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# Sequel and aftermath: tragic structure and dramatic continuity in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*



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## Abstract

In this paper I shall discuss some possible relations between two of Shakespeare's tragic dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1). These plays were probably written and perhaps staged at a distance of seven years from each other (*Julius Caesar* almost certainly written by, and staged in, 1599, and *Antony and Cleopatra* perhaps written by the end of 1606); but they deal with periods of ancient Roman history effectively continuous with one another. I shall consider, first, the notion of 'sequel', as it might be relevant to possible interconnections between Shakespearean dramatic units, and the related but distinct notion of 'aftermath'. Here I shall refer to a text by the contemporary English novelist and essayist Rachel Cusk, *Aftermath* (2012). Secondly, I shall consider applications of these notions within the fields of Shakespearean comedies, English Histories, and tragedies. In my third and final section I shall argue, both that, in relation to *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* may be considered a sequel, and that the lines along which, in the later play, the roles of Anthony and of Cleopatra are presented and developed can fruitfully be understood in terms of 'aftermath'.

**Key words:** Shakespeare, aftermath, *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, tragedy

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## Introduction

In this paper I shall discuss some possible relations between two of Shakespeare's tragic dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*<sup>1</sup>. These plays were probably written and perhaps staged at a distance of seven years from each other (*Julius Caesar* almost certainly written by, and staged in, 1599, and *Antony and Cleopatra* perhaps written by the end of 1606); but they deal with periods of ancient Roman history effectively continuous with one another. I shall consider, first, the notion of 'sequel', as it might be relevant to possible interconnections between Shakespearean dramatic units, and the related but distinct notion of 'aftermath'. Here I shall refer to a text by

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Shakespearean plays are taken from The Norton Shakespeare.

the contemporary English novelist and essayist Rachel Cusk, *Aftermath* (2012). Secondly, I shall consider applications of these notions within the fields of Shakespearean comedies, English Histories, and tragedies. In my third and final section I shall argue, both that, in relation to *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* may be considered a sequel, and that the lines along which, in the later play, the roles of Anthony and of Cleopatra are presented and developed can fruitfully be understood in terms of 'aftermath'.

### Sequel and aftermath

Within Shakespeare's oeuvre it has been customary to consider certain plays as 'sequels'; I have in mind the almost universal editorial practice of referring to two early History plays as '*2 Henry VI*' and '*3 Henry VI*', and to a later History play as '*2 Henry IV*'. In considering what such a view might involve, it is helpful to cite a rather provocative claim, by Giorgio Melchiori in his edition of *2 Henry IV*, about the notion of a sequel:

The *Second Part* is merely a 'sequel'...In fact it bears all the marks of the time-honoured technique, still practised nowadays especially by the film industry, for concocting a sequel: the introduction of a host of new characters to support the central figure responsible for the success of the original play, the parallelism in structure with the 'parent' production, and even the explicit promise at the end of further instalments... [such features] give the play a metadramatic quality...making it a reconsideration of the nature of the dramatic event (Melchiori 1989, 1).

While Melchiori's general view, here, of the nature of a 'sequel' is suggestive, his specific interpretation of *2 Henry IV* in such terms was, and remains, far from universally accepted; much critical opinion has seen the two *Henry IV* plays as planned, either from the start of composition or at least from some identifiable point within the writing of the first play, as a 'double play' exhibiting a careful interrelation of its two parts. It is not clear that the two plays run parallel to each other in structural terms; at a basic level the first play ends with the victory over internal rebellion of King Henry IV while the second ends with the peaceful succession of that King by his son Henry V. Both plays, certainly, stage rebellions, but their character is markedly different, and the defeat of the second rebellion occurs more by Machiavellian diplomacy than, like the first, through open battle. The promise of a 'further instalment' occurs, despite Melchiori's implication, at the end not of the first but of the second play; and it refers, there, to the reappearance of a 'central character', Falstaff, who actually, in the 'sequel' to *2 Henry IV* – that is, in *Henry V* – significantly fails to reappear. Moreover, it seems misleading to imply that the 'success' of *1 Henry IV* was or is attributable simply to the character of Falstaff's role,

but rather to the relations between it and the roles of Prince Henry and of Hotspur (Bulman 2016, 3-16).

As for the three *Henry VI* plays, issues of compositional intention, and of chronology, are also problematic. A common recent view sees *2 Henry VI* as the earliest of the plays to be composed and staged, followed by *3 Henry VI*, with *1 Henry VI* as perhaps the last play in order of composition. Relevant factors in such a view include the likelihood that each play was composed by more than one author, and the possibility that *1 Henry VI* was created as a 'prequel'; the idea here might indeed resemble Melchiori's notion of 'sequel' as far as concerns such elements as 'parallelism of structure', a 'central figure' surrounded by 'new characters', the 'promise of further instalments' (which in this case would already exist), and above all the hope for theatrical 'success' (Warren 2003, 67-74).

However, the main justification for any understanding of (two or more) plays in terms of (one or more) sequels, including that of Melchiori concerning the *Henry IV* plays, surely lies in the co-existence of a few of Melchiori's named features with another, which he does not name; continuity of staged action. In the penultimate scene of *1 Henry IV* Hotspur is killed by Prince Henry, with Falstaff inappropriately claiming his share of the credit; in the opening scenes of *2 Henry IV* a variety of rumours circulate concerning Hotspur and his death (or possible victory) and Falstaff is seen claiming general acceptability and entitlement on the basis of his supposed role in Hotspur's defeat. The dovetailing of staged events, between the end of *2 Henry VI* and the start of *3 Henry VI*, and between the end of *1 Henry VI* and (its perhaps already composed 'sequel') *2 Henry VI*, is even more tight and precise.

This continuity of staged action is not necessarily – and in the case of the two *Henry IV* plays it is in fact not – a matter of historical continuity between the events underlying the dramatic staging. Both plays simplify and compress actual historical process, in the interests of a sharp focus on their principal roles and the causal agency of these roles. What matters, if one play is to be seen as another's sequel, is that a staged action be intelligible as continuous, across the two plays and the juncture between them, in terms of the actions and reactions of principal characters appearing in the plays. Given this, many of Melchiori's claims do fall into place. A sequel will stage familiar characters from its antecedent drama, along with major new roles; it will display, not parallelism indeed, but significant differentiation, in structure; and, not least, by its own existence and in other ways it will open a prospect of further sequels, whether or not extant.

What, then, is an aftermath, and how might it be recognised? It is useful to distinguish the idea from that of a mere sequel; yet the word clearly carries within itself a sense of sequence. Initially one may say that the notion of 'sequel' operates at the level of artistic form, while that of 'aftermath' involves claims about human experience, real or fictive. The idea of 'aftermath', by derivation, also implies some

sort of productive fruitfulness. Rachel Cusk, in giving the title *Aftermath* to her memoir of a marriage that ends painfully but whose ending is yet in some important ways fruitful, writes that “The etymology of the word ‘aftermath’ is ‘second mowing’, a second crop of grass that is sown and reaped after the harvest is in” (5). An important implication here is that an ‘aftermath’, even if only in the long run, is something positive for the one who experiences it. Cusk later remarks that “To reach aftermath, first there has to be the event itself” (55). Of her emotional experience, in the painful situation which she delineates, she says that “[T]his darkness and disorganization were not mere negation, mere absence. They were both aftermath and prelude” (5). Later in her memoir she develops an application of her notion of ‘aftermath’ to a dramatic text – that is, by implication, to more than one such text;

The world Creon has inherited... is aftermath, and Creon has the job of governing it... Creon’s authority is recreating the very perversity from which it was born... but afterwards he is more honest with himself. This, after all, is aftermath, the second harvest: life with knowledge of what has gone before. He admits that he is frightened. He admits that what frightens him most is the idea that he will have to sacrifice himself in the name of authority, that true responsibility is an act of self-destruction (103-105).

