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Contents

The ‘Irish Problem’ through the Lens of Elizabethan Media	5
<i>Elke Mettinger</i>	
“People don’t like to be conquered, and so they will not be”: The Enduring Appeal of <i>The Moon Is Down</i>	29
<i>Danica Čerče</i>	
The Paradox of Historical Fiction: a Plaidoyer for Fictionality in Lois Lowry’s <i>Number the Stars</i>	45
<i>Lea Košmrlj</i>	
The Good, the Evil, and the Morally Ambiguous: The Demon Crowley in Terry Pratchett’s and Neil Gaiman’s Postmodern Fantasy <i>Good Omens</i> and Its Television Adaptation	63
<i>Amy Kennedy</i>	
Contextualizing the Spaces of the Sea in Contemporary Emirati Short Stories	75
<i>Aysha Juma Al Shamsi</i>	
Heinrich Heine im slowenischen Lektürekanon: Eine Analyse seiner Rezeption und Präsenz von 1850 bis heute.	93
<i>Mineja Krisper, Petra Kramberger</i>	
Can AI be a Poet? Comparative Analysis of Human-authored and AI-generated Poetry	113
<i>Eldar Veremchuk</i>	
<i>Ubu roi</i> : une œuvre polymorphe	127
<i>Primož Vitez</i>	

The ‘Irish Problem’ through the Lens of Elizabethan Media

Elke Mettinger

Abstract

This article seeks to explore the 16th century Anglo-Irish problem through the lens of multiple Elizabethan media. It attempts to show that, despite the invention of printing and her Protestant religion, Elizabeth continued to rely on oral and visual media. The sermon and the image seem to have been more directly suitable for bringing her Irish agenda home to the people than printed works whose authors tended to become independent of royal patronage. In addition, the Queen's gender and her ‘womanly’ feelings were perceived as an impediment to a successful military solution advocated by male authors like Spenser.

Keywords: Tudor Ireland, Elizabethan media, Elizabeth I, Spenser, Shakespeare, Earl of Essex

INTRODUCTION

The invention of printing sparked off a revolution from scriptographic to typographic media like the printed book, the pamphlet or the broadside, thus decisively contributing to the spreading of the Reformation. The introduction of book printing and the success of the Reformation have been interpreted, for instance by Fuchs (442), as a semiotic change of representation in early modern England in which the Protestant book (and word) culture came to supplant the medieval Catholic image culture.

This paper will look at the Irish problem through the lens of multiple media in Elizabethan England and seeks to show that despite her religion, Elizabeth continued to rely to a great extent on old, i.e. visual and oral, media. She had a range of media at her disposal to channel public opinion about the Irish problem in the right direction and to accompany the military campaign with the appropriate propaganda. Her ambivalence – generally identified as the essence of Elizabethan politics by new historicists – was also manifest in matters Irish and ascribed to her gender. Elizabeth's hesitant and inconsistent attitude towards Ireland – which she never visited (Morgan 209) – was one reason for the Irish rebellion. Tudor Ireland had an ambiguous semi-colonial status between kingdom and (Catholic) colony. Hence, the Irish question was located at the interface of politics, national identity, and religion, becoming a central political issue in the 1590s. The positions of writers and artists on this question might align with the medium used and the extent of royal patronage or favour.

Louis Montrose claims that “[b]y means as diverse as the pulpit, the printing press, and the public theatre, and in a bewildering variety of genres, Elizabethan subjects created a sphere in which to engage in a prudently oblique but also frequently contentious and sustained discussion concerning matters of state” (“Political Imaginary” 939). Montrose's general observation is specifically applicable to the perception and handling of the Irish problem, I would argue. As a female ruler, Elizabeth was perceived as an ‘anomaly’ in a profoundly patriarchal society, and her gender was particularly obstructive in matters military. McCabe maintains that “[n]owhere was the queen's apparent deficiency more evident to contemporary observers than in Ireland” (10).

Soon after her accession, Elizabeth was acclaimed as a motherly Queen taking care of Ireland in an anonymous song celebrating her additional claim to the Irish throne (“the Good Queen of *Ireland*”, l. 4) and the issuing of new Irish coins displaying her image: “... New Coynd with Her own Face, / And made go currant in *Ireland*” (ll. 11–12, qtd. in Carpenter 49). The latter is a first manifestation of her reliance on images, especially of herself – as a kind of personal (instead of religious) worship.

Her status and popularity in Ireland changed in the second half of her reign, on which this paper will focus. The 1580s have been perceived by historians as a kind

of watershed, both in the history of media and in the nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship, which might provide some justification for linking the two. Collinson speaks of England's "journey from a culture of orality and image to one of print culture" (99) around 1580 and argues that Protestants became ever more hostile to images, which resulted in a move from iconoclasm to iconophobia, at least in religious and historical books. Although this view has been increasingly challenged (e.g. by Tessa Watt), a strong reliance on the written word and the verbal was about to supersede the visual. Still, the invention of printing hardly affected the mostly illiterate population at large. And in a twist of perspective, print made the verbal visible on the page.

The watershed is also reflected in the political and religious quarrels of the time. John Guy speaks of Elizabeth's "second reign", starting in around 1585, the time of her growing problems with the Catholic arch enemy Spain, with her Catholic antagonist Mary Stuart, and with Catholic Ireland. As a result, her rule became increasingly authoritarian, and her reaction to Ireland shifted from reform to repression.

JOHN DERRICKE'S *IMAGE OF IRELAND*

The first medium I would like to explore is John Derricke's woodcut series in his *Image of Ireland*, completed in 1578 but not published until 1581. Despite the outbreak of the second Desmond Rebellion in 1579, Derricke did not adapt his work accordingly before publication, thus adopting an overconfident attitude that contradicts the facts.

His work is a late example of an illustrated book in which the woodcuts are no longer integrated into the text but added as a supplement, indicating the gradual disappearance of illustrations (Knapp 33). It opens with two dedications – the first to Sir Philip Sidney and the second to "the Lordes of her Maiesties realme of Irelande" (Derricke 7), whom he diplomatically entreats to cooperate in peacefully bringing the whole of Ireland under the crown and in accepting its cultural practices.

The first part, on the history of the Irish and English, proves the English hereditary right to rule Ireland with a genealogy from King Arthur via Henry II to Elizabeth I, who features as the successful antagonist of the Pope:

I meane our (gracious soueraigne Queene,
that sacred virgine pure :)

[...]

This is the Prince whose sacred arme,
hath wounded so the Pope: (Derricke 22)

What follows is a description of the Irish landscape – often metaphorically in female terms as a virgin territory – that leads in to the problematic nature of Irish women, who corrupt English men of the Pale, the Old English settlement around Dublin, and give birth to ever more “kern”, the wild, rebellious, lightly armed Irish peasants. And their nature is the real impediment to civilisation in Ireland:

So doe thei worke the landes decaie,
 procuring what thei canne:
 The ruine and vndoyng quight,
 of many an honest manne. (Derricke 30)

The second part dwells on the conflicts between the Irish woodkern and Henry Sidney’s English army and is illustrated by 12 appended woodcuts. These are considered outstanding in 16th century English book printing and more significant and artistic than the verse. Cramming many details into each image, they afford a reliable insight into contemporary Irish dress, including the famous Irish mantle, but also into English military equipment and Dublin’s topography. Derricke, a Protestant English eyewitness in Ireland, believes in converting the barbarous Irish to English civility. With his manipulative interaction of the verbal and the visual, he conveys a polemical anti-Irish message and politically justifies the harsh treatment of the supposedly barbaric Irish rebels (Knapp 212).

Simple unsigned woodcuts display the woodkern and their costumes. Plate 3¹ is divided into several sequential scenes (marked A, B, C, D) set in a single location. Two persons baring their bottoms at a feast satirically display the kerns’ barbaric manners. A concomitant reading of the closely corresponding verse helps to fully understand the message. The Catholic friars are revealed as the source of evil:

Thus Friars are the cause,
 the Fountaine and the Spring,
 Of hurleburles in this lande,
 of eche unhappie thing.
 Thei cause them to rebell,
 against their (soueraigne quene)
 And through rebellion often times
 their liues doe vanishe clene. (Derricke 59)

Mirroring the cultural stereotypes at an artistic level, the signed woodcuts (ID, probably for John Derricke, or FD) are more refined illustrations of the English forces led by Sidney, who departs from Dublin castle (Plate 6) and sends a

1 Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Image_of_Irelande,_with_a_Discoverie_of_Woodkarne#/media/File:The_Image_of_Irelande_-_plate03.jpg/2

messenger with a peace offer (7). His army advances through the country (8), causing the flight of the Irish and their surrender beneath the banner of St. George (9), the only plate to illustrate actual military conflict. Sidney and his English troops return triumphantly to Dublin castle and are received by the Lord Mayor (10). Sidney's peaceful intentions are underlined at the close of part 2: "God graunt the warres of Irishe soile, / by *Sidneys* meanes maie cease" (Derricke 68).

Derricke's *Image* traces the increasing Irish aggression up to treasonous rebellion and ends up with subjective rebel perspectives. Rorie Ogge's (11) monologue directly addresses the audience and might risk evoking their sympathy, while O'Neill, cousin to Hugh O'Neill, kneels before Sidney and earns the Queen's mercy for his loyal submission to him (12). As a powerful warning against rebellion, the reader learns about Ogge's decapitation, who from his severed head advises "Against the Croune royall doe nothyng attempt" (Derricke 97).

PRINTING AND ILLUSTRATING

Apart from Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Derricke's work is the only description of Ireland available to Elizabethan readers (Hadfield, "Shakespeare's Plays" 47). His portrayal of the Irish as brutish, dirty, primitive, savage, eccentric, and unreliable was common currency in Elizabethan England and thus shared by Holinshed, who recruited Richard Stanyhurst as editor on the Irish section. The 1577 edition of the *Chronicles* has frequent woodcuts, while the second one, a decade later, lacks illustrations, thus confirming the shift from a visual to verbal representation (of history). Much like Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, they are a concerted effort to document the origins of England and English Protestantism. Holinshed took over this project from Reginald Wolfe, the zealous Protestant London bookseller and printer, who shared with Archbishop Matthew Parker an understanding of the role of printing in guiding the Reformation, which is also evident from Parker's patronage of John Day (Knapp 177-180).

A committed Protestant and one of the most prestigious and virtuosic experts in the new medium of printing, Day specialised in Protestant works and editions of the Bible and, after an enforced break under Mary, re-acquired from Elizabeth the profitable patents for standard Protestant books. The share of the print market for religious works amounted to 40% in her reign. Day printed and published Derricke's *Image* and, more famously, the three editions of John Foxe's monumental *Book of Martyrs*, the long, polemical tract on the wickedness of the Catholics towards the Protestants. Its second edition of 1570 contained more woodcuts than the first one seven years earlier, which contradicts the tendency of dwindling illustrations. Profane reasons like Day's commercial success or profit-seeking might provide an explanation. Both Foxe and Derricke shared an ardent passion for England and the

Protestant cause. In 1580, Day became head of the Stationers' Company and was soon known as a strict proponent of copyright protection (Fuchs 425-426). His death in 1584 could be one reason for the disappearance of the illustrated (history) book as his successors lacked his virtuosity. Others might be the changing aesthetic tastes of the Elizabethan readership that determined the success of a book or financial reasons, like the high price of elaborate illustrations. Most likely was the Protestant reliance on the power of the written word as safer, more stable, and truthful in historical, political, or religious contexts, while images might have been perceived as rather fluid, immediate, exaggerating, alluring even, and appealing to the emotions.

This might explain why Elizabeth, though Protestant, cherished all kinds of spectacle, performance, and display. She appreciated the power of the image as a vain woman demanding admiration and as a mighty monarch commanding authority. As a medium of persuasion and propaganda, the fluidity and emotional potential of the visual might suit her ambivalent policy and reluctant attitude towards Ireland better than staunch Protestants' printed works with their rigorous military solution. In addition, visual and oral media had the great advantage of reaching the population at large, including the illiterate masses.

THE PUBLIC THEATRE

In this context, it is worth considering the rapid emergence of public theatre as a mass medium in the Liberties around 1590. Theatre directors bought plays from increasingly prolific playwrights and made huge profits from the performances that came to be grand visual spectacles – thus proving that the visual and the oral, combined in new ways, were not altogether absent from early modern culture in the second half of Elizabeth's reign. The relegation of popular theatre to Shoreditch and the Southbank outside the City still reflected its potential danger to religion, morality, or public health in the eyes of Puritans and city fathers alike. It is, at any rate, remarkable that popular drama, as a performative medium, visually and aurally appealing to the – also illiterate – masses, was so successful in a Protestant culture and supported by the Queen herself. Elizabeth licensed the profession of acting against much resistance from the city authorities and aspired to establish the theatre as a means of satisfying her subjects' desire for spectacular visual entertainment, and of manifesting her own power, although she could not fully calibrate the theatre to her own wishes.

Shakespeare was not only an author and occasional actor but also a shareholder in the Globe and in his acting company, whose plays were performed at the Globe but also before the Queen at Whitehall. The latter seem to have been intended for performance only. Either Shakespeare lacked interest in printing and publishing them or his status, as a sharer in his company, was not compatible with

self-promotion as an author of printed play texts (Brooks 55-57). The Stationers' Company guaranteed an early form of copyright, but numerous pirated versions circulated in manuscripts as performances used the spoken word and that could not be completely protected. Indeed, the collaborative nature of a Shakespearean play was evident from its being subject to changes brought about by the intersecting interests of the stage and print businesses.

SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY PLAYS AND IRELAND

Shakespeare made topical allusions to Ireland and the Irish question that otherwise found little resonance in the drama of the time. These occur above all in his history plays, written in the 1590s, the decade of the Nine Years' War, and stopped abruptly after Essex's failure in his Irish mission.

Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* was written in around 1591, i.e. before the onset of the Nine Years' War. Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York, plans to usurp the throne from King Henry. Before he leaves for Ireland, which he had brought "to civil discipline" (1.1.192), to raise an army, he confides his intentions to the audience in a long soliloquy: He has persuaded the "headstrong [...] John Cade" (3.1.356-357), whose scheming and spying skills he witnessed in Ireland, to "make commotion" (3.1.358) in England, which he will use for his own purposes on his return:

In Ireland have I seen this stubborn Cade
Oppose himself against a troop of kerns,
[...]
Full often, like a shag-haired crafty kern,
Hath he conversèd with the enemy
And, undiscovered come to me again
And given me notice of their villainies.
This devil here shall be my substitute; (3.1.360-371)

Cade, York's substitute and alter ego, is a transgressive character playing around with disguises and shifting between English and Irish identities. And York, even more dangerous than the former, warns his enemies by means of the proverb of the frozen snake:

I fear me you but warm the starvèd snake,
Who, cherished in your breasts, will sting your hearts. (3.1.343-344)

It is perhaps no coincidence that Irenius in Spenser's *A View* compares Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, to the frozen snake to stress his wicked and ungrateful attitude towards the Queen:

He was I assure you the [most] outcast of all the Oneales then, and lifted up by her Majestie out of the dust, to that he hath now wrought him selfe unto; and now he playeth like the frozen snake, who beinge for compassion relieved by the husbandman, soone after he was warme began to hisse, and threaten danger even to him and his.

Returning to England with his “Army of Irish”, York triumphantly declares that

From Ireland thus comes York to claim his right
And pluck the crown from feeble Henry’s head. (5.1.1-2)

Ireland is, hence, portrayed as an unruly kingdom that seems to be the ideal breeding or training ground for rebels like Cade or traitors like York. The latter is the king’s Irish viceroy and will turn out to be the most serious threat to Henry. Hadfield calls this “a prophetic prefiguration of events at the end of Elizabeth’s reign” (“Shakespeare’s Plays” 48) as she will feel betrayed by Essex failing in Ireland in 1599. Cade, and York even more so, call to mind the transgressive O’Neill who moved from agent for the crown to open Irish rebel, and was proclaimed traitor in June 1595. But York also foreshadows the Earl of Essex. Shakespeare might have also constructed an oblique parallel to the Perrot scandal around 1590 with Cade’s and York’s machinations. Perrot, Lord Grey’s successor in Ireland, and his alleged accomplice O’Rourke, were accused of treason and executed in 1592 and 1591, respectively (Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser* 58-60).

Richard II was written in 1595, when the Irish conflict was intensifying. After John of Gaunt’s death-bed speech featuring England as the “sceptered isle”, Richard II turns abruptly from Gaunt’s death to the Irish wars, which he unlawfully plans to finance with his late uncle’s legacy:

So much for that. Now, for our Irish wars,
We must supplant those rough rug-headed kern,
Which live like venom where no venom else
But only they have privilege to live.
And, for these great affairs do ask some charge,
Towards our assistance we do seize to us
The plate, coin, revenues, and moveables
Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possessed. (2.1.155-162)

Richard’s Irish expedition is an attempt to avoid solving problems at home, but it leads to grave personal ones, such as the gradual loss of his army and, finally, to his deposition and murder. Shakespeare’s Irish references – mostly not drawn from history but from anti-Irish tropes circulating at the time – are meant to be

understood as topical, among them the much reiterated contrast between the unspoiled natural Irish landscape (which, as a colonial subtext, needs to be 'planted' by imperial forces) and its corrupt inhabitants, the woodkern.

Richard II was the signature play of the Earl of Essex, whose supporters, as a kind of spur, paid Shakespeare's acting company for a commissioned performance of the play on the eve of their rebellion. The play's exploitation for political ends corroborates the enormous potential of the visual and the oral in dealing with the Irish problem as late as 1601. Both Essex and Bullingbrook were popular with the common people and usurped authority, although it remains unclear whether Essex aspired to the throne. Elizabeth I and Richard II shared failed Irish expeditions, childlessness, and dependence on favourites. While Shakespeare could not have anticipated the play's role during the Essex rebellion, his presentation of Bullingbrook's usurpation might have served as its model. The interlocking of stage and state is overtly visible in the commissioned performance of the play at the Globe on the eve of the rebellion but also in the one at Whitehall before the Queen on the eve of Essex's execution in 1601.

Ireland is not explicitly present in *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*, probably written in 1597 and 1598 respectively, at a time when the tide began to turn dramatically for England. Still, both parts engage with uncertain national identities. In the first part England's national identity seems threatened by Wales. The Welsh character Glendower's claim

I can speak English, lord, as well as you,
For I was trained up in the English court, (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.116-117)

resonated with Elizabethan audiences, who felt reminded of O'Neill: both shared an education with English masters – Glendower as a follower of Bullingbrook – on whom they later turned (Highley, "Wales" 94). In the Welsh revolt King Henry IV is confronted with Glendower as the leader of the Welsh rebels.

According to Shapiro (71), among the plays staged at Whitehall for the 1598 Christmas court festivities was *2 Henry IV*, which topicalised military conscription, an issue that Spenser considered vital to solving the Irish question.

Henry V was first performed in 1599, at about the time of Essex's ceremonious departure for Ireland, which – starting around 2 pm – was framed as a kind of theatrical performance. The presentation of the war with France made spectators in the Globe think of the contemporary conflict in Ireland. This elucidates the power of the spoken word and the appeal of the visual to the emotions, also of the common people, who, in the public theatre, could participate in a political discourse that they were otherwise denied. Pistol's corrupted version of an Irish song sung to the French captive can serve as the epitome of this conceptual blending of Elizabeth's and Richard's worlds.

Macmorris is – like O'Neill – a strangely transgressive Irish/English character from the Pale, fighting in the English army and feeling uncomfortable with his national identity. The play's lack of an answer to his problematic question "What ish my nation?" (3.3.61) might be symptomatic of the unsolved Irish question. The scene was probably based on Stanyhurst's strangely mixed section on Ireland in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Against this background, Macmorris can hardly be considered (as so many critics did) as the stereotypical stage Irishman (Maley, "Shakespeare" 34). Rather, his question can be seen as part of a discourse about uncertain national identities and the exclusion of the margins from the centre.

In terms of the performance of the play, the differences between the 1600 Q1 and F1 are crucial. Q1 claims that the play had been performed "sundry times", but the first performance in Whitehall that we know of took place on 7 January 1605 before James I. If Q1 served as the basis for performances in early modern London (as Patterson argues), the audience did not hear much about Ireland. Q1 lacked Irish references, like the four captains-scene, the Choruses, and the opening scene with the bishops supporting the war. It seems more likely that, for obvious reasons of censorship in the aftermath of Essex's failed campaign, the Q1 text was forbidden for performance. As early as July 1599, the authorities seem to have decreed a gagging order on all those who wrote or spoke of Irish affairs. George Fenner and Francis Cordale apologised to friends abroad for not being allowed to inform them about the Irish war (qtd. in Shapiro 195).

The Chorus to Act 5 compares Henry's homecoming to Caesar's and – in Shakespeare's only explicit topical reference – to Essex triumphantly returning from Ireland:

Like to the senators of th'antique Rome,
 With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
 Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in –
 As, by a lower but loving likelihood,
 Were now the general of our gracious empress,
 (As in good time he may) from Ireland coming,
 Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword,
 How many would the peaceful city quit
 To welcome him! Much more, and much more cause,
 Did they this Harry. ... (5.0.26-35)

And yet this anticipation made sense for only a few months – before Essex infamously returned to London. Though paying tribute to Essex, Shakespeare is prudent enough to make reservations ("Much more, and much more cause"). And "rebellion" in the ambivalent line 32 might mean that Essex quelled the Irish rebellion, but it also sounds like a warning to the Queen that he could return to

rid the court of Cecil and other enemies and settle the succession (aspiring to the throne like Caesar). On the other hand, Essex might have been sent to Ireland for much the same reason by Cecil and his faction – to remove a rival from court. The ambivalence surrounding Essex in Ireland is reflected in this passage and enables Shakespeare to avoid taking sides too clearly.

ELIZABETH, HUGH O'NEILL, AND THE EARL OF ESSEX

It is interesting that Shakespeare's history plays – as has been shown – often feature a transgressive character who shares similarities with the leader of the Irish rebels, Hugh O'Neill. O'Neill is the epitome of an ambiguous Irish liminal character. Born of Gaelic parentage but raised in English ways, he was expected to serve under his English patrons in his native Ulster. In the course of time, he began to play a double game by exploiting his insider knowledge of the English and finally starting the treasonous rebellion. This illustrates the fluid national identities on both sides of the Irish war (Murphy 40–42).

In a letter to Essex dated 19 July 1599, Elizabeth referred to O'Neill as “a base bush kern” (391) and “a wretch whom we have raised from the dust and who could never prosper if the charges we have been put to were orderly employed” (393). This is a hint at her protecting and educating the young O'Neill in the early 1560s after the murder of his father and at his serving under Sir Henry Sidney in Ireland before he started the rebellion against English rule and openly asked for Spain's and the Pope's help.

In the same letter, Elizabeth reprimanded Essex for disregarding her orders and exposing her before the world by demanding ever more thousands of soldiers only to realise that they would not be enough to subdue O'Neill. Essex, for his part, had told the French Ambassador as early as 1597 that Elizabeth's gender was responsible for the court's delay and inconsistency. This is in line with complaints from the Queen's Irish deputies, who were disappointed by her ungratefulness while she remained suspicious of them. Henry Sidney found it hard to be a ‘woman's slave’ and longed for male regiment; Lord Grey heroically opposed Elizabeth's enervating mercy, excessive pity, and clemency (McCabe 10–14). Elizabeth and her ‘womanly’ feelings, her lack of masculine resolve, were perceived as an impediment to English victory in Ireland.

Her letter of 14 September that year no longer reached Essex as he returned home without her permission. In this letter, the Queen unequivocally criticised Essex, who had more means and men than anyone before him, for always doing the opposite of what he was told, for coming up with threadbare excuses like the bad state of the army and insolent claims, and she summoned him to remedy the situation and immediately declare the true state he had led the kingdom

into (394-99). Behind Elizabeth's back, Essex had cunningly knighted many English soldiers in Ireland to consolidate his power and had secretly arranged a truce with O'Neill in September 1599 after a private conversation which no one overheard. Later he claimed to have been lured into a trap. It is this truce that seems to have turned him into a transgressive character himself, similar to O'Neill. While Essex was at first the great antagonist of the latter, they seem to have converged – especially in the queen's perception – after the former's disastrous failure in Ireland. While Elizabeth's female body was deemed inferior to the male by contemporaries, she herself seems to have attempted – albeit unsuccessfully – to put it to her advantage. She had protected O'Neill and Essex and promoted their careers; hence they shared a similar relationship with her. But as a woman – openly flirtatious according to contemporary sources – she also succumbed to their charms. The Earl of Essex, 34 years her junior, was her last favourite and had risen quickly to the top. Ultimately, Elizabeth would be betrayed by both of them. While Essex was executed in February 1601, O'Neill was shown mercy for political reasons. In letters to Essex's successor, Lord Mountjoy (399-408), she advised him to spare O'Neill's life after his submission to rob the latter of Irish secrets.

LANCELOT ANDREWES' LENT SERMON

The close connection of *Henry V* with the Irish war is also evident from Lancelot Andrewes' remarkable public sermon "Preached before QE at Richmond, On the 21st of Feb AD 1599, being Ash Wednesday, at What Time the Earl of Essex was Going Forth, upon the Expedition for Ireland". He spiritually prepared his listeners – among them probably Shakespeare and his playing company, who had performed before the Queen the day before (Shapiro 88) – both for Lent and for a crucial phase in the Irish war. Just like he assured them of the sanctity and lawfulness of the latter, the bishops in Shakespeare's play do the same for Henry's war by confirming his claims in France, "You are their heir, you sit upon their throne" (1.2.117), by arguing that France belongs to Henry "by gift of heaven, / By law of nature and of nations, ..." (2.4.80-81) and by convincing him of his God-given "rule in nature" (1.2.188).

Hence, London audiences might have heard echoes of Andrewes' sermon in the theatre after Lent. Just like Andrewes had called for all soldiers to be free of sin, Henry, assuming the identity of a common soldier on the eve of the battle of Agincourt, claims that soldiers owe obedience to the King but are themselves morally responsible for their conduct in war:

... Every subject's duty is the king's, but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience. ... (4.1.159-162)

In addition, Andrewes' claim that a victory (which did not materialise for Essex) is to be ascribed to God is echoed by Henry learning of the English victory at Agincourt: "Praised be God, and not our strength, for it" (4.7.77).

The sermon's topical relevance is further underlined by a passage from Deuteronomy 23:9 about Moses going off to war. It seems probable that Elizabeth had commissioned a sermon on this topic or could at least trust in Andrewes for corroboration of her mission, for when she "had any business to bring about amongst the people, she used to tune the pulpits, as her saying was; that is to say, to have some preachers in and about London, and other great auditories in the kingdom, ready at command to cry up her design" (Heylyn, qtd. in Shapiro 89). This points not only to Elizabeth's religious and political authority but also to the huge political importance that orality still held as late as 1599.

In her aim to justify the Irish campaign, the Church's blessing would come in handy for Elizabeth. And her royal printer, Christopher Barker, printed an official "Prayer for the good success of her Majesty's forces in Ireland", asking God "to strengthen and protect the forces of thine anointed, our Queen and Sovereign, sent to suppress the wicked and unnatural rebels". Barker would also publish "The Queen's Majesty's proclamation declaring her princely resolution in sending over her army into the realm of Ireland", in which she justified the campaign, with the Irish having forgotten their allegiance and rebelliously taken arms, while at the same time sounding conciliatory when admitting abuses by her English deputies in Ireland. She strongly rejected the accusation of conquest with the captivating logic that you cannot conquer what already belongs to you (Shapiro 90).

It is hard to underestimate the effect of Andrewes' public sermon. He elegantly managed the transition from the appropriate Bible passage to England being at war with Ireland, by means of repeating "this time" or "this day" and by linking the times of Lent and war through abstinence from sin:

When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing. [...] These former years, this time of the fast, and this day, the first day of it, both ministered an occasion to call for an abstinence from sin; [...] (Andrewes)

The sermon justifies the crushing of O'Neill's rebellion who has committed many wrongs and unduly taxed England's patience and clemency. The war is mandatory, lawful and sanctified:

here have been divers princely favours vouchsafed, and most unkindly rejected; means of clemency many times most graciously offered, and most ungraciously refused; yea, faith falsified and expectation deluded; contempt upon contempt heaped up, that the measure is full. These then are the enemies against, and this the time when. When not only we may but must, and that not with God's leave only, but with His liking and full commission, go forth in this cause. So that war is lawful; (Andrewes)

Still, Andrewes – maybe in the light of critics reproaching the Cecil faction for denying the necessary provisions to Essex, thus thwarting his mission – admonishes the government to be well prepared and to generously care for the soldiers' food, clothes and reward: "victuals must be supplied. [...] and with an host, not a heap of naked or starved men" (Andrewes). Famine is a topic in the play as well, for instance in the Prologue anticipating "famine, sword and fire" (1.0.7).

PAMPHLETS ABOUT THE IRISH WAR

Thanks to improved publishing technology, pamphlets played a crucial role in Luther's multimedia campaign to spread and promote religious reform and to attack his enemies. In a similar way, the dynamics of new and old media had a function in influencing public opinion on the Irish war. Hence, Essex's 1599 Irish expedition was accompanied by much propaganda cast in the form of pamphlets, ballads, and broadsheets. Thomas Churchyard, for instance, a minor 16th century courtier (or rather court servant), soldier and writer, fighting for preferment at court and patronage throughout his long career, produced prolific autoreferential and self-promoting writings over decades (Woodcock 2-9). Late in 1592, he finally learned about a royal pension he was to receive but the long period of delays and withholding prompted him to target Essex as a powerful patron and dedicated *Charitie* to him (Woodcock 240-253). "Never missing an opportunity for a strategic topical publication Churchyard penned *The welcome home of the Earle of Essex*" (255) after the latter's victory at Cadiz. *A Wished Reformation of Wicked Rebellion*, published in 1598, advocates the teaching of a military lesson to traitors, just as does *The Fortunate Farewel*, a hastily produced pamphlet on Essex's departure for Ireland with much praise and certainty about the English victory. His *welcome home* in September 1599 was not printed owing to Essex's falling into disfavour. While neither the Earl's rebellion nor his execution was reflected in Churchyard's work, the Queen's death prompted his broadside *Sorrowful Verses* praising the Phoenix's great virtues (255-260).

After the turn of the century, many pamphlets, broadsides, treatises, and poems also celebrated the late 1601 English victory at Kinsale. Among them was Ralph Birchensa's long anti-Irish *Discourse occasioned upon the late defeat, given to*

the arch-rebels Tyrone and ODonnel, by... Lord Mountjoy... (1602). It denigrates the Irish as worse than monsters or heathens and blames the Catholic Church for Irish rebelliousness while at the same time praising Queen Elizabeth's care and provision for the ungrateful Irish.

O famous Queene, who holds this land by right,
Whose care that been and is, to cure their sore:
What loving favours hath her Grace bestowd, (lines 85-87; qtd. in Carpenter 113)

And an anonymous "joyfull new ballad of the late Victory obtain'd by my Lord *Mount-Joy...*" heaps exuberant praise on the latter: "Oh, give Him thanks for that which He hath done! / In *Ireland* through Him hath *England* won" (lines 9-10; qtd. in Carpenter 116).

JOHN DONNE'S "H. W. IN HIBERNIA BELLIGERANTI"

Another medium used during the Irish war is John Donne's verse epistle "H. W. in Hibernia Belligeranti", addressed to Henry Wotton serving in Ireland as secretary to Essex between April and September 1599. Wotton seems to have supplied intelligence of affairs to Essex but was obviously not too closely involved as he could narrowly escape after Essex's death. Donne reminds Wotton of writing home as well as of the dangers, desires, and fears connected to his service in Ireland, pleading with him

Lett not your soule (at first) with graces filld
And since and thorough crooked lymbecks, stild
In many schooles and courts, which quicken it,
It self vnto the Irish negligence submit. (lines 13-16)

He fears that "the Irish negligence" could make Wotton indifferent to England and to him or that the latter's soul had already been corrupted by the Irish. This is a hint at the precarious state of English identity on the Irish border and again focuses on the danger of transgressive, liminal characters. The subjection of the Irish other is necessary for the formation of the English self. With the opening question "Went you to conquer?", Donne might be considering Essex's possible failure, which would explain why Wotton can no longer write (as an Englishman). As Donne implies, Essex's success or failure would decide on Ireland as a site of a newly enhancing or degenerating Englishness. He emotionally implores Wotton to withdraw from Essex's Irish expedition and asks for innocuous letters from a friend that exclude politics and thus need fear neither censorship nor the spy networks of Essex and his enemies (Baker 25-28). What

seems to concern Donne apart from the possible loss of their friendship is the trustworthiness of the letter bearer:

I aske not labored letters which should weare
 Long papers out: nor letters which should feare
 dishonest cariage: or a seers Art
 Nor such as from the brayne come, but the hart. (lines 17-20)

Much of the Donne-Wotton correspondence between 1598 and 1601, when they were employed as secretaries to Sir Thomas Egerton and the Earl of Essex respectively, is likely to be copies of copies made as part of a domestic surveillance effort ordered by Robert Cecil, suspicious of both Donne's Catholic leanings and Wotton's closeness to Essex (Redford 29-32).

