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LITERATUROZNAWSTWO

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AESTHETIC DISTANCE IN WILLIAM GOLDMAN'S NOVEL *THE PRINCESS BRIDE*

Introduction

The proposed paper deals with the concept of aesthetic distance and its representation in contemporary art and literature. The term is relatively new in literary theory, and therefore it requires to be first looked at from the perspective of its opposite, i.e. aesthetic illusion, which has been more frequently discussed. Aesthetic illusion refers to a particular pleasurable feeling of being imaginatively and emotionally involved in a represented world, whether it is a literary world or any other artistic world. Logically, aesthetic distance stands for a state of being constantly and in various ways reminded of the fact that there is a difference between reality and fiction, and that the literary work (or any other work of art) the readers try to penetrate into is a pure fiction; that it is not real at all.

In the paper, I briefly introduce the basic knowledge of aesthetic illusion and then focus on the concept of aesthetic distance, especially at the example of John Barth's short story *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968). The main part of the paper deals with William Goldman's novel *The Princess Bride* (1973), in which the author employs several distancing tools, via which he tricks the minds of the readers who are trying to get engaged in the story. My aim is to analyse various techniques, either on a larger or on a smaller scale, which the author uses to create the effect of aesthetic distance, thanks to which he masterfully breaks aesthetic illusion. From the perspective of a reader, I look at the passages which are affected by these distancing tools and try to explain how readers might feel about the author's strategy of making them continuously aware of the fictitious character of the story.

What is aesthetic illusion?

Have you ever experienced a moment of being mentally and imaginatively drawn into the world created by a work of literature that you were reading? Do you remember the images occurring in your mind while following the journey of the characters or you trying to do your best while giving your internal directions to the characters about what they should or should not do in that particular situation? And what about seeing a painting or a photograph of a spectacular countryside, or listening to Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and feeling the warmth in your heart, the peacefulness of your soul and your imagination blooming? If your answers to these questions is positive, you may have experienced an aesthetic illusion, or a moment

of a pleasurable feeling which happens when you are immersed in the work of art that you are in a close contact with for a certain period of time.

Werner Wolf (2013:6) characterises aesthetic illusion as *a response to an artefact which results in a certain state of mind*. The artefacts that are responsible for the creation of an illusion vary to a great extent. They can be films, literary texts, musical compositions, songs, paintings, sculptures, photographs or even architecture. When we perceive these artefacts for a certain period of time, we may feel indifferent toward them, or we may feel emotionally moved by them. The fact whether we care or do not care about what we see, hear, touch or feel depends heavily on the artefact's ability to guide our imagination to create mental representations of what the artefact wants to evoke and – what is even more important – it also depends on our personal experiences, beliefs and characteristics. It is believed that the more life experiences we have, the better we can emotionally relate to what the artefacts represent. When allowing our imagination to create the images activated by the representations, we may sigh, cry, smile, laugh, become relaxed, calm, comfortable or even nervous, stressed, anxious and tense. This being said, it should be acknowledged that the moment of being emotionally moved, either positively or negatively, is one of the most important features of illusion.

Aesthetic illusion has been around for a considerably long time, though it has never been as interesting for literary scientists as during these days, when it is studied in connection to its opposite, aesthetic distance. However, it is believed that aesthetic illusion was first defined by Aristotle in his still highly acclaimed *Poetics* (1902:23), in which he defines tragedy as

an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

This purgation of emotions (or catharsis) can then be explained as a relief of emotions by spectators who are watching a tragedy being performed on the stage. Aristotle's argument is that, since we are made to feel the emotions of pity and fear for the characters, then we openly release these feelings in the auditorium. This would not be achieved if the play performed on the stage did not allow the spectators to get emotionally, psychologically and mentally immersed in it. In other words, the spectators need to experience a moment of aesthetic illusion in order to get emotionally attached to the characters and consequently express feelings corresponding with the characters' feelings.

Apart from its immersive feature (as defined by Aristotle), aesthetic illusion serves as a tool for short-term distraction from the real world surrounding the person who experiences it. According to Mellmann (2013:72), this feature links aesthetic illusion to the act of playing, since while playing, people (and animals

alike) forget about the world around them and redirect their attention and imagination to things which seem more pleasurable, more engaging and sometimes even more serious than the real ones. The play's intention, Mellman believes, is to develop and maintain motor skills, but also to distract the playing individuals from the reality surrounding them. And there lies the link between playing and aesthetic illusion – they both end up in involvement in a secondary world. Mellmann's view on the qualitative connection between the acts of playing and immersion is very similar to, and probably based on, Freud's classical study *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* (1992), in which Freud compares the way creative writers build their fictional worlds to the way children engage in plays. He claims that both groups have at least one thing in common: they pay their entire attention to the creation of their worlds while letting the real world pass on outside their minds. In Freud's own words, *it would be wrong to think he [i.e. the child] does not take that world seriously; on the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotion on it. The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real* (Freud 1992:36).

What is aesthetic distance?

Aesthetic distance is generally understood as the opposite of aesthetic illusion, i.e. a state of being constantly and in various ways reminded of the fact that there is a difference between reality and fiction, and that the literary work (or any other work of art) the readers are trying to penetrate into is a pure fiction; that it is not real at all. In order to do so, an author of artistic works deliberately uses such techniques and tools, which more or less hinder the recipient in experiencing a pleasurable mental state of aesthetic illusion. Generally speaking, authors and creators of the works of art, be it a literary text, a painting, a film or a sculpture, want their recipients to get involved in the worlds they create and therefore they use various techniques that can possibly make the recipients identified with the worlds they portray. In literature, for instance, having the readers lost in the book is usually considered a successful storytelling. However, there are also authors – especially the postmodern ones – who deliberately break the illusion and increase the distance between the readers and the constructed worlds, for the sake of focusing the readers' attention on other aspects of their stories.

One of the most popular ways of breaking the illusion is reminding the recipients that the story they are reading is not real. This can be done, for example, by commenting on the fictitiousness of the characters or events, or by commenting on the process of writing the book as such. The technique known as metafiction, which presents the work of art as a pure artefact, draws a thick borderline between fact and fiction by constantly making the readers aware of the book being a work of fiction. John Barth's short story *Lost in the Funhouse*, which was published in 1968, can be viewed as one of the best illustrations of this technique. In it, Barth's narrator follows a teenage boy's day in a funhouse. Ambrose and his family, joined by his secret love Magda, visit Ocean City in Maryland to spend a fun

Independence Day while World War II rages in the world. However, Ambrose's experiences in the funhouse cannot be viewed as the main focus of the narrator – as it usually does in literary pieces – but serves as a base upon which he can comment on the process of creating a story. At one point, after providing a brief description of Magda's background, the narrator inserts a commentary on the use of initials or blanks directly into the text (Barth 1980:69-70):

Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. It is as if the author felt it necessary to delete the names for reasons of tact or legal liability. Interestingly, as with other aspects of realism, it is an illusion that is being enhanced, by purely artificial means.

The reference to language (or in other cases to grammar) used in the process of writing a fictional work, resembles what we can typically find in a book on literary theory. Barth's narrator is aware of the fact that the story is being written and often addresses the issues of story-writing. He also reveals what happens to Ambrose (which can be predicted from the title as well) several times before he even enters the Ocean City's attraction, which means that the traditional narrative pattern of a dramatic storyline is broken, as the ending precedes the crisis part. The narrator also provides several possible endings of Ambrose's day in the funhouse, which only adds to further confusion of the reader. It is clear that Barth wants to play with his readers, to get them literally lost in the story (though not in the way "traditional" authors want them to) just like Ambrose got lost in the funhouse. And, interestingly, by referring to the principles of writing an immersive story, he ends up with its complete opposite – a story which distances the readers from the characters and their experiences and breaks the illusion they might have achieved if the additional commentaries were omitted from the storyline.

Speaking of the connection between aesthetic illusion and aesthetic distance, I believe that they cannot exist separately, but they need to cooperate in a way. In other words, their cooperation is vital since an author cannot break an illusion if it is not there at all. Therefore at first, he or she needs to draw the recipients into the world which is being constructed (and thus create an illusion), only to remind them – usually at a place where they do not expect it at all – that everything they read about is pure fiction. This is exactly what John Barth does in his short story. His narrator first introduces us to the fictional world of Ambrose and Magda, and thus plants a seed of gradually growing illusion, only to suddenly jump into it and return us back to the reality of creating the story, which – as a result – makes the readers move between real and fictitious worlds and thus experience an aesthetic distance. Metareferentiality, used by Barth and many other postmodern writers, is therefore an effective tool of creating a distance. Whether by direct addressing of the recipients or by examining the elements of fiction in the process of writing the story, a metafictional work of art always forces the recipients to think about the

nature of constructing a representational world instead of focusing on the characters or events in it, not speaking about getting emotionally attached to them.

Goldman and aesthetic distance

Thanks to his widely popular fantasy romance novel *The Princess Bride*, published in 1973, William Goldman can easily make it into the list of the best creators of aesthetic distance. His book employs several distancing techniques or elements which happen to (intentionally) distract the readers from getting fully involved in the constructed fairy tale-like world of the beautiful Buttercup, brave Westley and evil Prince Humperdinck, but at the same time, the author's humorous style of writing turns the book into an unforgettable reading experience.

In *The Princess Bride*, Goldman builds a complex world typical for fairy tales. It does not lack princes and princesses, giants and magic, or the primary feature of the genre: the fight between good and evil. However, unlike most of the fairy tales, we do not know whether evil is defeated in the end, since the book is open-ended. But despite that, the world of *The Princess Bride* has it all: *fencing, fighting, torture, poison, true love, hate, revenge, giants, hunters, bad men, good men, beautiful ladies, snakes, spiders, beasts, chases, escapes, lies, truths, passion and miracles* (Goldman 2008: backcover). It all contributes heavily to the immense pleasure of reading the story about Buttercup and Westley, as well as getting imaginatively involved in the protagonists' struggle for love and happiness.

Goldman presents his novel as an abridged version of S. Morgenstern's "The Princess Bride, A Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure". In the Introduction to the abridged version, Goldman writes that Morgenstern was a famous Florinese writer who moved to America and later died in New York (2008:8). He mentions that Morgenstern's book, which his father used to read him each night, drew him into the world of Buttercup so much, that he forgot about his aversion to literature. *For the first time in my life, I became actively interested in a book. Me the sports fanatic, me the game freak, me the only ten-year-old in Illinois with a hate on for the alphabet wanted to know what happened next* (2008:9). He writes that he never read the book himself, because he always associated the story with his father's voice, but he wanted his own son to read it to find out if he liked the book as well. When his son told him that he could not get past the first chapter, Goldman decided to find out why. To his great surprise, he learned that *Morgenstern wasn't writing any children's book; he was writing a kind of satiric history of his country [i.e. Florin] and the decline of the monarchy in Western civilization. But my father only read me the action stuff, the good parts. He never bothered with the serious side at all* (2008:29). That is why Goldman decided to abridge the book and republish it in "the good parts" version.

This motive might be very interesting, but it is a complete fabrication since when searching the Internet to find out more about Morgenstern, the readers might learn that there was never an author of that name, a book entitled "The Princess Bride, A Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure" never existed and the

countries named Florin and Guilder are nowhere to be found in reality, no matter how skilled in geography they are. Most of what Goldman writes about in his Introduction is fictional – including some facts about his own life. For example, he claims that his wife is Helen and they have an only son. In reality, Goldman's wife is called Ilene and they have two daughters. Goldman therefore intentionally misleads the readers while they do not even realise being misled and continues in this pattern throughout the book. The fictional S. Morgenstern and the original text of *The Princess Bride* are just devices invented by Goldman to trick the readers and to use as the tools of his meta-referential intentions.

At many places throughout the book, Goldman interrupts the narration to provide commentary on Morgenstern's writing style. When we, however, bear in mind that Morgenstern is Goldman himself, the author comments on his own writing style. This is where the metafictional features of the story are employed. The author simply stops the narration to express what he thinks about certain tools that Morgenstern used while writing the original book (which is now being abridged) or sometimes even to criticise what he thinks Morgenstern's version lacks or overuses. For example, he begins the second chapter with a commentary on the central feature of Morgenstern's version. He claims that it was more about description of the Florinese history than about action. The original chapter 2, he says, contains sixty-six pages on the history of the Florinese crown and mentions Prince Humperdinck only in the last few pages. What Goldman writes in the commentary on the issue is the following (2008:65):

Why would a master of narrative stop his narrative dead before it has much chance to begin generating? No known answer. All I can guess is that for Morgenstern, the real narrative was not Buttercup and the remarkable things she endures, but, rather; the history of the monarchy and other such stuff. When this version comes out, I expect every Florinese scholar alive to slaughter me. (Columbia University has not only the leading Florinese experts in America, but also direct ties to the New York Times Book Review. I can't help that, and I only hope they understand my intentions here are in no way meant to be destructive of Morgenstern's vision.).

Goldman often accompanies his remarks with certain advices to the readers about how to avoid being disturbed from the story when Morgenstern employs illogical or unnatural devices in his book, for example contradictory realia (2008:41-42):

My intrusion here is because of the way Morgenstern uses parentheses. The copy editor at Harcourt kept filling the margins of the galley proofs with questions: 'How can it [the country of Florin] be before Europe but after Paris?' And 'How is it possible this happens before glamour when glamour is an ancient concept? See "glamer" in the Oxford English Dictionary.'

And eventually: I am going crazy. What am I to make of these parentheses? When does this book take place? I don't understand anything. Helllppppp!!!' [...] I couldn't help her. Either Morgenstern meant them seriously or he didn't. [...] Or maybe it was just the author's way of telling the reader stylistically that 'this isn't real; it never happened.' [...] All I can suggest to you is, if the parentheses bug you, don't read them.

Goldman always interrupts the story in a clearly noticeable manner: he writes his commentaries in italics and usually starts with *This is me*, *Me again* or *Interruption* formulas. The interruptions are therefore visually marked and the readers know when they occur, but they still serve as a major distancing tool. Whenever a commentary happens to be, the readers are instantly brought back to reality and, no matter how intensive their experience of aesthetic illusion is, they have to face a shorter or longer aside on how Morgenstern's work was written or what changes Goldman had to make to prepare the abridged version they have in their hands. The author speaks directly to the readers, gives them advice on what to focus on or what to omit if they want to, or even asks for their activity to find out more about Buttercup's adventures. The last mentioned case occurs in chapter 5, in which Buttercup is kidnapped by three assassins shortly after the announcement of her engagement to Prince Humperdinck and her beloved Westley (believed to be dead at the time), disguised as the man in black, saves her and reveals his true identity. Morgenstern omits the scene of their reunion and continues in the description of their escape through the lethal Fire Swamp. However, the omission of the reunion scene was what bothered Goldman so much that he decided to complete it with his own version (2008:171-172):

I think it was unfair not to show the reunion. So I wrote one of my own, what I felt Buttercup and Westley might have said, but Hiram, my editor, felt that made me just as unfair as Morgenstern here. If you're going to abridge a book in the author's own words, you can't go around sticking your own in. That was Hiram's point, and we really went round and round, arguing over, I guess, a period of a month, in person, through letters, on the phone. [...] But I got Hiram to agree that Harcourt would at least print up my scene [...] – it's all of three pages; big deal.

He then asks the readers who want to read it to write a letter to his publishing house asking for the reunion scene. In order to trick the readers even more, Goldman even provides an address of the publishing house and gives details on what exactly to do in that case.

Through his many commentaries and asides, Goldman not only makes the readers feel like they have to be active in order to fully grasp the story, but he also makes them aware of the fact that what they are reading now is a complete fiction. He takes care that the readers do not engage in the adventures of his characters too

much, so that they are able to go on in their real lives. When we, however, read a story, our aim is to be fully re-centred into the imaginary world that lies inside our minds. We intentionally seek the ways of ignoring the world around us, and literature is one of them. That is why when Goldman enters into the fairy-tale world which we use as an escape from reality, we actually feel somehow disappointed or deceived. In other words, we are not allowed to enjoy the scene which we so vividly imagine in our minds, and cannot help ourselves but laugh about the way the author fooled us again.

In this regard, one of the exemplary moments where aesthetic distance is employed perfectly, is the author's deliberate entering into the dramatic scene and revealing what is going to happen. When Buttercup is kidnapped by three assassins in chapter 5, she tries to save her life by jumping from the boat that takes her to certain death into the sea full of sharks. The predators do not pay attention to her at first, but one of the assassins tells her that when they feel blood, they attack. Then he cuts himself and pours the blood into the sea. The sharks attack... This scene is written in such a dramatic way that we find ourselves holding breath and silently praying that Buttercup suffers no harm. However, somewhere back in our imagination, the images of dead heroine appear, even though we feel that Buttercup, being the central character in the book, has no right to die so soon (or even at all). We want to know what happens after the sharks attack her, if and how she survives and what happens next. We turn the page to read on, but instead of the continuation of the story, we find there the author's commentary, in which we read (2008:96): *She does not get eaten by the sharks at this time. [...] You looked like you were getting too involved and bothered so I thought I would let you relax.* What such an entering into the scene causes can be viewed as lowering of the pleasure of reading since when something major in the plot is revealed sooner than the plot would do so itself, the feelings naturally associated with dramatic scenes – thrill, tension, distress or expectation – are broken before they would naturally reach their peak. In his commentary, Goldman writes that he revealed that Buttercup would survive the shark attack because the readers were too much involved in her fate. That is what happens when aesthetic illusion takes place. What Goldman did in this specific case, was that he did not allow the illusion to take effect, and therefore achieved its opposite – aesthetic distance.

Goldman enters into the plot several times throughout the novel, and always does so in the way that readers' imagination and engagement in the characters' journey is disrupted. In chapter 6, which speaks of what happens during the months prior to the wedding of Buttercup and Prince Humperdinck, he reveals the oncoming plot in the following way (2008:210):

There's a lot of bad stuff coming up, torture you've already been prepared for, but there's worse. There's death coming up, and you better understand this: some of the wrong people die. Be ready for it. [...] The wrong people die, some of them, and the reason is this; life is not fair. Forget all the

garbage your parents put out. Remember Morgenstern. You'll be a lot happier.

What happens next in the story, is that Prince Humperdinck secretly imprisons Westley in his Zoo of Death, where he becomes an object of Count Rugen's experiment with the torturous Machine. And when Buttercup calls the Prince a coward, Goldman – in yet another aside – prematurely reveals that the remark makes Humperdinck so enraged that he kills Westley with the Machine.

Apart from the revelation of the upcoming scenes, the reader's aesthetic illusion is also challenged by fake plot. In *The Princess Bride*, Goldman uses a technique which we generally know from films. Imagine a scene where something horrible happens. The scene lasts a particular time and then, suddenly, a protagonist wakes up and realises that all the horrible things were just a dream. A very similar scene happens in Goldman's novel, though we have no idea that the events described there happen only in Buttercup's dream (or rather a nightmare). The author sets the scene in the following way (2008:204-205):

The King was dead. [...] And Prince Humperdinck became, forty-five days before the wedding, King of Florin, and that changed everything. [...] And before her lovely eyes, Humperdinck changed from a man of fear and action to one of frenzied wisdom, because he had to get it all straight now before any other country dared interfere with the future of Florin, so the wedding, when it actually took place, was a tiny thing and brief, sandwiched in between a ministers' meeting and a treasury crisis.

Two pages later (2008:206), *Buttercup woke up screaming. She was in her bed. Alone. Safe. The wedding was still sixty days away.* And approximately ten pages later, Goldman provides a very short aside, in which he writes: *You thought his [Humperdinck's] father was dead but that was in the fake-out, don't forget – Morgenstern was just edging into the nightmare sequence, so don't be confused* (2008:222). As a result, not only does it take the readers a moment to realise that they have been incredibly tricked by the author, but it also means that nothing has changed in the story at all. The King of Florin is still alive, his son cares about nothing but hunting and Buttercup lives in secret hope of Westley coming to save her from marriage without love. The story continues to follow its original direction, but because an alternative has been so overtly offered, it is demanding to restart our imagination so that it works as before. Fake plots can therefore be inarguably listed among the numerous distancing tools, since the moment of realisation that something described did not really happen in the story returns the readers back to reality where they have to take some time to mentally and imaginatively relocate their minds into the fictional world again.

A similar situation happens when Goldman stops the narration to explain the meaning or tracks the history of certain concepts and realia that exist in his

constructed world. For example, in chapter 1, when Buttercup realises that she loves Westley by getting jealous when Westley spends too much time with another woman, the author inserts a paragraph explaining the history of jealousy into the story (2008:51):

Flailing and thrashing, Buttercup wept and tossed and paced and wept some more, and there have been three cases of jealousy since David of Galilee was first afflicted with the emotion when he could no longer stand the fact that his neighbour Saul's cactus outshone his own. (Originally, jealousy pertained solely to plants, other people's cactus or ginkgoes, or, later, when there was grass, grass, which is why, even to this day, we say that someone is green with jealousy.) Buttercup's case rated a close fourth on the all-time list.

The discursion that the author uses here has a documentary character. It traces the history of jealousy back to the biblical times and even provides a linguistic explanation of why we say that someone is green with jealousy (which we more recently know as 'to be green with envy', since envy is synonymous to jealousy). To provide more examples, in chapter 5, where Buttercup and Westley attempt to run away together through the so-called Florin/Guilder Fire Swamp, Goldman explains what fire swamps actually mean (2008:176):

Fire swamps are, of course, entirely misnamed. [...] Simply, there are swamps which contain a large percentage of sulphur and other gas bubbles that burst continually into flame. They are covered with lush giant trees that shadow the ground, making the flame bursts seem particularly dramatic. Because they are dark, they are almost always quite moist, thereby attracting the standard insect and alligator community that prefers a moist climate.

No matter how true the explanations are, one thing cannot be denied – such discursions completely oppose the style in which fairy tales are typically written. We have been acquainted with the world of fairy tales since our early childhood, and therefore we all bear in our minds certain qualities associated with fairy tales. We feel that fairy tales transfer us to a totally different world which cannot exist in reality. It is the world of magic, courage, love that conquers all, and the fight between goodness and evil. That is why disturbing its tradition with something that exists in our world distances us from the imaginary world of fairy tales and throws us back to reality. Goldman knows what effect the use of (documentary) explanations has, but he still fills the story with many of them. He does so on purpose, because he does not want us to be too involved in the fates of Buttercup and Westley, but rather to bear in mind that what we read is pure fiction.

Apart from distancing tools which take place on a larger scale – metafictional commentaries or entering into the scene to reveal what is going to happen – *The Princess Bride* also contains several minor distancing tools which, although occupying a much smaller scale, have a similar effect – aesthetic distance. Among them, one can notice the following ones: modern-age concepts in fairy-tale world, allusion to other fairy tales or literary works, mentioning famous (historical) figures or events and mentioning existing countries of the world. It has been noted above that the world of classical fairy tales is very specific in terms of its setting, time, characters, conflict and ending. The exact time is usually not mentioned (it is often a long time ago) and the location is somewhere beyond the woods, beyond the seas and beyond high mountains. The characters, strictly divided into good and bad, fight against each other using either their wits or swords, until the happy ending is achieved at the end. This is a typical pattern that we have been used to since we were children. Therefore any smaller or larger violation of it seems to be out of the genre. In other words, it stands out so much that we cannot neglect it.

Goldman's novel, while being classified as a fairy tale, contains a lot of these violating tools. To illustrate, the use of modern-age concepts is so evident throughout the novel that it is difficult to continue reading without reflecting on how it is possible that they exist in the fairy tale world. When the Count and Countess of Florin visit the farm where Buttercup lives, Westley, a farm boy, is wearing torn blue jeans (2008:47). When Westley departs to America to seek fortune, broken-hearted Buttercup sips cocoa to calm down her nerves (2008:62). Later on, a golf ball is mentioned (2008:283), characters drink coffee (2008:287) or fight in a billiard room (2008:306). Why do these modern elements attract our attention so much? While on the one hand, *The Princess Bride* could be viewed as a modern fairy tale, on the other hand, the classical medieval features used in it (fencing, castles, kings and princes, magical resurrection or the existence of giants) continuously persuade us about its old-fashioned character. Therefore we may claim that such things as cocoa, coffee or billiard have nothing to do in a fairy tale like *The Princess Bride*. The use of these modern elements is, however, Goldman's another way of detracting our imaginative skills from the story, because while we ponder over existential possibility or impossibility of the abovementioned elements in the story, we lose the illusive ties to the story itself and thus get distanced from what we read and try to imaginatively and mentally relocate to. This is exactly what happens in chapter 5, where the character of Fezzik, a Turkish man of incredible strength hired to kidnap and kill Buttercup, is introduced. We read about his childhood problems – he was constantly made fun of by other children – and his growing up. Interestingly, all these descriptions remarkably resemble our modern life. Fezzik was born in hospital, where doctors took care of him and his mother. He was a baby of extraordinary weight and height, and he grew up to be something like a giant. However, his characteristics did not match his frightening appearance – he did not want to fight other children and that is why they called him a coward. *By the time he reached kindergarten, [...] he was the size of a normal*

man [...], and all the other children made his life miserable. At first, naturally, they were scared to death [...], but once they found out he was chicken, well, they weren't about to let an opportunity like that get away (2008:139). What the narrator describes here, is undeniably an act of bullying, something which we commonly associate with our modern age, even though bullying must have existed forever, although it was never mentioned so overtly in classical fairy tales. When Fezzik's father decided to teach his son how to fist fight, Fezzik discovered his special weapon and quickly became a champion in boxing. Even though this sport is not mentioned straightforward in the text, it is indicated by many allusions (2008:143):

They had his first professional match in the village of Sandiki, on a steaming-hot Sunday. Fezzik's parents had a terrible time getting him into the ring. They were absolutely confident of victory, because they have worked very hard. They had taught Fezzik for three solid years before they mutually agreed that he was ready. Fezzik's father handled tactics and ring strategy, while his mother was more in charge of diet and training, and they had never been happier.

Another interesting distancing tools used by Goldman in his novel are several allusions to other fairy tales or literary pieces. One of the most eye-catching allusions is found at the beginning of chapter 3, in which Prince Humperdinck chooses a suitable wife. Naturally, his old and weak father and 'evil' stepmother try to advise him on which young lady would be the best one. The allusion here is connected to the character of the evil stepmother, Queen Bella (2008:71):

She was easily the most beloved person in the kingdom, and had been married to the King long before he began mumbling. Prince Humperdinck was but a child then, and since the only stepmothers he knew were the evil ones from stories, he always called Bella that or "E. S." for short.

What strikes the readers' attention in the quotation is that the Prince himself is aware of how stepmothers are usually portrayed in classical fairy tales. Such a perception, however, takes readers out of the story, since once again, they keep wondering how it is possible that a character in a fairy tale knows about what happens in other fairy tales. In fact, throughout the story, there are several other cases when we notice that characters know about things or concepts which do not typically occur in fairy tales. They are presented as a natural part of their world, even though they are more commonly associated with the knowledge of a modern man. For example, in chapter 5, one of the three assassins named Inogo Montoya, a skilled swordsman, owns an exceptional six-fingered sword, which is *the greatest sword since Excalibur* (2008:112), the legendary sword of King Arthur. A few pages later, the name of the famous artist Leonardo da Vinci is mentioned

(2008:135), or Fezzik fights at the Olympic Games in Greece and in various other European countries, including Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania (2008:146). The characters also know about Australia and its original history as a British colony for prisoners (2008:157): *Australia, as everyone knows, is peopled with criminals*, as Vizzini, a man of admirable brain skills, notices.

Conclusion

Goldman's *The Princess Bride* is not only an amazing romance and adventurous novel, but it is a bountiful source of various distancing tools. As it was analysed above, the author uses many different ways of creating the effect of aesthetic distance, whether these are the major ones – like metafictional commentaries on the process of creating the book or entering into the story during its dramatic peak to reveal what is going to happen (or not happen) – or minor ones – like tricking the readers with fake plots or alluding to other fairy tales or literary works. What makes the novel so interesting, and probably so popular all around the world, is the way the author mixes the passages when the readers have a chance to experience aesthetic illusion with the passages which reliably destroy the illusion and throw the readers back to their own reality and to the reality of the writing process of the book. On the one hand, Goldman creates a complex world with stable rules and principles and psychologically complex characters, which undeniably helps the readers to clearly imagine this world in their minds, to understand why the characters act in a certain way and even to sympathise with them. On the other hand, the distancing tools used throughout the book constantly remind the readers of the fact that the story they read and even imagine to be a part of is utterly fictional. The author himself wants to warn the readers to keep a healthy mind when approaching the story, so that they do not fall head over heels into the represented fairy-tale world. He does so both directly in the commentaries, when he claims that he wants to relax them as he feels that the story has involved their being too much, but also in many indirect ways throughout the story, when he, for example, advises to neglect certain deficiencies of the narrative.

The entire novel is designed to play with the readers, to constantly cooperate with them, and even to trick them while they do not realise being tricked. It is a one-of-the-kind story, which, moreover, is a priceless research source of interaction between aesthetic illusion and distance.

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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SOCIETY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S FICTION

Abstract

The paper aims at analysing the unusual methods Kurt Vonnegut used to criticise the contemporary state of humanity in two of his most famous books, Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance With Death and Breakfast of Champions, or Goodbye Blue Monday. The subject appears as noteworthy and significant since the direction of the civilization's development and its destructive effects on society and the natural environment have always been a subject of heated debate. Furthermore the author's original techniques and style are worth a deeper consideration. The paper lays a particular emphasis on the author's reflections on today's American commercialized modern society, as well as the mistakes of the nation's past.

Key words: Kurt Vonnegut, criticisms of modern society, American society, contemporary fiction.

Introduction. Summary and public reception of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*

Slaughterhouse-Five is a post-modern anti-war science fiction novel, which was published during the peak of the protest against American involvement in Vietnam, in 1969. Its realistic part describes the Second World War, particularly the allied firebombing of Dresden in February 1945, an event that the writer personally witnessed and survived. After the war, American society wasn't well informed about the event, despite the fact that the extent of the destruction and the number of civilian casualties were comparable to those caused by the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The novel also has a fictitious part, which describes life of the protagonist Billy Pilgrim after and before the war, with a number of science fiction elements.

Slaughterhouse-Five is considered one of the most important and greatest works of Kurt Vonnegut. According to Monica Loeb (Loeb 1979: 5):

Before the publication of Slaughterhouse-Five in 1969, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., was an author virtually unknown to wide reading public. Slaughterhouse-Five is his sixth novel and has earned him recognition among the public as

well as the critics. (...) "Slaughterhouse-Five" has been translated into twenty languages. The total sale of all Vonnegut's books runs into many millions. Slaughterhouse-Five alone has sold over two and a half million copies in the U.S.

Kurt Vonnegut devoted chapter one of *Slaughterhouse-Five* to the problem of his attitude towards wars and other matters he touched on this book and also described the laborious process of writing it. Even though when he got back home from the war he thought it would be easy to write, since all he had to do was report what he had seen, it turned out to be difficult, as no adequate words to describe the massacre came to his mind. He did not finish the work until 1969, a quarter-century after the destruction of the city. Vonnegut tried to make the part about the war as realistic as possible. He shared the feelings of some people he talked to during the process of writing, who said that most books and films presenting this topic show war as an attractive and adventurous experience, when in fact they are fought by young men at the end of their adolescence, who often get killed or become crippled and witness a lot of violence and horror, which is destructive to their mental health. That is also why he added *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance With Death* to the title.

The book received mixed reviews, nevertheless in the year of its publication it was nominated for a Nebula Award (presented each year by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America- SFWA) and a Hugo Award for best novel. It also appeared on the list of the 100 best English-language novels prepared by critics Lev Grossman and Richard Lacayo for *Time Magazine*.