Cusk has in view here, of course, Sophocles’ tragedy *Antigone*, and its relations to two other extant tragic dramas by Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Cusk is no doubt aware that these three plays are susceptible of being considered as containing two ‘sequels’ (*Antigone*, on such a view, occupying the third and final position). Equally she will probably have known that the order of composition and staging of these plays does not correspond to the order of their represented dramatic action – *Antigone* was staged around 441 BC, twenty or more years before *Oedipus Rex* and thirty-five years before the later play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, with which the opening of the earlier *Antigone* is more or less dovetailed. Clearly Cusk’s understanding of ‘aftermath’ – a very rich and suggestive understanding, upon which I shall draw in detail in later sections of this paper – is distinct from a ‘mere’ continuity of action; yet also, I think, in her application of it to these two or three plays by Sophocles, it presupposes some such continuity.

Cusk also seems to presuppose the relevance, to the notion of ‘aftermath’ and to the continuity of action across which she traces its operation, of the genre and the experiential mode of ‘tragedy’. An aftermath, though eventually understood and experienced in positive terms, may also be painful and problematic; moreover, it typically follows something, also painful, which has seemingly amounted to closure and finality. Hence there emerge questions; how may such a closure, and (differently) how may its aftermath, be survived, in such ways as to do justice, emotionally and morally, to what precedes them? if an aftermath involves both pain

and growth, by what process may it be “sown and reaped”? how might one distinguish, from an initial (perhaps, ex hypothesi, negative) harvest, its aftermath? and by what causal processes might a seemingly complete harvest generate something “aftermathic”, transcending the limits of a supposed previous closure? Might there be no end of aftermath(s)?

I would paraphrase my sequence of quotations from Cusk’s *Aftermath* in the following terms. Some framework, whether considered primarily in political or social or interpersonal terms, has broken itself down. This breakdown, which could be interpreted as a closure, is, in an ‘aftermathic’ framework, to be understood as a (possibly tragic) ‘event’. From it, and by the same token from behind and before it, there emerges something new - some factor, within the apparent causal chain preceding the event, which had been dormant or neglected; some option which the seeming closure of the event within itself left available for a new exposure and a new opening. Yet, all this can be ignored or refused. New harvests may be blighted in advance, by the insistence of such traditional “landlords” and administrators as Sophocles’ Creon upon the maintenance of inherited traditions of social criteria, governmental discipline, and of personal ‘dignity’ which have been already, by the “event”, proved demonstrably counter-productive. If an ‘aftermath’ is something positive, it is achieved at a cost, and by a personal recognition of the necessity of a cost, already paid, which may amount to a sacrifice. It is also the case that a refusal of such recognition exacts its own cost.

In this last paragraph, while staying, I believe, reasonably close to Cusk’s lines of thought, I have also had in mind – perhaps a little transparently – the applicability of her thought, as I see it, to the Shakespearean plays *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Before moving on to a consideration of these plays, it will be useful to consider the operation, in Shakespearean dramatic genres more generally, of ‘sequels’ and of ‘aftermaths’, and their relation to decisive ‘events’, within these dramas – events which sometimes take, or appear to take, the form and the weight of ‘closure’.

### **Sequel and aftermath in Shakespearean comedy, English History, and tragedy**

It is a familiar observation that several of Shakespeare’s comedies start from a certain form of closure, namely a death – the deaths of a heroine’s father, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and *All’s Well That Ends Well* (a wonderfully aftermathic title), or brother, as (for Olivia) in *Twelfth Night*. As the action of this play begins, Viola, too, supposes her brother to have died; and supposed deaths, of a wife, a son and a brother, generate the action of *The Comedy of Errors*. In *Cymbeline* Posthumus’ uncertain status is a function, to some extent, of his father’s premature death. In *The Tempest* Prospero’s death is assumed by most of the play’s characters. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, jointly written by Shakespeare with John Fletcher, begins with a marriage celebration

interrupted at once by the appeals, for redress and justice, of three recently widowed women – widowed, in fact, by the wars which have led to the rule, in a Thebes at once Shakespearean and Sophoclean, of the Creon to whom Cusk's remarks on 'aftermath' referred.

Death, perhaps, counts as an extreme event, and it is important to see that Shakespearean comedies regularly centre upon the experiences and choices of characters who survive and outlive the deaths of those who have been close to them. Thus notions of 'aftermath' should be relevant to such plays. Yet it's not always clear how painful the emotions are, or have been, which these deaths have aroused in the protagonists who survive them. Olivia's grief for her dead brother may, in face of Viola's sharp scrutiny, and by comparison with Viola's grief at her own supposed loss, appear affected. Portia, by her father's death, is bequeathed, rather than grief, the problems of a newly rich and much-besieged heiress. Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, makes no bones about it; 'I think not on my father... What was he like?/I have forgot him'. (Act 1, scene 1, lines 75, 77-78). Nonetheless she is grief-struck, for a different reason – the departure of her beloved, Bertram, seemingly unaware of her love, and bound for the social world of a court from which she is, by her 'low birth' excluded.

One might consider other kinds of putative closure here. Exclusions, or renunciations, are found prominently at the start of other Comedies. An ambitious attempt to renounce courtly obligations initiates the male projects of *Love's Labour's Lost*; disgrace and banishment underlie the uneasy embraces, by the characters of *As You Like It*, of the pastoral world of Arden. Behind the social wit, and the incipiently violent male chauvinism, of *Much Ado About Nothing* stands a military action with its own casualties. The female and the male protagonists of all these comedies have something, some 'event', some experience, or some decision seemingly involving 'closure', which they find themselves, within their plays, outliving.

Does this give one reason to see, in the field of Shakespearean comedy, the operation, on any widespread level, of what I am calling (following Rachel Cusk) 'aftermath'? It is not easy to embrace such an idea. The energies of Shakespeare's comic protagonists, as we observe and participate in them within the scenarios of the plays, are drawn more from qualities seemingly innate to them than from their processing of whatever negative experiences may have determined their initial situations. Nonetheless there are plays in which those energies, often deployed towards and within romantic relationships, are frustrated by obstacles which seem to impose some sort of closure; a father's will, a lover's refusal, a suspicion of betrayal. There are also comedies in which romantic projects are conceived with levels of single-minded intensity which may indicate a reaction, to past grief or loss, and which may in turn give place, in due course within the drama, to something more moderate and mitigated. In such cases one might see a kind of double aftermath, with

the single-mindedness which Cusk attributes to 'Creon' followed (but without the negative stimulus of bereavement, operative in Creon's case) by an acceptance of something like (Cusk's terms again) responsibility, or fear, or a necessary cost.

One may think in this connection of Benedick, and of his oscillations between a military pose of determined bachelorhood, a profession of equally determined courtship, and a reluctant abandonment of homosocial male bonds (which, in the end, he seems happy enough to renew). Again, one may think of Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, whose intense pursuit of Bertram, yielding to an intense abjection, is followed in turn by endlessly complex and contrived manoeuvres directed as much towards her own dignity as towards their marital future; or of Posthumus, whose staunch belief in the chastity of the wife from whom he is exiled collapses, under peer pressure, into credulity about her infidelity, a credulity followed in due course not (at first) by renewed trust but by a rather remarkable acceptance of autonomous female desire; or, above all, of Prospero, driven by his wrongs into a path of revenge which, with few words, he seems suddenly to abandon, in favour of a perhaps unconvincing policy of general forgiveness.

Another issue, here, should be mentioned. Whereas few comedies or Romances stage the death of a named and represented character (the exceptions are all late – *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), there are some plays in which the event of a marriage, or a betrothal, seems to precipitate, or in temporal terms to accompany, 'events' as drastic in their implication as might be expected of a death. Bassanio no sooner wins Portia's hand and heart than he learns of his friend Antonio's mortal danger, and comes to experience his own inability to make good to Antonio the obligations of friendship. Benedick's devotion to Beatrice is tested, to near-destruction, by the false accusations against her cousin Hero, which have led to her actual collapse and simulated death. In other comedies violent consequences ensue from marriages actually performed (as between Petruchio and Katharina), marriages arranged (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, between Demetrius and Helena), and marriages enforced (as in *All's Well that Ends Well* between Bertram and Helena).

