring the viewers’ attention to Tommy lying in the shadows, with the trophies and the darkness behind him keeping him visually trapped (adding to the emotional isolation), just like the trauma of his childhood and his PTSD.

The film then focuses on the brothers as they train. Brendan approaches his old friend, Frank, and asks for help. Frank’s training method

includes listening to classical music during training sessions, which points to the concept of the music of the spheres, i.e. the idea of universal harmony. That seems to be a foreshadowing of the resolution of the film, because emphasis is put here on being in unison with the whole. With *Moby-Dick* taken into account, that is the only thing that will ensure survival, or in this case winning and/or resolving trauma. During Paddy and Tommy's training, isolation is pointed to once more. In one of the scenes, another excerpt from *Moby-Dick* is heard: "Captain Pollard once more sailed for the Pacific in command of another ship, but the gods shipwrecked him again upon unknown rocks and breakers; *for the second time his ship was utterly lost, and forthwith forswearing the sea, he has never tempted it since*" (Melville 307; emphasis mine). This follows closely after a scene in which the viewers learn about Tommy's 'surrogate family', emphasizing not just the isolation, but also the difficulty and seeming impossibility of re-establishment of meaningful, close relationships. Another thing this quote does in the book is re-affirm the credibility of the events. It refers to the account of the sinking of the Essex, an actual whaling ship which was sunk by a white whale, an event which was well-known at the time *Moby-Dick* was published. Along with other elements of the novel (like the scientific facts already mentioned), it works to make the story more believable and realistic. In the film, the realistic feel is achieved by the use of a hand-held camera, a often employed in documentaries, but one also used to imply instability and loss of control (Barsam 254). The use of documentary-like filming technique just serves to underline the reality of what war veterans have to face in peace.

During the training sequence, the screen is split into several shots. This functions as a device that allows us to track the brothers' progress, while also condensing the weeks leading up to Sparta into a couple of minutes. Hurdles are established for both brothers. For Brendan, it is Marco, a contender who had already been chosen to compete; for Tommy it is Mad Dog Grimes, a fighter whom he has already beaten before. Other than that, there is Koba, a Russian fighter, and apparently an insurmountable obstacle. It is during this montage that another quote from the novel is used: "...to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self. Great pains, small gains for those who ask the world to solve them; it cannot solve itself" (Melville 541-42). This quote comes from the chapter titled "The Doubloon", which is a Spanish coin Ahab promised to the man who spots Moby Dick. It is used in a scene during Brendan's training when Marco gets injured, which opens the way for Brendan. Neither this opportunity nor the tournament later on should be interpreted by the characters as offering ready-made solutions to their problems. They just present an opportunity for working through their trauma. They still have to confront each other.

In order for Tommy to work through his PTSD, he needs to find a way to trust his family again (primarily, it seems, his brother, who has reached a level of understanding with Paddy on account of his affliction with PTSD). When the tournament starts, Tommy avoids seeing Brendan and tries very hard not to be present in the media. However, because footage of him fighting Mad Dog goes viral, a soldier in Iraq recognises Tommy as the person who saved his life and goes to the media with this information. It is that report that is on the news as Paddy leafs through some materials about the contestants and listens to the audiobook:

. . . the sea-crashing boat, the whale wheeled round to present his blank forehead at bay; but in that evolution, catching sight of the nearing black hull of the ship; seemingly seeing in it *the source of all his persecutions*; bethinking it – it may be – a larger and nobler foe; of a sudden, he bore down upon its advancing prow, smiting his jaws amid fiery showers of foam.

Ahab staggered; his hand smote his forehead. 'I grow blind' (682; emphasis mine).

The quote in combination with the report on the television work to direct the viewers' and characters' attention to the reality of PTSD. Up until this point the audience is aware of it, but the film focuses more on how the characters interact. The problem of understanding shifts to the experience of war. Being in an environment where one could die at any moment leaves veterans unable to adjust to life at home. Paulson and Krippner point out that "the combat landscape supervenes on the home environment, such that there is no safe place" (19). There is also the complexity of dealing with the fact that one has taken life, which is the most prevalent traumatic experience in war (14). A coping strategy might be "emotional numbing," which is used to avoid sharing problems and can lead to detaching oneself emotionally (16). An example from Tommy's behaviour is his continual isolation, his rejection of Brendan and Paddy's attempts to re-establish their relationships. A moment which is especially important is the casino scene. After Tommy and Brendan run into each other and exchange some pretty hefty words, Tommy goes to the casino (a form of soft risk-taking, which is also a typical symptom), where Paddy looks for him. He tries to get Tommy to open up by showing that he understands ("Can't sleep, huh? I know about that" at 01:34:13-01:34:22), but he only gets a response after he tells Tommy that he's proud of him. This is when Tommy says that he had deserted and had accidentally found himself in the right place at the right time, and portrays what he did matter-of-factly ("What was I supposed to do? Let them drown?" at 01:34:57-01:35:00). Paddy tries twice to get him to talk, but Tommy cuts the conversation short by saying, "[t]hat is none of your business, *man*" (emphasis mine) and "[i]t's too late now. Everything has already happened" (01:35:29-01:35:30, 01:36:05-01:36:07).

He then tells Paddy he does not need him and that he, Paddy, is nothing to him, eventually driving him off. This unravelling of PTSD is continued in the next scene, where Paddy is seen drunk, listening to *Moby-Dick* and pleading with nobody in particular to "stop the ship" (01:38:01-01:38:02). The quote is interrupted by Paddy's pleading, but parts are clearly audible: "The whale! The ship!" cried the cringing oarsmen. 'Oars! oars! Slope downwards to thy depths, O sea, that ere it be for ever too late, Ahab may slide this last, last time upon the mark!" (Melville 682). When he spots Tommy, he moves towards him and says, "Ahab! You godless son of a bitch! You stop the ship! You godless son of a bitch!" (*Warrior* 01:38:17-01:38:27). He keeps pleading as he moves to his room, and as he is framed by the doorway, he says, "For the love of god! They're lost! Stop the ship!" (01:38:53-01:39:00). The 'they' changes to 'we' in Paddy's speech as Tommy tries to get him to go to sleep: "We're lost. We're all lost Tommy. We'll never make it back" (01:39:44-01:39:55). This is the culmination of the film's dealing with the effects of combat trauma. It is in this moment that Tommy realises what could happen to him if he does not face his PTSD head on, how it could spiral out of control at any given moment. All is set for the final confrontation.

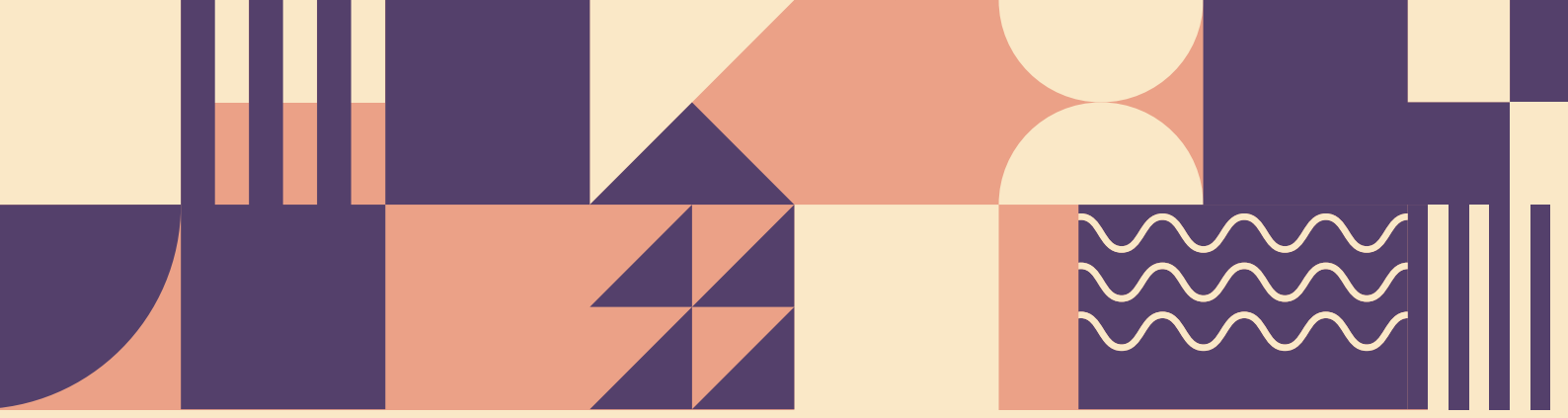
Both Tommy and Brendan manage to go through to the final. As the viewers follow their fights, the camera gradually moves in closer. The brothers' first two fights are filmed almost entirely from outside the cage, making them look enmeshed in the wires, trapped in the cage, and by extension in the circumstances that led them to this point. The fights against Mad Dog and Koba, Tommy's and Brendan's final hurdles, are also filmed mostly through the mesh, with the camera movements being very jittery, and only short intervals being filmed from within the cage. The final is a chance for Tommy to work through his trauma, as he is finally ready to confront his brother. Interestingly, Brendan is wearing white shorts, pointing to the fact that Tommy first needs to understand their relationship, and then move on to work through his more recent trauma. During the rest period after the first round, Tommy is framed in a low-angle shot through the mesh. That, coupled with his walking around, gives the impression of him as a caged animal, wild and incapable of self-control. After Brendan pops Tommy's shoulder in round three, the sound is muffled, which again emphasizes his isolation in that moment (the viewers clearly hear what Frank says to Brendan). In the rest period between the last two rounds, there are a couple of shots of Tommy crying, a close-up and an extreme close-up of his eyes, both filmed through the mesh from the outside (again, implying distance). The extradiegetic music playing is another song by The National, "About Today", which speaks about distance between two people and not knowing how to bridge the gap. Only in round five does Tommy finally accept the family and support he is being offered. Brendan manages to get him into a hold, and only after his brother repeats several

times that he is sorry, that 'It's okay' (02:08:51-01:08:52), and that he loves him, does Tommy tap out. The film ends with the two brothers walking down a corridor, approaching the camera, Brendan's arm round Tommy's shoulders. Tommy accepts Brendan's offered help and can begin dealing with the complex mechanism of trauma he is entangled in. He needs to give in and risk vulnerability to start getting better. Ahab, on the other hand, remains a tragic hero to the very end, which costs him his life. His death is made to look like a perversion of birth – the rope of the harpoon he managed to imbed in the whale coils round his neck and eventually pulls him under water. The book ends with a reassertion of the indifference the whale symbolises: ". . . all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (685). Man suffers because he cannot come to terms with the fact that he is a part of, and not apart from, his surroundings. Tommy is allowed to move on because he discards Ahab and takes up Ishmael's pen in an attempt to understand himself.

Gavin O'Connor's film *Warrior*, therefore, uses a number of elements to illustrate the complexity of trauma. It uses a multi-layered intertextual relationship with *Moby-Dick* to emphasize man's struggle with trauma by pointing to the feeling of isolation that accompanies it due to emotional distancing, as well as the difficulty of understanding and making oneself understood. It also employs song lyrics to condense and express complex ideas such as disappointment, avoidance, conflict, distance, and estrangement, either as help to establish them, or to further elaborate on them. With the use of cinematographic devices, such as the handheld camera and the framing of shots so that characters seem trapped, it draws attention to the claustrophobic feelings that come with processing trauma. By harking back to one of the most well-known American novels, it portrays the complexity of life after trauma and brings the viewers closer to understanding the extent of the sacrifices military service requires.

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**Neven  
Brlek**

**Religion, Imagination and  
Revolution in William Blake's  
"The Tyger" and Percy Bysshe  
Shelley's "Mont Blanc"**

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# Religion, Imagination and Revolution in William Blake's "The Tyger" and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Mont Blanc"

The Romantic era represented a considerable artistic and philosophical paradigm shift towards subjectivity in perceiving and portraying the world around us, and thus heavily relied on the fusion of several distinct topics: religion, politics, social matters, nature, art, etc. In the context of British Romanticism, or more precisely British Romantic poetry, one might point out the importance of the "great six" poets: William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. This paper comparatively takes into consideration Blake and Shelley, and singles out two of their poems which are generally considered to represent some of their finest work – Blake's "The Tyger" and Shelley's "Mont Blanc". The comparison of the poems yields, in spite of their rarely being considered as companion pieces, great philosophical and poetic resemblances. Both authors saw nature, albeit in unique ways, as a logical extension of the poet's imagination and of religious considerations, which becomes evident upon reading the poems. The similitudes demonstrated here serve as evidence of the complex entanglement of Romantic ideologies, both on the level of a single author or a single poem and on the level of time and place (turn-of-the-nineteenth-century England). Furthermore, the paper situates the said poems in a broader European political context and delineates the possible influence of that context on their creation.

### KEYWORDS

**romanticism, religion, Blake, Shelley, imagination, revolution**



Twenty-two years and a whole generation of development in Romantic thought passed between the publication dates of William Blake's poem "The Tyger" (published as a part of his 1794 collection *Songs of Experience*) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's 1816 "Mont Blanc," yet they share what Bloom calls a "pattern of natural inspiration as a reciprocal process or dialogue between phenomena and the poet's imaginings" (296). Thus, both the eponymous tiger for Blake and the sublime Swiss mountain for Shelley are creations which, in conjunction with the poet's imagination, serve as a source of conception of revolutionary, or at least social, activity. Naturally, Blake and Shelley viewed England and Europe from two different contexts (pre-Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic, respectively), but the primary focus of the poems is generally the same: what is the origin of those creations, and what is their awe-inspiring power saying? At that point, further similarities between the poems, and consequently between their authors, emerge – on the level of religious convictions, for Shelley was a "religious poet whose passionate convictions are agnostic" (Bloom 282) and Blake was a "believer in the divine reality," but not "a theist in any orthodox sense" (Bloom 5). Therefore, both looked with disfavour upon religious dogma and orthodox Christianity. Still, a sense of spirituality pervades over their imaginative ponderings in the two poems, in which the triangle of religion, imagination, and urbanity is, as this paper hopes to demonstrate, the centre of poetic sensibility. It is also what propelled them both to value "poetry over all other human speech," since for them poetry is the only artistic form through which one can express that sensibility (Bloom 6), and without it, the tiger's and the mountain's metaphysical aspects would have remained largely useless. Blake opens "The Tyger" with the following, now iconic lines:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry? (1-4)

Immediately, the problem of the poem is two-fold: in Brennan's words, the poet both questions the "wonder [of] the tiger's existence and the tremendous power that must have been necessary to bring it about" (406). The "*immortal* hand or eye" (emphasis mine) signifies that the creator of the tiger must be of nature above that of humans – God, or at least a god. However, the tiger's "symmetry" is "fearful" – it is a creature of immense, terrible power, and therefore, the question arises: "if this creature be so frightful, so powerful, what must *he* be who 'framed' that fearful might and brought it into being?" (Brennan 406). The portentousness of that power continues to reappear throughout the later stanzas, in the shape of a "fire in [its] eyes" (6), "sinews of [its] heart" (10), its "dread grasp" (15), "deadly terrors clasp" (16), etc. However, as the poem progresses with its

rhythmic series of rhetorical questions, an alternative presents itself. It is, as Miner points out, a "Miltonic beast," but its "fearful symmetry" is framed by "Divine *as well as* Satanic forces" (emphasis mine), for "in the first line of the second stanza . . . Blake speaks of the 'distant deeps [of hell] or [of heaven]'" (484).<sup>1</sup> The contrariness of such lines from the start alludes to the possibility that the fierceness of the tiger's power ("burning bright") might not only be of diabolical, but of divine, glorious, positive origin as well. The dubious duality of the creator is further made explicit by the end of stanza five: "Did he smile his work to see? / Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" (19–20). What is more, the context in which Blake wrote the poem must be remembered: in 1794, the violent effects of the French Revolution, generally referred to as the Reign of Terror, were beginning to make their mark on contemporary English and European society. It must have aroused complex feelings in him and made him "strengthen the myth or self-made account of reality given by his own poetry" (Bloom 2). Could it be possible, Blake asks, that if the great sinister power of the tiger has a benevolent side to it as well, it can be used for the improvement of society, for a noble cause. Can it, in Shelley's words, "repeal large codes of fraud and woe" ("Mont Blanc" 80–81)? The tiger's power may also very well have outgrown the original creator's intentions, and a key reversal of roles is intimated in the last, otherwise repeated stanza, where God must dare to create such a power:

Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? (21–24)

The shift from "could" to "dare" in the poem's last line, thus, signifies a convergence of "all the terrifying implications of the questions posed with mounting intensity and deepening significance in the foregoing stanzas" (Brennan 406–407). The attempt at an answer is of course a juncture of contraries, and "the questioner who speaks the poem becomes more and more sure of the answer, and concurrently further and further away from the true answer" (Bloom 35).

Are the tiger and its power, then, a socially useful or a detrimental entity? Is the tiger a symbol of "God's Mercy" or "His Wrath" (Bloom 38)? Upon answering that question, the third part of the aforementioned religion–imagination–revolution triangle comes into play – imagination. The key point of the poem is that "The forest," as Bloom says, "is not 'in the night' but 'of the night,' and does not exist apart from it" (36). The beholder who sees the tiger's burning energy is predestined to see it as powerful, malevolent, for he inherently sees it in the night. On the other hand, if, by the use of imagination, one chooses to see it in daylight, it is an altogether

different creature, and retrospectively, the opening exclamation "Tyger Tyger" engenders a tone of alluring mystery, rather than of awe: "Blake wants us to question the questioner, rather than to attempt an answer to a question that already seeks merely to answer itself" (Bloom 36). On a side note, such reading also puts into perspective Blake's etchings of a meek, benevolent tiger on his original publication of the poem.

Shelley's poem differs from the outset from Blake's in the mere fact that it is under the influence of, and describes the sublime immensity of, a real natural creation (the subtitle of the poem is *Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni*), whereas Blake's tiger is purely metaphorical – a divine vision. However, like beholding the "fearful" tiger in "The Tyger," "'Mont Blanc' makes one of Shelley's strongest and most direct claims for the socio-political potential of the aesthetic response to nature" (Borushko 225). At the end of the third stanza, Shelley writes:

Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood  
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good  
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel (80-83).

The "voice" of the alpine sublime has the potential to bring about change by "repealing large codes of fraud and woe" – codes of a modern, industrial, overly pious society. Indeed, it is, in Borushko's words, a "language of the phenomenal world" (246) which must be "felt" and "interpreted" by "the wise, and great, and good." Thus, strong emphasis is put on the subjectivity of perceiving the sublime discourse, the "phenomenal" essence projected by the mountain, and accordingly, "the poem here registers the agency of the perceiving mind" (Borushko 246). For Shelley, the poets, the cultivated, by the use of their imaginative powers, are the ones who transform that discourse into politically potent poetry. (He would, of course, write that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" in *A Defence of Poetry* only five years later [1247].) Such imaginative powers are not only needed for "interpreting" the "voice" of the "great Mountain," but also actively participate in its creation (not unlike the subjectivity of the perception of the tiger in Blake):

And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,  
If to the human mind's imaginings  
Silence and solitude were vacancy? (142-144)

Shelley's philosophy of imagination as fuel for active involvement of the mind in perceiving and creating nature is closely akin to what Coleridge would call "Secondary Imagination" a year later in *Biographia Literaria*, and to Kant's philosophy, which argues that imagination – an intuitive tool for

cognition of external reality – is one of the core faculties of the human mind (Kneller 2–6). What is at stake in such a process is "the proper intellectual and political response to the sublime" (Borushko 247). The Romantic poet is a genius, and only he is capable of deciphering nature's transcendent voice.