EDMUND SPENSER AND IRELAND

Edmund Spenser was personally much more involved with Ireland than Shakespeare, but his relationship to the Irish and to the Queen is more than ambivalent. He went to Ireland in 1580, during the Desmond rebellion, as one of Lord Arthur Grey's secretaries, whom he praises as an exemplary military figure and whose brutal methods he defends in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Ireland offered easier access to property than England, which Spenser was interested in, as his later acquisition of the Kilcolman estate in Cork proves (Hadfield, *Spenser* 154-168).

Written over several years, *A View* may have been finished under Essex's patronage when Spenser was proud to be in attendance at the royal court at Greenwich in 1596. It was strongly promoted and intended to circulate in elaborate and expensive manuscripts of various types among prominent and influential policy makers, like the Earl of Essex, Sir Thomas Egerton, and possibly even the Queen, with the aim of serving Spenser's own interests and those of the Munster settlers. Following classical and humanist models *A View* is set up as a sophisticated dialogue between Eudoxus and Irenius. The latter, skilled in brilliant argumentation and thought to be the author's mouthpiece, is an eyewitness to the events in Ireland aiming at legitimating England's reconquest (Hadfield, *Spenser* 336-349). *A View* is a discursive engagement with political rebellion in an Ireland that resists colonial power. What seems wrong with Ireland is discussed in the fields of laws, customs, and religion – with Spenser at times recommending brutal means like starvation, scorched earth, or the devastation of Irish civilisation.

As an Irish settler, Spenser could act as a link between colony and kingdom, promoting his own interests and mediating between his two careers as poet and colonial civil servant by exploiting the periphery to gain patronage at the centre. But he was not a court poet, and despite Marx's epithet of "Elizabeth's arse-kissing

poet", he was known for his, at times, offensive behaviour towards influential contemporaries, including the Queen. At the very end of Spenser's tract, Irenius recommends "a Lord Leiftenante, of some of the greatest personages in England (such an one I could name) upon whom the eye of all England is fixed, (and our last hopes nowe rest) [...] may backe and defend the good cause of the government against all malignors..." This is most likely an allusion to Essex, known as a generous patron and turned into a national hero after the Cadiz expedition, who might be the military figure urgently needed to achieve victory over the Irish rebels on the battlefield, a role that the Queen's gender would prohibit. Spenser's strategy of strongly advocating a military solution for Ireland with Essex being the right man for the job would decenter the monarch. Maley ("Spenser's *View*" 201) also does away with the myth of the loyal courtier when pointing to the irony that Spenser's hoped-for victory over Ireland is only possible after the Queen's death. Elizabeth does not, in her person, unite military and political power, as does, for instance, Henry V, prompting Dollimore and Sinfield to consider Shakespeare's play "a powerful Elizabethan fantasy" (223). Spenser criticises Elizabeth's lack of concern about preventing Ireland from remaining a dangerous and neglected land.

This message of discontent with her Irish policy in *A View* is in line with what Books V and VI of *The Faerie Queene* convey in less direct, allegorical form. Book V opens with a dedicatory sonnet to Essex, corroborating the assumption that Spenser targeted him as his patron and as the solution for Ireland. According to Camden, it was Essex who paid for Spenser's funeral in London in January 1599 (Hadfield, *Spenser* 394-402).

The Faerie Queene is not an unequivocal celebration of the Queen either. McCabe claims "that the experience of writing from Ireland intensified Spenser's sense of alienation from female sovereignty" and that he "adopted the pose of [...] the critic in exile" (3). For Montrose *The Faerie Queene* is a "manifestation of the Elizabethan Political Imaginary" and an "attempt to frame the Queen to her subjects' fantasies" ("Political Imaginary" 940).

Spenser's poem "Epithalamion" celebrates his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle in Cork in 1595. His new wife resembles "some mayden Queene" (line 158) in whose face "vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne" (194). Cynthia standing for both the moon and the Queen is present as a jealous voyeur spying on the newly-wed through the bedroom windows:

Who is the same, which at my window peepes?
Or whose is that faire face, that shines so bright?
Is it not Cinthia, she that neuer sleepes,
But walkes about high heauen al the night?
O fayrest goddesse, do thou not enuy
My loue with me to spy: (372-377)

And she shall "...the chast wombe informe with timely seed" (386), which will allow the bridegroom to firmly establish his domestic centre in Ireland. Spenser's focus has clearly shifted from the Queen and the centre to his wife and the periphery, which is about to become itself the centre, an "alternative center" in Montrose's words ("Domestic Domain" 120). The poem's appraisal of the Irish setting and Spenser posing as the bridegroom – literally, and metaphorically, in the wedding of kingdom and colony – might also suggest a colonial reading. In this case, the marriage would be enacted as a competitive political/public project to the Queen's, challenging the authority of her court in London.

In any case, Spenser, the critic in exile, staunch Protestant, and supporter of military Irish leaders like Grey and Essex, is also the one who publishes his poetry in the medium of print: "Unlike some of his [...] fellow poets, Spenser sought print" (Montrose, "Domestic Domain" 84) as a sign of authorial empowerment (and gradual independence) vis-à-vis the royal patroness (87).

THE RAINBOW PORTRAIT

The last medium to be looked at is the portrait, which Elizabeth relied on during her entire reign but especially from the 1580s onwards. On the one hand, royal portraiture was a convention, on the other hand, Elizabeth seems to have played with images of femininity and political authority. While it seems understandable that she needed this kind of powerful visual propaganda and wanted to hide her ageing face behind a mask of youth for personal and political reasons, it is still striking that a Protestant monarch resorted to this visual medium so frequently.

In our context, the Rainbow Portrait², revealed at the Queen's 1602 progress at Hatfield, three years after Spenser's death and one year after Essex's execution, is worth looking at. It carries a strong message in the Irish question that had not yet been solved. The Queen wears a luxurious version of the Irish mantle, which might seem provocative to her English subjects. Conversely, it could serve as a visible sign of the colony incorporated into the centre. The eyes and ears all over the mantle might represent the spies that provide her with intelligence, indicating that the Queen sees and hears everything in the centre and at the periphery. They might point to the intimidating fear her omnipresent and inquisitorial gaze instilled in courtiers and Irish alike, to the power emanating from the surveillant Queen drawing on potential Irish secrets. They suggest the kind of Foucauldian control she seems to have exerted – also in matters Irish – long before Foucault identified panoptic surveillance for the 18th and 19th

2 Cf. Some aspects related to the Rainbow Portrait are discussed in Mettinger (2020).

centuries. On a different level, the eyes seem to be in line with her motto "Video et taceo", as the mouth is absent from the mantle. The missing mouth is further reminiscent of Kantorowicz's concept of the King's two bodies. In Elizabeth's case the body natural would be the silent and chaste woman, the body politic the all-seeing sovereign claiming authority – also in Ireland.

What has often been overlooked is the political dimension of the Latin tag above the rainbow: "Non Sine Sole Iris" goes far beyond Biblical symbolism or the veneration of the Queen as the sun of the universe. The latter is ambiguous anyway for the rainbow is colourless. As Iris was an old name for Ireland, the literal meaning of "no rainbow without the sun" translates into the metaphorical meaning of "no Ireland without the Queen". Hence, Michael Neill (31) reads the portrait as emblematic of Elizabethan imperial ambitions in Ireland and its political motto as an anticipation of England's imminent victory in Ireland. This time it is the Queen, with her extravagant coiffure, who is posing as a bride, the spouse of her kingdom. Still, this might be a subversive reading, revealing Elizabeth's dependence on the Irish, who clothe her with their mantle. The ambiguities in the portrait's message are part of the strategy at the core of Elizabeth's power. She chooses the problematic Irish mantle that Edmund Spenser in *A View* considers "a fitt howse for an outlawe, a meet Bedd for a Rebell, and apte Cloke for a thief". He does so via Irenius, who addresses the possibilities of disguise, protection, or hiding arms that the mantle offers to the Irish rebels. As a means to conceal pregnancy and, consequently, avoid shame for lascivious or promiscuous women, it was linked to sexuality as well as to the English fear of a huge increase in the "wild" Irish population: "And when she hath fyll'd her vessill, under it she can hyde bothe her burden, and her blame; yea, and when her bastard is borne it serves instead of all her swadling cloutes." The Queen posing in the Irish mantle highlights the fluid nature of national identity. John Ziegler attempts an answer to the puzzling question of Elizabeth's sartorial choice:

National identity was figured as variously hidden, revealed, or transformed by the Irish mantle. The mantle thereby emblemized the very mutability of identity that both generated and persistently undercut English rhetoric surrounding the project of colonizing and reforming Ireland. Perhaps Elizabeth chose to be painted in this powerful and problematic garment for exactly these reasons. As the literal embodiment of national identity, her wearing a mantle functioned as an assertion that Englishness would not, in fact, degenerate in the face of Irishness; it might even adapt Irishness to its own purposes and subordinate it to Englishness. (90)

CONCLUSION

Elizabeth's relationship to Ireland was as ambivalent as to the media. In the diverse mix of old and new media, forms of oral transmission and visual media remained vital for the Queen. Sermons – especially during Lent – played an even more influential role than the theatre as a medium delivered before the Queen, who manipulated the pulpit for her specific political aims, such as justifying the war in Ireland. Preachers like Andrewes were more directly suitable for bringing the Queen's agenda home to the people than authors of printed works, who tended towards emancipation from royal patronage. And right to the end of her reign, Elizabeth relied on visual media, which she seems to have deployed as an emotion-triggering tool when appealing to her subjects' support in the Irish question. Staunch Protestants and loyal subjects would be concerned to secure popularity and success, like Derricke (although we know little about him and his relationship to the Queen) with his prestigious woodcut series, which repeated common stereotypes about the Irish while praising the English monarch and her military representatives in Ireland. Elizabeth herself took care to put subtle political messages, also about Ireland, into the portraits for which she posed, as the Rainbow Portrait proves.

The public theatre combined the oral and the visual in the performance of plays. Negotiating its power with the crown, it was more indirectly controlled by Elizabeth and, hence, only partly instrumental in reaching her political objectives. Although Ireland was an extremely delicate topic in the 1590s and works on the Irish crisis were censored or suppressed, the stage proved a most convenient medium as it was open to diverse interpretations. So Shakespeare addressed the Irish question above all in his history plays, in which he portrayed liminal, transgressive characters who pointed to the importance of national identity and who shared characteristics with O'Neill and, ultimately, also with Essex. His oblique and fragmentary allusions guaranteed him safety and relegated the wide range of topical meanings suggested by the performances to the playgoers' responsibility. Meaning was constructed in the theatre, which operated like a kind of political forum for discussion, a dynamic that the Queen could neither fully influence nor anticipate.

Shakespeare seems to have been more prudent than Spenser, who advocated a military solution for Ireland in his tract *A View*. He criticised the Queen's reluctance to remedy the situation in Ireland and envisioned an English military victory under Essex's leadership. Spenser spent much less time at court than is commonly thought and, in terms of patronage, hoped for much more than Elizabeth was inclined to grant. The critical stance he adopted in his print works, his leanings towards Essex, and the promotion of his own career distanced him from Elizabeth.

To conclude, the Irish problem proved to be a big challenge to royal authority – especially in terms of gender. The Queen may have tried to make up for not fighting in battle, for harbouring ‘womanly’ feelings of pity, and for lacking masculine assertiveness by harnessing male courtiers, favourites, preachers, artists, and authors for her cause. In the end, she was least successful with those who published their strict Protestant agenda and intransigent attitude towards Ireland in print, which increasingly tended to disenchant the royal myth. Elizabeth seems to have been aware of this when admitting that “never any realm [was] worse governed” (qtd. in Morgan 220). Yet, she underestimated the potential of visiting Ireland in person. It seems odd that a monarch who relied so much on visibility and spectacular performance never set foot on Irish soil.

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Irski problem skozi prizmo elizabetinskih medijev

Članek raziskuje anglo-irski problem. stoletja skozi prizmo številnih elizabetinskih medijev. Poskuša pokazati, da se je kraljica Elizabeta kljub iznajdbi tiska in svoji protestantski veri še naprej zanašala na ustne in vizualne medije. Zdi se, da sta bili pridiga in slika bolj neposredno primerni za posredovanje njene irske agende ljudem kot tiskana dela, katerih avtorji so bili običajno neodvisni od kraljevega pokroviteljstva. Poleg tega so kraljičin spol in njena »ženska« čustva dojemali kot oviro za uspešno vojaško rešitev, ki so jo zagovarjali moški avtorji, kot je bil Edmund Spenser.

Ključne besede: Irska pod Tudorji, elizabetinski mediji, Elizabeta I., Spenser, Shakespeare, grof Esseški

“People don’t like to be conquered, and so they will not be”: The Enduring Appeal of *The Moon Is Down*

Danica Čerče

Abstract

The essay deals with the novel *The Moon Is Down* (1942) by American Nobel Prize winning writer John Steinbeck. Withing a year after its publication, the novel evolved into a play and movie. The appearance of this slim volume came as a shock to readers eagerly waiting another book on the same epic scale as its monumental predecessor, *The Grapes of Wrath*. During World War II, *The Moon Is Down* successfully served as a work of propaganda, as Steinbeck intended, raising morale in the European resistance movement. However, the work is not contingent upon time or place and deserves more critical attention. Reflecting delusions, traumas, and fears of a historical period, and the collective effort for survival, *The Moon Is Down* is also a study of today’s world in a state of conflict. By creating new awareness and conveying the idea about the unconquerable spirit of those reacting to the assault on freedom and democracy, it offers the assurance the people of Ukraine and Gaza, among others, want to hear.

Keywords: John Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down*, art and propaganda, public and critical response, resistance movement

INTRODUCTION

John Steinbeck is known as a writer of great versatility and range. He himself observed that he had “not written two books alike” (1950, 20). Released at the wrong time for the Americans but at just the right moment for the European resistance movement, *The Moon Is Down* is his only full-length work of fiction that deals entirely with the subject of war. Focused on psychological rather than physical warfare, it explores how people resist and fight the terrors of invasion. On its publication in early March 1942, *The Moon Is Down* generated attacks and defences as passionate as those which greeted Steinbeck’s previous novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939); however, whereas the latter is a generally recognised masterpiece, the former is not. The most frequently exposed and criticised flaws include simplistic and sentimental dialogue and flat or unconvincing characterisation. Viewing the book as a reductive propagandistic work, American reviewers were more interested in predicting its effects as propaganda than in evaluating its literary merits.

If the past saw little consensus about the exact nature of the work, today scholars and critics are inclined to treat the book as a legitimate work of fiction that needs to be approached from various angles of contemporary critical engagement. Looking at the work from the viewpoint of another culture, Japanese scholars Tetsumaro Hayashi, Kioko Ariki and Eiko Shiraga are among those whose change of tune for *The Moon Is Down* can be regarded a trope for the current trend towards re-evaluating the novel in terms of what Steinbeck accomplished, rather than what he failed to do. For example, Ariki (2003) re-examines the work in terms of the techniques Steinbeck employed for the presentation of the main themes, whereas Shiraga (1995), analysing the role of female characters, highlights their significant dramatic functions and heroic deeds in confronting the enemy. Several other critical readers tend to concur with Donald V. Coers, who reads *The Moon Is Down* mainly as highly effective propaganda on behalf of the war effort:

Few books have demonstrated more triumphantly the power of ideas against brute military strength, and few books in recent times have spoken with such reassurance to so many people of different countries and cultures. [...] *The Moon Is Down* was an inspiring statement of faith that despite the darkness of their hour, freedom and decency would return. That power to inspire [...] remains today its signal distinction. (Coers 1991, 138)

Coers describes the work as inspiring and comforting not only anti-Nazi resistance fighters during World War II, but as having an ongoing uplifting impact on all who defy enemy oppression and dictatorship. In addition to giving evidence of the book’s wide approval and enthusiasm it caused among the underground groups resisting Nazi oppression in Europe, the essay will demonstrate

that *The Moon Is Down* is not only emotional in its effect, arousing imaginative activity and promoting identification and empathy, but it is also relevant for its epistemological effect, conveying as it does important knowledge about wars and human nature.

ART FOR PROPAGANDA

Although propaganda does not usually accord well with art, given that we admire art but view propaganda with scepticism or even condescension, it is often found in literary works and popular cultural media. Its function is not only to summon powerful emotions; this opinion was contradicted as early as 1928, when Edward L. Bernays argued that emotions disconnected from ideas were worthless (101). Bernays saw propaganda as an organised effort to disseminate a particular belief or doctrine with the aim of getting large numbers of people to think in the same way (20). Propaganda is thus both emotional and epistemological in its effects, exploiting the power of storytelling to construct knowledge and influence behaviour. As Michel Foucault (1988) noted, knowledge is not simply the reflection of objective truth but is produced through discursive practices shaped by power dynamics.

Hollywood film production between December 1941 and September 1945 provides a good example of how efficient pop-cultural media could be in constructing cinemagoers’ knowledge about the war. During that time, Hollywood studios released a number of films that developed narratives, conflicts, character types and rhetoric to explain what American soldiers were fighting and dying for, what each citizen’s role should be and why enemy should be defeated. These issues were of particular relevance to the film adaptation of *The Moon Is Down*.¹ As Robert L. McLaughlin has described in great detail, by purchasing the film rights, Twentieth Century-Fox “thrust Steinbeck’s narrative into the machinery of the already well-established film conventions for movies about occupied countries” (214). Scholars, including McLaughlin and Roy Simmonds, have compared the three versions of the story and commented on how the “Hollywood treatment” corrected some narrative weaknesses in the novel and play, occasionally disrupted the writer’s narrative or thematic logic and enhanced ideas that were merely hinted at, in order to accentuate the work’s effectiveness as propaganda during the war (McLaughlin 214). The attempts to make the story of the successive versions more acceptable to the public produced increasingly less successful results.

1 The novel was published on 8 March 1942, the first production on Broadway was on 7 April 1942, and the world premiere of the movie was on 14 March 1943. Unlike the play version, written by Steinbeck, the film script was the work of Nunnally Johnson and Steinbeck had no final control over it.

According to Simmonds, at the time it first appeared, *The Moon Is Down* was never “widely accepted in America for what it was” (1995, 92); what most American readers, playgoers and movie viewers wanted was precisely what James Agee, among some others, passionately criticised as “reassuring, patriotic melodrama,” in which “superhuman acts of courage are enacted and in which the issues of good and evil are presented in clear-cut, psychologically simplified terms”(643).

The Moon Is Down is not the only work Steinbeck wrote for propaganda purposes, understanding literature as a medium that is not defined merely by the author’s quest for personal fulfilment and the meaning of human existence, but also as an expression of collective efforts to eliminate conflicts and tensions or ensure the existence of a community. As he observed in his 28 June 1951 entry in *The Journal of the Novel*:

It is the duty of the writer to lift up, to extend, to encourage. If the written word has contributed anything at all to our developing species and our half-developed culture, it is this: Great writing has been a staff to lean on, a mother to consult, a wisdom to pick up stumbling folly, a strength in weakness and courage to support sick cowardice. (115-116)

In line with his views concerning the duty of an artist, Steinbeck always came forward when help was needed. First, after witnessing the deplorable living conditions of migrant workers in California during the Great Depression, he exposed the unconscionable capitalist dynamics of corporate farming in a series of sharp newspaper articles “The Harvest Gypsies.” Published in October 1936, these articles attracted the attention of the Roosevelts and the nation, starting Steinbeck’s intriguing relationship with the White House. The sources as yet available do not reveal the entire extent of this relationship, but it is no secret that within a year after Steinbeck began asking President Roosevelt for various favours that would stop and correct the consequences of the tyranny of California’s agricultural system and its flagrant violations of migrants’ civil and human rights, he became an esteemed advisor to the President’s electoral committee and speech writer to the President himself (Lewis 1995). However, serving the government did not always serve Steinbeck’s artistic development well. This is particularly true of the works Steinbeck wrote during World War II. Composed hurriedly and under orders, they lack qualities that distinguish his earlier works. According to Warren French, what Steinbeck “unintentionally learned” from his political involvements was that he could only produce “superficial accounts” about matters he was not intimately involved with, a lesson that probably contributed to the despair and depression he felt in his later years (6).

STEINBECK’S WORLD WAR II ASSIGNMENTS

Following the 1939 German invasion of Poland, a number of American writers realised that the role of detached observer was no longer morally tenable and therefore undertook various tasks in government war projects. Steinbeck, who by the summer of 1940, when much of Europe had been conquered by the Nazis had become a world-renowned author, was one such writer (Lewis 23). He was alarmed by the aggressive propaganda Axis nations disseminated in Latin America, while the United States did nothing. Anticipating the inevitability of American involvement in the war and being willing to contribute to the Allies’ cause, he served voluntarily in several intelligence and information agencies established by the government between 1940 and 1942 (Coers 1995, vii).² Unlike some other major American writers, including Hemingway and Faulkner, who refused such assignments, Steinbeck agreed to write two books for the government, *The Moon Is Down* and *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* (1942). The former promotes guerrilla resistance, while the latter aimed at boosting the enlistment of citizens into the American Air Force. Several scholars have noted that Steinbeck’s submission to the pressures of political expediency had disastrous consequences for his art. Indeed, neither of the two books solidified the artistic reputation he had established with *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was written with what French describes “the almost mystical sense of the author’s personal driving involvement” (6). Despite the important role of *The Moon Is Down* in heartening the European resistance movement, the stature of Steinbeck’s works connected with the subject of war remains controversial. In Steinbeck’s own words, the two books that followed government guidelines were not meant to be of artistic merit; writing them was a job he was doing for Foreign Information Service and as a contribution to the war effort: “I thought I was doing a good and patriotic thing” (qtd. in Benson 498).

As a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* in England, North Africa and Italy, another activity that testifies to the writer’s engagement with the events of his time, Steinbeck wrote a series of reports in which he expressed his views on war and politics. Dismissed by several critics, the reports were collected and published under the title *Once There Was a War* as late as 1958. Other attempts Steinbeck made to translate the theme of war into a literary work that would achieve the artistic greatness of his previous works also failed. Such were the film scripts for *Lifeboat* (1944) and *A Medal for Benny* (1945) by Alfred Hitchcock and Frank Butler respectively, both of which were huge disappointments for the

2 Two of the agencies Steinbeck worked for, COI (Office of Coordinator of Information) and OSS (Office of Strategic Services), both headed by Colonel William J. Donovan, were precursors of the CIA.

readers eagerly expecting another book with the sweeping reach and social consciousness of *The Grapes of Wrath*. The sense of disappointment these works generated because they “signalled a shift in the writer’s social commitment,” as Stanley Edgar Hyman wrote in the 10 December 1962 issue of *The New Leader* (10), was the beginning of what became known as Steinbeck’s “decline,” with some critics declaring that “nothing Steinbeck wrote after 1939 bears rereading” (Simmonds 1995, 77).

I would counter such denigrating critical views but concur with the scholars who argue that Steinbeck could never repeat the success he obtained during his “years of greatness,” as Hayashi³ refers to the period from 1936–1939, when Steinbeck produced works that have generally been accepted as classics. My contention is that, despite Steinbeck’s main preoccupation with propaganda in writing *The Moon Is Down*, and the widespread disappointment it caused on its publication in the United States, the book is an enduring if not altogether a great work of art and deserves more critical attention. Exploring how human beings should cope with the effects of war, shown as pernicious for the conquered and the conquerors alike, and conveying ideas about humans’ ability to confront and overcome the inhumanity of man to man, the work is particularly relevant in today’s turbulent times.⁴

FROM CONCEPTION TO PUBLICATION

The Moon Is Down is Steinbeck’s first novel far removed from his accustomed settings and the proletarian bent of his late 1930s fiction. The timing of the book’s appearance was most unfortunate—it was published in March 1942, three months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Involved as he was with the Roosevelt administration, Steinbeck’s aim in writing the book was primarily propagandistic. The first draft was written when America, unlike several European countries, had yet to join the war against Germany and the other Axis powers. Detesting the complacent attitude of many Americans in the manner of “it can’t happen here,” as Sinclair Lewis titled his 1935 dystopian political novel, Steinbeck intended to write about an enemy invasion of a small American city. As he explained later, he

3 In 1993, Tetsumaro Hayashi edited the book *John Steinbeck: The Years of Greatness, 1936–1939*.

4 One indicator of how this story about “the power of ideas in the face of cold steel and brute force,” as the blurb on the back of the book reads, continues to engage us in the 2020s is the effort of Dr Eric Rasmussen, the CEO of Infinitum Humanitarian Systems, to provide the residents of Crimea and Donbas with the electronic version of *The Moon Is Down*. Probably because of my 2017 study *John Steinbeck in East European Translation: A Bibliographical and Descriptive Overview*, he sent me an email on 24 November 2022, wondering whether *The Moon Is Down* was available in Ukrainian translation.

thought that the book would “wake America up and at the same time build a sympathy for what many people were going through abroad” (Benson 491). Clearly, Harriet Rafter points out, propaganda was on Steinbeck’s mind long before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour (240).

As Simmonds (1995), among others, describes in detail, Steinbeck’s initial idea was rejected by the authorities, who considered a story about the defeat and occupation of the United States as potentially destructive to national morale. Intrigued by the stories of refugees from recently occupied European countries with whom he came into contact in the course of his intelligence duties, Steinbeck then placed the action in an unidentified European country occupied by the enemy. The opening sentences read: “By ten-forty-five it was all over. The town was occupied, the defenders defeated, and the war finished” (Steinbeck 1995, 1). Demoralised by the invasion, the town gradually recovers from the shock of occupation and begins to resist. As an account of unfamiliar people in an unparticularised setting, the book could serve as a warning to Americans to remain alert and at the same time boost resistance movements abroad. In order to ensure the book’s broader implications, Steinbeck also neutralised his initial choice title from *The New Order*, which alluded to the political and social system that Hitler intended to impose on occupied territories, to *The Moon Is Down* (Simmonds 1995, 79). The new title—a phrase taken from the second act of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*—is more subtle, alluding to the descent of evil and spiritual darkness that the Nazis’ obsession with power had brought to Europe.

By the time the novel was published, America had entered the war. Due to this turn of events, the book was much more highly appreciated abroad than by Americans, who felt that Steinbeck was far too soft in his portrayals of the Nazis. Angered at Steinbeck’s apparent complacency towards Nazism, James Thurber referred to the novel as a “gentle fable of War in Wonderland,” denouncing Steinbeck for not having told the “true story of hell, horror and hopelessness” (370). Similarly, British war historian John Keegan described the work as “romantic” and “naïve” (Benson 490). Richard Astro also delivered a harsh verdict, arguing that the work was neither a war story nor an anti-war story, but a “quasi fictional philosophical debate, cut off by definition from World War II or any other war” (150). Several other reviewers and historians expressed contempt for Steinbeck’s humanisation of the invading soldiers, reprimanding him for his failure to show how desperate life was under Nazi rule, and drawing attention to such atrocities as the 1941 Babi Yar massacre in Kiev in September 1941.⁵ The anonymous reviewer of the 5 April 1943 issue of *Time* claimed that “the whole premise of the work was based upon questionable psychology and presented an extraordinary naïve view of Nazi life” (54). Clifton Fadiman accused Steinbeck of “melodramatic

5 Over three days, the Nazis shot about thirty-three thousand Jews (Rafter 241).

simplification of the issues involved,” basing the work on the “comforting fallacy that good will always overcome evil simply because it is, by definition, good” (59). A few others defended the novelist, noting that, while he “may have been too easy on the Nazis, he portrayed the heroic resistance of a basically peace-loving people with great understanding” (Astro 150). For Jackson Benson, Steinbeck’s main biographer, the book is “compelling in its currency, yet timeless” (488). Clearly, *The Moon Is Down* provoked nearly as much controversy as *The Grapes of Wrath*.

“THE FLIES HAVE CONQUERED THE FLYPAPER”

The story unfolds in a historically familiar environment, though with neither the location nor the time directly specified. As Steinbeck explains in his 1963 article “Reflections on a Lunar Eclipse,” the occupied country is described as “cold and stern like Norway, cunning and implacable like Denmark, reasonable like France. The names of people in the book I made as international as I could. I did not even call the Germans Germans but simply invaders” (3). Steinbeck’s aim seems to have been to illustrate what can happen when any nation invades another. Thus, although the narrative is illustrated with a chronological panorama of social and historical events, *The Moon Is Down* is not a documentary or a factual text but a fictional account that follows the events as arranged by the author. As Vanesa Matajc has observed, upon engaging the artist’s creativity, one realises that the past is “a priori intertwined with the artist’s present-day reality or it is a matter of his subjectivity; it exists through artistic construction rather than through historiographical reconstruction” (202).

At the forefront of the novel and as the most important driving force of the narrative is resistance warfare. The account of occupation, which is used as a means of exploring the issues of heroism, freedom, power and individuality, is complemented with several almost impressionistic depictions of a cold, half-dark and ice-covered landscape to achieve “certain effects in thematic development,” as discussed by Ariki (225). Sometimes, the description of depressing winter landscape creates the mood of monotony and inactivity—“The days and the weeks dragged on, and the months dragged on. The snow fell and melted and fell and melted and finally fell and stuck” (Steinbeck 1995, 57)—but most often, the landscape mirrors and underscores the occupied people’s collective emotional state, serving as a metaphor for the townspeople’s psychological transformation, for their growing wrath and hostility towards the invaders (Ariki 226-7):

By eleven o’clock the snow was falling heavily in big, soft puffs and the sky was not visible at all. People were scurrying through the falling snow, and snow piled up in the doorways and it piled up on the statue in the public square and

on the rails from the mine to the harbor. Snow piled up and the little cartwheels skidded as they were pushed along. And over the town there hung a blackness that was deeper than the cloud, and over the town there hung a sullenness and a dry, growing hatred. The people did not stand in the streets long, but they entered the doors and the doors closed and there seemed to be eyes looking from behind the curtains, and when the military went through the street or when the patrol walked down the main street, the eyes were on the patrol, cold and sullen. (Steinbeck 1995, 51)

And there was death in the air, hovering and waiting. [...] The cold hatred grew with winter, the silent, sullen hatred, the waiting hatred. [...] And the hatred was deep in the eyes of the people, beneath the surface. (Steinbeck 1995, 57–58)

The book also provides insight into the intimate emotional experiences of invaders, giving evidence that Steinbeck avoided the “facile flaw of propaganda in black and white” (Coers 1991, 107). With the exception of Captain Loft, a true professional, a man with “no unmilitary moments” (Steinbeck 1995, 21), the invading soldiers are presented as ordinary men who would rather be at home performing their everyday tasks than serving as military officers. Naive in their loneliness and homesickness, the enemy soldiers are seeking warm human relationships, longing for the affection and understanding of the town girls. As Lieutenant Tonder confides to the local girl Molly:

I only want to talk, that's all. I want to hear you talk. That's all I want. [...]. Can you understand this—can you believe this? Just for a little while, can't we forget this war? Just for a little while. Just for a little while, can't we talk together like people—together? [...] I'm lonely to the point of illness. I'm lonely in the quiet silence and the hatred.” (Steinbeck 2011, 77)

Often, they are plagued by doubts, fear, and uncertainty, realising that the citizens will not welcome but fight them. As individuals, they might reject the military mind and the “inability to see beyond the killing which is [their] job” (Steinbeck 1995, 49), but their inescapable role as soldiers in an aggressive army leaves them prey to violent idealism and desensitises their human spirit. Colonel Lanser, in particular, is depicted as war-weary, sceptical and distasteful of the job he has been given. He knows that war requires treachery and hatred, the torture and killing of innocent people. And yet, he fights off his individual sensitivity, repeatedly reminding himself that he is a soldier, not “expected to question or to think, but only to carry out orders” (Steinbeck 1995, 23). Cognisant of what happened in the previous war and foreseeing a repetition of the same pattern in the current one, he tries to convince himself “fifty times a day: this [war] will be different” (Ibid.). Steinbeck seems to have possessed the perception which was unusual for

that time; namely that the invader was equally vulnerable as the population they had overrun. In his view, wider recognition of this fact could contribute to a resistance victory. Indeed, although the situation for the occupied population appears hopeless, given that every act of rebellion is followed by brutal reprisals, the novel leaves no doubt about the final outcome:

“The people don’t like to be conquered, sir, and so they will not be. Free men cannot start a war, but once it is started, they can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of a leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars. You will find that is so, sir.” (Steinbeck 1995, 111).

The invading army has taken on “the one impossible job in the world, the one thing that can’t be done [...] to break man’s spirit permanently” (Steinbeck 1995, 50). The inevitable defeat of invaders, the impossibility of subduing people with strong and free will without destroying themselves in the process, is also mirrored in the phrase “The flies have conquered the flypaper” (Steinbeck 1995, 111), which functions as an elaborate trope for what Steinbeck wanted to achieve with this novel. The propagandistic thrust of the work was intended to be twofold: to raise the spirit of the conquered and to shatter the morale of the invaders. This is particularly powerfully expressed in the closing chapter, with its startling dramatization of a passage from Plato’s *The Apology of Socrates*. Just before Mayor Orden and his confidant, Doctor Winter, are led away to be shot, they recite Socrates’ final speech to the Athenian court. His prophesy regarding his executors—“punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you”—is easily recognisable as the writer’s direct humanistic idea he wanted to convey: the conqueror will not remain unpunished, and by sending people to their deaths, he will not silence the voices of his victims.