Arguably, thus, in these characters and situations and relationships of comedy and Romance, one may see, at a certain level and within single plays, the operation of 'aftermath'. On the other hand, it seems clear that no extant Shakespearean comedy or Romance has, or is, a sequel. We have reports of a play-title, 'Love's Labour's Won', which probably related to a comedy no longer extant – or possibly to a play we now know by another title; it seems to me vanishingly unlikely that such a play deployed characters familiar to us from a known drama.

One further point should be made. Few if any of these plays revolve around a single protagonist – few of them even centre upon one single 'romantic' couple'; whereas the notion of 'aftermath' seems to involve, either a single character, through

whom the operations of aftermath may be represented (perhaps by oscillations of project or of mood) or a single relationship, within whose problematic survival such oscillations might reach a more or less stable and fruitful resolution. If we turn now to Shakespeare's English History plays, it's again important to note how few of them revolve around a single protagonist – despite the often-misleading implications of their traditional regnal titles; Henry VI's role is far from being straightforwardly central to any of the three plays bearing his name, and the same is true of Henry IV.

These two royal roles appear, each of them, in three plays whose action is successive – plays, thus, which in my terms here can be perceived as sequels, whatever their order of composition, and whatever the moment, surely indeterminable, of their dramatic and aesthetic conception. In this sense, the two monarchs, as 'survivors' of various political crises – crises involving, for many of their political subjects, deaths – are certainly potential dramatic 'subjects' of 'aftermathic' experiences. Indeed Henry VI, rejection of reign, says to his Queen

Come, wife, let's in, and learn to govern better;  
For yet may England curse my wretched reign. (*2 Henry VI*, 4.9. 47-48).

One might expect him to have said 'Yet may England hail my kindly reign', or something similar; he already seems despondent about his prospects, and correctly so. By the end of *2 Henry VI* his forces have been defeated in battle; *3 Henry VI* opens with a challenge to both his power and his legitimacy as King, and by its end he has been dethroned, re-enthroned, deposed once again and finally murdered. These are not, in Cusk's or in my terms, aftermaths; they are sequels, and the play is itself a sequel – followed by yet another sequel, with a different regnal name, *Richard III*.

Perhaps a greater readiness to reconceive past experiences in terms of 'aftermath' operates in the two *Henry IV* plays, and in their relations to *Richard II*, which precedes them, and *Henry V*, which follows them. Perhaps Bolingbroke, the seemingly reluctant rebel of *Richard II*, learns a costly shrewdness, in dealing with rebellions, as the aftermath of his experience of what he sees as Richard's naivety in that respect. More plausibly his son, the future Henry V, successfully learns a middle path, for his own kingship, between the heroic activism of Hotspur and the statecraft of his own father. A little more subtly one might suggest that the oscillations, in *Henry V*, between general up-front heroism and occasional rueful reflection, owe something, not only to an awareness of his father's guilt in acquiring the throne from King Richard, but also to a sense that his own rejection of Falstaff has opened up, within him, an emptiness which neither success nor repentance can quite fill – a knowledge of what has gone before (to apply Cusk's terms) which does not and cannot prompt, in him, any commensurate 'aftermathic' and sacrificial acceptance.

Yet it's hard to estimate the inner life of either Henry IV or his son, both before and within the period of their monarchic rule. Ultimately both men are committed to their own kingship; because – and this is the dominant feature of the English Histories – there is and must be an English King. Whatever process may generate the succession of one king by another, succession is what counts. Succession is not closure – neither seemingly nor actually so; it is what precludes the notion, and ideologically exorcises the fear, of closure – the fear of a 'tragic' event from which there can be, whatever its merely occasion-bound sequel, no fruitful aftermath of any kind. By the same token, I would argue, a commitment to 'succession', at the level of ideology, while guaranteeing the applicability, across the field of Shakespeare's English Histories, of the notion of 'sequel', effectively limits the operation of 'aftermath' within the represented experiences of the leading characters in these plays.

As for Shakespeare's tragedies, an interesting general picture is clear. Plays tend to begin in situations which involve potential crisis but in which such crisis is being kept, one way and another, at bay. Various characters, some of them villains, seek their own survival or (the villains especially) their own advantage and power, through these critical uncertainties. Differently, protagonists assume responsibility, by virtue not of their political position so much as their belief or will or ability or charisma, for keeping things together – for the survival or the amelioration, even if by drastic means, of the imperilled state or society which they, even if unwillingly, inhabit. The consequences include, sometimes, conflict – between protagonist and society, even (though this is in fact rather rare) between protagonist and villain; more generally the consequences involve reversal – the protagonist becomes all too closely identified with, and a major part of, those problems which he or she set out to resolve, to the point where the elimination of the protagonist may seem, to others, a desirable goal. The achievement of such an elimination – the death of the protagonist – will in turn be shown, though to differing degrees in different tragedies, to involve the general exhaustion of the fruitful energies of a whole staged polity and society.

To put this general picture into terms relevant to the argument of this paper: Shakespeare's tragedies proceed from crises, through failed remedies, and through ostensible but only superficial recoveries of stability, into closure. Such closure, moreover, is, more often than not, ostentatiously theatrical; that is to say, it involves a representation, not of a purportedly logical resolution of events and situations, through necessary connections between a protagonist's virtues and failings, or between a protagonist and any single countervailing person or force – not this, but a violent, an abrupt, and frequently a wilful closure, enacted by a protagonist, of his or her project. Such violently theatrical closures not only deplete the social and political energies available within the world of a play; they embody a rejection, by its leading inhabitant – exemplary for better as for worse – of the terms of that play's

world, and a deliberate and negative verdict upon its remaining resources for fruitful growth, even for ultimate recognisable survival. The three greatest writers on Shakespearean tragedy (as I conceive them to be), Andrew Cecil Bradley, William Empson, and Stanley Cavell, conspire to concur in a sense that what is tragic about these tragedies is the enactment, and experience, of what they refer to as 'waste' (Bradley 1956, 37). This is the opposite of 'aftermath', and would seem to preclude it.

Yet I shall now argue that two of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (hereafter *JC* and *AC*), while falling recognisably, to some extent, within the terms of these general patterns, also exhibit differences, from such patterns, of some significance; that these features can be accommodated within the idea that the later play is in some ways a sequel to the former; and that *AC* is not only, in relation to *JC*, a sequel but also the vehicle of an experience of 'aftermath'. This aftermath amounts to something different from 'waste'; it is an experience located primarily, but not only, within the role of Antony.

### ***Antony and Cleopatra* as aftermathic sequel to *Julius Caesar***

First, then: in what sense and to what extent is *AC* a sequel to *JC*? (Hatchuel 2011) I shall mention a number of features which link the plays; some are more telling than others; one has, I think, never been given its due weight. Both plays draw heavily on the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch, available to Shakespeare in the translation of Thomas North. Over the last two generations they have often been staged in sequence with some continuity of set-design and performers (Jensen 2016)<sup>2</sup>. *JC* and *AC* have both generated their own prequels and sequels. Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* deals with the love-affair, with Julius Caesar, remembered by Shakespeare's Cleopatra with stagy nostalgia; Hebbel's *Herodes und Mariamne* pits against each other an Eastern queen, of suspected but true fidelity, and a powerful but jealous ruler, Herod the Great, who had also caused problems for Shakespeare's Cleopatra. A TV series screened between 2005 and 2007, *Rome*, presented a continuous narrative, from before the assassination of Julius Caesar, across 22 episodes, up to the (sadly unhistorical) survival, from the purges of the younger ("Augustus") Caesar, of Caesarion, Cleopatra's son by Augustus's adoptive father.