If the sublime is not just actively perceived by the mind in the form of creative and political impulses, but in turn also generated, the issue of the true creator of the mountain ensues. Borushko continues: ". . . in the experience of the sublime and its violence, the human mind might imagine a power, a known deity" (247). Shelley is aware of that and imbues the poem with a dose of scepticism himself, for "The wilderness has a *mysterious tongue* / Which teaches *awful doubt* or faith so mild" (76–77, emphasis mine). The "'awful doubt' is of any orthodox view of nature that sees it as the direct handiwork of a benevolent God" (Bloom 295). In contrast, "the 'faith so mild' is the solemn and serene natural piety of Wordsworth" (Bloom 295, emphasis mine). Hence, the poem demonstrates a complex rendition of theism, which quite jarringly compares to Shelley's self-professed atheism. Shelley had earlier already asserted that "we invent [God's] general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences" (*Necessity* 5) and that "the educated man ceases to be superstitious" (*Necessity* 6). In "Mont Blanc," he struggles with the possibility of the existence of a higher deity responsible for the creation of the sublime, which is probably, as Salt points out, of Pantheistic nature, and which marks a progression in Shelley's thought from a "youthful mood of open denial and defiance" to the complexity of his "maturer years" ("Foreword" 1). If that deity exists, or if it is synonymous with nature itself, one "needs to recognize its potential malevolence. The mountain's voice, if understood, tells us that the power of good or evil is in our own wills, for we can choose how to utilize natural power" (Bloom 295). What is needed for "the mountain's voice" to be "understood" is precisely imagination, and then the mountain, like the tiger, diffuses political and revolutionary inspiration by its sheer intensity:

Fast clouds, shadows, and sunbeams; awful scene,  
Where power in likeness of the Arve comes down,  
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,  
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame  
Of lightning through the tempest,—thou dost lie,  
The giant brood of pines around thee clinging (15-20).

In conclusion, it is vital to remark that, when reading Blake's "The Tyger" and Shelley's "Mont Blanc," religion, imagination, and revolution ought not to be viewed on their own, but as an inseparably cohesive matter of discussion. Each of them is elemental in understanding the other, and together they form a dialectic of "searching out the nature of the hidden power that governs thought and the universe" (Bloom 293). Both the tiger

and the mountain are mysterious entities standing before the eyes of the poet; in both cases, the poet questions its origin and that origin's relation to his own imaginative capacity, and both entities unquestionably herald a politically potent lesson. Such intertwining reaffirms Bloom's statement that "the outward form of the inward grace of Romantic imagination was the French Revolution, and the Revolution failed" (2). After the failure of first the Revolution, and then of Napoleon, both poets turned inwards and made social questions a matter of one's imagination. Again, it should not be understated that Blake's Tyger is imaginary and not in any sense real, yet it is still wholly comparable to Shelley's mountain, since in both cases, the emphasis is on the origin and the functional end of the force, and all (imaginative) descriptions in the middle serve to point either backwards toward the former, or forwards toward the latter.

## END NOTES

- 1 This essay takes as a given the fact that "in Milton's cosmography the upper part of the Universal Sphere relates to heaven, whereas the nadir of this sphere encompasses precincts of hell" (Miner 484).

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**04**

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**Siyu  
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**Writing Features Influencing Non-  
Native English Speakers' Publication  
in International Journals**



## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# Writing Features Influencing Non-Native English Speakers' Publication in International Journals

Given that more and more non-native English speakers have begun to publish in English in recent years, researchers are becoming increasingly interested in revealing writing features that influence the eligibility for international publication. This paper, with systematic review as the major research method, aims to outline factors influencing non-native speaker's publication in international journals. Based on critical analysis of previous research findings presented in six representative papers, the research draws to the following conclusions: first, even though journal editors prefer correct grammar use, minor grammar errors do not decrease the possibility of publication, because more attention is paid to the worthiness of the content, which may include uniqueness of viewpoint, high research quality, discursive coherence in paper structuring and content organizing, etc. In the second place, avoiding time delay has a significantly positive impact on the likelihood of publication. Thirdly, research that has a clear social background is easier to be accepted by international journals than research without any social background or without explicitly demonstrated social background. Last but not least, compared with those from America, Britain and Western Europe, voices from Asia, Africa and other non-Western countries are particularly welcome. However, since the present research draws heavily on material from the fields of science and engineering, research findings may vary once other fields have been included.

#### KEYWORDS

**non-native English Speakers, international publication, non-canonical use, writing features, systematic review**

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is no doubt that English is used as a lingua franca in the academic circles around the world. It is estimated that 5.5 million scholars, 2,000 publishers and 17,500 research/higher education institutions worldwide deliver academic publication in English (Lillis and Curry 1). English serves as a bridge for scholars using a different language from their mother tongue to communicate more frequently and conveniently. However, Flowerdew argues that the dominant use of English in academic circles also brings about changes which include changing and mixing of genres, changing sources of norms, inequality for publication of non-Anglophone scholars' works and other changes in the use of the English language ("The Non-Anglophone Scholar" 14-15). Research by Flowerdew also indicates that most L2 writers (the term referring to writers whose first language is not English; while "L1 writers" refers to native English speakers) feel that they are at an unfavorable place compared with English-as-first-language writers in writing for publication ("Writing for Scholarly Publication" 125-126). Some scholars are concerned with "sweeping generalizations made by native speakers" and request "an assertion of rights for writers using English as a Lingua Franca Academic (ELFA)" (Tribble 39-40). The current situation implies that L2 writers should overcome their language difficulties and comply with certain writing norms in order to gain eligibility for publication. Language features of texts by L2 writers may decrease, increase or have no impact on the likelihood of paper publication. This paper, using the method of systematic review, aims to identify different features which have positive, negative or neutral impact on the paper publication of L2 writers in international journals.

## METHOD

Taking the features of NNES (Non-Native English Speakers) writing in international journals as research objects, the aim of this paper is to analyze and discover NNES writing features influencing international paper publication. According to Foster and Jewell, Systematic review is a method of collecting large amounts of information, which meets the requirements of evidence-based research (40). This research specifies several selection criteria to search for relevant papers for systematic review.

## PAPER- SEARCHING STRATEGIES AND SELECTION CRITERIA

This systematic review is based on several research papers from the Scopus database. Based on the research question, we established and used the following search formula to find relevant articles in Scopus.

The formula is written based on Boolean logic with the consideration of key words in relevant articles:

( ALL ( elfa ) OR ALL ( "academic lingua franca" ) OR ALL ( "lingua academica" ) OR ALL ( "non-native researcher" OR "non-native academic" OR "NNS researcher" OR "NNS academic" OR "L2 academic" ) AND ALL ( journal ) OR ALL ( publica\* ) OR ALL ( publish\* ) OR ALL ( manuscript ) AND ALL ( english ) AND ALL ( writ\* ) )

After we had input the formula into the search engine of Scopus, we retrieved 576 articles at first. To identify articles which are related to article publication of NNES, and which might be helpful for non-native speakers aiming to publish their article in international journals, several criteria were formulated to identify relevant papers which would be used for the systematic review.

## **CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION**

Firstly, the articles included are either connected to the analysis of academic writing of NNES or to the comparison between academic papers by NNES and NES. Any analysis of informal writing or non-academic writing was excluded. In addition, articles only focusing on analyzing writing features of NES were also excluded. Secondly, the systematic review mainly focuses on the articles related to paper publication of NNES in international journals. Therefore, the articles related to publication in domestic journals were also excluded. Thirdly, both qualitative and quantitative research was included. Qualitative research, for example in the form of interviews, and quantitative research, such as corpus-based analyses, was to be included, as long as it was related to our research question. Fourthly, this systematic review mainly tackles publication in journals. Thus, articles about other kinds of formal academic writing such as dissertations and reports were excluded.

A team of students was responsible for selecting related articles. Altogether 11 students participated in identifying relevant articles from 576 articles in Scopus. After the selection, six articles which met the criteria were included. The articles used can be found in the Endnotes Page<sup>1</sup>.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

After finding adequate articles, a model similar to "PICOC" was built to extract and analyze useful information in these articles. PICOC is an abbreviation of participant/sample, intervention, comparison, outcome

and context. This framework, proposed by Petticrew and Roberts in 2006, is used to analyze data in systematic review of social sciences (qtd. in Foster and Jewell 40). The formation of this framework is based on the adaption of the "PICO+" analysis framework, designed by Bennett and Bennett in 2006, which is frequently used in medical science (qtd. in Foster and Jewell 40). In medical science, a control group is employed to examine the conditions applied to the experimental group. In social sciences, the "PICO+" framework is sometimes inapplicable, especially in field investigation, survey research, and documentary research, because it is difficult to control variables and distinguish the controlled group and the experimental group. This systematic review is based on the six studies selected before. Thus, it is difficult to design a control group and an experimental group. Selected articles usually focus on conditions for paper publication or features of NNES writing. These papers are usually small- or medium-scale survey research, and no experimental or control group is designed to make a comparison of independent variables and dependent variables. Therefore, some adaptations were made to the "PICOC" framework so as to better analyze the selected papers and extract information. Finally, a new framework - "PICMC" - is designed based on the "PICOC" and the features of selected papers. "M" stands for *mechanisms* which bring about influence on publication. In the "PICMC" framework, *participants/objects* in this research include the editors, the corpus consisting of the published paper and the manuscripts accepted for publication. *Intervention* can be understood as independent variables, which are features of NNES writing, both positive and negative ones. *Mechanism* refers to the effects produced by the features of NNES writing, which connect the *intervention* and the *outcome*. Mechanisms, to some extent, explain why NNES features influence the likelihood of paper publication in international journals - they are the reason behind the publication result. *Outcome* means to what extent these writing features influence the likelihood of publication. There are three kinds of outcomes in this research: increasing the likelihood of publication, decreasing the likelihood of publication, and having no impact on publication. *Context* refers to the field to which the research findings can be applied. This systematic review tries to use the PICMC framework to extract useful information, analyze the information and, finally, answer the research question.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

We used the "PICMC" research framework to extract and analyze useful information from six papers. See tables 1 - 6.

**Table 1. Framework for analyzing the first paper**

Title	<i>Research Writing and NNS: From the Editors.</i>
Author	Gosden, H.
Year	1992
Participants	Information from 154 editors and associates.
Intervention	Cohesive linking of sentences and/or propositions; coherent topic progression; use of grammatically correct sentences; awkward expressions; poor quality of reporting; language errors related to grammar, syntax, lexis and register; clear and logical presentation of results and discussion.
Mechanism	NNS writers may ask for language errors or "awkward expressions" to be corrected when submitting, which might irritate the editors. Nevertheless, "first-rate work" is not often obscured by poor presentation. However, "mediocre" science may be disguised by its poor reporting. When it comes to a bias against NNES, most editors bear no prejudice against NNES. Some editors recognize bias and connect it with the authors' different cultural backgrounds. Sentence structures, use of articles, and inappropriate choice of words may frequently be corrected by editors. Contrastingly, awkward writing and idiosyncratic choices may not be corrected.
Outcome	NNES features, including cohesive linking of sentences and/or propositions, coherent topic progression, use of grammatically correct sentences, may increase the likelihood of publication. Awkward writing, idiosyncratic choices, and "some minor grammatical errors" have no impact on publication. Textual cohesion and coherence, integration of research quality and writing skills, avoidance of time delay, research with clear social background, and good results and discussion session may help to increase the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of hard science which is roughly divided into physics, chemistry, biology and some interdisciplinary subjects.

**Table 2. Framework for analyzing the second paper**

Title	<i>Attitudes of Journal Editors to Nonnative Speaker Contributions</i>
Author	Flowerdew, J.
Year	2001
Participants	Information from 12 journal editors.
Intervention	Surface errors; parochialism; absence of authorial voice; nativized varieties of English; show awareness of aspects of language such as cross-cultural pragmatics; display the objectivity of an outside perspective; native speaker knowledge of other languages.
Mechanism	Overall, editors accept the distinctions between NNES and NES. Editors pay more attention to the quality of the paper instead of focusing on the language. Most editors have no bias against NNES, some are even more sympathetic to NNESs and welcome voices outside the U.S., UK and Canada. Editors generally feel that surface errors are acceptable, except for errors that distort meaning and reduce readability. However, some manuscript reviewers seem harsh with NNES language problems. Editors are more concerned with parochialism, introduction and discussion parts, as well as the absence of authorial voice. Most editors allow for nativized varieties of English, except for some inappropriate usages.
Outcome	Surface errors or nativized English have little impact on the likelihood of publication. Parochialism, poor introduction/literature review and discussion/conclusion, as well as the absence of authorial voice may seriously decrease the likelihood of publication. A different and more objective perspective, testing out dominant theory in central countries may help NNES to increase the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of applied linguistics, language teaching and related areas.

**Table 3. Framework for analyzing the third paper**

Title	<i>A Contrastive Study of the Variation of Sentence Connectors in Academic English</i>
Author	Carrió-Pastor, M. L.

Year	2013
Participants	Twenty academic papers written by NES, twenty academic papers written by NNES
Intervention	In the aspect of sentence connectors, NES use much more inferential connectors than NNES. They almost have the same frequency in using listing and summative and other kinds of connectors.
Mechanism	NES use much more inferential connectors than NNES. NNES and NES share similar frequency in using contrastive, appositional and resultive connectors. NNES use a little more summative connectors than NES.
Outcome	NNES may use inferential connectors to become more "native". However, there is no hard evidence that writing features of NNES different from those of NES have an impact on the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of industrial engineering, electrical and nuclear engineering, mechanical engineering, and materials.

**Table 4. Framework for analyzing the fourth paper**

Title	<i>Non-canonical Grammar in Best Paper Award Winners in Engineering</i>
Author	Rozycki, W., & Johnson, N. H.
Year	2013
Participants	Fourteen best paper-awarded research articles
Intervention	Non-canonical use including article usage; subject-verb discord; verb usage; preposition usage; determiners; adjective-adverb usage; and other anomalous occurrences.
Mechanism	These non-canonical usages have little impact on comprehension, but have impact on variability, norms and discourse practice.
Outcome	NNES in the field of engineering have developed a language that allows all language speakers to communicate with success. Most editors accept non-canonical use as long as it is comprehensible. These usages have no impact on the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of engineering.

**Table 5. Framework for analyzing the fifth paper**

Title	<i>Author's Editor Revisions to Manuscripts Published in International Journals</i>
Author	Flowerdew, J., & Wang, S. H.
Year	2016
Participants	Manuscripts of fifteen SCI-indexed journal articles by Chinese doctoral students
Intervention	Non-canonical use at multiple lexical-grammatical levels
Mechanism	Revision types given by editors, including substitution, correction, addition, deletion and rearrangement, happened from time to time.
Outcome	Different kinds of revisions had been made before the articles were finally published. Among these revisions, substitution is the most important one, as it is helpful to increase the readability and intelligibility of the paper. Since these NC uses were frequently revised, they may decrease the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of science and engineering subjects.

**Table 6. Framework for analyzing the sixth paper**

Title	<i>Elfa vs. Genre: A New Paradigm War in EAP Writing Instruction?</i>
Author	Tribble, C.
Year	2017
Participants	Published academic writings from four reputed journals of four disciplines
Intervention	Non-canonical uses including missing determiners, lexical choices, collocating prepositions, and other.
Mechanism	English as an academic lingua franca tends to be a new paradigm competing against Genre in EAP writing instruction.
Outcome	These chosen published articles all have some NC uses, which proves that these NC uses have no impact on the likelihood of publication.
Context	In the field of applied linguistics, biology, business studies and electrical engineering.



## **FEATURES HAVING NO IMPACT ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLICATION**

The analysis of the six research papers we chose beforehand, showed that the writing habits of NNES were much more accepted by editors than was the case before, which was caused by an increasing number of NNS reviewers and the tendency of content-based revision system (Rozycki and Johnson 159-168). Some international journals may accept certain non-canonical uses of native speakers. These non-canonical usages include missing determiners, lexical choices, problems with preposition collocations, redundant determiners and other problems (Tribble 39). According to Tribble (40), disciplinary engagement and the control of disciplinary practice are more important in international publication, because in most situations fluent use of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is bestowed by the mother tongue status of the writer. Most of these six articles can illustrate that editors are "sympathetic" towards NNES. Consequently, minor non-canonical issues, such as subject-verb discord, inappropriate usage of articles, verb, preposition, determiners, adjectives-adverbs, and other anomalous occurrences, have no impact on publication (Rozycki and Johnson 166; Tribble 40; Flowerdew, "Attitudes of Journal Editors" 145). Moreover, nativized varieties of English were allowed or would be improved by editors, which may illustrate that nativized varieties are generally accepted by editors (Flowerdew, "Attitudes of Journal Editors" 145-147).

Apart from NC use by NNES, some corpus-based research suggests that there is no clear difference of detailed language usage between NNES and NES. In research regarding the use of sentence connectors in academic English, Carrió-Pastor (192-202) employs corpus-based analysis, which reveals that NNES and NES are different in using sentence connectors including inferential, listing and transitional connectors. However, such differences between NNES and NES are not so obvious, and there is no clear evidence showing these differences will decrease the likelihood of publication.

## **FEATURES DECREASING THE LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLICATION**

However, some writing habits of NNS would lead to rejection and were corrected by editors for final publication in international journals. According to qualitative research conducted by Flowerdew and Wang (44), revision changes of NNS manuscripts happened in language units ranging from morpheme to clause/clause complex. Revision types include substitution (accounting for 39.4%), correction (29.3%), addition (15.5%), deletion (12.1%) and rearrangement (3.7%) successively. Substitutions

are often used to slightly change the meaning of the text in some circumstances or to correct inappropriate collocations. Non-canonical use at multiple lexico-grammatical levels, such as wrong use of articles or a clause complex which needs revision, may decrease the likelihood of publication (Flowerdew and Wang 45). In addition, parochialism, poor introduction/literature review and discussion/conclusion, as well as the absence of authorial voice, may seriously decrease the likelihood of publication (Flowerdew, "Attitudes of Journal Editors" 137-140). It is worth mentioning that NC use which leads to misunderstanding and distortion of meaning may decrease the likelihood of publication (131).

## **FEATURES INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLICATION**

From relevant research, it is known that editors pay more attention to the quality and content of the research paper rather than the language (Gosden 126-137). Textual cohesion and coherence, integration of research quality and writing skills, avoidance of time delay, research with clear social background, and good results and discussion session may help to increase the likelihood of publication (Flowerdew, "Attitudes of Journal Editors" 146-147). Some unique features of NNES, such as taking a different but more objective perspective, challenging dominant theories with research done in non-Western countries, may help NNES to increase the likelihood of publication (Gosden 126-137).

## **DIFFERENCES IN DIFFERENT FIELDS AND SUBJECTS**

Compared with social science subjects, in the fields of natural science and engineering, "judging shall be based on general equality, originality, subject matter, and timeliness" (Rozycki and Johnson 165). The language seems inferior to the meaning and finding of the research. Thus, surface level grammatical non-canonical usage is found "frequently" in the research of engineering. The role of engineering is to apply knowledge to solve real-world problems. In this regard, this pragmatic mindset can "allow the discourse community to accept NC usage without any of the heated exchanges about norms or the counter-arguments about language imperialism that arise frequently in the social sciences and humanities" (Gosden 136). Indeed, some "errors" of published articles in engineering seem unacceptable to scholars from humanities. However, these papers were published already. Typographic errors, punctuation problems, word choice, subject-verb discord, and other NC usage could be found in the best, even awarded, research articles. Despite the fact that errors were sometimes allowed in published papers, we have to admit that these NC usages do not necessarily mean that any similar

"errors" would be accepted in other subjects. However, the existence of the NC usage shows that engineering editors exhibit a willingness to accept NC usage, and readers appear willing to negotiate the meaning of the texts with NC usage (Rozycki and Johnson 166). Therefore, relevant NNS students and researchers are advised to pay attention to larger issues of structure, format, transitioning and content rather than some smaller specific use of language such as surface-level grammar. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that this suggestion is for people from the field of engineering and not humanities. If the language of science and engineering is a faithful reflection of reality or a translation of already formed thought, written knowledge from humanities and social sciences, including sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, and literary theory is more of constructing and constituting thought (MacDonald 3). Since the language functions are different in the two fields, the suggestion may not work out for those who work in humanities and social science.