After writing his masterpiece novel about Dresden, Vonnegut lost major inspiration and entered a period of experimenting with other forms. His next great novel, *Breakfast of Champions*, wasn't published until 1973. In its preface, the author described the book as his fiftieth birthday present to himself- summing up his past life and achievements. Later on *Breakfast of Champions* became one of the author's bestselling books. It describes the ups and down of two main characters, Kilgore Trout, an unsuccessful science fiction writer and a self-made rich man, Pontiac dealer Dwayne Hoover. The main action focuses on Trout's adventurous travel to an art festival, where he is supposed to give a speech, preparations for the event and the happening itself. The other protagonist, Dwayne Hoover, although well-to-do and seemingly sane, without arousing the suspicion of his co-workers and lover, is slowly going mad. After several attacks of mental illness, he finally runs amok at the gathering, after reading and believing a book written by Kilgore in the form of a letter from the Creator of the Universe informing the reader that he was the only human with free will while all the others were robots. The book contains plot summaries of numerous books written by the fictional author and abounds in Vonnegut's own illustrations.

Both novels must be considered as the author's most successful works. They not only made Kurt Vonnegut famous and recognized when they were published, but are also still popular today, since they contain ideas that are up-to-date.

The author's stylistic devices and literary techniques

In both books Kurt Vonnegut used many postmodernist elements unusual for contemporary literature. Even though both books concern serious matters, they are full of comical elements and black humour. The author makes fun of serious topics such as war and the destruction of the natural environment and therefore provides the reader with entertainment and amusement, but at the same time also provokes serious contemplation of the problems presented.

Since *Slaughterhouse-Five* contains both autobiographical and fictional elements, Kurt Vonnegut introduced two principle narrators. One is the actual author himself and the other impersonal, seemingly omniscient. The former describes the factual side of the story, the author's experience during the war and the process of writing the book, while the latter one belongs to the fictional side of the story, describing the life of protagonist Billy Pilgrim. Those two are elements joined by technique of intrusion, a sudden entry of another narrator. In the first and last chapters, which serve as prologue and epilogue, Vonnegut uses the first person to narrate and leaves the reader in no doubt that it is, in fact, himself, as he mentions many autobiographical details.

The author reveals the climax of the story, the death of an American soldier who was executed for stealing a teapot after surviving the firebombing of Dresden, on the fourth page already. He also mentions all the major themes in the first chapter. This dispenses the plot and negates the suspense traditional for novels.

As far as the treatment of time is concerned, Vonnegut used a very innovative technique in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He made the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim 'unstuck in time', in the sense that he travels back and forth in time, visiting random moments of his life, also reliving them. When the author introduces Billy Pilgrim in the second chapter, he writes (Vonnegut 1985: 23):

'He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next.'

Vonnegut keeps on repeating that these are only the character's claims, he also hints in other ways that this might be merely Billy's imagination or an effect of mental illness, that was intensified with a head injury during a plane crash. That might suggest that the author just wanted to have a pretext to use flashback and

flash-forward techniques while making the book easier to comprehend for an average reader at the same time. Another unusual concept of time from *Slaughterhouse-Five* is connected with the way creatures from an imaginary planet, Tralfamadore, perceive the world. Their concept includes a thesis namely (Vonnegut 1985: 27):

'All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadoreans can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interest them.'

This means that they could see in four dimensions, the fourth being time, and pitied terrestrials for only being able to see in three. One of the consequences of such an idea is their way of comprehending death as nonexistent. For Tralfamadoreans each moment lasts forever. Therefore they do not see death as tragedy or the end of existence. This concept seems to be adapted by Vonnegut himself, he comments on every death in *Slaughterhouse-Five* with the expression 'so it goes', no matter whether he writes about someone of a great importance or fleas, lice and bacteria, as if their lives and deaths were equally insignificant.

Vonnegut's protagonists often share features and facts from their life similar to the author himself. Both Billy Pilgrim from *Slaughterhouse-Five* and the writer were born in 1922, he also had nearly same posture as Vonnegut (six feet and three inches, gaunt), they share the entire war experience – had been captured and survived the firebombing in a meat locker. Dwayne Hoover from *Breakfast of Champions* is a car dealer, while Kurt Vonnegut owned a Saab dealership. Kilgore Trout, the other protagonist of the book, is a science fiction writer, who uses his stories to indirectly criticize the nature of the society people live in, which is an obvious reference to the author's style. He also represents Vonnegut's fear of remaining unrecognized as a serious artist and being labeled solely a science-fiction writer. Indeed, until the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, to make a living, he had to take other jobs just like Kilgore Trout.

There is one particularly non-standard yet quite frequent technique among contemporary writers, Vonnegut uses in many of his novels, including both *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*. He refers to numerous different literary sources by either quoting them or making allusions. Every time he does it, however, it seems to implement a certain purpose. None of those references are aleatory. It can be said that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is based on them to a high degree. Two main types of such sources invoked in this novel can be distinguished - historical and fictitious.

Examples of the former are historical sources about the Second World War and Dresden. He purposely gives wide, well documented information about the extraordinary beauty of the city and its remarkable architecture before the war,

confronting it with a quite precise description of the extent of the destruction caused by the 1945 bombing. The clear aim of this confrontation is to emphasize the tragedy and cruelty of this military action, unnecessary in the author's opinion. Vonnegut tries to convince the reader that events like that prove that humanity is unable to learn any lessons from history. He suggests that history repeats itself and people do not learn from it, mentioning a similar devastation of the same city during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

Quoted historical sources also have another purpose. They verify which events in *Slaughterhouse-Five* are factual, note made up by the author. It makes it easier for the reader to distinguish between the two worlds in Vonnegut's books, reality and fiction. For the same reason the author often mentions he witnessed some of the events personally.

Another kind of sources referred to by the author are the fictitious ones, which he created himself while, quoting from them as if they had been published and recognized. This category includes mainly Kilgore Trout's novels, which are present in both *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*. These novels summarized in Vonnegut's books serve the purpose of reinforcing the central themes or they highlight certain aspects of American values already hinted at in the novels, in an indirect way which requires some thought and individual interpretation.

In general, it must be stressed that the simple and, at first glance, amusing fables of Vonnegut's novels is, in fact a very sophisticated stylistic construction of a skilled and brilliant author. Not a sentence is there without a purpose or by chance and can be analyzed on many different levels.

“Do as I say, not as I do.” Double standards in the USA regarding human rights

A significant part of Vonnegut's texts, particularly *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*, is devoted to criticism of the hypocrisy typical of developed countries. Officially governments, constitutions and laws proclaim humanitarian values. It is always stressed there that the 'free world' is obeying principles of democracy, human rights and equality, that individual rights are essential for its economic and social principles. At the same time the values are, in fact, openly or unofficially violated with the support or consent of governments, mass media and public opinion.

Examples of such double standards were easily found by the author in his own country playing the role of the world leader of obeying human rights and high ethics. The United States of America, long after World War II continued to practise racial segregation with no open regret for being a slavery center in the past. The Indian minority was kept in reservations in unacceptable economic and social conditions and a large part of the population (also white) of that country suffered poverty.

Even though slavery and racial segregation are forbidden by law, black people are still often are paid less, live in isolated ghettos and are treated worse than white

people. A lot of time must pass before they will have equal chances for good education.

Kurt Vonnegut deals with problems of inequality, injustice and discrimination in his own, very specific way. Without criticising them openly, he demonstrates all the evil of the abuse of human rights in real social and political life by the symbolic and ironic, often unrealistic situations of his heroes.

A perfect example of poverty in the wealthiest nation is one of the soldiers transported and kept by the Germans in the same carriage as Billy, the *Slaughterhouse-Five* protagonist. He is a significant character, since he reminds the reader that some people, here represented by a homeless person, have to bear even worse conditions and suffer greater hunger in their everyday life in times of peace despite being members of a the richest society in the world.

In the same novel, Vonnegut also quotes a fictitious yet absorbing and meaningful monograph about the American nation, written by one of his reoccurring characters, Howard W. Campbell. A part of it deals with the subject of poverty (Vonnegut 1985: 129):

It is in fact a crime for an American to be poor, even though America is a nation of poor. Every other nation has folk traditions of men who were poor but extremely wise and virtuous, and therefore more estimable than anyone with power and gold. No such tales are told by the American poor. They mock themselves and glorify their betters. The meanest eating or drinking establishment, owned by a man who is himself poor, is very likely to have a sign on its wall asking this cruel question: "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?"

This fragment indicates an important problem partially caused by the short tradition of the American nations. The poor, who in fact work for capitalists' wealth, are treated with no respect and have low self-esteem. The only folk tale is the American Dream about self-made men, however even though Billy Pilgrim from *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Dwayne Hoover, the protagonist of *Breakfast of Champions* are examples of such people, it did not make them happy, as will be discussed in next chapters. People imagine that if they were valuable and talented they would automatically become rich, which is not always the case. According to the monograph, it leads to further negative outcomes (Vonnegut 1985: 129):

Americans, like human beings everywhere, believe many things that are obviously untrue. Their most destructive untruth is that it is very easy for any American to make money. They will not acknowledge how in fact hard is to come by, and, therefore, those who have no money blame and blame themselves. This inward blame has been a treasure for the rich and powerful, who have had to do less for their poor, publicly and privately, than any other ruling class since, say, Napoleonic times.

Apparently, it is in the best interest of people who possess many material goods, to make people feel it is natural that there is a poor part of society and that nobody is responsible for this fact. In that way they do not have to provide any care for the lower classes and so make them dependent on their employer. In order to lead a normal life people are practically forced to take loans and pay them off for most of their lives. Additionally, their working conditions are usually unfavourable - the work is stressful and people are often treated as someone worse by their supervisors. Ultimately, the capitalistic system can be considered a modern version of slavery. Vonnegut broaches this subject in the first chapter of *Breakfast of Champions*, where he presents his cogitations on the history of America (Vonnegut 1992: 11):

Actually, the sea pirates who had the most to do with the creation of the new government owned human slaves. They used human beings for machinery, and, even after slavery was eliminated, because it was so embarrassing, they and their descendants continued to think of ordinary human beings as machines.

Vonnegut also alludes to the tradition of hypocrisy started by the Founding Fathers and continues until this day. He mentions that one of *Breakfast of Champions* characters attended a school named after Thomas Jefferson, who was one of the greatest theoreticians on the subject of human liberty, while at the same owning slaves. Then again, this time directly, on the pages of *In These Times* he bashes the mendacity of American politicians, especially republicans claiming they are Christians (Vonnegut 1992: 11):

*How about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes?
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
...
And so on.
Not exactly planks in a Republican platform. Not exactly Donald Rumsfeld or Dick Cheney stuff.
For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes. But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.
"Blessed are the merciful" in a courtroom? "Blessed are the peacemakers" in the Pentagon? Give me a break!*

In the same article he also criticizes several other matters. One of them is how politicians claim that they fight the drugs, while two of the most addictive and destructive substances, ethyl alcohol and nicotine are perfectly legal.

The picture of contemporary America given by Vonnegut is radical and controversial. Many evils of the country are exaggerated and generalized in his books and articles to draw the reader's attention to certain problems. Nevertheless it forces him to rethink common truths and slogans and see more clearly, not only what can be noticed at first sight the dark sides of present social life with its rat race.

“If we don’t end war, war will end us”. Condemnation of war fought for national and individual profit

From the very beginning of his best known novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut makes clear that he has pacifist views and the book contains anti-war ideas. He does not, however, believe that one day wars will cease and people will live in peace. The author clearly states that in the first chapter, where he presents considerations directly, in form of first person narration, unlike in the rest of the book.

Because most people are prone to taking for granted what they hear in the media, propaganda makes wars look justified and reasonable in the eyes of societies. A good example can be Billy Pilgrim's son, Robert, who as a teenager used to be rebellious. He was condemned by his family and surroundings for being an alcoholic and standing out from the crowd with his appearance and views, but after he straightened out and became a soldier he started to be approved and even admired for actually being trained and paid to kill innocent people in Vietnam.

Most characters from *Slaughterhouse-Five* are soldiers whom Billy encounters during the war, in a diversity of ranks - from privates to officers as well as nationalities - Americans, Germans, British and Russians. They are all pitiful both in appearance and behaviour, most of them are innocent people thrown into a war they have neither caused nor wanted. The majority of those who survive, veterans, are not taken care of by the state and often become homeless and have problems with their mental health because of what they have experienced and seen. When Billy ends up in a psychiatric hospital, he shares a room with another former soldier, Eliot Rosewater, one of Vonnegut's recurring characters. They both found life worthless and meaningless and suffered a breakdown.

The next time Billy is in hospital, after suffering a head injury in a plane crash, he encounters an ex-soldier once more. This time it is Professor Rumford of Harvard University, a multi-millionaire from birth, successful writer and a retired brigadier general. Vonnegut used this character to uncover another ugly side of war and ways the American government manipulates society. Just like Vonnegut during his research about the Dresden bombing necessary for writing *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Professor Rumford encountered difficulties while he was gathering information on the same subject. Shameful war events are kept secret and disregarded by the officials to avoid indignation, protests and loss of support.

When Vonnegut reaches the contemporary history of the United State in the first, introductory chapter of *Breakfast of Champions*, he exposes how in his opinion the United States of America abuse its military strength to intimidate and toe into line the rest of the world (Vonnegut 1992: 12):

When Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout met each other, their country was by far the richest and most powerful country on the planet. It had the food and minerals and machinery, and it disciplined other countries by threatening to shoot big rockets at them or to drop things on them from airplanes.

He later expressed this view directly, as redactor of *In These Times* (Vonnegut 2004):

But I know now that there is not a chance in hell of America's becoming humane and reasonable. Because power corrupts us, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Human beings are chimpanzees who get crazy drunk on power. By saying that our leaders are power-drunk chimpanzees, am I in danger of wrecking the morale of our soldiers fighting and dying in the Middle East? Their morale, like so many bodies, is already shot to pieces. They are being treated, as I never was, like toys a rich kid got for Christmas.

Later on in his article he also exposes how, in his opinion, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are fought for the resource the American economy is based on-fuel under the cover of fighting terrorism and reveals how the media joined the propaganda. He compares Iraqis who are ungrateful for bringing them democracy with the Indians, who felt similarly about the Europeans colonizing America under the pretext of sharing Christianity. Once more Kurt Vonnegut implies how history repeats itself and how people believe in similar lies and made up ideologies which are used as excuses for crimes committed.

Criticism of commercialized human relations related to destructive influence of money upon family and social relations

To quote a Liza Minnelli song from the famous film *Cabaret*, it is 'money that makes the world go round'. Since the industrial revolution, the market economy has developed its social relations for more than two hundred years now¹.

¹ *Cabaret* is a 1972 musical film directed by Bob Fosse and starring Liza Minnelli, Michael York and Joel Grey. The film is set in Berlin during the Weimar Republic in 1931, under the ominous presence of the growing Nazi Party.

Man doesn't need to produce anything for himself. All his needs can be satisfied with goods and services that are sold on the market. The only condition to use them is to have sufficient money to pay their market price.

The market economy is the most dynamic system ever known. It has changed the whole human civilisation in a comparatively short period of time. It may be illustrated by comparing of XIX century horse coach with present space technology, the internet system and molecular or genetic engineering.

Together with the unprecedented material progress, the new system brought deep, not always positive changes in family and social relations. Commercialization of human relations leads to an explosion of individualism breaking traditional family and local communal lives. For many people market freedom means loneliness and helplessness that is expressed in the novels analyzed here.

In the commercialized world, individuals often take great measures that are a far cry from decency and morality, to achieve a respected position and wealth. Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five* can serve as a perfect example. After his return from the war, he graduates Ilium School of Optometry and marries the extremely unattractive Valencia Merble. In his eyes, her imperfections are outweighed by the fact that her father owns the school, is rich and will ensure him a good position in his business. He uses Valencia to climb up socially and financially, even though he is not happy with her. She is a symbol of the weaknesses of capitalism - weak people with no ideals can sell out to power and money, just like Billy Pilgrim. Vonnegut (1985: 119) summarized it that way:

He had been rewarded for marrying a girl nobody in his right mind would have married. his father-in-law had given him a new Buick Roadmaster, an all-electric home, and had made him manager of his most prosperous office, his Ilium office, where Billy could expect to make at least thirty thousand dollars a year. That was good. His father was only a barber.

To deal with his loveless family situation, Billy retreats to a fantasy world and creates a character, Montana Wildhack, who may embody celestial love, sex and fertility, a dream of troubled unhappy men, represented by the *Slaughterhouse-Five* protagonist. In many ways the twenty-year-old girl is Valencia's opposite. She is attractive and affectionate. In his imaginations Billy escapes his real life and dreams about everything it is lacking. The comfort of made up Montana also allowed him to confront his Dresden experience he had been unable to face with Valencia. Billy refused to answer his wife's questions about his experiences during the war, but he tells his imaginary lover all about it with great detail.

Billy does not show much affection to his children either. He does not know his son Robert and shows no interest in getting to know him, since he suspects there is not much to know about him, which shows the lack of love and contact in this average middle-class family.

Billy's daughter, Barbara repeats the pattern of her parents and marries an optometrist, who, again, is set up in the business by his father-in-law. She also represents the hypocrisy of the middle class and lack of love in her family. After Billy's brain injury, she does not accept his eccentric behaviour, thinks he is senile and treats him like a baby who only causes trouble.

The family story of Billy expresses the hopelessness of a life deprived of feelings and positive emotions, based upon market principles. Marriage treated as business inevitably leads to loneliness.

Professor Rumfoord, aforementioned in the previous chapter, is another example of how wealth attracts life partners. At the age of seventy, still healthy and virile, he shows off his wealth with his beautiful fifth wife, Lily. She is another example that power and money can more or less buy a young attractive girl, who then might be used by her husband to demonstrate his potency publicly. Sometimes not being very bright, such women unwittingly serve only as a compliment and a servant to their husbands, obviously enticed by his money and position.

Generally Vonnegut's characters from *Slaughterhouse-Five* tend to sacrifice their personal happiness to achieve professional success, wealth and assurance, which are essential in the contemporary world. There is no place for emotions where the choice of husband or wife is, concerned; their riches and connections are what matters. The author reminds the reader of what should really be important in our lives. Even after achieving apparent success, wealth and having a family, a person can still be lonely, isolated and unhappy.

One of Kilgore Trout's novels summarized in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *The Big Board*, ridicules the importance of money in human life. It tells a story of two people kidnapped to another planet, who are told by their kidnappers that they can invest a sum of money in the stock market and make a fortune. Aliens watch their extreme reactions when they show the couple of Earthlings a fake market board for amusement. The story exposes how seriously people treat money.

The main idea of Kurt Vonnegut regarding family relations is that wealth and position cannot substitute mutual feelings and understanding.

Destructive influence of contemporary society on average, sensitive individuals

Vonnegut uses his characters to display or represent certain ideas that contribute to the general message of his novels. Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five* can be considered one such illustrations, he spans all four levels touched on in this book: the private, military, fantasy as well as the autobiographic, since the reader can think of him as synonymous with Vonnegut during the part of the book about Dresden.

Billy's private life is sorrowful. His misery started in his family home during childhood. His father tried to bring him up in a macho fashion, teach him strength and aggression to fight for survival. This almost led to his son's death when he threw him into deep water assuming he would simply learn to swim that way. His

mother, on the other hand, represents spiritual hypocrisy and emptiness. She had a problem deciding which religion she identified with, until she found a gruesome crucifix presenting Christ's wounds in great detail in a gift shop and placed it on her son's wall. It introduced Billy to human cruelty at a very young age and reminded him of it every day. She also strongly supported Billy's decision to marry Valencia, emphasizing material profits.

The adult Billy does not have any life ideology. Like most people nowadays, he simply tries to fit into society by doing well in school, marrying the right person and climbing up the social ladder. Thus, he can be considered a modern Everyman. His surname, Pilgrim, might be used by Vonnegut with purpose; Billy's aim might be to draw the attention of the reader to the world's and man's inclination to cruelty and inhumanity. The protagonist of *Slaughterhouse-Five* deals with his problems passively, quietly and inwardly, in a non-violent and absent-minded manner- ignores them or escapes into day dreaming. Vonnegut calls it 'the simplest way'. His pacifism and tolerance makes for an extreme contrast to the dominating forces in society. Sometimes quietly weeps, for example thinking about the cripples, who are often forced to take to their bed and then deprived of income.

According to Monica Loeb (1979), the author of a thorough analysis of the book:

In other words, Billy is capable of crying and probably feels for a suffering mankind. This is how he resembles Christ described in the Christmas carol that constitutes the book's epigraph. Vonnegut explained that although Billy cried very little, "he often saw things worth crying about". Note however, that this was the only respect in which he resembles Christ. Vonnegut emphasizes this by saying: "in that respect, at least, he resembles the Christ of the carol.

There are many further references to the Bible and similarities between Vonnegut's protagonist from *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Christ. For example as Billy time travels, he dies and then comes back to life again, when latrines are being built in the prisoner camp he hears 'Golgotha sounds' or he feels like he is being crucified jammed in with other soldiers into a boxcar. Once again, Vonnegut seems to use this character, his creation, to draw our attention to the downfall of humanity.

Billy's loneliness and isolation is emphasized by recommendations of his doctor, who advises him to use the massage mode on his bed in order to relax. He has no close friends to talk to about his problems and frustrations. To find sincere approval he has to escape, in his imaginations, to an alien planet where he is kept in a zoo by aliens, admired and appreciated.

In *Breakfast of Champions* there are two more examples of individuals who had problems with adjusting to the surrounding reality, however different their reasons may be. The first protagonist, Dwayne Hoover, was a successful and rich

Pontiac dealer. Despite his financial well-being, he was unhappy and going insane, similarly to Billy Pilgrim from *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut describes his madness in a satirical way as his body manufacturing certain unbalanced chemicals that affect his mind. Yet another parallel with Billy is his unhappy private life, Dwayne's wife committed suicide and his only friend was a pet dog called Sparky. People around him were not close enough to notice his illness, at least not until it was too late. He had a mistress, his secretary, but after his beloved one's death he was too afraid of being hurt again to let anyone get close to him.

Kilgore Trout, on the other hand, was an extremely unfulfilled person, both professionally and personally. He was an unrecognized artist, a science fiction writer. Kilgore's problem was that despite having brilliant ideas, his works lacked clear style and were hard to read. Just like Vonnegut, the fictional author used indirect ways to discuss different problems. Trout's environmentalist views prove his sensitivity and concern about the human civilization destroying the planet. The protagonist was poor and lonely. Having no family, his only friend was a pet parakeet, similar to Dwayne Hoover's case. One day, after being accidentally discovered and invited to an art festival by influential Eliot Rosewater, he decides to go. His intention is to show the participants how miserable he is, being a representative of all the people who had devoted their lives to art, yet still were unrecognized and poor. To make his living, Trout works as a window fitter. He does the job on his own, therefore has no colleagues from work, which only adds to his lack of social relations.

Is the love of money the root of all evil? The negative influence of greed in society and media

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut described the Americans as greedy and unable to share their success with others, even in times of peace, contrasting the capitalistic system with communism. He describes the political system as one where a person has to grab as much as possible and hold onto his possessions. He thinks that it is the reason of greed and most people are not willing to use their success to help the section of society that suffers from poverty, even if their fortunes are too large to be spent. According to Vonnegut, the system could be opposed by communist theories, which state that people should be more equal when money is considered. He criticizes how costly even basic needs are in the USA. He gives an example in *Breakfast of Champions*. A young girl has to work hard to pay off the bills left by her father who died of cancer. He makes a bitter comment that getting sick is one of the most expensive things a person could do, bearing in mind the expensive health care.

Since media such as radio, television and newspapers have to be profit oriented, their owners have to make sure they attract as broad a group of customers as possible. This makes them less reliable as it frequently makes them misinterpret news and create scandals from trivial events on purpose to be more attractive. Vonnegut mocks this subject in *Breakfast of Champions*. After Kilgore Trout had

been robbed during his journey to the arts festival, he jokingly told a *New York Post* reporter that for all he knows the culprits may not be humans and originate from Pluto. The very next day the story appeared in a newspaper under *Pluto Bandits Kidnap Pair* and it begun to spread. Reporters started to ask policemen for any new information on The Pluto Gang, so they began to look for it. All this started to spread panic in New York, despite the fact that there were many more serious and genuine threats.

Art: modern. Language: out of date. A critique

Undoubtedly one of the most difficult professions to prosper in is an artist. There are numerous immeasurable factors that decide about failure or success, such as the subjectivity of critics and audience and the impossibility of predicting future fashions and trends. All that can be simply be put down to luck. Vonnegut raises this topic in *Breakfast of Champions*, using one of Trout's stories. It tells about a planet, where once a year citizens submitted works of art to the government and were given numbers. Then a wheel is spun and stopped at a number, pointing the winner. The lucky person in this story turned out to be a man who painted the first picture in his life, presenting his cat. He was awarded equivalent of one billion dollars and a place of honor in the National Gallery, where people lined up in miles to see such a valuable exhibit. All the other paintings were thrown into a giant bonfire, since the wheel decided they were worthless.

To picture this problem, Vonnegut used a character, Rabo Karabekian, who was also invited to the arts festival. He was a minimalist painter, whose works were very simple, but had mysterious titles. Vonnegut gives an example of a painting entitled 'The Temptation of Saint Anthony', which consisted of nothing more than green wall paint field and an orange vertical stripe made from reflecting tape. He was hated by people for getting a lot of money doing little work until he explained his ridiculous theory about his work at the Midland City Arts Festival (Vonnegut 1992: 221):

"I now give you my word of honor," he went on, "that the picture your city owns shows everything about life which truly matters, with nothing left out. It is a picture of awareness of every animal. It is the immaterial core of every animal - the <I am> to which all messages are sent. It is all that is alive in any of us – in a mouse, in a deer, in a cocktail waitress. It is unwavering and pure, no matter what preposterous adventure may befall us. A sacred picture of Saint Anthony alone is one vertical, unwavering band of light. If a cockroach were near him, or a cocktail waitress, the picture would show two such bands of light. Our awareness is all that is alive and maybe sacred in any of us. Everything else about us is dead machinery".

After this speech, feelings of the audience towards this painting dramatically changed and everyone admired the genius of Rabo Karabekian.

Vonnegut also dislikes contemporary writers who write old fashioned novels. In order not to criticize anyone directly, he introduces another character, who attend the arts festival- a female writer Beatrice Keedsler. This is what he has to say about her works (Vonnegut 1992:209):

I thought Beatrice Keedsler had joined hands with other old-fashioned storytellers to make people believe that life had leading characters, minor characters, significant details, insignificant details, that it had lessons to be learned, tests to be passed, and a beginning, a middle, and an end.

In the author's opinion such an approach is unrealistic. According to him the educational system partially bears the blame for such a situation, as schools teach many things that are unnecessary and out of date. People are told to use the language of English aristocrats from the beginning of the XIX century. In his opinion the reading list should contain fewer books about distant times and people and more novels comprehensible for the average person. In his own books he never uses sophisticated language taught in schools and discusses relevant and contemporary matters.

Can a nation divided against itself stand? Lack of unity and brotherhood in the USA

There are numerous mostly indirect indications of the negative aspect of the diversity of cultures, nations, beliefs and races in both of the analyzed novels.

During the war Billy Pilgrim from *Slaughterhouse-Five* would have been killed by a fellow American, Roland Weary, if it was not for enemy German soldiers. While he was being beaten heavily, ironically the Germans captured him and his companion and therefore prevented what was intended to be a homicide.

When they were being transported as the Prisoners of War and in the German camp, American soldiers were standing out among other nations as extremely impolite, quarrelsome and completely lacking in compassion, sympathy and helpfulness towards one another. This may be connected with the American nation's history: a nation formed from different immigrant groups possesses no uniformity of religion or traditions. It was further deepened with the Civil War, where often even members of the same family had to fight on the enemy's sides. Howard W. Campbell warned the Germans about American prisoners of war in this way (1985: 130):

A prison administrator dealing with captured American enlisted men for the first time should be warned: expect no brotherly love, even between

brothers. There will be no cohesion between the individuals. Each will be a sulky child who often wishes he were dead.

Conclusions

It is not very easy to review Kurt Vonnegut's novels. This author is some sort of intellectual phenomenon in contemporary literature. He was an active member of the American society: soldier, salesman, husband and father, successful writer and deeply unhappy individual. Readers of his publications can find his observations, problems and considerations in them.

Most of his conclusions are pessimistic. There are not many illusions about the present state and future of humanity. Vonnegut's message is sad but not very original. Many other authors, often more precisely and much more deeply, criticize the evils lurking in market societies. One can find such ideas in literature starting from the XIX century writers like Charles Dickens or Victor Hugo. Vonnegut's observations concerning the commercialization, social and economic inequalities, lack of ethics, atomization of society and total loneliness are quite commonly exposed by many other authors and can one consider them truism.

At the same time the way of introducing and discussing the obvious problems in this author's novels is quite specific. He manages to present difficult and sad aspects of life, usually avoided by mass readers, in a very attractive form. His stories, though gloomy, are so brilliant and full of a special sort of humour that they can be read simply for amusement. Some less sophisticated readers can admire the plot and sense of humour. More considerate people pay more attention to the author's language, techniques used to get his message through and very original illustrations. This diversity helped Kurt Vonnegut to achieve quite wide popularity among readers and high valuation of professional critics.

His positive program is nevertheless rated poor. Criticizing the dark sides of contemporary wealth and democracy he is unable to propose any realistic methods of correcting them. His naive belief in idealistic social and political concepts such as communist egalitarianism or sophisticated civilizations of other planets in fact show no real alternative. Historical experience proved that the role of writers, politicians, intellectuals, philosophers and prophets in changing social and economic relations is objectively limited. Every time societies are led to a better and brighter future the experiments end with bigger or smaller failures or even crashes.

Nonetheless the novels analyzed above must be considered a valuable contribution to progressive social ideas and efforts. Kurt Vonnegut, in exposing his thoughts and civilization problems in an attractive form, helped many readers to find their way to non-commercialized literature.

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GHOST-LORE IN THE SELECTED POEMS BY ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON

Abstract

The article is an attempt to close-read and analyse three poems by the Victorian author Rosamund Marriott Watson (1860-1911). Its aim is to study particular characteristics of the poems about ghosts with specific attention paid to the language and images by which the poetess maintains the tension between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The study shows how the imagery related to ghosts expresses deepest human longings for purpose, identity and meaning. Analysed poems include 'The Prodigal Son', 'The Open Door', and 'Revenant'.

My own experiences, together with the facts which I was led to search out as a result of them – as well as the analyses of scientists respected in their fields who had also given careful attention to data in one or more of the psi areas – enabled me to affirm life after death as the “natural” thing to expect of the human psyche, which already seems to be in eternal life (Pike 1969: 174).

The dead have no existence other than that which the living imagine for them (Schmitt 1998: 1).

Introduction

I have started the analysis of *poetry* about ghosts with a quotation from the book of non-fiction for a specific reason. The reference comes from the autobiographical narrative of an American Episcopal bishop James Pike (1913-1969). In his vivid account bishop Pike described paranormal activity which followed his son's suicide in 1966. The details of the bishop's multifarious activity of examining his son's 'return' notwithstanding, I believe the above quote from *The Other Side* (first published in 1968) convincingly illustrates man's deep and universal interest in the ghosts and the paranormal. A particular reason which I had in mind in choosing the quote and thus suggesting an opening discourse of the article is the relatedness and 'presence' of such phenomena in the man's *actual* life world. The bishop evidently wrote his book convinced that what happened, happened in the *actual* world and not in his imagination. In other words, one can

see the lure of 'literary' or 'fictional' ghosts as directly related to the unique place they occupy in our cultural memory. By 'the unique place' I mean the creative interspace between that what is experienced as 'the real' and that what belongs to 'the imaginary'.¹

Following this dichotomy, David Appelbaum thinks that

[t]he ghost is a non-acoustical replication of the voice put in writing that reading (out loud, 'silently') encounters, a sonic facsimile. Reintroduced in writing, the voice, eviscerated, depleted of its breath, and made a subvocal wraith duplicates the real exterior articulation of speech. Of course, no original exists to be replicated; there is only the existence of the iteration. Repetition without origin, the source infinitely removed (2009:13).