Roman triumvirs, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius Caesar, feature importantly or centrally in both plays. Both plays range in their settings from Rome across the Mediterranean, and both plays move, in the placing of their represented action, eastwards. Chains of revenge, in both plays – on behalf of Julius Caesar, and of Pompey his defeated rival, by Julius Caesar's adoptive and Pompey's actual son – are

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<sup>2</sup> They have also frequently been staged as two of four plays – the others being *Titus Andronicus* and *Coriolanus* – presented as 'Shakespeare's Roman Plays', and a number of critical books and articles have considered these four plays in thematic terms as a distinct group.

thematically salient in both plays, affording as they do some degree of motivation for leading agents (though this factor is more relevant in the earlier play).

In both plays, a pair of politicians – Brutus and Cassius, Caesar and Antony – achieve, after quarrels, some degree of personal or diplomatic reconciliation. The name of “Caesar” runs remorselessly across the two dramas, as part of Julius Caesar’s family name, and as assumed for ideological and even military purposes by his grand-nephew and adopted son (usually referred to in editions of *JC* as ‘Octavius’, more appropriately referred to in *AC* as ‘Caesar’). The prospect or the fact of military and ceremonial ‘triumphs’ dominate the final scene of *AC* as they do the opening scene of *JC*.

Some scenes and some speeches, in *AC*, refer back to scenes and speeches and events in *JC*. Pompey, at *AC* 2.6, recalls the project of Brutus and the other conspirators, in the earlier play, against Julius Caesar as based on the desire to ‘have one man but a man’ (2.6. 19). Antony, at *AC* 3.11, recalls his own military success, at Philippi, against Cassius and Brutus, and contrasts it with the weakness shown at that time by Caesar and with the reversal of their fortunes in his recent defeat by Caesar at Actium. Antagonism between Antony and Caesar, which seems suddenly, in *AC*’s third Act, to become a dominant dramatic motivation, has emerged twice, at lower levels, in Act 4.1 and Act 5.1 of *JC*.

At a less measurable but very significant level, many audiences have felt the last two Acts of *JC*, after its central double crisis of action and rhetoric, rather a let-down; hesitating to find in the death of Brutus an adequate closure, they have, one way or another, wanted something more. One might also feel that the overall structure of *JC* – particularly if one were to emphasize its features shared with ‘English History’ dramas (and thereby, I think, to conceive Julius Caesar on the lines of an English monarch faced by violent rebellion) – resembles in some ways that of *1 Henry IV*, where rebels seek to overthrow a monarch (who seems to limit their own scope for dignity and self-expression) but come to grief, partly through their own unresolved differences, partly through the opposition of a monarch’s heir. It may be suggested that, as far as concerns the (Octavius) Caesar depicted in *JC*, the closure of that play corresponds to the ending of a single ‘Shakespearean (English) History’, involving as it does the seeming establishment of Caesar as spokesperson for (his version of) Rome and interpreter of the significance of the battle immediately concluded. Antony’s epitaph for Brutus, ‘the noblest Roman of them all’, might befit the death of a tragic protagonist; but nothing suggests that Caesar regards Brutus (or Cassius) in such a light. Caesar’s refusal to respond, in fact, to Antony’s remarks indicates the gap between potential readings of the whole play *JC*; and it is this gap which leaves scope for a reading of *AC* as, for Caesar, a sequel to, but, for Antony, an aftermath of, the earlier play (*JC* 5.5. 68 and ff.)

I shall now add what seems to me the most important feature which links these plays. It is, simply, the remarkable choice, by Shakespeare, of a starting point – in terms both of historical fact and of the structural arrangement of his own drama – for the later play, *AC*. All accounts of *AC* dwell upon its wide range in both space and time; it covers, in terms of original history, eleven years, from 41 to 30 BC. Many accounts of the play also develop comparisons between it and other early-modern tragic dramas focussed on the deaths of Antony and (especially) of Cleopatra – one of the greatest, and latest, of these dramas being Dryden's play *All for Love*. Such dramas, almost invariably (a rare exception is a play by Hans Sachs), begin at a point either immediately before or, more often, after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Some begin after Antony's death. None begins as far back, from these events of 31-30 BC, as Shakespeare's play (Neill 1994, 14-20). Equally, no playwright other than Shakespeare wrote plays both about the death of Julius Caesar and the relationship, and the deaths, of Antony and Cleopatra. Only to Shakespeare's treatments of these historical events, therefore, are the double modes – of sequel and aftermath – conceptually and emotionally pertinent.

By his chosen starting point, Shakespeare achieves important and vivid effects of continuity between the actions of the two plays. Of the victors at Philippi, Antony has remained in the East, supposedly (and, I would claim, genuinely) maintaining a Roman imperial presence there through his power over Cleopatra, while Caesar undergoes very mixed fortunes, back in Italy, in his attempts to quell enduring civil war – war which the 'victory' at Philippi has left unresolved. Caesar, moreover, receives, or endures, the uncertain assistance of the third triumvir, Lepidus, whose qualities and limitations were staged in just one telling scene of *JC*, Act 4.1. In these ways, and in the other aspects which I have mentioned, there is a strong case for seeing *AC* as a sequel to *JC*.

Yet such undeniable continuity, so carefully and remarkably staged by Shakespeare, has passed largely unremarked, in critical literature. There is one obvious reason for this; criticism has dwelt, understandably, on the striking opening of *AC* – on everything in it that is, by comparison with *JC*, glamorous and amusing and romantic and, above all, new; a new major female role, that of Cleopatra; a new 'female' presence, in the form of Cleopatra's attendants Charmian and Iras, whose part in subsequent events will be crucial; a new setting, Alexandria; above all, as it seems to his Roman followers, a new Antony;

... his captain's heart,  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gypsy's lust...

Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transformed  
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see. (*AC* 1.1. 6-10, 11-13)

Yet another factor has also militated against the acceptance of *AC* as a 'historical' sequel to *JC* – again a rather obvious factor; the categorisation of both plays as tragedies. Tragedies (as I have discussed above) do not typically have sequels. It is worthwhile, therefore, to ask how far one may understand the end of the earlier play, *JC*, as an adequate closure, in terms of tragic form? What is going on in *JC*? The play's central crisis is, no doubt, the assassination of Julius Caesar and its immediate consequences. What precedes this? Typically, a set of unresolved situations in Roman public life; fickle public adulation of Julius Caesar; his own impenetrable self-confidence, bolstered by apparent deference from leading Senators; Cassius's keenly resentful desire for a revival of the traditions of Republican rivalrous and oligarchic governance; the envy and herd-instinct shared by other conspirators; and, in Brutus, grand dreams of public renewal by 'purge' and 'sacrifice', by the exaltation of public ideals over personal relationships.

How does the assassination resolve these motives and emotions? It is typical of Shakespearean tragedy that such a violent reversal of the terms of political life and public conduct should cause problems far greater than any it might claim to resolve; and, more specifically, that Brutus and Cassius, agents of one version of resolution, should become the targets of another. Rivalry is indeed renewed, more bloodily than ever, between killers and avengers of the dead general and leader; citizens turn their uncertain civic allegiances into armed opposition; and, for both Brutus and Julius Caesar's young heir Octavius "the Ides of March" becomes an ideology – a singularity, a catch-word for the thought that, now, because of and in the embodied continuity of that "event", nothing and everything are to remain the same, everything and nothing are to have changed. Either "Caesarian Rome" – under an Octavius, or under a Brutus hailed, against his will, as "Caesar" – or endless resentment and civil war. The conclusion of *JC*, on this reading, lacks something in terms of tragic form, not only because of Brutus's failure but also because of the terms in which Caesar presents his own success – terms which seem to leave unresolved many of the issues, and the energies, which the play has staged.