## CONCLUSION

This study sets out to discuss what kind of writing features of NNES would increase or decrease the likelihood of publication in international journals. In general, it has been discovered that editors are becoming more and more tolerant of non-canonical structures by NNES, especially those who come from engineering and science subjects. Minor grammar errors would not decrease the possibility of publication since more attention has always been paid to content. Voices coming from Asia, Africa and other non-Western areas instead of the US, the UK and traditional Western European countries are particularly welcomed. NNES features such as unique viewpoint, delivering the paper in a logical, coherent and well-organized way would have a positive impact on the likelihood of publication. In addition, editors suggested that authors should do "everything possible (...) to avoid delays", so that they can acquire "the extra time, effort and patience (...) to get NNES researchers' papers published" (Gosden 135). However, certain features of NNES writing may greatly reduce the possibility of international publication, such as parochialism and absence of authorial voice.

There is a limitation in this systematic review because of the relatively small number of selected articles. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers use more databases, include different points of view and broader inclusion criteria for a more persuasive research result. If conditions permit, empirical studies can be carried out to gather first-hand information relating to this topic.

These findings suggest several courses of action for NNES authors, teachers of academic writing and journal editors. For NNES authors, avoiding the errors mentioned above and delivering papers with good content with the features mentioned above would help them to publish papers in international journals. Moreover, making contact with the editors beforehand may help authors to get to know the requirements for articles. As for academic writing teachers, it is not enough to focus only on grammar and language itself. Instead, their teaching should be extended from lexico-grammatical level to discursive level, where discursive features like introduction, claiming, argumentation, transition, generalization, summary, as well as format should be discussed in depth. As to recommendations to editors, it is suggested that the general trend of reviewing should pay more attention to content rather than being meticulous about certain non-canonical uses by NNES. Thus, editors may contact authors to discuss the content of papers from time to time and give space and time for authors to correct non-canonical use in their papers.

## END NOTES

1 For articles used in the analysis, see Carrio-Pastor 192-202, Flowerdew 121-150, Flowerdew and Wang 39-52, Gosden 123-139, Rozycki and Hohanson 157-169, and Tribble 30-44.

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**05**

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**Lisa  
di Rosa**

**Talking about Trees: Stances  
towards Political Poetry in  
Adrienne Rich's "What Kind of  
Times are These"**

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# Talking about Trees: Stances towards Political Poetry in Adrienne Rich's "What Kind of Times are These"

This paper aims to present the potential for political activism within poetry by analysing the poem "What Kind of Times are These" by Adrienne Rich. The literary analysis demonstrates an affinity with the second-wave-feminist stance of the personal as being inherently political, implying a necessity for political poetry that addresses injustices beyond the political macro level of the public realm. The author thus makes the case for poetry as a means for socio-political interaction, allowing those who are overheard in the public sphere to expose systemic injustices that seep into the private realm.

## KEYWORDS

**Adrienne Rich, Bertolt Brecht, political poetry, feminism**



## **ADRIENNE RICH: WHAT KIND OF TIMES ARE THESE**

There's a place between two stands of trees where the grass grows  
uphill  
and the old revolutionary road breaks off into shadows  
near a meeting-house abandoned by the persecuted  
who disappeared into those shadows.

I've walked there picking mushrooms at the edge of dread, but  
don't be fooled,  
this isn't a Russian poem, this is not somewhere else but here,  
our country moving closer to its own truth and dread,  
its own ways of making people disappear.

I won't tell you where the place is, the dark mesh of the woods  
meeting the unmarked strip of light—  
ghost-ridden crossroads, leafmold paradise:  
I know already who wants to buy it, sell it, make it disappear.

And I won't tell you where it is, so why do I tell you  
anything? Because you still listen, because in times like these  
to have you listen at all, it's necessary  
to talk about trees.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

While political poems have been written throughout history, the many-voiced criticism of the genre has been just as consistent. It remains a dominating view that lyrical qualities are compromised by an alleged hard-headedness of politics. The author and activist Adrienne Rich contested the inherent destructivity of political content to poetry, claiming that art is never fully detached from the political climate in which it was created (*Arts of the Possible* 54). Her poem "What Kind of Times are These" (Rich, *Dark Fields*) follows the New Historicist notion that literature is inseparably bound to the context in which it was created (Veese, *The New Historicism* 3).

The poem encapsulates her stance towards the apparent dichotomy by embedding political proceedings in an unspecified woodland. Conflating nature poetry and political poetry, the author imposes a distinct attitude on the subject: the poetic and the political forge a unit with two complementary sides that are not only compatible, but interdependent. The recurrent mention of trees within the poem is one of its most prominent features, which is even more emphasised by an overt request within the poem to be conscious of them.

With this in mind, the paper will centre on the tree motif in the poem. The parties involved in the conversation about trees will be revealed by the poem's textual content, while an analysis of its stylistic devices integrates the tree motif within the poem's two potentially conflicting directions. In order to interpret the trees' metaphorical meaning, the poem will then be examined in the context of a work by Bertolt Brecht. Finally, detecting the implied location of the trees helps to specify which political appeal the poem might contain. A variety of Rich's speeches and essays will be used as a basis to relate the poem to the context of her literary work and political activism.

## 2. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: WHO TALKS ABOUT TREES?

"What Kind of Times are These" tells the story and aftermath of a failed revolution, narrated by an unnamed speaker. The speaker, who at that point is still covert, introduces the scenery in the first stanza by giving an expositional description of the forest environment at the fringe of civilisation. She<sup>1</sup> depicts an old, shadowy "revolutionary road" at a nearby abandoned house, which was formerly possessed by a persecuted group, possibly the revolutionaries. The persecuted are said to have disappeared into the shadows, but it is unspecified whether the shadows have served as a hide-out for the subversive group or for their secret elimination by outside forces.

In the second stanza, the speaker first refers to herself, revealing that she has visited the place before to collect mushrooms "at the edge of dread". Her past locational proximity to the revolutionaries' headquarters implies that the speaker was a witness of their actions and downfall, possibly even an active ally. The walk at the "edge of dread" may symbolise her own struggle with fear as well as the looming threat towards the revolutionaries and their conventicle. The speaker directly turns to her addressee in the second stanza ("don't be fooled"). She explicitly discloses herself as a poet by referring to "this poem", suggesting that she may not only talk to a fictive addressee but to the actual readers. The speaker then stresses that these dreadful things have already been happening in "our country".

The third stanza contains the speaker's refusal to specify the exact location of the place despite her providing further details to its visual description. The speaker also refrains from revealing her own identity or that of the addressee; even the number of possible addressees is left open, as the speaker's use of "you" may be singular or plural. The only clear connection between the speaker and the addressee is their shared origin ("here", "our country").

In the last stanza, the speaker explains that the reason why she talks about trees at all is "because you still listen". While this does not contradict the notion of an addressee located within the world of the poem, it picks up the previously suggested break in the fourth wall: someone who "still listens" is the person who hears or reads the poem in the real world. Thus, Rich calls attention to the interactive component of poetry. Her readers are not to merely indulge in the world she has built, but to actively listen and understand what she has to say. At the same time, she poses her readers as the main matter of her writing. Her appeal, then, goes two ways: not only should readers try to connect to the writer, but the writer, rather than remaining in a creative solitude, should seek a connection to the readers.

### **3. STYLISTIC DEVICES: BETWEEN TREES AND TRUTH**

The poem exhibits only few structuring elements: the rhythm flows freely and irregularly without clearly apparent rhyme schemes, continual verse feet or regularly stressed syllable intervals. There are also numerous alternations between caesurae and enjambments. The poem's fluidity of form and language is characteristic for Rich's work (Rich, *Arts of the Possible* 17-18) and creates a sense of unstrained intimacy. This, amplified by the lack in typically lyrical patterns and regularities, conveys the impression of spontaneous conversation rather than carefully structured verses. Only the poem's distinct division into four stanzas (the

first two further divided into five and the last two into four verses) marks a deliberate arrangement.

This division delimits two linguistic styles which alternate within the poem. The first and third stanza are characterised by a comparatively lyrical, ornate diction and contain numerous tonal devices such as assonances ("old"/ "road"/ "host"/ "crossroads"/ "leafmold"/ "know") and alliterations ("grass/ grows"; "revolutionary/ road", "won't/ where"; "mesh/ meeting"). These euphonies underline the setting's tranquillity, which is only compromised by the eeriness induced from the elements of decay.

The diction of the second and the last stanza, however, appears prosaic and straightforward: the speaker's objective is no longer to use pleasing sounds to create a vivid depiction of nature, but to clarify all doubts. The words are not deployed on the basis of their tonal qualities, but on the information they need to convey. The speaker's tone is clear and concise, as exemplified in her overt warning "don't be fooled", which is even further emphasized by its isolation in a single line.

In the third stanza, the speaker returns to her associative approach. By choosing metaphorical expressions from other-worldly domains (e.g. "ghost-ridden", "paradise"), she mystifies and alienates the described place, as if to obscure rather than identify it. Her tone changes once again in the last stanza when she reveals another clear message: the reason of speaking to the addressee at all is because "it's necessary / to talk about trees". The poetic wording of the previous stanza has entirely made way for poignant repetitions such as "tell you/ tell you", "because/ because", "listen/ listen". Nonetheless, the last lines of this stanza contain the only full rhyme "these/trees", the peak of formal harmony in the poem. Even the textual content itself justifies the existence of the more lyrical lines - the conversation about trees - which are deemed necessary in the last stanza in order to talk about "truth and dread".

Playfully toggling distinct moods and styles, the poet seems to be located above the poem's topic, which she can access on the route of her choosing. The reconciliation of the "flowery" and the more sober style of the poem clarifies that the two writing modes are not at odds - much rather, they are interwoven. This also becomes apparent through the recurring motif (trees) and themes (secrecy, disappearance) interlinking all stanzas. The juxtaposition of the lyrical and the plain writing style is parallel to the thematic juxtaposing of "talking about trees" with "truth and dread". The linguistic resolution within the poem composes a comment on the compatibility of nature poetry and political poetry - one does not exclude the other, and both of them are warranted in their value.

#### 4. REFERENCES TO "AN DIE NACHGEBORENEN": WHAT ARE THE TREES?

It should be noted that the poem includes overt references to Bertolt Brecht's poem "An die Nachgeborenen", which was published almost sixty years prior to the poem by Adrienne Rich. The first of these references occurs already in the poem's title, which is a direct translation of a verse within "An die Nachgeborenen". The speaker in Brecht's poem laments that, in times like these, "talking about trees", just as "the innocent word," "a smooth forehead"<sup>2</sup> - in short, any conversation revolving around harmless banalities - amounts to the deliberate silence about the misdeeds and sufferings in the world.<sup>3</sup> As this turmoil is directed towards *die Nachgeborenen* - that is, those who are born after - the speaker in Rich's contemporary poem is invited to directly join in the conversation and provide her answer, stating that "to have you listen at all, it is necessary / to talk about trees".

This answer allows for various readings of differing plausibility. In the context of Brecht's reproach, the speaker may imply that the shallow conversational hooks may serve to catch a listener's attention or, to put it more narrowly, that a poem about nature makes its readers receptive for the discussion of more profound topics. While it can hardly be contested that pressing political matters may be made accessible to the public by pandering to their personal interests, there is no reason to assume that either the author or the speaker of "An die Nachgeborenen" were unaware of this tactic. Therefore, the intention supposed in this reading may be considered unlikely. Considering the dire circumstances in which the speaker and the addressee are located, the answer by Rich's speaker may also be read as a defence; "talking about trees" is deemed an escapist method to mentally flee one's own surroundings.

Engaging with superficial matters is, in this sense, deemed a useful act to get some needed distance from the misdeeds that Brecht describes. What seems inconsistent in this reading is how closely the speaker connects the trees to the misdeeds and sufferings: the trees frame the head-quarters of the persecuted and cast the shadows in which they disappeared. The "dark mesh of the woods" is clearly contrasted with the less threatening "unmarked strip of light". Rather than distracting one from the problems, the trees are entangled with them; the speaker does not need to move away from the trees to discuss other topics because they are part of the situation.

This reading seems to be most consistent with the author's own political affiliations and stances. Adrienne Rich has repeatedly criticised the exclusion of everyday life in political discussions, which are "reduced

to government, to contests between the empowered, or to petty in-group squabbles" (*What is Found There* 24). This criticism is in line with the call of academic feminists to consider the layers of women's daily lives for political discussions (Gallop, *History is Like Mother* 317). What Brecht's speaker saw as avoidant withdrawal is actually a devotion to matters that have been overlooked. In the view of Rich, the political seeps into the personal and is in turn reflected by everyday occurrences. In a poem with such close ties between the poet and the speaker, it is likely that her stance has fed into the poem's message: the trees are the "innocent word", the ostensibly natural banalities which need to be located and scrutinised in order to follow in the footsteps of the revolutionaries.

While Rich's speaker evidently disagrees with Brecht's speaker, "What Kind of Times are These" must not be understood as a conclusive rebuttal to "An die Nachgeborenen". In reference to the works of her literary idols, which included Bertolt Brecht, Rich states that those works were "a part of a long conversation with the elders and with the future [...]. Such artists draw on a tradition in which political struggle and spiritual continuity are meshed. Nothing need be lost, no beauty sacrificed" (61). Instead, Rich harnesses the opportunity to create an intergenerational dialogue through poetry; not rebuking, but adding to the body of knowledge and sentiment which has been left behind for those who are born after. Engaging with the past will help to understand and improve the future – as Judith Gardiner puts it, "We think back through our mothers [...] We have yet to think forward through them" ("The Heroine as Her Author's Daughter" 252).

## **5. POLITICAL STANCES WITHIN THE POEM: WHERE ARE THE TREES?**

If the trees symbolise life's mundane commonplaces as opposed to issues officially deemed relevant and significant, this means that one does not have to look far to find "truth and dread": not to Russia or other countries experiencing political turmoil, maybe not even to people's own "country" as a whole. After all, what is described is only the microcosm of the "place between two stands of trees". The speaker actively obscures this place, but not with the intention of holding others off from it – at the time of her conversation, it is already lost to the speaker and the persecuted; it has been taken over by outside forces and cannot be protected anymore. The concealment rather serves to encourage the addressee to actively search for this place within her own reach. In order to learn about her country's own problems and "own ways of making people disappear", the addressee must locate the trees and talk about them.

Being the first to delve into the conversation about trees, the speaker functions as a role model to the addressee. As the speaker repeatedly indicates her identity as being that of the poet, the role-model function applies to poets in general as well. With merely "talking about trees" as the stated main goal, this holds implications about the objective of political poets. Their goal should not be to produce artistic propaganda, "to persuade others 'out there' of some atrocity or injustice" (Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* 367) but to describe their own world and attempt to identify its sources for her own fear, grief or anger. According to Sean Wilentz, all forms of writing, whether public or private, are relevant for political interpretation: "Personal diary jottings about recalcitrant slaves, disobedient children, and mired cattle can tell us things about political relations in colonial Virginia not to be found in the most impassioned pamphlet of natural law" (*Rites of Power* 5). The most private of concerns tend to be overlooked by the public eye, but as they reflect the systems in which all people find themselves, they deserve to be discussed and deconstructed.

In one of her speeches, Rich has stated that, to her, politics were "not something 'out there' but something 'in here' and of the essence of my condition" (*Arts of the Possible* 22). Even though this speech was published more than twenty years prior to the poem, the excerpt bears striking resemblance to the line "This isn't a Russian poem, this is not somewhere else but here". The speaker reminds her addressee that brutalities happen in their own surroundings, even though the "ways of making people disappear" are different from what she might have heard about Russia. The appeal is the same as in Rich's speech, which further blurs the lines between the speaker and the poet, the addressee and the reader. The readers are urged to engage with the things that happen in their most immediate surroundings – their own countries, buildings, rooms – and to analyse how they affect their condition and constitute their identities. In poetry, writers and readers can find a space to reflect on those seemingly little ills of civilisation without them being shrugged off in favour of topics which their oppressors deem to be worthy of discussion.

## 6. CONCLUSION

One comment by Adrienne Rich naturally unfolds in "What Kind of Times are These": "Poetry never stood a chance of standing outside history" (*Poetry and Prose* 357). Even a poem devoted to the importance of seemingly unmemorable nullities contains a political appeal to change the times.

The trees in this poem are inextricably linked to the notions of truth and dread: amidst all their serenity, a ruthless persecution happened, leading to the revolutionaries' expulsion from their own Paradise.

Therefore, the speaker talks about trees, but she could never talk about trees *only*. This illustrates how closely poetry is tied to politics – every possible concern of a poet, regardless of how private it may seem, is in some way imbued with her surroundings and, therefore, the politics that determine these surroundings. Other writers have pointed out that every artwork is embedded in a sociocultural context and can never be interpreted in isolation (Marcus, *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf* 90). The interconnectedness of all writings requires a communicative network which allows creators and consumers of texts to enter a dialogue (90). To Rich, poetry offers a place where seemingly insignificant problems within the private realm can find their audience: through their writings, poets may identify and map out "the myths and obsessions of gender, [...] of race" and "the violent exercise of power" (*Arts of the Possible* 50).

The linguistic preservation of the poetic from the influences of political content lies in the responsibility of the poet. On this, Rich has stated that poetry has to "account for itself politically [...] without sacrificing intensity of language" (*Arts of the Possible* 47). Her speaker shows a lyrical omnipotence: skipping back and forth between alternating styles at will, but still revolving around the same theme, she demonstrates that the poetic does not have to be compromised by any topical choice.

No matter how irrelevant talking about trees may seem in a world which has seen an abundance of nature poetry, it does more than only keep the poets busy or distract their audience. Intellectually engaging with the little things in daily life serves to expose shortcomings and make them tangible. This corresponds to the objective of political poetry in Rich's eyes, which is not to "tell you who or when to kill, what and when to burn, or even how to theorize. It reminds you ... where and when and how you are living and might live" (*What is Found There* 241). The appeal of the speaker is political, but she does not call to take revenge or reclaim the space that has been taken – she only asks people to make themselves heard and talk to each other.



## END NOTES

(All quotations from this poem refer to Rich, Adrienne: "What Kind of Times Are These." In *Later Poems: Selected and New, 1971-2012*. *Adrienne Rich*. Reprinted by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, 2013, p. 247.)

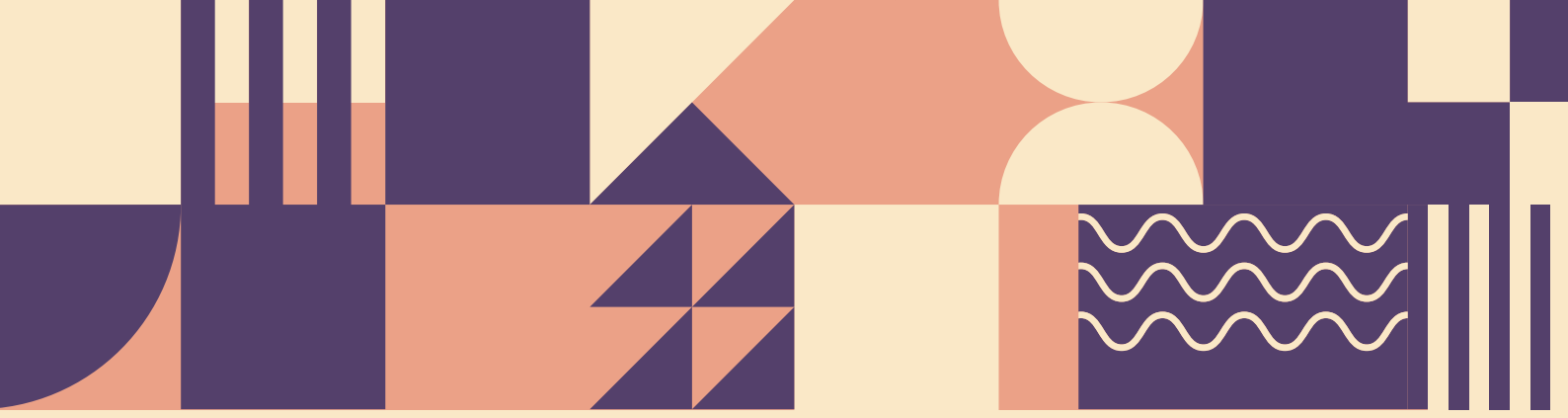
1 Gender-specific pronouns in this paper should be read as including all genders unless otherwise specified. They were used for the purpose of facilitating the reading flow and without the intention to exclude or offend.