Alongside its fundamental idea about the unconquerable spirit of people struggling for freedom and survival, and the vulnerability of the soldiers in the occupying forces, *The Moon Is Down* provides fictional reflection on several related issues: from its observation of the absurdity of military conflict and critique of military training that, for instance, prepares soldiers for victories but not for defeats, to its condemnation of unquestioning obedience to authority and lamentation of the loss of personal judgement and responsibility. Clearly, although it was conceived and written as propaganda and served its purpose most efficiently, *The Moon Is Down* contains the seeds for many new areas of investigation and continues to show and lobby for rethinking of the world we live in. This fact alone is a compelling rationale for the book’s new readings and circulation. Another is a convincing aesthetic use of landscape, the feature that is typical of Steinbeck’s central works, and is mentioned here only in passing.

THE NOVEL’S SUCCESS AS PROPAGANDA

As mentioned above, in the writer’s homeland, the publication of *The Moon Is Down* was accompanied by mixed feelings, but the book nevertheless sold well, benefitting from selection by the Book of the Month Club. “The ‘craziness’ did not end there,” reports Simmonds; soon after publication, the movie rights to the book were sold to Twentieth Century-Fox for the then record sum of \$300,000, four times more than the same studio had paid three years earlier to obtain the rights to *The Grapes of Wrath* (1995, 77). The controversy the work caused raged for months in major American newspapers and magazines. The book had some defenders, but the majority of critical readers expressed outrage and accused Steinbeck of naivety because of his lenient depiction of the Nazis. According to Coers, some critics even prophesied the novel’s failure as propaganda, claiming that this “soft and dreamy stuff” would demoralise rather than inspire the victims of aggression (1995, xi). Praised until then for his artistic technique and socially enlightened views, Steinbeck suddenly fell from grace for what he considered a well-meaning contribution to the war effort. Three years earlier, following his bold exposure of the contemporary agricultural labour situation in his major work, many had accused him of sympathising with communism; now similar voices charged him with supporting Nazism and questioned his patriotism. The injustice of such criticism rankled with Steinbeck long after. In his 1957 essay “My Short Novels,” he wrote:

The war came on, and I wrote *The Moon Is Down* as a kind of celebration of the durability of democracy. I couldn’t conceive that it would be denounced. I had written of Germans as men, not supermen, and this was considered a very weak attitude to take. I couldn’t make much sense out of this, and it seems absurd now that we know the Germans were men, and thus fallible, even defeatable. (Steinbeck 1957, 38)

In occupied Western Europe and Scandinavia, on the other hand, *The Moon Is Down* was met with an extraordinarily affirmative, even euphoric response, which demonstrates that Steinbeck was right about what would work as effective propaganda. The idea that there was no possibility for the invader to defeat peoples who shared common commitments was assurance of the sort that the people in occupied countries and those who had escaped German occupation wanted to hear. In Benson’s terms, history proved that the critics were wrong on nearly every count, except that the book was artistically not among Steinbeck’s best achievements (499). Despite the Nazis’ attempts to prevent the book from being translated and disseminated, it was “smuggled into the occupied countries, copied, mimeographed, printed on hand presses in cellars” and sometimes “hand-written on

scrap paper and tied together with twine,” a member of Danish resistance revealed in 1942 (Benson 499). They did not feel the novel treated them favourably: mere possession of the book led to an automatic death sentence (Ibid.). As Coers relates with great thoroughness, in France, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, the book was so popular that sales of illegal editions provided funds for these countries’ respective resistance movements. The French clandestine edition of 1944 ran to fifteen hundred copies, which was the largest single edition to leave the Parisian underground press during the war. In Norway and Sweden, it was published in remarkable quantities even after the war (1995, xiii).

The Moon Is Down also enjoyed popularity in neutral Switzerland, but there the officials omitted all passages indirectly identifying Germany and the German army to “avoid displeasing their powerful neighbour” (Coers 1995, xiv). During the war, it was the most commonly acclaimed work of American literature in the former Soviet Union, although Russian critics denounced it as “mediocre and unrealistic” (Coers 1995, xx). During his visit to Florence in the 1950s, Steinbeck learned that the novel was also secretly translated and disseminated by members of the resistance in some Axis countries. Between 1943 and 1946, the book was published four times in Chinese translation; the Chinese immediately recognised its potential value as propaganda in their fight against the Japanese, who had claimed large tracts of China. Perhaps the greatest single proof of the novel’s significance and popularity was the gesture of King Haakon VII of Norway, who in 1946 awarded Steinbeck with the Liberty Cross for his significant contribution to the country’s liberation movement.

Several critics have attempted to explain divergent responses to the novel in wartime Europe and Asia, on the one hand, and in the United States, on the other. Referring to Jean-Paul Sartre’s claim that “readers can have no true understanding of a literary work unless they know who the author is writing for” (115), Coers draws attention to a similar controversy that surrounded the novel *The Silence of the Sea* by Jean Bruller, a member of the French resistance. The book succeeded as propaganda in France but found a hostile readership in French people living abroad (Coers 1995, xxii). Like Steinbeck, Bruller avoided the crude oversimplification typical of most wartime propaganda; for his compatriots, who were in daily contact with the invader, to “stereotype all Germans as ogres” would have been unrealistic (Ibid.). Roland Barthes has similarly overthrown criticism that disregards the reader, claiming that a “text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (257).

Steinbeck may have been right in his perception of the general character of invading soldiers, not portraying them as despotic and brutal oppressors, observes Benson, but since he had not yet experienced the atrocities of war at first hand, he had only an indirect notion of it. When more than twenty years later, he reported

from South Vietnam, witnessing the horrifying reality of the conflict in progress, such “biological distancing failed him” (1003). Be that as it may, *The Moon Is Down* had a huge impact as Allied propaganda in Nazi-occupied Europe and continues to speak with reassurance to the masses worldwide who defend independence and democracy in the face of dark adversity.

CONCLUSION

On several occasions, Steinbeck expressed his view that too much praise he had received for some of his work might lead to an “automatic rejection of whatever else he would produce of a different kind (Benson 497). *The Moon Is Down*, published after *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was already recognised as one of the most accomplished novels of the decade, if not of the half-century, proved his fears. The new novel, for which readers had great expectations, signalled a shift in Steinbeck’s thematic orientation, and seemed to have nothing in common with its powerful predecessor. Written in haste and “partly by dictation,” it is admittedly not a masterpiece (Benson 498). However, and despite numerous attacks launched by critics particularly on the account of what they saw as its unrealistic presentation of war, the book significantly raised the morale of readers in occupied Europe and Asia and thus accomplished what its creator had intended. In Simmonds’ terms, “it had never been Steinbeck’s purpose to people the novel with the sort of stock Nazis most readers regarded as the norm.” The writer’s approach was “more subtle and wiser,” emphasising the importance of knowing the enemy, his strengths and weaknesses (1995, 80).

Several early reviewers predicted that *The Moon Is Down* would not survive the crisis that created it. Despite its huge success as propaganda, the novel transcends the time and space it describes and creates visions of broader significance. Uncovering as it does profound and often unsettling truths about war and human nature, and exploring how an individual should face and survive political and moral crises, it remains a source of inspiration and knowledge well worth exploring. Given that such crises continue to unfold, it seems unlikely that the book will soon lose its ability to capture new audiences.

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“Ljudje nočejo biti okupirani, zato ne bodo”: trajna privlačnost romana *The Moon Is Down*

Prispevek se ukvarja z romanom *The Moon Is Down* (1942) ameriškega Nobelovega nagrajenca Johna Steinbecka, ki mu je že v letu prvega izida sledila priredba za gledališče, leto kasneje pa še filmska upodobitev. V pisateljevi domovini je roman sprožil val nezadovoljstva, še posebej pri tistih bralcih, ki so z nestrpnostjo pričakovali delo v maniri pisateljeve največje uspešnice, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Steinbeck je roman zasnoval in napisal kot propagandno delo; kot takšno je med drugo svetovno vojno učinkovito služilo svojemu namenu. V prispevku zagovarjam stališče, da pisateljevi pogledi niso niti časovno niti geografsko zamejeni, zato je delu potrebno nameniti več kritiške pozornosti. Čeprav roman odseva zablode, travme in strahove nekega zgodovinskega obdobja, bralca kar sili v razmislek o današnjem svetu v stanju konfliktov ter spodbuja nova spoznanja, še posebej idejo o nepremagljivi moči človekovega duha v boju za svobodo, demokracijo in obstoj. To pa je tisto, kar danes bodri prebivalce v Ukrajini, Gazi in drugje.

Ključne besede: John Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down*, umetnost in propaganda, odmevnost romana, odporniško gibanje

The Paradox of Historical Fiction: a Plaidoyer for Fictionality in Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*

Lea Košmrlj

Abstract

In light of the fact/fiction divide, this paper delves into the literary genre of historical fiction for young adults and re-examines the disputed boundaries between fact and fiction. Exploring Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, a work of historical fiction for young adults about life in Nazi-occupied Denmark, this discussion addresses the paradoxical nature of historical fiction: it is the *fictional* elements of historical fiction that play the crucial part in bringing *historical* facts closer to the young adult reader.

Keywords: historical fiction, young adult literature, Lois Lowry, *Number the Stars*, fact and fiction

"It is only if fiction is identified with writing about imaginary beings and literature identified with fiction that the relation between history and literature must be seen as little more than an opposition between the real world (past and present) and fantasy, dreams, daydreams, and other similar phantasmatic activities [...]" (White 2014, xii)

INTRODUCTION

Fact and *fiction* are often viewed as two diametrically opposed terms. In the case of historical fiction, factual, hard data competes with non-factual, fictional parts of the work that are a product of a writer's imagination. In the relentless rivalry between the two, which one prevails? Is it fiction that governs the text, or is it history that is the basis of a successful work of historical fiction (Akman 86)? When it comes to historical fiction, it often seems that a book's main objective is to convey historical information, and its quality mostly dependent on how well it succeeds in doing so.

In young adult fiction, the fact/fiction dichotomy is particularly pressing. The *fact/fiction divide*, which is still a matter of dispute, seems to have led to a *history/literature divide*, and by strictly separating the latter two, there remains little room for the genre of historical fiction to affirm itself as a reliable source of knowledge and an accurate portrayal of the past (see White 2014). The article explores the fact/fiction and history/literature divides in the present conceptual frameworks of young adult historical fiction. By examining Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, an acclaimed work of historical fiction for young adults set against the backdrop of World War II in Denmark, the article seeks to challenge the presumption that the historical elements in a work of historical fiction are subordinate to its fictional parts. On the contrary, the article argues that fictional elements play a crucial part in evoking a believable and engaging portrayal of the past. The demands that a work of historical fiction "smells right, [...] feels right," and that "the snap and tang of the past are communicated effectively" (De Groot 14) are fulfilled precisely by building an immersive fictional frame around historical facts. Therein lies the paradox of historical fiction: it is the fictional elements of the work that bring history closer to the young adult reader, and that are the key to bridging the gap between the past and the present.

THE FACT/FICTION DICHOTOMY IN HISTORICAL FICTION

The literary genre of historical fiction is often under attack for being a "secondary form" of history (Smiley), even "impure" and "vulgar" (O'Connell 506), and therefore an inadequate medium for conveying historical facts. Such accusations

mostly attack the narrative elements, a priori assumed to be fictional elements of literature which *dry history*, a presentation of historical facts in a strictly informative manner, purportedly does not contain and which, by consequence, make historical fiction more *fiction* than *history* (Hollien 5). Paradoxically, literary critics acknowledge historical fiction's educational function, but often to the detriment of its aesthetic value. It therefore seems to offend common sense to shelve a work of historical fiction either as pure fiction or a history book, and this is precisely what prevents the genre from receiving more serious attention in either discipline (Rehberger 59). Before examining the fact/fiction dichotomy in Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, a brief historical overview of the debate is needed.

In today's historiography, non-narrative, analytical, and descriptive procedures prevail, whereas the narrative mode is scarcely used and mostly limited to providing specific, often personal examples and illustrations. The limited utility of narration in historical writing has, at least in part, to do with doubts about its ability to accurately represent the past (White 2010, 273). It is worth noting that this was not always the case. As Aristotle famously writes in *Poetics*, poetry "is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (IX). History as a discipline used to convey its lessons in the form of stories and exerted a strong moral component; historical narratives of ancient Greek scholars like Homer and Sophocles recounted both factual information and didactic, moral lessons (Rodwell 173). The *history versus fiction* debate is thus far from novel and has existed from at least ancient Greece onwards (Burke 169). It was as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century that history moved away from its origins in rhetoric and story-telling, and was transformed into a positivist, utilitarian science postulating objective facts about the past, while historical literature became its deficient, non-referential counterpart (White 2014, 10; 2014, 12–13). In classical narratology and literary theory, the *fictional* narrative was "hypostatized as narrative par excellence, or as the model for all narratives whatsoever" (Genette et al. 755), whereas the possibility of a *factual* narrative, a term introduced by Genette as recently as 1991, remained largely overlooked (Löschnigg 2021, 270). The narrative mode in general therefore came to be viewed in historical writing as more of a necessary evil than the norm, one which often triggers the association of a mythic, religious, pseudoscientific, or fictional text rather than a proper empirical reflection of history (White 2010, 273–74). Thus, the concept of *historical fiction* grew into an irresolvable opposition between *history* and *fiction*, with "one [being] a metonym for truth and the other for falsehoods" (Stocker 69).

It was only in the twentieth century that the fact/fiction divide began to shake at its foundations. It became increasingly clear that the problem impinges not

only on history and literary theory but on fundamentals of ontology, epistemology, cultural hermeneutics, and science (Tamura 151–52). Pitfalls of narration in historiography were raised by scholars such as Paul Ricœur, Paul Veyne, Georg Lukács, and Hayden White, and narratologists such as Käte Hamburger and Dorrit Cohn later turned to topics of factual narration, markers of fictionality and cultural hermeneutics (Löschnigg 1999, pa. 1; Korthals Altes 158). Gérard Genette postulated in his essay “Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative” that “historians do on occasion invent details or arrange ‘intrigues,’ and novelists do on occasion draw inspiration from topical events” (757), while Lukács was one of the first to examine the genre of historical fiction in *The Historical Novel* (1937). By arguing that historical writing cannot lay claim to objectivity because it is structurally identical to fictional representations of the past, Hayden White unequivocally took historiography off of the factual pedestal (Doran xxvi). White paved the way for the narrativist school of thought with his seminal work *Metahistory* (1973) (Korhonen 11), in which he argued that historical writing and literary writing display much the same structure at the level of representation—that of a narrative (Doran xxvi), and that a narratological order is imposed upon past events even in historical writing by way of *emplotment* (White 1973, 2014, 7). On these grounds, White repeatedly challenged the misconceived divide which surfaced in the nineteenth century and which equated history with fact and literature with fiction (White 2014, 17; Stocker 69). At the same time, he questioned historiography’s claim to complete objectivity and defended literature’s ability to deal with the past. His work marks a turn to narrative in the field (Korhonen 11), but has faced considerable criticism coming from both literary theorists and historiographers (Korhonen 13; see also Chorell; Lorenz). Postmodernist thought has thus shown that the domains of history and fiction, and by extension of fact and fiction, “are neither so far apart nor so homogeneous as they might appear” (Genette et al. 772).

HISTORICAL FICTION: HISTORY AND/OR FICTION?

For the present at least, the contestable history/fiction dichotomy continues to reign supreme in the domain of historical fiction (Addey 421). In everyday life, ontological realism is our best bet (Schaeffer 2.1). It is evident to us that certain events did take place, that certain people really did live, and that certain actions were carried out in the past—notwithstanding history’s interpretative nature and epistemological concerns (see also Brown). We intuitively establish a correlation between the reliability of a historical narrative and the amount of historical research behind it. Moreover, the commonsensical option of drawing a clear line between fact and fiction allows us to determine the work’s educational

value. Though his work has been repeatedly charged with historical relativism, White himself does not equate history (or historical fiction) with fiction either (Stocker 71), but rather with a kind of narration, and believes that reliable historical knowledge *can* be achieved (Korhonen 12). He acknowledges the ontological difference between factual and fictional components, and defines historical facts as “factual (singular existential) statements” (qtd. in Doran xxvi), which constitute the unprocessed historical record. However, the historical discourse which emerges from it does so by way of narration, and thus inevitably requires the author to make moral as well as aesthetic decisions (Roth xiii). White sees this as the point in which historical and literary writing coincide (Korhonen 12), and which demonstrates that the nineteenth-century separation of history and literature (but not fact and fiction) is artificial (Stocker 70).

Preserving the fact/fiction dichotomy is inevitable and necessary, especially when it comes to young adult literature, to avoid the traps of epistemology, relativism, and similar questions that are beyond the scope of this paper, and to be able to determine the work’s educational value. This certainly holds true for *Number the Stars*, as exemplified by Groce (2009) and discussed later. At the same time, the divide is detrimental to the genre of historical fiction, because it also maintains and perpetuates the literature/history divide and the *literature equals fiction, history equals fact* stance. Since the genre is inevitably a blend between fact and fiction (Akman 90), a work of historical fiction requires a delicate interplay of the two domains. In book reviews, however, the balance is often tipped heavily in favour of historical facts. Great demands are placed on historical accuracy (Peabody 33), while less attention is paid to the fictional aspects of the work (Addey 421–422). A work of historical fiction is often first met with suspicion towards possible fictional elements and scrutinised to determine just how many of them can be found in the work. If there are many, the entire work is condemned for being historically inaccurate at worst, or the fictional elements are ascribed no purpose and left unattended to at best (Addey 421). The answer to the question posed earlier about whether *fact* governs *fiction* in historical fiction is therefore a resounding yes: authors are expected to elaborate on which parts of the work are factual and which fictional in the fore- or afterword, and sometimes outright defend themselves for filling in slots where historically accurate information is available with fictional elements. Taking such poetic licence is often deemed a result of poor research or a factual faux pas (421). Authors contend with book reviews that “regularly emphasize the authenticity, the affective impact, of historical fiction” (De Groot 14), and suffer from what Maria Margaronis labels “anxiety of authenticity” (2008).

IN DEFENCE OF FICTIONALITY

Most authors of historical fiction, Lois Lowry included, are ‘mosaic makers’ (Ad-dey 425) that construct a story on the basis of a limited, in many respects incomplete historical record. Missing parts are filled with “multiple small elements (such as words, events, situations, characters) to create a bigger picture” (428). But what exactly are the missing parts, and in what relation do these ‘small elements’ stand to the past?

Hayden White argues in his last book *The Practical Past* (2014) that contemporary historical writing can only ever paint a fragmentary picture of the past, because it is limited to empirical methods like investigating documentary evidence, and to dealing with topics that are suitable for such analysis (xiv). By drawing on British philosopher Michael Oakeshott’s (1983) distinction between *the historical past* and *the practical past*, White proposes that the totality of the historical past can best be captured precisely through literary writing. The historical past belongs to the domain of professional historiography and deals with past events, institutions, persons, politics, and religion; the practical past includes topics like love, work, and suffering, which cannot be accessed and reconstructed directly and objectively, and are thus left unaccounted for in historiography, but are topics that literary writing can explore (xiii–xv). In short, White argues that historical writing cannot reify the past in the way novels or witness literature, which have often been blatantly disregarded as merely fiction, can (28–29), and that “professional history is not an adequate way of relating to the past” (Ahlskog 375). He makes the distinction between the practical and the historical past not only for the purpose of discussing the truth value of historical or literary writing, but primarily to open up the practical and ethical dimension of history. As opposed to the historical past, the practical past is didactic. It possesses present-day relevance by offering us parallels to current situations and problems, and explores ethical and moral concerns—hence the term ‘practical’ (White 2014, 10), much in the Nietzschean spirit of understanding history as a guiding force for the present and future (see Nietzsche 1874).

The practical past tackles topics which “are accessible as objects of practical study only by way of imaginative hypothesization” (White 2014, xv), for example love, friendship and everyday matters, and pieces of the mosaic that authors of historical fiction include to create an immersive atmosphere of the past. This yet again calls for a reevaluation of the term fiction merely “as a kind of invention or construction based on hypothesis rather than a manner of writing or thinking focused on purely imaginary or fantastic entities” (xii), and sheds new light on literary representations of the past. Historical fiction’s fictional elements need not be entirely fabricated. In fact, they can complement, enhance, and add validity to the factual components to lend a historical narrative the dimension it lacks. As White writes:

The practical past, however, *is* amenable to a literary—which is to say, an artistic or poetic—treatment that is anything but “fictional” in the sense of being purely imaginary or fantastic in kind. A literary treatment of the past—as displayed in various instances of the modern(ist) novel [...]—has the real past as its ultimate referent [...], but focuses on those aspects of the real past which the historical past cannot deal with. (White 2014, xiv)

In *The Practical Past*, White offers firm grounds for the validity of representing history through literature, and once again makes room for historical and literary writing to enter into dialogue. For the purposes of this paper, the concepts of practical and historical past will be borrowed to examine the interplay of factual and fictional elements in historical fiction. On the condition that authorial responsibility and academic rigour serve as the basis for tying a historical narrative to a historical record, White’s distinction effectively lends itself to exploring the fact/fiction divide. The practical past begins where the historical record as historiography knows it ends, and where the historical record ends is when authors of historical fiction are required to bring in their ‘small elements’ to fill in the empty space in a historical narrative.

A similar divide to that of the practical and historical past is suggested by Michael Hollien (4), who distinguishes between *dry history* and *narrative history*. The former conveys to the reader “*what-it-was* and *why-it-was*” and consists of impersonal historical facts, and the latter centres upon a personal and particular experience, usually of “ordinary people living through an extraordinary event,” and tells the reader “*what-it-was-like* to experience” (Hollien 7). While Hollien rejects the educational value of narrative history (5), there are parallels that can be drawn with White’s divide. The ‘*what-it-was-like* to experience’, much like the practical past, is literary, imaginative and fictional, but it can nonetheless be historical; not in the sense that it masquerades as fact, but rather in the sense that it brings the reader closer to a better, more thorough understanding of the historical background.

The fact/fiction dichotomy therefore persists, but an entirely new kind of duality becomes apparent: the literary elements at issue are no longer unbound from the facts and the factual narrative or useless for imagining the past reality. They still do not purport to be historical facts, just like historical fiction does not purport to be an entirely factual narrative, but by means of “imaginative hypothesization” (White 2014, xv), as opposed to invention *ex nihilo*, they facilitate the factual part of the narrative and take on a crucial immersive role. Susan Peabody, a writer herself, sees the historical novel as “a metaphor for the past” (34). Drawing on Aristotle’s discussion of metaphor in *Rhetoric*, she concludes that one of historical fiction’s abilities (and ultimate aims) is to render a convincing, comprehensible picture of the past. Confined by methodology and practice, this is what historical writing cannot do (Peabody 33–34).

The immersiveness and immediacy of historical fiction are particularly significant when it comes to young adult literature. Right after utopian and dystopian fiction, books with realistic and historical elements rank highest on the reading lists of young adults (Vats 9). Weaving historical facts into an engrossing narrative makes them “of more immediate consequences to a young reader than when presented in lists and pseudo-prose collections, as in a text book” (qtd. in Rodwell 153). Bullet points with historical dates, information about war alliances, and descriptions of triumphs, failures, and atrocities are indeed what young adults will typically encounter in their history books, where the human perspective is left unaccounted for. In historical fiction, however, the young adult learner is no longer “the outsider, looking in” (Nawrot 343). This observation is not merely a claim a reader of historical fiction makes on the basis of their subjective feeling, but is also backed up empirically (see Nawrot 343). The critical variable that distinguishes historical fiction from ‘plain history’ is thus precisely the practical past, the “what-it-was-like,” the human point of view. The past cannot take shape in the minds of readers if it is not given the form of modern immediacy; it must, in its fictional aspects, transcend its historiographical framework. Understanding the importance of the practical past in young adult historical fiction, we can now turn our attention to Lois Lowry’s *Number the Stars*.

A CASE IN POINT: LOIS LOWRY’S *NUMBER THE STARS*

Number the Stars is a historical novel for young adults by Lois Lowry, a prolific and internationally acclaimed American author of young adult fiction. Published in 1989, the novel was immediately well-received and won the esteemed Newbery Medal. Against the backdrop of World War II, Lowry’s *Number the Stars* presents the life of a Danish girl named Annemarie Johansen and her family’s valiant efforts to aid her Jewish friend Ellen Rosen in escaping Nazi persecution. Ellen’s family is forced to separate and flee the country; as the parents go into hiding, the Johansens provide sanctuary to Ellen and pretend that she is Annemarie’s sister. Along with Annemarie’s uncle Henrik, who is a fisherman in the north of the country, the Johansens help the Rosens and four other members of the Jewish community flee to neutral Sweden.

In brief, the historical background of the novel, which clearly shows the book’s narrative depth and historical validity: on April 9, 1940, German forces marched into the hitherto neutral Denmark, in violation of The Danish-German Non-Aggression Pact, and occupied the country. Outnumbered and insufficiently equipped, the Danes surrendered immediately. Resistance groups formed shortly after, yet active resistance was minimal and made little headway at the beginning of occupation (Holmskov Schlüter; Bülow, “The Occupation of Denmark”).

Recognising the necessity of adapting to life under German control, both the Danish citizens and the government more or less peacefully tolerated the German presence. The Danish government remained in power, refusing to participate in the genocide, but did provide the occupying forces with food and other resources. The monarch, King Christian X, remained in Denmark. It was not until 1943 that resistance sabotage actions grew stronger and became more frequent (Bülow, "The Occupation of Denmark"). By August 1943, the Nazi persecution in Denmark grew more severe and Danish Jews faced imminent arrest, relocation, and ultimately death. The events that followed are one of the most touching untold stories of human compassion in World War II. An effective nation-wide Danish counter-operation ensued: the majority of the Jewish community went into hiding and managed to escape to Sweden by fishing boats. German soldiers raided homes and boats to find them, yet mostly with little success; the Danes hid the Jews in their houses, churches, attics, and small stowaways under the boat decks. Out of around 7,500 members of Denmark's Jewish community, 284 were found on the night of October 1, 1943. The rest found shelter in hospitals, churches, attics, in the homes of complete strangers, and then managed to reach neutral Sweden by ferries and fishing boats (Holmskov Schlüter; Bülow, "The Rescue of the Danish Jews").

Number the Stars offers the young adult reader an overall historically accurate, well-researched account of the Jewish persecution in Denmark and also draws on multiple non-fictional sources to render it authentic: the diaries of underground Resistance Movement members, various written accounts, and stories of both the rescued Jews and the Danish rescuers (Groce 8–9). The author herself states in the foreword that, while the protagonist and her family are mostly a product of her imagination, the rest is thoroughly researched and historically accurate non-fiction:

Annemarie Johansen is a child of my imagination, though she grew there from the stories told to me by my friend Annelise Platt, to whom this book is dedicated, who was herself a child in Copenhagen during the long years of the German occupation. [...] So I created little Annemarie and her family, set them down in a Copenhagen apartment on a street where I have walked myself, and imagined their life there against the real events of 1943. (Lowry 133)

Annemarie, the protagonist of the novel inspired by conversations with Annelise Platt, should be understood as a vehicle aiding the book's practicality and conveying *what-it-was-like* to experience World War II in Denmark, which makes the book inextricably bound to the real historical account. The protagonist is therefore not simply freely invented, but carefully constructed by means of hypothesising in order to fit the historical backdrop:

I had always been fascinated and moved by Annelise's descriptions not only of the personal deprivation that her family and their neighbors suffered during those years, and the sacrifices they made, but even more by the greater picture she drew for me of the courage and integrity of the Danish people [...]. (Lowry 133)

In the first few chapters, Lowry paints a detailed portrait of the Johansen family, particularly Annemarie to make her as relatable a character to young adult readers as possible. She constructs a multi-faceted child who is naive and wary, inquisitive and contemplative, resolute and hesitant, brave and fearful all at once; a girl who loves playing with her younger sister and rolls her eyes at her naivety, has a best friend, likes fairy tales and making up stories herself—much the same traits young adult readers themselves might have. Throughout the book, she attempts to make sense of the war and the world around her, and the reader who follows her on her fictional journey is perplexed with similar questions as she is, or as Annelise Platt might well have been in 1943:

Later, once more in her bed beside the warm cocoon of her sister, Annemarie remembered how her father had said, three years before, that he would die to protect the king. That her mother would, too. And Annemarie, seven years old, had announced proudly that she also would. Now she was ten, with long legs and no more silly dreams of pink-frosted cupcakes. And now she—and all the Danes—were to be bodyguard for Ellen, and Ellen's parents, and all of Denmark's Jews. Would she die to protect them? Truly? Annemarie was honest enough to admit, there in the darkness, to herself, that she wasn't sure. For a moment she felt frightened. But she pulled the blanket up higher around her neck and relaxed. (Lowry 25–26)

Construing the reality around her, Annemarie most often turns to her parents or her uncle for guidance, and asks questions young adults would quite possibly pose as well. While they are open to discuss such matters with her, they are reluctant to reveal to her the full extent of war crimes and atrocities and only gradually, upon her insisting, explain to her the persecution of Jews, the Resistance movement and the Nazi ideology:

But Annemarie heard Mama and Papa talk, sometimes at night, about the news they received that way: news of sabotage against the Nazis, bombs hidden and exploded in the factories that produced war materials, and industrial railroad lines damaged so that the goods couldn't be transported. And she knew what Resistance meant. Papa had explained, when she overheard the word and asked. The Resistance fighters were Danish people—no one knew who, because they were very secret—who were determined to bring harm to the Nazis however they could. They damaged the German trucks and cars, and bombed their factories. They were very brave. Sometimes they were caught and killed. (Lowry 8)

It is through Annemarie's questioning, overhearing and speculating that the young reader gets a grasp of the past events, both on a social and individual scale, and the complexities of living in times of adversity. In the paper "Authenticating 'Number the Stars' Using Nonfiction Resources," Robin D. Groce puts forward three historical domains that the work accurately reflects in more detail: geography, events, and people (6). Factual information about these topics is conveyed to the young adult reader mostly through Annemarie's conversations with her father. While the dialogues are, naturally, made up by the author, they contain valuable descriptions of Denmark's topography, King Christian X's historical persona, Danish government's non-cooperative stance towards Nazi Germany, and geographic features of Northern Europe (Groce 6). The character of a 10-year-old who seeks out and absorbs all this information is much closer to the young adult reader than impersonal expository writing on the topic.

The book's linear plot relies on Harold Flender's *Rescue in Denmark*, a factual account about rescue groups in Denmark based on the testimony of David Melchior, a member of the Danish Jewish community, whose father was the chief rabbi of Denmark (Groce 6). The real-life events of September 29, 1943 are elaborated to Annemarie by her father and set the story of the rescue of Danish Jews in motion:

This morning, at the synagogue, the rabbi told his congregation that the Nazis have taken the synagogue lists of all the Jews. [...] They plan to arrest all the Danish Jews. They plan to take them away. And we have been told that they may come tonight. [...] They call it 'relocation'. (Lowry 35–36)

The effective nation-wide Danish counter-operation that ensued is described through Annemarie's perspective and skilfully zoomed in on a single fictional Danish family, which manages to bring several Jewish refugees to neutral Sweden. Multiple non-fictional resources were used as the basis for descriptions of the Danish Resistance movement, Nazi officers, hiding places and fishing boats that brought members of the Jewish community to safety (Groce 7–8). However, it is the literary, artistic elements around them that give the novel the power of "making [history] much more effective, much more 'historical', more 'humane', and thus, paradoxically, truer to reality" (Akman 91). The *historical* dimension of the past is achieved by thorough research; the *practical*, human dimension is conveyed by means of the book's fictional parts like Annemarie's thoughts, dialogues, and everyday situations. Annemarie is, apart from war atrocities, faced with the loss of a family member, the suffering of a best friend, and the struggles of growing up. All of this cannot be reconstructed historically, but is part and parcel of the real past—of being human then and now. This is ultimately what helps the story surpass its historiographical framework and gives it power beyond merely

conveying factual information. By discussing topics like the value of cross-cultural friendships, the importance of inter-religious tolerance, and the dynamics in interpersonal relationships, the novel gains the dimension of the practical past, and thus an immersive present-day relevance:

It was an odd word: pride. Annemarie looked at the Rosens, sitting there, wearing the misshapen, ill-fitting clothing, holding ragged blankets folded in their arms, their faces drawn and tired. She remembered the earlier, happier times: Mrs. Rosen, her hair neatly combed and covered, lighting the Sabbath candles, saying the ancient prayer. [...] She remembered Ellen in the school play, moving confidently across the stage, her gestures sure, her voice clear. All of those things, those sources of pride—the candlesticks, the books, the daydreams of theater—had been left behind in Copenhagen. They had nothing with them now; there was only the clothing of unknown people for warmth, the food from Henrik's farm for survival, and the dark path ahead, through the woods, to freedom. (Lowry 93–94)

The story of *Number the Stars* operates at once at the external, referential level which abounds in factual information, and at the level of the (mostly) fictional protagonist's rich internal life, which is the key element that ultimately grants the reader access to a past world and helps them learn about the historical happenings. Annemarie and her family are simultaneously a *fictional* construct of the author, and what is ultimately *real* and comes alive in the mind of the young adult reader. This is what once again leads us to arrive at the paradox of historical fiction: it is through fictional characters, their thoughts, everyday situations, and conversations—their hypothesised reality—that young adults immerse themselves into the past, and are able to take from the book a history lesson about Danish Resistance in World War II.