In particular, Antony's path through the play invites interpretation; his role, negligible in the first two Acts, acquires great prominence once he encounters the assassins, in 3.1, and even more significance as he successfully arouses the Roman crowd against them in 3.2. One editor of *JC*, David Daniell, makes a very telling point here;

By contrast with everyone else in the play...his language over long passages is apparently driven by feeling for someone else...in the Forum scene, whatever he is saying, his linguistic eye, if we may so express it, is on his dead friend and leader, in grief for him. (70)

'Whatever he is saying', here, is a phrase covering a rather large range of effects, for Antony is in fact arousing the Roman crowd to violence and murder; yet there is no reason to discount his own genuine feelings of grief and loss in response to Julius Caesar's death. Hereafter his role is telling but limited; he participates with Octavius Caesar in the semi-legalised murders of leading Roman citizens, he shares with him in the leadership of Roman armies – against fellow-Romans – at Philippi, and he offers generous words towards (in 5.4) the defeated Lucilius and (in 5.5) the dead Brutus. On the whole he says rather little. He involves himself in both civil and military violence against Roman fellow-citizens. He refers to Cassius and Brutus – after they are safely dead – in terms appropriate to fellow-citizens. In what he says and in what he does not say – it can be suggested – he does not subscribe to Caesar's versions of political or dramatic closure.

In the later play, *AC*, he is seen, from the outset, to evade such closure. We may think he resents Caesar's pretensions; we may think he seeks, and in his own eyes finds, a kind of escape from the tensions of Roman civil war. In any case – this needs no emphasis – he finds other kinds of things to do and to say. He becomes, indisputably, with Cleopatra, one of the play's two protagonists – while Caesar still operates, in his own eyes, as if he were a nascent monarch in a historical drama destined for a conclusion in terms of 'filial' succession. For Antony there are other options; these are, I would suggest, 'aftermathic' and fruitful. By Caesar's standards he incurs, and comes to accept (also in his own eyes) vulnerability and 'disorganization', 'fear and darkness', and ultimately 'self-destruction' – all these being tokens of (Cusk's understanding of) aftermath. He exposes himself to critiques launched from the supposedly invulnerable standpoints of "honesty" and "justice" – critiques already operative in *JC*, as in Brutus's early and rash judgment;

[...] he is given

To sports, to wildness and much company. (*JC* 2.1. 188-89)

Those who have understood *Antony and Cleopatra* as a tragedy have generally found in it an Antony deficient in duty and responsibility to Caesar and to Rome. Differently (one would think) he has been seen as a failure insofar as he does not manage to defeat Caesar and take over one-man rule in Rome. Generally, allowing for concessions to him of personal "generosity", he is perceived as decadent and morally delinquent, falling short of Caesar in rational self-control and of Cleopatra in glamorous manipulation. Yet why assume the moral rectitude, or the political rationale, of one Caesar's inheritance of the aura and allegiances of another? Antony is surely the shrewder in virtue of his refusal, for himself and to anyone else, of the dangerous exposure involved in one-man rule; and triumviral rule, an aftermathic novelty and (in Cusk's phrase) a "structural refurbishing", arguably preserves just the

manageable degree of oligarchic rivalry needed to sustain – as in the time of Julius Caesar's predominance it had sustained and furthered – the expansive energies, valorised or otherwise, of Roman warfare and government.

But the case for Antony can be put in terms less political, more theatrical and emotional; after tragic assassination – and all the more, for Antony, after the guilt incurred by the murderous proscriptions, and the discomfort involved in military alliance with the ineffectual but pompous young Caesar - who would not welcome the comedies of triumviral diplomacy? Who would resist the farcical pleasures of Egyptian flirtation (itself relevant to such diplomacy)? If a “Roman” is to find a place for himself in “Egypt”, better so as lover than as - the title bestowed later upon Caesar – “universal landlord”. And in any case, as the Soothsayer spells out, Antony thrives best when well away from Caesar;

Thy demon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous, high, unmatcheable,  
Where Caesar's is not; but, near him, thy angel  
Becomes afeard, as being o'erpowered. (*AC* 2.3.18-21)

Yet erotic and diplomatic comedy turns rapidly, in the play's third Act, into zero-sum military tragedy and, it may seem, emotional betrayal. Caesar seems determined to punish, next after his adoptive father's assassins, his own fellow-triumvirs – above all Antony, the triumvir with his own hinterland. Hesitant to lose Roman lives in civil wars, Antony is defeated at sea – and perhaps abandoned by the fleet of a Cleopatra tacitly concerned with her own survival and options for power. Moralistic Roman revenge, upon an Antony who has abandoned the life of vengeance, would thus be empowered by Antony's infringement of his own previous 'diplomatic' marriage to his Roman wife Octavia, and given further scope by a Cleopatra whose necessary independence, in political as in amatory warfare, Antony has arguably failed fully to acknowledge.

In these respects, on an “aftermathic” reading, Antony retains all too much of the Caesarean “perversity” of male governance, alternately resisting the stigma of moral and military shame and, by his melodramatic celebration of occasional victory, proclaiming a virtue whose location, between bed and battlefield, remains uncertain. His attempts to claim temporary military victory over Caesar, in the play's fourth Act, may seem to evince the kind of ‘perversity’ ascribed by Cusk to Sophocles' Creon. As is often remarked, Antony contrives to make a clumsy failure even of his attempted suicide.

How far can this train of events, and the role of Anthony as a tragic protagonist, be at all accommodated within the conception of Shakespearean tragedy which I have tried to sketch? If *AC* is indeed a tragic drama, whose tragedy is it, and in what sense? Is it better to accept the pair of sequenced plays, *JC-AC*, as a dramatic unit

closer (as the plays' Caesar would have it) to the modes of Historical than of tragic theatre? Or, does an acceptance of Antony's development, from the earlier to the later play, in terms of 'aftermathic' experience, carry with it the notion that the later play, insofar as it is indeed a sequel, is something less than tragic – perhaps elegiac, even comic? 'The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce'? (Again these are perceptions voiced by many interpreters of *AC*).

Against Marx's formula, just cited, one might pit two fine Shakespearean phrases. One comes from a later play still, *The Tempest*,

Spring come to you at the farthest,  
At the very end of harvest. (4.1. 114-15)

Another is voiced by Cleopatra, in the final Act of *AC*, and it proposes a direct and adequate evocation of Antony;

For his bounty  
There was no winter in't. An Antony 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping. (5.2. 85-87)

I am a little surprised that Cusk's memoir lacks reference to this utterance. What can one take from it for an understanding of the play? That Antony was, I will say, generous; that – more tragically – he sought to bind to himself his lover, his friends, ultimately the whole state and empire of Rome; that, rather single-mindedly, he took his life with Cleopatra, and with himself as her lover, to embody a fullness which was at once universally admirable and effectively inimitable; as he had said,

Here is my space.  
Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life  
Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair  
And such a twain can do it – in which I bind,  
On pain of punishment, the world to weet  
We stand up peerless. (*AC* 1.1. 35-41)

This is an Antony who has learnt, from Cleopatra and from their 'mutuality', a new understanding – of empire, of Rome, and of himself. His responsibility to Rome, thus, becomes a responsibility to this conception. It leaves little independent room for any Caesar. More importantly, it circumscribes the distinct hopes, and underestimates the manifest fears, of Cleopatra. Its breaking point is reached in the play's third Act – a regular enough feature of tragic structure – as Caesar seeks to enforce against Antony the consequences of his double sexual and emotional betrayal, of Cleopatra no less than of Antony's new wife, and Caesar's sister, Octavia. Cleopatra, meanwhile

(I would argue), is led, by the same ‘doubleness’ that lurks within Anthony’s professed generosity, into her own plans for betrayal, and for political double dealing; why would she not keep alive, in Caesar, the idea of her power to betray Antony, when by so doing she might save her own kingdom and her status as its Queen?