Man's fascination with the uncanny, irrational and mysterious has always been reflected in art, music and literature (see Blanco, M. P. – Peeren, E. 2013). The need to verbalize the ungraspable has been present in the mankind's thought and closely related to the search for the life's essence and meaning. The realm of ghosts seems especially rich in its potential to reveal man's desires, fears, obsessions and passions. These fantastic visitors from the beyond express not only one's horrors of solitude, the wonder of death, nothingness and the desire for the past but they also show the power of the mind to shape the present reality. On the other hand, ghosts may equally arise from the depths within the mind, becoming the evidence of one's absence of rationality, self-delusion and disturbed state, if not insanity. Therefore, the second quote the article starts with describes a slightly different aspect, which is, what ghosts as imaginary beings stand for and represent in a psychological discourse of the *secular* culture. As it is shown below, study of ghosts is also exploration of the mystery of human identity, emotional patterns, longings and desires which are *unrelated* to the realm of the supernatural and which speak – using poetic/ figurative language - about the condition of the *earthly* man.

It is not my intention to ponder here the scientific validity or the delusion of the belief in ghosts and outstanding psychic experiences, but one has to admit that such beliefs *do* exist among various cultures including ours and fascination with the 'world beyond' is deeply ingrained in our social memory.

¹ To such discourse belongs, for instance, the 'confession' made by a famous surrealist painter Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) in her interview with Paul de Angelis: *From a young age, and I believe this happened to many people, I used to have very strange experiences with all sorts of ghosts, visions and other things that were generally condemned by Orthodox Christianity* (available at <http://www.locusgraphic.com/carrint.html>).

What *is a ghost, really?*, asks Daniel Appelbaum and suggests the following answer:

The ghostly defiance of boundaries between life and death, presence and absence, truth and illusion, being and non-being like-wise defies the what question, as well as the why and the how. Spectral ethereality gives ghosts escape velocity from the plane of reality, and challenges easy assumptions about substance, solidity, gravity, ground, and place. Such terms define a foundational reality to which philosophy as Western metaphysics is committed, a commitment expressed through grammar and semantics, logic and categories (2009: 2).

Apparitions, ghosts, specters and spirits are exceptional and they are philosophically, spiritually and aesthetically appealing. As has been pointed out by M. P. Blanco and E. Peeren,

[t]he ghost, even when turned into a conceptual metaphor, remains a figure of unruliness pointing to the tangibly ambiguous. While it has insight to offer, especially in those matters that are commonly considered not to matter and into the ambiguous itself, its own status as discourse or epistemology is never stable, as the ghost also questions the formation of knowledge itself and specifically invokes what is placed outside it, excluded from perception and, consequently, from both the archive as the depository of the sanctioned, acknowledged past and politics as the (re)imagined present and future (2013:9).

The ‘presence’ of ghosts provides us with the radical ontological and epistemological juxtapositions. Inhabiting the world ‘in-between’, they make us aware of our own mortality and the ultimate condition of death all of us must face one day. Their ‘reality’ and existence outside the physical reality becomes the answer to the ultimate question man asks about the evidence for the life after death. As Paul Edwards writes,

[i]t can hardly be denied that a philosophy which maintains that the world is morally meaningful, that death is not the end, and that human beings – or at least some of them – will have another chance is emotionally more satisfying than naturalism (1997:1).

According to M. P. Blanco and E. Peeren, the ghosts operate *as a powerful metaphor for encounters with disturbing forms of otherness* (2013:3). I believe that ghosts express simultaneously man’s ultimate state of fearful uncertainty and doubt, and the pleasures of yearning. As a mysterious force and irrational phenomenon, ghosts stand for what we are most afraid of and question what we

know and what we are capable of knowing. The pleasures of yearning are also of the two-fold nature. First, it is the man's yearning for immortality (yearning for the infinite future); secondly, it is yearning for the past as the ghosts' stories often express the desire for what once was. This ambiguous and uncertain nature is typical of ghosts and inspires many questions, wonderings and interpretations.

The present study close-reads and analyses three poems about ghosts by the Victorian author Rosamund Marriott Watson (1860-1911) and its aim is to deal with particular characteristics of the texts while specific attention is paid to the language and images by which the poetess maintains the tension between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The life of Rosamund Marriott Watson embodies many sentiments of the fin-de-siècle era. Various known as Rose Ball, Mrs. G. F. Armytage, Graham R. Tomson and Rosamund Marriott Watson, her wide interests (poetry, criticism, literary essays, art, and fashion) and arresting life story (which includes three marriages) made her the New Woman *par excellence*. An active participant in literary London, Watson was acquainted with many famous representatives of cultural life of the time, including Edith Nesbit (1858-1924), Mona Caird (1854-1932), Amy Levy (1861-1889), Alice Meynell (1847-1922), Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Although her personality and life were indeed interesting, my concern here is not to follow Watson's biographical traces, neither to offer a reading which would place the texts within the context of her marital or literary life². The study is grounded in the 'poetic' framework and the texts are examined through the methodology appropriate for the study of literature.

Rosamund Marriott Watson's ghost-lore

It is important to point out that although the main focus is on three poems ('The Prodigal Son', 'The Open Door' and 'Revenant') by Rosamund Marriott Watson, these do not represent Watson's complete 'ghost-lore'³. The poems have been chosen as typical works in which ghosts play a major role and which, simultaneously, stand for three different poetic discourses. Through a thorough examination of the texts, I will try to illustrate how their speakers, atmosphere and imagery, all related to ghosts, verbalize and express the deepest human longings for purpose, for identity and for meaning. Each poem will be studied as the 'imaginary' world *per se* and my attempt is to present three separate 'vignettes' or three states of mind rather than to search for the features of consistency and unity in the author's portrayal of ghosts. The questions I will be concerned with include:

² This article is, first and foremost, an attempt to study and explore the ghost-lore in selected poems by the often overlooked Victorian poetess. For detailed biographical information see Linda K. Hughes' *Graham R.: Rosamund Marriott Watson*, 2005.

³ Other poems about ghosts include, for example, 'The Blind Ghost', 'D'Outre Tombe' (Beyond the Grave), 'D'Outremer (From Afar)', 'Farm on the Links', 'The Ghosts', 'God's Acre', 'The Haunted Palace' and 'The House Desolate'.

What are the distinct features of Watson's ghost personalities? Are they passive or vibrantly alive? Do they fit and represent the socially acceptable behaviour patterns? Are they sensitive and warm-hearted, full of loving concern or do the spectres place heavy emotional demands on those who are being haunted?

'The Prodigal Son': a story of forgiveness and consolation

'The Prodigal Son' concerns a very special form of return. The anonymous speaker surrenders to the mysterious, unexplainable, yet overwhelming force which propels him back home after the period of alienation from everything and everyone he must have felt affection for in the past, including his beloved, parents and animals. The poem thus consists of a series of suggestive encounters between the man and his relatives. First, he meets his former love, then his mother and, finally, his dear dog.

The allusion to the New Testament parable suggests that the man's return might be motivated by the sense of loss and longing as well as by the pain and weariness of life. In the original story, the prodigal son asks for his inheritance before his father dies; he leaves his home and wastes all his fortune. After realizing that hogs have better food than he eats, he decides to return and repent his sins. On his coming back, the humbled son begs to be hired as a servant, but instead of reminding him of his faults, the father warmly welcomes the child back and makes a feast to celebrate his return.

Similarly to the Biblical pretext, Watson's prodigal son comes back in order to heal the strains of a broken heart. It appears he decided to pick up the threads of his old life and draw some comfort from return, but strangely enough, neither his beloved nor his mother gives any sign of being aware of his presence. The man aims at consolidating his relationships but he remains alien and unwanted. As the most marked characteristic of his identity is not revealed until the very end, a reader suspects that people whom the man meets *really* ignore him and therefore each encounter evokes deep sadness and mingles the atmosphere of loneliness with sorrow. Ignorance seems worse than rejection. Eventually, only after he caresses his dog does the man (and the reader, too) make the most unsettling (self-) discovery which explains why all people behaved as if he were not present. The prodigal son is a ghost:

*I stroked his tawny head,
But he cowered back from me, and crouched in terror,
Whining and shivering, though I still caressed him,
Murmuring fond words, familiar, foolish phrases
He once would leap to hear –
Then suddenly –
I knew – ay, then I knew in very surety
That I was dead. (1912:177)*

The fact that the prodigal son's identity becomes known through the animal companion can be seen as Watson's ironic wink at the Biblical pretext. In her poem, there is neither place for a heart-breaking return, loving and welcoming father, nor for a happy end. We are in the world where a ghost *does* exist but he is unaware of his own identity unless he is being reminded of it. After the final revelation, the reader returns to the question of *actual* motivation for the son's return. Similarly to the 'Revenant' discussed below, the speaker of 'The Prodigal Son' keeps silent about his past. We never learn what went wrong or what the cause of his leaving was at first place. The mysteries of the nature of his former intimate relationships remain unexposed. We may hypothesize – following the New Testament hint – that the return has something to do with the speaker's father, although it is the mother, not the father, whom the lost son begs for forgiveness:

*I went in and passed athwart the chamber
To the square hearth-nook where my mother sat,
Propped in her high-winged chair.
Weeping, I bowed my head upon her knees:
"Forgive me, I have come at last," I said;
"I am come back, to leave you nevermore."
Yet she replied not, only sighed and shifted
The seam she sewed on nearer to the light,
And then I saw it was a shroud she wrought. (1912:176-177)*

As I wrote before, unlike in the New Testament story, in Watson's 'parable' the son's return does not cause a warm welcome followed by a feast, but there comes a double realization of death: his father's and his own. We never learn for whom the mother sews a shroud: is it for her husband or for the son? Has the dead son come 'intuitively' to attend the father's funeral? Or is it actually the son's funeral?

If the latter be true, the story of return becomes a story of farewell as well. The ghost as a speaker of this graveyard poem represents a link between the past and the present. He becomes a reminder of one's mortality and its limits and expresses rather sadly the truth of 'dead' relationships. His attempts to revive them ends in a failure since, somewhat cynically, the only being that recognizes him is a dog.

'The Open Door': A story of grief and consolation

The setting of 'The Open Door' reminds one of Poe's 'The Raven'. Similarly to the classic 19th century ghost poem, Watson's text of seven stanzas is set in the bleak December night,

*When the low flame whispers and the white ash sinks,
When all about the chamber shadows troop and follow
As drowsier yet the hearth's red watchlight blinks. (1912:267)*

Unlike Poe's poem where the warmth of the fireplace, coziness and velvet curtains contrast with the windy world outside, in 'The Open Door' *the fire lies dead* (1912:267) and the bareness and coldness of the place mirrors the harshness of the weather outside.

The speaker of the poem is a mother who had lost her daughter and still has not reconciled with the sudden loss of her child. Although we suspect that in reality the mother never stopped mourning, the weather of the present night, so very much like in the night when the child disappeared, revives the woman's great anxiety. Fettered with the vivid memories of the ill-fated night, the mother tries to convince herself that her lost daughter has returned to play. She speaks repeatedly to herself (*O listen for her step*, 1912:267) and addresses herself in the monologue of disturbing appeals and questions (*Leave the door upon the latch/ Lean deeper in the settle-corner lest she find you/ Do you hear the hinge of the oaken press behind you?/ Do you hear the light, light foot, the faint sweet laughter?*, 1912:267).

We read a confession if not a passionate delirium of a grieving woman whose despair, inactivity, weariness and withdrawal from life are the direct result of the loss and existential pangs of conscience: she failed as a responsible guardian, unable to protect her child against the dangers of getting lost at night. The poem's title as well as one of the appeals (*Leave the door upon the latch*, 1912:267) draws our attention to the image of the open door provoking a question whether the woman forgot to leave the door opened in the night the girl disappeared.

Alike Coleridge's tortured spirit in 'The Pains of Sleep' Watson's mother feels that *all seemed guilt, remorse or woe* (1816), yet unlike Coleridge's obviously innocent victim of the nightmare, the mother's guilt seems more justified. The text bears the meaning of intense blame, penance and self-mortification, but also of the fatal attraction of the past which binds the woman down as heavy chains. The mother's attempt to assure herself that her daughter has come back and *is* happy then serves as an emotional corollary to anxiety felt in the presence of the ultimate unknown of what really happened that night.

At least three interesting points can be made about the emphasis on silence and the sense of hearing in 'The Open Door'. Firstly, silence is crucially important for the mother so that she can actually *hear* the child coming. If she *hears* her daughter, she *will* open the door and let her beloved child in. That is actually the story that we read about. Mother's reenactment of the scenario of the ill-disposed night clearly suggests her need to cope with the past and the ghost's visit can be interpreted as a wish-fulfillment of an emotionally disturbed woman whose state of mind borders the psychological disorder.

The poem's ambiguous diction provokes us to hesitate what should be accepted as happening on the conscious (rational) level and what on the subconscious

(irrational) level. The ghost may not be necessarily 'present' and the hauntings - a mere fantasy of distress and suffering - take place just in the woman's mind. In other words, hours and days of darkness appear to have culminated in her pouring out the agony of an endless misery and unbearable pain. It is important to note, however, that the speaker's appealing discourse is addressed as much to herself as it is to the poem's listener(s). The woman haunted by her guilt invites to experience and share the sense of loss with her, she asks the listener to cross the door-step and enter the enclosed space of the room which once had failed to provide a shelter for the beloved being. She appeals to hear what she can hear: *Do you hear the hinge of the oaken press behind you?/ Do you hear the light, light foot, the faint sweet laughter?* (1912:267) and her questions infer that she *can* certainly hear the hinge, the steps and the laughter of the child. Of course, one's 'active presence' and 'involvement' are precisely delineated: the listener is cordially welcomed to share the mother's night, yet the tension between the presence and absence is perpetually maintained. You are allowed to be there, on the condition that your presence is like the presence of the invisible ghost. Only through such presence/absence and losses of 'corporeality' may the spiritual gains of consolation and inner peace be achieved.

Secondly, 'hearing' and 'listening' are contrasted with 'seeing' in the text. The woman 'wants' to rely exclusively on the sense of hearing and pleads us to do so too, because she is evidently afraid to 'look' and 'see'. As the saying goes 'seeing is believing'. If she *did look*, the magic might disappear, the daughter would turn into a mere figment of imagination and by seeing 'nothing' the mother would definitely strip herself of the hope to be in the presence of her child again. The mother chooses 'not to look' and keeps her hopes alive, even though by that decision she opts for passive and enduring suffering.

Finally, there is also the woman's urgency to keep the place *per se* as quiet as possible. Paradoxically, it is not the mother or 'us' who should be 'afraid' of the ghost - the daughter's intangible spirit does not seek attention - but, on the contrary, it is the little child who might get scared if anyone is present: *Lean deeper in the settle-corner lest she find you - / Find and grow fearsome, too afraid to stay* (1912:267). For that reason, 'we' must be quiet, 'unseen', 'unheard' so that the child may come and play safely. There is a striking contrast between the 'supposed' safety of the room and the dangers of the outside world the little girl had been exposed to. It cannot be overlooked, however, that these images belong certainly to the past and the present room/ house resembles a much more eerie resting place. Time had obviously stopped for the woman - the daughter's toys are still there untouched - and the only haven she may find is in the safety of her fantasy. The mention of the toys seems fairly significant as it foregrounds the absence of actual physical contact so significant for any warm relationship between a vulnerable child and a caring parent. The mother has evidently suspended the real world and chosen instead to punish herself by incarceration in the dwelling of dust and ashes oppressive closeness and darkness of which bear a strong resemblance to

the lifeless grave. On the other hand, by willing submission to the life in the atmosphere of torture, confinement and horror, she attempts to provide the 'final' safe shelter for the daughter and offer her the house she can 'eternally' rest in, replacing the anonymity and distance of an unknown and shadowy resting place.

'Revenant': A story of longing and consolation

The speaker of 'Revenant' is a ghost who returns to the house it had once lived in. Similarly to 'The Open Door', the sense of space, albeit very different in each poem, is crucial for our reading of the ghost's 'nature' and informs our interpretation of the text.

The poem details the ghost's intimate knowledge of and immersion in the place. He is an unusually receptive spectator to colors, shapes and the aesthetics of the natural as well as the human-made world:

*The lilac hedge, the lupins' spires of blue,
The old embowering trees that shrined the lawns,
The dark recesses of the cloistered yew! (1912:280)*

The ghost seems to have been urged to come back by the pleasant and attractive power of the memories. His wanderings in the spacious garden and in the big, charming house follow the same trajectory as he had used to experience in his mortal life. Seen from this angle, 'Revenant' suggests the reenactment of the past similar to the mother's desire to imitate the happenings of the past night in 'The Open Door'.

It is interesting to observe how the description of the place in the first three stanzas turns into a personal story of a being whose longings and associations with the place are essentially human. Not only 'nice' and optimistically sentimental memories are evoked, but the ghost remembers the multifaceted fullness of the human condition, including the commonplace and somber realities of life:

*The old house was so full of joy and grief,
Of beaconing hopes, of cold, half-imaged fears;
Was ever harvested so strange a sheaf,
Golden with gladness, dun and grey with tears? (1912:280)*

While we are naturally intrigued to know *why* the ghost returns, we never learn the particularities of *his* story. The last two stanzas of the poem shift our attention again, as it becomes clear that the house is presently inhabited by *glad new dwellers by our ancient hearth,/ Who come and go where once we came and went* (1912:280). The ghost, however, does not feel sinister envy towards them, he simply harmlessly desires to 'be' and 'stay' anonymous at the beloved place, like the speaker of Alexander Pope's 'Ode on Solitude':

*Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me dye;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lye. (1700)*

According to Linda K. Hughes,

Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal and Pater's vampiric La Gioconda had made the revenant a defining figure of decadence. It was also a resonant topic for a woman poet whose still-living body had cast off two dead identities, and Graham R. was to return to revenants in several works throughout her career (2005: 95).

Contrary to the depraved nature of a 'typical' revenant, the anonymous speaker of the poem is not a decadent figure after all. He is not a revengeful ghost or a phantom threatening people or causing an alarm but a quiet, modest fellow of sensitive nature who does not hurt and whom we might sympathise with and feel sorry for. Described as *the poor ghost* (1912:280), this vulnerable being does not wish to engage in and he is not to form any closer acquaintance but longs instead to belong permanently where his past is. Although the ghost wishes to remain a constant companion and the house to become his permanent residence, his presence will be literally 'fleeting' and not forcible.

It is interesting to observe how the poet's diction repeatedly draws attention to the kinesthetic imagery. There are several words and expressions which denote movement, such as *migrant birds*, *haunts*, *my pilgrim thoughts go wandering*, *I pass*, *I mount*, *come and go*, and *let the poor ghost pass* (1912:280). The choice of words, including the poem's title throws a particular light on the ghost's character and functions as a deliberate attempt to juxtapose the threat of change and decay with the constancy the ghost seeks. By his 'successful' return, the revenant 'walks' *from* the past (and symbolically *into* the past) and he is content because he finds the things as they used to be. Similarly to the child ghost of 'The Open Door' and the prodigal son, the poem echoes the motif of the return to one's 'final' home, the search for *the permanent end of life's transit* (Hughes 2005:116).

Poems as longings for purpose, identity and meaning

Although my attempt here is not to trace any consistency in Watson's depiction of ghosts, there are certain features which all three 'ghosts' share. As hinted above, the discourse of each poem (re)presents a liminal zone between life and death, the uncanny states in which the boundaries between the dead and the living are erased and in which the past and the present cannot be sharply divided. In all three cases there is an intense longing for a safe place and seeking the union. The characters are wounded, vulnerable and weakened; they all suffer from alienation, experience exclusion and pose a question whether the past can be buried. We find out,

eventually, that their past could not be put firmly out of mind and the consolation they are seeking is not to be found.

It is telling that none of the three 'stories' is 'complete' and their open endings leave us wondering - quite pessimistically - about the possible resolutions to internal suffering which nothing could seemingly assuage. The attempts to exorcise the past are evidently unsuccessful. Ghosts in the studied poems are disquieting phenomena who transcend the space-time continuum and albeit having distinctive personalities, they clearly share the longings for purpose, identity and meaning. All ghosts appear to be unable to rest for certain reasons, something has gone wrong in the past and their order of life has been disturbed. It is true that they do not provoke horrific suspense or terror, but they express sad and melancholic longings for the past.

The purpose of their present existence is determined by obtaining consolation and comfort. In 'The Prodigal Son', the quest for purpose is related to the man's 'resuscitation' of dead relationships. In 'The Open Door', it is the loss of the daughter whose corpse lies at the unknown place and her 'summoning' becomes the crux of mother's life. In 'Revenant', the ghost seeks consolation in the return to his beloved house. In this case, the sense and experience of the place and the past he had been longing for are also shaped by former human relationships, *full of joy and grief* (1912:280).

The ghosts' identities are firmly situated in the context of their quests for purpose. They do not ask explicit ontological questions about the nature of being, existence and reality and their personality traits are firmly rooted in the past. While 'The Open Door' presents a deep inward conflict of a bereaving and desolate mother and can be read as a study of paralysis, a psychological study of obsession *par excellence*, two other analysed texts belong to the so called posthumous poetry the speakers of which are ghosts. Interestingly, their identity is revealed at the very end which only further highlights the juxtaposition of the world of the mortal man and the world of the spirits. Without mentioning the word 'ghost', the poems might well be about mortal men. The humanity of ghosts is indeed very prominent and pronounced.

While I understand purpose as the 'concrete' representation of ghosts' motivation, meaning is purely metaphysical and super-personal. As far as this aspect is concerned, what truly matters for the ghosts and motivation which activates them are both related to redemption of individual beings. Their meaningful existence is primarily regulated by their fragmented, displaced and incomplete selves. Incompleteness is of inner nature, generated by emotional losses they suffer from. Unless these wounds of the heart are healed, the process of finding the spiritual peace will never take place.

When one reads poetry about ghosts, it becomes evident that there are as many unique individuals in the world of the shadows as there are in the world of the living. We encounter beautiful, friendly and faithful spirits as well as the wicked, threatening and fearful ones, visually attractive and active provocateurs as well as

slightly mundane and passive beings. Some of them remain silent presences, while others address us their requests and pleas. Ghost poetry gives voices to these invisible and immaterial beings and teaches us how to be perceptive of that which is not. The texts are endowed with a particular spirituality in which the voices of bliss often merge with those of damnation. What the studied poems have in common is the tension between the real and the unreal, the natural versus the supernatural, and the mundane versus the fantastic. It is the poetry in which the living and the dead cohabit. In Watson's texts, the poet becomes the transmitter between the living and the dead and provides the vocal chords for them.

Epilogue

When Rosamund Marriott Watson died in 1911, her husband was so devastated that *he could not attend the funeral nor did he ever visit her grave* (Hughes 2005:304). Two years after his beloved wife's death, Marriott Watson published *an account of his ongoing relationship with Rosamund through a medium* (Hughes 2005:312). The sessions based on automatic writing with Mrs. Norman and Rosamund's 'messages' from the beyond were 'successful' and brought Watson desired consolation so that he could write convincingly: *I have no shadow of doubt that my wife survives in another state, and that she has communicated to me through the automatic writing of Mrs. Norman* (Watson 1913:171). It is indeed noticeable how the *actual* life world mirrored the imaginary (and vice versa) in this case and how the fictional landscapes of Rosamund's imagination inhabited by ghosts 'materialized' after her death in the husband's effort to get in touch with his love.

While we may say that the only time the ghosts possess is the past and the only 'appropriate' space for them is a grave, their artistic representations constantly remind us of their *actual* presence and significance. Although ghosts primarily represent a diminished and displaced sense of the self, their frequent 'appearance' in verbal art becomes the evidence that they embody *humanity* in a very concrete, thought-provoking and sometimes even challenging way.

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DIE REFORMATION IN DEM EHEMALIGEN KREIS RADOM IM 16. UND 17. JAHRHUNDERT

Die Bezeichnung „Region Radom“ ist ein historischer Begriff, der sich auf das Gebiet des ehemaligen Kreises Radom bezieht. Seine Grenzen setzen: die Linie Nowe Miasto an der Pilica, Głowaczów, der Flusslauf der Radomka, Wisła, Kamienna, Garb Gielniowski und der Niederflusslauf der Drzewiczka. An den Rändern der Region liegen also solche Ortschaften wie: Ryczywół, Kozienice, Sieciechów, Janowiec, Solec, Bałtów, Brody Iłżeckie, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Przysucha, Klwów. In der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts existierten auf diesem Territorium 613 Ansiedlungen, darunter 22 Städte, darunter 5 Städte mit einer Bevölkerungsrate von mehr als 1000 Menschen – d.h. Kozienice, Radom, Zwoleń, Iłża und Szydłowiec. Ihre Gesamtfläche betrug damals 5241 km².

Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung dieser dicht bewaldeten Gebiete mit Übergewicht von unfruchtbaren Böden, wo sich der Radomer Urwald (ein Übergangsgebiet zwischen Klempolen und Masowien) ausstreckte, wurde von den zahlreichen fremden vernichtenden Einfällen gehemmt. Die Folge war eine Besiedelungsverzögerung auf diesem Territorium, denn am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts gehörten diese Gebiete zu den schwach besiedelten – von ca. 10 bis 15 Menschen pro 1km² (Guldon/Zieliński 1995:8). Trotzdem fand hier die Reformation eine große Schar von Befürwortern, denn Radom bildete als eine alte Burg und ein Kommunikationsknotenpunkt schon ab dem frühen Mittelalter ein wichtiges Verwaltungszentrum. Den Durchfluss von den „religiösen Neuigkeiten“ begünstigte seine geografische Lage in der Nähe von den bedeutenden Nord- Süd- und Ost-West-Handelswegen. Eben dank dem hier verlaufenden Osthandelsweg verweilten die zwischen Krakau und Vilna reisenden Monarchen von der Jagiellonen-Dynastie sowie ihre Familienmitglieder oft auf dem Radomer Schloss (Piątkowski 2000:33).

Eine sehr wichtige Rolle bei der Wahrnehmung der neuen Ideen spielte in dieser Hinsicht der Hof vom König Zygmunt August, der sich häufig in der Kreishauptstadt aufhielt und dessen Gesellschaft immer der Reformation gegenüber günstig war. Der Evangeliumverbreiter im Kreis Radom war angeblich die zu den Höflingen des Königs gehörende Familie Wąsowicz, die dafür von Andrzej Trzeciecki in seiner „Elegie vom wachsenden Protestantismus in Polen“ („Elegia o wzroście protestantyzmu w Polsce“) aus dem Jahr 1556 gelobt wurde. Bei der Verbreitung des Protestantismus zeichnete sich bedeutend das an dem durch Radom verlaufenden Thorn-Lemberg-Handelsweg gelegene Opatów aus, das

noch im 17. Jahrhundert eine protestantische Stütze war. Der durch verschiedene Verwandtschaften mit dem Lubliner und Sandomierzer Adel verbundene Adel aus Radom besuchte hier die Woiwodschaftstage (Urban 1966:3). Die Reformationsideen drangen in den Kreis Radom auch aus dem Nordteil der Woiwodschaft Krakau ein, wo sie relativ früh, denn schon in den 20er Jahren des 16. Jahrhunderts, auftauchten – zuerst unter den deutschen Patriziern in Krakau und anschließend unter der Universitätsjugend, wozu auch der aus der Region Radom stammende Professor Jakub aus Ilża beitrug (Kaczor 1996:126).

Es darf nicht außer Acht gelassen werden, dass die ersten Leiter der frühen polnischen Reformation eben aus der Region Radom stammten. Sie wirkten dennoch außerhalb ihrer Grenzen: Jakub aus Ilża in Kleinpolen und Jan Seklucjan in Großpolen. Jakub aus Ilża (Zwolski 1988:80) (1490-1542) war der erste offensichtliche Macher und Verbreiter der reformatorischen Bewegung und zugleich einer der hervorragendsten Vertreter der Reformation auf dem polnischen Territorium. Er studierte an der Krakauer Akademie, wo er 1516 Magister der freien Künste, Dozent und ordentlicher Professor wurde. Henryk Barycz (1935:102) kommentiert:

Er hätte zweifellos den Dokortitel erlangt und den Platz in der Reihe seiner Kollegen – außerordentlichen Professoren bekommen, wenn er nicht die neuen religiösen Strömungen kennen gelernt hätte und unter ihrem Einfluss zu einem unerschrockenen Apostel und Kämpfer des neuen Glaubens geworden wäre.

Beschenkt mit einer untadeligen Aussprache und ausgezeichnet gebildet, wofür er von Modrzewski und Tomicki gelobt wurde, trat er voller Mut in der St.-Stephanuskirche auf, indem er die bisherige kirchliche Ordnung in Frage stellte und angriff. Weiter organisierte er einen Kreis von Anhängern Luthers in Krakau, zu dem Jan und Andrzej Trzecieski, Bernard Wojewódka, Jakub Przyłuski und Mikołaj Rej gehörten (Wojak 1977:23). In seinen Anschaungen war er eher ein linksorthodoxer Lutheraner, d.h. er zog die körperliche Arbeit den theologischen Erwägungen vor (Urban 1991:14). Als 1528 vor dem bischöflichen Strafgericht gegen ihn ein Prozess geführt wurde, wo man ihm Ketzerei vorwarf, leugnete er alles. Zum zweiten Mal wurde er 1534 verklagt, verteidigte aber weiter eifrig seine Ansichten, die dennoch für „unrechtmäßig und ketzerisch“ erklärt wurden. In die Enge getrieben verpflichtete er sich in einem vom Bischof festgelegten Termin, seine Ansichten zu widerrufen und die lutheranischen Regeln abzuschwören. Es sollte vor der ganzen Universität, die sich in der Bischofskurie sammelte, stattfinden. Jakub meldete sich jedoch zum gekündigten Termin nicht und flüchtete nach Breslau. Daher wurde er von der römischen Kirche als Ketzer verbannt, versuchte aber trotzdem den neuen Glauben weiter zu verbreiten, indem er im ganzen Land eine Sammlung seiner auf Polnisch geschriebenen Predigten versandte (Barycz 1935:103).

Nach Wacław Urbans Forschungen starb er 1555 in Tarnowskie Góry in Schlesien, wo er den Rest seines Lebens verbrachte. Jakub aus Hża (genannt „Hża”) wurde noch um die Wende des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts der erste Held der polnischen Reformation genannt (Urban 1991:15). Auch Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski schätzte seinen Beitrag hoch, indem er Jakub als einen Pionier der Reformationsbewegung in Polen vorstellte (Zwolski 1988:81). Trotz der Beseitigung des Hża aus Krakau ist es der Katholischen Kirche nicht gelungen, seine Saat zu zerstören, wovon die Tatsache zeugt, dass die Mehrheit wichtiger Reformationsmacher an der Krakauer Akademie gerade zur Zeit seiner Aktivität studierte, d.h. in den Jahren 1528-1535. Auf diese Art und Weise gab es da unter anderen soche Schüler Hžas wie: Jan und Andrzej Trzeciecki, Szymon Zacjusz (Żak) aus Proszowice, Jan (Koźmińczyk) aus Koźmin, Wawrzyniec Discordia (Nieżgoda) aus Przasnysz, Abraham Kulwiec, Feliks Cruciger (Krzyżak), Marcin Glossa aus Wąchock, Marcin Kurek aus Proszowice, Marcin aus Opoczno, Andrzej Samuel und Mikołaj Rej (Barycz 1935:105). Jakub übte jedoch keine große Auswirkung auf die Jagiellonen-Akademie aus, die nie als ein reformatorischer Pionier Polens galt, im Gegensatz zu den größten Universitäten in der Schweiz und in Sachsen.