CONCLUSION

Authors of historical fiction for young adult readers contend with the task of piecing together the mosaic of the past, and the quality of their work is contingent upon their finding a fine balance between both factual and fictional elements. This paper advocated for greater appreciation of the fictional elements, offered grounds for their immersive and authenticity-granting capacities by introducing the concept of the *practical past*, and suggested a shift in the definition of *fictionalising* towards what Hayden White terms *imaginative hypothesization*. In historical fiction, literary elements are thus at once a means for teaching history and reanimating the past, and an end in and of itself with literary and aesthetic value. A case in point in this respect is *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, an award-winning

historical novel for young adults. The fictional protagonist Annemarie Johansen, her family, and Lowry's depictions of their practical past give young adult readers a window into a past world of Nazi-occupied Denmark, and thus contribute to the contemporary discussion of the Holocaust.

The observation that fiction plays as important a role as fact does not, naturally, diminish the importance of the moral and ethical questions that authors of historical fiction are confronted with: "How much—and what kinds of things—is it permissible to invent? [...] What are the moral implications of taking someone else's experience, especially the experience of suffering and pain, and giving it the gloss of form" (Margaronis 138)? To say that the ethical, epistemological and ideological pitfalls of historical fiction can in some measure be mitigated is to assume both an idealist and a relativist stance at once. However, it might be one worth taking if we believe that historical fiction for young adults can, in fact, serve as a conduit for historical understanding. With thorough historical research and intellectual responsibility as the prerequisite, authentication procedures, and parental and teacher guidance, boundaries between fact and fiction become clearer, and the two can, somewhat paradoxically, seamlessly blend with one another in a work of historical fiction to create an engaging narrative for young adult readers. The paper emphasised the value of the fictional elements in historical fiction, for it is the fictional frame that ultimately, albeit somewhat paradoxically, bridges the gap between the past and the present, and allows young adult readers to engage with the past and to gain historical knowledge from a work of historical fiction.

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Paradoks zgodovinske fikcije: v zagovor fikcije v romanu *Number the Stars*

Članek se v luči dihotomije med dejanskostjo in fikcijo ukvarja z literarno zvrstjo zgodovinske fikcije za mlade bralce in preosmišlja meje med dejanskim in izmišljenim. Osredinja se na zgodovinski roman za mlade bralce *Number the Stars* avtorice Lois Lowry, ki opisuje življenje na Danskem pod nemško okupacijo. Članek raziskuje paradoksalno naravo zgodovinske fikcije: prav izmišljeni elementi so tisti ključni del zgodovinske fikcije, ki mladim bralcem in bralkam približa zgodovinska dejstva.

Ključne besede: zgodovinska fikcija, mladinska literatura, Lois Lowry, *Number the Stars*, dejstva in fikcija

The Good, the Evil, and the Morally Ambiguous: The Demon Crowley in Terry Pratchett's and Neil Gaiman's Postmodern Fantasy *Good Omens* and Its Television Adaptation

Amy Kennedy

Abstract

In their postmodern fantasy novel *Good Omens*, Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman create a compelling case for a combination of good and evil in all their characters, but one character is of particular interest: the Demon Crowley. Moral ambiguity marks both the novel and its namesake television series *Good Omens*. I will examine the moral issues raised by the written and on-screen Crowleys, and the overall understanding the reader or viewer gains of his character. I also examine the intertextual use of the name "Crowley" and its connotations, ending on the question of whether the television series is an effective adaptation of Pratchett's and Gaiman's novel and its morally ambiguous message.

Keywords: postmodern fantasy, moral ambiguity, intertextuality, adaptation

INTRODUCTION

Good and evil are conventional binaries that do not usually coexist, either in a person or a moment in time, in our traditional understanding and view of the world. Since they are opposites, the question arises of who or what embodies good and who or what embodies evil, and whether these are mutually exclusive. In the novel *Good Omens*, Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman create a compelling case for a combination of these traits, upending assumptions of humans, angels, demons, Heaven, and Hell as black-and-white, and they construct the characters in a substantially morally ambiguous world.¹ Moral ambiguity permeates the novel, as well as the subsequent television series *Good Omens*, but to what end? What understanding will the reader or viewer gain from the combination of good and evil in the characters in the narrative? In examining the character of Crowley in the novel and the television series, directed by Douglas MacKinnon, I will explore issues raised by the written and on-screen Crowleys, and consider whether the novel has been successfully adapted to the screen to convey the ambiguity central to the character and his role. I will also examine the intertextual use of the name “Crowley” and its connection to the real-life Aleister Crowley (1875-1947).² Another question worth asking is whether the series is an effective adaptation of Pratchett’s and Gaiman’s postmodern fantasy in an age in which people are increasingly conditioned to a position of moral relativity (Gowans 2004, 2021).

MORAL AMBIGUITY AND OUR CONFLICTING RESPONSES TO CROWLEY

In “Literature, Moral Reflection and Ambiguity,” Craig Taylor discusses texts that elicit conflicting responses in the reader and the moral understanding these responses aid in creating (80), on the premise that a piece of writing may construct more than one meaning and that it “may not tend to a definite conclusion, or, in other words, that it may be in the nature of a given work of art that its meaning or meanings may remain ambiguous at the same time as they convey truth” (76). Taylor argues that conflicting responses readers have to morally ambiguous texts do not conceal the overall meaning; rather, our responses tend to make the

1 Gaiman developed a similar theme in *The Sandman* comic book series (1989-1996), later adapted into the television series *Lucifer* (2016-2022) and *The Sandman* (2022-).

2 Crowley has become an icon in modern culture. Ozzy Osbourne’s “Mr. Crowley” (1980), inspired by Aleister Crowley, was ranked the 23rd greatest heavy metal song of all time in a readers’ poll conducted by the Gibson guitar company (<http://www.gibson.com/News-Lifestyle/Features/en-us/top-50-metal-0318-2011.aspx>). Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page was so fascinated by Crowley’s life and work that he bought Crowley’s house (<https://www.boleskinehouse.org/jimmy-page>).

message clearer. In reading a morally ambiguous text “such understanding as we might gain from the work may be revealed through its ambiguity” (76). When readers delve into a narrative with an ambiguous twist ending (like Shirley Jackson’s short story “The Lottery”), or containing a morally ambiguous character like Crowley, we face the challenge of using “our own judgement in making sense for ourselves of our potentially conflicting responses to those characters and events” (79). In examining Crowley in the novel and the TV series, we wonder about the truths the character conveys, and whether the two versions of the character channel the same understanding of the theme. What *is* the overall message of Crowley’s character and his actions?

Crowley’s actions undoubtedly cause conflicting reactions in readers and viewers. Taylor is “interested in the kind of case where, as we might put it, our conflicting emotional responses to the narrative really suggest different ways in which we might fill it in” (79). Crowley is a demon; he should be evil, like his fellow demons, Hastur and Ligor. Our moral response to Crowley depends on the idea that he is a demon; he should be the antagonist, but he is not. He is a relatively reasonable character who aids the angel Aziraphale in trying to prevent Armageddon; the ambiguity surrounding his character is caused by the way Heaven and Hell are portrayed in the novel. Through Crowley and Aziraphale, we come to see the mixing of good and evil in Heaven and Hell. This is Milton’s Lucifer problem: the attractiveness of the instigator, even when what he instigates is self-evidently evil. Margaret Johnson, in “Fallen Faith: Satan as Allegory in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,” argues that Milton’s Satan is the archetype of moral ambiguity:

Milton offers readers the opportunity to see themselves not just in the human characters of Adam and Eve but in Satan as well. He creates the Satan character as a sympathetic one so his audience may readily identify with the turmoil he feels at having lost his faith. (2013, 157)

One way we can “fill in” the narrative is by understanding that Crowley is human-esque because he has been living on Earth for six thousand years. Other demons do not often visit Earth, but for Crowley, Earth is home. In his time here, he has observed humans, dealt with them, learned about their lives, empathized with them (to an extent), and centred his life around human behaviour. He has observed human behaviour and learned how to instigate bad actions and to quietly persuade those teetering on the edge of a bad decision to behave badly. Nevertheless, after spending so much time on the job, he sees that not everyone can be swayed every time they contemplate behaving badly. He has come to realize that humans are not inherently good or evil. This is one of the most important themes explored by theologians and philosophers throughout the history of human thought; Robin Douglass addresses “one of the age-old questions of human

nature: are we naturally good or evil?" (Douglass 2019). Crowley has seen many positive traits and wonderful accomplishments which have nudged his behaviour from what was supposed to be evil to something more human in its fusion of good and evil. The novel hints at this duality within Crowley (and Aziraphale) when Crowley is still the serpent Crawly.³ During their discussion on the topic of man "learning the difference between good and evil" (Pratchett and Gaiman xi), Aziraphale says that this new knowledge must be evil, otherwise Crawly would not have been involved. Aziraphale does not believe it could be possible for Crawly to do good or for his actions to result in something good. The serpent's role is to convert free-floating evil into sin, which is "an offence against a personal Holy God" (Loke 2022, 39). This interaction is mirrored on the following page, when Crawly sarcastically returns the sentiment, saying, "I'm not sure it's actually possible for you to do evil" (xii). Since they are both involved in man's acquisition of this new knowledge, the knowledge must be both good and evil. Crawly's and Aziraphale's interaction sows doubt within the reader regarding the black-and-white nature of demons and angels, since they are both part of something that is born not of pure good or evil, but of a combination of the two.

Another way to "fill in" the narrative is to postulate that Crowley may be the way he is because of Aziraphale's influence. Crowley and Aziraphale are the only ones of their kind to live on Earth. The four horsemen (or in this case, motorcyclists) of the apocalypse are also beings of the order of angel and demon, but they do not appear in the story until the very end. Unlike humans, whose lifetimes pass by quickly compared to their otherworldly timelines, Crowley and Aziraphale are each other's only real company. In Crowley's mind, Aziraphale is "the Enemy, of course. But an enemy for six thousand years now, which made him a sort of friend" (Pratchett and Gaiman 25). The two are not supposed to mingle; they were given their separate tasks by Heaven and Hell, but they began to consort soon after arriving on Earth. In the six-part series, episode three stands out in this regard. The first half of the episode is dedicated to showing the viewer Crowley's and Aziraphale's joint history, the little inside jokes they have accumulated over time, their changing appearance, and their "Arrangement." Over the course of many major historical events, they have saved each other from awkward, even dangerous situations, such as their undercover stint during World War II. They witness the animals entering Noah's Ark, they discuss their understanding of the Crucifixion of Christ, and Crowley even helps Shakespeare with his rendition of Hamlet. At this point in their joint history, in the Globe Theatre, they discuss the upcoming jobs they have been given by Heaven and Hell and the locations of these jobs.

3 A literary antecedent of Crawly/Crowley is Sir Pitt Crawley, the lewd, lascivious, financially and morally bankrupt head of the aristocratic Crawley family in Thackeray's satire of Regency society, *Vanity Fair* (1847–8).

Since both were given tasks to accomplish in the same city, they decide that one of them should simply do both in order to save the other the time and the trip. Heaven and Hell will not know who does the jobs as long as they get done. This “Arrangement” (29), is an open invitation for both to do good and evil deeds. It is not only a case of Aziraphale’s influence on Crowley – Crowley also influences Aziraphale. They help each other, make each other’s lives easier, and seem to enjoy each other’s company, a perception that emerges with greater clarity in the series.

SEEING OR IMAGINING?

Another aspect of Crowley’s character evident in the series is his changing appearance. He and Aziraphale change their clothing based on the time period they are in, but Crowley’s outfits and hairstyles are more adventurous: his style follows the times and he is much “cooler” than Aziraphale. Crowley follows historical trends in the series, but this aspect of his character is not highlighted to such an extent in the novel, where he lives in a modern apartment with all the modern luxuries, because “a sleek computer was the sort of thing Crowley felt that the sort of human he tried to be would have” (Pratchett and Gaiman 2007). This indicates that Crowley does not see himself solely as a demon. Why follow Earthly trends unless you see yourself as belonging there? Crowley’s apartment, with all of his modern appliances, is not simply a demonic charade, since no human ever sets foot in it. He is not trying to trick humans into believing that he is human; he is following trends and furnishing his apartment with the latest technology in order to feel like he fits in – to make himself feel more human.

Aziraphale does not follow trends; he dresses in classic, old-fashioned outfits, but no human becomes suspicious of his old-fashioned ways. His fashion choices do not seem to register with humans as being at all odd. Crowley dresses in current fashion not out of necessity, but of his own wish, which makes him appear more human to viewers of the television series. On the other hand, Crowley’s seeming obsession with human fashion and the latest gadgets could indicate an undertone of vanity or greed, both negative traits emphasizing his and humans’ propensity for being, feeling, and behaving negatively.

In the novel and the series, Crowley talks to the plants in his apartment, whereby he puts “the fear of God into them. More precisely, the fear of Crowley” (207). In the novel, the narrator explains this to us; in the series, the voiceover of God explains it. However, in the series, the viewer can experience Crowley’s outbursts, seeing his expression, his demonic yellow eyes with black slits for pupils, hearing his high-pitched screaming and howling. In this way, the series gives a more vivid picture of Crowley’s moral duality. We see him missing Aziraphale and his company, and their time spent together is emphasized more in the series than in the

novel. In the novel, we know that Crowley is in human form in order to live on Earth, but we also know that he is really a demon in disguise. When reading, the human Crowley is just a shell, a husk wherein a demon resides, black and swirly, like smoke. Since we are not given a visual representation of his human form, his demonic essence is more prevalent than in the series. The on-screen Crowley is more human, his good and bad traits visually more foregrounded by actor David Tennant than they are described in the novel.

Crowley is human-like in his combination of good and evil because he has lived on Earth for six thousand years, and because of Aziraphale's influence. Does his human-ness result from a mix of the two? Does Crowley have the free will to choose moral ambivalence, or is it predetermined? His nature is supposed to be evil, but perhaps just being on Earth is enough to mix the two. Perhaps, insomuch as we see that Heaven is not purely good, what with Metatron and the Archangel wanting Armageddon to happen, and that Hell is not purely evil, since even the Antichrist is a compassionate little boy with a pet Hell Hound that is a cute, fuzzy dog, it makes sense that humans, demons, and angels also exhibit traces of both good and evil. Considering our conflicting moral responses to Crowley, as well as to all of the examples above, what moral understanding do we gain from this narrative?

A BALANCING ACT

Crowley was sent to Earth to cause havoc, to make life difficult for humans, to make them react poorly, rashly, aggressively in everyday situations. Once he succeeds with a particular human, they are sent to Hell. His job is to send as many people there as he can. We should not sympathize with him, or wish him to succeed. As we dive deeper into the narrative, however, Crowley, though still a demon, accrues more positive traits which, in a way, liken him to Aziraphale, but overwhelmingly liken him to us. Although we see some of his actions as evil, we begin to perceive the balance that he and Aziraphale maintain. They may have begun as complete opposites, but each has taken on some of the other's characteristics. They have become friends, and their behaviour and morals have rubbed off on each other. No longer simply an angel and a demon, they are me, they are you, they are everybody. Crowley is "an Angel who did not so much Fall as Saunter Vaguely Downwards" (Pratchett and Gaiman xv). This description gives the reader the feeling that he is not inherently evil: he simply fell in with the wrong crowd. The most important detail leading us to relativize Heaven's and Hell's morality is that both "mostly-good" Aziraphale and "sometimes-evil" Crowley ultimately share the same mission: to save the human race from Armageddon. Our original grouping of good and bad characters shifts, and Crowley, Aziraphale, and

everyone on the side of saving the world become good, while Heaven and Hell, and their occupants, are now evil. The assumption that Angels, Demons, Heaven and Hell are good or evil is now a grey area, the poles of black and white replaced by a spectrum. Here we see Pratchett's and Gaiman's nod to the individual versus the corporate—individuals are generally good (as good as any human can be) and corporations, groups, Heaven and Hell are evil. The image emerges of evil conglomerates working against small actors. In this sense, Crowley is a small actor who, no matter how personally good or bad, is acting for the greater good of all people, demons, angels, and other citizens of the fantasy world of *Good Omens*.

FICTIONAL, BIBLICAL, AND REAL-LIFE CROWLEYS

For readers and viewers, Crowley's morally ambiguous nature may become apparent before they perceive his characteristic mix of good and evil. *Good Omens* contains many intertextual references, including Crowley's name. At the beginning, when Crowley is still Crawly, we see the first reference when he makes an appearance as the snake in the Garden of Eden.⁴ In terms of moral ambiguity, any reader who knows the story of Eden, the snake, and Adam and Eve will come to a conclusion regarding Crawly's character.

When Crawly the snake turns into Crowley, he changes his name and his form. The human Crowley in the narrative has a second intertextual connection, this one to the real-life Aleister Crowley, once "dubbed 'the wickedest man in the world'" (Owen 99). Aleister Crowley founded the Order of the Silver Star in 1907, a magical order that dealt with the learning and application of ritual magic (99), after being blocked from ascending into the higher ranks of another magical order:

Crowley, Cambridge-educated, highly intelligent, and capable of great powers of concentration, advanced quickly through the Grades of the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn. He was contemptuous of the bourgeois mundanity of many of his fellow initiates, impatient with the slow, pedantic methods of the Order, and eager to access the secrets of the cherished Second Order. His advancement, however, was blocked by senior officers, Yeats foremost among them, who were scandalized by Crowley's wild, unpredictable behavior and questionable morals. Crowley subsequently became involved in a bitter power struggle within the Golden Dawn, abandoned it in 1900, went on to study with other teachers, and finally established his own Order of the Silver Star. (103)

4 Genesis 3:14: "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

Like the fictional Crowley, the real-life Crowley was intelligent, driven, contemptuous, impatient, curious, wild, unpredictable, and morally questionable, a man who has been portrayed as “the great outcast and enemy of mainstream modern society” (Urban 8). In his magic dealings, Crowley believed that he had encountered demons (Owen 104), an idea mirrored by Pratchett and Gaiman and transformed so that Crowley actually is a demon.

In “The Sorcerer and His Apprentice: Aleister Crowley and the Exploration of Edwardian Subjectivity,” Alex Owen mentions Crowley’s propensity for disguise and changing his identity:

At Cambridge he had become an ardent Jacobite, changing his name from Alexander to Aleister (a misspelling of its Gaelic equivalent) and afterward adopted the spurious persona Boleskine, a Highland laird. Shortly after his initiation into Dawn, he had taken a flat in London under the name of Count Svareff and enjoyed posing as a young Russian nobleman. In 1904 Crowley decided to pass himself off as a Persian prince, Prince Chioa Khan. (116, 117)

Although it appears that Crowley changed identities for fun, it is also likely that he did so in order to escape his family connection to trade; he fantasized about coming from an aristocratic background (117). This changing of and playing with identity, appearance, and behaviour is another link between Aleister Crowley and the fictional Crowley. Readers and viewers of *Good Omens* will notice these connections, and will understand the fictional Crowley as the biblical snake and all of the connotations brought by that image, as Aleister Crowley and the undertone his image provides, and as a mix of the two.

DO THE NOVEL AND THE SERIES CONVEY THE SAME MESSAGE?

Good Omens portrays Earth, Heaven, and Hell as grey or as a fragmented black-and-white; the question arises whether the medium of writing and that of the screen portray the same shade of grey, whether, in this sense, the adaptation remembers its source. The question is subjective in nature; the answer is likely to be subjective as well. In comparing novels to on-screen adaptations, Glenn Jellenik, in “The Task of the Adaptation Critic,” disputes the idea that “there are two texts but only one story” (254). An adaptation need not tell the same story as its source in order to succeed. In *Good Omens*, the adaptation retains the same storyline, but in a nuanced way, emphasizing slightly different aspects of Crowley’s character than the novel. Jellenik argues that, “in the end, adaptations are interpretations, not copies or translations. And those interpretations have lives of their own” (266).

The *Good Omens* series has had a life of its own apart from the novel.⁵ The visual element adds a dimension to the written narrative – a dimension that in written form resides within the reader’s imagination. In the series, what the viewer sees is Crowley as imagined by the director, the producer, and David Tennant. This Crowley lives through the same events and conducts the same dialogue with other characters as in the novel, but his visual form, facial expressions, body language, and voice have lives of their own. Some viewers will have read the novel before watching the series, and others will not. Their understanding of the story and the moral ambiguity surrounding Crowley (and other characters) will be similar, even though their concept of Crowley and their imagined picture of him will differ.

Examining *Good Omens* through the lens of Linda Hutcheon’s ideas on adaptation reveals some other aspects of adaptation theory and how they affect our perceptions of the novel and the series. In “On the Art of Adaptation,” Hutcheon says, “while no medium is inherently good at doing one thing and not another, each medium (like each genre) has different means of expression and so can aim at certain things better than others” (109). In the series, one example that reflects this idea is Crowley’s changing appearance. Scenes that highlight Crowley’s changing appearance do not appear in the novel, but the detail of Crowley’s clothes and hair changing with the timeline quickly suggests to the viewer something human in his character. He is putting in more effort than is needed simply to fit in with the human population. He seems to enjoy visually fitting in – a human trait that other demons and Aziraphale do not share. The viewer can perceive these details within seconds, unlike character descriptions in writing, which take longer to process. The change in medium from novel to series offers the director a new avenue to explore the character of Crowley, emphasizing his human tendencies through visual means.

Hutcheon explores the similarities between literary adaptation and biological adaptation. In “On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and ‘Success’—Biologically,” Hutcheon and Gary R. Bortolotti connect adaptations and biological adaptation with the term “homology,” by which they mean “a similarity in structure that is indicative of a common origin” (444). In *Good Omens*, this similarity manifests itself in multiple forms. The foremost similarity between the novel and the series is the narrator. In the novel, blocks of text are allotted to the narrator, while in the series, the narrator’s voice guides the viewer through the scenes as they appear on screen. Both narrative forms contain intertextual references to other texts, other historical figures and events, and other biblical figures and events, such as the character Crowley and Aleister Crowley, the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and the character Aziraphale and biblical Aziraphale. The

5 The series earned an Average Audience Score of 95% on Rotten Tomatoes (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/good_omens).

structure of the narrative surrounding the moral ambiguity of Crowley is present in both the novel and the series, and it holds an active presence in both media.

Some adaptation theorists believe we should compare certain aspects of an adaptation to its original and some do not. Brian McFarlane, in "Reading Film and Literature," proposes that it may be "more helpful to consider what film and literature have in common than either to require film to 'reproduce' the experience of the book (however doomed an enterprise that might be) or to insist simply on the autonomy of the film" (19). Here, we return to Taylor's ideas on moral ambiguity and the understanding we come to as readers (or viewers). Even though Crowley is presented differently in the series and the novel, the moral interpretation we construct from the narratives is similar. Crowley's moral ambiguity reflects his humanity, and Pratchett's and Gaiman's overall idea of there being no black-and-white, no fully good or fully evil in the world. Both the novel and the series present the idea of moral ambiguity pertaining not only to Crowley as an individual, but also to a higher entity, here Heaven and Hell, or allegorically, to corporations and governments, placing emphasis on the idea of the corporation versus the individual. The series "remembers" and channels not only Crowley and his morally ambiguous character, but also the novel's greater idea of this shift in morality which goes hand in hand with the trust, or lack thereof, in authority figures and groups in the real world.

CONCLUSION

On the question of who is good and who is evil, who is morally ambiguous, and whether anyone is not, Pratchett and Gaiman create a compelling case for a combination of these traits. The main difference between the novel and the television series in terms of Crowley lies in his humanness and in our understanding of him as a demon. In the novel, Crowley's bad deeds and his efforts to send humans to Hell originate from the Demon Crowley. He is and always will be a demon who has taken on some of Aziraphale's traits, as well as some human traits, but he is still inherently "other." In the series, Crowley has cat-like demon eyes, but he is otherwise visibly human; it is easy to forget that he is not actually human. Thus, the reader's and the viewer's reasoning for his moral duality may stem from different places of understanding, but the overall message and idea of the novel, its skepticism of ethical absolutism, remains the same within the two forms of narrative. The intertextual connections to the serpent and Aleister Crowley add their own flavours to the mix of Crowley, further emphasizing the character's morally ambiguous nature. The means to the end is different in the novel and the series, but that comes down to the medium being used and the technological differences in each medium. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders captures this idea

of works provoking responses, no matter if they are adaptations: “adaptations and appropriations deserve to be seen as influential and agenda-setting in their own right, and in the process they acknowledge something fundamental about literature and art: that their impulse is to spark thoughts, associations, relationships, and stimulate emotional response” (212). This is a valuable point to end on, since adaptation theorists now strive to move away from fidelity discourse, and instead focus on other aspects of literature, film, and narrative in their exploration of adaptation. *Good Omens* and its namesake TV series thus both spark the same moral understanding of human nature in slightly different ways.

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Dobro, zlo in moralno dvoumno: demon Crowley v postmoderni fantaziji Terryja Pratchetta in Neila Gaimana *Dobra znamenja* in njeni televizijski priredbi

Terry Pratchett in Neil Gaiman v svojem postmodernem fantazijskem romanu *Dobra znamenja* prepričljivo utemeljujeta kombinacijo dobrega in zla pri vseh svojih likih, vendar je en lik še posebej zanimiv: demon Crowley. Moralna dvoumnost zaznamuje tako roman kot istoimensko televizijsko serijo *Good Omens*. Preučil bom moralna vprašanja, ki jih odpirajo napisani in prikazani Crowleyji, ter splošno razumevanje, ki ga bralec ali gledalec pridobi o njegovem liku. Preučim tudi medbesedilno rabo imena "Crowley" in njegove konotacije ter zaključim z vprašanjem, ali je televizijska serija učinkovita priredba Pratchettovega in Gaimanovega romana in njegovega moralno dvoumnega sporočila.

Ključne besede: postmoderna fantazija, moralna dvoumnost, intertekstualnost, adaptacija

Contextualizing the Spaces of the Sea in Contemporary Emirati Short Stories

Aysha Juma Al Shamsi

Abstract

The sea legacy occupies a prominent position in the history, culture and literature of the United Arab Emirates and it shapes the collective memory of the Emirati people. Throughout centuries, particularly during the pre-oil era, the UAE people depend on the sea as the major source of living. Most of the country's economy is contingent upon maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and pearl fishing in the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. The sea constitutes an inexhaustible artistic and intellectual reservoir of narrative creativity especially in the UAE short story genre. In this context, the paper critically examines the shifting perceptions of the sea analogy in Emirati short stories to explore significant social issues integral to Emirati literature. The paper underlines the ambivalent attitude of Emirati writers towards the sea in their attempt to preserve local Emirati heritage in the post-globalization era. While they share a sense of nostalgia for a bygone era that affiliates the image of the sea with innocence and purity, they associate the sea with a pre-oil age characterized by socio-economic difficulties prior to a period of steady development and significant transformations. On this basis, the paper explores new aspects and facets of the connection between the sea legend, local heritage, national identity, and inherited traditions that are crucial to Emirati society. The paper also investigates the maritime imagination and sea narratives in selected Emirati short stories from a variety of philosophical, intellectual, and symbolic angles to emphasize the efforts of a new generation of writers to restore a legacy endangered by the waves of globalization and modernization.

Keywords: sea, Gulf, narrative, nostalgia, pre-oil era, modernization, Emirati literature

INTRODUCTION

The notion of the sea evokes interdisciplinary research since the “topic is situated at the intersection of geography and a number of other disciplines, most notably: history, linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies and, one among others, literary studies” (Lyutskanov, 120)¹. Many civilizations around the world considered the sea as a sacred entity. Those who lived in ancient Egypt and India revered the sea as a holy deity. Beyond nautical fiction and heroic epics that depict maritime adventures, the sea plays a significant role in fiction. Since the dawn of time, the sea has always captivated people’s imaginations, and it has continued to inspire writers, novelists, storytellers, and poets with their visions in numerous tales and poems. The sea brings up the fundamental issue of human identity in all its complexity across time and space in a cross-cultural setting. The sea has captivated the human imagination and left its marks everywhere, whether people live in the heart of a continent or close to the coast.

According to S. Barathi, “every civilization is born on the banks of rivers and oceans. From time immemorial, the water bodies predominated the formation of colonies. In eco criticism the lifestyle of the people who live on the shores depends on the sea, which becomes their preserver as well as destroyer. It is a kind of never-ending reservoir of wealth” (Barathi, 129)².

In maritime literature, the sea occupies a paramount position. The interaction with the physical presence of the sea and its connections to humanity pervade many novels and short stories in world literature including narratives about sea monsters, exotic mermaids, and geographical hazards such as vortices and high waves. Scholars from different parts of the world provide contradictory representations of both the destructiveness and unity of the sea in the context of memories of navigation and how the sea shapes the identity of the people living near the shores (Robertson, xii)³.

Discussing the sea symbolism in Melville’s *Moby Dick*, the sea is viewed as “both earth’s center, its ultimate clue; it also brings forth the savagery, destruction, and death lurking in human beings” (Hamilton, 417)⁴. Moreover, the sea has a serenity, and it also symbolizes darkness and death. The sea analogy was a crucial motif in the works of great American authors such as Hemingway, Melville, and

1 Lyutskanov, Yordan. “Black Sea as Literary and Cultural Space: State of the Art and Prospects”. *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*. Volume 6, Issue 2, April 2020. PP.119-140.

2 Barathi, S. “Sea Life and Culture in Hemingway’s *The Old Man and The Sea*.” *Literary Herald*, Vol.3. Issue 4 (December 2017):129-132.

3 Robertson, Ben, et al. Ed. “Introduction”. *The Sea in the Literary Imagination: Global Perspectives*. Newcastle upon Tyne: 2019. pp. xi-xiv.

4 Hamilton, William. “Melville and the Sea”. *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Volume 62. No.4 (Winter)1979: 417-429.

others. In the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah, the winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature, the sea appears as a network that produces “patterns” and “rhythms” in an ecological as well as imaginary space that constitutes a wide variety of “subjectivities” of people (Gupta, 520)⁵. In Gurnah’s novels, the sea is not only made by climate and trade cycles but also literary circularities. These circularities capture a dynamic cross-cultural traffic, exchange, and encounter across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East through rich range of genres, including epics, story cycles, travelogues, memoirs, poems, and novels (cited in Oruc, 148)⁶.

In a broader context, Jamie McKinstry argues:

The sea is full of literal and symbolic paradoxes. It can bring hope and life, but also can create fear and destruction; it is a realm of possibility and potential, but equally a place of limitation and interruption. Our thoughts regarding the sea range beyond the interpretation of the body of water itself. In fact, what the sea gives us is the freedom to project our own thoughts into and onto this immense space. The sea gives us time to *think* about ourselves in terms of where we have been, where we are now, and where we might be going. We can journey across the sea, or we can travel mentally, guided, and reassured by its ceaseless rhythm of tides and waves in which each moment is individual, yet part of some greater cycle or scheme (McKinstry, 3)⁷.

Historically, sea stories have shaped human existence in both ancient and contemporary literature through a variety of tales, poems, novels, and stories. Beyond water, shorelines, waves, ships, boats, fishermen, and far-off horizons, the sea epitomizes other things. The sea represents the limits of collective consciousness in many cultures and regions of the world. It also characterizes individual human identity as a social issue of survival and an anthropological one, influencing human life and history. In a similar vein, the water has shaped the UAE people’s collective memory over time in a significant way. In UAE literature and culture, the sea is embodied ontologically as a frontier of adventure and livelihood. In ancient times the population of the UAE depended economically on the pearls, which they fished from the sea.

5 Gupta, Pamila. “Monsoon Fever.” *Social Dynamics* 38, no. 3 (2012): 516–527.

6 Oruc, Firat. “Thalasso logical Worldmaking and Literary Circularities in the Indian Ocean”. *Comparative Literature* 74:2: 147–155.

7 McKinstry, Jamie. “Floating Ideas: Memories and the Sea in Medieval Literature”. in *The Sea in the Literary Imagination: Global Perspectives*, ed. Robertson, Ben, et al. Newcastle upon Tyne: 2019. pp.3–20.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SEA IN UAE CULTURE AND LITERATURE

The local Emirati community relied heavily on the sea during the pre-oil era. Geographically, the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Gulf form the UAE's maritime borders. For centuries, the sea has been the primary source of income for a significant portion of the Emirati population, supporting both themselves and their offspring. The sea in the UAE has historically been used for navigation, trade, and pearl fishing, among other related purposes. As a result, the sea played a crucial role in shaping UAE cultural traditions, legacy, and written /oral literature not only on the fishing communities across the Arabian Gulf but throughout the terrains of the country.

Unequivocally, the UAE was declared an independent state in the early 1970s after the departure of British colonial forces and the unification of the seven Emirates into a single federation. It is noteworthy to argue that the emergence of UAE sea literature particularly the short story at this intervening period had historical and social effects on popular consciousness in the context of the cultural, urban, and civilizational transformations at that time. In this era, the UAE was established, and the emerging state entered a new phase of radical economic, social, and cultural changes, marking the beginning of the oil era and the accompanying major developments in all areas of life.