Antony’s death, which in its verbal form may seem to resolve him back into a ‘Roman’ mode – ‘a Roman by a Roman/Valiantly vanquished’-, surpasses, in its rich flexibility and mobility, the death of *JC*’s protagonist Brutus; where Brutus resigns himself to defeat, Antony forgives (and in silence) the treachery of Cleopatra which has been the final trigger for his own suicide (*AC* 4.15. 59-60). Such a silent forgiveness – or, such a last-ditch preservation of dignity – allows to Antony the complex closure of a tragic protagonist. But this has been the drama, and potentially the tragedy, not of one protagonist alone but of two, and of their relationship – that relationship being, in my view, the play’s true ‘protagonist’. And, at the point of Antony’s death, a whole Act remains – the fifth Act, which comes to be, through Cleopatra’s brief but potent survival of him, a second “aftermath”. After tragedy and farce, after the triumphalism of Caesarian politics and the tragedy of Antonian love, follows a new spring. What, for Cleopatra, is this second aftermath?

It is a dream of Antony, as she develops it rhapsodically to her entranced Roman hearer Dolabella. It is a crafty deception, for the sake of her own dying independence, of the appropriative will of Caesar the ‘universal landlord’ (*AC* 3.13. 72). It is the basis for endless new ‘triumvirates’ in which, as the “third person” with herself and Antony, shall be linked any and every gossip, admirer, and audience whom (like Enobarbus and so many others within the play itself, Caesar not excluded) she has captivated and will captivate. And it is a staging by Cleopatra of herself as, beyond “queen”, “wife” – “Husband, I come” - and mother – “dost thou not see the baby at my breast?”; as, thus, “playing” erotically and melodramatically up to and even beyond her own end - beyond it into the admiring imitation of her maid Charmian whom she urges to “play till doomsday” and who obediently dies in mid-flirtation with the reproving Roman soldier to whom she insists that, whatever the appearances, all this - this unending aftermath - has been indeed “Well done” (*AC* 5.2. 283, 305, 322). For such aftermaths, flirtatious and debatable, shameful and theatrical, “dislodging” and “refurbishing” their readers’ and audiences’ emotions, there may indeed be no end.

Still, one final post-‘aftermath’ needs to be indicated. *AC* can ultimately be interpreted less as tragedy, and not even as a mere comedy, but as something one might want to call a ‘triumph’ – the triumph, over both protagonistic tragedy and ‘successional’ political History, of a vision of ultimate Love, whether sexual or romantic or, even, marital. The play, certainly, has inspired such reflections – along with, and perhaps not so differently from, its power to evoke a sense of moral disgrace and deliquescence. Aftermaths, perhaps necessarily, evoke varied reactions from their commentators. But another aftermath lies beyond the play’s represented

action – yet not beyond the hints and implications of that action and its concomitant utterances. The ‘Herod of Jewry’, whom Caesar names as an ally of Antony and Cleopatra, reigns (if one is to believe St Matthew’s gospel) at the time when the ‘eastern star’ (Charmian’s description of the dying Cleopatra) was, by a few ‘wise men’, seen – and, being seen and ‘followed’, was interpreted as the sign of a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ (Matthew 2.1-2; Revelation 21.1, see *AC* 1.1. 17). In terms of the nascent framework of Christian revelation – so, I suggest, Shakespeare may, in this play’s tragic action, have sought to insinuate – tragedy, history and comedy are hard to distinguish; they become each other’s sequels and aftermaths.

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# Hidden Meanings behind *Meat-specific Vocabulary* in the History of English



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## Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to illustrate and discuss selected changes of meaning of meat-related vocabulary items brought about by the mechanism known as foodsemy, in which the source domain derives from the riches of the conceptual macrocategory **FOODSTUFFS** (e.g. *pork, peach, bread*), and the target is the macrocategory **HUMAN BEING**. The closeness and familiarity of food in our lives has given rise to various historical foodsemic metaphors during the evolution of English, most frequently in the colloquial register of the language, while the phenomenon may easily be observed in other natural languages. To this end, we intend to delve into figurative extensions of the original senses of words related to the category **FOODSTUFFS**. More specifically, we shall be dealing with a body of meat-related vocabulary, and the secondary senses they developed at certain points in the history of English.

## Key words

*foodstuffs, metaphor and metonymy, microcategory MEAT PRODUCTS, and macrocategory HUMAN BEING*

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## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, food is of major importance for every living creature, not only vital for their existence, but also food plays a crucial role when viewed from historical, cultural and social perspectives. As a significant component of our daily existence, it also has enormous influence on the shape of language. Recent analyses provide evidence that food-related vocabulary serves as the basis for numerous metaphorical/metonymic transfers, and the process in question is, in no way, restricted to the current use of English, but rather it characterises various stages of the development of its vocabulary stock.

The last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and – in particular – the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been marked by a particular rise in interest in the study of metaphor, which has become one of the main targets in linguistic research. In Polish tradition, this is particularly true of a group of Resovian academics, such as Kleparski (2002, 2008, 2012), Górecka-Smolińska (2009, 2015), Kiełtyka (2008, 2009, 2016), Cymbalista (2009) and Kudła (2009, 2016), who have developed a number of specific categories of meaning shift, such as zoosemy, plantosemy and foodsemy. The last category mentioned here has been investigated extensively by, among others, Kleparski (2002, 2008, 2012). Also Kudła (2009, 2016) has brought to the fore the research on ethnonymic metonymies and Cutierrez-Rivas (2011) has dealt with the notion of gender realised in food metaphor.

The goal set to this paper is to discuss several metaphorical/metonymic transfers of lexical items related primarily to the microcategory **MEAT PRODUCTS** that may be said to represent cases of historical shift to such human-related conceptual categories, as **FEMALE HUMAN BEING**, (e.g. *beef, burger*) **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS** (e.g. *sandwich, beef*) **MALE PRIVATE PARTS** (e.g. *bacon, bacon bazooka*) and, finally the category of **SEXUALITY** (e.g. *beef, meat*). The English lexico-semantic inventory of meat-related metaphorization processes is difficult to determine with absolute precision, but all in all, one can speak of at least 35 documented cases of foodsemy that have shown up in the period from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which merely mirrors the material registered and evidenced in a variety of lexicographic works, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, *Green's Online Dictionary of Slang*, *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, *Dictionary of Word Origin*, *The Diner's Dictionary*, *Word Origins*, *The Secret Histories of English Words from A to Z*, *Partridge's Dictionary of Slang* and *The Probert Encyclopaedia of Slang*.

## 2. Foodsemy and the macrocategory HUMAN BEING

The very term *foodsemy* was coined and introduced to metaphorical research by Kleparski (2008); however, the first analysis of the issue ventured by the author goes back to 1980s when various food-related transfers were discussed without being explicitly named. The nature of the mechanism is defined by Cymbalista and Kleparski (2013: 145) as figurative extension of food-related words onto various conceptual categories, most frequently **HUMAN BEING**, and the various subcategories that may be discerned within its scope, such as **FEMALE HUMAN BEING**, **FEMALE/MALE PRIVATE PARTS** and **SEXUALITY**. For the multitude of cases that have been subject to linguistic investigation in order to account for metaphorical extensions affecting the conceptual macrocategory **FOODSTUFFS**, the model of analysis proposed by Kleparski (1997, 2008) will be implemented. In short, it is based on general tenets of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in that it employs the general concept of mappings occurring between the source and target domains, together with the formulation and phrasing of possible paths/schemes of development, but, what is crucial for the analysis, it makes use of other elements, such as **CONCEPTUAL DOMAINS** (CD) and attributes that stand for experiential elements. In the implemented convention, capital letters are employed to signal names of conceptual attributes (e.g. **YOUNG**), bold capitals indicate names of conceptual domains (e.g. the **DOMAIN OF AGE** [...]) and conceptual categories (e.g. **FOODSTUFFS**).