Jan Seklucjan (um 1510-1578) war Theologe und Schriftsteller, aber vor allem ein geschickter Herausgeber, dank dessen Initiative die Stadt Königsberg, durch eine reichliche Kolportage der religiösen Literatur, zum Zentrum der Reformation wurde, das auf den Jagiellonen-Staat ausstrahlte (Kosman 1980:15). Fälschlicherweise wurde ihm die Herkunft aus Bydgoszcz zugeschrieben, was der Autor seiner ausführlichen Monographie, I. Warmiński, bewiesen und der Philologe Sprachwissenschaftler Stanisław Rospond bestätigt hat. Auch die örtliche Analyse seines Namens weist deutlich auf seine Herkunft in Siekluki, einem Dorf bei Radom hin. Diese Abstammung bestätigen auch die charakteristischen Merkmale der Mundart in seinen Schriften (Rospond 1949: 7). 1536 fing Seklucjan das Studium an der nicht weit von Wittenberg entfernten Leipziger Universität an, wo er „baccalaureat artium“, d.h. den ersten Universitätsgrad erlangte. Dort wurde er für die reformatorische Idee gewonnen, was sofort nach seiner Ankunft in Posen deutlich wurde. Hier wurde er Anfang 1539 Zollsreiber und zugleich als ein ungewöhnlich aktiver Prediger, Übersetzer, Drucker, Kolporter und Buchhändler berühmt (Warmiński 1906:82). So äußerte sich Pfarrer I. Warmiński (1906:7):

Die Person und Aktivität von Seklucjan steht in einer überaus engen Verbindung zu den Anfängen der Reformation in Großpolen. Er trug dazu im großen Maße bei, dass der Entzündungsherd des neuen Glaubens, der aus Deutschland nach Posen von Hagendorf gebracht wurde, sich immer weiter glühend ausbreitete und endlich zu Beginn der Herrschaftszeit von Zygmunt August mit einer hellen Flamme in die Höhe schoss und den ganzen Westteil des Landes umfasste.

Ins Bewusstsein der kirchlichen Macht gelangte die Besorgnis, dass Seklucjan Initiator der Reformationsbewegungen in Posen sei, wofür er vom Posener Bischof Sebastian Branicki vor das Strafgericht gestellt wurde (Warmiński 1906:45). Das Urteil, dank der Fürsprache von Seklucjans guten Freunden – der Magnatenfamilie Górek zwar gelindert, gebot ihm die „ketzerischen Fehler“ feierlich und öffentlich zu widerrufen und abzuschwören, was Seklucjan trotz seinen Versprechungen nicht tat, indem er auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise diese Widerrufung mied und sich um sie drückte (Warmiński 1906:64). Solche Konsequenzen wie Ausschluss aus der Kirche, Beschlagnahme seines Vermögens oder eine lebenslängliche Haftstrafe zwangen ihn zur Flucht. Deshalb nutzte er den Zwischenaufenthalt des Herzog Albrechts bei dem Posener Burgvogt Andrzej Górka aus und entkam am 18. November 1543 nach Königsberg (Warmiński 1906:77). Immerhin nicht lange danach kehrte er ins Land zurück, überzeugt davon, dass er die Möglichkeit bekäme, von seinen Vorwürfen vor dem König aufgrund des von den Landtagsabgeordneten im Landtag in Piotrków Trybunalski am 25. Januar 1544 erlangten Geleitbriefes entlastet zu werden. Leider wurde er vom König in Audienz nicht empfangen (Wojak 1977:34). Nach diesem Ereignis verweilte Seklucjan eine Zeit lang in Polen in einem Versteck, wo er sein Werk „Bekenntnis“ („Wyznanie“) schrieb, das die erste ausführliche Grundlage und Auslegung des polnischen Protestantismus war (Warmiński 1906:84). Nachdem er das Werk herausgegeben hatte, war er gezwungen, wieder eine Unterkunft in Königsberg zu suchen, wo er an der Königsberger Akademie zu studieren anfang und zugleich Prediger für die dort wohnende polnische Exilbevölkerung wurde, wofür er vom Herzog Albrecht ein niedriges Gehalt bekam (Warmiński 1906:171). Er entwickelte dort aber vor allem eine breite schriftstellerische Aktivität und gab viele Bücher und andere Schriften heraus, was sich in Form von den ersten Werken in polnischer Sprache niederschlug und den anderen reformatorischen sowie katholischen Verlegern und Herausgebern ein Beispiel gab. Das größte Verdienst Seklucjans ist aber die Herausgabe der ersten gedruckten polnischen Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments 1553 (die Übersetzung von Stanisław Murzynowski) (Wojak 1977:156). Für die Reformationsanhänger, dem Prinzip der Autorität vom Gotteswort im Bereich der Lehre und des christlichen Lebens gemäß, war die Bibelübersetzung in die Landessprache der einzig richtige Weg zur Kirchenerneuerung.

Obwohl die aus der Region Radom stammenden Pioniere der Reformation schon in den 20er und 30er Jahren agierten, hatte die eigentliche Entwicklung des Protestantismus im Kreis Radom ihre Blüte erst Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts. Das typische Zeichen des Kirchenzerfalls in dieser Zeit waren die weltlichen und meistens überhaupt nicht in ihren Pfarrgemeinden residierenden Pfarrer. Eine solche Situation fand auch in Zwoleń (um 1570) statt, wo ein seinen Pfarrkindern völlig unbekannter Poet, Jan Kochanowski, Pfarrer war. Er wankte aber zwischen dem Katholizismus und dem Protestantismus, denn er wollte sich nie den Zwängen ergeben, die priesterliche Ordination anzunehmen, verzichtete endlich um 1575 auf die geistlichen Profite und heiratete eine „aufgeklärte Frau“ – die Calvinistin

Dorota Podlowska (Piątkowski/Pietrzyk 2002:50). Die Kirche in Zwoleń war inzwischen vernachlässigt und der hier arbeitende Vikar Stanisław aus Bartodzieje *zeugte mit irgendeiner Frau Kinder* (Urban 1991:4). Ähnlich wie in ganz Polen spielte auch in der Region Radom bei der Reformationsverbreitung der Interessenkonflikt zwischen den Adligen und den Geistlichen eine große Rolle. Aus diesem Grund wurde hier der Calvinismus zum dominierenden Bekenntnis. Wenn man die Tatsache nicht aus den Augen verliert, dass der Adels- und Magnatenlandbesitz über 60% der Kreisfläche ausmachte, wird der Erfolg der reformatorischen Bewegung auf diesem Gebiet deutlich (Guldon/Zieliński 1995:8). In den 50er und 60er Jahren des 16. Jahrhunderts begannen hier massenweise die ersten kalvinischen Kirchengemeinden zu entstehen. Der Adel nutzte das Patronatsrecht und die ihn schützenden Privilegien und beseitigte aus den Kirchen Bilder und Skulpturen. Anstelle von katholischen Heiligen Messen organisierte man protestantische Gottesdienste, zu denen Gebete, Lieder, Bibellesen und -erwägen zählten (Pasek 1995:51). Dementgegen scheint es merkwürdig, dass in der bischöflichen Visitation im Dekanat Radom 1570 nur eine geringe Zahl der Protestanten erwähnt wurde. Neben den lakonischen Kommentaren zum Verhalten der sich um die Zehntenzahlung und Festenbeachtung drückenden Adligen, die *meinen, dass sie alles dürfen*, wurden dort als Ketzer beim Namen nur ein gewisser Herr Przykuleja aus der Pfarrei Skaryszew, Łukasz Grochowski aus der Pfarrei Zwoleń und die Frau von Walenty Dzik aus der Pfarrei Kowala Stępcina angeführt (Urban 1991:43).

Wie Jan Luboński (1907:24) angibt:

Die Radomer Gegend der damaligen Epoche sollte nach Commendoni völlig katholisch gewesen sein. Diese Behauptung scheint aber fragwürdig, denn der Kammerherr von Łęczyce – Stanisław Lasocki, Fürsprecher der hiesigen Protestanten versuchte, Commendoni entgegen, 1559 im Namen der Sandomierzer und Radomer Ritterschaft den König Zygmunt August zu überzeugen, dass die Radomer Umgebung voll von den Bekennern des neuen Glaubens ist und die Protestanten sogar ihren eigenen Distrikt Radom haben.

Die erste protestantische Kirchengemeinde in dieser Region war höchstwahrscheinlich die Gemeinde in Klwów, die von einem der ersten aus dem Adel stammenden kleinpolnischen Protestanten, dem Lubliner Burgvogt, Stanisław Zbąski, 1550 gegründet wurde. Diese kalvinische Gemeinde existierte gewiss ein paar Jahrzehnte, aber die genauen Daten ihres Bestehens sind nicht vorhanden (Merczyng 1904:56). Vor dem Jahr 1559 entstand auch eine kalvinische Gemeinde in Przytyk (Kaczor 1996:130), von den Söhnen Stanisław Podlowskis, dem Schwiegervater von Jan Kochanowski, gegründet. Ihr Minister (kalvinischer Seelsorger) war der aus Schlesien stammende, ehemalige katholische Pfarrer Daniel Bieliński. Die Podlowskis gründeten auch andere Gemeinden, u.a. um

1560 in Skrzyńsk und 1565 in Wrzos (Urban 1991:9). Der Minister dieser Gemeinde war Wojciech Rzymiski, dann Wojciech Wołdanowski, 1570 vom Generalkonzil in Sandomierz zum Pastor ernannt (Kaczor 1996:130). Um 1560 entstand mithilfe des Sandomierzer Landrates Andrzej Firlej an der Stelle der katholischen Kirche die Gemeinde in Zdziechów. Die Familie Zbąski gründete die Gemeinde in Goryń und, nach Jedlińsk brachten den Protestantismus die Erben Jedlińskis und ihre aus Rotrussland stammenden Verwandten – Stanisław und Maciej Bal, die von dem arianischen Schriftsteller Erazm Otwinowski in die Schar der christlichen Helden gerechnet wurden (Merczyng: 1904:55).

Jedlińsk, dessen Patronen die Jedlińskis und im 17. Jahrhundert nach ihnen erbenden Górajskis waren, verdient hier zweifellos eine besondere Behandlung, denn es war der lebhafteste protestantische Ort in der Region. Ein beträchtlicher Teil des Bürgertums konvertierte hier nämlich zum Calvinismus und die in Jedlińsk ansässigen Schotten, die die Möglichkeit nutzten, ungebunden an den kalvinischen religiösen Riten teilzunehmen, stifteten für die Gemeinde 1619 die bis heute erhalten gebliebene Glocke als Ausdruck ihrer Dankbarkeit für die hier herrschende Konfessionsfreiheit (Kaczor 1996:131). Bei der Gemeinde wirkte die einzige im Kreis Radom protestantische Oberschule, die so genannte „Akademie“, die sowohl die adlige, als auch die plebejische Jugend besuchen konnte. Sie stellte, nach Pfarrer Wiśniewski, ein großes Gebäude in der Nähe von der Kirche dar (Wiśniewski 1911:83). Die Zahl der sich hier bildenden Jungen betrug ca. 50. Unter den adligen Schülern trifft man 1611 die Namen Podlodowski, Suligostowski und Brzozowski (Kaczor 1996:131). 1617 wurde der schlesische Poet Andreas Calagius Rektor der Akademie. Er bekam dafür von Frau Górajka ein sicheres Gehalt in der Höhe von 20 Zloty, außerdem stand ihm ein Haus mit einem Garten zur Verfügung. Der Präzeptor war sein Schüler Elias Netwig, der in seinem „musaeum“ – einer Stätte für intellektuelle Arbeit in Jedlanka, einem anderthalb Kilometer von Jedlińsk entfernten Dorf, wohnte. In der Jedlińsker Schule entstand 1589 die für die Zwecke der damaligen Universitäten gedruckte Zeichnung des Weltallschemas – „piramida mirabilis mundi“, die von den schöpferischen Ambitionen der Akademie zeugt (Wiśniewski 1911:84). Hohe Anforderungen stellte man an die hier verwaltenden Minister, die gewöhnlich missraten waren. Der erste von ihnen, der seine Pflichten ab 1561 tat, der Italiener Giorgio Niger, war verhasst und wurde vom Volk getötet. Auch die zwei nächsten Minister verließen die Stadt in Schande: 1611 wurde Mikołaj Orlicz um das Amt gebracht, denn er tolerierte die Aufsehen erregenden sexuellen Affären seiner Gattin. 1617 wurde auch vom Posten wegen schlechten Rufes Jakub Biskupski beseitigt.

Nach 1561 entstand die Gemeinde in Szydłowiec, gegründet vom Szydłowiecer Landbesitzer, dem Grafen Mikołaj Radziwiłł dem Schwarzen. Ihr Minister war Adam Petri (Kaczor 1996:134). Ungefähr zu derselben Zeit entstand die Gemeinde in Lipsko, gestiftet von der Familie Oleśnicki und die Gemeinde in Siemno – von Sebastian Sienieński. Diese Gemeinde überlebte mit Sicherheit bis zu den 20er

Jahren des 17. Jahrhunderts, denn es ist eine Information vorhanden, dass 1624 hier Paweł Bochnicki Pastor war. Wahrscheinlich existierte diese Gemeinde viel länger und am längsten von allen Kirchengemeinden der Region, und zwar möglich, dass noch bis Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts, als sie unter Bestrebungen vom örtlichen Pfarrer Szembek und dem Bischof Załuski den Katholiken wieder abgegeben wurde (Urban 1991:13). Zur Wende des 16. und des 17. Jahrhunderts funktionierten hier jedoch nebeneinander zwei Pfarreien: die katholische und die kalvinische. Angeblich gab es auch eine kalvinische Kirchengemeinde in Czarnocin (Gemeinde Radzanów, Pfarrei Bukowno), gegründet in den 60er Jahren vom Erben Mikołaj Szpot, und die Gemeinde in Potkan, gegründet in den 60-70 er Jahren vom Landbesitzer Maciej Szymonowicz (Kaczor 1996:131). Später, denn 1589 entstand die Gemeinde in Oleksów, wo Jan Gniewosz den Vikar Wojciech aus Konice von seinem Amt enthob und an seine Stelle einen kalvinischen Minister einführte (Urban 1991:7). Bis Mitte des Jahres 1595 tat hier seine Seelsorgerpflichten Pfarrer Paweł Obrębski, dann Piotr Milicius, Jan Cluencius und Jakub Dzierżanowski. Später, um 1628, entstand die Gemeinde in Suligostów (Pfarrei Klwów), gegründet gewiss von der Familie Suligostowski. Pfarrer Walenty Gracjan Krański war hier Pastor, nach ihm Pfarrer Daniel Rabonius (Merczyng 1904:76). Man weiß auch von der Gemeinde in Gutów und in Zakrzów, die wahrscheinlich von Podlowski gestiftet wurden. Jan Luboński erwähnt unter den „Kirchen der helvetischen Konfessionen“ auch die Gemeinden in Jasionów, Jasionno, Radzanów, Solec und Ryki (Luboński 1907:25). Dennoch sind keine Daten vorhanden, die auf die Existenz einer protestantischen Kirchengemeinde in Radom hinweisen würden. Es sollte hier aber betont werden, dass Radom zu jener Zeit eine Kleinstadt war mit einer vergleichbaren Bevölkerungszahl wie die benachbarten Städte Szydłowiec, Zwoleń und Skaryszew (Jędrzejewicz 1961:14). Trotz mangelnder Informationen über die hiesige Gemeinde hatte diese Stadt starke Verbindungen mit dem Protestantismus, denn schon im Juni 1559 trat hier der Łęczyer Kammerherr Stanisław Lasocki im Namen der ganzen Ritterschaft der Kreise Radom und Sandomierz mit einer Rede vor dem König auf, in der er die Privilegien der katholischen Geistlichen scharf kritisierte. Die Quellen beschreiben unterschiedliche ökonomische Streitigkeiten zwischen dem Bürgertum und den Geistlichen, z.B. die Vertreibung der Bernhardinerinnen aus dem Kloster von einem gewissen Radomer Bürger Stanisław 1568(Kaczor 1996:132). In der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jhs. trifft man unter den Radomer Landräten auf solche eifrigen Reformationsanhänger wie der Freund von Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski – Jan Lutomirski, der Schwiegervater von Jan Kochanowski aus Czarnolas – Grzegorz Podlowski oder der Woiwode von Rawa – Stanisław Gostomski. Die Anregung dazu konnte für sie das zu dieser Zeit herausgegebene Werk von Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski „O naprawie Rzeczypospolitej“ sein, nach dessen Prinzipien die Kirchenreformation eine wichtige Voraussetzung für das Staatsreformenprogramm sein sollte (Wojak 1977:76). Der oben erwähnte Landrat Gostomski, eifriger Bekenner des Calvinismus, war Initiator von zwei Kongressen der polnischen

Andersgläubigen in Radom im September 1591 und im Februar 1592 und unternahm noch direkt vor seinem Tod Anstrengungen um die Einberufung des dritten Kongresses, der im Februar 1599 stattfinden sollte (Urban 1991:8). Ihr Zweck war die innere Vereinigung der reformierten Gemeinden hinsichtlich der schlechten Lage, in der sich alle polnischen Protestanten befanden. Die Zusammenkunft der Protestanten in Radom im September 1591 war eine der wichtigsten Manifestationen der Adligen gegen die konfessionelle Intoleranz. Den direkten Impuls aber gab dem Kongress die Verschwörung in Krakau am 23. Mai 1591, wo eines der Krakauer kalvinischen Kirchengebäude geplündert und verbrannt wurde. Während der Tagungen in dem Radomer Schloss wurde beschlossen, eine Vertretung auf den königlichen Hof zu schicken, um vor dem König Zygmunt III. Wasa eine Bestrafung der Zerstörer von protestantischen Kirchen zu fordern und ihn an die Notwendigkeit des friedlichen Zusammenlebens aller Gläubigen von verschiedenen Religionen zu erinnern (Urban 1991:18). Am 2. Februar 1592 fand hingegen, so Luboński, in Radom ein Kongress der Protestanten mit dem Ziel statt, den Warschauer Beschluss über die Konfessionsgleichwertigkeit aus dem Jahr 1573 zu erneuern (Wiśniewski 1911:196).

So wie in ganz Polen, so auch in der Region Radom erfasste die Reformation bis zur Hälfte des 16. Jhs. das Bürgertum und den Adel. Und als im dritten Viertel des Jahrhunderts man glauben konnte, dass sie die ganze Gesellschaft „erreicht“ und ihr alle Gesellschaftsstände folgen werden, kam es unversehens zu einer Spaltung in der kalvinischen Kirche (Tazbir 1996:21). Obwohl der Antitrinitarismus in Polen bisher vereinzelt war, gelang es ihm, diesen Wunsch zu streichen und wie es sich später herausstellte – für immer. Der Auslöser dieses Missstandes waren Arianer, die nach ihrem Gottesverständnis das Dogma von der Dreieinigkeit Gottes, das auf dem Konzil in Nicäa 325 beschlossen wurde, nicht anerkannten oder als Irrlehre bezeichneten. Diese Bewegung brachte zahlreiche Konflikte im Rahmen des ganzen Protestantismus in Gang und trug in hohem Maße zur Abschwächung und im Endeffekt zum Untergang der Reformation in Polen bei (Kosman 1980:39). Der Hauptvertreter der Arianer in der Region Radom war Daniel Bieliński, der ehemalige kalvinische Minister der Kirchengemeinde in Przytyk, Autor von gesellschaftlichen Publikationen, die bezüglich ihrer allzu radikalen Weltanschauungen von den Vertretern aller Konfessionen abgelehnt und zerstört wurden. Höchstwahrscheinlich führte er den Wechsel der Kirchengemeinde in Szydłowiec von kalvinisch zu arianisch herbei. Die Kirchengemeinden von den so genannten „Polnischen Brüdern“ – eines arianischen Zweiges – entstanden in Skrzyńsk, Szydłowiec, Wsola und Owadów, das zur Tochter und später zur Enkelin von Jan Kochanowski gehörte. Man weiß nichts Genaues von den arianischen Einflüssen in Jedlińsk. W. Urban verweist hier auf eine Kirchengemeinde der Polnischen Brüder (Urban 1991:9). Jan Wierusz Kowalski schließt andererseits irgendwelche arianische Einflüsse in der Jedlińsker Akademie aus (Kowalski 1986:24). Die hiesige Kirche konnte im Besitz der Polnischen Brüder jedoch nicht länger als bis 1600 bleiben, als der Calvinist Stefan

Czarnota zum Minister der Kirche ernannt wurde. Das Missverständnis, dass Jedlińsk das arianische Zentrum dieser Region gewesen sei, ist darauf zurückzuführen, dass die Leute die Calvinisten umgangssprachlich falsch Arianer nannten. Die Namenmischung resultierte aus der Ignoranz gegenüber den reformierten Konfessionen, denn für die Katholiken waren alle Nichtkatholiken Abtrünnige, egal ob Calvinisten oder Arianer (Kosman 1980:16).

Obwohl sich im Kreis Radom keine Jesuiten ansiedelten oder auch es zu keinen religiösen Unruhen kam, verursachten die Zwiste innerhalb der Reformationskirchen, dass viele Protestanten schon Ende des 16. Jhs. begannen, zum Katholizismus zurückzukehren (Urban 1991:12). Die Wende des 16. und des 17. Jhs. zeigt eine erkennbare Neige der Radomer Reformation (Merczyng 1904:10). Schon um 1570 stellten die Radziwiłłs in Szydłowiec die katholischen Messen wieder her und Ende des 17. Jhs. wurde in Janowiec der Katholizismus wieder zum Hauptbekenntnis durch Mikołaj Mniszek und Stanisław Tarło. In Lipsko gab Mikołaj Oleśnicki, der spätere Burgvogt in Radom, den Calvinismus auf und begann eine katholische Kirche zu bauen. In Przytyk konvertierten die Podlodowskis teilweise zur römischen Kirche zurück. Die restlichen protestantischen Gemeinden dieser Region fielen am Anfang des 17. Jhs. In den Jahren 1600-1603 verschwanden die Gemeinden in Goryń, Oleksów, Wrzos und Gutowo (Urban 1991:12). Die kalvinische Kirche in Jedlińsk hatte ihr Ende 1630, denn der Erbe von Jedlińsk, der Sandomierzer Burgvogt und Schwiegersohn von Jan Kochanowski – Stanisław Witkowski gab eben dieses Jahr die Kirche den Katholiken zurück. Ab diesem Moment wurde die Jedlińsker Akademie auf katholische Art und Weise regiert und gegenüber den Reformationsanhängern und gegenüber den hier ansässigen Schotten wurden entsprechende Propagandamaßnahmen getroffen. Der Pfarrer Michał Dmowski berief 1632 zusammen mit dem Stifthern Witowski die St.-Anna-Brüderschaft zur Bekämpfung der Reformation ein. Alle diese Bestrebungen führten zu großen Ergebnissen in Form von allmählichen Bekehrungen zum Katholizismus, bis sich schließlich zwischen 1647 und 1650 der letzte hiesige Protestant bekehrte – der schottische Kaufmann Kilian Willim (Wiśniewski 1911:83). Nach dem Untergang der Jedlińsker Gemeinde blieben in der Region nur 3 Kirchen erhalten, dennoch überdauerten auch diese nicht lange: 1637 fiel die Kirche in Jankowice und 1651 die Kirche in Suligostów (Pfarrei Klwów) (Urban 1991:13). Am längsten, denn bis zur Hälfte des 18. Jhs. überlebte angeblich die Gemeinde in Siemno.

Mitte des 18. Jhs. waren die Protestanten vereinzelt und verstreut. Eine Ausnahme bildete hier die Ortschaft Kozienice, wo eine beträchtliche Zahl von Calvinisten sowie Lutheranern wohnte. Angeblich existierte hier eine zahlreiche Gruppe von Mitgliedern der evangelisch-augsburgischen Kirche, darunter gab es ökonomische Beamte und die hier stationierenden sächsischen Soldaten. Zu den Ausnahmen gehörte auch eine lutheranische Gemeinschaft in Przysucha, wo Anfang des 18. Jhs. sich viele Handwerker deutscher Herkunft ansiedelten, vor allem Schmiede und Waffenhersteller. Sie hatten hier 39 Besitztümer. Aus der hier

ansässigen Familie stammte der prominente Ethnograph, Musiker und Komponist Oskar Kolberg. Die Evangelischen aus Przysucha unterlagen wahrscheinlich einer allmählichen Assimilierung, indem sie als Konfessionsgruppe in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jhs. verschwanden. Eine ziemlich große Ansammlung von Lutheranern gab es auch in Drzewica bei Przysucha (Kaczor 1996:142). Nicht leicht fiel es der römischen Kirche in Szydłowiec, die Protestanten zu beseitigen, denn man findet noch in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jhs. in der Szydłowiecer Pfarrei die so genannten „Akatholiken“. In den Kirchenbüchern wurde jeder Fall einer Konversion als ein besonderes Ereignis verzeichnet (Guldon/Zieliński 1994:46).

In der Zeit der größten Reformationsentwicklung, d.h. in den 70er Jahren des 16. Jhs., gab es im Kreis Radom über 20 protestantische Kirchengemeinden. Sie bildeten sozusagen eine Konfessionsinsel in den Tälern der Radomka und Drzewiczka, wo die meisten von ihnen lebten: vom Osten – Goryń, Jedlińsk, Gutowo, Przytyk, Żakrzów, Zdziechów, Wrzos, Potkanna, Skrzyńsko, Suligostów, Klwów und noch ein paar andere Gemeinden, die zum Kreis Opoczno gehörten. Von den Gebieten, wo sich die Reformation in Klempolen entwickelte, waren sie mit den königlichen und bischöflichen Landbesitztümern abgegrenzt. Der Rest war stellenweise an der Weichsel verstreut (Sienno, Lipsko, Janowiec) (Urban 1991:14). Der Radomer Protestantismus spielte jedoch keine große Rolle in der polnischen Reformationsbewegung und hatte außerdem keinen erkennbaren Einfluss auf die Entwicklungsrichtung der Reformation in Klempolen, denn die wichtigsten Entschlüsse, die eine Bedeutung für ihr Schicksal hatten, wurden außerhalb des Kreises Radom gefasst. Ein Ende der Entwicklung dieses Bekenntnisses besiegelte hier, so wie in ganz Polen, der Zwiespalt in der kalvinischen Kirche. Die Radomer Reformation konnte der Probe nicht standhalten, die für sie die antitrinitarische Bewegung war. Ihre Errungenschaften erwiesen sich als nicht dauerhaft. Nur die Wirkung von den aus dieser Region stammenden protestantischen Pionieren machte sich auf die Dauer in der Geschichte der polnischen Reformation bemerkbar. Sie agierten immerhin außerhalb des Gebiets ihrer kleinen Heimat. Aus dieser stürmischen Zeit ist nur die 1619 von den Schotten gestiftete Glocke in Jedlińsk übrig geblieben.

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JUDE AND HERITAGE CINEMA

Abstract

Film adaptations of the masterpieces of English literature have always been one of the most distinctive characteristics of English cinematography. The immense popularity of these productions led to the emergence in the 1980s of a new cinematic genre referred to as 'heritage' or 'national' cinema. Initially, heritage productions focused on showcasing the lives of the English elite at the turn of the century. However, the aim of presenting an idealistic and therefore unreal image of the English past, which had originally stood behind heritage productions, met with strong criticism not only from scholars but also from filmmakers.

*Among the opponents of heritage cinema is Michael Winterbottom. One of his films – "Jude", based on Thomas Hardy's renowned novel *Jude the Obscure*, was made in 1996 when the fashion for filming Hardy as well as the fashion for heritage productions in general was in full swing. This paper aims at analysing Winterbottom's adaptation in the prism of heritage cinema in order to prove that despite his antagonism towards the genre, Winterbottom created a cinematic masterpiece which is currently celebrated as an important example of heritage productions.*

Key words: heritage cinema, film adaptations, *Jude*, Thomas Hardy, Michael Winterbottom.

Films which are set in the past have become a popular and culturally important pillar of the British film industry. They belong to a wide circle of what is called in Britain "heritage" or "national cinema". Starting from the 1980s until now heritage films have enjoyed unabated popularity. The term, however, appeared much earlier and was first used in reference to the costume dramas of the 1940s. Later on in the 1980s owing to the huge success of films such as *Chariots of Fire*, *Brideshead Revisited* and Merchant Ivory's¹ adaptations of E.M Forster's prose e.g. *A Room*

¹ Paradoxically, Merchant Ivory Productions was an independent film company founded in 1961 in New York by an American director James Ivory and an Indian producer Ismail Merchant. Both of them also frequently cooperated with Ruth Praver Jhabvala – the writer born in Germany, educated in England and having Polish-Jewish roots. At first they produced films set in India, the USA, France, China or Argentina. However, their 1990s

with a View and *Howards End*, the concept has been redefined. From the mid 1980s onwards the label has been given to costume dramas that were argued to depict in a nostalgic fashion some aspects of the English past before the Second World War and were adapted from canonical literary texts (Perisic 2012: 10). Andrew Higson (1995: 4-5), one of the leading critics of heritage films, identifies four ways of analysing the national cinema: the economic being the first one. It is connected, Higson claims, “with the infrastructures of production, distribution and exhibition within a particular nation-state” as well as the promotion of the movies abroad. It also has to do with the size of the domestic film market and the attempts to employ a mainly national work force. The second aspect of analysis is “exhibition and consumption”. Not without significance is a number of foreign films, especially American, appearing in a national market. The audience preferences in the choice of a repertoire and the impact the films have on them show the scale of “Americanization”. Such knowledge empowers the government to take steps towards protecting the so called “nation’s cultural standing”. The third perspective is tightly connected with the previous one. The point is to develop a strategy where a wide group of films are given “the brand-name of national cinema” which would also give the directors a feeling of connection with the national culture. Finally, national cinema can be analysed from the perspective of distribution. It is within this context to answer how the national character is depicted and what role the films play in projecting the image of the nation. The concerns that arise here are also connected with the idea of nationhood forged through the same language, education and mass communication.

Films included in the heritage genre share some characteristics although the popular opinion is that the concept itself has been subject to constant negotiations as it is still in the process of development. There are some tendencies, however, which are common to what we call heritage cinema nowadays. First of all, the core of the genre comprises films which are preoccupied with the upper and upper middle classes between the Victorian and Edwardian epochs until the breakout of the Second World War. It is probably due to the fact that these periods are regarded as central in the formation of the modern version of the English national identity (Higson 2003: 28). Second of all, most heritage productions are filmed in England and feature lavish properties located in beautiful rural surroundings. They are usually inhabited by aristocrats who represent a certain system of values and behaviour codes. What is more, the rich *mis-en-scène* in the form of tasteful period décor, costumes, and furnishings build the atmosphere of the period and reconstruct a historical moment which is thought to be of national significance.

adaptations of English literature e.g.: *The Bostonians*, *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, *The Remains of the Day*, brought them huge popularity and made them a part of a long tradition of literary adaptations in British cinema. The films soon gained a reputation of tasteful cinema and were highly praised for their focus on traditional values, stability and propriety.

In delineating the stylistic criteria of heritage films, it is necessary to remember that the narratives are usually slow-paced, episodic and de-dramatized and they revolve around a few central characters. It creates a space for the characters and places to be more exposed. The work of the camera is slow with a preference for long takes rather than close-ups in order to emphasise the aesthetic value of a film – the setting and everything that completes it. Also, the camerawork which does not usually show a character point of view, explores even more ostentatiously the *mis-en-scène* of the films. Therefore, it is impossible not to agree with Andrew Higson (2003: 39) who says:

[heritage cinema] is not a cinema of story-telling, but something more akin to that mode of early film-making that Tom Gunning calls the cinema of attractions. In this case, the heritage films display their self-conscious artistry, their landscapes, their properties, their actors, and their performance qualities, their clothes, and their often archaic dialogue. The gaze, therefore, is organized around props and settings – the look of the observer at the tableau image – as much as it is around character point of view”.

The aforementioned features constitute the foundation of heritage cinema. On this foundation grew the fashion for these kind of productions which reached its peak in the 1990s. This glorious decade for heritage films included also filming Thomas Hardy’s prose. Within five years there appeared six adaptations of his novels and short stories starting from film versions of *Jude the Obscure* - *Jude* (1996), *The Scarlet Tunic* (1997) based on a short story *The Melancholy Husar*, TV versions of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* – both in 1998, the film adaptation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reworked as *The Claim* (2000) and finally 2015 saw the latest film adaptation of *Far From the Madding Crowd* by the same title.