Since ancient times, the sea has been part of the collective awareness of the Emirati people due to its connection with wonderful past of their predecessors. However, since the mid-1970s, and particularly after the foundation of the United Arab Emirates in 1972, local society has been moving towards a time of modernization because of the extreme turns of events and changes that happened directly following the disclosure of oil in the locale. Sadly, this massive transformation has marginalized the role of the sea, which no longer became the primary source of income for most of the population.

Besides, new financial and mechanical improvements have sped up the urbanization cycle in the UAE, preparing for a fast change from a customary way of life to a more perplexing way of life. A generation of Emirati writers became interested in the country's new strategic position and its significant dominance on the world map of tourism, politics, and economics because of the massive transformation in all fields. Considering their vision of the social intricacies and economic repercussions of another time and considering how they might interpret the distinctions between local culture and the post-globalization culture coming from abroad, UAE writers tried to encapsulate the enormous scope improvements occurring in their country at a speeding pace. They also recuperated the accounts of the sea in their fiction and stories as manifestations of a society's efforts to safeguard its cultural heritage and rekindle recollections of the past.

On the literary level, UAE short story writers were able to absorb the experiences of their counterparts in neighboring Arab countries in the 1980s, and thus this literary genre began to prosper in the UAE during the 1990s, especially in terms of form. In terms of content, the Emirati short story continued to have the sea legend as the central motif. This trend is attributed to the place of the sea in the history and culture of the Emirates as a life-giving vein, the center of economic activities, and the source of the pearl trade and fishing for centuries.

Further, the sea contributed to shaping the fabric of tribal relations and other social entanglements in traditional Emirati society. On this basis, it is not surprising that the sea is at the forefront of the Emirati novel space, to the extent that some critics consider it the center of most contemporary short stories in Emirati literature. Even if this opinion is a kind of exaggeration, given that the Emirati short story expressed other social, national, cultural, and humanitarian concerns, the sea remains the most prominent concern in many UAE short stories. The sea also played a significant role in shaping tribal relations and other social entanglements in traditional Emirati society. On this basis, it is not surprising that the sea is at the forefront of the Emirati fictional space, to the extent that some critics consider it to be the focus of most contemporary short stories in Emirati literature. Although the Emirati short story expressed other social, national, cultural, and humanitarian issues, the sea remains the most important theme in many local short stories since the early seventies.

The multi-dimensional symbolism of the sea, represented by its violence, destructive geographical nature, ability to provide livelihood, and potentiality to evoke human longing is articulated literally through a long series of forms, strategies, and dynamics in multiple cultures. In this context, water as a natural element carries a set of complex meanings that are absorbed into the cultural connotations of the sea. However, the sea turns this complexity into a paradox. Accordingly, water becomes a specific phenomenon acquiring names such as the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Arabian Gulf. Thus, water is considered an entity without borders. Since water is unlimited, the sea constantly and uncontrollably exceeds its limits and transcends the boundaries of human imagination and power.

The cultural presence of the sea and its apparent global similarity should make the sea a multicultural entity that can be defined by interpretive and historical differences. This fact creates the opposite effect, because the vastness of the sea can only be perceived and interpreted from certain perspectives created either through comparisons, comparisons and metaphors obtained through empirical analysis. The sea constitutes a universal challenge, but the complex interpretive strategies it evokes generate different and even contradictory meanings that reveal deep cultural and historical differences across time and space. From this perspective, people worldwide never encounter the sea as part of the forces of nature but

engage into a dialogue with the various implications and meanings that it creates.

There is no doubt that the sea has figured prominently in Emirati culture and folklore. The sea has had an important influence on the social, commercial, and social life of the UAE, but it has also had a direct impact on educational and cultural life. It should be noted that the first educational institutions of the pre-oil era received financial and logistical support from the pearl traders who depended on the sea for their livelihood and profits. Therefore, education in UAE in the past was clearly affected by the prosperity or stagnation of the pearl trade.

In Emirati culture and literature, the sea represents a great physical, moral, and psychic presence, as evidenced by the symbolic and mythical images of the sea in many stories that trace the maritime history of the Emirati people. The symbolism of the sea takes on many meanings, especially when compared to the desert, deepening the moral and psychological awareness of the sea in local stories and narratives. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to categorize all the influences related to the sea, apart from the general contexts of the story elements in question, because the sea is usually used as a tributary that feeds the elements that present a particular vision of Emirati fiction.

THE SEA NARRATIVES IN UAE SHORT STORIES

Due to the radical repercussions emanating from the process of rapid development, which transformed the UAE from a diving and pearl-fishing community into a modern and civilized country, a new generation of Emirati writers utilized the sea analogy to communicate their apprehension about these variances and underscore the need of adhering to local traditions and rebuilding national identity. Thus, they revealed the impact of economic development and urbanization on the social and demographic structures of their society. In their attempt to preserve the local Emirati heritage in the post-globalization era, UAE writers were interested in rebuilding national identity and consolidating inherited maritime traditions through their literary works, popular novels, and short stories. Emirati writers, interested in the issue of national identity, fall into a cultural dilemma, and become caught between local legacies and foreign traditions accompanying the urbanization process that took place in the post-oil era.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the sea takes up a central stage in the space of the Emirati short story, to the extent that some critics consider sea narratives as the central theme in most of the UAE short fiction. For example, Najib Al-Awfi argues that the Emirati short story narrates the sea embedded in memory, the sea as a horizon for adventure and an avenue for writing (Al-Awfi, 19)⁸.

8 Al-Awfi, Najib. "The Locality of the Emirati Short Story". *Third Forum Research for Novel and Short Story Writing in UAE*. Sharjah: Publications of the Emirates Writers Union, 1983.

Although the preceding opinion involves some exaggeration since the Emirati short story expresses other concerns on the social, national, human, and civilizational paradigms, it concentrates on the sea as the most prominent motif since the emergence of the Emirati short story in the early 1970s. This period had significant implications and consequences due to the foundation of the UAE in 1972 and the beginning of the post-oil era leading to prosperity of economic, social, and cultural life in the country. At that time, the Emirati society began to change radically, announcing the beginning of a new phase in Emirati history. The discovery of oil was a harbinger of great developments and achievements in all fields.

Despite the short lifespan of the Emirati short story, it was able to digest the precedented narrative experiences of the Arab authors in 1980s, and then it benefited from the modern global fiction of the 1990s, especially in terms of form. However, the UAE short story remained linked to the sea motif in terms of content.

The sea in the UAE has been the backbone of life, as the center of economic/commercial activity and as a source of pearl trade and fish wealth. In addition to the physical presence of the sea in Emirati life in terms of economy, and trade it constitutes an underpinning literary motif in UAE short fiction through the symbolic and mythological connotations in various narratives. Like the desert, the sea constitutes a prominent literary trajectory of moral and psychological implications shaping the Emirati narrative discourse. The sea is presented in UAE short fiction from manifold perspectives and in different contexts reflecting a variety of thematic obsessions with cultural or historical or symbolic connotations manifesting authorial visions.

Some Emirati writers express in their stories their feeling of wistfulness for a past time that affiliates the image of the sea with honesty and immaculateness. In addition, they recontextualize the sea image through new philosophical and scholarly aspects. Regardless of the significance of the imagery of the sea in UAE fiction and related issues that structure an integral part of the issue of identity and local traditions, critics often ignore it focusing on other elements of symbolic and elitist nature.

Emirati short story writers monitored the legend of the sea from different points of view. For example, the well-known Emirati short story writer Mohammed Al Murr saw the sea from an objective perspective, stripping it of traditional metaphorical or romantic associations. This approach is due to Al-Murr's position on the sea, which in his memory was linked to a past era of poverty and backwardness, from his point of view. The great Emirati writer supported the tremendous cultural development that affected public life in Emirati society during the post-oil era. Al-Murr is proud of the new era of development and urbanization that his country has experienced since the early 1970s. There is no doubt that the objectivity of the

image of the sea in Al Murr's short stories⁹ stems from the author's positive opinion of the massive changes that have left their impact on all aspects of life in UAE since the early 1970s. His stories about the pre-oil era did not inspire romantic nostalgia about the past. Indeed, his sea tales sometimes mock his fellow short story writers, who portrayed the pre-oil age as a paradisiacal society and utopia.

Explicitly, UAE short story writers delineated the sea legend from different perspectives. For example, the well-known Emirati short story writer Mohammed Al Murr saw the sea from an objective perspective, stripping it of traditional metaphorical or romantic associations. This approach does not favour the ancient image of the sea as a symbol of a bygone era. The author's perspective springs from his realistic attitude toward the sea as reflection of the pre-oil era. The memories of the sea in this context are associated with a past era of poverty and backwardness according to the author. Instead, Al-Murr championed the huge economic and cultural developments that influenced public life in the Emirati society in the post-oil era. Unlike other writers who longed for the simplicity of the past, Al-Murr is proud of the new era of development and urbanization, which took place in his country after the foundation of the state in the 1970s.

Therefore, the sea image in Al-Murr's stories is presented from a realistic and objective point of view, away from traditional romanticism, which means that the presence of the sea in his narrative is viewed objectively, without reference to its social and historical significance. The sea in this context is a space or place devoid of any symbolic effects or intellectual, historical, social, or religious implications. Unlike other UAE novelists, Al Murr presents a somewhat objective depiction of the sea in his short stories. However, some UAE writers romanticize the sea as a symbol of a bygone era rooted in local heritage while demonizing modern society as an example of external cultural invasion taking place in the post-oil era and overshadowing genuine inherited traditions.

Scrutinizing the stories of Mohammed Al Murr, one can capture the strong presence of the sea as a realistic geographical construct and a traditional chronological and historical element preserved in the collective memory of the people of the UAE. Sufficient evidence of the multiple appearances of the sea in the fictional works of Muhammad Al-Murr can be traced in several short stories. In these stories, Al-Murr depicts a variety of characters affiliated with the sea, who suffer from boredom and seek a way out of their feeling of exhaustion and monotony. These sea workers are subjected to a sense of isolation and loneliness, which reach a zenith as they wander around the Dubai Creek area, looking at the dark dock and the dull and silent ships carrying damaged fishing nets.

Due to the state of poverty characterizing the pre-oil era, some local people were not interested in either the port cranes or the small wooden boats anchored

9 Al Murr, Mohamed. *The Fictional Works (Three Parts)*. Beirut: Dar Al Awda, 1992.

near the seashore. In his short stories, Al-Murr likened the old boats to black cows lying along the dock of the creek. He also portrayed the cranes in the port as gigantic animals and monsters devouring the small homes of Al-Shindagh district. In this context, the sea remains a neutral geographical location, which does not evoke any sense of nostalgia about a bygone past. Instead, the sea is associated with old ships and broken boats, an image, which intensifies the sense of exile and loneliness on the part of the characters contemplating the sea as they walk through the Creek of the old Dubai area.

In his stories about the sailors and the UAE folks who live in communities near the seashore in the pre-oil-era, Al-Murr describes life in ¹⁰Al-Shindagha port in Dubai in an objective way. He abstained from providing romantic or emotional details about the small port, the anchored ships, or any other matters related to marine life at that time. His characters recall their memories about the sea expressing their happiness at the scene of the increasing numbers of ships anchored near the customs wharf. When the port dock is empty of ships, they monitor the tides and flow of the Gulf waters, carrying the remains of fruit peels, ship waste, debris oils, and human waste at the end and beginning of the lunar months. Obviously, the sea in Al-Murr's stories is presented as a geographical space, far from the romantic portrayal in stories by other writers. In this context, the image of the sea descends to the level of vulgarity, and the sea becomes a place polluted by dirt, garbage, pieces of excrement and oil from ships accumulated in the waters of the creek.

The image of the sea in the Emirati short stories examined in this research reveals a special local flavor that distinguishes it from its counterparts in other Arab and international works. The sea takes different features -mythological, realistic, and romantic- which reflects a strong presence of the sea narratives in Emirati literature. The multiple images of the sea remain adjacent like a mosaic of narratives, underlining the distinctive structure of Emirati short stories. For example, many Emirati writers adopted a realistic approach to the sea focusing on the social, economic, and humanitarian aspects associated with the communities, which depend on the sea as the main source of their livelihood. In Abdul-Hameed Ahmed's title story "Swimming in the Eyes of a Monstrous Gulf"¹¹, the author describes the suffering and miserable lives of generations of sailors, who left their families and navigated the sea in search for pearls. The young female narrator in the story talks about her wretched life after her father and husband joined the sailors in their sea journey leaving her alone with her two babies. She lives in a shack and is subjected to severe weather conditions in a harsh environment: "They left us alone suffering from the scorching sun of the summer. We live like orphans under pergola in the

10 Small harbor in ancient Dubai.

11 All translations from Arabic sources are done by the author of the paper.

heat of summer. I knew the meaning of misery and orphanage, when the sea steals the father of his children. I do not want our children to live like orphans as we did¹²". In this story, the author did not romanticize the sea or delineate sea-life in the pre-oil era as a lost paradise, but he portrayed the misery of the ancestors, who struggled to live under difficult economic and social conditions.

In another story from the same collection, the author narrates the tragedy of Salem, the sailor, and his beloved Salma, who agreed to get married but due to the poverty of Salma's father, the marriage was not consummated. Salma's father was indebted to a pearl merchant, the owner of one of the pearl-fishing ships, where the former works as a diver. The greedy merchant attempted to force Salma's father to break her engagement to Salem to marry her in return for the father's debt. However, Salem and Salma continued their relationship secretly and Salma became pregnant. Salem decided to kill the owner of the ship and he joined other sailors and divers, who worked on the same ship. Salma was waiting for the victorious return of Salem, but all the sailors and divers came back home except for Salem. She was informed that the owner of the ship forced Salem to dive for long hours despite his illness and Salem suffocated under water. When the owner of the ship discovered the death of Salem, he ordered the sailors to throw his dead body in the sea as a banquet to the fish.

The previous story deals with social and humanitarian relations in the sea community with a focus on the relationship between ship owners and divers who work on their ships. It was a relationship of oppression and tyranny. The reveals how the ship owner exploited the miserable conditions of the divers. He did not care about their lives or their lives, and he severely punished another diver, who tried keep one pearl for himself. Salim argues: "Last year when the owner of the ship found out that Khalfan, the diver, tried to keep a pearl for himself, the captain burned his chest and back with fire¹³". In this story, the writer monitors the suffering of a generation of poor sailors and divers at the hands of greedy pearl merchants and owners of diving ships prior to the establishment of the UAE in 1972.

In a story titled "The Fish"¹⁴, the narrative introduces a man named Rashdan who was a pearl diver but currently he became a seller of fish in the old and destitute market, overwhelmed with black flies and insects. Rashdan was selling the fish, he purchased from fishermen with meagre and feeble faces. While Rashdan was sitting on the ground, he was busy selling fish. In the fish market, Rashdan

12 Ahmed, Abdul-Hameed. *Swimming in the Eyes of a Monstrous Gulf*. Beirut: Dar Al Kalema Publishing House, 1982.

13 Ahmed, Abdul-Hameed. *Swimming in the Eyes of a Monstrous Gulf*. Beirut: Dar Al Kalema Publishing House, 1982.

14 Ahmed Abdul-Hameed. *On the Edge of the Day*. Sharjah: Emirates Writers Union Publications, 1992.

had a conversation with an old friend, who talked about the past, and pearl diving and fishing, as well as the current circumstances, which turned Rashdan from a pearl diver into a fish seller. The conversation reveals the suffering and misery of Rashdan, who sold his land and house due to his poverty and deteriorating economic condition. Further, his children were not educated and failed to succeed in schools and after the death of his wife, he had to marry a poor woman from Indian origins¹⁵.

Apparently, the narrative did not manifest any sense of nostalgia to the pre-oil era and the protagonist did not aspire to the past as a lost paradise. The author presents a realistic image about a community devastated by poverty as result of severe economic conditions, which subsequently brought about social problems. In the past, the ship owners and pearl merchants constitute an elite class, who exploited the poor divers and fishermen accumulating wealth at the expense of the underprivileged folks. The conversation between Rashdan and his friend reflected a huge social divide between different sectors in the fishing communities located across the shores of the Arabian Gulf. Rashdan told his friend about the proliferation of poverty among most of the population, whereas wealth is possessed by few members of the communities.

The author, in this story, traces the impact of changing economic conditions on the lives of an entire community, who depended on the sea as a source of their livelihood particularly after the collapse of the pearl trade in the world markets in the forties of the last century. These economic transformations forced a big number of pearl divers to change their professions such as Rashdan, who became a seller of fish in the market. Moreover, the drastic economic conditions paved the way for the appearance of a new class of opportunists in the society, who exploited the poor. By the end of the story, Rashdan received an offer from his old friend, who asked him to abandon fish-selling and work as a guard for his new multi-level building. Rashdan discovered that his old friend was the same person who bought his land through an agent. His friend established a huge building on the land, and he asked him to work as a door keeper for the condominium.

Unlike the realistic image of the sea, expressed in the fictional works of Abdul-Hameed Ahmed, the short stories of the Emirati writer, Abd Al Ridha Al Sajwani, approached the sea from a romantic perspective. In the post-oil era, the economic importance of the sea diminished after the discovery of oil in the UAE. The shacks of the fishermen, the old houses, and neighbourhoods in most of the UAE cities are demolished to pave the way for the establishment of ultra-modern mega-cities and shopping centres. In a story titled "Anticipation", Al Sajwani

15 In the pre-oil era, underprivileged Emiratis, who failed to bear the costs of marrying local women, tended to marry women of Indian origins, who were available in the UAE due to the long-term relations between UAE and India particularly during the British occupation of both countries.

describes the feelings of an old man called Sheikh Bo Ghanem who expressed his sadness at the loss of his house near the seashore. The house was demolished as part of the new infra-structure projects, which include the creation of streets and roads in the area. Bo Ghanem sheds tears of grief while watching the devastation of his house. He longs for the bygone days recalling his memories in the house¹⁶.

The demolition of the house, in this context, is a symbol of the collapse of an old era and the beginning of a new age—the post-oil epoch. The pre-oil era, in this story, is associated with innocence and the beautiful memories of childhood and the struggle for living regardless of the dangers of navigating the Gulf “(52). The new era according to the vision of Bo Ghanem is characterized by the disruption of humanitarian relations and the breaking of the bonds of friendship among neighbours in the same community (53), and “the breaking of his bones” due to the impact of air-conditioning on his feeble body” (54). In the view of Bo Ghanem, the most catastrophic aspect of life in the post-oil era is the disappearance of the sea. The old man expresses his nostalgia to an era in which he considers the sea as a mother and father (55).

In the post-oil era and due to the conflicts between external colonial powers over the control of the oil fields in the Gulf region, the sea becomes a source of danger and threat to the population.

In a story titled “Amazement”, a missile, fired from a warship in the Gulf, falls on the houses of the nearby popular district smashing the mosque and damaging several properties. Accordingly, innocent people were killed including the muezzin of the mosque who was calling for prayers when the incident took place. The story reveals that the sea, which was a companion to man and a source of livelihood for him, becomes a source of horror and death. Unlike the past, the sea in the post-oil era becomes the centre of menace and intimidation:

“You will not even be able to swim in the sea or catch its fish! - You’ll see fearful things going through it, breaking through its waves. - You will be terrified of the sea, who is your friend today this. . . You will be horrified by the stinking smell that will invade your nostrils whenever you pass by the sea” (56)¹⁷.

Symbolically, the essence of the story is concerned with the fears coming with the new era and the accompanying civilizational developments, which threaten the human existence of the communities near the shores of the Gulf. Due to its strategic importance, the Gulf attracted the attention of powerful economic and military rivals from all over the world. The discovery of oil in the region threatens not only the disappearance of the friendly Gulf, but also turns it into a source of horror, where missiles are launched to destroy the surrounding communities. The central point in the story is the prophecy of the „muezzin“, who expressed his fear

16 Al Sajwani, Abd Al Ridha. *Rejection*. Sharjah: Emirates Writers Union Publications, 1992. P.51.

17 Al Sajwani, Abd Al Ridha. *Rejection*. Sharjah: Emirates Writers Union Publications, 1992

of the consequences of the competition between the superpowers over the control of the oil sources in the Gulf. Therefore, in the post-oil era, many people long for their memories of the sea during the bygone days prior to the invasion of western globalization and the colonial hegemony on the Gulf.

In a story titled "Temporary Hardship"¹⁸, the UAE writer, Nasser Jubran introduces a narrative by a young man called Yamaan, who found a tin box near the seashore. When he opened the box, he found inside it a sticky chemical material. The combustible material in the tin box was of the remnants of the British navy, which was conducting military man ōuvres in the Gulf. Unaware of its danger, Yamaan poured the material out of the box, and it ignited causing huge fire, which burned the tent and the palm tree, symbols of the pre-oil era. The fire burned the tent, but it failed to destroy the palm tree. Though the trunk of the palm tree was burned, its green leaves were not touched by the fire. The palm tree resisted the fire, which suggested the continuity of the traditions of the past and the preservation of local identity.

Moreover, the local folks cooperated to get rid of the toxic material, which, like the missile in the previous story, horrified the people in the nearby district. The narrator points out: "This dangerous device was buried in the ground. Hence, I spent the night in my simple tent. I watched the palm tree while embracing the moon. The sea was sharing me the same pillow. The waves were playing a harmonious melody. The dogs were barking outside the tent. It was a beautiful night" (59). Meanwhile, the mother of Jamaan expressed her happiness after the disappearance of the danger, which emanated from the sea. She told Jamaan: "Beware of bringing strange things from the sea. . . We only want fish. We want food for ourselves and for the birds" (60).

Similarly, in a story titled "Hooks", from (The Fishing Rods) story collection¹⁹, Nasser Jubran introduces another surprise coming out of the sea. While a group of fishermen, on board of a boat, were heading north navigating in the deep waters of the Gulf, their eyes caught the spectacle of flocks of birds hovering over the waves of the Gulf at sunset. They came closer to the birds and anchored their hooks in water expecting to catch a big fish. When they pulled the strings, their bodies trembled of fear at the sight of "a swollen and disfigured dead body of a man with a shaven head wearing a military uniform" (62). Like the missile and the toxic tin in previous stories, the floating body in "Hooks" reflects the catastrophic impact of modern warfare and armed conflicts on the tranquillity and quietness of the sea. The simple life of fishermen and the beauty of the sea, associated with the past are jeopardized by the invasion of foreign powers, who seek commercial and financial gains in the Gulf region through military dominance and new colonial hegemony.

18 Jubran, Nasser. *Fishing Rods*. Sharjah: Emirates Writers Union Publications, 1989.

19 Ahmed Abdul-Hameed. *The Farm Worker*. Beirut: Dar Al Kalema Publishing House. 1984.

In the same vein, Abdul-Hameed Ahmed, in a story titled "Sunset Mood" from (The Farm Worker) story collection, sheds light on the character of Mubarak, the idealistic protagonist, who was not able to adapt to the new realities affiliated with the unprecedented changes, which swept all aspects of life in the Emirati society in the post-modern era. His attitudes towards the present are articulated through his changing vision of the sea. He longs for the bygone days when he was navigating the sea and coming back after a fishing journey to find his beloved, Afra, and his friends waiting for him on the shore (63). Currently, Mubarak envisions the sea as a dead body, which has lost its vitality and brilliance. He attempts to regain the memories of his childhood days, spent near the seashore: "Mubarak is trying hard to bring life to the dead body of the sea through dreams and memories. He sees it full of boats, fishermen, nets and boys, and eyes that live in the dreams of a beautiful future, and rhythms of waves and dances of women and the beats of their hearts as they anticipate the return of the sailors who come back from their long journeys in the sea" (64). But Mubarak, the dreamer, was not able to continue in his illusions and memories. Shortly, "he wakes up and finds himself alone on the cold, impoverished beach with the corpse of the sea, which his family forgot to bury in the grave" (65).

In this story, the writer provides two images of the sea. In the past the sea was associated with love, affection, and warmth of human relations. At present, the sea is viewed as an abandoned dead body. In an era of post-globalization and industrial pursuits, the sea, according to Mubarak, becomes a polluted spot where "tankers carrying tar and bitumen ejaculate dark oil stains that distort the face of old memories and create a sense of loneliness and alienation" (66). In his desperate attempt to regain the image of the sea in an era of innocence and purity, the dreaming Mubarak passed through a quest of suffering and pain attaching himself to an illusion that no longer exists. Instead, the ugly reality of the present time imposes itself on him "with force, rigidity, and rudeness". Finally, Mubarak died on the beach near the seashore to remain part of a past, which he failed to regain. Explicitly, the story of Abdul-Hameed Ahmed introduces a romantic approach to the sea, which is different from other realistic perspectives embedded in the stories of Al Murr and other Emirati writers. Throughout his romantic attitude towards the sea, the central character, Mubarak, unlike other protagonists, expressed his absolute rejection of the new developments, that took place at different levels in the post-oil era and changed the face of the Emirati society.

CONCLUSION

The previous argument reveals that Emirati short story writers used the sea analogy as a symbol of the continuous transformations, which swept the UAE since

the pre-oil era. Local UAE writers were interested in the narratives of the sea due to the geo-political importance of the water bodies surrounding the country particularly the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Geographically, the borders of the UAE are enclosed by huge water bodies from different directions. Therefore, the sea had a tremendous impact upon the trajectories of life of the Emirati people throughout history. In the pre-oil era, the sea, represented in the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, constituted the main source of income for most of the local people, who were pearl divers and fishermen. Moreover, a considerable number of populations were merchants and traders, who were engaged in commercial activities with different Asian and African countries. After the discovery of oil under the waters of the Arabian Gulf, and the subsequent economic and industrial developments resulting from the use of oil revenues in modernizing the country, the functions of the sea went through drastic changes. These transformations, which had wide-scale repercussions on the Emirati society at different levels and the shift of the UAE from a traditional Bedouin community in the pre-oil era into an ultra-modern country in the post-oil age were reflected in the indigenous literature of the nation particularly the short story genre. On this basis, the paper critically examines the changes that came across the UAE society since the past until the present by investigating the image of the sea in Emirati short stories, given that the sea constitutes the most significant factor that affected the life of the UAE local communities throughout centuries. In this context, a variety of short stories by prominent Emirati writers, which engage sea narratives, were explored from different perspectives to illustrate the significance of the sea analogy in Emirati culture and literature.

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Kontekstualizacija prostorov morja v sodobnih emiratskih kratkih zgodbah

Morska dediščina ima v zgodovini, kulturi in literaturi Združenih arabskih emirатов pomembno mesto in oblikuje kolektivni spomin prebivalcev Emiratov. Skozi stoletja, zlasti v obdobju pred nafto, so bili prebivalci ZAE odvisni od morja kot glavnega vira preživetja. Večina gospodarstva države je odvisna od pomorske trgovine v Indijskem oceanu in nabiranja školjk bisernic v Arabskem zalivu in Omanskem morju. Morje je neizčrpen umetniški in intelektualni rezervoar pripovedne ustvarjalnosti, zlasti v žanru kratke zgodbe v ZAE. V tem kontekstu članek kritično preučuje spreminjajoče se dojemanje analogije z morjem v emiratskih kratkih zgodbah, da bi raziskal pomembna družbena vprašanja, ki so sestavni del emiratske literature. Članek poudarja ambivalenten odnos emiratskih pisateljev do morja v njihovem poskusu ohranjanja lokalne emiratske dediščine v postglobalizacijski dobi. Čeprav jih družijo nostalgija po preteklem obdobju, ki podoba morja povezuje z nedolžnostjo in čistostjo, morje povezujejo z obdobjem pred nafto, za katero so bile značilne družbeno-ekonomske težave pred obdobjem stalnega razvoja in pomembnih preobrazb. Na tej podlagi članek raziskuje nove vidike in plati povezave med legendo o morju, lokalno dediščino, nacionalno identiteto in podedovanimi tradicijami, ki so ključnega pomena za emiratsko družbo.

Ključne besede: morje, nostalgija, prednaftno obdobje, književnost Združenih arabskih emirатов

Heinrich Heine im slowenischen Lektürekanon: Eine Analyse seiner Rezeption und Präsenz von 1850 bis heute

Mineja Krisper, Petra Kramberger

Abstract

Obwohl der deutsche Dichter Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) eine herausragende Position in der globalen literarischen Szene einnahm, wurde er bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts oft aus dem schulischen Lektürekanon ausgeschlossen. Die Anerkennung seines Werkes im Bildungsumfeld wurde von einer Vielzahl von Faktoren geprägt, unter anderem von politischen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen sowie Kontroversen, die sein Schaffen begleiteten. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht Heines Rolle im gymnasialen und mittelschulischen Lektürekanon des slowenischen ethnischen Gebiets. Die Analyse konzentriert sich hauptsächlich auf die historische Entwicklung der Kanonisierung von Heines Texten im slowenischen Bildungsumfeld und betrachtet auch seine aktuelle Präsenz im slowenischen Schulsystem. Das erste Kapitel beleuchtet Heines Rolle im slowenischen Schulkanon von 1850 bis 1918 und gliedert sich aufgrund des historischen Kontextes in zwei Unterkapitel: Heines Rolle im Deutschunterricht und seine Präsenz in slowenischen Lesebüchern. Das zweite Kapitel konzentriert sich auf Heines Position im slowenischen Bildungskanon von 1918 bis heute. Dabei wird untersucht, wann Heines Texte erstmals in slowenische Lesebücher integriert und welche seiner Werke für die Aufnahme ausgewählt wurden, wann und wie Heines Werke zum festen Bestandteil des slowenischen Bildungssystems wurden und wie der Dichter den slowenischen Schülern heute präsentiert wird.

Schlüsselwörter: Heinrich Heine, slowenisches ethnisches Gebiet, Literaturkanon, Lesebücher, von 1850 bis 1918, von 1918 bis heute

In den vergangenen Jahrzehnten erlangte der deutsche Dichter Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) aufgrund seiner Werke, deren Bedeutung weit über die Grenzen seiner Zeit hinausreichen, den Status einer literarischen Ikone. Dennoch unterscheidet sich seine gegenwärtige kanonische Stellung erheblich von der Position, die er in den vergangenen beinahe zwei Jahrhunderten in den Schulbüchern innehatte. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht die Rolle Heines im Bildungskanon des slowenischen ethnischen Gebiets sowohl aus historischer Perspektive als auch im gegenwärtigen Kontext. Die Untersuchung gliedert sich in zwei Kapitel und basiert auf der Analyse von Lesebüchern, die von 1850 bis heute veröffentlicht wurden. Das erste Kapitel erforscht Heines Rolle im slowenischen schulischen Lektürekanon zwischen 1850 und 1918. Unter Berücksichtigung des historischen Hintergrunds des slowenischen Bildungswesens teilt sich dieses Kapitel in zwei Unterkapitel auf: Heines Präsenz im Deutschunterricht, wobei vor allem auf die bisherigen Untersuchungen zurückgegriffen wird, sowie Heines Präsenz in slowenischen Lesebüchern, wo die Analyse aller relevanten Lesebücher bis 1918 erfolgt. Das zweite Kapitel untersucht Heines Position im slowenischen Lektürekanon von 1918 bis heute. Dabei wird erörtert, wann Heines Texte erstmals in slowenische Lesebücher integriert und welche seiner Texte für die Aufnahme ausgewählt wurden, wann und wie Heine zum festen Bestandteil des slowenischen Bildungssystems wurde und auf welche Weise der Dichter slowenischen Schülern heute vermittelt wird. Diese Analyse bietet also Einblicke in Heines Platzierung im slowenischen Schulkanon.

HEINES PRÄSENZ IM SLOWENISCHEN SCHULKANON VON 1850 BIS 1918

Aufgrund historischer Umstände war der Schulkanon im slowenischen ethnischen Gebiet eng mit dem österreichischen Schulsystem verbunden. Dies unterstreicht die bedeutende Rolle der österreichischen Normen und der deutschen Sprache als Unterrichtssprache in der Entwicklung des slowenischen Bildungssystems. Im Jahr 1848/49 wurde in Österreich die entscheidende Gymnasialreform durchgeführt, die die Einführung eines achtjährigen Gymnasiums mit Unter- und Oberstufe beinhaltete (Okoliš 47). Diese Reform verlieh „dem Deutschunterricht eine konstitutive Rolle in der Gymnasialausbildung“ und führte „gleichzeitig [die] Verpflichtung“ ein, am Ende jedes Schuljahres Jahresberichte herauszugeben (Samide 16). Es wurde auch beschlossen, im slowenischen ethnischen Gebiet den Slowenischunterricht einzuführen (Okoliš 52), jedoch war dieser lange Zeit kein obligatorischer Bestandteil des Curriculums und hatte nur den Status eines Wahlfachs. Darüber hinaus wurde das Slowenische nicht als die Muttersprache der Slowenen anerkannt, sondern lediglich als zweite

Landessprache, wodurch es nur für Schüler, die sich ausdrücklich als Slowenen identifizierten, ein „relativ obligate[s] Wahlfach“ (Samide 71) war. Nach der Reform des österreichischen Gymnasialwesens mangelte es an angemessenen Lehrbüchern, da sämtliche vorhandenen sowohl methodisch als auch inhaltlich veraltet waren. Daher schlug das Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht vor, auf deutsche Lehrbücher zurückzugreifen (Hriberšek 51). Diese Tatsache ist für die Kanonisierung der Werke Heinrich Heines von großer Bedeutung, da sie Heines Position im slowenischen Schulsystem dieser Zeit zweifellos beeinflusste. Aufgrund dieser historischen Umstände kann Heines Rolle im slowenischen Lektürekanon bis 1918 aus zwei Perspektiven betrachtet werden: Heine im Rahmen des deutschen Literaturunterrichts und Heine in slowenischen Lesebüchern. Der Zeitraum nach 1918 wurde in Bezug auf Heines Rolle im slowenischen Schulkanon als Ganzem untersucht.