One may say that such conceptual dimensions as, among others, **TASTE**, **SMELL**, **SHAPE** or **SIZE** are involved in the possible paths of semantic change from the **DOMAIN OF TASTE** [...], **DOMAIN OF SMELL** [...], **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF SIZE** [...] from the macrocategory **FOODSTUFFS** to the macrocategory **HUMAN BEING**. At the same time, one observes that in the case of foodsemic transfers certain resemblance paths or, as termed by Sornig (1981), conceptual bridges, seem to trigger metaphorical shifts in which food items, with their various qualities and characteristics, related to taste, shape, size and/or colour are translated metaphorically onto diverse qualities of human beings. For instance, the parameters based on the **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF**

**SIZE** [...] with such attributive values as [ROUND] and [BIG] may be said to be responsible for the sense transfer of lexical items *grapefruits, melons, pumpkins* and *watermelon* that can stand for large female breasts. Additionally, the attributive value [SWEET] is perceived as positive in the rise of metaphorical shifts of such lexical items as *honey* which acquired the metaphorical sense ‘a beloved person’. Similarly, further instances of panchronically viewed transfers related to the sphere of the target macrocategory **ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING** include the set of sweet food item names, such as *biscuit, bun, cake, cherry pie, cookie, cupcake, sweet meat, cream puff, cheesecake, cupcake, hot gingerbread, sugar-pie* and *jam*. All of them, at one point of the history of English started to be used for an attractive female human being, and they are all linked to the **DOMAIN OF TASTE** [...] and, in particular measure, the value [SWEET]. One may generalize and say that numerous foodsemic developments related to the conceptual category **ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING** are based on the possible metaphorical schema phrased here as <SWEETNESS IS PERCEIVED AS POSITIVE>. Yet, here the **DOMAIN OF TASTE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS/APPEARANCE** [...] seem to form the most relevant bridge between the original and metaphorical senses. Additionally, there are also cases, including *bun, cherry pie, cookie, cupcake* and *sweet-meat*, which are linked to the attributive value [YOUNG] of the **DOMAIN OF AGE** [...] as the last five vocabulary items acquired the secondary sense ‘attractive young female/girl’.

### 2.1. The microcategory **MEAT PRODUCTS** in focus

The lexical items linked to the conceptual category **MEAT PRODUCTS** have been frequently affected by figurative extensions of various nature, and hence constitute challenging material for linguistic analysis. According to Kiełtyka (2016, 200), “one of the most intriguing aspects of foodsemy [...] is the prominence of meat products in the rise of metaphorical senses”. From the extralinguistic point of view let us stress that – since meat is obtained from animal flesh – whenever one employs meat terminology to refer to people, one makes use of the general conceptual metaphor <HUMAN BEING (OF A KIND) IS ANIMAL (FLESH)>. It has been shown by, among others, Kleparski (2012) that the list of vocabulary items primarily semantically related to the microcategory **MEAT PRODUCTS** is quantitatively significant (see, for example, *Random House Word Menu* and *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English*). All in all, the two subcategories, namely **MEAT AND CUTS OF MEAT** and **SAUSAGE AND PÂTE** as stated in Glazier’s (1997) *Random House Word Menu* are linked to more than one hundred words used in reference to various meat types and meat products. Interestingly enough, 51% of elements listed in the former category developed a secondary sense/senses, while as far as the latter one is concerned 36% of the given vocabulary items acquired metaphorical/metonymic extensions. Consequently, **MEAT AND CUTS OF MEAT** is one of the categories that are the richest in variously conditioned figurative transfers. Out of 63 vocabulary items related to some kind of meat listed by Glazier (1997), words such as *meat, bacon, beef, brisket, burger, butt, chitterlings, chop, cold cut, corned beef, cutlet, goat, ham, hamburger, hock, jerky, joint, kid, kidney, lamb, liver, marrow, mutton, pork, ribs, roast, steak, tripe* and *veal* have been prone and subject to foodsemic developments. Here, we shall highlight a number of representative transfers of lexical items related to general meat types, such as *beef, mutton, pork, veal* and a few meat products including *bacon, chop* and *hamburger*.

To start at the top, let us focus on the very word *meat*, the meaning of which, according to *The Diner's Dictionary* is 'the flesh of animals used as food', developed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, Anglo-Saxon *mete* used to refer to food in general, and the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* enumerates two related historical senses, that is 'food, as nourishment for people and fodder for animals', and the other one being 'a kind of food; an article of food, a dish, a drink'. The source provides the following Middle English illustrative material for the former sense 1222 *Ne sculen 3e nawiht zimstones leggen Swinen to mete*, > c1450 *Pi mete schal be mylk, hony, & wiyne* and for the latter 1340 *A god huet we hedde guod wyn yesteneuen and guode metes* > c1520 *Of all metis in the worlde that be By this lyght I loue best drynke*.

Diachronic lexicographic data shows that from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century a novel meaning, that is 'the flesh of animals used as food, esp. excluding fish and sometimes poultry, and usually in contrast to the bones and other inedible parts' started to establish itself in English. The OED provides the earliest possible quotation dating back to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Ilc man... Heued and fet and in rew mete Lesen fro ðe bones*, and eten. However, the original sense of meat by no means disappeared completely from the system of English vocabulary and its traces are visible in various quotations from the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century: 1578 *These kindes of lillies are neither used in meate nor medicine* > 1623 *Meate of the Gods, Ambrosia, Manna*.

As far as metaphorical extensions of the lexical item *meat* are concerned, they made their first appearance during the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and *Green's Dictionary of Slang* enumerates two sense-threads of the noun. Chronologically, these are a 'woman's body as an object of sexual pleasure' illustrated in the following quotation: 1515 *And from thens to the halfe strete, To get us there some freshe mete. Why, is there any store of rawe motton? Ye, in Faythe*, 1590 *Why how now Scull quoth hee? will no worse meat go downe with you then my wife?* > 2013 *Drag the meat back to your magazine's snazzy tent, club it into submission with pumping house music and have your way*, and 'the penis' as in: 1564 *The baker he did cram the cockes / with bread well baked for y' nonce / and she her mealy mouth well stoppes / w'h pleasinge meate quite free from bones* > 2017 *We caught you staring at our meat while we took a piss*. Somewhat later, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the sense 'vagina' appeared, which may be testified by a number of historical quotations, such as 1654 *The Streams of Concupiscence so in her floate, / That many a Water-man rows in her Meate* > 1998 *Meat shots', 'Hamburger shots' in the jargon of the world of home-made pornography and contact magazines*.

The given, so to speak, corporally-oriented extensions were followed by the rise of the negatively loaded sense 'prey, a potential victim' and, especially in American English, 'a corpse, a wounded person' as testified in the following lexicographic material: 1845 *I knoed he were my meat without an accident* > 2012 *Then Bill got his eyes on me. He rolled them once or twice [...] New meat, Fred? Who's the new meat?* Finally, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was also the time of the rise of yet one more female-related sense, that is 'a prostitute' as in 1844 *Almost every house in the street is a bawdyken, and a decent bit of prize meat may be got at, at a reasonable price*.

Kleparski (2012) distinguishes several modern senses of *meat*, such as 'a sexual partner', the sense that gave rise to further sense-threads, such as the senses encoded by the compounds

*meat market* and *meat rack* used in reference to bars for singles, where one can find someone for sexual 'consumption'. Additionally, other secondary compounded formations as *fresh meat*, *hot meat* and *raw meat* have acquired the sense 'a prostitute' and 'the vagina'. Kleparski (2012), points to the fact that meat-related words follow the path of semantic evolution that may be patterned as <SEXUAL USE OF A PERSON IS CONSUMPTION OF MEAT>.

## 2.2. HUMAN BEING on the hit-list of meat products

Historically speaking, the oldest cases of foodsemic transfers in English, apart from *meat*, are *bacon*, *mutton* and *beef*. Thus, the lexical item *bacon* started to be used in 14<sup>th</sup> century English with reference to a human being and human flesh, in most general terms. As we have seen, at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *meat* started to be used in reference to a woman and her body viewed as sources of sexual pleasure. During the course of the same century, *mutton* and *beef* developed similar metaphorical senses. Specifically, the former acquired the sense 'a promiscuous woman', and the latter started to be used in the sense 'vagina'.