2 "Wirklich, ich lebe in finsternen Zeiten!; Das arglose Wort ist töricht. Eine glatte Stirn; Deutet auf Unempfindlichkeit hin." (Brecht 70).

3 "Was sind das für Zeiten, wo; Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist; Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!" (ibid.)

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**06**

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**Tomislav  
Domazetović**

**God save thee, Ancient Mariner!**  
**Stories of the *Book of Genesis***  
**and their relation to *The Rime of***  
***the Ancient Mariner***

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# God save thee, Ancient Mariner! Stories of the *Book of Genesis* and their relation to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has some obvious Christian influences, from the angelic troop to the blessing of the water snakes. However, this paper proposes that Coleridge made the poem as a form of reversal of the stories found in the *Book of Genesis*, especially the stories of Cain and Noah's Ark. It suggests that the moral dimension of the poem, which is one of its most important features, is directly connected to Cain's murder of his brother and to Noah's dove as a bird of good omen. The harshness of the punishment is a point of tension in the poem, but this essay gives examples of God being just as punishing in the *Book of Genesis*, so the punishment of the Mariner is not without a predecessor. The story of the Fall is also transformed because Coleridge uses the image of a snake – or a water-snake – to return the Mariner to the world of prayer, while the snake in the *Book of Genesis* is responsible for tempting Eve and thus causing the Fall from Eden. Other elements that further connect the poem to the *Book of Genesis* are listed. A connection is also made between *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and another poem by Coleridge, "The Wanderings of Cain", which can be seen as sibling poems, both in how they came to be and in the predicament of their main characters.

### KEYWORDS

***Book of Genesis*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Christian symbolism, the Fall**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has some apparent Christian symbolism – such as the hanging of the Albatross around the Mariner's neck instead of a cross, as well as the appearance of the Angelic troop. But there are other more covert elements of the work that are influenced by Coleridge's religious views. This essay will discuss the Biblical influence on the characters and events of the poem by analysing the stories found in the *Book of Genesis*. It will explain how Coleridge shaped the myth of the Fall to fit into his narrative, as well as discuss the similarities between the poem and the Genesis Flood Narrative.

Coleridge's early work was influenced by his religious beliefs, and Davidson argues that "he valued the Bible above all other books, but... he was no bibliolater" (413). At the same time, he believed that the Bible held a "superiority to all other books" (Davidson 417). Accordingly, the numerous Biblical elements in his writing come as no surprise, even if he was not a *bibliolater*. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner's* concept lies in the story of Cain. Originally, Wordsworth and Coleridge set out to write the poem "The Wanderings of Cain", but the Prefatory Note to "The Wanderings of Cain" "describes how that curious prose fragment came into being and it ends by saying that the whole scheme for the collaboration with Wordsworth in a poem about Cain 'broke up in a laugh: and the Ancient Mariner was written instead'" (House 48). The very conception of the *Rime* comes from the Biblical story of Cain and the poem is riddled with different Christian undertones, but Fulmer argues that, even though Cain was the setting stone for the poem, the actual influence on Coleridge's creation lies in the myth of the Wandering Jew. This myth is not from the Bible itself but is still connected to Christianity. Woolf writes that the biblical antecedent of the Wandering Jew is Cain, but the legend itself is "only tenuously connected to biblical sources" (22). Woolf describes the character as being "... human but condemned to live forever until the Second Coming of Christ releases him" (21). Fulmer argues that, as the Jew "is obsessed with confessing the fatal event in his life, so is the Mariner compelled to relate the offense against God's creature which brought upon him the curse of restless wandering. Each hopes that a contrite spirit will obtain present relief for him and salvation at the Last Judgment" (Fulmer 804). And while Fulmer dismisses Cain as just an early influence on the poem, after which two separate poems were created, the story of the Fall and subsequent passages in Genesis may have had more influence on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* than Fulmer gives credit (Fulmer 803).

In short, the story of the Fall goes as follows – the bliss of Eden is ruined by the Serpent under whose influence Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit and are consequently banished from Eden. They have two children, Cain and Abel, and Cain kills Abel due to an immense feeling of jealousy and is punished and marked by God for his crime. Coleridge

symbolically reverses this story in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The Mariner's killing of the Albatross, argues Pen Warren, "symbolizes the Fall, and the Fall has two qualities important here: it is a condition of will, as Coleridge says, 'out of time,' and it is the result of no single human motive" (396). But House sees a problem in this line of thought, where he says that "at one point he (Warren) seems to equate the killing of the bird with the murder of a human being . . . and at another point to say that the killing 'symbolises' the Fall. . . [T]he killing cannot *equate* with both a murder and the Fall, which are very different kinds of things" (59). Warren, says House, observes the Fall as directly connected to Adam and Eve, without considering Cain's actions (59). But the story of Cain and Abel could be viewed as an extension of the Fall, since by killing his brother Cain became the first murderer, further distancing himself from Eden, and was consequently marked by God:

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. (*King James Bible*, Gen. 4. 11, 15)

As Adam and Eve represent the Fall from Eden to the mortal world, Cain's story represents the descent of humanity through disregard of the higher, moral law. Not only is the mark that the Mariner receives analogous to Cain's, but the very killing of the Albatross can now be viewed as both a murder and a fall. The connection between the Mariner and the story of *Genesis* now gains a reversal of symbolism: it is not that the Mariner represents the fall of Adam and Eve, but the fall of Cain, after which the snake symbolism is also transformed. While in the Bible the snake brought the exodus from Eden, in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* it is in fact a return to the world of prayer, a salvation:

O happy living things! no tongue  
Their beauty might declare:  
A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
And I blessed them unaware:  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea (283-292).

While in *The Book of Genesis* the snake is instrumental in the fall of Adam and Eve, which then leads to the act of murder and the fall of Cain, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* reverses this pattern. If the Biblical pattern is bliss followed by the serpent and the sin, after which comes Cain's murder, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* follows the exact opposite order, showing the murder first, then sins of the sailors, after which the Mariner blesses the water snakes and is returned to the world of prayer. As House comments, "at that point the reminder of the sin against this principle is gone" (63) with the sinking of the Albatross. The focus now turns to the punishment, both the one that the Mariner receives, but also the punishment of his fellow sailors.

Whalley argues that "[t]here is the sternness and inexorability of Greek tragedy in the paradox that an act committed in ignorance of the laws governing albatrosses . . . *must* be punished in the most severe manner" (88). What he argues is that the punishment the Mariner receives is reminiscent of a Greek tragedy, while it actually resembles Biblical accounts very accurately (Whalley 88). The God of the Old Testament is not known for his lenient punishments. Fulmer quotes many characters who have, in one way or another, suffered the wrath of God, the Wandering Jew being the principal figure:

"An archetypal wanderer who suffers inordinately for a seemingly minor offense against God, man, and nature, the Mariner naturally bears varying degrees of likenesses to several others of the type: Cain, Jonah, Falkenberg, the Flying Dutchman, Christian the Mutineer, the mythical wandering Judas and Pilate, Huon, Peter Wilkins, the hero of John Newton's *The Authentic Narrative*, the Wild Huntsman, Philip Quarll, and many other sailors and wanderers" (799).

But even without analysing these characters, who stem from both the Bible and many other works, the story of the Fall itself shows how unforgiving God of the Old Testament could at times be,

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life (*The Holy Bible, King James Version* Gen. 3. 16-17).

A severe punishment that followed the killing of the Albatross is in line

with God's actions in the Old Testament. The punishment might resemble Greek tragedy, but it is easily found in the Bible as well.

What precedes the blessing of the water snakes are days spent on the ship alone. "Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse/ And yet I could not die." (Coleridge 262-263) Number seven, especially the symbolism of seven days, is important in the Bible. Apart from the creation of the world in *Genesis 1*, there is also the story of Noah, and God said to him, "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." (*The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Gen. 7. 4) The Mariner, after the blessing of the snakes, falls asleep and upon waking up sees that it's raining. What follows in the Bible is the eradication of all life except those on the Ark. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, everyone on the ship is already dead and with the coming of the rain the dead rise again. So again, these are the elements from *Genesis*, but they are transformed. The rain was the carrier of death in the Bible, while in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* it brings life by saving the thirsty Mariner but also by returning the crew to a grotesque un-life.

Another connection to the Flood Narrative is the Albatross itself. It is reminiscent of Noah's dove, and in *Genesis 8*, the "7 days" symbolism appears again, this time in connection to the bird:

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more (*The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Gen. 8, 10-12).

The dove's return signals salvation and it lifts Noah's spirit, much like how the Albatross was a guide and a symbol of hope to the sailors at first. By killing the bird of good omen, the Mariner is first frowned upon by other sailors, but then, as House notices, they "become accomplices in his crime. They do not know whether the fog and mist (along with the Albatross who brought them) are good or bad . . . , nor do they know whether the sun is good or bad" (59). The belief in the bird's allegedly good intentions is easily forgotten with the murder. Here the Mariner and the crew commit a sin against their possible saviour, as analogous to the Genesis Flood Narrative, since there the bird brings a good omen and is set free by Noah. The Mariner killed not only a bird whom "As if it had been a Christian soul/



We hail'd it in God's name," (65-66) but also their hope of salvation.

It can thus be argued that the severe punishment that the Mariner receives follows the punishments given by God in *The Book of Genesis*. Here, now, a question arises – what would have happened to Noah if one of the people on the Ark killed the Dove upon its return? The primal, frozen world in which the Mariner and his crew find themselves is reminiscent of the Flood Narrative's scarcity of life as well as of Narrative's need to preserve all life. If the albatross is taken as a bird of good omen, as it was in the Flood Narrative, then the Mariner effectively destroys not just the one being that could help them, but also God's willingness to save them, since the bird is one of God's creatures, just like the water-snakes and "[a]ll things both great and small" (Coleridge 616).

Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is an experiment of retelling and reshaping the Biblical mythos found in Genesis. He reverses the order of the events of the Fall and evokes the story of Noah's Ark. The importance of the Snake as a participant of the Fall is reversed – the water snakes in the poem represent the spiritual ascent rather than sin. The Mariner is thus a Cain of the Romantic era who performs the sin of murder but repents it with the help of the accomplice in the Original Sin – the snake. The symbolism of seven days is closely connected to the Genesis Flood Narrative, as well as the bird of good omen that is present in both the Biblical account of the flood and the Mariner's story. In the end, the fall of Cain is the biggest influence of *The Book of Genesis* on the poem, and the other discussed elements connect to this central idea of murder as the original sin for which both Cain and the Mariner were punished. The bird and the water-snakes were not arbitrarily chosen by Coleridge to be the victims of the murder and the blessing; with them, he seamlessly connected the narratives discussed in this essay – the fall of Adam and Eve, the fall of Cain and the Flood Narrative to form a poem filled with Christian symbolism, but still done covertly enough so as not to be considered a *bibliolater*.

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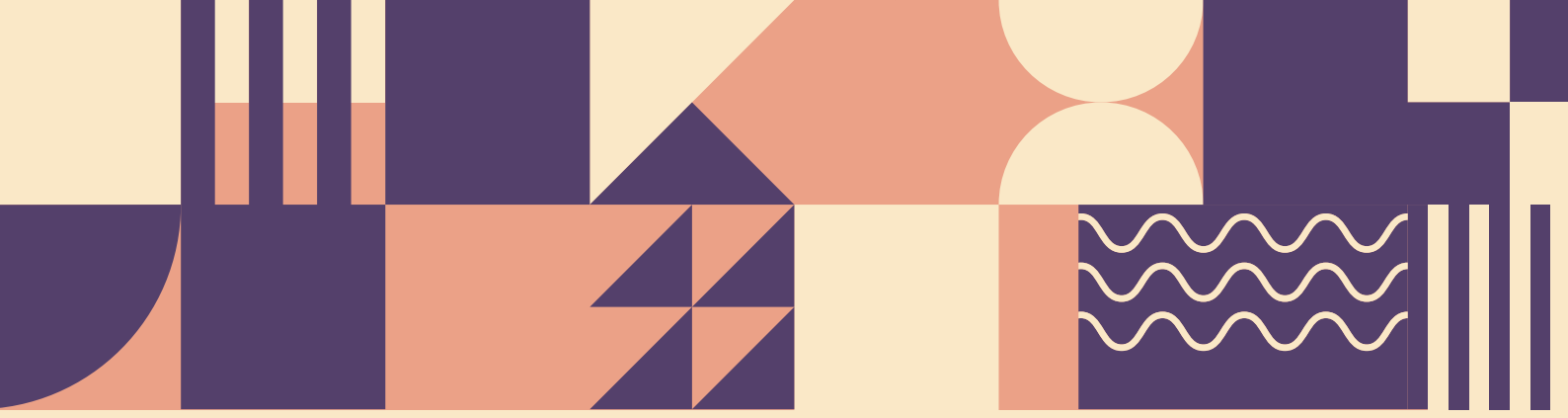
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**07**

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**Martina  
Jović**

**The Depiction of African-American  
Life during the Harlem Renaissance  
in Jean Toomer's *Cane***

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# The Depiction of African-American Life during the Harlem Renaissance in Jean Toomer's *Cane*

This paper aims to discuss the problems that African Americans faced at the beginning of the twentieth century, notably discrimination and marginalization, and to explore the social movements which emerged at the time. The New Negro, a movement founded by Alain Locke, intended to achieve the inclusion of African Americans in U.S. society through art. In Harlem, New York, the Negro Renaissance began. The African-American modernist stream will be explored through the analysis of Jean Toomer's depiction of African-American life in the novel *Cane*. The novel is experimental, as Toomer combines poetry, prose, and drama, writes in a rural dialect, and incorporates poems and stream of consciousness into short stories. *Cane* has a tripartite structure – the first section is set in the American South, the second in the industrial North, and the final section again in the American South – in Georgia. The sections are tied together through folk motifs and the themes of oppression, alienation, and aimlessness. The novel is motivated by the author's racial ambiguity and his position as a mediator between "white" and "black" culture. In opposition to other modernist literature, Toomer focuses on the rural South in order to illustrate the folk culture still present there. Juxtaposing the North and the South, the author addresses the problems of African Americans while providing social critique.

### KEYWORDS

**the Harlem Renaissance, the New Negro movement, racial ambivalence, oppression, alienation**

The beginning of the twentieth century was a period of unprecedented technological advancement. Industrialization, modernization, urbanization, capitalism, and mass production had a profound effect on the economy, politics, and society of the United States and announced an era of progress. Nevertheless, progress did not permeate all spheres of society, as there was a stark contrast between promised democracy and equality for all, and the discrimination and marginalization that the minorities faced. Thus, "a new spirit" awoke among the masses as there was an increase in racial awareness among African Americans, the most numerous minority (Locke 46). This rise in racial consciousness resulted in the cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. Houston Baker defines the Harlem Renaissance as "an outpouring of Afro-American writing, music, and social criticism that includes some of the earliest attempts by Afro-American artists and intellectuals to define themselves in 'modern' terms" (89). One of the novels of the Harlem Renaissance, which defies tradition with both its structure and its style, is Jean Toomer's *Cane*. Unlike most modernist literature, it is not concerned with urban centers, but rather illustrates the modern predicament and racial disenfranchisement and alienation through the portrayal of African Americans in the South.

The Harlem Renaissance commenced in Harlem, New York, during the 1920s, under the sway of cultural pluralism and diversity following a mass migration. In pursuit of better living standards, hundreds of thousands immigrated to the United States from all across the world. This created a culturally diverse society in the urban and industrial cities of the American North. However, foreigners were not the only migrants. As Walter Kalaidjian puts it, "adding to this ethnic mix, the urban centers of the Northern United States further received tens of thousands of transplanted working families during the so-called Great Migration of African Americans from the South" (2). Harlem provided the prospect of an imagined community, as the common experience of urban life not only called for new forms of group expression, but also greatly influenced the Afro-American collective identity. According to Charles Scruggs, this had previously been impossible, as those of African ancestry had more common complications and issues due to institutional, political, and social discrimination and overt racism that was present in American society (552).

Racial stereotypes distorted the image of the African American, whom various advertisements, films, and the minstrel stage illustrated as inferior, idle, and lacking intelligence and integrity (Sanders 137). Stephen Watt observes that in the minstrel show "music, lavish costuming and scenery, and conventional comic oratory entertained urban audiences at the same time as they advanced sharply delimited caricatures of blacks and blackness" (107). Victorian dichotomies between man and animal,

moral and immoral, savage and civilized further reinforced this view. Anthropologist Franz Boas conducted extensive research which proved that those of African origin were equally creative, compassionate, and competent as those of European origin: "If we were to select the most intelligent, imaginative, energetic and emotionally stable third of mankind, all races would be represented" (Boas 79). Boas published his findings in *The Mind of Primitive Man* and later in *Anthropology and Modern Life*, sparking controversy and debasing biological determinism, thus making a strong statement against racism and aiding the recent cultural and political pluralist movements.

One such movement was the New Negro, analogous to the Harlem Renaissance. Alain Locke, a professor of philosophy and the movement's main advocate, noted that the collective consciousness of African Americans was changing (46). He differentiates the New Negro from the "Old Negro," asserting that the Old Negro had in fact ceased to exist and was at the time a mere stereotype of a black man as docile, idle, and simple (Locke 47). According to Locke, the New Negro should shatter the stereotypes, avoid assimilation and the acceptance of middle-class values, and accept his cultural heritage instead (47). As Mark Sanders notes, the New Negro movement strived toward complete cultural, social, and political inclusion of African Americans, declaring that democracy was unsuccessful due to disregard for the African American, who was by all means a citizen of the United States and deserved equal rights and privileges (138). Thus, the New Negro founded institutions and organized demonstrations and marches in the streets.

The main means of claiming civil rights for the New Negro was art, notably literature. Baker suggests that art offered progress, since African Americans could succeed in it, as art was not reserved for white upper-middle-class Americans, unlike a multitude of professions at the time (90). Nonetheless, black authors were faced with a different problem – a divided audience. As Sanders observes, the American reading population had significantly increased, and a profusion of publishers and independent magazines encouraged the advancement of contemporary African-American writing (134). Nonetheless, Scruggs notes that the reception of black literature was less than favorable among African-American readers, considering the common notion that they were misrepresented, and preferred "nice literature," which would dispel the usual stereotypes and demonstrate "the bourgeois aspirations of the race" (544). On the other hand, the white reader wanted African-American characters in literature to comply with their own perception of the race – their nature comic and their cultures primitive and savage. Therefore, the author was compelled to cater to both and could appease neither. Furthermore, the assumed stance of other black authors remained ambiguous. The New Negro

movement demanded a radical change in representation, including the portrayal of the working classes in urban and industrial centers, while some considered such a depiction demeaning and shameful. Thus, due to the absence of consensus on the proper representation, the Negro Renaissance was not a homogeneous movement.

Racial ideology was affected by access to higher education and subsequent socio-economic upward mobility, and a new sense of alienation, acculturation, and assimilation in the industrial cities of the North contributed to the considerable change in Afro-American collective identity. The shift in sensibility was most evident in urban centers, such as Harlem, where jazz music, influenced by African folk songs and blues, flourished and impacted other arts, such as literature. Moreover, fascination with African culture and the primitive was felt beyond the boundaries of New York bars and nightclubs. Afro-Americans began to embrace their tradition in opposition to the prevailing pragmatism and Puritan values of American society. As Alain Locke declared, "the culture of the Negro is of a pattern integral with the times and with its cultural setting" (46). The Harlem Renaissance was in accord with the international modernist movement in arts, its main characteristics being the refusal of tradition, experimentation with literary forms, and the exploration and illustration of new experiences, such as urban life. The prominent authors of the Renaissance include Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, W.E.B. DuBois, Countee Cullen, and Jean Toomer.