Two of the aforementioned adaptations were directed by Michael Winterbottom: *Jude* (1996) and *The Claim* (2000). The action of the latter is shifted from the English rural countryside to California in the 1860s. The latest Winterbottom adaptation of Hardy is *Trishna* (2011) based on *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. The action of the film is set in modern India where Trishna (Tess) has to deal with restrictions of her social status. For Winterbottom, *Trishna* is, above all, a love story that develops between a poor peasant girl and a wealthy hotel owner’s son. When asked about the reasons of his interest in Thomas Hardy’s works, Winterbottom replied that he always appreciated Hardy’s skill in expressing criticism of the Victorian society where the division between the more and the less privileged was very clear. He was also fascinated by Hardy’s ability to construct complicated relations between the individual and the society. These issues are recurrent in all three adaptations. Hardy’s *Jude*, however, belongs to Winterbottom’s favourites that inspired and accompanied him since his student

years when he took the chance of adapting the novel for the first time. Winterbottom's view on social injustice and the place of the individual in the society is similar to Hardy's. Hence, it makes him a sort of an heir and continuator of Hardy's view of life. *Jude* (1996) appeared when heritage productions were in full swing. Since 1980s many adaptations of the literary "greats" such as Austen, Dickens or Forster appeared on the market and it was hoped that filming Hardy could repeat the success. *Jude* is not the first adaptation of this novel. It had been filmed earlier in the 1970s by Hugh David with Robert Powell playing the leading role. Nevertheless, the popularity of filming the 19th century prose was one of the symptoms of growing nostalgia after the past epochs, an escapist attempt to show the picture of the better, simpler and happier world (Włodek 2009: 47). It may be that Michael Winterbottom has been inspired by the fashion for heritage cinema, and adapting *Jude*, he wanted to have a say in the heritage debate. The critics argue about the place of the film in the national cinema. Can *Jude* be a representative of the heritage genre? What features of it does it represent? How does the film depict the past? These and other questions will be discussed here.

The film tells the story of a stonemason whose dreams of a university career are shattered by the British social system, by fate, and by his own bad luck. Jude enters an unsatisfactory marriage with Arabella Donn, who soon abandons him. He moves to the city where he encounters his cousin Sue, who shares his contempt for convention, and the two develop a romantic relationship. The lovers are forced to keep their affair a secret from a disapproving world.

The efforts of the international team working on the film paid off. The reviews were rather flattering, praising the intensity and the emotional depth of the production that *uncovers the soul of a novel and brings it to life on the screen*². The filmmakers first turned to BBC for help in funding the film. The BBC expecting the production to fit the costume drama category agreed to invest £800 000. The remaining amount of £5.7 million budget was contributed by the Dutch Film Company- PolyGram. A talented Iran-born scriptwriter – Hossein Amini, the future screenplay author of such heritage productions as *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Four Feathers* wrote the script.

The Portuguese Eduardo Serra became the author of stunning cinematography. Kate Winslet was given the role of Sue Bridehead and Christopher Eccleston played Jude Fawley. The scenes were shot in the UK – in Edinburgh and on location in County Durham including Durham Cathedral, Durham City, Ushaw College, Blanchland village and Beamish museum, and abroad – in France and New Zealand. The film won four prestigious film awards including The Silver Frog for Eduardo Serra for best cinematography at Camerimage in 1996, Best Actor Award for Christopher Eccleston at Chicago International Film Festival and two awards for Michael Winterbottom: The Golden Hitchcock at Dinard British Film Festival and the award for the Best New British Feature at Edinburgh International

² <http://www.reelviews.net/movies/j/jude.html>

Film Festival. While *Jude* was rather successful at home, it passed almost unnoticed on the American market. The international recognition at various festivals, however, proves its cultural value.

Considering the above mentioned arguments, it goes without saying that Michael Winterbottom's adaptation of *Jude* transcends mainstream heritage cinema, among others, due to the fact that it was created by an international group of filmmakers. While so many adaptations made in the 1980s and 90s are so bright, colourful, slow-paced and rich with a great number of props and period detail, Winterbottom's film is quite the opposite. Although, *Jude* is, according to Peter Widdowson, "faithful" to the novel in many respects, it is gloomy, fast-paced and vague as far as its time setting are concerned. Many alternations have also been made as to the number of characters and the language of the film. A lot of minor characters were removed and the language simplified. As Anna Włodarczyk-Stachurska observes *it is language that represents culture* so the dialogues in Winterbottom's film were modernized and devoid of its allusiveness. Such simplification helped to reduce a cultural gap between the characters and the viewers and made the film more understandable to modern audience. A vivid example of that measure is Jude and Sue's conversation about her religious orthodoxy. While in the novel Jude declares: *You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or whatever it may be called, if that's which has caused this deterioration in you.* (Hardy 1995: 426), in the film, he simply states: *You make me hate Christianity and God and whatever else has reduced you to this state.* Therefore, in the book, Jude relies on the word "or" not knowing exactly what has happened to Sue. The film makes it simple: Christianity and God are responsible for Sue's change. Finally, the ending of the film has been completely changed (Niemeyer 2003: 167).

As explained by Andrew Higson, heritage film productions of the 1980s can be seen as "ironic reflections" on the Thatcher era. While the Conservative government was fighting to deconstruct the socialist systems and while the Iron Lady herself was advocating the return to "Victorian" family values, the filmmakers reacted against that policy and turned to an earlier epoch – especially the Edwardian era to show in a nostalgic way "a more stable past" (Niemeyer 2003: 167).

With respect to the aforesaid argument, *Jude* goes beyond the scheme of heritage cinema by its lack of sentimentality which sends the viewer back to the idealized past. *Jude* does not dazzle with nostalgic atmosphere and it does not show the life of the elite upper classes. On the contrary, the main hero rather struggles to go beyond his status as a working class man and become a member of the elite. Furthermore, *Jude* deviates from heritage cinema by the lack of stunning properties or people wearing glamorous costumes. There are very few scenes highlighting the beauty of the landscape. The idyllic picture of the countryside, especially in the scenes with Jude and Arabella, is always disturbed. The pair's first meeting happens among the greenery of trees and meadows with birds chirruping and

a murmuring stream in the background. The thing that spoils the encounter is the piece of pig's flesh thrown at Jude by Arabella. In one of the consecutive scenes they make love in a pigsty (Włodek 2009: 47). In line with the lack of sentimentality goes the choice of colours. The setting in *Jude* is not bathed in rich and sharp hues. Instead, the light is often dim and the colours rather subdued and darkish. Grey, brown and green dominate. Many scenes are shot in autumn and winter, it is often raining or snowing so the countryside looks rather unattractive (Włodek 2009: 47). The same happens with the picture of the cities. They are usually represented as depressing. Christminster, for example, is dominated by grey and blue, enlivened only by the crimson gowns of the Remembrance Day paraders. However, as Andrew Higson contends, there is a kind of regularity which the English past is depicted with. Modern times, meaning the period before the outbreak of the II World War is has the so-called "vintage quality" where picturesque landscapes and stately homes with grand cottages are surrounded with green rolling hills. As opposed to that, Medieval times are depicted as gloomy and wild with vast stone castles framed into an untamed landscape. Higson calls the latter "dirty realism" contrasting the prettiness and charm of the pre-modern past with the harshness and filth of the medieval times (Higson 2011: 208-219). Surprisingly enough, it seems that this sort of "dirty realism" quality makes *Winterbottom's* more truthful and believable.

The camerawork typical of heritage cinema, which includes numerous panoramas to highlight the aesthetic advantages of the setting is rather limited in *Jude*. Except for a few long takes e.g. the opening scene where little Jude is walking across a vast stretch of ploughed land, the panorama of Christminster that he sees from the distance or deans and scholars leaving Oxford colleges for the Remembrance Day procession, the film contains more close-ups and shorter takes. The use of those, however, is also common to such popular heritage productions as *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) or *Elizabeth* (1998).

Some aspects of *Jude*, however, prove how startlingly close to heritage cinema the film is. One of them is the fidelity of *Winterbottom's* film to Hardy's novel in depicting the lives of working classes: shopkeepers, teachers or stonemasons and the hardships of everyday living. Jude renovates old buildings and churches. It is a profession that Hardy's father and the author himself used to practise. So while describing the scenes Hardy draws heavily on his own experience. There are a number of scenes showing Jude at work. He is carving names on tombstones, renovates churches at Marygreen and later in Aldbrickham. The hardship of everyday life is from time to time buttered with moments of pleasure and entertainment which is also shown in *Winterbottom's* film. There are, for example, a few scenes showing main characters spending time at fun fairs: first, it is Sue and Jude after they have met for the first time, later they go to a fun fare together with Jude's son – Little Father Time and, finally, they go to a fair not to entertain but to work selling cookies that Sue has baked. Describing the lives of working classes was not a practice used by filmmakers producing heritage films in the 1980s but it

emerged later, in the 1990s, in the so called “Post-Thatcher” era. There appeared variants of heritage cinema in the shape of alternative or post-heritage productions which started to develop in the early 1990s. They represent new ways of talking about the past and demonstrate less elite versions of it. The point is to show working and industrial classes as well as communities which found their home in Britain. The characters are more complex and less admirable. By depicting the imperfections that relate to real life, post-heritage films become more believable.

Another aspect is Winterbottom’s interest in period fashion. The filmmakers, especially Janty Yates – a costume designer for *Jude*, reconstruct period styles and the wardrobes of the characters. Costumes like Jude’s or Little Father Time’s (Jude’s son), the village people’s or stonemasons’ in Christminster mark their status and sometimes their impoverishment. Sue Brideshead’s costumes, however, provide a special viewing pleasure. She changes them quite often which may be somewhat surprising taking into consideration her financial status. Her outfits, however, are often symbolic. Until her engagement with Mr Phillotson she is usually dressed in pale costumes. A crimson dress that she is wearing as she tells Jude of her matrimonial plans symbolises a new phase in her life. The colour of the dress, however, proves ironic since she firmly rejects her husband’s courtship (Allison 1995: 37).

Most importantly, however, alongside all technical aspects confirming *Jude*’s affiliation with heritage cinema is the truth about the past that the film brings to light. By focusing on Jude and Sue, Winterbottom is able to show the couple turned into outsiders oppressed by the reality they live in. The very first scene proves the point. Shot in black and white, analogous to the first two chapters of the novel, the sequence is so re-arranged as to *establish the social hierarchy’s role in oppressing Jude, and the false promise of hope it extends* (Niemeyer 2003: 173). The scene shows young Jude feeding rooks instead of scaring them away for which he is beaten by farmer Troutham who shouts: *You’ve gone up in the world!* His words are relevant in the ensuing scene during Jude’s conversation with Aunt Drusilla who exclaims: *Did he hit you? Shame on you for letting him! His father was my father’s journeyman!* Within a short period of time two extremely important messages are conveyed concerning the understanding of the film. First of all, Winterbottom indicates Jude’s loss of social status and second of all, that loss puts him in danger of further alienation whenever he would take an attempt to “go up” in the world.

As Paul Niemeyer (2003: 171) claims, Michael Winterbottom makes a successful attempt to *find adequate visual companions to Hardy’s written word*. One of the examples proving the point are the scenes in Christminster (Edinburgh) where the university has a “forbidding quality”. Therefore, Jude’s ambitions – a poor stonemason’s ambitions to become a scholar have to shutter over the thick university walls which he used to restore. Winterbottom seems to choose such places as to show the sense of barrenness and dislocation.

Along with visual fidelity between the novel and the film comes the poignant study of suffering presented with impressive realism in the scene of the murder of Sue and Jude's children. The camera follows Jude when he enters the room to find the corpses of the children. After putting them on the bed, Jude bursts out crying. Then the camera shifts to show Sue lying in a foetal position on the floor choking with pain and grief. The sequence is painful and difficult to watch but Winterbottom achieves the point. He shows that the suffering of those people is real, and the death of the children causes unbearable suffering (Niemeyer 2003: 172-173). The impression that stays is that it seems that the adaptation of Hardy's novel should look like.

All in all, many critics analysing *Jude* claim that it is a successful adaptation of Hardy although it was problematic to translate from page to screen. *Jude* represents the style of Michael Winterbottom's cinematic artistry. Although, the director fights to escape the heritage framework, it is not difficult to identify a string of features that joins *Jude* with the genre. First and foremost, the film has its origins in a canonical late Victorian novel by which fact it is inseparably tied with the national heritage. By its truthfulness to the novel and its truthful representation of the 19th century reality the film becomes a bridge between the epochs. It brings the pictures of the 19th century reality in front of the eyes of the modern viewer without unnecessary beautification of the past. That is why, although it cannot be called a *sensu stricte* heritage but rather a post-heritage production *Jude* entered the cycle of national cinema as a balance to all previous productions depicting mainly the beauty of life in the privileged classes.

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CULTURAL SLAVERY IN THE CONTEXT OF VALUE ATTITUDES OF CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Introduction

Values have played a huge role in creation and formation of European cultural space. Thanks to continuous search and evaluation, Europe has been the stage for ideological, cultural, social and religious upheavals. *Values in general have had a calming effect on the people, however, there were also times when values made people conscious or worried, they motivated them to activity and made them united* (Brožík 2006: 115). Values can be found hidden in the sphere of different historical events influencing world affairs and they are also reasons for many conflicts. When having a detailed look at the history of the term, it is interesting to follow Whitehead (1970) who uses the term *value* in order to define the inner reality of the event. But, it is very difficult to view the world as an event of values without historical connection with tradition. Presence, quality and polarity of values can be examined only during the process of life events by the individual. Values cannot be made similar to qualities, although they can be wrongly presented by individuals as if they were values. Values can be performed in rational, functional relations of events, knowledge and ideas which are changed without human effort.

Rapidly changing nature of values has become the reason for their relative state. Because of natural catastrophes or changes in political regimes, diametrically different values have appeared in comparison to those which were valid in the past, before such changes occurred. Morris (1955) can be considered to be the founding father of the value fields theory. Following this theory, values are interconnected creating one complex unit and change in one area is automatically performed in other areas, defining relative and changeable value criteria. When trying to measure values, we should think of the idea that for individuals (acting in order to satisfy their needs) values can be so diverse that anything can become a value (Városov, 1970). *That is the reason why values are changing so quickly, so people learnt how to differentiate whole groups of values according to different functions that the same thing can have during lifetime of people* (Brožík 2007: 8).

Values can be categorized into ethical, aesthetic, ecological, legal, cultural, etc. Every individual values on the basis of own attitudes, norms and these valuations can contradict the norms of other people, i.e. *the quality of function* is different for every individual. Elliot, an English literary scientist, found out in the second half of the 19th century that the value of each new literary work changes existing classical

literary values to a certain extent. New literary work can emphasize the previous values, revive them or overcome them. Morris (1955) calls it a changeable value pole.

Value is the result of valuation. Nothing is of value per se, but the value can be reached through the medium of process, the process of human activity. Traditionally, the identification of values with norms is present in ethics. Valuation viewpoint is performed via opinion which reflects personal experience. The opinion presents mental approach towards values. Individuals often acquire opinions and patterns of others and follow them in their own actions. It is important to differentiate patterns and schemes of behavior (models of actions). *Human values are gained through experience* (Homola 1972: 206). An individual ascribes the value according to the standards of group, differentiating what is „good“ and „bad“ following the norms. All individuals (identities) have got their own system of values which supplement the common system shared with the environment, socio-cultural group. Value system is defined by individuals' relationship towards the world, their position in the world as well as relationships with environment and motives of their activities.

Cultural Values

When defining cultural values, we also have to take into consideration different social approaches. Some opinions, dating back to the previous century, perceive culture merely as a system of outcomes of human activity, not acknowledging the idea that culture is a permanent process. A very sharp contrast can be visible when asking questions about real world of values which is viewed in two polarities, either as the world of value relations, or as the world of material and spiritual culture.

Cultural values are permanently shaped and re-shaped by every society and individual, being a member of the given society. They are usually divided into two basic categories: material and spiritual, however, this categorization is not finite, whereas one and the same object or relationship can be viewed as a part of both. Cultural values are part of the world of values and they are dependent on human activity. *Huge importance was attributed to ethnic, cultural and religious values because they dominate emotional feeling of nation* (Čulenová 2012: 98). When defining the term cultural values, spiritual basis of culture and its values should be taken into account.

Cultural values are very peculiar in their nature. Many times, culture is identified with art, but art is just one of the cultural forms. *Art as a reflection of culture, as a statement about cultural values, represents in reality the complexity of culture, but it cannot substitute or replace it in any way* (Brožík 1984: 76). Cultural values are considered to be the products of cultural activity of man which is a characteristic quality, so it is not represented only by quantity. Evaluation of this activity takes place on the basis of results, but they do not have to be in the

form of material products. Cultural value does not result from the moment of individual creative activity.

Cultural need is the result of preferring certain values which are the product of creative activity of man and which were promoted by individuals as dominant in their way of life. *Cultural needs are conditions to interest that could be described as an active relationship of the common subject towards any value inevitable for the creative way of being* (Brožík 2007: 43). Signs which enable us identification of values should not be interchanged with values per se. Valuation is always the process of comparison, but not every comparison is valuation.

The experience with satisfying higher cultural needs leads to „personalization“ shaping individuals in a unique way. *Art helps us to realize the meaning and value of our own roles and all what is connected with them via values* (Brožík 2007: 67). Culture is often perceived as a system of duties which we must respect if we want to live in society which accepted this system (norms).

Cultural norms are based on the system of rules. It is connected with how to realize values. Norms are specifically designed in order to be able to measure value. We suppose that values are anchored in the mind of people and their ideas. They often become starting points and targets of human efforts. Therefore, individuals find their way in life by recognizing and focusing on values.

Cultural Slavery of Value Attitudes

Today's society can be described as a civilization with high level of risks and dangers - with a very visible crisis of trust and responsibility, termed as a crisis of values and approaches towards values. Values have played a key role in evolution of human society. However, there is still misuse of them in the period of technical revolution, similarly, as it was in the past, when values were misused by ideologies opposing human rights and human dignity.

Today, this feeling has doubled because of increasing extremism and terrorism. As stated by Tondl (2010: 3): *The increase of danger, its extent and impact, is also influenced by the fact that the standard of the contemporary society provides incomparably larger and more serious extent of risks and possibilities of all available technical appliances misuse*. Values can also be found present in seemingly unrelated individual performances. They can be misused by radical groups, spreading in virtual space, often the cause of conflicts.

Decisions of man are always choices between what is possible and tolerated. This decision applies and respects certain values and approaches towards values that are performed in society in the form of norms. Every culture developed own system of these norms as a precondition to own existence. Values and norms direct society towards the so called civilized behavior (Todorov 2008). Ethical, social and cultural norms are mutually connected with global value and cultural atmosphere, as well as with traditions, images and duties. These norms create functional borders of the system that should not be violated.

Tondl (2010) stresses the fact that values and norms are bound to human activity, determining the quality of these relations and disseminating them through the medium of communication. *It is about the processes of communication, linguistic and non-linguistic forms of communication, use of social patterns, preferred forms of human behavior* (Tondl 2010: 6). Through the medium of communication, understanding, adequate acceptance and proper interpretation, it is possible to disseminate values trouble free between different cultures. Respecting differences in socially tolerated way is thus an inevitable condition. There are many ways how to make intercultural communication easier. One of them is to admit the existence of exceptions while assuming that value valid in society does not have to be regarded as universal.

Different social patterns represent one of the most common problems when values of two different cultural groups crash. In the past, the gender positions, relationships and assigned tasks of individual members in society were clearly determined, but today we face new non-standard and unusual situations, connected with global changes and technical development. Therefore, we need to focus again on values and their impact on individual or group behavior.

Because of this, we favor the idea that education system should be comprised of complex knowledge about society, man and culture in the broadest extent. If in the past, the education was influenced by fundamental ideology, today there has been a new space opened (especially at secondary schools and universities), so that this kind of knowledge can be introduced to students in an innovative way.

As it was mentioned before, the knowledge as a value can be also misused and manipulated. The knowledge as a value presupposes perception and valuation from both points of view, positive and negative, leading to individual performance: acceptance or unacceptance of situation, person, etc. Tolerant approach towards values should lead to accepting permissive conditions, whether the activity/person is possible, allowed or at least tolerated. *It pays also today that many things which are considered now as unacceptable, unsuitable or often harmful, were regarded as normal, standard and totally acceptable by previous generations* (Tondl 2010: 12). We assume that there is a constant dynamism in this process.

Development of values and attitudes towards them has never been trouble free and from the historical point of view, it arose from conflict concepts which were influenced by culture and civilization development, reflected especially in creation of cultural, artistic and technical artifacts. The whole development of human knowledge has been accompanied by new requirements towards culture and crisis. Weber (2009) also differentiates two types of rationalities, the one of purpose and the one of value.

When taking into account attitudes towards values, we also need to pay attention to the possibility of searching for new and better concepts. Values are elements present in the process of decision-making, so it is important to integrate them in the process of intercultural communication. Nowadays, we have been facing new challenges in the sphere of individual values of man. In the past, values

were bound to religion and tied to close family-social relationships. The individuals were determined by their upbringing in family resulting in acquisition of such concepts as honesty and truthfulness, being the reason for pride when employed in certain occupations. It was especially the human solidarity which was considered to be a positive value.

Crisis and conflicts in contemporary society are usually not conditioned by differences in the level of civilization, it is not primarily about „the conflicts of civilizations“, but about the conflicts of different orientations towards values (Tondl 2010: 18-19). This opinion is in opposition to the statement of Huntingtona (2001) who does not pay so much attention to value approaches of societies, but he views rather material side of civilization development.

Scientific and intellectual isolationism, which dates back to the 19th century, is the problem of complex value approaches development. It rests on very narrow specialization limiting cross-cultural communication. As a result of this, there is a certain amount of doubt created in the area of some fields and knowledge relevance, whereby the mutual respect is missing. Value tasks and challenges require interdisciplinary approach.

Generally, current European culture is more often than not indifferent, characterized in abstract concepts such as freedom, equality, democracy, solidarity, continuous development and open market. The so called western culture prefers universality of cultural values, even though this universality does not reflect operation and management of individual states. This diversity of systems leads to acknowledgment of different values in different contexts.

Today, there is also a cultural fragmentation arising inside of the states, where parallel cultural worlds are created. *Many people believe that luck can be found in achieving freedom, in the shape of unlimited freedom, believing that social justice is only an expression of requirement to take share in this luck that is similar to the lack of any duties, and that equality is synonymous with the equal share in material benefits enabling carefree life* (Di Fabio 2009: 16). Society, which loses trust in the future, is closed and isolated, leading to resignation and refusal of ideals of freedom and equality.

Free society that is fragmented in this way divides people into groups instead of declared equality (into young, old, men/women, disabled, etc.). Freedom – one of the basic democratic values is connected primarily with safety in today's society (protection from terrorist attacks). Protection of state and unending conflicts, however, destabilize the idea of freedom as a universal value.

Cultural Slavery

The French renaissance philosopher Boétie (2014), in his work of art called *On Voluntary Slavery*, comes with the opinion that life without freedom cannot be happy. According to him, the freedom of man is limited by fear. *Those who are at the bottom* are afraid of power, while „*those who are up*“ are afraid not to lose it.

Theory of power was later on developed by own concepts of Hobbes and Weber (2009).

Berd'ajev (2000), who comes up with the philosophy of the free, refuses West-European rationalistic tradition and brings the opposite of the philosophy of slaves. This theory is based on intuitive, up-to spiritual perception of freedom, whereas, freedom is not the only object of research. *The man should not be the slave of his existence. Perception of personality and freedom is connected with personal reason, will and activity* (Berd'ajev 1997: 63). Freedom is performed through active performance that is based on this value. Freedom, in a theoretical way, without exertion of practice, can be contested.

Current slavery is connected with the process of socialization that can move to social hypnosis, absorbing the man. Society of free people must not create the rule of power and powerful, but it should lead to solidarity. However, the man creates slavery alone, as well as his dependency on society thanks to developing civilization.

Civilization helped man to set free from the hegemony of natural powers. Civilized man has been changing the world around thanks to intellect, but there are also side effects of his activities such as oppression, exploitation, suffering of great masses of people, which are excused by the values of civilization. The great writers like Tolstoi and Rousseau in their works of art warn that civilization suppresses the freedom and makes slaves of people while promising emancipation.

As far as development of society follows material basis, it suppresses to a great extent the level of human life value. *The man feels as if he was crushed by this huge variety, disintegration and conditionality of civilized world* (Berd'ajev 1997: 97). Culture and civilization will always coexist, but in a certain way, civilization is older and more genuine, culture was created later. The process of civilization takes place especially on the level of collective identity, however, culture is more individualized. Civilized man is not automatically synonymous to cultural.

As it can be noticed in today's society, civilization can suppress culture, the bearers of which can be made into slaves of other values, distanced from the core values of original culture. Cultural styles often imitate traditions, drawing on them and introducing new, innovative elements. Up till now, culture is based on the quality of selection. That is why cultural elite can lead to aristocracy. That would mean destruction and degradation of individual cultural layers, and so culture alone.

Culture is made up of creative activities of free individuals, not slaves of culture. The subjectivity of authors transcends into the objectivity of world through the medium of artistic creativity, whereas, the main criteria is reflection of values and perfection within the cultural norm. However, any man can become slave of cultural values that are enforced by higher authority.

When dealing with the concept of cultural slavery, it is important to take into account the relationship between freedom and authority. As early as in the 19th century, Mill (1995) indicates that freedom in society should be guaranteed by

liberties and rights, as well as representative group that should make efforts to reach the so called common good of society. However, *in places where governing elite exists, a considerable part of morality of the given society arises out of own interests and the feeling of superiority of this elite* (Mill 1995: 13). Inequality in social status reflects also the nonfunctional society.

The awareness of collective freedom is performed through the medium of faith in social authority that is not weakened by the fact that e.g. in other places of the world, or in a different country, this authority is denounced. The man who accepts authority connected with cultural environment, without reservations, becomes a slave. The freedom of thinking and opinion become substituted by imitation and acceptance of thoughts and opinions that are held by the authority. Such a man or a group is very easily manipulated. It is often performed in the form of different cultural groups which promote ideological thoughts, fascism, etc.

The faith in freedom in society is interconnected with the ideal of truth. *In reality, the saying that the truth always wins over persecution is one of the untruths that are being repeated by people until they become cliché. Every experience opposes this fact. History tells us a lot about such cases when truth gives way to persecution. If it cannot be suppressed forever, it can be muted for a long period* (Mill 1995: 31). It is very difficult to find the truth. The truth does not have to represent the real truth, even though it is agreed on by majority.

When talking about cultural slavery, it is important to suppress free thinking because it is a threat to doctrines and ideologies. In comparison to acts, thinking does not have borders given by cultural community and it does not require power necessarily in order to materialize. Plurality of opinions has got a better chance to lead to progress than the only ideology, governing in the form of totality. *According to my point of view, Europe is bound to plurality for its progress and versatility* (Mill 1995: 67). However *Europe is going in the way of Chinese ideal, to make everybody the same* (Mill 1995: 67). Because of globalizing tendencies, we have noticed this similarity in different cultures and their systems. The original values cannot oppose the pressure and new trends. Their uniqueness is gradually replaced by uniformity.

Humbolt (2000) defines two inevitable conditions for human development: freedom and variety of conditions. If these two conditions are not being materialized, the result is mass, uniformity, amorality and artificiality, which are responsible for the loss of values, weakening inner structure of cultural community as well as cultural diversity. Following this opinion, society has got the right to be sovereign, superior over individuals, but only on the condition that their free development is allowed. Respecting general criteria, valid for all the people equally, should enlighten the members of community about what they can await. Sovereignty/authority can take neither individuals' free will, nor the rights to do their own decision-making.

We suppose that by acknowledging values of every individual, the fight against cultural slavery is possible. Today, this individual freedom is threatened by

extreme nationalism, new technologies, industrialization or performance of intolerance. Cultural system should enable individuals to identify personal liberties in the system which does not limit their development. Every culture is peculiar for own customs, traditions, forming every individual in a specific way. The negative side appears when individuals become slaves of the system, instead of gaining knowledge and becoming open towards their identity through the medium of intercultural performance. Thus, the individual refuses them and remains closed within the uniform space around.

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EAST MEETS WEST – ON (IN)COMPATIBILITY OF CULTURES

Annotation

The article focuses on most up-to-date topic – cultural differences between “western“, Anglo-Saxon and European cultures and immigrants coming from Islamic Eastern countries. The author examines crucial historical, political, religious and cultural differences. Attention is paid to “visible differences“, concerning visual symbols of religion and lifestyle represented in English-written literature (novels by Betty Mahmoody and Khaled Hosseini) and media. The article also explores various social metaphors and answers a question whether these cultures are compatible and whether acculturation or cultural pluralism can be reached.

Key words: cultural (in)compatibility, Islam, Christianity, Americanisation, globalisation, lifestyle, women, Betty Mahmoody, Khaled Hosseini.

Introduction

Integrating Europe as an equivalent to multiculturalism and religious diversity of the United States of America, increasing market dominance of Asian countries with spreading their cultures and religions and growing influence of Islam, has to cope with the phenomenon of cultural pluralism, globalization, Americanisation and Islamisation. “European” culture is considered as a “western” culture based on Christianity, American on pluralism, race tolerance and strong individuality, and “Islamic” culture on male dominance, orthodox religious belief and strict hierarchy in society. If we look closer to these statements, we can observe that they are only stereotypes and generalizations about certain parts of the world with common cultural traits. The question that occurs is whether there exists European and Islamic culture. States of European Union have common values such as human dignity, peace, wealth of nations, freedom, democracy, equality etc. ^[1] However, we cannot claim that they create European culture because each state has its own traditions, conventions, customs and language. In contradiction to European values are those of Islamic world such as hospitality, generosity, blessing the family, honour and collectivism. ^[2] These values are more or less common for all countries with Islam as a national religion but they also do not create one unified culture as Islam is spread from south-east Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia), through south (Afghanistan) and south-west Asia (Pakistan, Iran), the Middle East (Iraq, Saudi

Arabia) to North Africa (Egypt, Libya) and every country keeps its own cultural features. Considering this brief analysis, it is necessary to re-evaluate thinking and understanding of the term culture and the relationship between cultures.

Already mentioned phenomenon of globalization, Americanization and Islamisation is spread throughout mass media that has dominant position in human life. We live in the era of technologies, mass media and almost unlimited flow of information. Information is often substituted for knowledge. People are disoriented in the huge amount of information, they are getting confused and it is difficult for them to understand and select important information. Literature and translations from national literatures can provide better orientation in understanding specific cultures, religions and philosophies. In addition, reading literary works can enrich our minds and souls.

The aim of this article is to provide insight into Islamic culture and examine its influence to other cultures throughout novels written in English with the setting in Iran and Afghanistan. Even though the setting of the novels is in different countries, it has many common features. Both novels depict problematic life of women who live in the countries with Islam dominance. They have to obey rules that the Europeans, living in a liberal and open society, often find mysterious, unbelievable and in many cases difficult to understand. Therefore it is important to focus on the skills of a good translator. If translator wants to translate novels from the exotic environment, we agree with the Slovak translator Alojz Keníž, they have to be skilful not only at foreign language and mother tongue, but the most important is knowledge of both cultural environments – foreign and domestic. (Keníž, 2008, p. 39) Another key role of a skilled translator is to interpret the way of thinking in a particular culture. Thus, the translator becomes universal and versatile professional. By translating to another language we enrich our literature, culture and give space for a reader to understand visible differences of cultures.

Islamic Culture on Slovak Literary Market

At the turn of centuries we can observe spreading even more amount of information about “eastern” cultures and customs. Bookshops are getting saturated with esoteric literature, American motivating books on how to be successful and more and more novels with Islamic topics are published.