Die Präsenz Heines im deutschen Literaturunterricht bis 1918

Bis zum Jahr 1918, dem Gründungsjahr des Königreichs der Serben, Kroaten und Slowenen, nahm der Deutschunterricht eine bedeutend wichtigere Stellung als der Slowenischunterricht ein. Daher beeinflussten die schulischen Ausrichtungen und pädagogischen Prinzipien der Habsburgermonarchie maßgeblich Heines Rezeption an slowenischen Gymnasien und anderen Mittelschulen. Irena Samide untersuchte die Lehrpläne des deutschen Literaturunterrichts an drei humanistischen Gymnasien im slowenischen ethnischen Gebiet von 1848 bis 1918: dem k. k. Gymnasium zu Laibach/Ljubljana, dem k. k. Gymnasium in Marburg/Maribor sowie dem k. k. Gymnasium zu Klagenfurt/Celovec, wobei ihre Forschung auch Heines Rolle darin berücksichtigte. Sie stellte fest, dass Heine während dieses Zeitraums im gymnasialen Lektürekanon im slowenischen Raum nur selten Erwähnung fand, da er aufgrund seiner jüdischen Herkunft, seiner politischen Überzeugungen und seiner scharfen politisch gefärbten Gesellschaftskritik als ungeeigneter Autor angesehen wurde, obwohl die österreichisch-ungarische Kaiserin Elisabeth eine große Verehrerin von ihm war und seine Texte im Allgemeinen gut aufgenommen wurden (Samide 144). Diese Erkenntnis wird durch die Ergebnisse der bisherigen Untersuchung von Zeitungsartikeln über Heine in von Slowenen bewohnten Gebieten bestätigt (Krisper). Die Studie verdeutlicht, dass Heines Poesie bis 1860 größtenteils positiv rezipiert wurde. In der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts erfuhr sie dann in liberalen Zeitungen eine äußerst positive Resonanz, während sie in konservativen Zeitungen bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts häufig abgelehnt wurde. Ab dem frühen 20. Jahrhundert, insbesondere jedoch in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, wurde Heines Poesie in Slowenien durchweg positiv wahrgenommen. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass Heines

Position im Schulsystem des slowenischen Raums bis 1918 nicht unbedingt das Interesse an ihm in der slowenischen Presse widerspiegelte.

Trotz Heines begrenzter Präsenz im deutschen Literaturunterricht kamen seine Texte bereits vor dem Tod des Dichters mit wichtigen Namen der slowenischen Literaturszene in Berührung. Dies wird von France Bernik in seinem Beitrag *Heinrich Heine in slovenska literatura* [dt. *Heinrich Heine und die slowenische Literatur*] verdeutlicht, in dem er erwähnt, dass der Dichter Simon Jenko (1835–1869), „der literaturhistorisch in Slowenien am häufigsten mit Heine in Verbindung gebracht wird“ (Krisper und Kramberger 288), Heines Werke während seiner Gymnasialzeit zwischen 1854 und 1855 zu lesen begann (Bernik 432). Zu Jenkos Zeit wurde das literaturhistorische Lehrbuch *Geschichte der Neudeutschen Literatur in Proben und Biographien* von Gottlob Heinrich Friedrich Scholl und Traugott Ferdinand Scholl im Unterricht verwendet. Bernik verweist in seinem Artikel darauf, dass das Scholl-Lehrbuch bis zum Jahr 1854 in den Jahresberichten genannt wird (432), eine Feststellung, die auch von Samide bestätigt wird, wenn sie darauf hinweist, dass das Lehrbuch noch einige Jahre nach der Gymnasialreform verwendet wurde (Samide 176). In diesem Lehrbuch werden im Kapitel *Neunzehntes Jahrhundert* vier Vertreter der literarischen Bewegung des Jungen Deutschlands genannt: neben Heine auch Ludwig Börne (1786–1837), Karl Gutzkow (1811–1878) und Heinrich Laube (1806–1884) (Scholl und Scholl 911–912). Es enthält zehn Gedichte von Heine, beginnend mit den Frühlingsliedern *Unterm weißen Baume sitzend* aus der Sammlung *Neue Gedichte* (1844) und *Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt* (1830). Es folgen *Belsazar* (1827), *Die Grenadiere* (1822), *Die Lore-Ley* (1824) und *Das Fräulein stand am Meere* (1832) sowie drei Gedichte aus dem *Buch der Lieder* (1827): das Sonett *Gieb her die Larv', ich will mich jetzt maskieren* und zwei kürzere Gedichte, nämlich *Ich hab euch im besten Juli verlassen* sowie *Selten habt ihr mich verstanden*. Das letzte Gedicht im Scholl-Lehrbuch stammt aus dem zweiten Buch des *Romanzero* (1851) und trägt den Titel *Jetzt wohin?*. Der Poesie folgen noch das erste Kapitel sowie ein Ausschnitt aus dem achten Kapitel des Buches *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski* (1834) mit dem Titel *Aus Heine's Salon* (917–926).

Seitdem das Lehrbuch von Gottlob Heinrich Friedrich und Traugott Ferdinand Scholl nicht mehr verwendet wurde, fand Heine bis 1913 in Lehrverfassungen und Lehrplänen an den drei bedeutendsten humanistischen Gymnasien im slowenischen ethnischen Gebiet (am k. k. Gymnasium zu Laibach, dem k. k. Gymnasium in Marburg sowie am k. k. Gymnasium zu Klagenfurt) keine Erwähnung (Samide 143–144),¹ was nahelegt, dass dies auch für alle anderen Mittelschulen auf slowenischem Boden galt. Sein Name war, wenn auch in sehr

1 Die Untersuchung Samides bezieht sich ausschließlich auf Lehrverfassungen und Lehrpläne, nicht jedoch auf Lesebücher, die einer separaten Untersuchung bedürfen würden.

bescheidenem Umfang, in Titeln von Aufsätzen präsent, die sich auf die Balladen *Belsazar* (319, 372) und *Die Lore-Ley* (144) bezogen. Außerdem tauchte Heines Name auch in Titeln von diversen Vorträgen bzw. Redeübungen auf (144, 330, 380). Im Vergleich zu Heine waren andere deutsche Autoren wie Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872) u. a. viel stärker vertreten bzw. wurden häufiger genannt, sowohl explizit im Lehrplan als auch in Form von Aufsätzen und Vorträgen (139). Samide schreibt die außergewöhnlich begrenzte Aufnahme von Heine dem normierenden und zensurierenden Einfluss der Schule wie auch der allgemeinen Zensur zu (145). Sie betont jedoch auch, dass der Zustand im schulischen Lesekanon kein Indikator für Heines tatsächliche Beliebtheit im slowenischen Raum war, was wiederum bedeutet, dass die Schule nicht die einzige Kanoninstanz war (145).

Die Präsenz Heines in slowenischen Lesebüchern bis 1918

Der Schwerpunkt dieses Kapitels liegt auf der Analyse von Heines Präsenz in slowenischen Lesebüchern während des betrachteten Zeitraums. Unter Berücksichtigung der Erkenntnisse von Samide (144) und des historischen Kontextes des slowenischen Raumes ist anzunehmen, dass Heines Werke darin eher spärlich vertreten waren. Es wurde die These aufgestellt, dass Heine zwischen 1850 und 1918 in slowenischen Lesebüchern entweder überhaupt nicht oder nur in begrenztem Maße präsent war. Das Jahr 1850 wurde als Ausgangspunkt gewählt, da zu dieser Zeit die ersten für diese Untersuchung relevanten Lesebücher erschienen. Die Auswahl der Lesebücher basiert auf der Studie *Slovenska literatura v šoli in Prešeren* [dt. *Slowenische Literatur in der Schule und Prešeren*] des slowenischen Literaturhistorikers Zoran Božič, in der alle relevanten Lesebücher von 1850 bis 2010 erfasst und analysiert wurden. Für diesen Beitrag wurden bis zum Jahr 1918 alle verfügbaren Lesebücher durchgesehen, während nach 1918 mindestens einmal pro Jahrzehnt eine Stichprobe ausgewählt wurde, wobei die Auswahl je nach historischer Bedeutung des Erscheinungsjahres der Lesebücher angepasst wurde. Basierend auf diesen Kriterien wurde ein umfassender Überblick über Heines Rolle im slowenischen Lesebücherkanon gegeben. Es sei jedoch darauf hingewiesen, dass die Vollständigkeit der Daten nur bis 1918 bestätigt werden kann; die Ergebnisse für die Zeit danach liegen nicht in vollem Umfang vor.

Die Untersuchung beginnt mit den 1850er Jahren, als der renommierte slowenische Publizist und Politiker Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881) Lesebücher für die

ersten vier Klassen des Gymnasiums zusammenstellte (Merhar 44),² während der Philologe, Linguist und Slawist Fran Miklošič (1813–1891) die Bände für die darauffolgenden vier Gymnasialklassen verfertigte (45).³ Nach einer gründlichen Durchsicht aller genannten Lesebücher wurde festgestellt, dass Heines Werke zwischen 1850 und 1865 darin nicht enthalten sind. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass Heine gegen Ende seines Lebens und unmittelbar nach seinem Tod im slowenischen Literaturunterricht keine Berücksichtigung fand.

Die weitere Untersuchung ergab, dass Heine bis zum Jahr 1893 in keinem einzigen Lesebuch verzeichnet ist. Seine Werke fehlen auch im Lesebuch *Cvetnik* (1865, 1867) von Anton Janežič (1828–1869). Es war der Schriftsteller Jakob Sket (1852–1912), der Heine erstmals in der Geschichte des slowenischen Schulkansons in seinen Lesebüchern erwähnte, und zwar in *Slovenska slovstvena čitanka za sedmi in osmi razred srednjih šol* und in *Slovenska slovstvena čitanka za učiteljsišča*, die beide 1893 in Wien veröffentlicht wurden. Es ist anzumerken, dass Sket in seinen Lesebüchern weder Heines Poesie noch seine anderen literarischen Werke berücksichtigt, sondern seinen Namen mit dem Erlernen von poetischen Formen in Verbindung bringt. In beiden von Sket veröffentlichten Lesebüchern finden wir den gleichen Text:

Učiti pa se moremo in učiti se moramo oblike. Krivo bi bilo misliti, da se veliki pesniki niso učili. Znano je, da ravno Heine, eden izmed največjih lirikov vseh časov, kateremu nihče ne bo jemal genijalnosti, ni kar tako iz rokava iztresal svojih neumerjochih pesmij: čim bolj se nam vidijo priproste, naravne, tem bolj jih je obdeloval, predeloval in pilil, več je v njih skrite umetnosti; in da nam ne kažejo dela in truda, to je ravno največja umetnost. Ravno v lirični pesmi, ki je po navadi kratka in se lahko pregleda z enim pogledom, najbolj žali izobraženi okus vsaka, tudi najmanjša napaka, katero bi človek čisto prezerl v dolgi epični pesmi ali v drami. [...] Pri novejših narodih je vedel zlasti Nemec postaviti svojo literaturo na narodno podlogo. Tu nam nij obširneje govoriti o tej stvari; dovolj naj bode omeniti, kako so prestvarili nemško liriko s tem, da so zajemali iz narodnega vira, zlasti Goethe, Uhland, Heine. (Sket 1893a: 343–346; Sket 1893b: 343–346)

Im gesamten Text, der vier Seiten umfasst, erwähnt Sket Schiller (7-mal), Goethe (6-mal) und Uhland (3-mal) öfter als Heine (2-mal). Hierbei fällt jedoch auf, dass lediglich bei der Erwähnung von Heines Namen der Zusatz „einer der größten

2 Diese trugen die Titel *Slovensko berilo za prvi gimnazijalni razred* (1850), *Slovensko berilo za drugi gimnazijalni razred* (1852), *Slovensko berilo za tretji gimnazijalni razred* (1854) und *Slovensko berilo za četrty gimnazijalni razred* (1855).

3 Miklošičs Lesebücher: *Slovensko berilo za V. gimnazijalni razred* (1853), *Slovensko berilo za VI. gimnazijalni razred* (1854), *Slovensko berilo za VII. gimnazijalni razred* (1858) und *Slovensko berilo za VIII. gimnazijalni razred* (1865).

Lyriker aller Zeiten, dem niemand seine Genialität absprechen wird“ vermerkt wurde (343, übersetzt von P. K.). Im Vergleich dazu verwendet Sket bei Goethe „großer Dichter“ (343) und bei Schiller „originelle[r] Dichter“ (265), was darauf hinweist, dass Heine von Sket hochgeschätzt wurde, er sich aber auch der kontroversen Meinungen über Heine bewusst war. In beiden von Sket herausgegebenen Lesebüchern sind ausschließlich Werke slowenischer Dichter und Schriftsteller veröffentlicht, während ausländische Autoren nur im theoretischen Teil namentlich genannt werden, sodass nicht von einer bewussten Ausgrenzung Heines oder anderer deutscher Autoren die Rede sein kann. Ein Jahr später wurde Sket Herausgeber des Lesebuchs *Staroslovenska čitanka za višje razrede srednjih šol*, in dem weder Heines Name noch seine Poesie zu finden sind. Das letzte Lesebuch, das hinsichtlich des Zeitraums von 1850 bis 1918 untersucht wurde, war *Čitanka za meščanske šole* aus dem Jahr 1912, zusammengestellt von dem Schriftsteller und Lehrer Josip Brinar (1874–1959). Auch hier blieb Heine unerwähnt.

Mit der Durchsicht von Brinars Lesebuch wurde die Untersuchung für die Zeit bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs abgeschlossen. Die Analyse unterstreicht die These, dass Heine zwischen 1850 und 1918 in slowenischen Lesebüchern keine bedeutende Rolle spielte. Die vorliegende Untersuchung verdeutlicht, dass bis zum Jahr 1918 slowenische Autoren dominierten, in den erwähnten Lesebüchern jedoch auch Übersetzungen ausländischer Autoren enthalten waren. Die starke Präsenz slowenischer Autoren dürfte auf den patriotischen Wunsch der Herausgeber zurückzuführen sein, die Schüler mit der einheimischen Literatur vertraut zu machen und so das slowenische Nationalbewusstsein zu stärken. Unter den deutschen Autoren war Schiller in slowenischen Lesebüchern am häufigsten vertreten. Bereits 1853 erschienen in Miklošičs Lesebuch übersetzte Passagen aus Schillers *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (1801) und *Die Kraniche des Ibykus* (1797), die in den Lesebüchern im späten 19. Jahrhundert häufig vorkamen. Im Jahr 1867 wurde Schillers *Der Taucher* (1798) in Janežičs Lesebuch *Cvetnik* veröffentlicht. Das neun Jahre zuvor erschienene Lesebuch Miklošičs *Slovensko berilo za sedmi gimnazijalni razred* (1858) enthält auch Auszüge aus Werken des deutschen Arztes und Naturforschers Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780–1860), der sowohl Heines Zeitgenosse als auch ein zeitgenössischer Autor für das im Jahr 1858 veröffentlichte Lesebuch war. Das Fehlen von Heines Werken in den Lesebüchern lässt sich also nicht nur damit erklären, dass er ein deutscher oder ein zeitgenössischer Dichter war.

Unsere anfängliche These, dass Heine zwischen 1850 und 1918 entweder überhaupt nicht oder nur in begrenztem Maße in slowenischen Lesebüchern präsent war, wurde durch die detaillierte Analyse der besagten Lesebücher bestätigt, und wir schlussfolgern daraus, dass der Grund dafür zweifellos der Einfluss der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie auf das slowenische Bildungswesen war,

in welcher Heine als für den Lehrplan ungeeigneter Autor angesehen wurde. Ein Vergleich zwischen Heines Rolle im deutschen Literaturunterricht und seiner Präsenz in slowenischen Lesebüchern zeigt eine ähnlich eingeschränkte Einbeziehung Heines in beide Kontexte, obwohl andere deutsche Autoren wie Goethe oder Schiller sowohl im Deutschunterricht als auch in slowenischen Lesebüchern vertreten sind bzw. waren.

HEINES PRÄSENZ IM SLOWENISCHEN SCHULKANON NACH 1918

Nach einer sorgfältigen Analyse der Lesebücher bis zum Jahr 1918 wurde eine stichprobenartige Durchsicht der Lesebücher im 20. Jahrhundert bis heute durchgeführt. Nach dem Zusammenbruch der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie verlor die deutsche Sprache im slowenischen Schulsystem ihre einst konstitutive Rolle. Daher wurde das zweite Kapitel dieser Studie nicht mehr in Heines Rolle im deutschen Literaturunterricht und in slowenischen Lesebüchern unterteilt, sondern es fokussiert sich ausschließlich auf seine Position im gesamten slowenischen Lektürekanon. Zu Beginn der Untersuchung wurden zwei grundlegende Thesen aufgestellt:

1. Heines Präsenz im slowenischen Schulkanon verstärkt sich nach dem Ende der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie aufgrund veränderter politischer Umstände in Europa und nimmt, mit Ausnahme der Zeit des Zweiten Weltkriegs, kontinuierlich zu.
2. Folglich gewinnt die Rezeption Heines in Slowenien an Bedeutung, was dazu führt, dass der Dichter zu einem festen Bestandteil des slowenischen schulischen Lektürekansons wird.

Zunächst wurden die ersten Lesebücher nach 1918 durchgesehen, darunter die Lesebücher *Slovenska čitanka za tretji razred srednjih šol* (1921) und *Slovenska čitanka za četrti razred srednjih šol* (1922), zusammengestellt vom Pädagogen Josip Wester (1874–1960), sowie das Übungsbuch *Slovenska vadnica za višje razrede osnovnih šol in za meščanske šole* (1923) von Josip Brinar. Heines Werke sind in keinem der genannten Lesebücher zu finden.

Ein weiterer bedeutsamer Meilenstein für die vorliegende Untersuchung sind die Lesebücher aus der Zeit des Königreichs Jugoslawien, etwa um das Jahr 1929. Die Frage, ob Heine in einem der Lesebücher aus dieser Zeit erscheint, beantwortet das Lesebuch *Klasje*, das im Jahr 1930 veröffentlicht wurde. Es wurde vom Pädagogen Anton Kacin (1901–1984) zusammengestellt, während er an einem privaten Erzbischöflichen Gymnasium in Gorica unterrichtete (Božič 140). Auf der Seite 208 dieses Lesebuchs ist Heines Gedicht *Belsazar* in der Übersetzung

des slowenischen Schriftstellers Ivan Pregelj (1883–1960) zu finden. Dies ist die erste Veröffentlichung eines Gedichts von Heine in einem Lesebuch für den slowenischen Literaturunterricht. Heines Leben wird im Lesebuch jedoch nicht vorgestellt, er wird lediglich als Autor des Gedichts genannt.

Im Jahr 1931, ein Jahr nach der Veröffentlichung des Lesebuchs *Klasje*, wurden im Königreich Jugoslawien erstmals die Lesebücher des slowenischen Sprachwissenschaftlers Anton Bajec (1897–1985) et al. herausgegeben.⁴ Im Vergleich zu den bisherigen Lesebüchern enthielten diese eine größere Anzahl von Werken ausländischer Autoren, darunter Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695), Homer (ca. 8. Jh. v. Chr.) und anderer. Trotzdem fanden Heines Gedichte darin keine Erwähnung, was bedeutet, dass das Jahr 1930, obwohl das erste Heine-Gedicht zu dieser Zeit in einem slowenischen Lesebuch erschien, kein entscheidendes Jahr war, das Heines ständige Präsenz im slowenischen Lektürekanon markieren sollte.

Der nächste bedeutende historische Meilenstein in dieser Untersuchung war die Zeit vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, als Heines Präsenz in den Lesebüchern *Naša zemlja* und *Naša beseda* des Pädagogen Rudolf Wagner und des Lehrers sowie Publizisten Maks Rožman (1898–1970) sowie im Lesebuch *Naši vodniki* des Dichters, Schriftstellers und Lehrers Anton Gaspari (1893–1986) et al. untersucht wurde. In den Lesebüchern *Naša zemlja* und *Naša beseda* sind ausschließlich slowenische und jugoslawische Autoren vertreten, während im Lesebuch *Naši vodniki* neben slowenischen und jugoslawischen Autoren nur der polnische Autor Władysław Stanisław Reymont (1867–1925) und der norwegische Autor Knut Hamsun (1859–1952) zu finden sind. Kein deutscher Autor, weder Heine noch Klassiker wie Goethe und Schiller, wurde in die Auswahl aufgenommen. Der eindeutige Grund für die Ausschließung aller deutschen Autoren war die damalige historische Situation: Die Lesebücher wurden im Jahr 1939 veröffentlicht, demselben Jahr, in dem der Zweite Weltkrieg begann. Die Kriegszeit war geprägt von tiefgreifenden politischen und ideologischen Spaltungen zwischen den Staaten und das slowenische Gebiet war zu dieser Zeit in das Königreich Jugoslawien integriert. Dieser Staat war bestrebt, das jugoslawische Nationalbewusstsein zu fördern und diese Bestrebungen waren auch im Bildungssystem jener Zeit vorherrschend. Angesichts dieser politischen und nationalen Spannungen wäre die Aufnahme eines deutschen Autors nicht nur unerwartet, sondern auch kontrovers gewesen. Aus demselben Grund wurden Heines Werke auch nicht in die

4 Die Lesebücher von Bajec et al. waren: *Slovenska čitanka in slovnica za prvi razred srednjih in sorodnih šol* (1931), *Slovenska čitanka in slovnica za drugi razred srednjih in sorodnih šol* (1932), *Slovenska čitanka in slovnica za tretji razred srednjih in sorodnih šol* (1935) und *Slovenska čitanka in slovnica za četrti razred srednjih in sorodnih šol* (1935).

1942 erschienenen Lesebücher aufgenommen – weder in *Slovensko berilo*⁵ noch in *Slovenska slovstvena čitanka za višje razrede srednjih in sorodnih šol* des slowenischen Literaturhistorikers Ivan Grafenauer (1880–1964) – und auch nicht in die Lesebücher *Slovenska čitanka za [prvi/drugi/tretji/četrti] razred srednjih in meščanskih šol* aus dem Jahr 1943, die von Anton Bajec zusammengestellt worden waren. Der Ausschluss von deutschen Autoren wegen des Kriegszustands setzte sich auch bis in die unmittelbare Nachkriegszeit fort. Im Jahr 1946 veröffentlichte die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Marja Boršnik (1906–1982) das Lesebuch *Slovensko berilo za nižje razrede srednjih šol*, das ausschließlich Werke slowenischer Autoren enthält. Aufgrund der allgemeinen Ausgrenzung deutscher Autoren infolge der historischen Umstände war die Zeit vor, während und nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg keine Periode, in der Heine in den Lesebüchern des slowenischen Raums oder im slowenischen Schulkanon einen Platz gefunden hätte.

1950 wurde das Lesebuch *Slovensko berilo III*, zusammengestellt von Marja Boršnik, Viktor Smolej (1910–1992), Blaž Tomaževič (1909–1986) und Erna Muser (1912–1991), veröffentlicht. Dort wurde Heines Gedicht *Die schlesischen Weber* (1844) in slowenischer Übersetzung – ohne Angabe des Übersetzers – publiziert (136). Zudem enthält das Lesebuch noch zwei weitere Abschnitte: Der erste, mit dem Titel *Misli* [dt. *Gedanken*], erörtert den stofflichen Hintergrund des Gedichts, nämlich den Arbeiteraufstand gegen die Hungersnot in Schlesien im Jahr 1844 (136–137), der zweite, etwas kürzere Abschnitt, bietet einen knappen Lebenslauf Heines. Dabei wird Heine als einer der bedeutendsten deutschen Lyriker und der revolutionärste deutsche Satiriker vorgestellt (137). Er wird als progressiver Dichter charakterisiert, der Deutschland aufgrund seiner revolutionären Ideen verlassen musste. Das Jahr 1950 markiert so einen entscheidenden Wendepunkt, da Heine nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wieder Eingang in slowenische Lesebücher findet. Zugleich ist dies das erste slowenische Lesebuch, das neben Heines Gedicht auch seinen Lebenslauf enthält. Heine wird äußerst positiv präsentiert, was charakteristisch für die Nachkriegszeit ist, da er als ein Gegner von Nationalismus, Rechtsextremismus und Antisemitismus wahrgenommen wird. In Slowenien verstärkte sich diese positive Wahrnehmung Heines durch die Verurteilung der Ereignisse im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Aufnahme seiner Werke in die Lesebücher nach Kriegsende kann als symbolischer Ausdruck des Sieges über totalitäre Systeme interpretiert werden. Es sei noch angemerkt, dass Božič in seinem Beitrag *Slovenska literatura v šoli in Prešeren* in einer Anmerkung Heine im Zusammenhang mit dem Lesebuch *Slovensko berilo III* aus dem Jahr 1956 erwähnt, das von der Dichterin Erna Muser zusammengestellt worden war (Božič

5 Božič gibt in seiner Studie *Slovenska literatura v šoli in Prešeren* an, dass dieses Lesebuch vom slowenischen Übersetzer Janko Moder (1914–2006) zusammengestellt worden war (Božič 126). Dies können wir jedoch nicht bestätigen, da er im Lesebuch nicht namentlich erwähnt wird.

157). Die Durchsicht von zwei Ausgaben des genannten Lesebuchs, aus den Jahren 1954 und 1956, hat jedoch ergeben, dass weder Heines Name noch seine Texte in diesen angeführt sind.

Als Fallbeispiel für die 1960er Jahre wurde das Lesebuch *Svetovna književnost* ausgewählt, das in zwei Bänden erschien und vom Literaturhistoriker Janko Kos (1931–) samt Mitarbeitern zusammengestellt wurde. Der erste Band wurde 1962 und der zweite 1964 veröffentlicht. Beide Bände sind in literarische Epochen unterteilt, wodurch Heines Gedichte im zweiten Teil des Lesebuchs im Abschnitt über die Romantik (7–38) erscheinen. Schülerinnen und Schüler lernten Gedichte wie *Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam* (1827), *In mein gar zu dunkles Leben* (1827), *Der Tod das ist die kühle Nacht* (1827), *Die Lore-Ley*, *Weltlauf* (1851), *Lumpentum* (1846), *Die schlesischen Weber* und *Laß die heiligen Parabeln* (1854) kennen, die alle ins Slowenische übersetzt wurden. Das Lesebuch *Svetovna književnost II* ist somit das erste slowenische Lesebuch, das mehr als ein Gedicht von Heine enthält, und gleichzeitig das Lesebuch, in dem die meisten seiner Gedichte in der Geschichte des slowenischen Schulkansons enthalten sind, und das bis heute. Basierend auf unserer bisherigen Forschung lässt sich aufgrund der Einbeziehung einer so großen Anzahl von Gedichten festhalten, dass das Lesebuch *Svetovna književnost II* auch das erste ist, das von einem deutlicheren Interesse an Heines Poesie und einer guten Akzeptanz des Dichters im slowenischen Raum zeugt. Das Jahr 1964 markiert jedoch noch einen weiteren Meilenstein, denn Heine taucht seitdem kontinuierlich in slowenischen Lesebüchern auf. Ein wichtiger Faktor dabei war wahrscheinlich eine geringfügige Wiederbelebung des Interesses an Heine im slowenischen Raum anlässlich seines hundertsten Todestages im Jahr 1956. Die Slowenen begannen sich im wissenschaftlichen Kontext mit seinem Leben und seiner Poesie auseinanderzusetzen, es wurden einige Artikel (vgl. Auswahl: S. G. 5; Vreg 6; m. z. 7.) sowie die ersten Abschlussarbeiten (vgl. Auswahl: Pach-einer-Klander; Logar; Dolinar; Senjor) über ihn veröffentlicht.

Obwohl Heines Gedichte seit 1964 kontinuierlich in slowenischen Lesebüchern präsent sind, erfolgte seine formelle Integration in das slowenische Bildungssystem erst im Schuljahr 1973/74 mit der Einführung des „modernen“ Lehrplans für die Sekundarstufe. Seit dieser Reform sind Heines Werke in allen Lesebüchern für das zweite Jahr in weiterführenden Schulen verpflichtend enthalten. Infolgedessen werden slowenische Schülerinnen und Schüler im zweiten Jahr ihres Literaturunterrichts im Rahmen der *Europäischen Romantik* auch mit Heines Werken vertraut gemacht. Weitere Autoren dieses Lehrabschnitts sind Alexander Sergejewitsch Puschkin (1799–1837), George Noel Gordon Byron (1788–1824), Walter Scott (1771–1832), Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864), Petar Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851) und Ivan Mažuranić (1814–1890). Zu dieser Zeit wurden der *Europäischen Romantik* 10 Unterrichtsstunden gewidmet (Krakar-Vogel

178). Bereits im Jahr 1974 fanden sich Heines Gedichte im Lesebuch *Slovensko berilo II* des Schriftstellers und Essayisten Franček Bohanec (et al.). Die veröffentlichten Gedichte Heines in slowenischer Übersetzung sind *Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam*, *Die Lore-Ley* und *Die schlesischen Weber*. Die fünfstrophige Ballade *Die schlesischen Weber* wurde im Jahr 1981 als Beispiel für ein engagiertes Gedicht im Lesebuch *Slovenski jezik* von Vera Gregorač (1921–1999) angeführt. Es ist zu beobachten, dass *Die schlesischen Weber* zu den charakteristischsten Gedichten Heines gehört, die in slowenischen Lesebüchern zu finden sind. Im 21. Jahrhundert verliert die Ballade jedoch ihre führende Rolle im slowenischen Schulkanon, da *Die Lore-Ley* mittlerweile das einzige Gedicht Heines ist, das zu den im Abitur relevanten Themen zählt. Daher hat *Die schlesischen Weber* in Slowenien nicht die gleiche Bekanntheit erlangt wie das Gedicht *Die Lore-Ley*, das im 21. Jahrhundert am häufigsten mit Heines Namen assoziiert wird.

Im Jahr 1996 wurde der Lehrplan für slowenische weiterführende Schulen angepasst, der nun vorsah, dass Schülerinnen und Schüler im Rahmen der Romantik-Periode Werke von Goethe, Heine, Byron sowie des russischen Dichters Michail Jurjewitsch Lermontow (1814–1841) behandeln. Insgesamt sind dafür fünf Schulstunden vorgesehen, eine für einen literaturhistorischen Überblick und vier für die Auseinandersetzung mit den genannten Autoren (Krakar-Vogel 179). Somit bleibt Heine auch nach der Lehrplanerneuerung ein fester Bestandteil der Lesebücher für das zweite Jahr der weiterführenden Schulen.

Für die Analyse von Heines Präsenz in den Lesebüchern nach dem Jahr 2000 wurden zwei Bücher ausgewählt, die zu dieser Zeit in slowenischen Gymnasien und Mittelschulen am häufigsten verwendet wurden. Das erste war das Lesebuch *Svet književnosti 2* von Janko Kos, während das zweite von der Literaturhistorikerin Boža Krakar-Vogel (1950–) et al. stammt und den Titel *Branja 2* trägt. Ein Vergleich zwischen *Svet književnosti 2* und den Lesebüchern früherer Jahrzehnte bezeugt eine intensivere Auseinandersetzung mit Heine und seinem Leben. Das Heine-Kapitel gliedert sich inhaltlich in fünf Teile: *Življenje in delo* [dt. *Leben und Werk*], *Heinejeva lirika* [dt. *Heines Lyrik*], *Lorelaj* [dt. *Die Lore-Ley*], übersetzt von Mile Klopčič, *Ob Lorelaj* [dt. *Neben der Lore-Ley*] und *France Prešeren: Ribič* [dt. *France Prešeren: Der Fischer*]. Letzterer dient dazu, eine Vergleichsanalyse zwischen der *Lore-Ley* und Prešerens Ballade durchzuführen, um Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen ihnen zu erkennen und romantische Motive zu untersuchen. In diesem Lesebuch ist bereits eine Tendenz zur Fokussierung auf *Die Lore-Ley* erkennbar, die seit Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts stetig zunimmt. *Svet književnosti* ist so strukturiert, dass jeder thematische Abschnitt mit dem Kapitel *Vprašanja in naloge* [dt. *Fragen und Aufgaben*] endet. Im Heine-Teil befassen sich die Schüler und Schülerinnen mit Fragen, die mit ihm oder seinem poetischen Werk in Verbindung stehen. Die gestellten Fragen deuten darauf hin, dass Heine

die Rolle eines nationalen Befreiers und Trägers liberaler Ideen zugeschrieben wird. Eine ähnliche Auseinandersetzung mit Heine lässt sich auch im zweiten ausgewählten Lesebuch beobachten. In *Branja 2*, das ebenfalls für Schülerinnen und Schüler des zweiten Jahrgangs der Sekundarstufe bestimmt ist, ist Heine im Kapitel *Predromantika in romantika* [dt. *Frühromantik und Romantik*] mit fünf seiner Gedichte vertreten, die ins Slowenische übersetzt sind (*Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam, In mein gar zu dunkles Leben, Die Lore-Ley, Lumpentum* und *Sie erlischt* (1851)). Die Auswahl der Gedichte in *Branja 2* weist Parallelen zum Lesebuch *Svetovna književnost II* von Janko Kos aus dem Jahr 1964 auf. Allerdings enthält Kos' Werk mehr Heine-Gedichte (8) als *Branja 2* (5). Neben den fünf angeführten Gedichten, die vollständig wiedergegeben sind, findet man in *Branja 2* auch die Anfangsverse der Ballade *Die schlesischen Weber* sowie, wie es in modernen Schulbüchern üblich ist, einen kurzen Lebenslauf von Heine. Heine wird als Befürworter liberaler Werte und Kämpfer für menschliche Rechte dargestellt, wie auch aus dem folgenden Zitat hervorgeht:

Nikoli nisem kdo ve kako cenil pesniške slave in kaj malo mi je mar, ali moje pesmi hvalijo ali grajajo. Toda meč mi položite na krsto; zakaj bil sem dober vojak v osvobodilni vojni človeštva.⁶ (Krakar-Vogel et al. 35)

Diese Äußerung Heines ist in seiner Gedichtsammlung *Reisebilder* (1826) zu finden, in der er seine Vorstellung von der Rolle des Dichters darstellt, die eine politische sein sollte. Die gleichen Worte waren im slowenischen Raum bereits fünfzig Jahre zuvor in einem Artikel von France Vreg mit dem Titel *Heinrich Heine, „dobri vojak v osvobodilnem boju človeštva“* [dt. *Heinrich Heine, „der gute Soldat im Befreiungskampf der Menschheit“*] zu lesen, der am 21. Februar 1956 in der Zeitung *Ljudska pravica* veröffentlicht wurde (6). Die Erwähnung dieser Worte in *Branja 2* passt thematisch zur Wahrnehmung von Heine im Lesebuch *Svet književnosti 2*, was darauf hindeutet, dass Heine im modernen slowenischen Schulkanon im ersten Jahrzehnt des 21. Jahrhunderts als Befürworter liberaler Prinzipien und progressiver Denker betrachtet wird, der sich für das Wohl der Menschheit einsetzte.