In 1923, Jean Toomer wrote *Cane*, a composite novel consisting of poetry, short stories and a play, concerned with racial and regional ambivalence and identity, exploring the experience of African Americans in the United States at the start of the twentieth century. As Frederik Rusch remarks, Toomer utilized a plethora of modernist techniques (15). Its form is unusual, since Toomer combines poetry, prose, and drama into a single novel, incorporates poems into short stories, and writes in the present tense. As Rusch notes, Toomer uses staccato sentences in order to create tension (16). Stream of consciousness appears throughout the stories, and many characters speak in a rural vernacular dialect (Rusch 16). According to Rusch, there are fragmented and elliptical sentences, plenty of repetitions, various types of verse, and no sense of formal unity between each poem and narrative (15). Furthermore, the literary form is dependent upon the function (25).

The novel has a tripartite structure, the first section set in the American South, the second in the industrial and urban cities of the North, namely, Chicago and Washington D.C., and the third section is again set in the American South – in rural Georgia. As Rusch observes, the sections are tied together through common themes and motifs instead of shared

characters or narrative events (15). According to John Duvall, the author's inspiration for the novel stemmed from his own racial ambivalence (257). Toomer came from a privileged background, and the fact that he was light-skinned allowed him to circumvent the color line effortlessly (257). Kathleen Pfeiffer states that he preferred a "multiethnic identity" (3). Nonetheless, he was aware of the hardships of African Americans at the time. In order to explore his own racial identity, he traveled to Georgia to teach at a school, which motivated him to create *Cane* (Duvall 257). Thus, *Cane* is not concerned with industrial settings, but with the portrayal of Afro-Americans in small Southern towns.

The opening section of the novel captures Southern folk culture and illustrates the lives of lower-class African Americans in the South. It comprises narratives about the lives of five women and poems which serve as a transition between the narratives. The novel opens with "Karintha," a story about a beautiful black woman. The narrative explores relationships in the black community, as Karintha was a mischievous and violent child, yet no one reprimanded her as they deemed her lovely and desired her from an early age. She has little respect for other creatures, herself included. Karintha has been objectified since childhood, and her sexuality is exoticized. As a result of this, she becomes promiscuous. Sexuality and passion are the main motifs of the story. The topic is presented experimentally, portraying Karintha as a flash of color or a gust of wind. These comparisons, evocative of the modernist motifs of speed and dynamism, further show Toomer's dedication to the movement. Moreover, the Great Migration of Southern African Americans to the industrial North is referred to as "the smoke," which was "so heavy you tasted it in water" (Toomer 5). Karintha may be read as the embodiment of the Harlem Renaissance – beautiful and dynamic, yet objectified and underestimated. As Toomer writes, "the soul of her is a growing thing ripened too soon" (5). The males who wish to own it as a material thing and "ripen" it too soon may be interpreted as the divided audience with which Afro-American authors were faced – both white men and black men, unable to appreciate the beauty and liveliness of Afro-American art. Nonetheless, the narrator acknowledges Karintha's beauty and autonomy, reflecting Toomer's own attitude towards the Harlem Renaissance.

"Becky" tells the tale of a white woman excommunicated due to the fact that she gives birth to two black sons: "White or colored? No one knew, and least of all themselves" (Toomer 9). The story deals with segregation and ingrained racial prejudice in the South, since both whites and blacks condemn miscegenation and eschew the family. Moreover, it depicts alienation, as they live isolated from others and are unable to socialize properly. Furthermore, hypocrisy and conformity are condemned as the story illustrates how the community comes together only to cast



someone out, and they merely pray and preach, yet show no compassion or compulsion to aid the family. Becky is referred to among them as a "common, God-forsaken, insane white shameless wench" (8). She is a spectacle, a sensation. The author expresses his satire and disapproval of such an approach to miscegenation in the final paragraph, detailing how a man "threw his Bible on the pile" when he saw Becky's collapsed chimney, as if her mere existence was a curse on the community (10).

Another woman portrayed in the novel is Carma in the story of the same name. Toomer describes "Carma" as "the crudest melodrama" (15). After her husband finds out that she has had an affair, she stages her own death, causing him to join a gang. The narrator sympathizes with Carma and portrays the men who have gathered to hunt her down as brutes: "one would have thought they were cornering a rabbit or a skunk" (16). Thus, the narrator favors the outsider view of black culture, siding with Carma, portraying her as clever and independent and comparing her to a "sad strong song" (15). The story contains numerous "primitive" motifs, such as folk songs, witch-doctors, *juju* men, *greegree*, and flaring torches. Moreover, African culture is referred to in the following way: "The Dixie Pike has grown from a goat path in Africa" (15). The Southern landscape evocative of Africa is also mentioned in "Fern," a story about a woman into whose eyes "the whole countryside seemed to flow" (23). A Northern Negro becomes infatuated with her, but fails to entice her, which serves as an example of the juxtaposition of the North and the South. She has a spiritual experience, talking inarticulately while pounding her head and calling Christ. Superstition surrounds her, as was common in Georgia at the time.

The theme of race is further explored in "Esther," a story about a pale girl discriminated against because of her skin color. Racial ambivalence is depicted in this short story as Esther cannot come to terms with the color of her skin and dreams about King Barlo, a black preacher often in religious trance. Barlo is the epitome of a Southern black man – strong, astute, and spiritual. Nonetheless, her love remains unrequited, as she is left with "dead dreams and a forgotten resolution" (34). She is alienated because of the racial prejudices of the other African Americans in the town. The story ends on a pessimistic note, as the town disappears. Folk motifs, especially folk songs such as "Little Liza Jane" and "Deep River," are often referred to, and verses from these songs appear in the stories.

The narratives portray the oppression present in the South, notably lynching. According to Sanders, "between 1890 and 1917, some two to three black Southerners were hanged, burned at the stake, or quietly murdered every week" (137). The poem "Portrait in Georgia" illustrates the dead body of a woman using vocabulary reminiscent of the violent practice of lynching, such as a lyncher's rope, scars, blisters, and "black flesh after flame" (Toomer

38). In addition, lynching is described in "Blood-Burning Moon," in which a black man is burned at the stake in an old factory for courting a rich white man's black chef. The motif of a cane, after which the novel was named, appears throughout the story and the rest of the section, foreshadowing dreadful events. This poem describes the skeleton-like stone walls and rotting floors of the cotton factory. However, descriptions of the pastoral landscapes of the Southern countryside and agrarian culture are present as well. The language of the section is rather poetic and at times vernacular, characteristic of the South. Due to the use of black dialect, Toomer's novel may be considered regional. According to Duvall, regionalism is "a form of critique rather than a type of geographical determinism" (245). The social critique is rather evident, as the author explores differences in the perception of social roles, norms, culture, and identity in the South.

The second section of the novel offers a portrayal, as well as a critique, of urban black life. It starts with "Seventh Street," a fusion of poetry and prose. The initial verses, which are repeated after the section of prose, illustrate life in the city:

Money burns the pocket, pocket hurts,  
Bootleggers in silken shirts,  
Ballooned, zooming Cadillacs,  
Whizzing, whizzing down the street-car tracks (53).

City-dwellers are described as bootleggers and money-spenders, embracing modernization and new technologies. Prohibition and the Great War are addressed, and their influence is evident in the following sentences: "Black reddish blood. Pouring for crude-boned soft-skinned life, who set you flowing" (53). Furthermore, this is a reference to the violence on the city streets, and "Seventh Street" may be interpreted as a call for change.

The modernist motif of change, specifically the desire to escape the city, is the theme of "Beehive," a free-verse poem comparing the city to a black beehive: "Wish that I might fly out past the moon/ And curl forever in some far-off farmyard flower" (65). The speaker is depicted as a lone drone getting drunk with honey, contemplating an escape to the countryside. "Harvest Song," a poem about an overworked, fatigued farmer whose throat is dry, eyes blind and ears deaf from the dust of the oat fields, also illustrates alienation and disconnectedness in the following way: "It would be good to hear their songs [...] reapers of the sweet-stalk'd cane, cutters of the corn ... even though their throats cracked and the strangeness of their voices deafened me" (94). The speaker is aware that his fellow farmers are experiencing the same, unable to connect, unable to communicate with each other.

Another pessimistic narrative is "Box Seat." This is a story about Daniel Moore, a delusional dreamer who desires Muriel, yet cannot be with her, as the town would not approve of it because of his bad reputation. Daniel claims that "there is no such thing as happiness. Life bends joy and pain, beauty and ugliness, in such a way that no one may isolate them" (81). Unlike Muriel, he is not a conformist and maintains that one should not try to make people happy, but rather try to make them create instead. Creative tension in the context of the entire novel is achieved when the North and the South are juxtaposed. Attending a variety show at the Lincoln Theater, teeming with African Americans, Daniel perceives himself as an outcast, as he does not fit in with the formally-dressed crowd. Following a jazz overture, they watch a grotesque fight between two dwarfs. At the end of this act, the winner offers Muriel a bloodied rose. Although she is visibly appalled by it, Muriel reluctantly reaches for the rose. One may argue that the flower represents the heritage of the African American, beautiful and blooming, yet bloodied and shameful to some. Thus, Muriel has adopted the middle-class values and wishes to reject her heritage, attempting to assimilate and rise up the social ladder. In opposition to her, Daniel has no clear direction. Although he starts a fight at the theater, he forgets about it and simply walks away. This scene demonstrates that Daniel indeed does not care about the opinions of others. Through his prophetic words, it is apparent that his only aim is to "Is'tir the root-life of a withered people. Call them from their houses, and teach them to dream" (76). Dan's views are in accord with the New Negro movement.

The third and final section is dedicated to novelist and literary critic Waldo Frank. As Kathleen Pfeiffer notes, Toomer and Frank were close friends and often advised each other on their literary work (2). Moreover, Toomer "took an extraordinary journey south" with Frank, which greatly inspired him, and Frank continuously supported Toomer's career as a writer (2). Therefore, the dedication serves as an expression of gratitude, as well as a signal of Toomer's connection with experimental writers who influenced the form and style of his work. This section is set in the American South and consists solely of "Kabnis," the story of an African-American professor struggling with his own identity and racial conflicts. This section best reflects Toomer's own racial ambiguity and his inability, or rather his refusal, to come to terms with his racial identity, as he was light skinned and faced the same issues as Kabnis. Furthermore, in this section the author addresses segregation based on skin color and racial prejudice within African-American communities.

Ralph Kabnis is a Northerner who was originally from the South. His character is apprehensive and tense, unnerved by the folk songs he hears in the night winds of Georgia – "Dear Jesus, do not chain me to myself and set these hills and valleys, heaving with folk-songs, so close to me that I

cannot reach them" (Toomer 114). Being light skinned, Ralph is alienated and constantly struggles with racial ambiguity. Furthermore, he rejects his heritage, claiming his ancestors were orators, Southern blue-bloods, which is yet another proof of his rootlessness. He condemns the hypocrisy surrounding him, and is laid off due to his failure to comply with the rules of the school. Nonetheless, he is not suited for physical labor either, as he seems awkward and ludicrous compared to his coworkers. His opinions differ from those around him, as they maintain that oppression and racial conflicts are "things you neither does a thing or talks about if y want t stay around this away" (121). Kabnis believes the issues should be addressed, since "[t]his loneliness, dumbness, awful, intangible oppression is enough to drive a man insane" (114).

Superstition and paranoia are omnipresent in their society. This is especially evident in the mentions of ghosts and in Kabnis' hysterical and irrational behavior upon receiving a threat written on a rock thrown through his window. Nonetheless, conflicts do not occur only between those of different races, but within the same race as well, as the threat was written to an African American by other African Americans. Oppression is the underlying theme of the story and is referred to on many occasions. The most striking mention of oppression is the description of the lynching of Mame Lankins, a pregnant woman who was stabbed for hiding her husband from the lynchers, who also ripped her unborn baby from her womb and stuck it to a tree with a knife. In addition to the oppression they suffer, the characters are alienated, unable to communicate efficiently. The old mute man in the basement in which they gather represents this inability. Furthermore, he is the "[d]ead blind father of a muted folk who feel their way upward to a life that crushes or absorbs them" (Toomer 144). The father figure is prophetic, presenting to the reader a dreary vision of African Americans at the start of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the short-story cycle ends on a positive note – "The sun arises. Gold-glowing child, it steps into the sky and sends a birth-song slanting down gray dust streets and sleepy windows of the southern town" (Toomer 160). Thus, one may assert that Toomer's vision is ultimately optimistic, that he believes African Americans will awake, gain or claim their rights, and embrace their culture.

In conclusion, Jean Toomer's *Cane* depicts the beauty, dynamism, alienation, and violence in African-American communities at the start of the twentieth century. The novel demonstrates Toomer's involvement with the modernist movement in literature, as he experiments with literary form and style. Much like the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement, *Cane* is not homogenous. In opposition to other modernist literature, Toomer focuses on the rural South in order to illustrate the folk culture still present there. He addresses the issues that African Americans faced, namely discrimination and a fragmented collective identity, and

the novel presents a call for change. The book speaks volumes about the author's racial ambivalence, as his liminal position as a mediator between the "whites" and "blacks" allows him to illustrate the life of African Americans from the perspective of both sides. Therefore, Toomer paints a colorful portrait of the life of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, juxtaposing the American North and South, and providing social critique.

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**“I Have Become an Enigma to  
Myself”: A Comparative Analysis of  
Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* and  
Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis***

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# "I Have Become an Enigma to Myself": A Comparative Analysis of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*

At one point in *Cosmopolis*, DeLillo's character Benno Levin quotes Saint Augustine of Hippo: "[I] have become an enigma to myself" (189). However, the similarities between the two narratives go beyond a simple reference. Although centuries apart and operating within different temporal and philosophical frameworks, both are examples of confessional prose, an inherently introspective genre which offers insight into the narrator's emotional development. The works at hand explore concepts key to the human condition, such as time and temporality, corporeality, and morality. The narrators also seek to define themselves in relation to (or against) a superior, ubiquitous, and almighty Other (Saint Augustine in relation to God, and Benno Levin against Eric Packer, the embodiment of cybercapitalism). Apart from thematic similarities, biographical and structural similarities are also to be observed. Hence, as DeLillo is building on (or rather, subverting) what is considered to be the first piece of confessional prose in the Western tradition, the comparative method can be applied in analysing *Cosmopolis*. Such an approach makes possible the singling out and defining of peculiarities as depicted in the novel, which allows for an(other) analysis of the American here and now.

### KEYWORDS

**American literature, capitalism, corporeality, temporality, comparative analysis, *Confessions*, *Cosmopolis***



The postmodern world is, in the words of Lyotard, "incredulous towards metanarratives" (xxiv). However, in his quest to transpose onto paper the totality of the present-day United States, Don DeLillo proceeds to unmask the current, allegedly non-existent, American grand narrative: (cyber)capitalism. By contrasting DeLillo's novel with Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, a work blatantly steeped in another, markedly Christian tradition, the patterns which enable one to detect the narrative underlying *Cosmopolis* arise. Hence, in employing the comparative method, this essay will aim to single out and define the peculiarities of DeLillo's novel, allowing for an(other) analysis of the American here and now.

For the comparative method to be sensibly employed, the units of comparison must first be established. Likening the United States of America to the Roman Empire is nothing new<sup>1</sup>. However, what is currently of interest are two events which respectively figured highly in the Roman and American collective consciousness – the sack of Rome in 410 and the September 11 attacks. The respective perpetrators of these attacks, the Germanic tribe of the Visigoths and Islamic fundamentalists, can be said to have been constructed as "the Other" on charges as enumerated by David Simpson. The attacks might have been "the result of jealousy, of 'them' wanting what we have and destroying it because they cannot have it . . . or from 'them' being too technologically undeveloped and/or cowardly to face their enemy in open combat. *They* are secretive, cowardly, primitive, inflexible . . ." (6–7, emphasis in the original). In short, the events of both 410 and 2001 marked forceful incursions of what the Romans and the Americans each perceived as an essentially "backward" and foreign "Other" into the heart of a global power. *Heart* is an apt designation, as both targets were chosen for their symbolic, rather than strategic, importance – each of these acts was an end in itself, a demonstration of power (Grgas 64, Wickham 23). Although the attacks hardly affected the economies of the two Empires, they unquestionably dealt a great blow to the Roman and American self-confidence. Each reverberated throughout the known world, signalling the global importance of an essentially local event, and gave rise to new narratives (Grgas 63–69). The works of Augustine and DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* can be said to have prefigured such (literary) developments, bestowing upon their authors an aura of propheticism (Mauro 69), as they were written some years prior to these respective apocalyptic events.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of such momentous developments, the characters central to the works at hand are forced to (re)negotiate their position in this adversity-ridden world, to define how they relate to time and space.

Little wonder, then, that DeLillo chose to give Benno Levin a voice in the form of a confession, a tradition established in the Western canon by none other than Augustine. What sets confessions apart from

testimonies is the fact that in them it is the self, and not an external event or another person, that is being scrutinised and laid bare. This is done to achieve self-transformation (Radstone 169, 175). Hence, Augustine and Levin do not directly analyse the world they inhabit. Rather, it transpires as an outside impetus which prompts their actions and affects their thinking, allowing us to see how the individual self is formulated and shaped by external forces at a given point in time. Of course, a piece of confessional prose written in AD 400 differs vastly from one written at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, it is precisely these (dis)similarities that allow us to diagnose what is peculiar to the experience of the American here and now. First and foremost, Augustine's writings presuppose God as the addressee – as numerous occurrences of formulations such as "I declare and confess this to you, my God" (*Confessions* i.xix) attest. Thus, in Augustine's writing self-transformation is synonymous to absolution and salvation as bestowed on mortals by a divine, external force (i.e. God). On the other hand, Levin's targeted audience is, seemingly, the whole world: "I am planning to make a public act of my life through these pages I will write" (*Cosmopolis* 149). This would fit nicely into the turn that first made its appearance in Dostoevsky's writing, the inward turn that signifies a search for the redemptive, inner truth of *the self*, independent of God, the "projection of an inner life before the world" (Radstone 171). However, this model does not fully accommodate Levin's case. In his own words, "I make mind speeches all the time. So do you, only not always. I do it all the time, long speeches to someone I can never identify. But I'm beginning to think it's him" (*Cosmopolis* 57). It can therefore be stated that Levin also addresses, if not God himself, then his prophet. And this prophet is Eric Packer, the novel's protagonist, who figures as the champion of the new world-religion – cybercapital (Conte 185, 187).

At one point in the novel, Vija Kinski, Packer's "chief of theory," states that people "don't exist outside the market" (*Cosmopolis* 90). Hence, the market can be characterised as ubiquitous and pervasive, all-enveloping, not unlike God as conceived of in Abrahamic religions, whom it supplanted in the twenty-first century. In the same way that the great monotheistic religions have rites by means of which they approach God, Packer achieves union with his God through technology, which "helps us make our fate. We don't need God or miracles" (95). In the words of Joseph M. Conte, "as the Abrahamic faiths promise the afterlife of the soul, so the technological sublime holds forth the transcendence of the disembodied mind" (186). Hence, it is Eric's aim to attain this transcendence, to become "pure information" (*Cosmopolis* 204), as can be observed in Packer's disdain for his own body, which he thinks of as his "meat space" (64). Even Vija Kinski, his collocutor on the questions of cybercapitalist dogma, is described as "a voice with a body as afterthought" (105). Eric navigates external space unseen, in his armoured, cork-lined limousine, abstracting himself even

more from the physical world of yesterday as represented by places such as the diamond district. The choice of the terms "space" and "place" in the previous sentence is not coincidental: "places" are in fact "spaces" marked and shaped by *manmade* intervention, whereas "space" is depersonalised and divorced from "place," characterised by skyscrapers and banks. The space of Packer's New York is an "internal, thought-operated world" (Valentino 146). And it is precisely this rift between body and soul that for Augustine represented the source of real "evil" (Hunter 359). In Augustine's philosophy, it is in the very nature of the soul to wish for embodiment, as "a disembodied human soul is incapable of enjoying the vision of God" (Hunter 356). Corporeality is also one of the features that distinguishes humans from God, for only God is truly immutable and eternal, and hence incorporeal (Griffin and Paulsen 106). Expanding on God's eternalness, the following paragraph will address a category inextricably linked to that of corporeality and space – namely, the category of temporality and time.