The novel *Not without my daughter* by Betty Mahmoody was first published in 1987. In Slovakia it was published two years after Velvet Revolution, in 1989, and can be considered as a breaking novel because before that topics described in the novel were mostly taboo. Later on in 1992 its sequencing novel *For the love of a child* was published (with its Slovak translation in 1992 by Slavo Herman, Alojz Keníž, Ján Kvapil and Michal Pribus). In addition to these two novels *My name is Mahtob* by Mahtob Mahmoody, a daughter of Betty Mahmoody, appeared on the

book markets in 2013. Its Slovak translation was published in 2014 by Otakar Kořínek. All these novels depict real lives stories of both Betty and Mahtob Mahmoody. The first novel tells the story of the author who went on two weeks holiday with her Iranian husband to his country. A short holiday changed to nearly two years stay. During this stay Betty searched for all possible ways to escape, with her four-year old daughter Mahtob, back to the USA. It is not only dramatic and terrifying novel full of tension, but it also provides insight into Iranian society thorough the eyes of an American woman. The second story depicts their comeback to America, readjustment to its culture, constant fear of her husband Moody's revenge and her many encounters with others who have tried to escape similar situations. And third novel is told by Mahtob. Now grown, educated and fiercely independent, Mahtob Mahmoody recounts her harrowing escape with her mother from a tyrannical and abusive father in war-torn Iran. She describes how influential this experience was. She is unable to move on with her life until she discovers that she can change her life by changing her attitude. She finds out that the clue to her happy life is forgiveness.

Another significant writer is an Afghan-American doctor Khaled Hosseini. In 2003 he debuted with a novel *The Kite runner* (translated to Slovak in 2008 by Danica Hollá) that became a world bestseller. Another novel *A Thousand splendid suns* was published in 2007 (translated to Slovak in 2009 by Mária Galádová) and it will help us to explain particular customs and rules of Islamic culture, respecting them, abandonment of them, shifting from traditions to modernization and their influence to other cultures. This novel is a story of two women of different generations, social and family backgrounds whose lives were connected by marrying one man. War, violence, fear and unjust status of women in a society, but also faith, hope, protection of the family and long-lasting values are specified in the struggle for survival. *A Thousand splendid suns* is both a historical chronicle of Afghanistan for the last thirty years and touching story about family, friendship, power of love and sacrifice as well.

Both writers, Betty Mahmoody and Khaled Hosseini, deal with topics such as human dignity, mostly woman's dignity, ability to survive, making decisions and keeping responsibility for them. Despite the fact, that one heroine is American and another two are Afghans, they display with similar abilities, tell about their lives experience and provide insight into far distant customs of Islamic culture.

(In)compatibility of Cultures

The word culture is derived from the Latin word *colere* and its meaning is to cultivate. Generally it refers to patterns of human activity and symbolic structures that are given by such an activity. Different definitions of culture reflect different theoretical bases for understanding or criteria for evaluating human activity. For example, anthropologists most commonly use the term culture to refer to the

universal human capacity to classify, codify and communicate their experiences symbolically (Fobelová, 2000, p. 9). Nowadays, the term culture belongs to the most frequently used words. Synonym to the word culture can be civilization, but culture is wider term. Culture is traditionally divided into material and spiritual. Symbols together with values, norms, conventions, customs, religion and language are parts of the second one.

We can distinguish some dominant cultures –European, American and Islamic. All these cultures are recognized throughout their “image” or so called cultural stereotypes. A cultural stereotype is a culturally-based belief (e.g. one referring to attributes of culture including race, ethnicity, religion, sometimes also sexual orientation or appearance) that everybody who is a member of a certain group tend to behave in some fixed pattern traditionally (and often falsely) attributed to that group. Cultural stereotypes can be both positive and negative. (Javorčíková, 2014, p. 58).

One of the main stereotypes in Islamic culture is that women have no rights, are oppressed and tyrannized by men. Both novels confirm this statement. For example in *A Thousand splendid suns* the position of women is explain as follows: “Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man’s accusing finger always find a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam.” (Hosseini, 2007, p.7) Mariam, one of the main heroines, was born as *harami* – unwanted thing, an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance. (Hosseini, 2007, p. 4) Hosseini often uses mixed language to keep multicultural dialogue. (Janecová, 2011, p. 35) His novels, both in original and translated versions, seem rather exotic and thus interesting for a reader. However, using too many culture-motivated words can be found distracting.

Not only Muslim women but also those who experienced mix marriages should know and be aware of the fact that according to Islamic law Sharia and Quran, women in Muslim countries belong to a man. Betty Mahmoody describes and explains in her novel what it means to be married to a Muslim: “...as Moody’s wife I was his chattel. He could do with me as he wished.” (Mahmoody, 1993, p. 79). In addition to this: “The husband owned everything; the wife nothing. And property includes the children. The children of divorce live with the father. (Mahmoody, 1993, p. 170) She continues: “...Iranian women were slaves to their husbands, how their religion as well as their government coerced them at every turn, the practice exemplified by their haughty insistence upon an antiquated and even unhealthy dress code. (Mahmoody, 1993, p. 50) .

A very specific dress code is inseparable part of Muslim women’s lives. Slovak educated Emíre Khidayer, diplomat in Muslim countries such as Egypt, Kuwait

and Iran, explains in her book *Život po arabsky* (Life in Arabic, published in 2010) that there are five reasons why women veil themselves. First is sun and wind protection, second is lack of money because not every woman can afford regular hair styling, third is religion, fourth is connected to the previous one – woman should not attract a man because she is devil's tool to lead a man from the right way, and finally they voluntarily veil themselves against the eyes of men. (Khidayer, 2010, p. 138 – 144).

Betty Mahmoody describes her first experience when arriving to an Iranian airport: "I knew that women in Iran were required to keep their arms, legs, and foreheads covered, but I was surprised to see that all of the women airport employees as well as most of the female passengers were wrapped almost completely in what Moody told me were *chadors*. A chador is a large, half-moon-shaped cloth entwined around the shoulders, forehead, and chin to reveal only eyes, nose, and mouth. The effect is reminiscent of a nun's habit in times past. The more devout Iranian women allowed only a single eye to poke through. Women scurried through the airport carrying several pieces of heavy luggage in only one hand, for the other was needed to hold the fabric in place under the chin. The long, flowing black panels of their *chadors* billowed wide. What intrigued me most was that *chador* was optional. There were other garments available to fulfil the harsh requirements of the dress code, but these Moslem women chose to wear chador on the top of everything else, despite the oppressive heat. I marvelled at the power their society and their religion held over them. (Mahmoody, 1989, p. 14) In the original version and also in translated Slovak version we can observe detailed explanation of various culture-motivated words: "The coat is called *montoe*. The scarf is called *roosarie*. In Iran you have to have this to go out on the street." (Mahmoody, 1989, p. 20) If not, you can get into troubles with *pasdar*, a special police force: "One of the *pasdar's* assignments was to make sure women were properly dressed." (Mahmoody, 1989, p. 45) Thus, in contrast with what many Europeans think, the custom of covering oneself has more regional, financial or status-bounded varieties. We agree with Emíre Khidayer that veiling is not only religious symbol but also social and cultural.

Another part of clothes so called *hijab* is mentioned in the novel *A thousand splendid suns*. Although in its original version this word is not explained, the Slovak translator keeps it as culture-motivated word and then explains it as a scarf. The word *hijab* originates from the word *hajaba* that means to hide or separate. *Hijab* is used as a cover of a head or a veil hiding hair. According to Quran it is also a place separating women from men who came for a visit. (Khidayer, 2010, p. 141 – 142).

Fashion varies from one country to another. There are no commonly valid rules for all countries. Meanwhile in some countries the veil is strict or orthodox, in another

countries there exist only recommendations. It can be seen that there is actually no fashion in the Muslim world. But this stereotype is not true. Muslim style can be observed also in western cultures. In fashion world there are no new things such as extended tops, tunics, pashminas made of cashmere, scarves, various colourful ornaments and patterns. Both novels provide full range of examples of Muslim clothes. Translating these words can be tricky and the role of translator is to enrich national language with various exoticisms. However, Keníž, famous for his attitude to translate as many foreign words as possible, claims that professional pride of translator should lead to their intention to translate everything foreign into mother tongue. (Keníž, p. 39) Otherwise the result can be a language that is “enriched” mainly with various exoticisms, calques and misunderstood phraseological units. (Keníž, p. 44).

Lives of women, their position in society, dress code and rules they have to obey, for western way of thinking, can be considered old-fashioned, “medieval” or even illogical. Despite the fact that Islam is spread and getting more and more present in European cultures, it is difficult to understand it. Literary texts that are translated into another language can help with understanding. By translating they become a part of a different cultural environment and bring new information to it. According to Biloveský, the quality of Slovak translations tells about readiness of our environment to translate such kinds of texts. (Biloveský, 2011, p. 6) Social, cultural and fashion trends are gradually becoming part of national culture. As a result of this, countries should do all their best to avoid extinction of their diversity, specificity, particularity that is common for their national culture. They are the most valuable wealth and heritage that are necessary to improve constantly. (Biloveský, 2011, p. 12) In connection to translation solutions of culture-motivated expressions we suggest keeping authenticity, colour and exoticism of original work. They can enrich readers of translated work and provide them with the same experience as the readers of original work can have. And that is the reason why we propose using internal explanatory notes that are related to the effort to preserve the equivalent specification. (Levý, 2012, p. 114) Intertextual explications function as subtle parenthesis and carry new cultural information.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explain and clarify selected issues of so called Islamic lifestyle, with a special attention paid to the social status of women, values and way of thinking, often translated into the way women dress themselves, and the influence of these differences onto other cultures. It seems that nowadays Europe needs to define or re-define its values in contrast to those of dominant civilizations. Phenomenon of national culture is becoming crucial topic and leads to intensive thinking of cultural identity that has its unique characteristics. The question that occurs is whether European countries have similar or different values, if they keep their own cultural identities and independence or are globalized and

influenced by American and Islamic cultures. Only strong awareness of diversity and uniqueness importance of all aspects of national culture can prevent total principle implementation of one culture. Translated texts throughout literature, introduce different culture to another one. As everything has its positive and negative influence, translating into national cultures enriches cultural environment but on the other hand it is protection of national culture in which foreign culture wants to be establish. (Biloveský, 2011, p. 14).

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PARODY AND HUMOUR OF PRATCHETT 'S FANTASY

An intertextual comparison with J.R.R. Tolkien

A well known creator of fantasy novels, Terry Pratchett is usually appreciated for his *Discworld* series. However, among other novels of the fantasy genre, this author's books form an odd group due to their ever-present humour and irony. Within the genre, they are usually branded as humorous fantasy. Pratchett's humour is often an outcome of various intertextual shifts. The following text presents a comparison of J.R. R. Tolkien's and T. Pratchett's characters to identify one intertextual method that Pratchett uses for humorous impact.

When, in the first half of the 20th century, British linguist and writer J.R.R. Tolkien published his novels *Hobbit, or There and Back again* and *Lord of Rings*, he caused Hobbit-mania. Although his books were primarily intended for children, they became very popular among people of all age levels. In the time of revolutionary scientific discoveries and first human attempts to travel in space, people, who were otherwise able to find logical explanation for almost every problem and mystery, turned to reading fantasy. They followed the adventures of a little creature, neither dwarf nor man. For writing those stories and novels, Tolkien drew inspiration from Scandinavian sagas and medieval eposes. This is clearly indicated by the characters' names. As L. Doruzka noticed, the names of dwarfs and the sorcerer Gandalf from *Hobbit* come from Edda, the old Norse saga. In addition, the main motif from *Lord of Rings* also shows significant similarity with the Song of Nibelungs¹, the old German legend².

The story of the hobbit Bilbo resembles a classic fairy tale, which is based on the traditional opposition of good and evil, with an inevitably positive ending. The Hobbit also follows the classic conception of protagonists who always fit into two

¹“Mená trpaslíkov a čarodejníka Gandalfa z Hobita pochádzajú zo severskej Eddy a hlavný motív Pána prsteňov má mnoho spoločného s Piesňou o Nibelungoch” (Dorůžka, 1991, s. 375).

² The old German legend Song of Nibelungs was recorded in 13th century, although its existence is much longer. It tells stories of mighty prince Sigfried who defeats the Nibelung brothers, strong dwarfs and great, skilled black smiths. Sigfried is able to gain their gold treasure, magical sword and the cloak of invisibility and then he kills a dragon. After that, he pretends he is someone else and goes to propose a beautiful princess Krimhild. He helps her brothers defeat enemy armies of Saxons and Danes as well as gain the mighty Burgundy Queen Brunhild for one of them.

basic categories: good or evil. Their qualities are revealed to the readers at the beginning, or with the arrival of conflict. Such protagonists usually do not change, or evolve in any way during the whole narration. If a queen is bad at the beginning, she will stay so till the end, when the evil is rightfully punished.

Tolkien introduces the rather comfort-loving, plump hobbit Bilbo Baggins, who refuses to take care about anything but his own wellbeing and solace. Unlike other classic fairy tales, however, here the reader can observe Bilbo's gradual change and development during one adventurous journey. Tolkien's novels *The Hobbit* and *Lord of Rings* are similar in this respect so we can regard them both as adventure – initiation novels. The main protagonist of an initiation story makes a certain kind of pilgrimage, a journey leading through several challenging tests. Meeting these challenges changes his view of life, allowing him to understand the true meaning of his existence and of all life. Passing the tests changes the personality of such a protagonist, which is not the case of adventurous.

The journey of Tolkien's characters is also full of dangerous surprises that present new challenges and self-sacrifice. The fellows have to go through thick and dangerous forests, survive many a perilous mountain pass or dark underground corridors and attacks of various fierce creatures, they have to fight for life. Survival means that they have found both the practical and social tools not only to survive, but also to mature. This is an evolutionary shift in such characters, who are not winning due to their primary category (i.e. good conquers evil), but by personal choices that reflect their growth. That makes them able to help their society and finally to fulfil their ultimate goal: to defeat evil. The journey changes Bilbo, who is not so self-interested anymore, but the change is not leading up until his final spiritual enlightenment.

The success of Tolkien's novels brought a lot of his epigones. They tried to achieve the same popularity and literary position, but in vain. Terry Pratchett is a British fantasy writer who was blamed by orthodox Tolkien fans of borrowing from their favourite writer. Pratchett explained, that he did not find inspiration in Tolkien's book, but rather in the unsuccessful literary imitations, which appeared immediately after *Hobbit's* success. He emphasized that he created his first books of *The Discworld* series to mock such texts and their writers. However, there are some signs that contradict the writer's refusal of a direct influence from Tolkien's texts.

Doubtlessly, both the authors enriched fantasy literature with two unique fictitious worlds. While Tolkien's Middle-earth is somewhere on our planet, Pratchett's *Discworld* is an utterly different world in the shape of a gigantic disc supported by four elephants standing on a shell of space turtle A-tuin.

Tolkien's world

The fictitious world of Middle-earth is a meticulously designed place with enough similarities to English life that we can assume that its author placed it somewhere in Europe, most probably in England. Tolkien, who was a linguist,

created not only its geography, but also the language, mythology and genealogy of its emperors. Thematically these novels deal with history, depict various heroic fights, wars and battles of hobbits, elves, dwarves and people against their enemies, who represent the empire of evil. While *The Hobbit* is a kind of prologue to *The Lord of Rings* Trilogy, *Sillmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* offer further details explaining mythological and kin relationships of gods and emperors from all the writer's novels.

Pratchett's world

Pratchett's Discworld novels miss the encyclopaedic aspect of Tolkien's fiction. Pratchett found a rich source for his fantasy world in Native American Indian mythology (the turtle and four elephants supporting the world). Despite such construction, Discworld countries resemble specific countries of the actual world. Such effect is doubtlessly the result of the author's deliberate effort, because in creating them he uses well known geographical and cultural aspects and stereotypes from the actual world and applies them in his fictitious countries. For example, it is easy to recognize that *Interesting Times*, the 7th Discworld novel, is set in the country which was highly inspired by medieval China (Agatean Empire is surrounded by a Great Wall), while the end of the novel shifts to a country that overtly resembles Australia (natives with white body painting, a boomerang). Geographically, the Discworld is created gradually, increasing its size with every new part.

Ankh-Morpork, its central city-state, bears signs of a big European medieval city. (Also the social and technological aspects of the city as well as of the whole Discworld situation are medieval). The citizens of Discworld travel by horse-drawn carriages and believe in the supernatural. However, they sometimes use machines that slightly resemble contemporary devices (these are outcomes of modern technologies in the actual world, but in the Discworld, they are based on the opposition of contemporary idea and primitive realisation, which follows childish apprehension of how they might work).

Contemporary elements appear in the themes and language of the Discworld novels. The main motif of *Interesting Times* is the difference between totalitarian regime and democracy. This comparison is depicted by juxtaposition of two worlds that are built on the principle of a negative and its photography, e.g. black and white contrast between the two otherwise similar pictures. All the books of the City-Watch sub-series include racial equality, which is also one of the themes of *The Truth*. Women's equality is the topic of *Monstrous Regiment*, while *The Truth* explores the ethics of journalism.

Aspects of the contemporary world overtly penetrate into descriptions, where they demonstrate itself and refer to the actual world, which is implicitly present in such opposition with the medieval Discworld situation. They also mark language registers of characters who speak about local situations and use similes or references to the actual world too. Those characters also buy hotdogs in the streets

of medieval city, or they roller skate there and such incongruities have comical effect.

Tolkien's novels use the setting of actual battles between good and evil as the setting for the characters' moral growth and development. His heroes always win through their valour, power and sometimes also with a help of white magic. There are also battles and combats in Pratchett's novels, but his characters win because they are quick, dexterous as well as clever. Some of them are very cunning and skilled in political manoeuvring (Lord Vetinari). Physical power is rather scorned and as such attributed mainly to characters of slow thinking like clumsy trolls, stone creatures, whose origin is also in Scandinavian legends.

It seems, that the fictitious words of these authors are so different that it would be hardly possible to find any direct connection between them. Nevertheless, Captain Carrot Ironfoundersson, a character from Ankh-Morpork City Watch sub-series, may reflect inspiration from Tolkien's Aragorn from the *Lord of Rings* trilogy.

Aragorn

After his royal father's death, Aragorn is brought up by Elf Elrond in Rivendell. Aragorn does not know about his royal origin. The elf names him Estel, which means "hope" in the Elven language. Elrond treats Aragorn like his own son and decides not to reveal the secret of his origin before adulthood. Then he will be able to face duties that are bound with it. Aragorn proves his bravery and heroism in fighting against the evil necromancer Sauron and his armies. In that time he falls in love with Arwen, a half-elven. He defeats Sauron and then marries Arwen and becomes the king of Arnor and Gondor.

Carrot

As a toddler, Carrot is found in a forest, surrounded by a group of murdered wayfarers. He is adopted by the king of dwarfs and brought up in belief that he is also one of them despite his considerable physical size. Carrot does not know anything about his possible royal origin, however there are some unusual things that suggest such past. The most significant one is his appearance. There is also an old and always sharp sword with an inscription, which was found next to him in the forest. The final item is an old ring with the same inscription, which was dug out later, but from the similar place. After growing up, Carrot goes to Ankh-Morpork to fight against crime as a member of The City Watch. There he meets Angua, a female werewolf, and they gradually develop a very close relationship.

Close comparison of Aragorn and Carrot shows several resemblances and shifts that form a proposition of their intertextual relationship. It appears that Pratchett found a rich source of inspiration for one of his characters in Tolkien. In creating Carrot he made his tool of Genettian parody. According to Genette parody is a playful transformation of the subjects of parodied text, which has no effect on its style. Such parody often changes conditions of the subjects instead of its style,

which means that there can be changes in the subjects' social status, or existential form, and so on. Relation between the parody and its original pretext does not have to be satirical, even if the aforementioned transformation of subjects and their conditions often comprises effect of irony.

We can identify three basic semantic shifts in Pratchett's transformation of Tolkien's character of Aragorn:

1. Aragorn is leaving hills to fight against Sauron's evil – Carrot leaves for Ankh-Morpork to fight against criminality as a policeman.
2. Aragorn is in love with Arwen, half-elven – Carrot loves Angua, who is from a family of werewolves (she is half wolf).
3. Aragorn becomes the king – Carrot gets a promotion.

In the case of Pratchett's parody, there is more than these changes. The shifts caused by transformation of pretext change the mood of the final post-text creating a humorous effect:

1. While Aragorn's tutors are exalted and noble creatures who live in their forest dwelling, the dwarfs who raise Carrot are just opposite in both appearance and behaviour. The dwarfs are rather simple, short, noisy and quarrelsome, with long beards. They live deep in hills in their mines.
2. When Aragorn goes to fight against Sauron, he is a man and his Elven background is significantly integrated into his personality. And so is Carrot's background. When he leaves for Ankh-Morpork, he is as honest and simple thinking as his tutors, dwarfs, and that is why he is not able to understand any of intrigues and gossips that surround him in the big city, or to identify irony when it appears in someone's words.
3. The war against Sauron and his army requires such serious self-sacrifice and courage that only a hero and future king as Aragorn can be successful in defeating this enemy. Fighting against crime in Ankh-Morpork brings Carrot into many complicated situations, but he usually shrinks from use of his physical powers. It is his helpless innocence and simplicity in combination with his strong carrot - shaped body that shock the environment and especially criminal elements of the society. They suddenly become meek and obedient.
4. The Elven Princess Arwen is a noble creature of great manners. On the other hand, Carrot's colleague and girlfriend Angua is a werewolf. In her animal form she is very effective when she is chasing a criminal. Pratchett uses such situations to create a lot of humour. For example when Angua wants to return to her human shape (Situational kind of humour, the reader sees a mental picture of the event with missing clothes, which must follow, it is implicitly present, however the writer usually omits it). Such humour is based on the opposition of the implicit, logical conclusion of missing clothes with absence of any explicit reference to them.
5. After defeating Sauron, Aragorn becomes a famous and respected king. People still remember his heroic deeds and appreciate him. Carrot is gradually promoted for his successful fight against criminality in Ankh-Morpork. He is

satisfied with his personal life, because as a policeman he knows his streets, city and his people. When he realizes that the word policeman is derived from *polis* – city, Carrot concludes for himself that a policeman is a man of the city. He is the true governor of the city who knows his people and protects them. (*Men at arms*, 1993).

The shifts indicate that the outcomes of Pratchett's transformations are present on the semantic level³ and in the mood of the entire text. This indicates that the character of Captain Carrot was developed as a satirical parody of Tolkien's Aragorn. The shifts changed Aragorn's traditional heroic dignity replacing it with simplicity and comicality in the posttext. The loss of dignity is already indicated in Carrot's name, which in combination with the tall muscular body of its owner creates more a cartoon character than a hero.

As Tolkien found a lot of significant inspiration in Scandinavian mythology, Pratchett found a degree of inspiration in Tolkien's novels. However, he did not try to imitate them. His approach to those texts was very creative, he parodied some elements to create a satirical parody as an outcome of superior intertextuality. Most of Pratchett's humour is created with similar intertextual shifts that produce various incongruous connections with their implicit pretexts. Hence the origin of most of Pratchett's humour. Although the text above focuses especially on the Pratchett-Tolkien relationship, the Discworld texts contain many other examples of humour-producing intertextual relationships and therefore to brand this novels as intertextual fantasy would be more accurate than the simple label of humorous fantasy.

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³ Already mentioned conditions of parodied subjects.

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JĘZYKOZNAWSTWO

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WHY DO PEOPLE LEARN – MOTIVATION

Abstract

This article describes the phenomenon of motivation which is regarded as a crucial element of educational processes, one could say basic stimulus to achieve success at school. It is dedicated to giving a brief look over various aspects of motivation as well as describes inner and outer conditions which determine learners capacity to acquire knowledge. The author concentrates on characteristics of different groups of students, who according to their age, are more or less determined to learn. The author's main purpose is to establish the results of the questionnaire devoted to certain reasons that influence learners eagerness to study or discourage them from this process. The author will mainly concentrate on middle-aged school students whose motivation to learn is quite low in comparison to other age groups. The author would like to broaden knowledge in this field for practical reasons. Finally, the article focuses on summarizing the survey results to emphasize the importance of keeping students motivation high and using suitable teaching methods to sustain this course of action.

1. Teaching a foreign language in contemporary times

Teaching English successfully in modern schools is not an easy thing to obtain. On one hand students are more conscious of the necessity to speak at least one foreign language fluently but on the other they are not hardworking and systematic enough to achieve certain goals. Since the humanistic and communicative approaches gained popularity a lot has changed in terms of teaching attitudes. Nowadays the whole learning process is aimed at the student, he/she stays in the centre of it and is expected to become an active participant of this process. The learner is no more the passive recipient of information what has completely changed the role of the teacher as well who now acts as a helper, assistant and advisor. The person who individualizes educational processes and shows various ways to achieve particular goals but gives the student *controlled autonomy* to do it. A teacher is supposed to inspire students to logical and innovative thinking and show practical usage of gained information. These changes resulted in more autonomous approach to study connected with putting increased responsibility on students who became planner-directors of their own learning patterns, monitor-evaluators of their own progress and tutors of other learners. According to American didactic Nunan (1991) it is crucial for the teacher to activate learners'

emotions and involvement in lessons¹. It has been proved that not the teacher himself and his knowledge but the students' activity reflects the real nature of acquiring information and influences successful teaching results. Every student needs friendly classroom environment to stimulate his/her thinking. It is scientifically proved that positive input evokes a number of positive reactions in human's brain what influences creativity and helps to achieve better learning results. During English classes it is essential to stimulate learners to talk. Exchanging information and communicating is natural when the information gap appears and the lesson context stays realistic. When the teacher relates to contemporary problems, uses up-to-date information it becomes easier to provoke students to discussion on certain subjects. Real-life context can lead to very strong emotions and as a result strong involvement in what the students learn, remember and do.

1.2. Why do people learn – motivation?

There are no two students who learn exactly the same way. Every student is an individual whose ability to learn is deeply influenced by personal characteristics, life experience, interests, learning strategies and techniques (Szałek 2004:15). Acquiring knowledge is a complicated process determined by a lot of various didactic and psychological aspects among which a crucial role play innate and acquired during the life time personal features. From the psychological point of view personal features can be divided into cognitive (intellectual) and affective (emotional) ones. In the first group of features we can distinguish: intelligence, age, ability to learn, typological features of character, competitiveness, the level of fear, learning and communicative strategies. The second group consists of faith in achieving success, level of self-esteem, respect, empathy, approach to life and motivation. Only the affective features can be controlled in the classroom environment and their intensity is possible to be modified. With no doubts in the scientific world motivation is regarded as the triggering factor which significantly influences the educational process. Szałek (2004:51) illustrates this phenomenon in a chain:

motivation → positive emotions → organism stimulation → intellectual activeness → faster elicitation of L2²

“Motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2”³ (Ellis, 1997:75). It is a self-conscious and purposeful activeness, enthusiasm for doing something, a kind of willingness to

¹ D. Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1991.

² M. Szałek, *Jak motywować uczniów do nauki języka obcego?* Wydawnictwo WAGROS, Poznań 2004, s. 15, 51.

³ R. Ellis, *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

acquire new information which has its source in the mind of the student however its intensity can be influenced a lot by other factors like: the teacher's attitude, teaching methods presented during the classes, well-equipped language laboratory, being forced to use a foreign language at work or just for pleasure in communication with friends⁴ (Komorowska 2009).

As motivation seems to be a very complicated and multidimensional phenomenon that is why over the years scientists found various types of motivation depending on the accepted criteria. One can distinguish primary and derivative motivation that vary in their intensity. The primary motivation is definitely stronger but it only appears when the child acquires L1. Positive and negative motivation depending on feelings they evoke, direct and indirect which refer to the distance of goals to complete, inner and outer depending on educational or more overall aspects that influence the students or general and detailed motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished two other kinds of motivation: integrative-connected with the positive attitude to the target language group and eagerness to become its member, and instrumental, which is connected with utilitarian goals for learning a foreign language like being promoted at work or getting the possibility to travel⁵. Equally important is the concept of intrinsic motivation, which is the energy and effort put by a student to accomplish certain tasks⁶ (Dakowska 2007). Contemporary view over motivation reflects more classroom-oriented opinion that it is teacher's responsibility to raise students' curiosity about the subject and engage them in the learning process⁷ (Dörnyei 2001, 2005). As it has been mentioned above different aspects of motivation count more or less to various age groups among which children, teenagers and adults can be distinguished.

1.3. Motivation in different age groups

1.3.1. Children age 6-11

This group of learners can be characterized as probably the most enthusiastic one about learning itself. Children usually possess a deep eagerness to acquire knowledge, they simply feel happy about going to school. Their positive attitude is caused by not having any bad experiences in this field before, being like a white sheet of paper.

⁴ H. Komorowska, *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2009.

⁵ R. C. Gardner and W. E. Lambert, *Attitudes of Motivation in Second-Language Learning*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1972.

⁶ M. Dakowska, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007.

⁷ Z. Dörnyei, *Motivational Strategies In the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Other aspects of such behaviour can be connected with being determined to impress parents or thinking warmly about the teacher who is often treated by young learners like an icon. If the trainer cares about the learners, praises them, smiles and has energy to play with, students will definitely love the lessons and succeed in making very good results. Most children achieve success in learning because they have a very competitive nature, as Dakowska (2007:159) names: “a goal-oriented behaviour, which unconsciously forces them to be better than their classmates to deserve for praise and any kind of teacher’s attention”⁸.

With this age group motivation does not seem to be a problem, but more demanding is an aspect connected with preparing a course as the teacher is limited in many domains. Komorowska (2009) notices that every tutor should remember that children’s ability to write and read is not developed well, that suggests concentrating on listening and speaking skills during a language course⁹. On the other hand, Papalia and Olds (1990) hold the opinion that children should be encouraged to do creative projects like, for example, writing a poem, drawing a picture, writing a story, first version, polishing and revising it. The same authors recommend teaching practical tasks, for instance, reading a map, keeping a journal, writing letters, because putting thoughts on paper helps the children in better organization¹⁰. As Dakowska (2007) describes, middle-aged children start developing their memory capacity, critical thinking, reasoning operations, imaginary that is why their attention span is still limited and quite short. Due to this fact the trainer needs to prepare a lot of attractive exercises which involve movement on every session. The founder of Total Physical Response method, James Asher (1982), states that the initial part of teaching a foreign language is concentrating on practising physical actions in response to teacher’s commands and instructions¹¹. On the basis of his research it can be assumed that any kind of activity, changing places, looking for some objects, matching, singing or dancing will bring benefits to young learners because liveliness is an integral part of their growing up. Teaching through songs, poems, flashcards, games, floor playing and senses is crucial for youngsters. As they feel a deep need to hear things, the course should consist of a number of stories, fairy tales, listening to CDs or video recordings.

Teaching speaking and pronunciation is also not an easy thing to achieve due to the fact that the teacher is limited only to simple phrases, rhymes and basic

⁸ M. Dakowska, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007.

⁹ H. Komorowska, *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2009.

¹⁰ D. E. Papalia and W. Olds, *A Child’s World Infancy Through Adolescence*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1990.

¹¹ J. Asher, *The Total Physical Response Approach*. 1982, In: R. W. Blair (ed), *Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House Publishers, 54-66.

sentence structures. Asher (1982:54) claims: “the first step in learning another language is to internalize the code in the same way you assimilated your native language, which was through commands”¹². He is convinced that the imperative can be successfully used to teach a lot of grammatical structures and vocabulary of the foreign language. Another important aspect connected with acquiring the target language by children is the fact that they do not have a well developed ability to abstract thinking, they remember things mechanically and as a result learning process must be connected with real objects present here and now¹³ (Dakowska 2007). They usually possess an extremely creative nature so they should express themselves in theatre, music, art any kind of practice that releases their feelings and spontaneous reactions. What is more, teachers need to provide a lot of repetition every time they meet students because youngsters forget quickly what have already been taught.

1.3.2. Teenagers age 13-19

The next age group in the centre of methodologists' interest are teenagers. According to Forisha-Kovach (1983), adolescence is the time when learners grow into maturity, a period in which they reach the peak of intellectual development which requires flexibility and coordination¹⁴. What is more in this period of life teenagers achieve the top in the ability to think critically and abstractly, as well as to hypothesize and build theories. Young individuals grow independent of their parents, but peer behaviour and relations begin to play a very important role in their lives. Dakowska (2007:173) says: “a peer group is the context in which adolescents try to establish their identity”¹⁵. When the teacher decides to start a language course with teenage students setting the main goals is obligatory as well as considering the best methods to achieve certain skills¹⁶ (Scrivener 1994). The question of where the students are at the beginning of the course and where they are supposed to be at the end of it must be asked. It is very important to remember that developing speaking and listening skills is a thing that cannot be forgotten. Nowadays being able to communicate with foreigners or react to everyday life situations is emphasized in teaching languages. Students must be exposed to the language of native speakers as much as possible as well as skilfully motivated to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ M. Dakowska, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007.