Im Jahr 2007 wurde im slowenischen Bildungssystem das Lesebuch *Umetnost besede* in vier Bänden [2007–2010] eingeführt, das vom Literaturhistoriker Dr. Klemen Lah in Zusammenarbeit mit Dr. Vanesa Matajč, Dr. Darja Pavlič, Dr. Marijan Dovič, Dr. Tone Smolej und Dr. Mateja Pezdirc Bartol zusammengestellt worden war. Im Vergleich zum Lesebuch *Branja* beinhaltet *Umetnost besede* einen deutlich größeren Anteil an weltliterarischen Werken. Für die vorliegende Untersuchung ist insbesondere *Umetnost besede 2* (2008) relevant, welches für das

6 Im Original lautet das Zitat: „Ich habe nie großen Wert gelegt auf Dichter-Ruhm, und ob man meine Lieder preiset oder tadelt, es kümmert mich wenig. Aber ein Schwert sollt Ihr mir auf den Sarg legen; denn ich war ein braver Soldat im Befreiungskriege der Menschheit.“ (Heine 300)

zweite Jahr der Gymnasien und Mittelschulen konzipiert worden ist. Heinrich Heine wird im Rahmen des Kapitels *Europäische Romantik* erwähnt (62–66). Zu Beginn ist sein *Burleskes Sonett* (1824) abgedruckt, gefolgt von drei Reflexionsfragen über Heine und seine Poesie. Danach folgen zwei Absätze über das Leben des Dichters, jedoch liefern diese nicht viele Informationen über Heines nationalbefreiende Ideen. Stattdessen wird ein realistischer Blick auf sein Leben und Werk präsentiert, der von einer gewissen Tragik aufgrund seiner Herkunft und langwierigen Krankheiten sowie der politischen Umstände geprägt ist. Dieser wird durch eine ausführliche Analyse seines Gedichts *Die Lore-Ley* ergänzt. Es folgt ein kurzer Abschnitt über die sozialkritischen Aspekte von Heines Gedichten, wobei die Ballade *Die schlesischen Weber* als Beispiel für seine sozialkritische Lyrik präsentiert wird. Im Lesebuch *Umetnost besede 2* findet sich auch ein kurzes ins Slowenische übersetztes Zitat Heines: „Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.“ (63) Im Vergleich zu den vorherigen Lesebüchern vermittelt *Umetnost besede 2* den Schülern nicht den Eindruck, dass Heine als Kämpfer für nationale Befreiung wahrgenommen werden sollte, sondern lediglich als Dichter, der zu einer Zeit, als dies noch nicht erlaubt war, modern dachte. Im 21. Jahrhundert übernimmt im slowenischen Lektürekanon das Gedicht *Die Lore-Ley* die führende Rolle und gehört, wie bereits erwähnt, zu den Gedichten, die seit der Wiedereinführung des Abiturs im Schuljahr 1994/95 regelmäßig in den Abiturprüfungen erscheinen.⁷ Im Schuljahr 2023/24 wird in den Gymnasien und vierjährigen Mittelschulen vor allem das Lesebuch *Branja*, entweder die ältere oder die überarbeitete Ausgabe, verwendet, aber in einigen Schulen wird auch das Lesebuch *Umetnost besede* gebraucht.⁸

Die aufgestellten Thesen des zweiten Teils der Untersuchung wurden bestätigt. Heine nahm nach dem Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs aufgrund veränderter politischer Umstände in Europa und der verminderten Einflussnahme Österreichs auf das slowenische Bildungswesen einen, wenn auch bescheidenen, Platz in slowenischen Lesebüchern ein.⁹ Insbesondere nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zeigte sich eine deutliche Veränderung seiner Position im slowenischen Lektürekanon. Kulturelle und politische Umbrüche führten zu einer breiteren Anerkennung von

7 In allen Abiturmaterialien für die slowenische Sprache und Literatur, wobei *Književnost na maturi* am bekanntesten ist, sind folglich eine kurze Zusammenfassung von Heines Leben und Werk sowie die wichtigsten Merkmale seiner Lyrik und eine kurze Analyse von *Die Lore-Ley* zu finden.

8 Für diese Angabe bedanken sich die Autorinnen herzlich bei der Kollegin Ajda Gabrič.

9 Heine ist jedoch nur im slowenischen Gymnasial- und Mittelschulkanon präsent, nicht aber im Grundschulkanon. Da seine Poesie dennoch nicht aus den Regalen der Grundschulbibliotheken verschwunden ist, wurde eine kurze quantitative Studie über das Vorhandensein von Heines Poesie in diesen Bibliotheken durchgeführt. Es wurde festgestellt, dass die Gedichte Heines in insgesamt 48 Grundschulbibliotheken in Slowenien vorhanden sind (Izum. COBISS, 2018–2024. Erhältlich unter: www.cobiss.si (Zugriffsdatum: 25.1.2024)).

Heines Werken, nicht nur in Slowenien, sondern auch in der globalen Gesellschaft. Seine Herkunft war im Gegensatz zu früher nicht mehr maßgeblich und so wurde Heine ausschließlich aufgrund seines literarischen Schaffens bewertet. Seine liberalen Ideen fanden immer mehr positive Resonanz, was dazu führte, dass er im schulischen Kontext ebenbürtig zu anderen deutschen Autoren behandelt wurde. Das bedeutet, dass Heine im slowenischen Schulsystem als integraler Bestandteil seiner literarischen Epoche anerkannt und seine Werke als bedeutender Teil der Literaturgeschichte betrachtet wurden.

FAZIT

Basierend auf der Analyse von Lesebüchern von 1850 bis heute wurde Heines Präsenz im slowenischen Lektürekanon untersucht und bewertet. Dabei wurde festgestellt, dass seine Rolle in den Lesebüchern des slowenischen Gebietes trotz gelegentlicher Einbeziehung in Lehrpläne variabel und stark von den kulturellen, politischen und pädagogischen Richtlinien der jeweiligen Zeit abhängig war. Die Unbeständigkeit von Heines Präsenz spiegelt auch den allgemeinen Prozess der Integration ausländischer Autoren in das slowenische Bildungssystem wider. Dieser Prozess ist dynamisch und unterliegt den Einflüssen der politischen, kulturellen und ideologischen Umstände des Gebietes, während er gleichzeitig durch strenge Normen und Regeln eingeschränkt wird.

Die vorliegende Untersuchung ergab, dass Heine bis zum Jahr 1918 im Unterricht der deutschen Literatur im Scholl-Lehrbuch, das bis 1854 in Gebrauch war, und in Form von Referaten und Aufsätzen präsent war. In slowenischen Lesebüchern wurde Heine bis 1918 lediglich zweimal kurz erwähnt, und zwar in den Werken *Slovenska slovstvena čitanka za učiteljska* und *Slovenska slovstvena čitanka za sedmi in osmi razred srednjih šol* von Jakob Sket aus dem Jahr 1893.

Nach dem Jahr 1918 lassen sich fünf bedeutende Meilensteine in der slowenischen Schulkanonisierung von Heinrich Heine feststellen: die Jahre 1930, 1950, 1964 sowie die Schuljahre 1973/74 und 1994/95. Erstmals fand Heines Poesie 1930 Eingang in slowenische Lesebücher, als sein Gedicht *Belsazar* in der Publikation *Klasje* veröffentlicht wurde. Dennoch blieb seine Integration in den slowenischen Schulkanon zu dieser Zeit stark begrenzt. Während des Zweiten Weltkriegs wurde Heine gänzlich aus den slowenischen Lesebüchern ausgeschlossen, kehrte jedoch 1950 mit seinem Gedicht *Die schlesischen Weber* in das slowenische Schulsystem zurück, welches im Werk *Slovensko berilo III* enthalten war. Trotz dieser Einbindung erfuhr Heine erst ab 1964 eine konstante Präsenz in slowenischen Lesebüchern, als acht seiner Gedichte in das Lesebuch *Svetovna književnost II* einzug fanden. Diese Entwicklung überraschte, da zuvor nur ein oder zwei seiner Gedichte in die Lesebücher aufgenommen

wurden. Der Grund für diese plötzliche Einbindung waren zweifellos auch Heines hundertster Todestag und die ersten wissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen über den Dichter in den 1960er Jahren. Heine erlangte zu dieser Zeit eine bedeutendere Position im slowenischen Hochschuldiskurs, was sich auch auf den Lektürekanon auswirkte. 1973/74 wurde Heine ein ständiger Bestandteil der überarbeiteten, „modernen“ Lehrpläne und im Schuljahr 1994/95 erhielt sein Gedicht *Die Lore-Ley* einen festen Platz in den Abiturprüfungen. Heute ist der Name Heinrich Heine jedem in Slowenien bekannt, der das Abitur ablegt. Seine Präsenz im slowenischen Schulkanon bietet Schülerinnen und Schülern die Möglichkeit, Einblick in die Rolle zu erhalten, die der deutsche Dichter in der Weltliteratur einnimmt.

ANERKENNUNG

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Heinrich Heine v slovenskem šolskem literarnem kanonu: analiza recepcije in prisotnosti njegovih del od leta 1850 do danes

Čeprav je nemški pesnik Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) igral izjemno pomembno vlogo na svetovni literarni sceni, je bil vse do druge polovice 20. stoletja pogosto izključen iz šolskega kanona. Na njegovo sprejemanje v izobraževalnem okolju so vplivale tako tedanje politično-družbene razmere kot kontroverznost, ki je spremljala njegovo delo. Pričujoči prispevek se osredotoča na vprašanje, kakšna je (bila) Heinejeva vloga v šolskem literarnem kanonu slovenskega prostora in osvetljuje predvsem zgodovinski razvoj kanonizacije Heinejevih del v slovenskem izobraževalnem okolju, zajema pa tudi njegovo trenutno prisotnost v slovenskem šolskem sistemu. Prvo poglavje raziskuje Heinejevo vlogo v šolskem kanonu na Slovenskem med letoma 1850 in 1918, ki ga na podlagi zgodovinskega ozadja delimo na dve podpoglavji; na Heinejevo vlogo pri pouku nemške književnosti in na Heinejevo prisotnost v slovenskih čitankah do leta 1918. Drugo poglavje pa se osredotoča na Heinejevo pozicioniranje v slovenskem šolskem kanonu od leta 1918 do danes. Raziskali smo, kdaj so bila Heinejeva dela prvič sprejeta v slovenska berila, katera njegova dela so bila za vključitev izbrana, kdaj in kako je Heine postal stalni del slovenskega šolstva ter na kakšen način je pesnik danes predstavljen slovenskim učencem in dijakom.

Ključne besede: Heinrich Heine, slovenski prostor, šolski literarni kanon, berila, od 1850 do 1918, od 1918 do danes

Can AI be a Poet?

Comparative Analysis of Human-authored and AI-generated Poetry

Eldar Veremchuk

Abstract

The article deals with the problem of AI-generated poetry. It aims to investigate the difference between human-authored poems and the ones created by AI. The paper hypothesizes that AI poetic generation abilities are restricted by the algorithms, which influence its creative output. The research procedure included a gradual comparative analysis of the original human-authored poems “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost and “Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley with the ones created by AI on their basis. The analysis considered seven aspects: title, structure, rhyme and rhythm, grammaticality, vocabulary, meaningfulness, imagery and poeticness. We argue that AI-generated poetic output can easier be unravelled when contrasted to the corresponding human-authored poems. We presume that the online available highlights of literary criticism (author’s message, imagery, narratives) appear to be obligatory components in the AI’s poem creation process. The obtained result can be useful for conducting further research on the generative linguistic and creative abilities of AI, their development and improvement.

Keywords: authors message, Copilot, poem generation, poetry, stylistic devices

INTRODUCTION

AI has become a significant “player” in society since it functions in many spheres, starting from making scientific models and operating in the healthcare, transport, and financial sectors (OECD, 2019) and ending up in the sphere of entertainment and even in the domain of Art. AI is rapidly advancing and has begun to take over tasks previously performed solely by humans (Rahwan, 2019). Currently, generative artificial intelligence can produce graphical images, videos, presentations, and, of course, texts. Algorithms are already assisting humans in writing text, such as auto-completing sentences in emails and even helping writers write novels (Streitfeld, 2018, p. 1–13) and journalists to generate news pieces based on standardised input data, such as sports scores, stock market values (van Dalen, 2012) or articles on a particularly given topic.

A significant number of works are dedicated to the study of products, generated by AI, like images (Göring, 2023; Yadav, 2024; Jin, 2024), videos (Jayanthiladevi, 2020; Samadi, 2024) and texts (Berber, 2024), as well as research publications (Sarzaeim, 2023; Faisal 2023). But one of the particular focuses is the ability of AI to behave human-like, that is creatively not just like a programme, which operates according to the algorithms. With the latter being the case, AI still is able to generate creative output, one of which is literary texts and poetry in particular. This question is raised in (Köbis 2021; Linardaki 2022; Rahmeh 2023; Shalevska 2024).

The **actuality** of this topic lies in that AI literary work can hardly be differentiated from human one, and which is more, it is often highly valued. For instance, Rie Kudan, who won Japan’s most prestigious book award revealed that around 5% of the content in her novel came directly from generative AI. Shen Yang’s novel “The Land of Machine Memories” took the second prize since three of six judges voted for it in a popular youth science and sci-fi competition put on by the Jiangsu Popular Science Writers Association in Nanjing, Jiangsu province (Deborah, 2024). This raises the question of whether AI literary abilities can really compete with human ones. To understand this, we need to tackle the question of what is poetry itself and what are the criteria for evaluating its worth?

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING POETIC WORKS

To figure out criteria for evaluating AI-generated poetry, firstly we need to clarify what poetry is and what its goals are.

As Hirshfield suggests:

“Poetry’s work is the clarification and magnification of being. Each time we enter its word-woven and musical invocation, we give ourselves over to a different mode of knowing: to poetry’s knowing, and to the increase of existence it brings, unlike any other” (Hirshfield, 1997).

Poetry is intrinsic to human nature. And investigation of the way it is created and the impact it makes on the spiritual level makes it possible to unravel what it means to be human. The use of language in poetry demonstrates and discloses the human mystery allowing us to “find ourselves in poems” (Richardson, 1998, p. 459) making it a viable alternative to traditional prose (Faulkner, 2005)

“The art of poetry allows us to fly as well as to walk, to be old and young at once, to be inside and outside personal experience. And in poetry, we may combine the real and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract” (Becker, 1995).

The goals of real poetry, as scholars suggest, are: getting an emotional response from the reader (Glesne, 1997; Carr, 2003) and achieving emotional poignancy (Langer & Furman, 2004); showing the moment of “truth” (Richardson, 1998); revealing to others how it is to feel something and promotion empathy (Richardson, 2002; Poindexter, 2002). For a more detailed outline of poetic goals see (Faulkner, 2005). We suggest that the main goal of poetry is to reveal what is to be a human and unravel the intricacy of human emotions, feelings and aspirations via the depiction of their achievements, hardships and yearnings. If a poem abides by this goal in a broad sense it can be considered as a worthy one. But this is not the only criterion.

According to Manurung (2004), there exist three preconditions for a piece of writing to be considered poetry. They are grammaticality, meaningfulness, and poeticness. These criteria can be applied for evaluating poems, generated by AI. Grammatically means that the piece of writing should abide by the grammar rules of a language, in which the poem is written. Meaningfulness presupposes that the content of writing must have meaning and a message to be delivered to the reader. Poeticness is the last but not the least criterion, which differentiates a poem from other literary genres and presupposes the use of imaginative language, rhetoric and stylistic devices.

From the other perspective, poetic works can be assessed according to the overall perception, which includes participants’ satisfaction, emotional engagement, and perceived linguistic complexity (Rahmeh 2023).

Based on the abovementioned works and according to our own research experience we suggest evaluating the following aspects of a piece of poetry, generated by AI: title, structure, rhyme and rhythm, grammaticality, vocabulary, meaningfulness, imagery and poeticness.

MATERIAL, METHODS, AND PROCEDURE

The paper aims to compare AI-generated poetic texts with the already-acknowledged literary masterpieces. For the given research, we've chosen the Microsoft Copilot interactive chat interface based on a generative language model GPT-4. We've requested it to select two globally acknowledged poetic masterpieces. Of course, the list of the world's best poems cannot be exhaustible and indisputable, since the measurement of artistic value is always highly subjective. But considering the aim of the research we've relied on the AI-generated result, that is "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost and "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley

On the next stage, we've made two separate inputs in the Copilot interface: "Please, create your own poem, similar to "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost/"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, so that it should have the corresponding artistic value. Keep to the same number of stanzas and lines".

That was the end of the preliminary stage of material preparation after which, we had to analyze the pair of poems according to the outlined aspects: title, structure, rhyme and rhythm, grammaticality, vocabulary, meaningfulness, imagery and poeticness. We've used methods of stylistic and semantic analysis, comparative method and method of literary interpretation.

RESULTS

The first poem under analysis is Copilot-generated work as a response to the input "Create your own poem, similar to "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost, so that it should have the corresponding artistic value. Keep to the same number of stanzas and lines". The result is given in Table 1. We are going to delve into Copilot's creation and compare it to the original poem according to the suggested aspects.

Table 1. “The Road not Taken” by Robert Frost and “The Path Untraveled” by Copilot

“The Road not Taken” by Robert Frost	“The Path Untraveled” by Copilot
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;	In a wood where paths diverge in a yellow hue, I stood pondering the avenues anew. One path worn, where many feet have tread, The other, lush, with mysteries unsaid.
Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same,	With curious heart, I chose the road sparse, Where thicket grew and canopies arched vast. Each step I took was one of my own making, A journey of chance, ripe for the taking.
And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.	Behind me lay the common trail, well-known, Ahead, the secret whispers of the unknown. And in that choice, my story found its verse, A path less traveled, for better or worse.
I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.	May this path lead to vistas grand and wide, Where dreams take wing and new horizons bide. For in the choosing lies the life we craft, A tapestry woven with each forked path.

1. The title. The title of Copilot’s poem is different but conceptually the same, as the words are changed to their synonyms: *road* – *path*, *not taken* – *untraveled*. This, on the one hand, confirms Copilot’s attempt to create a kind of pastiche to Frost’s work, and on the other hand – reveals its ability to paraphrase for avoiding plagiarism.
2. Structure. Although in the input Copilot was asked “to keep to the same number of stanzas and lines”, its poem is 4 lines shorter, since each stanza has one line less. This can be interpreted as an inability to fully follow the task, sacrificing structure for achieving a certain level of “creativity”.
3. Rhyme and rhythm. Copilot’s work has a rhyming scheme *AABB* compared to the original *ABAAB*, and they both employ iambic tetrameter, a metrical scheme that features four beats to each line. This rhythm gives the poems a sense of propulsion and forward movement, fitting for a contemplation on choices and paths. This cannot be seen as a drawback, but rather as an advantage if we evaluate its creativity as opposed to plagiarism or mere random periphrasis.

4. Grammaticality. Copilot's poem adheres to English grammar rules, with the omission of an article "a" in one case (*with (a) curious heart, I chose the road sparse*), which helps to preserve rhythm.
5. Vocabulary. In most cases, Copilot uses relevant lexical collocations, though some of them may seem to be not traditional: a) *avenues* in the forest contrasted to *paths* in the original work; b) *canopies*, which can hardly be found in the wild forest; c) *ripe journey*, which doesn't seem common collocation. One lexeme used (*bide*) is archaic. With this mentioned, we have to state that the use of these words in a non-common context can be justified by the effort to create imaginative output.
6. Meaningfulness. This aspect is the most important for Copilot's work analysis since all previous ones assessed it from a formal approach. It is argued that AI can more easily produce good results in adhering to the norms in terms of grammar, rhythm and rhyme due to its algorithms. The meaning, on the other hand, is something which has more human nature as it employs not mere juxtaposition of certain lexical units according to the given rules but has an imaginative nature, it can be experienced and felt. To dwell on this aspect more thoroughly we will analyze the meaning of each stanza and compare it to the original Frost's poem, which served as a benchmark for its creation.

The first stanza of Copilot's poem depicts the hesitation of the lyrical hero about the choice that has to be made. Unlike in Frost's first stanza, Copilot's first stanza already reveals the opposition of the two ways: the well-trodden and the unknown, ruining the mystery, preserved in Frost's poem. The original poem though focuses more on the lyrical hero's feelings (*And sorry I could not travel both*), state of loneliness (*And be one traveler*) and yearning for something (*long I stood, and looked down one as far as I could*), which is not the case for the AI's verse.

In the second stanza Copilot directly announces the choice of the speaker in favor of the unknown path (*road sparse*), describes the results of such a choice (*Each step I took was one of my own making, A journey of chance, ripe for the taking*), while Frost keeps the mystery of choice up to the end of the poem, which makes it more enigmatic and captivating.

The third stanza of Frost's poem demonstrates that the dilemma of choice reaches its peak and the author drops the hint that the less traveled path suggests uniqueness and is more attractive. In Copilot's poem, this stanza expresses the idea of mystery, which lies ahead, and that each choice a person makes shapes the future, which can be either for better or for worse.

The final stanza in the original poem expresses the resolution of the internal conflict of making a choice, which is the logical ending of the verse. Frost says, that we are, who we are because of our decisions, and they make all the

difference in our lives. In Copilot's final stanza, we do not observe the pinnacle of emotional tension created by the unknown, but rather a wish for the better (*May this path lead to vistas grand and wide*). The final message is conveyed more explicitly (*For in the choosing lies the life we craft, A tapestry woven with each forked path*). The idea that each choice shapes our reality is expressed literally being the focus message to be conveyed. Therefore, Copilot used less imaginative language, compared to Frost's poem, so that the output could correspond to the input task.

7. Imagery and poeticness. Copilot uses imaginative language as well as a number of stylistic devices. Firstly, like in Frost's poem, Copilot employs a metaphor of wood, vegetation (*lush*) and its paths for life and the choices we make. Secondly, in the AI-generated poem, we see even more metaphors: *thicket* and *canopies* standing for the life obstacles; *journey* – meaning the life we live; *tapestry* – a story of one's life. Along with the metaphors as stylistic devices, Copilot also uses conceptual metaphors: CHANCE IS A FRUIT (*A journey of chance, ripe for the taking*); DREAM IS A BIRD (*Where dreams take wing*); PATH IS A PERSON (*secret whispers of the unknown*). Apart from metaphor, one can find other stylistic devices like alliteration (*paths diverge; secret whispers*); contrast and parallelism (*One path worn and the other, lush*), epiphany (*And in that choice, my story found its verse*).

Overall Copilot's poem can be viewed as a poetic work, evaluated according to the seven suggested aspects. However we have to mention, that one can feel a no-human/algorithmic touch while reading some of its lines, where Copilot tried to literally and directly fulfil the input requirements. In the content plane human author – Robert Frost unravelled his message gradually reaching its pinnacle in the penultimate stanza and suggesting a denouement in the final one. In Copilot's version, the suspense about the choice is revealed far earlier and the message is expressed more explicitly in an attempt to openly deliver the required message, which AI learnt on the basis of literary criticism of Frost's poem available on the Internet, which partly formed the restrictive basis of Copilot's creativity.

To check further if this is the case we suggest analyzing one more poem created by Copilot based on an outstanding poem "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley following the same procedure. The input request was like in the previous case "Create your own poem, similar to "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, so that it should have the corresponding artistic value. Keep to the same number of stanzas and lines". The result is given in Table 2.

Table 2. "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley and "Ozymandias" by Copilot

"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley	"Ozymandias" by Copilot
I met a traveller from an antique land, Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand, Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold com- mand, Tell that its sculptor well those passions read Which yet survive, stamped on these life- less things, The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed; And on the pedestal, these words appear: My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and des- pair! Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away."	Eternal sands conceal a fallen throne, Where once a tyrant's visage sneered and frowned. Two legs of stone, their grandeur overthrown, Now lie half-sunk, their majesty unbound. The sculptor's hand, once skilled, now rests in dust, Its mocking touch erased by time's cruel hand. The heart that fed ambition, power, and lust, Lies silent, lost amidst the barren land. And on the pedestal, these words remain: "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings." Yet nothing else endures, no grand domain, Only the endless stretch where ruin sings. Behold, ye mighty, learn from this decay, For empires crumble, fleeting as the day.

1. Title. The title of Copilot's poem "Ozymandias" coincides with Shelley's title unlike in the previous case. This might be explained by the fact that this proper name is central to the meaning of the poem, so Copilot left it unchanged.
2. Structure. Unlike in the previous case, the poem "Ozymandias" by Copilot contains the same number of lines as the original one. The Copilot version split it up into three four-line stanzas and the final two lines.
3. Rhyme and rhythm. Copilot's poem "Ozymandias" is written primarily in iambic pentameter, with the metric scheme *ABAB*. This means that each line generally consists of five metrical feet, with each foot being an iamb with occasional minor deviations (for instance, *The heart that fed ambition, power, and lust*). This is a common thing for English poetry, employed for the sake of emphasis and rhythmic variation, and the same is true for Shelley's poem.
4. Grammaticality. Copilot's poem adheres to English grammar rules. One should highlight the extensive use of predicative constructions with the participle II (for example, *Two legs of stone, their grandeur overthrown*), which shortened the utterance and helped to preserve the meter.

5. Vocabulary. The poem has standard English vocabulary, used appropriately both semantically and syntactically. Though there are a couple of outdated forms (*amidst*, *ye*), which corresponds to Shelley's style.
6. Meaningfulness. In Shelley's original version, the narration is carried out on behalf of the traveler, while in Copilot's poem, we observe the narration from the author. The opening lines in Copilot's poem focus more on the king's personality, describing him as a *tyrant* ruler, with severe character (he *sneered and frowned*), who used to sit on his *throne*. Further, the ruler is characterized even more as a vicious person (*The heart that fed ambition, power, and lust*). This confirms our assumption that AI having got an input task to write a poem similar to the already existing famous masterpiece analyses available literary criticism and interpretations and tries to explicitly express the main message, reinforcing it with the corresponding details. The same thing concerns the character of a sculptor, who is depicted in the poem as a dead person resting in dust. Since one of the main topics of the original verse is the decay of the empire and its rulers, this idea is reinforced in Copilot's poem by the decay even of the artist, who used to bestow honours upon a powerful king (*The sculptor's hand, once skilled, now rests in dust*).

The motive of the transience of power and its unavoidable decay is further conveyed by the use of corresponding lexemes, like *lost*, *silent*, *barren*, *ruin*, *decay*, and *crumble*. (*Lies silent, lost amidst the barren land*). The denouement in Shelley's poem is depicted clearly but not literally (*Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away*). It gives the reader a hint that nothing endures, no matter how grand and powerful it might be. But in Copilot's version, the message is as explicit as possible (*Yet **nothing** else endures, no grand domain, Only the endless stretch where ruin sings Behold, ye mighty, learn from this decay, For **empires crumble**, fleeting as the day*). Such use of words to convey the meaning gives another proof that AI algorithms try to fulfil the input tasks "with a reserve", which in the case of poetry may seem to be too overwhelming, especially when we are talking about the poetry which impels the reader to meditation and drawing their own conclusions instead of getting direct instructions.

7. Imagery and poeticness. The imagery includes visual images of grandeur and decay (*eternal sands, fallen throne*), a facial expression of the ruler (*Where once a tyrant's visage sneered and frowned*), body parts (*legs of stone*) scenery (*barren land*). All this personifies ruin as something endless and eternal, contrasted to human greatness, no matter how colossal it might be (*time's cruel hand; ruin signs*).

Stylistic devices employed to convey the message include: metaphor (personification of ruin); metonymy (*The fallen throne and broken statue as metaphors for*

the collapse of empires and power); irony (*My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings*) – where the poem contrasts the intended permanence of the statue with its real impermanence, which symbolizes the transience of human accomplishments, since despite the grandiose claim, nothing remains of the king's empire; alliteration (*Silent, lost amidst the barren land*). The imagery and stylistic devices employed correspond to the English literary tradition and are similar to the ones used by Shelley.

Overall, this poem just like the previous one can be regarded as a piece of poetry being assessed according to the agreed criteria.

CONCLUSIONS

Generally, we can say that there is evidence that AI-generated poems cannot always be distinguished by humans as such (Köbis 2021), especially if the judges do not have any reward for finding the right answers, see Turing test (Turing, 1950; Walsh, 2016; Walsh, 2017). Though, based on our investigation we have to say that AI-generated poetic output can be unravelled as such when the input request for generating a poem includes the task of making it on the basis of an existing one. Though the result is quite good, we've observed that the AI poem explicitly expresses ideas of the original one, because it writes it based on the available literary criticism of the real human-authored poem. The highlights of literary criticism (author's message, imagery, narratives) appear to be obligatory components in the poem creation process, which is not the case with the original poem created by a human, who is driven by inspiration and not by the mandatory algorithmic input. This makes human-generated poetry more compelling to reflections and less trivial and explicit in terms of message. The obtained result can be useful for conducting further research on the generative linguistic and creative abilities of AI, their development and improvement.

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Ali umetna inteligenca lahko pesni? Primerjalna analiza poezije, ki jo ustvari človek in tiste, ki jo napiše umetna inteligenca

Članek obravnava problem poezije, ki jo ustvarja umetna inteligenca. Njegov namen je raziskati razliko med pesmimi, katerih avtor je človek, in tistimi, ki jih je ustvarila umetna inteligenca. Članek postavlja hipotezo, da so sposobnosti umetne inteligence za ustvarjanje pesmi omejene z algoritmi, ki vplivajo na njen ustvarjalni rezultat. Raziskovalni postopek je vključeval postopno primerjalno analizo izvirnih pesmi, katerih avtor je človek, „The Road Not Taken“ Roberta Frosta in „Ozymandias“ Percyja Byssheja Shelleyja, s tistimi, ki jih je na njuni podlagi ustvarila UI. Analiza je upoštevala sedem vidikov: naslov, strukturo, rimo in ritem, slovničnost, besedišče, smiselnost, slikovitost in poetičnost. Trdimo, da je pesniške izdelke, ki jih je ustvarila umetna inteligenca, lažje razvozlati, če jih primerjamo z ustreznimi pesmimi, katerih avtorji so ljudje. Predpostavljamo, da so na spletu dostopni poudarki literarne kritike (avtorjevo sporočilo, podobe, pripovedi) obvezne sestavine v procesu ustvarjanja pesmi s strani umetne inteligence. Dobljeni rezultat je lahko koristen za izvajanje nadaljnjih raziskav o generativnih jezikovnih in ustvarjalnih zmožnostih UI, njihovem razvoju in izboljšanju.

Ključne besede: sporočilo avtorja, kopilot, generiranje pesmi, poezija, slogovna sredstva

***Ubu roi* : une œuvre polymorphe**

Primož Vitez

RÉSUMÉ

Ubu roi, cette exhibition théâtrale sur un homme grotesquement extroverti, enfantin, gigantesque et glouton, foncièrement amoral, est une œuvre littéraire par laquelle l'auteur réalise sa position critique à travers l'art performatif, une mise en scène théâtrale-textuelle utopique. L'idée de l'utopie se situe surtout au niveau de l'expression linguistique dont Jarry se sert pour articuler le sens transhistorique du pouvoir politique et de la nature humaine. La poétique du théâtre jarryque est une synthèse de nombreuses nouveautés formelles, graphiques et phoniques, ainsi que de toute une variété de couches linguistiques qui se combinent en une invention unique et incomparable. C'est un jeu constant avec les genres linguistiques, du français littéraire esthétisé, avec une forte touche poétique, au verbiage le plus profane ; de la langue enfantine à la rigueur de la terminologie militaire ; de l'ironie fine au littéralisme transparent du style théologique ; du latin classique au discours détendu des gens de la rue.