Eric's divorce from his body leads to a sort of rupture in the time-space continuum, allowing him to "experience an effect before its cause," i.e. to predict the trends of the stock-market (Conte 186). Observed through the lens of Augustinian philosophy, Eric's "incorporeality" and prophetic abilities would place him on a par with God himself. For Augustine, time presupposes change, and as such, "in its nature time is a dimension of the mind, a psychological condition attaching to being creaturely" (Chadwick 75). In other words, the body ages and eventually dies, with the "human consciousness functioning by anticipating the future, remembering the past, and being aware of the present through perception" (*Confessions* xi.ix, Knuuttila 112), while for God, who is unchanging and eternal, these categories exist simultaneously (Chadwick 76). The closing lines of the novel imply such divine simultaneity, with Eric "dead inside the crystal of his watch, but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound" (*Cosmopolis* 289). Being exempt from experiencing events in their linear succession, Eric can, in a way, be likened to God. However, his god is a god of the future. What transpires in the quote is the focus of cybercapital on what is to come. In the same fashion in which God, in Augustine's philosophy, created time in its entirety, "cybercapital creates the future" (79). This future is what DeLillo famously dubbed as "the utopian glow of cybercapital" ("In the Ruins of the Future"). Its utopian potential lies in the power of technology to eliminate doubt, which obstructs the investment potential and controls the market. However, what is at stake is not only the future, but also the past. In eliminating doubt, cybercapital is eliminating the past as well. As Vija Kinski put it, "All doubt arises from past experience. But the past is disappearing. We used to know the past, but not the future. This is changing. We need a new theory of time" (*Cosmopolis* 86). Such a narrative is in stark opposition to Messianic time as experienced by Augustine. His was a time inextricably linked to and conscious of the past,

the time of the First Coming, as well as oriented towards the future, awaiting its fulfilment in the Second Coming. In short, it had a grand narrative which gave people a sense of purpose (Anderson 24). Time in the twenty-first century, not unlike money, has "lost its narrative quality . . . . [It] is talking to itself" (*Cosmopolis* 77). In the words of Peter Boxall, "the landmarks and time marks . . . have lost their organizing power, abandoning the narrative to a kind of directionlessness" (693). In short, in erasing memory, cybercapital presupposes the erasure of existing identity.

However, apart from producing individuals such as Packer who successfully transition into this impersonal identity, the market, which, not unlike God in the Augustinian tradition, is total, also "breeds men and women [who] are necessary to the system they despise" (*Cosmopolis* 90). Every grand narrative (for global capitalism is undoubtedly America's current narrative) engages, although perhaps unwittingly, in the production of its counternarrative, and it is precisely the Islamic fundamentalist past which surfaces as the single greatest opposition to American self-confidence (Conte 184). In the words of DeLillo himself, "it was the power of American culture [steeped in capitalism and its tenets] to penetrate every wall, home, life and mind . . . which drew [the terrorists'] fury" ("In the Ruins of the Future"). Reverting to the beginning of the essay, one can establish that it was actually America that first forayed into foreign territory, whether by means of military intervention or on a symbolic level. And it is precisely on this symbolic level that, owing to the disparity in power and force, terrorists opt to deal a blow (Conte 189). However, fixating on and locating the external enemy often proves to be easier than identifying the internal one. When speaking of the religion of cybercapital, it is not only its ostensible *Other*, Islam, that we have to consider, but also its apostates, the "credible threats" who are treated as such by virtue of their one-time aspiration to enter the ranks of cybercapital. Here one might draw a comparison in the conversions of Saint Augustine and Richard Sheers, who goes by the alias of "Benno Levin," to their respective religions. Although their lives preceding conversion show a certain degree of similarity (a career in academia and families to provide for), the transformative moments in their lives led to radically different outcomes. Whereas Augustine's conversion to Catholicism and appointment as the bishop of Hippo further anchored his life, Sheets's leaving behind his old life to make his millions resulted in bankruptcy and mental instability. Such developments transpire clearly in their writings. Whilst Augustine's is orderly, with an endpoint, i.e. God, in view, Levin's is scattered, repetitive, and fixated on a single idea – bringing down the prophet of the religion that failed him. In short, it is indicative of the fragmentation of the self peculiar to postmodernism, the rejection of cybercapital (Grgas 66, Conte 187). Finally, Levin reappears as a harbinger of the past, or, put differently, he comes back as the figure who lectures Packer on asymmetry and doubt. Eric's quest for symmetry proves to be

an overefficiency, a trigger for self-destruction, resulting from a conscious dismissal of the past. The system, as encapsulated by the character of Eric Packer, crumbles in on itself rather than admitting miscalculation. It is for this reason that Packer himself seeks out his assassin, heading down memory lane as he nears his end (Conte 190).

After what has been said, the comparative diagnosis may be summed up as follows: figuratively speaking, the category of a supreme force remains as present today as it was in AD 400. What has changed is that God has vacated the slot and cybercapital has taken up his place. Whereas early Christian thought stressed the importance of the body-soul harmony and defined the progression of time in linear terms, in eradicating "places" in favour of "spaces" and the past in favour of the future, cybercapital is transforming people's identities. However, the capitalist grand narrative finds (and creates) its counternarrative not only in terrorism, which is rooted in the (fundamentalist) past, but also in those it has failed. Although the disparity in power remains too great for the counternarrative to prevail, the novel, in pointing to the existence of alternative narratives, acknowledges the complexity of the twenty-first century, even if it does not offer a chance of redemption.

## END NOTES

- 1 Recent studies on America as Empire include, among others, Ferguson (2004) and Maier (2006).
- 2 Although Cosmopolis was first published in 2003, DeLillo had completed the novel around the time of the September 11 attacks (Mauro 69)

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**Bence**

**Gábor Kvéder**

**Dracula's Grandparents: The  
Antagonist as a Prototype of the  
Modern Vampire in Samuel Taylor  
Coleridge's "Christabel" and John  
William Polidori's *The Vampyre***

## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# Dracula's Grandparents: The Antagonist as a Prototype of the Modern Vampire in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" and John William Polidori's *The Vampyre*

When a conversation turns to the topic of vampires, the main character of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is usually cited as a conventional prototype. However, it is important to note that the eponymous antagonist of the revolutionary novel is not the first vampire in English-language literature. Mainly through their potential historical, socio-cultural, and psychological interpretations, two members of the pre-*Dracula* era significantly contributed to the traditional idea of vampirism.

Critics seem to agree that the first male vampire of the English literary canon appeared in John Polidori's novelette, *The Vampyre* (1819), while the issue of the first female representative of this Gothic character may be more problematic. Traditionally, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) tends to be identified as the pioneering work in this regard. However, Samuel Coleridge's narrative poem, "Christabel" (1816), might be a relevant candidate as well: according to certain scholarly views, it may fulfil a similar role as "its" Victorian descendant.

This essay will concentrate on the most significant characteristics of vampirism that are traceable both in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" and in John William Polidori's *The Vampyre*. Mostly based on the behaviour of the two supernatural creatures, namely Geraldine and Lord Ruthven, respectively, the analysis will focus on the influence that these literary works had on the general features of vampire-figures as Gothic antagonists.

### KEYWORDS

**vampire, transgression, aristocrat, homoeroticism, virtue, vice, "Christabel", *The Vampyre***

When a colloquial or academic conversation turns to the topic of vampires, the main character of Bram Stoker's novel is usually cited as a conventional prototype. *Dracula* (1897) revolutionized this branch of Gothic literature, and eternalized the stereotypical horror-figure both in literary and in broader cultural terms. It is true that Count Dracula (as well as the world built upon him) contributed to the idea that "no other monster has endured, and proliferated, in quite the same way—or been made to bear such a weight of metaphor" (Punter and Byron 268). However, it is important to note that the eponymous antagonist is not the first vampire in English-language literature.

David Punter, in line with the general critical agreement, remarks that "the figure of Lord Ruthven became a model for the English vampire" (104). The central character of John William Polidori's novelette, *The Vampyre* (1819), is widely acknowledged as the first male representative of his kind in English fiction. Similarly, when the pioneering female character is examined, it is also Punter who notes that, "interestingly, several of the vampires in romantic writing are women"—mentioning Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Geraldine, the mysterious girl in the narrative poem "Christabel" (1816) as one of "the outstanding examples" (102). This essay will concentrate on the most significant characteristics of vampirism traceable both in Coleridge's "Christabel" and in Polidori's *The Vampyre*. Mostly based on the effects and behaviour of the two supernatural creatures, i.e. Geraldine and Lord Ruthven, respectively, the analysis will focus on the influence that these literary works had on the general features of vampire-figures as Gothic antagonists.

The most obvious similarity between Geraldine and Lord Ruthven is that they both belong to the top of social hierarchy. As Punter and Glennis Byron point out, "one of the most significant shifts in the movement from folk-lore to literature is the vampire's transformation from peasant to aristocrat" (269). Lord Ruthven can indeed be mentioned as a typical representative of this radical alteration, but Geraldine, since allegedly her "sire is of a noble line" (l. 79), may be a relevant example of the upper-class blood-sucker as well. However, the vampire is also a misfit, a being accompanied by eeriness and mystery. For instance, Ruthven himself is introduced as "a nobleman, more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank" (*Vampyre* 295). Therefore, he must be examined as an outsider even within aristocratic circles. Since "not only peasants and savages but lords and ladies took pleasure in believing themselves dominated by powers beyond their control" (Fulford 56), the attention paid to Ruthven can be justified: he is the materialization of otherworldly appearance and behaviour.

From its supra-hierarchical position, the vampire proves to be an effective device of highlighting the shortcomings of the aristocracy. As a superior being, "the vampire remains exotic, oriental, vulgar, folkloric, perverse, supernatural, superstitious, and to the sceptic, faintly ridiculous; but in Polidori's hands, he is now also a seductive rake, resident in an aristocratic culture and at home in the metropolis" (Ellis 183). Thus, the creature becomes a suitable critic of upper-class people. When summarizing the vampire's basic role in this aspect, Punter notes that "Ruthven is the representation not of a mythologised individual but of a mythologised class. He is dead yet not dead, as the power of the aristocracy in the early nineteenth century was dead and not dead; he requires blood because blood is the business of an aristocracy" (104). The parallel between the dubious nature of the aristocracy and that of the vampire, particularly through the ambiguous importance of blood, can reflect on the usual upper-class values. In "Christabel" the main "subject is chivalry, and the gender and sexual identities people take on in the chivalric and aristocratic family" (Fulford 55). Its medieval features and archaic, paternal power structures can be highlighted from a Gothic perspective as well. Even though a detailed description of chivalry as a political topic in "Christabel" will not be presented here<sup>1</sup>, it is significant to bear in mind that "Coleridge's critique of chivalry and aristocracy is [ . . . ] important to this poem" (Newlyn, Introduction 10). This feature gives Geraldine the chance to act both as a representative and as a critic of the nobility: in her own fictional world, she does the same as Lord Ruthven in Polidori's narrative.

In *The Vampyre*, instead of the above mentioned socio-political peculiarities of the aristocracy, the corrupted moral attitude of this class is emphasized—and exploited by Lord Ruthven. As Markman Ellis notes, "the rake and the vampire are both devices for exposing the epistemological complexity of moral judgement" (183). The general superiority of the creature is highlighted when Ellis observes that "the nobleman eventually proclaimed as 'a VAMPYRE!' in the last line dissimulates his blood-sucking practices under the guise of rakery" (183). In this sense, Polidori's monster manages to criticize and ridicule the idle, inconsistent, sensational aristocratic manners partly by identifying himself with these people on a superficial level: "His peculiarities caused him to be invited to every house; all wished to see him, and those who had been accustomed to violent excitement, and now felt the weight of *ennui*, were pleased at having something in their presence capable of engaging their attention" (*Vampyre* 295; italics in the original). Underlining Ruthven's most conspicuous features as widely used attributes of the vampire and mentioning the hostility between aristocrats and middle-class people as a potential secondary motivation behind the antagonist's behaviour and moral creed, Punter remarks that

the vampire in British culture [. . .] is a fundamentally antibourgeois figure. He is elegant, well dressed, a master of seduction, a cynic, a person exempt from prevailing socio-moral codes. He thus takes his place alongside other forms of Gothic villain, as a participant in a myth produced by the middle class to explain its own antecedents and its own fears (104-05).

Accordingly, by adapting his own activities (e.g. travelling on the Continent, gambling, enjoying the company of women) to upper-class values, Ruthven is able to subvert the main attitudes associated with aristocrats.

Through vampires, human hypocrisy, inherent sinfulness, the instability of threatened dignity, as well as the idleness of the aristocracy can all be criticized at the same time. Judgements aimed at such aspects may be extended to the field of sexuality—and its countless possible aberrations, which are exploited by Geraldine and Lord Ruthven, too.

As Punter and Byron note, "early vampires are not only aristocrats, but also seducers, and from the start the vampire has been associated with sexuality" (269). Furthermore, "reading this story [i.e. *The Vampyre*] as failing to express a more explicit sexuality is to fail to read it in an [sic] historically sensitive manner" (Ellis 184; see also Punter 104). While the corruption of the cultural-historical sphere is depicted through traditional aristocratic features and habits, a more personal field of human life also seems to be a threatened element.

It is undeniable that "Lord Ruthven is a sexual predator whose testified vampirism takes the form of sexual seduction" (Ellis 183), but extending his methods to the way in which Geraldine acts might testify to the latter's being a vampire, too. By taking advantage of the inhabitants' aforementioned, outdated aristocratic-chivalric manners, "Geraldine enthralls the innocent Christabel because she embodies the guilty knowledge that has been repressed within the castle walls" (Fulford 56). However, her unappeasable sexual hunger—as a kind of antithesis of what Leoline, his daughter, and the servants have represented since the mother's death—soon turns towards Christabel's father: "And fondly in his arms he took / Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace, / Prolonging it with joyous look" (448-50). Consequently, "on finally seeing this level of Geraldine in a sudden revelation, Christabel reacts [. . .] as if identifying with the snake-like other whom she simultaneously fears and longs to emulate" (Hogle 19). Her desperate but hopeless attempt to compete with the intruder suggests that Geraldine's abilities—just like those of Lord Ruthven—exceed human capacities. Furthermore, the power represented by them can be extended to same-sex relations, too. In this sense, Lord Ruthven's "haemovorous tendencies are a sexo-culinary perversion that merely underline his immoral pursuit of women" (Ellis 183)—and, in a certain way, of men.

Punter and Byron observe that "confounding all categories, the vampire is the ultimate embodiment of transgression" (268). In the two analysed works, the most expressive examples of violating limits and breaking the boundaries can be traced in homosexual intercourses. If the relationship between the two female characters in Coleridge's poem is examined, it must be clarified that, "with the exception of 'Christabel'—on all accounts an exceptional text—Coleridge's depictions of women in his poems were not very adventurous" (Carlson 206). However, Geraldine seems to possess the attributes of a sexually active and controlling, in this sense almost masculine individual, which makes her an innovative figure and her achievements a series of extraordinary acts within Coleridge's oeuvre.

Having Christabel indulged in her seductive world secures Geraldine's superiority both in physical and in psychological terms. The latter paraphrases this hierarchical relation during the night they spend together: "In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell, / Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel" (267–68). As Julie Carlson notes, "gendering and engendering surrender was a major topic in 'Christabel,' Coleridge's most remarkable statement on women, gender, a subject's coming-to-sexuality, and his or her formation by generic forms" (213). Emphasizing the spiritual outcomes of Christabel's successful temptation, Tim Fulford observes that "it is the acceptance of her guilt that makes her a mental slave" (57). Controlled by Geraldine, she starts alienating herself from the rest of her company. When summarizing the subsequent alteration in Christabel's position, Fulford underlines that "Geraldine's touch becomes [...] a stronger master of her fear and desire even than the man whom society calls her lord—her father" (57). This completion of Geraldine's intricate plot enslaves the confused girl with the help of female homosexuality: for Christabel, the carnal bond between them is raised directly onto a spiritual level. Since the relationship with her father never reaches such forbidden territories, Christabel naturally accepts Geraldine's ultimate superiority, thus a remarkable shift in her affection inevitably ensues. Consequently, Leoline's control over his daughter is overthrown by the guest in the castle.

As Punter and Byron highlight, if the male homosexual factor in Polidori's work is examined, "same-sex desire between men can be encoded only through women, as Aubrey and Lord Ruthven's relationship must be negotiated through Aubrey's sister" (270). Therefore, despite the fact that in cultural-critical terms vampires are supposed to represent omnipotence, within literary frames certain taboos have to be taken into consideration. The indirect method that has to be applied if one intends to interpret the connection between Lord Ruthven and Aubrey in detail may even defy vampires' total sovereignty. However, as Punter and Byron suggest, "the vampire is particularly well adapted to signify 'deviant'

sexuality" (270). Consequently, the loss of a vampire's unsurpassable nature might be compensated, and this presupposition is not necessarily restricted to the *deviance* of homosexuality.

The analysis of the main sexual aberrations represented by vampires leads us back to the criticism of the aristocracy, since "masochism, Coleridge suggested, was a national—and political—disease which monarch and minister sadistically exploited. In 'Christabel' the *disease* is traced to sexual roots" (Fulford 56). Whether or not the result of the two women's relationship can be referred to as a disease will be analysed later. Nevertheless, the presence of masochism is significant to note, since this is the sexual activity that usually leaves visible signs on the human skin. As Fulford continues, Geraldine "seems quite innocent, but her violation of property is marked on her body" (56). "This mark of [. . .] shame, this mark of [. . .] sorrow" (270) is never properly described, and its obscurity may make Geraldine's character even more otherworldly. The menacing atmosphere created by her mysterious behaviour is enhanced by the phenomenon that in the morning "Christabel's words do not betray her sexual knowledge and desire: her body does, just as Geraldine's did hers" (Fulford 57). In this sense, in Part II she may also wear the shameful mark she saw on Geraldine's skin—suggesting that she is indeed *infected* by the other girl. As Punter and Byron conclude the line of suggestions about this stain, "in the absence of a clear account, the imagination is left to dream, to hallucinate what the 'forbidden sight' might be" (296), since what is not seen at all might carry much more thought-provoking allusions.

Together with the invisible sexual aberrations, "it is clear that what is repressed, on both sides, is a sexual desire that is taboo because it is incestuous: Christabel's mother is dead and she takes her place" (56). Another, less radical interpretation of the apparently unhealthy and unstable relationship between Christabel and her father may be that "Sir Leoline and Christabel have each internalised their chivalric roles. He is the stern knightly father, she the obedient daughter—her sexuality repressed so that she remains innocent in his eyes" (Fulford 56). One possible explanation of this situation is provided by Punter and Byron, who sum up "Christabel" as "a poem in which, for most of the time, most of the protagonists are asleep, under the influence of some unspecified general narcotic" (296). This state can refer to aristocratic idleness both as a symptom of and as a disguise for paralysing sexual repression.

The rigid system in Leoline's castle does need a proper sexual pioneer. Therefore, it is no wonder that "into this self-enclosed relationship, Coleridge sends Geraldine, a damsel-in-distress who has suffered an abuse of chivalry. She has been raped by a band of knights" (Fulford 56; see also "Christabel" 81–99). This already suggests and foreshadows the

abuse of normal, chivalric sexual behaviour as well. Subsequently, her presence brings about noticeable changes in the medieval scene—and in some of the people it is populated by. A later established traditional feature of vampires can already be traced in Geraldine when the two girls enter the castle:

The lady sank, belike through pain,  
And Christabel with might and main  
Lifted her up, a weary weight,  
Over the threshold of the gate:  
Then the lady rose again,  
And moved, as she were not in pain (129–34).