¹⁴ B. Forisha-Kovach, *Experience of Adolescence. Development in Context*. Glenview: Scott Foresman and Company, 1983.

¹⁵ M. Dakowska, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007.

¹⁶ J. Scrivener, *Learning Teaching*. London: Heinemann, 1994.

express their own ideas¹⁷ (Savignon 1983). It is crucial to make students familiar with the culture, customs and traditions of other countries which build up the attitude of tolerance and frankness towards other nations¹⁸ (Komorowska 2009).

With middle-school and secondary school students the most frequent problem that may occur is lack of willingness to study. Sometimes the teacher can feel a deep sense of loss or dissatisfaction with not being able to encourage students to learn. Methodologists agree that motivation seems to be the most important aspect of teaching on every level, but with teenagers it may be more complicated to achieve than with other age groups. To avoid this problem it is crucial to know students interests, popular topics mentioned at this age, new advancements in technology like: computers, smartphones, high-tech gadgets which can help to create interesting and challenging lessons. Dakowska (2007:177-178) comments:

Non-trivial teaching content, for example regarding social issues and explicit grammar instructions are helpful, if not absolutely necessary in most cases of language learners. However, this is also the time when peer group, ego development and sexual identity become very important, certainly more important than the teacher and the grades for most, except the most academically-oriented learners¹⁹.

In addition, it is significant to make students responsible for their systematic training and raise their awareness of how a foreign language may be useful in the future²⁰ (Harmer 1998). Because adolescence is a period of life in which abstract thinking and logical memory become well developed learners are obligated to self-study at home. Older learners are able to work on their own with texts, written forms, they can also revise parts of the material at home without teacher's assistance, and this leaves more time during lessons for practicing new language or preparing short scenes and dialogues²¹ (Komorowska 2009).

Although some student show more eagerness towards learning than others, it has always been of great importance to remember to be fair and give only constructive opinions to prevent offending or hurting anyone as at this age learners seem very sensitive about being treated respectfully²² (Harmer 1998). It has been

¹⁷ S. Savignon, *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1983.

¹⁸ H. Komorowska, *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2009.

¹⁹ M. Dakowska, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007.

²⁰ J. Harmer, *How to Teach English*. Pearson: Longman, 1998.

²¹ H. Komorowska, *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych*. Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2009.

²² J. Harmer, *How to Teach English*. Pearson: Longman, 1998.

psychologically proved that it is more beneficial in educational processes to concentrate mostly on positive feedback that will support students' personality, intelligence despite emphasizing all kinds of mistakes that may occur. At this age it is not easy to speak in public or being judged by the classmates that is why working in pairs or groups may be a safer solution to limit pressure and stress.

1.3.3. Adults

The last but not the least group of learners to describe are adults. Planning a language course for adults is not limited by students developmental conditions and abilities, however it is essential to stick to very specific needs the students may have. The course is expected to be designed to fulfil learners expectations as well as, or even the most important, the hopes of the employer who sends his workers on a particular training. Such beliefs usually concentrate on practicing communicative skills necessary to take part in all kinds of business meetings, answering the phone calls or writing skills needed to correspond with foreign companies²³ (Frendo 2009).

According to the same author this group of students is highly motivated to work hard as their achievements result in saving the job they already have or getting a promotion. Not being forced to take advantage of the teaching process simplifies the trainer's work on one hand, but on the other requires a lot of precision and being well prepared for every session.

The problems which may occur during the course are usually connected with not having enough time at home for self-study or not attending the course regularly often as a result of concentrating on doing professional duties. Lack of students' attendance complicates running the course smoothly as some parts of the material are not satisfactorily acquired. Such situation demands from the trainer concentrating on a lot of repetitions, revisions and summaries of information.

It is also worth remembering that adults possess the baggage of experiences from previous schools which may be good or bad, as a consequence not everybody feel extremely happy about educating again and, what can be even worse, most of mature students are afraid of failure or being ridiculed in front of other workers. Lightbown and Spada (1999:33) write: "Most child learners do not feel nervous about attempting to use the language-even when their proficiency is quite limited, but adults and adolescents often find it very stressful when they are unable to express themselves clearly and correctly"²⁴.

Taking everything into account, designing a good language course consists of many elements like for example, an interesting course book, the choice of methods and techniques, involvement of technology and innovative teaching strategies.

²³ E. Frendo, *How to Teach Business English*. Harlow: Longman, 2009.

²⁴ P. Lightbown and N. Spada, *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Teachers' and students' positive attitude towards learning plays the major role in the whole process, not to mention building up learners' motivation, which differs depending on their age. It is a fundamental element of successful teaching. High motivation towards studying results in better achievements as well as positive attitude towards studying. Owing to the fact that the most demanding group to motivate are teenagers, teachers need to prepare a detailed plan of every lesson and include innovative working methods using computers, interactive white-boards or overhead projectors as often as it is possible.

2. The survey and its results

The survey was conducted among randomly chosen middle-aged students, aged 13 – 15, attending all three educational levels. There were sixteen boys and twelve girls from the first class, nineteen girls and thirty-two boys from the second class and nine girls and six boys from the third class what gave the number of ninety – four students altogether. These teenagers had to answer the question what motivates them to study. There were given ten reasons why people learn and were asked to order them according to their needs and preferences from the most motivating to the least important.

The survey

What motivates you to study the most (order the letters from the most to the least important)?

- a) interesting classes,
- b) getting good grades,
- c) your desire to be the best,
- d) being able to put theoretical knowledge into practice in the future,
- e) feeling afraid of the teacher, bad marks or parents,
- f) teacher whom you like and respect,
- g) being judged and treated fair,
- h) appreciation from friends,
- i) appreciation from parents,
- j) prizes in return for good grades.

The results, ordered from the most to the least important:

Table 2.1 The results of the survey

| PLACE | ANSWER | % OF STUDENTS |
|------------------|--------|---------------|
| 1 st | D | 30% |
| 2 nd | B | 22% |
| 3 rd | A | 17% |
| 4 th | F | 15% |
| 5 th | G | 15% |
| 6 th | I | 17% |
| 7 th | J | 15% |
| 8 th | C | 19% |
| 9 th | H | 24% |
| 10 th | E | 48% |

All of the reasons presented in the survey and then summarised in the table reflect derivative nature of motivation in educational processes. The analysis show clearly that the most motivating aspect of acquiring new language is the opportunity to use theoretical knowledge in practical terms in future life. It is an instrumental outer motivation based on motive of usefulness and moral obligation to study. Despite young age, students stay aware of contemporary challenges as well as high competition on the working market. Many of them, still as children, experienced certain drawbacks related to staying alone in the house while their relatives work abroad. These students have real life examples of how useful speaking English fluently can be for their future career in Poland or beyond its border.

The second place occupies getting good grades which indicates that self-motivation remains high. Students are directed by practical reasons which at school become reflected by good marks and then in the future career it will evaluate into materialistic needs like getting a pay rise or promotion. These motives fit within instrumental outer motivation and show teenagers' honesty and desire to live in wealth. Most learners stay highly motivated as they regard self improvement as the best way to achieve life goals.

Third out of ten inspiration to study is attending interesting classes. It is called instrumental inner motivation which involves motives of achieving success as well as some cognitive aspects of learning. As the survey shows positive reinforcement plays major role in education. A lot depends on the teacher who is expected to possess broad knowledge, stay open-minded, use challenging techniques to conduct classes and elicit information in an inspiring way. It can be assumed that if the teacher is fascinated with the subject, it is very probable that the students will become fascinated too.

It is not a surprise that after interesting classes students placed the teacher who they like and respect as the fourth important aspect for them. This feature derives from outer motivation whose primary motive is directly connected with the person of a tutor himself. Nice personality, intelligence and good sense of humour

encourage children to trust the teacher and express thoughts freely. This positive relation helps to build good working atmosphere and supports learners in taking risks and thinking creatively. This kind of teachers are expected to be respectful, genuine and honest to all students. That is why the fifth position occupies being judged and treated fair what is inseparably connected with teacher's personality and behaviour in the classroom.

The sixth position is taken by the appreciation from parents and together with the seventh place engaged by prizing in return for good grades these two aspects fit within instrumental outer motivation influenced by the motive of parents and materialistic needs. On the basis of this anonymous survey it can be concluded that positive feedback from parents is, to some extent, still important at this age. In homes where adults spend time with children there is an atmosphere of respect parents' opinion matters, as young people need a lot of attention and support. Although teenagers expect appreciation some of them also wait for presents in return. In homes where there is little talk among family members bribing children in order to get good marks is more common as it is a shorter and more convenient way to achieve certain goals.

Little influence on students motivation has the desire to be the best. The survey shows students approach to learning as the process of self-study that leads to self-improvement rather than the way to impress friends or gain popularity. Nowadays learners study in comfortable conditions, they work in small groups and get a lot of attention from the teacher. They have no competitive nature due to the fact that schools are waiting for all kinds of students with their arms open to maintain employment among teachers. In our times students often limit themselves to fulfilling mostly basic requirements.

Almost no impact on learners' eagerness to study has appreciation from friends. It is a quite surprising discovery as various peer groups prominently influence their members. From the practical point of view it could be assumed that studying systematically is completely old-fashioned and people who behave like typical bookworms are not popular among friends at all. They hardly deserve being noticed despite some emergency situations when others need their help to avoid punishment or a bad mark.

According to the majority of students who took part in this survey almost no influence on their education has fear related to derivative negative motivation. It is scientifically proved that all kinds of threatening conditions enlarge production of adrenaline in human body which then blocks neurones' connections and this reaction leads to complete brain and thought failure. The most significant thing is to build friendly and secure teaching environment to encourage brainstorming ideas.

To summarize, teenagers who took part in this survey stay motivated to achieve success in life. They are influenced by both outer as well as inner motives to fulfil their needs. They are self-reliance and quite mature, as for their age, with a deep understanding of contemporary reality. They live in a materialistic world

in which people want to possess certain items to lead comfortable lives. The results of the survey show students' understanding of this phenomenon and being aware of the fact that gaining knowledge is the first step to secure themselves more chances for successful and wealthy life in the future.

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SUGGESTOPEDIA AS A METHOD OF TEACHING VOCABULARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Abstract

Acquisition of vocabulary has gained a more crucial role in the 21st century, and as some would claim, the central role in learning a second language (Lewis 1993). Due to its complexities, many students find it very challenging, therefore teachers try to find appropriate methods to help students store and retrieve words in the target language. This article explores theoretical components and key features of Suggestopedia, the method which can be applied in teaching vocabulary. More specifically, the study proves that Suggestopedic techniques definitely increase students' motivation and improve the class atmosphere. The conclusion is that, despite the inconveniences, Suggestopedia has the elements that can be used successfully in teaching vocabulary.

1. Introduction

It is generally believed that vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in the language study as 'without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed' (Thornbury 2002). It can be observed that when students are asked to make some dialogues in the language classroom, they tend to keep silent due to the lack of vocabulary. There are some other reasons why they are not willing to take part in lessons. One of them is the use of uninteresting methods of teaching by the teacher. As Ramelan (1991) points out 'the failure of English instruction can be explained by many factors including little knowledge of principles of foreign language teaching and the ways of teaching'.

Language learning is one of the most important students' activities in a language classroom. It can be observed that nice atmosphere and various teaching methods may guide learners to learn more effectively in a meaningful context. There have been various teaching methods and approaches in the history of language learning that emphasized different educational needs. Hence, it is the role of foreign language teachers to apply them effectively to an English classroom, taking into account several factors such as: the age of the students, their level of proficiency as well as their interests.

2. Suggestopedia

One method that can be introduced to help students acquire new vocabulary items is Suggestopedia.

Suggestopedia, one of the humanistic approaches was developed by a Bulgarian educator and psychotherapist – Georgi Lozanov in the 1970's. Its basic tenets are derived from several disciplines such as yoga, classical music, autogenic therapy and Suggestology (Chastain 1986).

Lozanov (1986 quoted by Chastain 1986:104) describes the term Suggestology as 'the science for liberating the personality's reserve capacities' while Suggestopedia as 'an educational and curative desuggestive-suggestive pedagogical system'. He claims that students' memory capacity and learning speed are restricted by the restraints society. Thus, it is vital to free them from the confines of these restraints by desuggesting ingrained and subconscious social rules. Maleki (2005) states that learners are able to learn, much more than they can think, on condition that they use their brain power and inner capacities. Moreover, DePorter maintains that human brain is capable of processing great quantities of material as long as he/she is provided with appropriate condition for learning in a state of relaxation and adds that most learners use only about 10 percent of their mental capacity. According to Bowen (2009) using this method with students enhances the process of acquiring the language 25 times faster in comparison to other methods.

The most important characteristics of Suggestopedia advocated by Lozanov (1978) are the decoration, the arrangement of the classroom, the music and the teacher as the authority in the classroom. He believes that 'memorisation in learning by the suggestopedic method seems to be accelerated 25 times over that in learning by conventional methods' (Lozanov 1978:27).

To go further, in order to understand the method one has to look at such issues as yoga traditions and Soviet psychology. Richard and Rogers (2001) state that Lozanov has adapted techniques for altering states of consciousness as well as the rhythmic breathing from yoga. As far as Soviet psychology is concerned, Lozanov believes that a given subject matter can be taught at the same level of skill to all learners.

One of the most distinct features of Suggestopedia is the use of Baroque music and musical rhythm during the learning process. Ostrander and Shroeder (1988 quoted by Harmer 2002) state that Baroque music, with its specific rhythm, creates a sort of relaxed state of mind and helps in the retention of the material. It is thought that Baroque music, initiates a level of relaxed concentration that promotes the intake and retention of huge quantities of material. What is more, Radle (2008) believes that Baroque music is helpful for students to reach a certain state of relaxation, in which their receptivity is raised. Gaston (1968 quoted by Richard and Rogers 2001:100) enumerates three functions of music in therapy:

- to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of personal relations;
- to bring about increased self-esteem through increased self-satisfaction in musical performance;
- to use the unique potential of rhythm to energize and bring order.

Lozanov (1978) believes that music not only relaxes students but it is also helpful to structure and pace the presentation theory of the teaching material.

2.1 Theory of language and learning

In approaching the issue of theory of learning, Lozanov does not seem to be involved in any assumptions concerning language elements. The focus on memorization of vocabulary items (target language item together with its L1 translation) evokes a view of language in which lexis is principal and in which translation of lexical items rather than contextualization is emphasized (Richard and Rodgers 2001). However, Lozanov occasionally makes reference to the significance of experiencing language material in 'whole meaningful texts' (Lozanov 1978:268). He points out that the suggestopedic course leads 'the students not to vocabulary memorization and acquiring habits of speech, but to acts of communication' (Lozanov 1978:109).

According to Lozanov (1982) the most traditional learning is focused on in the left hemispheres of the brain. He advocates that both hemispheres of the brain should be activated to get the maximum learning efficiency. Additionally, learners should use both conscious and subconscious processes while studying and learning should include both analysis and synthesis at the same time. Lozanov (1982:146) adds that everyone has 'unmanifested but genetically predetermined capacities operating mainly in the paraconscious and surpassing the normal ones several times over.'

The most important goal of Suggestoedia is **suggestion** which is used to motivate the learner's potential to learn as it loads the memory banks facilitating memories. Thus, **dessuggestion** is connected with unloading the memory banks of blocking memories. Lozanov's theory of suggestion is derived from the 'narrow clinical concept of hypnosis as a kind of static, sleeplike, altered state of consciousness' (Lozanov 1978:267). He further states that what differentiate his method from hypnosis is that it does not concern 'suggestive-desuggestive sense' and does not have a constant access to reserves through psycho-relaxation.

Lozanov (1978 cited in Lica 2008) advocates that learners' difficulties in acquiring the language may be caused by the fear of making mistakes. He maintains that there is a mental block in the students' brain – *affective filter* which blocks the input. Lozanov recommends the combination of dessuggestion and suggestion as to motivate learners' mental potential to learn and to lower the affective filter, intending to facilitate the process by which they learn to understand the foreign language for communication to accomplish the superlearning.

In approaching the issue of the principles of Suggestopedia, one has to take into account Lozanov's experiences with Suggestology and psychotherapy. There are three basic principles formulated by Lozanov (1978):

1. Joy and absence of tension

Suggestopedic classes take place in a pleasant cheerful classroom away from conventional school surrounding. Classroom are furnished with comfortable chairs,

plants and posters which allow students to take advantage of their 'peripheral learning'. The class size is limited to a maximum of sixteen students.

Learners can feel enjoyment and relaxation due to the creation of what Lozanov (1978) calls a 'positive suggestive atmosphere'. The classes are absolutely non-threatening and tense free, with the teachers putting the emphasis on co-operation rather than competition. As far as the combination of suggestion and music are concerned, they allow the learner to create a state of relaxed alertness which is called *concentrative psychorelaxation* (Lozanov 1978), a state of mind that enhances learning.

2. Unity of conscious and unconscious processes

Lozanov (1977:3) maintains that the 'inhabitation of unconscious functions during the consciously directed learning process does not correspond to the natural, dialectic, inseparable link between conscious and subconscious processes'. He advocates that it does not mean that unconscious functions are completely 'unutilized in conventional teaching approaches' (Lozanov 1978:259) but he pays attention to the significance of these functions and how they can effectively be consolidated into the instruction process. To understand this process better, one must look at the behavior of the teacher as well as the materials used in suggestopedic teaching.

According to Celce-Murcia (2000) teachers' task is to use the target language for everyday communication by advancing their process of learning. It can be achieved by using learners' mental powers. Teachers can desuggest the psychological barriers students have in the learning situation and make usage of techniques to stimulate the 'paraconscious' part of mind (Celce-Murcia 2000:81).

Lozanov (1978) draws special attention to *dual plane* behavior which means that the teachers' verbal behavior must fit their unconscious non-verbal behavior. What is more, gestures, mimicry and eye contact are very significant in communication. Lozanov (1978) believes that mastery of dual plane behaviour can only be achieved when teachers use sincere rather than artificial techniques.

It is believed that the largest part of learning in Suggestopedia occurs in the *action mode* during the introduction of materials and the active concert session. A significant part also takes place in the *respective mode* which is peculiarly shown in the passive concert session (Lozanov 1978). Learners in this mode are referred to as being in a reverie-like state, they feel relaxed and do not specifically attend to the music and to the learning material which are demonstrated simultaneously. As Lozanov (1978:198) states 'such passiveness facilitates hypermnnesia and liberates the intellectual activity to operate without any disturbing strain'. Many researchers in this field provide empirical support for Lozanov's claim, for example Budzyński (1976) advocates that that a reverie-like state can be conducive to memorization. To go further, advantages associated with the psychological and physiological state of the subject evolved from experience of a reverie-like state have been shown in hypnosis (Ericson 1980).

3. Suggestive intervention

Lozanov (1978) maintains that it is vital to expand the learners' potential, taking into account two levels: psychological and intellectual. The goal of the teacher is to improve students' self-concept, the productiveness of their learning as well as their attitude towards learning. According to Celce-Murcia (2000) if learners feel relaxed and confident, they will do their best to learn the language and the process of their learning will be more natural and easier.

Lozanov (1978) advocates that it is suggestion that makes learners overcome their barriers to learning. He believes that learners often have negative views about their learning potential which may result in their bad oral performance. Thus, indirect positive suggestion can have a direct influence on the learners' self-confidence (Celce-Murcia 2000).

2.2 The key elements of Suggestopedia technique

The key elements of Suggestopedia contain a rich sensory learning environment, for example pictures, music, colour: a positive expectation of success and the use of a diverse range of methods such as dramatized texts, music, active participation in song and games (Elmi and Marongiu 2008).

Celce-Murcia (2000:84-85) presents the following techniques used in Suggestopedia:

a) peripheral learning

It is believed that by hanging posters with grammatical information about L2 language on the walls, learners will absorb the material without much effort. Celce-Murcia (2000) advocates that students notice much more in their environment than people consciously attend. The posters are changed every week to concentrate on grammatical information which is being dealt with in the class.

b) positive suggestion

The teacher's responsibility is to arrange the suggestive factors in students' learning situations, giving them support in breaking their barriers to learning they bring with them. It can be achieved through direct and indirect means.

Lozanov (1976) mentions two kinds of suggestion: direct and indirect. Direct suggestions are connected with conscious process. The suggestions can be prepared in printed announcement, orally by the teacher, or by text materials. Indirect suggestions, on the other hand, are perceived unconsciously and are definitely much bigger in scope than direct suggestion. Lozanov (1976) calls it the second plane of communication and believes it includes all the communication factors outside learners' conscious awareness, for example voice tone, body movement, facial expression, speech tempo, rhythm, etc. Other essential indirect suggestive effects evolve room management, classroom, décor, lighting and noise level.

c) Choosing a new identity

The learners can choose their new identity, for example a new name, occupation etc. As the course endures, the students may create a whole biography about their

own fictional characters. At the end of the course they may be asked to talk or write about their fictional family or friends.

d) role play

Learners change their behavior to adopt a role in an interaction with another student or students. They act out a conversation in which they have a certain role, for example they can introduce themselves as a completely different person. Role playing is connected with pretending to be someone else in order to represent experiences from students' point of view.

e) first concert

This implies the active presentation of the material to be learnt. After introducing the story and drawing students' attention to some grammatical points that occur in it, the teacher reads a dialogue in the target language. The students have copies of the dialogue accompanied by vocabulary lists and observations on important grammatical points while the teacher is reading. After a few minutes, the teacher starts dramatic reading of the dialogue, accompanied by classical music.

f) second concert (passive concert)

In the second phase, the students are guided to relax and listen as the teacher reads. According to Lozanov (1982) the best choice is pre-classical or Baroque music, with the text being read quietly in the background. The learners sit in comfortable chairs in a nice environment. After reading the dialogue to the accompaniment of music, the teacher makes use of the dialogue for more conventional language work. The music is chosen to bring the learners into the optimum mental state for the effortless acquisition of the material. At the end of the concert, the class finishes for the day.

g) primary activation

This technique is connected with an active phase of the lesson. The learners 'playfully' reread the dialogue in the target language aloud, as individuals or in groups. They can read the dialogue in a particular manner, for example sadly, angrily or cheerfully (Celce-Murcia 2000).

h) creative adaptation

The learners become involved in various activities designed to help them to learn the new material and then start using it spontaneously. Lozanov (1978) recommends various activities for this phase, for example singing, dancing, dramatization, puzzles, games, etc. What is more, the activities are varied and students do not pay attention to the form of the linguistic message but their task is to communicate.

2.3 Suggestopedia in the language classroom

Practice:

Here is an example of teaching vocabulary lesson connected with the topic of traveling by air:

The teacher asks students to choose for themselves a new name which is typical for English speaking countries, to go along with the new experience. They can look

at one of the posters with printed names. First the teacher reads the names and has the students repeat the pronunciation.

The teacher asks students if they like travelling and what countries they would like to visit. Once students choose their holiday destination, the teacher asks them to look at the poster with printed purposes.

1. The teacher provides the students with the dialogues in English together with their corresponding Polish translations. Next, the teacher presents the dialogues partly in English and partly in Polish, using gestures and facial expressions.
2. The teacher plays the background music (Yann Tiersen's 'Comptine d'Un Autre Ete') and reads the dialogues in English. The students can take notes or check Polish translations.
3. The teacher reads the dialogues once again but this time the students are only to listen (the dialogues are covered).
4. The teacher wears a hat, chooses one character from the dialogue and asks four volunteers to come to the middle of the classroom. They are given hats, their task is to read one part of the dialogue in a different way (for example in a cheerful or a sad way).
5. The teacher asks some questions connected with the dialogues. Next, she chooses some words from the dialogue and asks the students to provide Polish equivalents.
6. The teacher chooses some volunteers who want to read the dialogues in front of the classroom.
7. The students are divided into two groups: custom officers and travelers. The custom officers are given the handouts and their task is to interview each traveler before letting them into the country. As travelers are being interviewed, the custom agents write down the travelers' information.
8. The teacher plays some background music (Handel's Water Music') and asks the students to stand in a circle. She throws a soft ball to a different student and asks: '*What is your English name?*' indicating that he or she is to throw the ball to a different student while posing a question, for example '*How long are you planning to stay?*'.

2.4 Advantages and disadvantages of Suggestopedia

a) advantages

Suggestopedia offers some benefits for its use in the language classroom for secondary school students. Using this method in the language classroom, students can lower their affective filter. Learners learn in a pleasant environment with comfortable chairs and background music, a practice which makes students relaxed during the learning process. As Larsen and Freeman (1985) state: 'if students are relaxed and confident, they will not need to try hard to learn the language as learning the language will just come easily and naturally'. Moreover, Suggestopedia refers to a double-planedness theory - the learning from two aspects,

conscious and subconscious one. Students can acquire the aim of teaching instruction from both the direct instruction as well as the environment in which the teaching takes place. Another advantage is peripheral learning, students are encouraged to apply language more independently, taking responsibility for their own learning. Peripheral information may also help encourage students to be more experimental, and look to sources other than the teacher for language input.

b) disadvantages

Suggestopedia has also some negative aspects since there is no single teaching method which can be categorised as the best one.

The main disadvantages are as follows:

- environmental limitation

One of the problems, which many teachers around the world face, is the number of students in the class. It is difficult to teach large classes of 30-40 students using this method of teaching. There should be 10-15 students in the class to make the learning more effective.

- the use of hypnosis

Although Lozanov denied that, some people state that Suggestopedia uses a hypnosis, which can have bad deep effects for human beings.

- infantilization learning

Suggestopedia uses some child-like situations and there are some students who do not like to be treated like that in the language classroom.

Conclusion

Having conducted the lessons using Suggestopedia, the author has come to the conclusion that foreign language teachers should use various methods and approaches to help students acquire new words and expressions. To increase their vocabulary range, learners should be given an opportunity to participate in real-life situations in a non-threatening environment. Although Suggestopedia offers some valuable insights into the power of cognition and initiate techniques that make the learners feel relaxed and comfortable, it can be claimed that there is no single method which can guarantee success in language learning. Hence, it is the role of foreign language teachers to choose the methods or approaches that may be the most appropriate for a particular group of students.

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READING LITERACY AS A KEY STRATEGY TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

According to PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment – 15 year olds), *reading literacy is defined as understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in the society.* The presented research analyses thirty four (34) English reading literacy questionnaires of the university students and their ability to summarize, analyse and synthesize information from written texts, as well as to interpret both direct and indirect information integrated in the text, and, more importantly, to reflect, evaluate and integrate texts, they are confronted with in their everyday academic lives.

Key words: reading literacy, functional literacy, academic reading, text, reading, receptive skills.

Introduction

Learning to read is probably the most difficult and revolutionary thing that happens to the human brain and if you don't believe that, watch an illiterate adult try to do it.

John Steinbeck

Generally, the notion 'literacy' is linked with reading and writing. *A literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life* (UNESCO, 1958). The most common understanding of literacy is that it is a set of tangible skills - particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing (EFA 2006).

In the globalised and multicultural information-oriented society, reading literacy becomes a crucial skill that enables individuals to gather necessary information in order to function socially, perform their professions, and generally enjoy life. On the other hand, reading literacy failure may result in delays, serious economic loss, injuries and even deaths (source). Therefore, reading literacy has recently become one of the most necessary competencies that individuals, as well as working teams and nations are to acquire.

In the framework of literacy during the last digital decay, its understanding and definitions were changing dramatically. Literacy reflects cultural, political, economic, communicative, and other practices shared among members of society. As those practices change, so does literacy. Nowadays, literacy is understood as [...] *the ability to use available symbol systems that are fundamental to learning and teaching - for the purposes of comprehending and composing - for the purposes of making and communicating meaning and knowledge* (Stock 2012).

The importance of literacy and its dissemination is therefore crucial in any sphere of human and social life. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has as one of its mission statements (2013): *UNESCO is at the forefront of global literacy efforts and is dedicated to keeping literacy high on national, regional and international agendas*. Literacy is further described as *the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts* (2005). This definition covers four main fields:

- The context: a literate society;
- The scope: taking part in that society;
- The specific aims: to understand and communicate ideas;
- The skills involved: to read and write;
- The ability to use language: to read, write, listen and speak.

In other words, *literacy is defined as understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential* (OECD 2013 a). Literacy is a core requirement for developing higher-order skills.

The concept of literacy and its applications has drawn researchers and educators to identify it from its practices. Taking into account social, cultural and economic influences, conditions and implications, there are, among others, the following types of literacies (Gavora 2002):

- Base literacy: decoding meaning from the written text, reproducing the text (a reader is more a consumer of the text);
- Literacy processing (elaboration and reasoning of text information): a reader is seen as an active processor of the text;
- Literacy as a cultural (social-cultural) phenomenon: emphasises existence of different literacy activities depending on situation or particular social group;
- E-literacy: computer skills, searching information up to their critical assessment.

Definitions of general literacy and what it means to be literate are similarly varied, divergent and unclear, ranging from functional literacy (attempt to link literacy to purpose) to cultural literacy. The wording of a prestigious assessment body, Cambridge Assessment, points out the versatile nature of literacy: *There seems to be some agreement that literacy is not simply a set of static skills, but must involve*

literacy in action, critical literacy, and literacy as a social practice and multiple literacies (Cambridge Assessment 2013).

As a result of incongruent definitions of literacy, it was important to define also its various forms and new hybrids. In 1978 for example, UNESCO's General Conference adopted a definition of functional literacy – still in use today - which states: *A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.*

Historically, literacy was understood as basic skills (reading, writing) but during decades of globalisation, digitisation, and needs of improving adults' skills it should be regarded more as an instrument for preparing people for their social and economic roles.

The attribute of literacy is generally recognised as one of the key educational objectives of compulsory schooling. Apart from numeracy and writing literacy, the basic level of reading literacy means to read and understand simple printed paragraphs; the middle level is to read and comprehend stories, songs, directions, instructions and simple parts of newspapers. The highest level of reading literacy is comprehended as for self-learning process. It should occur at all education levels but mainly at secondary and higher (academic) education. It encompasses analysing and synthesising main ideas of what is read (UNESCO 2001).

Reading literacy is closely linked to positive outcomes at work, to social participation, and to lifelong learning (OECD 2013 b). Literacy development is one of the main goals in the global education system. The intention of the adult surveys is to measure something broader and deeper.

The main object of this research study is another generative form of literacy, the academic literacy which, however, comprises general literacy, functional literacy, reading literacy and other skills. Academic literacy is be defined as the complex of linguistic, conceptual and skills resources for analysing, constructing and communicating knowledge in the subject area (Warren 2003). According to Yeld (2003), academic reading literacy includes the ability: to comprehend information presented in various modes, to paraphrase, to present information visually, to summarise, and to describe (e.g. ideas, phenomena, processes, changes of state). Thus, it seems theoretically that our research reflects the characteristics of an academic literacy primarily in the ability to comprehend indirect and implicit information in a new, original English unabridged text. According to Foxcroft (2004) some of the fundamental sub-domains of academic literacy include:

- Making meaning from (understand) academic texts;
- Understanding words and discourse signals in their context;
- Summarizing and synthesizing information;
- Identifying the main and supporting ideas in a passage;
- Identifying main from supporting ideas;

- Identifying and tracking academic arguments;
- Understanding and evaluating the evidential basis of argument;
- Extrapolating and drawing inferences and conclusions from what is stated or given;
- Reading critically (e.g. distinguishing between fact and opinion, detecting an author's bias);
- Generating hypotheses on the basis of information in a passage;
- Understanding information presented visually (e.g. graphs, tables, flowcharts);
- Understanding basic numerical concepts and information used in text;
- Reporting facts or narrating events;
- Structuring their writing so that it moves beyond formulaic patterns and reflects original, critical thinking.