Mots-clés : *Ubu roi*, Alfred Jarry, polymorphisme, structure textuelle, néologisme

LECTURES ET ÉCRITS DE JEUNESSE

Toutes les œuvres de Jarry sont des œuvres de jeunesse.¹ Son travail est produit d'une énergie explosive, mais en même temps complexe, non linéaire, souvent au bord de l'incohérence – comme d'ailleurs toutes ces courtes vies extraordinaires (Levesque 1970 : 11) qui semblent avoir relié des contradictions irréconciliables. La dialectique du corps et de l'esprit est un ancien mécanisme littéraire et philosophique – dans l'œuvre de Jarry, indissociable de sa vie et de ses comportements scandaleux (Brotchie 2019 : 18) – cette dialectique semble résonner le plus clairement dans deux de ses textes essentiels : d'une part, le *Tout Ubu*, cette épopée théâtrale en quatre parties sur un homme grotesquement extroverti, gigantesque et glouton, où l'auteur réalise sa critique à travers l'art performatif, une fabuleuse mise en scène théâtrale-textuelle utopique ; de l'autre côté, un récit réflexif et ludique, *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien* (1898, publication posthume en 1911), dans lequel Jarry, par introspection, incarne ses vues philosophiques et se positionne comme un artiste intellectuel.

Le cycle ubuesque contient suffisamment de substance mentale pour que *Ubu* soit aussi philosophe, et docteur Faustroll a assez d'imagination pour que sa *pataphysique* fonctionne comme une pratique artistique. Avant de nous tourner vers *Ubu*, examinons de plus près ce que fait et pense le docteur Faustroll, qui, à la lumière de son prophétisme occasionnel et de son ton narratif élevé, côtoyant le sacré, agit parfois comme le *Zarathoustra* de Nietzsche. Le geste d'ouverture de ce texte insolite est auto-réflexif : il révèle son arrière-plan, son propre contexte, en réalisant une véritable exhibition intertextuelle. Au nom du docteur Faustroll, Jarry compile un catalogue, une liste de vingt-sept livres qu'il appelle les « livres pairs » (Schuh 2008 : 527) et que le docteur apprécie. Voici les unités élues à la « bibliothèque idéale » de Jarry.

Baudelaire, Edgar Poe, traduction.

Bergerac, œuvres complètes, 2e volume: L'Histoire des États et Empires du Soleil, L'Histoire des Oiseaux.

Évangile selon Saint-Luc, en grec.

Bloy, Le mendiant ingrat.

Coleridge, The Rime of the ancient Mariner.

Darien, Le Voleur.

Desbordes-Valmore, Le serment des petits hommes.

Elskamp, Enluminures.

Florian, volume de théâtre.

Mille et une nuits, traduction Galland.

1 Le sort que Jarry partage avec Arthur Rimbaud, Kurt Cobain, Franz Schubert, Jim Morrison, Amy Winehouse, Masaccio, Janis Joplin, Mozart, Mihail Lermontov, Lautréamont, Jimi Hendrix – et bien d'autres.

Grabbe, Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung, comédie en trois actes.
 Kahn, Le Conte de l'or et du silence.
 Lautréamont, Les Chants de Maldoror.
 Maeterlinck, Aglavaine et Sélysette.
 Mallarmé, Vers et prose.
 Mendès, Gog.
 Odyssée, édition Teubner.
 Péladan, Babylone.
 Rabelais.
 Jean de Chilra, L'Heure sexuelle.
 Henri de Régnier, La Canne de jaspe.
 Rimbaud, Les Illuminations.
 Schwob, La Croisade des enfants.
 Ubu roi.
 Verlaine, Sagesse.
 Verhaeren, Les Campagnes hallucinées.
 Verne, Le Voyage au centre de la Terre.

Les raisons pour lesquelles ces livres sont classés par ordre alphabétique sont de nature bibliothécaire. Quiconque veut comprendre à partir de ces livres le système par lequel le monde philosophique d'Alfred Jarry devait être construit, devrait d'abord accepter le fait fort probable qu'il s'agit d'une série de livres ou d'auteurs préférés que Jarry lisait ou avait lus en écrivant Faustroll – ou peu avant de l'avoir écrit. En d'autres termes, il semble que Jarry, submergé par le rôle de docteur Faustroll, ait parcouru par l'oeil l'endroit où il écrivait et fait la liste des livres qui se trouvaient dans sa proximité, c'est-à-dire dans sa chambre.

Il n'est pas étonnant que des histoires pour jeunes lecteurs (Kahn, Verne) apparaissent aux côtés des grands classiques (Odyssée, Rabelais) et des contemporains emblématiques (Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren). Compte tenu de l'hétérogénéité inhabituelle de Jarry, ces titres et leurs auteurs agissent comme des figures d'une pièce littéraire (Bordillon 1986: 89) dans laquelle aucune règle n'est donnée à l'avance : c'est au lecteur de les inventer. D'une part, toutes les influences littéraires majeures sur l'écriture de Jarry peuvent en être extraites, mais de l'autre part, c'est précisément dans la diversité de ces titres et auteurs que l'on trouve la structure de l'intérêt mental de Jarry (Schuh 2008 : 557), à cheval constamment entre l'art et la science, entre littérature et théâtre, entre textes triviaux et philosophiques, entre générosité enfantine et sagesse synthétique, entre différentes langues, entre traduction et original, entre classiques anciens et curiosités modernes.

L'énigme de ces vingt-sept titres est en fait une introduction bibliographique aux dimensions scientifiques et philosophiques de Faustroll, car plusieurs pages après le catalogue, Jarry ajoute une explication de ce qui l'a fait classer ces textes

parmi les « quelques élus », touchés par la grâce herméneutique de Jarry. Des explications plus détaillées des raisons de ce choix sont données ici :

« À travers l'espace feuilleté des vingt-sept pairs, Faustroll évoqua vers la troisième dimension :

De Baudelaire, le Silence d'Edgard Poë, en ayant soin de retraduire en grec la traduction de Baudelaire.

De Bergerac, l'arbre précieux auquel se métamorphosèrent, au pays du soleil, le rossignol-roi et ses sujets.

De Luc, le Calomniateur qui porta le Christ sur un lieu élevé.

De Bloy, les cochons noirs de la Mort, cortège de la Fiancée.

De Coleridge, l'arbalète du vieux marin et le squelette flottant du vaisseau, qui, déposé dans l'as, fut crible sur crible.

De Darien, les couronnes de diamant des perforatrices du Saint-Gothard.

De Desbordes-Valmore, le canard que déposa le bûcheron aux pieds des enfants, et les cinquante-trois arbres marqués à l'écorce.

D'Elskamp, les lièvres qui, courant sur les draps, devinrent des mains rondes et portèrent l'univers sphérique comme un fruit.

De Florian, le billet de loterie de Scapin.

Des *Mille et une Nuits*, l'œil crevé par la queue du cheval volant du troisième Kalender, fils de roi.

De Grabbe, les treize compagnons tailleurs que massacra, à l'aurore, le baron Tual par l'ordre du chevalier de l'ordre pontifical du Mérite Civil, et la serviette qu'il se noua préalablement autour du cou.

De Kahn, un des timbres d'or des célestes orfèvreries.

De Lautréamont, le scarabée, beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme, qui disparaissait à l'horizon.

De Maeterlinck, les lumières qu'entendit la première sœur aveugle.

De Mallarmé, le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui.

De Mendès, le vent du nord qui, soufflant sur la verte mer, mêlait à son sel la sueur du forçat qui rama jusqu'à cent vingt ans.

De l'*Odyssée*, la marche joyeuse de l'irréprochable fils de Pélée, par la prairie d'asphodèles.

De Péladan, le reflet, au miroir du bouclier étamé de la cendre des ancêtres, du sacrilège massacre des sept planètes.

De Rabelais, les sonnettes auxquelles dansèrent les diables pendant la tempête.

De Rachilde, Cléopâtre.

De Régnier, la plaine saure où le centaure moderne s'ébroua.

De Rimbaud, les glaçons jetés par le vent de Dieu aux mares.

De Schwob, les bêtes écailleuses que mimait la blancheur des mains du lépreux.

D'*Ubu roi*, la cinquième lettre du premier mot du premier acte.

De Verhaeren, la croix faite par la bêche aux quatre fronts des horizons.

De Verlaine, des voix asymptotes à la mort.

De Verne, les deux lieues et demie d'écorce terrestre. »

S'il y a un système dans ces explications poétiques et très brèves, c'est bien le point de vue de Jarry – celui d'un lecteur qui, dans la perception et interprétation des mondes littéraires, ne cherche pas à reconnaître les stéréotypes et le confort conventionnel (Arnaud 1974 : 270), mais trouve dans chacun de ces textes un point névralgique de déferlement poétique. Jarry arrête ce moment littéraire intemporel qui catapulte le travail individuel au-dessus de l'histoire : c'est-à-dire que le texte s'adresse esthétiquement et spirituellement à lui, penseur exceptionnel et porteur unique de sa propre sphère créative.

JARRY, AUTEUR D'UBU ?

Lorsque Jarry est venu s'inscrire au lycée de Rennes, en 1888, il a fait la connaissance des frères Morin et appris que l'aîné d'entre eux, Charles, avait écrit une pièce qui s'intitulait *Les Polonais* et dans laquelle un certain PH (Père Hébert, avec la variante Père Hébé) est roi de Pologne, ayant accédé au pouvoir par un massacre sanglant de toute la famille royale polonaise, pour régner en autocrate autoritaire, génocide et avide de richesses. Le seul survivant dans le carnage, le jeune Bougrellas, fils du bon vieux roi assassiné Venceslas, a été expulsé du pays. Le Père Hébé s'empare du trône qui, de droit héréditaire, appartiendrait à Bougrellas. Jarry, qui s'était jusque là beaucoup appliqué à l'imitation du théâtre de Victor Hugo, était absolument ravi du texte. Ce petit persiflage d'écolier, Charles Morin l'avait écrit pour ridiculiser un professeur de physique, nommé Félix-Frédéric Hébert, qui était considéré parmi les lycéens comme une personnification grotesque de l'injustice, de maladresse gigantesque, d'absurdité psychophysique et de malveillance injustifiable. Le professeur Hébert était, aux yeux des lycéens, un baril de farce, un « corps hyperphysique » incroyable, inconcevable, exposé à la haine, la risée de tout le monde.

Les traits physiques de ce professeur, et son comportement absurde, ont déterminé le profil théâtral du Père Ubu, personnage principal d'*Ubu roi*. Dans un témoignage, un camarade de classe de Jarry, Henri Hertz, le décrit ainsi :

« Monsieur Hébert était un professeur excellent. Il était bon. Il n'y avait aucune raison qu'il fût chahuté. Le choix des professeurs chahutés est soumis aux impondérables. Il s'ébrouait des interpellations saugrenues, des chansons injurieuses, des cris, des rires, des projectiles [...] il en secouait les banderilles avec tant de balourdise, des exclamations si ingénues, des menaces tellement à contretemps qu'il s'empêtrait dans ses entrailles et d'affreuses huées saluaient ses blessures et sa défaite. Quand il avait bien peiné, invectivé, trébuché, il avait des larmes. Avant que la classe commençât, tassé sur la table, il nous épiait, un à un, essayant de nous attendrir par un sourire que nous interprétions comme un signe de lâcheté, et déjà nous ricanions. Son esprit qu'il avait fort délié mais dont, à ces moments-là il perdait toute gouverne, se contentant de le hérissier de vociférations étranglées ... » (cité par Pennec 2003 : 78)

Obésité, injustice, lâcheté. Dans la parodie de Morin, Jarry a reconnu une forte idée théâtrale, une scénographie suggestive et le potentiel linguistique de la puérilité symbolique. Il s'est immédiatement approprié *Les Polonais* et en a fait des œuvres d'art explosives. A la création (réfaction) de la pièce, Jarry n'a pas utilisé son nom de naissance comme signature d'auteur de ce texte, car il ne pouvait pas intimement se considérer comme auteur. La suppression du nom, bien sûr, est liée, d'une part, au fait qu'il a repris le texte à un camarade de classe, mais de l'autre part, c'est le résultat de la vision de Jarry de l'œuvre d'art comme œuvre d'esprit universel. Au lieu de signer le texte, il a choisi lui-même d'adopter l'identité d'Ubu – et c'est comme cela qu'il a assumé irrévocablement sa paternité. La fascination de Jarry pour le texte est allée si loin que la fascination s'est finalement transformée en identification : désormais, dans la vie quotidienne, Jarry se présentait et signait comme Monsieur Ubu, ce qui n'a certainement pas contribué au succès de sa socialisation normative (Besnier 2007: 43). D'ailleurs, la participation aux conventions sociales ne l'intéressait pas. On a l'impression qu'Alfred Jarry avait bien soigné son image sociale en supprimant stratégiquement ses empreintes : il sélectionnait rigoureusement ses photographies ; il a même détruit un portrait sur lequel le grand peintre Henri « Douanier » Rousseau avait représenté la tête de Jarry en compagnie de ses deux animaux préférés, le caméléon et le hibou. Le premier animal étant, bien sûr, l'incarnation de la transformation et du mimétisme, le second un symbole de connaissance et de sagesse.

UBU ROI ET LA CINQUIÈME LETTRE DU PREMIER MOT

A Paris, Hébé est donc devenu *Ubu*, et *Les Polonais* sont passés au sous-titre de la pièce *Ubu roi*. Le nom emblématique d'Ubu est une invention propre de Jarry. Jarry a également ajouté au texte primordial plusieurs rôles, notamment celui de Bordure (Arnaud 1974 : 185), un capitaine qui est devenu le prototype de la lâcheté bavarde qui se transforme en espion et traître selon l'opportunité des circonstances. Il a retravaillé à fond la structure du texte, ajouté deux actes et réécrit les situations. Le mot clé, celui de l'ouverture de la pièce – Merdre ! – remonte aux premiers *Polonais*, c'est-à-dire à la version Morin (Arnaud 1978 : 12). *Merdre* est devenu le blason poétique de Jarry (Levesque 1970 : 39), le premier mot du premier acte, un mot qui a suscité l'indignation du public et une abondance de malentendus lorsqu'il a été prononcé et lancé au public ce 10 décembre 1896, lors de la première représentation de la pièce au Théâtre de l'œuvre. Sa base est la notion française habituelle de merde, merde ordinaire, merde banale. Dans l'invention de Jarry, cette notion est modifiée. Pourquoi et comment ? Comment se fait-il que *merdre* se soit établi comme l'ancre conceptuelle qui relie l'œuvre de Jarry toute entière, et qui explique, dans une certaine mesure, toute son imagerie poétique ?

L'ajout néologique et ludique de la lettre R, et par nécessité théâtrale, du son [R], cette « *cinquième lettre du premier mot du premier acte* », est un geste créatif par lequel s'esquisse une tendance originale de Jarry vers une redéfinition du médium littéraire. Le son [R] et la lettre R semblent omniprésents² dans le noyau inconscient de la perception jarryque non seulement du théâtre et de la littérature, mais de l'image sonore de son monde littéraire – et donc de l'ensemble de son esprit. L'invention de Jarry se fait sur une consonne vibrante répétée, en français formée par le dos de la langue sur l'extrémité du voile du palais. Le [R] uvulaire est le son le plus français de toutes les consonnes françaises.³ Cette vibrante sonore est prononcée en frappant rapidement le dos de la langue contre la partie la plus profonde du palais mou, créant ainsi une articulation gutturale, *de profundis laryngis*, une gutturale semblable à un grognement de matière chaude. Par son omniprésence, le [R] agit comme une fréquence fondamentale dans l'acoustique du corps d'Ubu. Au niveau métaphysique, cependant, la consonne française [R] apparaît comme un marqueur poétique de la sphère spirituelle de Jarry, comme une onomatopée puissante, placée dans les messages linguistiques pour réduire l'arbitraire de la relation entre le signifiant et le signifié. En d'autres termes : la sonante [R] a une signification que le phonème n'a pas comme forme, mais comme actualisation du sens sonore pur du monde meurtrier, frémissant, ronchon et aboyant. Chez Jarry, le son [R], menaçant et sournois, porte toutes les significations de cet univers englouti par le monstre inhumain.

LA GIDOUILLE ENTRE LE TOUT ET LE NÉANT

Il est possible que l'origine du *merdre* soit beaucoup plus prosaïque que ne le suggère le vaste effet poétique que Jarry en a tiré. Près de la ville de Rennes (où le texte parodique lycéen a été écrit), se trouve la petite ville de *Merdrignac*, un lieu que Charles Morin connaissait et où demeurait l'une de ses tantes. Quoi qu'il en soit, après avoir découvert *Les Polonais*, Jarry a décidé de les mettre en scène immédiatement en marionnettes, ce qu'il a réalisé dans le grenier de la maison familiale des Morin. Il a fait une adaptation dramaturgique approfondie du modèle textuel, construit une marionnette pour le personnage principal de P. H., et demandé à

2 C'est ostentativement le phonème/graphème que contiennent les noms de Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Coleridge, Bergerac, Maeterlinck, Régnier, Rimbaud, Rabelais, Verhaeren, Verlaine, Verne, Teubner, Mallarmé et autres, tous auteurs qui se sont retrouvés ensemble dans la bibliothèque virtuelle que Jarry avait lue pour construire son univers littéraire.

3 De plus, d'après les études distributionnelles de Wioland (1991) et de Boë & Tubach (1992), la consonne [R] est la consonne la plus fréquente en français, avec un taux d'utilisation de 7,25% sur la totalité des phonèmes du système phonologique français et 12,75% sur la totalité des phonèmes consonantiques.

sa mère de coudre pour le monstre une couverture pointue – celle exactement qui fonctionne depuis comme un signe identificateur d’Ubu et qui ressemble sinistrement à la mascarade du KuKluxKlan. Pourtant, le geste costumographique le plus frappant sur le corps d’Ubu, c’est la spirale qui se dessine sur son ventre volumineux. Cette spirale, qu’on appelle *gidouille*, est une incision physiopathique dans la présence d’Ubu, une sorte de placement pascalien de ce tout-puissant abdomen entre deux infinis: le centre de la spirale est dans le nombril, de sorte que cette circulation inachevée d’une part se jette dans le néant originaire, et de l’autre part s’étend sans fin dans les dimensions innombrables et inintelligibles du multivers. Le nombril d’Ubu est le point mystérieux de l’explosion énergétique du monde, le vide infinitésimal, le trou noir à partir duquel le *big bang* original a percé le néant. Pour le fœtus, le nombril est le site de la nourriture anaérobie, et plus tard l’entrée symbolique aux entrailles, où la substance ingérée est altérée et métabolisée en cours de route de sorte que son reste rampe dans la partie la plus épaisse du tube digestif, où la matière fécale est générée. La direction du développement en spirale vers l’extérieur, cependant, est une onde métaphysique, une expansion sans fin de l’univers qui se déplace automatiquement – comme un mobile perpétuel – sans que ce mouvement ait un objectif compréhensible. La spirale d’Ubu, sa *gidouille*, a un centre dans le corps, et une périphérie mobile à l’infini de l’esprit. Par conséquent, Ubu est une créature sans téléologie intelligible, sans commencement ni fin, un roseau pas vraiment pensant. L’éternel retour nietzschéen.

L’UTOPIE JARRYQUE ET LE LANGAGE

Dans l’inertie spirale, la *gidouille* se propage de tous côtés, sa propagation est universelle, dirigée vers partout et vers nulle part. C’est la pensée essentielle de l’interprétation utopique d’Ubu. Jarry a expliqué dans un petit discours le soir de la première, juste avant que le spectacle commence, que l’action se passe « *en Pologne, c’est-à-dire nulle part* ». Ce qui signifie en même temps que cette histoire se passe partout – dans le sens de cette spirale irrésistiblement progressante du ventre d’Ubu. À la fin d’*Ubu roi*, au retour du couple usurpateur en *douce France*, Père Ubu dit que « *S’il n’y avait pas de Pologne, il n’y aurait pas de Polonais* ». La Pologne fonctionne comme une scène de drame universel et seulement accessible à l’esprit humain, comme la mer Bohême chez Shakespeare : des histoires brutales de cupidité, de gloutonnerie et de pouvoir animal. Jarry ne cache pas ses sources d’inspiration, entre autres, la tragédie de Macbeth de Shakespeare (qu’il francise en *Hosche-la-poire*), mais les événements dans *Ubu roi*, parfaitement dépourvus de psychologie dramatique, sont beaucoup plus denses en massacres, encore plus sanguinaires. L’ambition du pouvoir (surtout celle de Mère Ubu) encore plus absurde et arbitraire, infiniment gloutonne. Ubu est fondamentalement un excès

physique (Arnaud 1974 : 211), principalement lié à l'énormité de l'abdomen et à la complexité de ce qui est suspendu en bas. Les métaphores bouillonnent d'allusions sexuelles, à commencer par le *bâton* de phynance. Et, bien sûr, il y a la perception *infantile* du monde, celle d'un nouveau-né qui n'arrive pas à dissocier son propre corps du monde extérieur. Ainsi le monde, pour Ubu, n'est qu'un immense réservoir qui lui permet de satisfaire ses désirs insatiables : *Ubu roi* est un texte foncièrement *humaniste*.

Sa recherche du langage est peut-être plus utopique encore que le placement de l'action nulle part, c'est-à-dire en Pologne. La poétique du théâtre de Jarry est une synthèse de nombreuses couches linguistiques qui se combinent en une invention unique et incomparable. En lisant le cycle ubuesque, on a l'impression que Jarry, possédé par l'ambition mégalomane d'un Rabelais, voulait capturer tous les registres de la langue française, écrite et parlée, en un seul trait textuel : c'est un jeu constant avec les genres linguistiques, du français littéraire esthétisé, avec une forte touche poétique, au verbiage le plus profane ; de la langue enfantine à la rigueur de la terminologie militaire ; de l'ironie fine au littéralisme transparent du style théologique ; du latin classique au discours détendu des gens de la rue.

INVENTION ET NÉOLOGIE

L'objet de la cupidité ubuesque est le plus souvent de nature matérielle, à savoir la propriété sous toutes les formes naturelles et économiques. L'argent, la richesse et les trésors ont trouvé une solution conceptuelle commune chez Jarry dans le mot *phynance*, par opposition à l'usage pluriel habituel (les finances), en plus avec une innovation orthographique grécisante (Brotchie 2019 : 12). Je reçois de la phynance ; je manque de phynance ; je dois m'occuper de la phynance ; qui, ventrecul, a volé ma phynance, etc. Au singulier, cette notion semble plus personnelle et indique clairement l'identification intime du pouvoir avec l'argent. L'auteur aime également utiliser les archaïsmes rabelaisiens, se livrer à des archétypes et des stéréotypes linguistiques profanes, maudire, mettre des formes de langage liturgique dans la bouche d'Ubu et inventer de nouveaux mots, passer sans hésitation du psaume au blasphème. Il doit se permettre tout cela parce que les quatre Ubu sont les éléments constitutifs d'un monde théâtral et textuel original et originel, un univers parallèle du langage jarryque qui n'imité aucune réalité, mais renouvelle à chaque réplique l'illusion tour à tour recousue de la sienne propre (Lacan 1966, Arrivé 2016), d'une nouvelle réalité, encore inconnue, à chaque fois basée sur une imagerie sanglante et cinglante, issue d'une expérience mentale et d'une imagination qui semble extrêmement dispersée. Il lui a fallu développer – pour réaliser tout cela – une discipline mentale extraordinaire. La mise en œuvre linguistique de Jarry, invention expressive et stylistique, tout cela semble aller de soi,

tout cela forme un ensemble complexe de gestes littéraires originaux. Cette violation de toutes les conventions possibles (sociales, théâtrales, textuelles, religieuses etc.), imprégnée d'une imagination exubérante de l'auteur, c'est peut-être l'une des formes d'art les plus pures.

JARRY, SYMBOLISTE SANS LE VOULOIR

Le personnage d'Ubu est une interprétation grotesque de l'origine et nature humaines, dérivée de la tradition depuis Rabelais. Le corps d'Ubu se comporte comme un bébé qui avale et draine simultanément. Plus il avale, plus il produit d'excréments. En même temps. Il est complètement engagé, parfaitement dépendant de son désir inconscient de dévorer quoi que ce soit. Tout ce qui s'oppose à sa volonté irraisonnable est immédiatement voué à la destruction. De là, le dégoût inerte d'Ubu, une insouciance extrême envers l'autre, un amoralisme total qui méprise, piétine, brûle tout, écrase tout, met tout dans un trou (qu'il appelle *une trappe*), tue tout le monde, insère brutalement un petit bâton dans les *oneilles* (néol. pour *oreilles*) des personnes vivantes.

C'est la *jouissance de la torture* : Ubu extrait le cerveau de ses victimes par les talons ou par les entrailles, il défigure les vivants en les *tudant* (néol. pour *tuer*) et les cadavres d'animaux abattus, tuant et retuant et tuant encore les objets morts. Le meurtre est le résultat d'une torture extatique, orgasmique, cette activité délectable et agréable à Ubu, qui se fiche radicalement du sentiment et du besoin de l'autre – parce qu'il agit en dehors des catégories éthiques : il n'y a pas de bien et pas de mal.

« *Ah ! saleté ! le mauvais droit ne vaut-il pas le bon ? Ah ! tu m'injuries, Mère Ubu, je vais te mettre en morceaux.* » (Ubu roi, III/1)

Ubu ne fait qu'assouvir son instinct primordial, glouton et assassin. Voilà cette interprétation totale et profonde du monde par laquelle Jarry, sans se donner de concession lui-même (Levesque 1970 : 97), comprend la nécessité tragique à travers laquelle la destruction s'installe périodiquement, mais régulièrement et obstinément, en cycles prévisibles, dans l'histoire de la civilisation humaine.

Ubu roi se termine fort comiquement par la défaite et expulsion du couple royal. Le jeune prince héritier légitime Bougrelas, fils cadet du roi de Pologne assassiné, réussit à réunir l'armée et, aidé des Russes, éloigne Ubu du trône et le chasse sans pitié de Pologne de sorte que, en compagnie des deux sujets les plus fidèles, Ubu se sauve au dernier moment sur un navire partant de Gdansk. Il prend la mer du Nord, passe devant le château d'Elseneur (autre allusion à Shakespeare) et devant la côte allemande pour rejoindre sa patrie, la France. L'expulsion d'un paradis utopique polonais est en même temps l'ouverture à une nouvelle tentation autocratique. Ubu détronisé se retrouve en France, maintenant avocat financier, dans une nouvelle situation de meurtre ; dans la suite d'*Ubu roi*, intitulée *Ubu cocu*

ou *Les Polyèdres*, le couple Ubu devient couple bourgeois, et s'engage dans une nouvelle forme d'arrogance – cette fois adulte, plus civilisée. Ubu entre agressivement dans la vie du savant Achras, érudit académicien qui étudie la vie et les habitudes des polyèdres. Ils s'emparent de sa maison, portant une valise dans laquelle réside un personnage nouveau, appelé *Conscience*, et qui est censée donner des conseils à Ubu, son porteur. Envahissant la demeure d'Achras, Ubu vient demander Conscience s'il a raison d'agir comme il le fait. Evidemment, Conscience lui conseille de ne pas faire de mal à autrui – conformément aux normes civiles – et on s'attend à ce qu'Ubu commence à se comporter comme un être social.

Il n'en sera rien, bien entendu : Ubu fait exactement le contraire de ce que lui suggèrent les conseils éthiques. Il tue (sans vraiment le tuer) le bon vieil érudit qui se gêne et ne peut même pas se défendre. C'est-à-dire : il l'empale d'abord et le met à la trappe, mais Achras n'en meurt pas – peu importe, Ubu est content, parce qu'il l'a tué de toute façon. – Selon les manières bourgeoises, la mère Ubu prend à un amant, un Égyptien, qu'Ubu tuera aussi dans un meurtre avorté, également comique que le précédent.

Après cet épisode bourgeois, Père Ubu (baptisé François Ubu, avocat) constate que sa mission dans ce monde ne peut être accomplie s'il ne devient, après avoir été roi, le dernier des hommes. Dans la troisième partie du cycle ubuesque, *Ubu enchaîné*, il s'obstine à devenir esclave. L'action, toujours, se déroule en France, pays de liberté, mais liberté qui n'est pas considérée comme une valeur suprême (universellement acceptée), mais comme un commandement normatif d'oppression sociale : « *Il faut être libre ! Votre devoir est d'être libres !* » Jarry renonce de manière déclarative à la liberté statutaire et fait servir Ubu en esclave au premier passant – si l'occasion se présente. Ubu commence à tuer ses maîtres occasionnels, mais avec un but précis : son esclavage ne sera pas accompli s'il n'est pas humilié à fond – puni à la galère turque. Il y est condamné en effet. Mais les officiers de la galère, où il rame, apprennent vite qu'Ubu est trop gros, trop indolent, trop fainéant pour ramer comme tout le monde : c'est pourquoi le capitaine de la galère, conformément à la pragmatique des mécanismes sociaux, propose à Ubu de prendre la commande du navire. Ce que Père Ubu refuse en disant :

« *O non ! Si vous m'avez mis à la porte de ce pays et me renvoyez, je ne sais où comme passager sur cette galère je n'en suis pas moins resté Ubu enchaîné, esclave, et je ne commanderai plus. On m'obéit bien davantage.* » (Ubu enchaîné, V/8)

Cela renferme le fil rouge dramaturgique d'une gueule insatiable et solipsiste : la condition aléatoire de, tour à tour, roi ou esclave, n'est aucunement pertinente (Grivel 1985 : 5), car au bout de l'histoire, le monstrueux bébé vieilli tuera et dévorera indifféremment tout le monde ainsi que toutes les choses tuables.

CONCLUSION

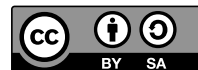
En 1928, Antonin Artaud a formé un organisme théâtral qu'il avait nommé *Théâtre Jarry*. Le manifeste de cette entreprise radicale présente la position d'Artaud dans le contexte artistique de l'époque. En même temps, ce petit texte, repris partiellement ci-dessous, se propose comme un résumé de l'impact qu'*Ubu roi* avait exercé sur sa postérité. Il suffit de remplacer le « *Théâtre Jarry* » par « *Ubu roi* » :

« *A partir du Théâtre Jarry, le théâtre ne sera plus cette chose fermée, enclose dans l'espace restreint d'un plateau, mais visera à être véritablement un acte, soumis à toutes les sollicitations et à toutes les déformations des circonstances et où le hasard retrouve ses droits. (...) Le Théâtre Jarry brisera donc avec le théâtre, mais en plus, il obéira à une nécessité intérieure où l'esprit a la plus grande part. Non seulement les cadres extérieurs du théâtre sont abolis, mais encore sa raison profonde. Une mise en scène du Théâtre Jarry sera passionnante comme un jeu, comme une partie de cartes à laquelle tous les spectateurs participent.* »

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***Kralj Ubu*, polimorfno gledališko besedilo**

Kralj Ubu, gledališka ekshibicija o groteskno ekstrovertiranem, otročjem, gigantskem in popolnoma amoralnem človeku, je literarno delo, skozi katerega avtor svojo kritično pozicijo uresničuje s pomočjo performativne umetnosti, utopičnega gledališko-besedilnega uprizarjanja. Ideja utopije je razpoznavna predvsem na ravni jezikovnega izraza, s katerim Jarry artikulira nadzgodovinski smisel politične oblasti in človeške narave. Poetika Jarryjevega gledališča je sinteza številnih jezikovnih plasti, ki se združijo v edinstveno in neponovljivo invencijo. Gre za nenehno poigravanje z jezikovnimi vrstmi, od estetizirane literarne francoščine, z močnim poetičnim pridihom, do najbolj profanega besedičenja; od otroškega jezika do strogosti vojaške terminologije; od fine ironije do prozorne dobesednosti teološkega sloga; od klasične latinščine do neobremenjenega uličnega govora.

Ključne besede: *Kralj Ubu*, Alfred Jarry, polimorfija, dramaturška struktura, neologizem

***Ubu the King* and textual polymorphism**

Ubu the King, a theatrical excess about a grotesquely extroverted, childish, gigantic and gluttonous figure, fundamentally amoral, is a literary work through which the author realizes his critical position in performative art, a fabulous utopian theatrical-textual staging. The idea of utopia is located above all at the level of linguistic expression which Jarry uses to articulate the transhistorical sense of political power and human nature. The poetics of Jarry's theater is a synthesis of many linguistic layers that combine into a unique invention. It is a constant play with linguistic genres, from aestheticized literary French, with a strong poetic touch, to the most profane babbling; from children's language to the rigorous military terminology; from fine irony to the transparent literalism of the theological style; from classical Latin to the relaxed speech of the street.

Keywords: *Ubu the King*, Alfred Jarry, polymorphism, theatrical structure, neology

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