In other words, she cannot step over the threshold without being invited or physically carried by the owner or some prominent inhabitant of the building<sup>2</sup>. However, it is not only Christabel whose (so far relatively callously constructed) sexual life is altered radically by the newly arrived lady, since Leoline himself "turns towards Geraldine instead, a woman his daughter's age who is not a blood-relation" (Fulford 57). From the point of view of unorthodox sexuality, his decision, which brings the plot to its abrupt end, may even be considered preferable. With Christabel experiencing a lesbian intercourse and Leoline turning away from her, the poem might suggest that, ironically, the vampire's power is able both to create and to eliminate forbidden sexual ideas and deviant activities. Enhanced by this observation, the unresolved conflict(s) may allude to a further Gothic feature: in both stories it is the villain who has the upper hand. For example, as Punter underlines, "the vampire in Polidori is capable of 'winning'" (105). This conclusion is prevented in later representatives of vampire-literature, where the beast is usually destroyed by the hero(es). The best-known example of such a climactic finale is probably the successful mission against Count Dracula, at the end of which Mina Murray sees Jonathan Harker's "great knife [. . .] shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr [Quincey] Morris's bowie knife [is] plunged into the heart" (*Dracula* 400), killing the villain. A combat like this, for that matter, a team of protagonists actively fighting back is presented in neither of the analysed works. However, further parallels or certain contradictions between the two might be provided by the settings of the evil's (unrevealed) victory: the medieval castle in "Christabel," as well as London and Greece in *The Vampyre*.

As for spatial frames, Coleridge seems to have borrowed the setting from Gothic novelists (Fulford 55). As Fred Botting notes, "'Christabel' (1816), following the patterns of eighteenth-century imitations of feudal romances, is set in a world of knights, ladies, honour and portentous dreams" (100), all of which were organic elements of the Gothic during the second half of the 1700s. In connection with the era evoked in it, Fulford notes the following:



"Set in medieval times, written in the style of a courtly romance, the poem seems backward-looking" (55). In other words, the plot is accompanied by an authentic chronological background. Similarly, the place itself, mainly through the appearance of Christabel's long deceased mother<sup>3</sup>, eventually proves to be a widely used Gothic setting: a haunted castle.

As opposed to "Christabel," *The Vampyre* serves as a prototype for the nineteenth-century codification of popular culture as folklore" (Ellis 186), while also exploiting the options an urbanized society in London can offer. Although it starts in the British capital, "the tale itself locates the vampire in the vulgar tales of primitive Greek society, here understood as a repository of ancient cultural knowledge" (Ellis 186)—thus providing a traditional rural-versus-urban attribute.

As a cultural opposite of London, the forest Aubrey has to ride through may reflect the folkloristic origins of vampires: it is said to be "the resort of the Vampyres in their nocturnal orgies" (*Vampyre* 305). While in Greece the dreaded term is applied in its plural form, in the British capital only one of these creatures, Lord Ruthven seems to be present. Taking into consideration that he is an urban monster, his journey with Aubrey on the Continent makes him move outside his usual hunting area—which simply gives him the chance to extend its frames to more international distances. Temporarily leaving London for Europe, Lord Ruthven quickly succeeds in overcoming the change of environment. This adaptability is supported by Ellis when he notes that "the scene of Ianthe's death [. . .] rudely obtrudes the vampire's libertine sexual world into Greek sentimental primitivism" (185). Considering how effectively he manages to frighten, harm, and destroy a pastoral community, vampirism may even be looked at as a potential antithesis for Neoclassicism.

The mere fact that a Greek girl, a fitting representative of Neoclassical pastorals, is killed, instead of being corrupted, may imply that vampires classify their (usually female) victims in a hierarchical system. The intruders' preferences are based on moral values, as well as on the aesthetic characteristics and standpoints of the women they attack.

Ellis summarizes the effects of crossing paths with Polidori's vampire by noting that "his interest in [. . .] women is not [. . .] simply in sex" (183). It already suggests that encountering this particular monster might have various outcomes, but the primary interpretation may be that "Lord Ruthven ruins reputations as well as drinking blood" (Punter and Byron 269). In other words, his goals include both physical harm and moral corruption. Ellis describes Ruthven's ideology and method as follows: "His seductions do not have sex as their target, but a more moral quarry, virtue itself" (183). What is more, his expectations in this aspect prove to

be especially high, since, "cloaking himself in virtue, he is able to seduce and dishonour precisely those women who were most virtuous" (Ellis 183). Consequently, the term "virtue" appears to have different connotations in Lord Ruthven's assessment. These can be analysed the most efficiently if certain representatives of his victims are placed properly within the villain's hierarchy.

In connection with the relative arbitrariness and plasticity of the term "virtue," it should be taken into consideration that "in nineteenth-century vampire fiction, the representation of the vampire as monstrous, evil and other serves to guarantee the existence of good" (Punter and Byron 270). In *The Vampyre* it is mainly represented by female characters, who, sooner or later in the plot, inevitably meet the vampire's true nature. As Ellis notes, "Ruthven's seduction marks his victims (in a manner like that of disease) and permanently alters them" (185). This observation may lead to the differentiation between the two main groups of Lord Ruthven's victims: the seduced and the murdered ones.

On the one hand, the representatives of the former group, even though they probably experience sexual intercourse with the vampire, are not bitten by him. Nevertheless, the consequences of their attraction towards the vampire soon become conspicuous, since "all those females whom he had sought, apparently on account of their *virtue*, had, since his departure, thrown even the *mask* aside, and had not scrupled to expose the whole deformity of their vices to the public gaze" (*Vampyre* 301; italics added). Thus, their change for the worse may suggest that simply their already existing inner personalities and vicious instincts are released. As Punter observes, "Ruthven transgresses the social norms, but he does so with the collaboration of his victims; he merely acts as a catalyst for repressed tendencies to emerge into the light of day" (103-04). Therefore, these victims can be considered similar to Christabel, who seems to face the same supernatural effects and undergoes a transformation with remarkable outcomes: from a superficially virtuous, unsullied maiden, she turns into a sinner, i.e. a grown-up woman with sexual experience, who is not afraid to express her jealousy and hostility towards Geraldine as her competitor in Part II (see 613-17). Similarly to Geraldine (and presumably Christabel herself), these women are also marked after the sexual act, but this stigma is not based on blood.

On the other hand, the second category of Ruthven's victims consists of the women who die as a result of meeting his true nature: they are the ones who have to suffer the physical contact on a much more gruesome level, as they are severely abused and tortured, and, eventually, their blood is sucked out by the bestial aristocrat. In the novelette, only two of them are identified: Ianthe and Aubrey's sister. Despite fulfilling the role

of the recurring *damsel-in-distress* motif, they prove to be the only female characters (if the reader disregards the prevented fate of the Italian girl; see *Vampyre* 301–02) whom Ruthven's infection does not seem to affect. In their cases moral corruption is not even mentioned as an option for the vampire: the first time they are left alone with him, their lives, and not their reputations, are threatened, and ended in both scenarios in a particularly graphic way (see *Vampyre* 306–07 and 321). Suggesting that on Ruthven's list the number of corrupted women is remarkably higher than that of the murdered ones, Punter notes that, "in the first place, the story barely deals at all with the concrete matter of bloodsucking; it is, like 'Christabel' [. . .], almost entirely about sex" (103). This idea may imply that the moral standards of Ianthe and Aubrey's sister are indeed so high that even a vampire's libertine sexuality fails to seduce and stain them. Consequently, the only possibility to transgress the borders protecting them, both in physical and in spiritual terms, seems to be the murderous act of biting them.

Christabel, as Geraldine's victim, appears to belong to the former of the aforementioned two categories. As Fulford notes, "contact with this [i.e. Geraldine's] uncanny body spellbinds Christabel, who falls into a sexual knowledge which, as a woman who identifies herself as an innocent and dutiful daughter, she is unable to accept as anything other than guilt and sin" (56). This effect can even be analysed as the first sign of the human Christabel being contaminated by the vampire Geraldine. Even though Christabel is not bitten physically, Geraldine's impact on the innocent(-looking) girl proves to be a type of contagious effect. In this sense, Christabel seems similar to the virtuous-looking ladies seduced by Ruthven: a kind of inherent vice is present in her all along. As Jerrold E. Hogle observes, the serpent-like behaviour (Geraldine's eyes turning into those of a snake and Christabel producing hissing sounds; see 459, 583–87, 591, and 602) "is another indication of the well-disguised evil in both of Coleridge's women" (19), which means that Christabel had already been susceptible to sin before the other girl's arrival. Geraldine merely helps her discover herself as a sexually active woman.

The question whether Geraldine has a corruptive or a beneficial effect on Christabel still seems problematic. First, she helps the heroine discover sexuality, but their intercourse may be considered abnormal. Secondly, she reminds Leoline of his friend, thus contact with the other lord can be renewed, but, at the same time, Geraldine appears to succeed in seducing Christabel's father, too. Finally, she must be a well-bred young lady with admirable manners, but she eventually proves to be a serpent-like, succubus-type demon as well. These features (completed with further characteristics) are summarized by Hogle in a cogent way:

Geraldine's apparent conniving in her grand 'stateliness' to become a substitute mother to Christabel [ . . . ]; to sleep with her homoerotically [ . . . ]; thereby violating 'normal' sexual boundaries [ . . . ]; and to worm her way into Sir Leoline's affections to the point of becoming this widower's lover and alienating his feelings from his daughter, exploiting patriarchy to undermine it [ . . . ]; all of this potentially makes her [ . . . ] an overweening quasi-Amazon too destructively challenging all good social relations, a power-mad woman subtly threatening the very order of nature—which Christabel, like all Gothic heroines, might herself become unless she retreats from identifying with Geraldine, which she starts to do as the poem breaks off (24).

Together with all the above examined arguments for Geraldine being a female vampire from the early decades of the Gothic, this passage by Hogle may function as a kind of literary and cultural manifesto—justifying Geraldine's role as a vampire in Coleridge's "Christabel."

Turning back to Lord Ruthven's role, it can be concluded that in the early phase of vampire-literature the two basic types of making physical contact with a vampire were effectively distinguished. Sexual intercourse and being lethally bitten seem to have been combined only later, creating the most characteristic way in which such a creature can turn human beings into undying blood-suckers. Consequently, "the model of female sexuality deployed in *The Vampyre* shares many features with an [sic] historically-enduring misogynist model of femininity: that every woman self-fashioned after the model of virtue conceals a hidden yearning for sexual expression" (Ellis 184). Although concrete examples of this statement would be difficult to find in the work, it still seems to be evident that the "wreckage he [i.e. Ruthven] causes in the social fabric is not exactly his fault: Polidori hints strongly that those who are ruined by his attentions are really the victims of their internal weakness—either they are themselves criminals, gamblers, sharpers, or they are merely 'frail'" (Punter 103). In Christabel's case the latter option seems to be relevant: indirectly, her kind-hearted behaviour, fragile nature, and loyalty to chivalric merits lead her to the ensuing conflicts and miseries. In *The Vampyre*, "Polidori suggests that the life of the morally virtuous is really a kind of hypocrisy, that moral certainty masks a more fluid construction of not virtue but vice" (Ellis 183). Again, this observation can be applied both to Christabel and to Geraldine: the heroine's guise is shattered by the outer influence when the other girl triggers her sinful but more mature demeanour. In other words, the former, with the latter's help, eventually does accept her more mundane (i.e. more human), sexual side.

As a woman of relatively serious (and, at least at that time, innovative) transgressions, "multiplicity of interpretation converged at Geraldine, the meaning of whom was never resolved but the

construction of whom was shown to depend on which of various genres different narrators employed to 'read' and thus construe her character: romance, Gothic fiction, sentimental fiction, allegory" (Carlson 215). These interpretational paths may have one solid common ground: in all of them, Geraldine's significance as a catalyst of remarkable changes both in Christabel and in her environment seems undeniable. Whether or not a vampire, her character does contribute to the critical convention claiming that, "unfinished though it is, 'Christabel' is not a failure" (Fulford 55). Even though its literary and cultural position is not always unanimously acknowledged, neither is *The Vampyre*.

In conclusion, both Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" and John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* have proven themselves to be representative pieces of Gothic literature: analysed separately or compared to each other, both the narrative poem and the novelette have their fair shares in vampire fiction. Some of the most characteristic features, practical methods, and ideological backgrounds that have been examined in this essay were introduced to British culture by them, making the texts a well-established, elaborate, and influential pair of Gothic plots: the truly worthy grandparents Dracula deserves.

## END NOTES

- 1 For a detailed analysis of chivalry as a socio-political issue and a feudal remnant in the late eighteenth century in "Christabel," see Fulford 55-57.
- 2 I am indebted to Gertrud Szamosi for drawing my attention to this interpretation.
- 3 For a feminist reading of the possible initial relationship between Christabel and (the ghost of) her mother, as well as of the triangular power structure established (and permanently altered) by Geraldine's arrival, see Carlson 213.

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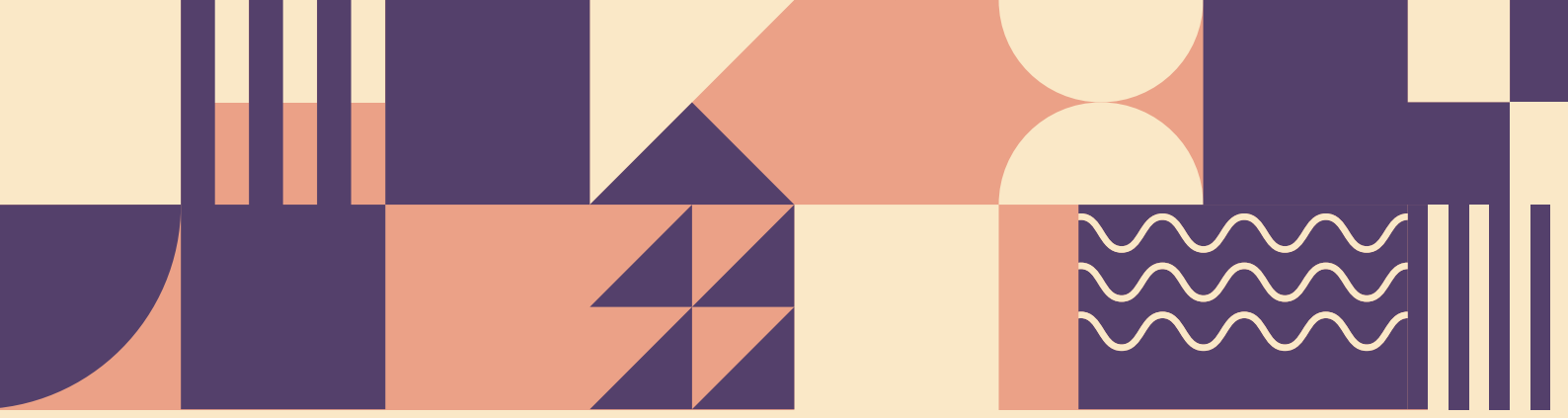
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**Karla  
Zorčec**

**Writing Historical Fiction:  
*Outlander* within the Romantic  
Tradition of *Waverley***



## PROFESSIONAL PAPER

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# Writing Historical Fiction: *Outlander* within the Romantic Tradition of *Waverley*

Sir Walter Scott is considered a pioneer in historical fiction; he had set up a framework for a wide range of writers that would later deal with the problem of history. The first among his notable historical novels is *Waverley*, taken as a paradigm of the genre, in which one can trace the extent of Scott's influence. The paper juxtaposes *Waverley* with the first two novels of Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series, in which Gabaldon depicts the same topic, the Jacobite risings in 1740s Scotland, using similar literary vehicles. The dichotomy between the historical and the romantic, and the representation of history as a problem rather than a set of truths are presented as arguably the most important common aspects of their work. Consideration is given to their protagonists, the natural environment, and the moment in time. It is argued that in the depiction of eighteenth-century Scotland Gabaldon follows Scott's example, giving new life to the romanticized land and everyday life of the Highland clans. It is then suggested that, in their rendering of the irretrievable past, the two authors' position as historical writers equals that of a historian, since both the historiographic and the fictionalized texts have the possibility to be romanticized. Based on postmodernist perspectives, it is suggested that history and historiography can be viewed as types of fiction. It is argued that the writers focus on the feeling of history rather than historical facts, which are inherently irrevocable.

## KEYWORDS

***Waverley*, *Outlander*, Scotland, history, romantic, fiction**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sir Walter Scott has long been regarded as a pioneer in the Western tradition of historical writing. The first in his series of novels about Scotland's legendary history, and arguably the first modern historical novel altogether, is *Waverley*. It follows Edward, a young Englishman, who rather accidentally becomes involved in the Jacobite risings of 1745. After being sent to the Bradwardine family, who are ardent supporters of the cause, Edward sets on a journey through the Scottish Highlands, where he becomes enthralled by the culture of their inhabitants. Under the influence of Fergus, the clan leader, and his fascinating sister Flora, Edward joins the Jacobite army, only to realize the inevitability of its failure. In the novel, Scott manages to depict a wide range of manners, feelings, customs, and the overall nature of human existence, all of which had an impact on significant historical events. By focusing on a single figure, tied to both political factions involved in the conflict, Scott succeeded in objectively delineating a crucial moment in the history of his nation.

The *Outlander* series by Diana Gabaldon is a story of time travel, Scotland, human relationships, history, and the nature of stories as such. The books are a blend of multiple genres, including historical fiction, romance, portal fantasy, and adventure. The series follows Claire Randall, a WWII nurse married to Frank Randall, an aspiring professor and historian with a specific interest in Scottish history. During their stay in the Scottish Highlands, Claire, in an unexplained way, finds herself transported to the same place in the year 1743. After a series of unfortunate events, she falls into the hands of the MacKenzie clan, whose ways she, at first, cannot fathom. She is brought to the clan chieftain and laird of Leoch Castle, Colum MacKenzie. During the mysterious travels with the clan, Claire is haunted by Black Jack Randall, the captain of the English Dragoons and a direct ancestor of her husband Frank. Jamie Fraser, the chief's nephew, faces danger by the same captain. In order to save both of them from falling into Randall's hands, it is agreed that Claire and Jamie are to marry. From then on, they go on living the life of eighteenth-century Jacobites, with all the mystery and romance that such a living holds for individuals bound by love and loyalty. The series offers a meticulous rendering of the eighteenth-century Highland culture, the doom that befalls it, as well as what comes afterwards; the first two books, *Outlander* and *Dragonfly in Amber*, deal with the rising of 1745, and the rest of the series with its aftermath. The narrative includes symbols and myths to deal with such subjects as history and the nature of a (literary) text. In the words of V. E. Frankel, "as well as offering romance and adventure, the series incorporates the myths of the ancient Celts into a world on the end of rationalism [...] Literature, myth, and symbolism permeate the series, connecting it with the history and culture of the period" (1). The characters

“encounter significant ceremonies, creatures, and symbolism from ancient myth as they struggle through love, trauma, and adventure” (3).

This paper aims to present how both narratives deal with the phenomenon of history, with special regard to the protagonists, the representation of Scotland in the eighteenth century, and their specific rendering of historical figures, processes, and events. Putting the focus on the notions of romantic representation, it is argued that, in those novels, history is presented as a problem rather than a set of truths.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE PROTAGONIST IN THE HISTORICAL NOVEL**

In general, historical novels center the (historical) plot on characters who are supposed to embody the overall human experience of a certain historical time. Historical novel “presents an image of the uniqueness of the age”; “It is a given, at least for Scott and his immediate successors, to present an image of the historical uniqueness of a time as well as to develop characters as representatives of this uniqueness” (Bernauer 298). Through their adventures, relationships, successes and failures the reader gets a vicarious sense of the past, its overall meaning, and significance for the present. The narratives provide

certain kinds of imaginative pleasures: the excitement of experiencing imaginatively the structures of past societies, the catharsis of seeing history fall into a comprehensible and conclusive pattern, the heightened self-awareness of knowing what it means to experience the past. In such novels, the protagonist [...] is central both in embodying the novel’s meaning and in providing the center of its structure (Shaw 154).