The specific subject of this study is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of reading literacy skills and general academic skills of university students in foreign (English) language in order to prove the necessity to improve university and school curricula and extend the scope of reading literacy training in foreign languages as well as in their mother tongue.

Hypotheses

Based on 17-year observations of students' results in entrance tests and reading and literary tests, three hypotheses were set prior to the research:

H1: University students encounter problems in reading new, original English unabridged text, especially when reading for indirect and implicit information.

H2: More training and wider general linguistic skills in other language enhance students' reading literacy skills in English.

H3: Reading literacy skills depend on gender.

Sampling unit description

The structure of sampling unit: The sampling unit consisted of thirty four (34) valid questionnaires. Even though some students did not complete one or maximum two questions question, no questionnaires were cast out as invalid. Incomplete questions were classified as "incorrect" as the student failed to provide the correct answer.

Quantitative data: 34 valid questionnaires were collected in October 2015. 26 women and 8 men participated in the research; all of them were full time second-year university students of various teacher-training programmes; studying double majors in humanities at Matej Bel University. Women outnumbered men more than three times. This is a common demographical phenomenon at teacher-training universities as the teaching profession in Slovakia is low-paid and gradually growing out of popularity among male population. All students studied double majors (e.g. English – Philosophy, English – French, etc.) which is the prevailing type of study at teacher training universities in Slovakia as it offers

graduates better opportunities in the Slovak and international labour market (see Table 1). 12 students studied double languages (English combined with German or Hungarian or Slovak or French or Russian), 6 students studied English and sciences (Chemistry or Biology or Geography) and 16 students studied English and humanities (History or Philosophy or Psychology) as their second subject (See Table 1).

Qualitative data: All respondents passed high-school-leaving exams and university entrance exams with usual passmark 75, 0%. We assume that these exams also served as an equalizer of students' general academic skills and competencies to study at the university. No further research has been conducted in students' previous education (e.g. the type of high school they attended), number of years they had been studying English and extracurricular English classes (e.g. private classes, language clubs, etc.) – Slovak educational system is nowadays so diverse that we take these information as unreliable and misleading (for example, a vocational school may offer a better language training than a secondary grammar school due to a higher number of foreign lecturers – native speakers and, possibly, better international exchange opportunities. Also, the length of study may not be a proof of language abilities anymore – students who study longer often join beginner or pre-intermediate groups due to school logistics or lack of students in advanced classes). Moreover, all respondents have finalized the first year of their university studies which equalised their language skills and linguistic abilities and provided them with necessary information (e.g. propaedeutic causes and introductions to English language, literature, etc.).

Age: No respondents were younger than 18 years and older than 24 years. There was a substantial majority of students (24 students out of 34, i. e. 70, 6%) aged 18-21. Those students who were second-year university students and older than 21 (3 students) usually changed their school or study programmes, or, encountered serious problems in their studies and re-took an academic year. 7 students, however, failed to state their age.

More detailed sampling unit data (including education, age and study combinations) are presented in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1. Structure of sampling unit (total 34 students)

| Sex | Women | Men |
|--|--------------|------------|
| | 26 | 8 |
| Age | | |
| 18 years | 3 | 1 |
| 19 years | 2 | 0 |
| 20 years | 8 | 3 |
| 21 years | 4 | 3 |
| 22 years | 2 | 0 |
| 24 years | 1 | 0 |
| Not stated | 6 | 1 |
| Study combinations (alphabetically ordered) | | |
| English - Biology | 2 | 0 |
| English - Chemistry | 0 | 1 |
| English - French | 0 | 1 |
| English - Geography | 2 | 0 |
| English - German | 1 | 0 |
| English - History | 4 | 3 |
| English - Hungarian | 1 | 0 |
| English - Philosophy | 0 | 1 |
| English - Psychology | 6 | 0 |
| English - Russian | 3 | 1 |
| English - Slovak | 5 | 0 |

Methods of research

In order to acquire empirical data, a questionnaire method, with regards to its multiple benefits, was selected as the key research method. Among other positives, questionnaires enable collecting of respondents' opinions and attitudes in a short period of time and the follow-up bulk data processing. Additional relevant information about the respondents (such as age, education and other identification data) can also be collected. Further, anonymous questionnaires usually enhance openness and sincerity of respondents and, in comparison with a personal debate, questionnaires are less stressful and responses are less affected by the atmosphere and the place. In spite of that, we have decided to use authorized questionnaires as they were at the same time a graded activity for students.

Questionnaire description: Questionnaires consisted of a sample text and two-part answer sheet. Sample text consisted of a 60-line unabridged opening of an English novel (David Lodge's *Small World*; 1984). According to Gavora and Matúšová's structures of sample texts (2010:189), the test tasks represented uninterrupted single body of text.

Sample text description: Lodge's text was selected because, we assume, the topic of academic life and hurdles in study and research is related to respondents' present life of university students. In this mid-1980s comic campus novel, Lodge starts with a prologue, where he in a light banter compares medieval pilgrimages and present-day conferences and draws frequent allusions to famous writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer and T. S. Eliot. Lodge in this text uses advanced language (e.g. words such as *penitential exercise*, *austerely*, *frantic traffic*, *converging paths*, etc.) as well as advanced figurative language, e.g. metaphors, rhetoric questions and allusions. Nevertheless, the overall meaning of the text is generally comprehensible and clear to a university student of English. In the second part of the sample text, Lodge introduces the setting of the novel, and one of the main male characters, a young teacher and scholar, Persse McGarrigle. Again, the language is advanced, however, comprehensible to the target group.

Questionnaire tasks: Sample text was followed by a set of 10 tasks. Students were asked to analyse the text in their own words and to use complete sentences. No further instructions were given, however, students had passed the Introduction to Literature course in the first year of their studies and thus, we assumed they were acquainted with the methods of a systematic literary analysis.

In the second part, focused on gathering specific information either directly or indirectly stated in the text, students were asked to select a correct answer to ten statements – true (T), false (F) or not stated (NS). Here is the list of comprehension statements:

1. Persse McGarrigle had been acquainted with (had read) books by Geoffrey Chaucer. T-F-NS.
2. According to Lodge, conferences and pilgrimages are different in their nature. T-F-NS.
3. The author notes that universities always pay for conferee's expenses. T-F-NS.
4. In this extract, Lodge addresses another writer as well. T-F-NS.
5. Conferees in the extract were happy to attend another conference. T-F-NS.
6. The student halls of residence (dormitories) in the extract were built after 1970. T-F-NS.
7. Rooms at the halls of residence were provided with restrooms. T-F-NS.
8. The narrator of the extract uses a humorous and light tone. T-F-NS.
9. The narrator is a man. T-F-NS.
10. The conferees did not mind minor inconveniences of the dormitories. T-F-NS.

According to the structure of test tasks, suggested by Gavora and Matúšová (2010:189), the structure of questionnaire tasks used can be divided as follows (Table 2):

Table 2. Questionnaire task structure

| | | Task number(s) |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Activities with text | Acquiring direct information | 2,4,6 |
| | Acquiring indirect information | 1,7,10 |
| | Interpretation | 5,8 |
| | Thinking and Evaluation | 3,9 |

Timing: Students started working on questionnaires in class, however, they were allowed to finish them at home and thus the total timing was not restricted. They were instructed to complete the tasks as well as possible which provided them with the authority to decide when the test is complete and answered correctly.

Validity of task questions: 9 tasks were directly or indirectly stated in the text and were to be completed by one of the answers provided. One task (Task 3), however, was speculative and required critical thinking. Students were instructed to note if they do not completely agree with the wording of a statement and amend or change it as necessary. This related mostly to Task 3 (The author notes that universities always pay for conferee's expenses) where the wording, to be 100% true, depended on the change of the word *always* for *usually*. Here we tested students' ability to think critically, go out of task and think "out of box".

Research Outcomes

More detailed research outcomes (including correct and incorrect answers and their correlation to the sex of students) are presented in the following table (Table 3):

Table 3. Research outcomes

| | Total correct answers out of 34 | Total correct answers out of 34 (%) | Total incorrect answers out of 34 | Total incorrect answers out of 34 (%) | Type of task |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Task 1 | 15 | 44.1% | 19 | 55.9% | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 2 | 29 | 85.3% | 5* | 14.7% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 3 | 19 | 55.9% | 15 | 44.1% | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 4 | 26 | 76.5% | 8* | 23.5% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 5 | 27 | 79.4% | 7 | 20.6% | Interpretation |
| Task 6 | 27 | 79.4% | 7* | 20.6% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 7 | 20 | 58.8% | 14 | 41.2% | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 8 | 31 | 91.2% | 3* | 8.8% | Interpretation |
| Task 9 | 25 | 73.5% | 9 | 26.5% | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 10 | 17 | 50.0% | 17 | 50.0% | Acquiring indirect information |

- * In Task 2, one female respondent failed to provide any answer, classified as “incorrect”.
- * In Task 4, one male respondent failed to provide any answer, classified as “incorrect”.
- * In Task 6, two women respondents failed to provide any answer, classified as “incorrect”.
- * In Task 8, one women respondent failed to provide any answer, classified as “incorrect”.

Task analysis - Hypothesis 1

Task 1 (Persse McGarrigle had been acquainted with (had read) books by Geoffrey Chaucer): 15 correct answers were collected versus 19 incorrect. The task was purposely tricky because the first part of the extract described pilgrimages at Chaucer’s times (14-15th century). However, the second part of the text did not make any connection between Chaucer and the main character, Persse McGarrigle, neither denied it. 19 students (5 men and 14 women) failed to recognize this.

Task 2 (According to Lodge, conferences and pilgrimages are different in their nature): 29 students answered this task correctly versus only 4 incorrect answers. This was an easier task as Lodge compares pilgrimages and conferences at length, in extensive 3 paragraphs and makes frequent ties between these (e.g. *as...Chaucer observed many years ago, folk long to go on pilgrimages. Only, these days, professional people call them conferences*).

Task 3 (The author notes that universities always pay for conferees’ expenses): 19 students answered this task correctly versus 15 incorrect answers. Answer to task 3 was purposely speculative in its nature, the proper answer lied in the difference between the words *usually* (universities usually pay) and *always* (universities always pay). As noted before, students were instructed to comment on the wording of statements if they felt it was tricky or misleading. However, only two students (women) were sensitive to this minor yet significant semantic difference and commented on it.

Task 4 (In this extract, Lodge addresses another writer as well): 26 students answered this task correctly versus only 8 incorrect answers. However, the answer to this task was directly mentioned in the text (*...What does Geoffrey Chaucer think? ...probably, he laughs heartily...and considers himself well out of it*) several times and thus, was easy to answer.

Task 5 (Conferees in the extract were happy to attend another conference): 27 students answered this task correctly versus only 7 incorrect answers. As in Task 4, this information was directly stated and repeated several times (*Dismay has been plainly written on many faces...; they had glumly unpacked their suitcases...; these were familiar discomforts and, up to a point, stoically accepted...*). Thus only 7 students (4 women, 3 men) failed to recognize the information needed.

Task 6 (The student halls of residence (dormitories) in the extract were built after 1970): Similarly to Tasks 4 and 5, task 6 required close reading plus some powers of observation. Lodge writes, ...*The conferees had...acquainted themselves with the accommodation provided in one of the University's Hall of residence, a building hastily erected in 1969 and now, only ten years later, looking much worse for wear...*). Thus, as many as 27 students noticed this fact and correctly answered the task, versus 7 incorrect answers.

Task 7 (Rooms at the halls of residence were provided with restrooms): The answer to task 7 was stated indirectly. Lodge writes ...*For more elaborate ablutions, or to answer a call of nature, it was necessary to venture out into draughty and labyrinthine corridors in search of the communal washrooms...*). Only 20 students (15 women and 5 men) managed to decode the euphemism *call of nature* as connected to the need of restrooms and identified the rest of the sentence correctly versus 14 incorrect answer (11 women, 3 men). We add as an interesting footnote that idiom *to answer a call of nature* is a calque in Slovak and therefore should be effortlessly recognized by native Slovak students.

Task 8 (The narrator of the extract uses a humorous and light tone): Task 8 was a more speculative and required general understanding of the gist of reading, its tone and atmosphere. 31 students identified the comic tone of the overall extract without any difficulties, only 2 students failed to notice it and one student could not provide an answer, indicating her doubts by a question mark.

Task 9 (The narrator is a man): Task 9 tested students' more advanced reading literacy skills – the ability to distinguish between the narrator and the author of the text (writer). Most students (25) however, noticed this difference correctly and only 9 students failed to answer the task correctly.

Task 10 (The conferees did not mind minor inconveniences of the dormitories): The answer to Task 10 was connected with Task 5 (Conferees in the extract were happy to attend another conference) and thus it came as a surprise that as many as 50, 0%, 17 students failed to identify conferees' dissatisfaction with their accommodation. Lodge writes ...*to veterans of conferences held in British provincial universities, these were familiar discomforts and, up to a point, stoically accepted...* Thus, Lodge makes it very clear that the conferees did mind the discomforts such as missing plugs, squeaking beds and missing hangers, even though they accepted them stoically as necessary evil. Only 17 students decoded this information correctly and thus, Task 10 proved to be the toughest nut for the respondents. Table 4 shows the order of tasks, ordered by correct responses:

Table 4. Research outcomes, top list of correct responses

| | Total correct answers out of 34 | Total correct answers out of 34 (%) | Total incorrect answers out of 34 | Total incorrect answers out of 34 (%) | Type of task |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Task 8 | 31 | 91.2% | 3* | 8.8% | Interpretation |
| Task 2 | 29 | 85.3% | 5* | 14.7% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 5 | 27 | 79.4% | 7 | 20.6% | Interpretation |
| Task 6 | 27 | 79.4% | 7* | 20.6% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 4 | 26 | 76.5% | 8* | 23.5% | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 9 | 25 | 73.5% | 9 | 26.5% | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 7 | 20 | 58.8% | 14 | 41.2% | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 3 | 19 | 55.9% | 15 | 44.1% | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 10 | 17 | 50.0% | 17 | 50.0% | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 1 | 15 | 44.1% | 19 | 55.9% | Acquiring indirect information |

* Respondent/s failed to provide any answer, classified as “incorrect”

As we can also see in Table 4 (section: Type of task), the structure and the nature of tasks, purposefully differed. Answers for tasks 2, 4, 6, were directly mentioned in the text in almost unchanged wording and thus required mostly reading skills to complete them. In these tasks, students were very successful and acquired 29, 26 and 27 correct answers respectively.

On the other hand, answers to tasks 1, 7, 10 required reading for indirect information. Here students acquired the lowest scoring of correct answers, only 15, 20 and 17 correct answers respectively.

Answer to task 3 was speculative in its nature, the proper answer lied in the difference between the words *usually* (universities usually pay) and *always* (universities *always* pay). Students encountered serious problems with this task, with only 19 correct answers. 15 students answered the Task correctly; however, only two students (women) were sensitive to the semantic difference between *always* and *usually* and commented on it. Similarly, Task 9 (The narrator is a man) tested respondents' general ability to distinguish between fact and opinion and also to identify or deny the “supposed” male narrator, revealing himself in self-assured tone and stereotypically masculine idiomatic language.

Answers to Task 5 required certain interpretation as the answer was encoded in a longer text and was not mentioned directly. 27 students answered it correctly, which came as a surprise, given, they failed to answer a connected Task 10 (17 correct and 17 incorrect answers).

Finally, the answer to tasks 8 tested respondents' ability to interpret in order to grasp the gist of the text and understand its tone, atmosphere and implications beyond the lexical meaning. This task was completed most successfully, with maximum, 31 correct answers.

Thus, we may conclude that students successfully managed to get the gist of reading – its overall (comic) tone and directly stated information. Moreover, they were able to identify the narrator properly, perhaps a result of the Introduction to Literature course which made them aware of basic literary terms.

However, students failed significantly in obtaining indirect and implicit information and information wrapped in artistic or figurative language. Thus, hypothesis H1 (H1: University students encounter problems in reading a new, original English unabridged text, especially when reading for indirect and implicit information). Also, only 2 students were, on the basis of the text, able to correct and incorrect information.

Hypothesis 2

When formulating Hypothesis 2 (H2 More training and wider general linguistic skills in other language enhance students' reading literacy skills in English), we assumed that more practice and wider general linguistic skills, provided by double majors in languages further enhance students' reading literacy skills in English. Those students who study double majors in two languages should thus score better in reading literacy tests as they have more information on the system of language, etymology of words, sentence structure, etc. Sample unit consisted of 12 students of double majors in languages, 6 students of single language and sciences (Chemistry, Geography and Biology) and 16 students of single language combined with humanities (History, Philosophy and PE). Table 5 shows correlation between correct answers of double-majors-in-languages students versus other combinations of study fields.

Table 5. Correlation between correct answers and double majors in two languages

| Task number | Total correct/ answers out of 34/ % | Double majors in two languages Total correct/ answers out of 12/ % | Double majors in single language (English) and sciences (Chemistry, Geography, Biology) Total correct/ answers out of 6/ % | Double majors in single language (English) and humanities (History, Philosophy, PE) Total correct/ answers out of 16/ % |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Task 1 | 15 44.1% | 3 25.0% | 5 83.3% | 8 50.0% |
| Task 2 | 29 85.3% | 9 75.0% | 6 100% | 14 87.5% |
| Task 3 | 19 55.9% | 5 41.7% | 5 83.3% | 9 56.3% |
| Task 4 | 26 76.5% | 9 75.0% | 6 100% | 11 68.8% |
| Task 5 | 27 79.4% | 8 66.7% | 6 100% | 14 87.5% |
| Task 6 | 27 79.4% | 8 66.7% | 4 66.7% | 15 93.8% |
| Task 7 | 20 58.8% | 5 41.7% | 5 83.3% | 10 62.5% |
| Task 8 | 31 91.2% | 12 100% | 5 83.3% | 14 87.5% |
| Task 9 | 25 73.5% | 8 66.7% | 3 50.0% | 14 87.5% |
| Task 10 | 17 50.0% | 7 58.3% | 2 33.3% | 8 50.0% |
| Average | 70.8% | 61.7% | 78.3% | 73.1% |

H2 was not confirmed by the research. On the contrary, double-majors-in-languages students scored in questionnaires significantly lower (by more than 10, 0%) than students of other combinations. Interestingly, those students who studied sciences and languages achieved the highest score (average 78, 3%). The average of correct answers of double-majors-in-languages students was higher than the total average of all students only in Tasks 8 and 10. As no similar research has been recently conducted in Slovakia, this type of research should be expanded and compared both nationally and internationally in the future.

Hypothesis 3

In formulating Hypothesis 3 (H3 Reading literacy depends on gender), we referred to observations of several Slovak researchers in reading and functional literacy (Gavora, Matúšová, 2010:183-184) who pointed out that the level of reading and functional literacy may be correlated to sex and women may score higher than men. 26 women and 8 men participated in the research

Table 6. Sex-based questionnaire results

| | Total correct/ answers out of 34 /% | Correct answers out of 26 women total /% | Correct answers out of 8 men total /% | Type of task |
|----------------|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Task 1 | 15 44.1% | 12 (46.2%) | 3 (37.5%) | Interpretation |
| Task 2 | 29 85.3% | 21 (80.8%) | 8 (100%) | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 3 | 19 55.9% | 17 (65.4%) | 2 (25.0%) | Interpretation |
| Task 4 | 26 76.5% | 21 (80.8%) | 5 (62.5%) | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 5 | 27 79.4% | 22 (84.6%) | 6 (75.0%) | Acquiring direct information |
| Task 6 | 27 79.4% | 21 (80.8%) | 6 (75.0%) | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 7 | 20 58.8% | 15 (57.7%) | 5 (62.5%) | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 8 | 31 91.2% | 24 (92.3%) | 7 (87.5%) | Thinking and evaluation |
| Task 9 | 25 73.5% | 18 (69.2%) | 7 (87.5%) | Acquiring indirect information |
| Task 10 | 17 50.0% | 14 (53.8%) | 3 (37.5%) | Acquiring indirect information |
| Average | 70.8% | 71.2% | 65.0% | |

Men scored higher only in three tasks 2 (acquiring direct information), 7 (acquiring indirect information) and 9 (thinking and evaluation). In Tasks 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 the difference between men and women was less than 10%. The most substantial difference was seen in Task 3 (where men scored lower by as much as 40, 4%), Task 2 (men scored lower by 19, 2%) and Task 10 (men scored lower by 16, 3%). Hypothesis 3, stating that women score higher in tasks requiring active work with texts was thus beyond doubts confirmed, however, in order to confirm it nationally and perhaps internationally, larger sample size will be needed.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1: In spite systematic evaluation of literacy is a well-developed international field of study (monitored and published by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education, IEA; see Elley, 1992, 1994) systematic study of academic/reading/functional literacy of adults in Slovakia is a relatively new discipline. Gavora and Matúšová note that no similar research in functional, reading and academic literacy has been conducted in Slovakia prior to 2000 (2010:186). Therefore, it is very difficult to find a comparable research and verify acquired results. We, however, can rely on selected results of Gavora and Matúšová analysis, conducted in 2006 and published in the article *Investigation into Reading Literacy of University Students* (2010:183-196). Even though the size of their sampling unit (over 100 students of pedagogical faculty), target language (Slovak) and the size and scope of tasks differed, several interesting parallels can be drawn between their research and ours.

Matúšová and Gavora observed that in analogical testing, university students acquired 86,2 points (or %) in obtaining information from texts; 81,8 points (or%) in interpretation of information from texts and 78,9 points (%) in thinking and evaluation (2010:192). Our research proved that respondents, perhaps due to reading in foreign language and slightly more demanding type of text, acquired lower results: average 65,7% in obtaining information from texts (both direct and indirect), 85,3% in interpretation of information from texts and 64,7% in thinking and evaluation. However, both analyses demonstrate lower performance in more independent type of tasks – thinking and evaluation.

Hypothesis 2: No similar systematic study or research related to gender/sex disparity has been conducted in Slovakia, with a minor exception of 2002 Jesenská's research (2002:86), related to the gender disparity among first year university students, testing methods however, differed so much that this research cannot be used for a comparative study. The lack of gender-based research in Slovakia is perhaps one of the results of feminist and transgender movements that view similar sex-based research as disregarding biological and social gender and thus, dated. Nevertheless, our research proved that women scored significantly higher than men. However, sex-based literacy researches conducted worldwide

(including PISA and PIRLS), show that in the compulsory education sector, on average, females tend to have higher (reading) literacy skills than males (for example, Wagemaker, 1996; Chamberlain, 2007 and 2008; Crooks-Flockton, 2005; Sturrock-May, 2002). Genderwise, the results of this study also correlate with 2006 research done in New Zealand where national testing of impressive 7131 sample size proved, that women scored significantly higher in reading literacy tests (2009:95). Interestingly, the reason of this difference in literacy skill was explained by the fact that *women tend to engage more with reading than men* (2009:96-97). Attitudinal factor toward reading thus plays a significant role in one's performance and it should be trained and cultivated as a part of reading-focused activities.

Hypothesis 3: Students' academic literacy correlated to individual study combinations has not been subject to any systematic study (the most up-to-date research was done by Hrnčír in 1998 (1998:117); the focus of research (achievements of students in entrance exams), testing methods as well as testing procedure differed so dramatically that could not be used for a comparative study). In the presented research, students studying sciences and languages significantly outscored students studying two languages. The reasons, however, might be political rather than educational – due to language policy in Slovakia, second language became a soft choice at primary and often at high schools as well and therefore, weaker students select two languages as an easier choice of majors at the university. Sciences, on the other hand are nationally supported and enhanced by the programme “Study science” and thus, students of sciences score better in both subjects.

Conclusion

The pilot research pointed out several issues related to academic/reading literacy. Regardless to certain sex-related and study-field related advantages or disadvantages, Slovak university students need more training in active work with text leading to independent and critical reading and thinking (in this we agree with several scholars including Šimoniová, 2008:2). University students, more than ever, need to learn ways and methods how to get beyond text, evaluate it critically and relate to their own experience. Schools and various educational institutions should intensify their focus on reading literacy and those skills and training that enhance reading competences, critical reading and general understanding of written texts. Universities should, therefore, offer more focused and extensive courses based on active work with texts in order to provide students with tools to grasp the gist of written information.

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CHALLENGES IN CLIL IMPLEMENTATION – A CLIL TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The process of integration can be observed throughout the world. In direct response to social demand the world of politics and technology has introduced many changes leading to continuous integration. For instance phones, which provide many additional functions such as photographic or navigational ones. Fusion has also become a fact at the level of schools. **Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)** clearly represents this process. One of the available definitions describes CLIL as *a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language* (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols 2008:9). More generally, we could say that it is the integration of learning a foreign language with learning some other content. Moreover, students are expected to focus on the content or information rather than on a linguistic syllabus (Larsen-Freeman 2000:137). *Within CLIL, language is used as a medium for learning content, and the content is used in turn as a resource for learning languages* (Marsh 2002:10). The definition itself, however, seems to bring many questions and hesitations to our minds. It is fully understandable that a lot of doubting Thomases may be found both inside and outside the education profession. In fact, a great majority of fears in relation to CLIL, come from the CLIL teachers. A person who begins working with CLIL, sooner or later, will be forced to face the real challenge of finding the right balance between content and language. This paper focuses on some of the possible problems a CLIL teacher encounters when entering the CLIL world.

To start with, CLIL may undermine teachers' confidence. Even those teachers, who have always actively participated in professional development and been willing to test new methods, start to feel anxious and incompetent (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols 2008:72). Once they have the possibility to work with CLIL on a regular basis, they begin to analyze their methodology. There is a question of the right time devoted to teaching both content and language. Secondly, there is a problem of choosing the right method of teaching, students working individually or in groups. Furthermore, there is a problem of the proper amount of feedback on the part of the students and many more. In addition, it is crucial to understand that *CLIL is a pedagogy, a methodological approach which requires specific professional skills, including a high level of fluency in the target language* (Marsh 2002:78). Therefore, many content teachers, who are not satisfied with their language skills, may be too critical and never consider introducing CLIL into their classrooms. On the other hand, language teachers may be unwilling to rely on

a particular school subject as a possible source of teaching language structures or phrases. It is, or at least should be fully understandable, since the process is extremely time consuming and requires from the teacher a lot of effort and creativity. Even those teachers, who specialize in both content subject and a foreign language teaching, admit that CLIL methodology forces them to rethink their previous techniques and introduce many modifications.

Another possible obstacle while using CLIL is the shortage of CLIL materials. Having decided to apply the approach in the classroom, the teacher faces yet another problem, namely the lack of materials for teaching language and a school subject simultaneously. We may begin with searching in a school library, which seems to be pointless, since school libraries mostly contain books written in our native language. In order to avoid translation, another solution would be the Internet, a fertile source of ideas. Having found a proper material in the target language, there are still a lot of things to be worried about. Firstly, there is a question of the material adequacy. The language presented should be *simple enough and introduced in a reader-friendly manner so as to facilitate comprehension* (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols 2008:22). Moreover, it should be cognitively challenging in order to capture students' interests. Furthermore, the material should be sufficiently content-rich, since teaching the content subject is fundamental while implementing CLIL. Similar problems exist even in the case of coursebooks obtained abroad. In their article, Novotná and Hoffmanová (2002:3), claim that using such textbooks *might cause difficulties in understanding because of the usage of country specific realia*. They give the example of such differences during mathematic lessons. The authors explain that some terms are known only in particular language (e.g. in English the Czech term “central symmetry” is not used, the English mathematical term “barrel” is not used in Czech for a special type of solid) (Novotná and Hoffmannová 2002: 3). All of the issued stated prove that CLIL requires from the teacher more preparation time and greater cooperation with fellow teachers. Interestingly, the cooperation may also cause some problems, since it calls for the sudden collaboration between two separate teams which have not been in the habit of co-operating. It is not a common situation for a language teacher to analyze his or her teaching methods with e.g. a chemistry teacher. Since both subjects have their separate methodologies, why should we believe that it is feasible to apply these methodologies during a single lesson? Moreover, even if it is possible, what effects will it have on our students?

Common sense seems to say that students, who learn a school subject in a foreign language, cannot possibly acquire the same amount of content as their friends learning in a more “traditional way”. On the one hand, some researchers firmly state that *CLIL students perform as well as or even outperform non-CLIL students in terms of learning content* (Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols 2008:20). On the other hand, skepticism remains and it seems difficult to deny *that learning a subject matter in an L2 poses an additional difficulty for the pupils* (Stohler 2006:41). The author adds that it is completely understandable to wonder whether

the use of an L2 in the teaching of non-linguistic subject matters creates deficiencies in the pupils' conceptualization of classroom topics (Stohler 2006:41). Furthermore, Masih (1999:113) states that very often parents and teachers have *reservations related to this new programme in education*. This fact seems to be highly justified and every CLIL teacher, sooner or later, begins to analyze the classroom setting in relation to content acquisition. How can one be sure that knowledge of the subject taught by means of a foreign language will not suffer? More importantly, what can the teacher do to make learning a content subject and a foreign language possible to happen? Once again the teacher encounters another serious obstacle which he or she has to deal with. Of course, there are possible solutions successfully adopted by teachers, which may serve as a means of enabling students to comprehend content more easily. Among these Lyster enumerates: speech modifications, multiple examples, using props, graphs, visual aids or building on students' background knowledge (Lyster 2007:60). Still, it is the teacher who is obliged to choose proper methods and apply suitable techniques. What is more, it is the teacher who is fully responsible for covering the content material dictated by the school curriculum. Therefore, CLIL teachers should be given some alternatives to consider, in relation to some specific forms of CLIL-tuition. It is vital for the teacher to know, even before implementing CLIL into teaching, if he or she is expected to particularly focus on one of the aspects, a content subject or a foreign language. Since there are many possible variants of CLIL education, teachers and educational authorities should be aware of such possibilities and choose the optimal model (Marsh, Zajac and Gozdawa-Gołębiewska 2008:10).

As the name of the approach suggests, there is also another equally important aspect of CLIL tuition, namely language teaching. It might seem very simple and many people believe that there should not be any obstacles in language teaching, since school subjects are taught in a foreign language. Consequently, students should easily learn all the aspects of language the teacher wants them to learn. However, for those who have already done some CLIL teaching, it is perfectly clear that teaching a subject in a foreign language might not be enough. CLIL teachers know how much additional effort it takes to teach students the passive forms in English while teaching them e.g. chemistry at the same time. And if we want to apply CLIL in the purest sense, there is no other option for us than spending long hours preparing satisfying lesson plans. Furthermore, studies also show that there are many unresolved issues in connection to CLIL classrooms. Dalton-Puffer's research proved that productive language skills, especially speaking, are not promoted in many CLIL-classrooms. She also mentions a lack of academic discourse functions (Dalton-Puffer 2007:261). Moreover, some linguists state that many CLIL students show very poor academic writing skills, even at the age of 16. More often than not, they failed to verbalize subject-specific issues in an appropriate way (Meyer 2010:13). The author goes even further and claims that *CLIL approach runs a risk of being «misused» as a justification of out-dated*

teaching habits and methodological monotony (Meyer 2010:13). Such opinions and our own observations lead us to the conclusion that embracing CLIL does not automatically guarantee success in teaching and learning. In order to truly realize the added value of CLIL, the teacher needs to constantly rethink his or her way of teaching and modify the techniques used.

To conclude, I would like to quote one of the Polish CLIL teachers: *My feeling is that when it comes to bilingual classes, there are no rules, no sets of advice available in Poland* (Marsh, Zajac and Gozdawa-Gołębiewska 2008:23). This quotation surely presents the position of a CLIL teacher. It expresses the feeling of uncertainty and the feeling of being left alone with the existing problems. And that is exactly what this paper tries to underline. It is not to criticize the approach itself but to present and analyze the possible obstacles in relation to CLIL from the teachers' perspective. There are many other unresolved matters when it comes to bilingual teaching e.g. the way of assessment. All these issues directly contribute to the teachers having fears and reservations. Unspoken words cannot be heard that is why this paper reveals possible areas of weakness, hoping for feasible courses of action to be taken in the future.

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