Of course, one can never take for granted the adequacy of a single character to hold within himself the whole of humanity. The characters’ experiences are necessarily idiosyncratic and unique. However, perhaps it is this uniqueness that makes them genuine, thus transforming them into universals. As Lukács would have it, the main point of the historical novel is “that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality” (42). This may be achieved by centering textual reality around “people like us, [who] find themselves in interesting stories” (Mazzoni 256). The focus is not on “supraindividual powers,” but on the “representative and universal value of the events being described” (Mazzoni 257). Thus, the universal is presented by the individual.

## 2.1. EDWARD WAVERLEY

Edward Waverley, as well as Claire, is what Shaw calls a "conjunctive hero" (Mazzoni 178); through his dealing with both the Jacobites and the Hanoverians, his love pursuits and misfortunes, the reader gets a glimpse of the culture(s) he lives in. Instead of Waverley's education, self-development and life as a young Englishman, in the forefront of the novel are the people, events, societies, and customs he encounters on his wanderings through 1740s Scotland and England (Mazzoni 182). In Shaw's words, Waverley serves as a kind of "historical tourist," allowing the reader to explore a whole spectrum of social forms and historical beliefs (Mazzoni 187). Being an Englishman in the Scottish Highlands, with both political sides present in his family and a connection with two profoundly different women, he is the point of convergence of all major forces in the novel, the predominant ones being the romantic/idealistic and historic/realistic. Through Waverley's life with the Bradwardines, the MacIvors, and his time spent first in the English and then the Jacobite army, the readers get to explore the ways of times and cultures otherwise unknown to them.

As mentioned previously, Edward embodies two different cultural, political, and social forces of eighteenth-century Britain. Valente claims Waverley is largely defined by his family being split along party lines. His aunt and uncle, who are in direct connection with the overtly Jacobite Lowland family of Bradwardine, support the cause, while his father supports the acting government. When staying with his aunt and uncle, Waverley is first introduced to the romantic notions of Jacobitism, honor, and certain traditions of the past, which are later made prominent during his stay in Scotland (252). The Highlands, with their peculiar social structures and deeply rooted idealism, represent Edward's and, consequently, the world's romantic side. The historical upheavals, the English military and Edward's eventual settling into the comfortable life of English nobility serve as the less idealistic counterpart or, in other words, the 'real' history. The same dichotomy is visible in his pursuits of two close, but entirely different women. Flora MacIvor, the sister of a Highland laird, is the epitome of the romantic notions. She is deeply connected to the Highland people and their way of life:

Her sentiments corresponded with the expression of her countenance. Early education had impressed upon her mind [...] the most devoted attachment to the exiled family of Stewart. She believed it the duty of her brother, of his clan, of every man in Britain, at whatever personal hazard, to contribute to that restoration [...] For this she was prepared to do all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all [...] Her love of her clan, an attachment which was almost hereditary in her bosom, was, like her loyalty, a more pure passion than that of her brother (Scott 139-40).

Her knowledge of the traditional tales and poems, her connection to nature, her utter devotion to the Stuart cause, as well as her own family, draws Edward deep into the culture of the rebels. Seeing her in the lush green glens of the 'romantic' Highland landscapes, of which she seems to be the human counterpart, enchants him:

The sun, now stooping in the west, gave a rich and varied tinge to all the objects which surrounded Waverley, and [...] exalted the richness and purity of [Flora's] complexion [...] The wild beauty of the retreat, bursting upon him as if by magic, augmented the mingled feeling of delight and awe with which he approached her (Scott 147).

She is enigmatic, passionate, unbridled, and above all, incredibly fascinating to Edward, as if she embodied the Highland culture in its entirety. Her brother Fergus, the leader of the MacIvor clan, is another version of the same romantic ideals of honor and personal sacrifice, thus equally fascinating. Edward's other romantic interest, Rose Bradwardine, is a representative of the tame, civilized part of his nature. A daughter of a baron, she resides in cultured, domesticated surroundings, somewhat sheltered from the roughness of everyday life. She is timid, compassionate, sensible, and in love with Edward, which in those times makes her an ideal spouse.

Edward never chooses a side. The two forces he is engulfed in clash within him, but he refuses to make a choice of either of them. He is a kind of 'inadequate hero,' governed more by events than his own volition. Fergus and other Highlanders celebrate Waverley as a hero, even though his actions never reach their extent of dedication and personal sacrifice. Without consciously choosing one over the other, Edward eventually ends up with Rose, settling to a life of calm domesticity. He sees the fall of the Highland Jacobites as inevitable, and, even though he mourns his friends, he comes to accept his place in the society as that of a respectable English gentleman, and goes on to start a family. The romantic side of him is not consciously subdued; he does not deliberately put Rose over Flora; he does not come to the conclusion that he would rather share his life with her family. His eventual settling into the life of a gentleman is not a personal choice, but a result of a series of historical events that spelled the end of the Highland culture.

## **2.2. CLAIRE RANDALL/FRASER**

In *Waverley*, the otherness of the Highland culture is explained by Edward coming from a different place – he is an Englishman wandering through Scotland. In *Outlander*, the dress, customs, and manners of the

Scotts are presented to the reader as foreign through Claire coming from an entirely different moment in history: "Claire is the one who is thrown into the Highland culture and the cultural clash between her and everyone around her helps with the distinctiveness in the representation of Scottishness" (Greiff 23). When she first finds herself in eighteenth-century Scottish Highlands, after living in the modern world of post-war Europe, Claire is flabbergasted. She is mysteriously plucked out of her known world and left to negotiate her way through the unknown culture as best she can. When people around her speak Gaelic, she feels like an intruder, an 'outlander'; she is fascinated by some of their formal traditions, and equally appalled by others; her conduct as an emancipated woman brings misfortunes and repercussions from a completely patriarchal society; she finds it difficult to reconcile her modern understanding of the world with the Highlanders' notions of honor and justice.

Edward Waverley and Claire Randall are both sophisticated Englishmen wandering through rural Scotland. However, while Edward has nothing whatsoever to guide him through the misty moors of the Highlands and the peculiarities of their people, Claire is not completely at a loss. With her uncle being an archaeologist and her husband Frank a historian, one especially interested in the history of Scotland, throughout her life Claire learns a good deal about what happened in this part of the world. She knows some of the localities, the names of the more important public figures, and finds some customs familiar, albeit somewhat unusual. Most importantly, she knows the fate of Prince Charles' cause, and what it means for the Scottish people. To her, the thorough destruction of the clan culture does not come as a shock, but rather as an inevitable outcome of historical events.

Another thing that differentiates Claire from Waverley is the fact that she becomes much more entangled in the world she finds herself in. After all her misfortunes, including the kidnapping, the life in the castle, Randall's constant pursuit, as well as learning Jamie Fraser's history with the Captain, Claire marries Jamie. Even though she is initially reluctant to marry him, due to being loyal to her husband Frank, Claire eventually warms up to Jamie, soon falling completely in love with him. She embraces his Scottish family, reconciles with his position as an outlaw, follows him in his military pursuits and even plots with him against Prince Charles. She learns to love the roughness and the simplicity of the Highland way of life, although she tries to improve it with her knowledge of history and modern medicine. While Edward stands completely apart from the Highlanders, Claire virtually becomes one of them, with her English accent being one of the few remnants of her past life. Edward refuses to make a choice, thus escaping the consequences of making a wrong one, and settles for familiarity. Claire does not settle for the known, comfortable, domestic

life. Despite being forced to go back to her own time on several occasions, she chooses the past, the romantic, over the familiar. She leaves Frank in the present and embraces Jamie and his Highlanders as her family. She knows the perils of staying in the rural, underdeveloped, dangerous place of wartime Scotland, but nevertheless, she decides to stay. "Even knowing their doom, Claire and Jamie defy history and predestination, as the power to choose is one of the most vital in the series" (Frankel 8). Despite being aware of the inevitable course of history, the imminent destruction of Jamie's entire way of life, Claire chooses him.

### 2.3. CHARLES STUART

Another figure crucial for the plot of both works is Prince Charles Edward Stuart. Of all the romantic aspects of the two narratives, Charles is potentially the most prominent one. Both stories treat him as an idealistic young hero of noble pursuits, but utterly ignorant of their inevitable repercussions, as well as everything else that was not of direct importance to his cause. The Prince is fallible: "He was rude and overbearing to his most loyal followers, ignored those who might be of help to him, insulted whom he should not, talked wildly" (Gabaldon, *Dragonfly* 541). His stubborn, foolish conviction that he is predestined to unite the rugged Highland clans in the pursuit of restoring his father on the English throne gives the people something to aspire to, something to get them going, but is eventually the direct cause of their doom.

Both Edward Waverley and Jamie Fraser become entangled in Charles' military net, and rather reluctantly join his forces, but while Edward does not in truth share the Prince's conviction, Jamie fights for his people. He is exasperated by the Prince, seeing his faults all the more prominent because of Claire's predictions. Claire and Jamie do everything in their power to stop him, but the Prince continues his doomed fight:

The death of Charles Stuart would not end the matter of the Rising; things had gone much too far for that... the Highland army was in tatters; without the figurehead of Charles to rally to, it would dissipate like smoke ... It was Charles who had chosen to fight at Culloden, Charles whose stubborn, shortsighted autocracy had defied the advice of his own generals and gone to invade England... there was no support from the South ...forced against his will to retreat, Charles had chosen this last stubborn stand, to place ill-armed, exhausted, starving men in a battle line on a rain-soaked moor, to face the wrath of Cumberland's cannon fire. If Charles Stuart were dead, the battle of Culloden might not take place (Gabaldon, *Dragonfly* 874-75).

Precisely this intransigency is what eventually costs the Scotts half their

culture. After the final battle of Culloden, these pretensions of the "gallant young prince," as Scott calls him, prove to be fatal, leading his men to death, prosecution, starvation, and destruction. After the final battle, all that remains of Charles Stuart and his followers is the notion of glory they had fought for, but never managed to find (Gabaldon, *Dragonfly* 907). In other words, the violent history consumes the ideals of the romance.

### 3. REPRESENTATION OF HISTORIC SCOTLAND

Sir Walter Scott has left a substantial mark in the tradition of epic depictions of the Scottish culture. His approach to the land and its people set the course for his literary successors, paving the way for authors such as Gabaldon and their understanding of the country's significance. What is so interesting about Scott is his way of giving life to the land. His meticulous descriptions of the place, garb, customs, manners, and the overall condition of the people inhabiting the Scottish Highlands were a pioneer attempt at bringing the past to life in the mind of the reader.

Along with the descriptions of the lush, fairy-like, romantic scenery (Valente 253), where Scott particularly excels is in the rendering of the Scottish clans. Their feudal ruling system, their dress, their dialect and manner of speaking, as well as their utter unpreparedness for the battles with the Hanoverians, are presented to the reader in such a way that he can hardly fail in conjuring up a vivid image of the doomed, tartan-clad warriors. A detailed description of them is given when they march through Edinburgh:

Finer and hardier men could not have been selected out of any army in Christendom; while the free and independent habits which each possessed, and which each was yet so well taught to subject to the command of his chief, and the peculiar mode of discipline adopted in Highland warfare, rendered them equally formidable by their individual courage and high spirit, and from their rational conviction of the necessity of acting in unison, and of giving their national mode of attack the fullest opportunity of success. But, in a lower rank to these, there were found individuals of an inferior description, the common peasantry of the Highland country... half naked, stunted in growth, and miserable in aspect (Scott 328).

This image of the Highland army, along with the unjustified optimism of the Bonnie Prince, explains to the reader why they had to fall. They looked formidable, but in a sorry state of disrepair:

Here was a pole-axe, there a sword without a scabbard; here a gun without a lock, there a scythe set straight upon a pole; and some had only their



dirks, and bludgeons or stakes pulled out of hedges. The grim, uncombed, and wild appearance of these men, most of whom gazed with all the admiration of ignorance upon the most ordinary productions of domestic art, created surprise in the Lowlands, but it also created terror (Scott 330).

Unprepared for the English battle tactics and severely underarmed, the clans have no chance of victory. They are guided by honor, justice, and a sense of duty, but instead of being rewarded for it, they are led to death by the one who they consider their military and spiritual leader. Scott's writing does not leave the reader awestruck after the battle of Culloden, but, much like *Waverley* himself, resigned to the fate of those whose romantic ideals prove to be too much for them; the defeat is only a part of historical development.

In her coloring of the eighteenth-century Scottish landscape, Diana Gabaldon is not far behind – it could be said she even outdoes Scott in certain aspects. Her works give much more space to the pagan traditions, festivities and myths specific for the region. The fairy hill of Craigh na Dun, near Inverness, is the very portal through which Claire is transported to the past. The beliefs and superstitions that the nation holds are presented as an integral and deeply rooted part of their everyday life and as the governing force of their conduct. Thus, at some point Claire is taken to a spring, told to drink from it, and asked a question, the sincerity of which is judged upon the fact the spring is believed to be a magical revealer of truth. This is only one example of the author giving the readers a sense of remoteness of the culture they are presented with.

The clan culture is as good as reenacted. The reader is drawn into the whole system of chiefs, lairds, tenants, rents, and other aspects of the feudal society, and can experience them along with Claire. The whole spectrum of traditions and activities is explicated and made alive by Claire's experience of it. These include Dougal MacKenzie surreptitiously gathering money for the Prince's rebellion, the collecting of rents, the feasts in the castle, the healings and the witch hunts. The most vivid are the colors of Highland life:

Banners and tartans hung on the walls between the windows, plaids and heraldry of all descriptions splotching the stones with color. By contrast, most of the people gathered below for dinner were dressed in serviceable shades of grey and brown, or in the soft brown and green plaid of hunting kilts, muted tones suited for hiding in the heather (Gabaldon, *Outlander* 103).

The ubiquitous tartan and men wrapped in plaid are a part of the scenery as much as the misty moors and emerald glens. One is synonymous with the other, existing in unison. The people are a part of nature, and, through

their mutually dependent life, nature is a part of the people. Their very way of existence is based on their natural surroundings.

Writing in the same fashion as Scott, Gabaldon manages to stay on his track, but also finds the space for her own explorations. The tradition is the same – Scotland and its people are represented as a lively rural setting, romantic in aspect and tragic in outcome. However, each of the two narratives focuses on different aspects of the same culture, which makes them both worthwhile.

#### 4. WRITING HISTORICAL FICTION

Both Scott and Gabaldon took historical artifacts and localities as the basis for their story, imagining the life of eighteenth-century Scotland on already imaginative renderings of the past. Stephenie McGucken claims that fictionalized accounts of history, such as *Waverley* and *Outlander*, want to familiarize the readers with the past through the universal themes of human existence, making them see the similarities with the present world (12). Since it cannot pertain to, or be held as reconstructing, absolute knowledge, historical fiction cannot be judged as truthful or misleading. *Waverley* and *Outlander* fit well within the paradigm.

Historical fictions are (sometimes) heavily romanticized accounts of what is generally considered objective reality; the writers are usually held as those who make romance out of history (hence the name *historical romance*). At the end of *Dragonfly in Amber*, when talking to Roger about her experience at Culloden, Claire even overtly blames them for falsifying the truth. Roger puts fault on the historians, but Claire disagrees:

Not the historians. No, not them. Their greatest crime is that they presume to know what happened [...] No, the fault lies with the artists," Claire went on. "The writers, the singers, the tellers of tales. It's them that take the past and re-create it to their liking. Them that could take a fool and give you back a hero, take a sot and make him a king." [They are liars or sorcerers who] see the bones in the dust of the earth, see the essence of a thing that was, and clothe it in new flesh, so the plodding beast reemerges as a fabulous monster (Gabaldon, *Dragonfly* 907).

Talking about Prince Charles, Claire condemns all authors who took it upon themselves to write about past events, unjustifiably making heroes out of figures who did not deserve the status. However, McGucken further argues that

constructed authenticity and fictionalized history are not to be dismissed. As we have seen, they bring history to life for an audience in ways that are otherwise impossible. They are not meant to be historical reenactments, but a backdrop for a fictionalized story based on history [...] A by-product of this imaginative recreation is the mental recreation of history in its physical context (18).

It is a way of "mak[ing] history popular and accessible, to spark interest that was until then nonexistent" (Weber). Both Scott and Gabaldon evoke history in the mind of the reader, giving it another life in the present. They present the past as a feeling, giving the reader space and opportunity for interpretation. Valente claims history in *Waverley* is posed as a problem relating to the interpretation of human experience, and not a given entity (251). The narrative, instead of claiming to be recounting the past, deals with the process of making sense out of it; nothing is ever presented as complete. The same could be said for *Outlander*. Neither of the narratives pertains to all-encompassing knowledge. The course of events is questioned, the necessity of action provoked, the right to make a choice shunned. The authors focus on "the sense of the past as a phenomenon, a sensation, a feeling and a passion," making history aestheticized through their writing, rather than giving it as an absolute (Shaw 152). In their artistic rendition of historical reality, they portray "the typically human terms in which great historical trends become tangible" (Lukács 35). They do not claim they know the answers, but merely pose the questions.

What Claire essentially criticizes is romanticizing the past as a verifiable phenomenon but, today, the idea of history being unquestionable does not stand (Hutcheon 95). In the words of Hayden White,

history, as currently conceived, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation, and [...], with the passing of the misunderstandings that produced that situation, history itself may lose its status as an autonomous and self-authenticating mode of thought (113).

As it cannot be empirically verifiable, not even history can pertain to objective truth. Shaw even goes so far as to claim that all histories are, in fact, historical romances (271). According to him, it is not only in the medieval legends that the two become one, but also in every story about the irrevocable past. He states that, for history to be free of romance, it would have to deal with immediate reality (Shaw 268). Since the past is irretrievable, the question whether all, some, or none of the stories about it are romances remains unanswered, but one should acknowledge their inherent *possibility* to be romanticized; Valente claims distance and irrevocability are the factors that heighten the possibility of romanticizing (267). As postmodernist theory has shown, all stories about the past have

the potential to be romanticized. However, in the context of literature, that does not make them faulty, or "false". In Todorov's words, "literature is not a discourse that can or must be false ... it is a discourse that, precisely, cannot be subjected to the test of truth; it is neither true nor false [...]: this is what defines its very status as fiction" (qtd. in Hutcheon 109).

Linda Hutcheon positions both history and historical fiction as types of discourse, narratives that deal with the past in equal manner (93). They both deal with signification, rather than validation of particular events (Hutcheon 96), shaping our experience of time through structures of plot (100). Thus, the position of a writer of historical fiction is equally faulty, or equally perceptive, as that of a common historian. Since they can only know the past through its discursive rendition (Hutcheon 97), for those who live in the present it is rather difficult to come to all-encompassing knowledge about the intricate web that is the past. Accordingly, the respective narratives of Scott and Gabaldon do not hold to an erroneous belief that they can emulate the past in its objective reality, but rather weave the feeling of it into well-structured literary plots. Their historical authenticity lies in the moral and other inner aspects of an age (Lukács 50), out of which grows the overall "atmosphere of historical necessity" (Lukács 59). Both authors focus on the "historical atmosphere" (Lukács 48) of the time; with their characters being pulled between the romantic and the realistic forces, as well as the meticulous descriptions of the last throes of a culture, they problematize the phenomenon of history and what it means for the present. For them, it is not about the facts, but rather about the ambience.

## END NOTES

- 1 For a detailed analysis of chivalry as a socio-political issue and a feudal remnant in the late eighteenth century in "Christabel," see Fulford 55-57.

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