It is fairly obvious that foodsemic metaphors provide euphemistic tools that help one avoid taboo terms connected with moral issues and sexuality, and, as such, they serve as replacement means that serve as more acceptable means of conveying the sense intended, e.g. *biscuit*, *chicken* and *peach* convey the negatively loaded senses 'immoral woman' and 'a prostitute'. Likewise, *bun*, *bread* and *pie* may be euphemistically employed in reference to female private parts.

One is justified in claiming that the conceptualization of meat is in various intricate ways strictly connected with the body, corporality, sexuality and all that may go with it. In what follows, we shall define and divide the scope of the data, and the type of foodsemic extensions affecting the names of kinds of meat and products, which fall into four main categories, namely **ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING**, **IMMORAL FEMALE HUMAN BEING**, **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS** and **MALE PRIVATE PARTS**. We shall begin with the lexical items that witnessed female-specific shifts, as both women and their bodies are most frequently viewed from a metaphorical perspective as food ready for consumption (by men). In this context, let us point to Cutierrez-Rivas (2011) who claims that in the metaphors of consumption women are usually eaten, if not devoured, rather than consume food themselves, because they are perceived as mere products that are there at the disposal of men, to be consumed, enjoyed or ignored and discarded.

Ideally, an analysis of foodsemic developments related to the macrocategory **FEMALE HUMAN BEING** would involve dividing the macrocategory into several conceptual subcategories including, among others, **ATTRACTIVE FEMALE HUMAN BEING** and **IMMORAL FEMALE HUMAN BEING**. Lexical items, such as *burger*, *ham* and *pork chop*, that are related through metaphorical links to the former subcategory, developed the historically attested sense 'a very attractive young woman' at some point of their semantic evolution in English. Also, the words that are related to the latter conceptual category, that is *beef*, *meat*, *mutton* and *laced mutton*, developed the secondary sense 'a prostitute'. The noun *pork* may be proved to be employed in reference to a woman, viewed as a sexual object. Conceptually, as women tend to be perceived through the prism of their bodies, many lexical items related to the subcategory **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS**, such as (*vertical*) *bacon sandwich*, *beef*, *beef curtains*, *fur burger*, *meat*, *a bit of meat*, *mutton*, *pork*

and *badly wrapped kebab* developed via some kind of metonymy another female-specific sense 'female private parts, the vagina'.

The conceptual image of a woman mirrored in the existing metaphors is in no way homogenous. Yet, one observes that the number of figurative changes that result in the rise of metaphorical sense echoing the feature of ATTRACTIVENESS is relatively low, and the most productive and general path of development operative here is <SWEETNESS IS PERCEIVED AS POSITIVE>. Finally, meat-based foodsemic extensions are oftentimes linked to sexuality, and therefore the two conceptual subcategories, that is **IMMORAL FEMALE HUMAN BEING** and **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS**, are rich as far as foodsemic transfers are concerned. One may speak here of two major paths of development, namely, <IMMORAL FEMALE HUMAN BEING IS PERCEIVED AS MEAT/A KIND OF MEAT> and <FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS MEAT/A KIND OF MEAT>.

Although, one gets the impression that it is the woman and her body that are frequently pictured as a food to be 'consumed', the same holds true for the microcategory **MALE PRIVATE PARTS**, that is linked to a great number of lexical items, and what is more the number of metaphorical and metonymic transfers found here definitely outnumbers the body of female-specific extensions. However, female-related semantic alterations may be said to be more varied and have developed links to a large number of conceptual categories. Interestingly, the body of transfers linked to the microcategory **MALE PRIVATE PARTS** is quantitatively most interesting because as many as 30 lexical items have developed secondary senses, and this number includes a certain number of compounds (see, for example *bacon*, *bacon bazooka*, *beef*, *beef bayonet*, *beef torpedo*, *meat*, *meat axe*, *mutton*, *mutton bayonet*, *mutton gun*, *mutton tail*, *pork*, *pork grinder*, *meatballs*). All the lexical items listed above developed the secondary metaphorical sense 'penis' at a certain stage of their semantic evolution in English. Additionally, the list given here may be supplemented with the example of mixed-bag type transfers that is *meat and two veg(etable)* (meat + vegetable) that conveys the sense 'penis and testicles' and the compound *meatballs* (meat + round inanimate object) used in reference to testicles. Here, one may postulate the existence of the pattern that may be phrased as <MALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A MEAT KIND/MEAT PRODUCT>.

One could venture the claim that the abundance of meat-based transfers has been conditioned by various human associations of meat and meat products with physical strength, vitality, vigour and general fitness. Especially, we observe that there are a number of cases of complex nouns semantically characterized by the presence of those elements that are directly associated with physical power, violence and warfare, such as *bazooka* (in *bacon bazooka*), *bayonet* (in *beef bayonet*, *mutton bayonet*), *axe* (*meat axe*), *dagger* (*mutton dagger*), *grinder* (*pork grinder*), *gun* (*mutton gun*), *knife* (*butter knife*), *musket* (*mutton musket*), *torpedo* (*beef torpedo*), *skewer* (*meat skewer*) and *sword* (*pork sword*). In the above cases, different kinds of weapons are clearly associated with masculinity and dominance and, therefore, the metaphorical/metonymic path followed here is <MALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A KIND OF WEAPON>. What is more, the weapons listed here are rod-shaped and, so to speak, are on the hard side, being made of steel and similar materials, and their deployment involves a thrusting movement, which certainly mirrors certain male sexual associations. All these elements form a kind of bridge for the associations with the penis and penetration.

Male and female private parts are conceptually phrased, quite often, as meat and meat products. Consequently, there is a link between the conceptual domains **FOODSTUFFS** and **SEXUALITY**, between eating and sexuality as, generally speaking, sexuality and sexual desire is often understood as appetite or hunger. Certain food items bear strong associations with sexuality, not only those which are treated as aphrodisiacs. Here, one may propose the most general patterns of development <THE OBJECT OF SEXUAL DESIRE IS PERCEIVED AS A FOODSTUFF> and <HAVING SEX IS EATING>. Since meat and meat products are associated with the body, flesh, physical strength and vigour, they are 'a natural' tool for language users to articulate certain notions connected with the most basic elements of human life, including procreation. Consequently, meat-related vocabulary items *beef*, *beef injection*, *meat injection* and *pork* developed the sense 'sexual intercourse/the act of penetration by the penis' as presented in the following current English illustrative material: *Maybe her old man ain't givin' her enough beef at night; Queen – A female of fluid moral habits who takes [...] beef injections; Their defining pro-pleasure dissertation is '(I Wanna) Meat Injection,' on which they avow that they'd swap Rudolph Valentino and Tom Cruise for a 'meat injection' from 'someone sweet, who can keep an erection'; There was much more to getting yourself than being an honest Joe. That crap rarely counted for anything when it came to pork time.* Additionally, except for the variety of nominal developments, one may enumerate verbs and verbal expressions that are used in the sense 'to have sexual intercourse', including *to make bacon*, *to pork*, *to hawk one's mutton* and *to hide salami*. One is tempted to generalize and say that the meat-related secondary extensions, both metaphors and metonymies, occupy a special position in the conceptualization of sexual organs and sexual activities and are strong images connected with generally understood sexuality.

However, apart from the picturesque images of meat and physicality, there are several metaphorical extensions of meat-related vocabulary items traceable within the subcategories APPEARANCE, NATIONALITY and MENTAL CAPACITIES. In the cases of *meatball* and *hamburger* one may speak of pejorative developments encoding features that characterise human beings. As far as *meatball* in American English is concerned, it may stand for a short and fat person, either a woman or a man. Similarly, and much along similar conceptual lines and patterns, Spanish *albondiga* 'meatball' and Polish *pulpet* 'a kind of meatball' may be used in the sense 'fat, obese person'. In all these cases, the main trigger in the path of evaluative development and the concept of obesity is realized by the presence and activation of attributive features/elements, such as SHAPE: [ROUND] and SIZE: [LARGE] operative within the **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...] and the **DOMAIN OF SIZE** [...]. However, the vocabulary item in question, may also be used in reference to a person of Italian origin. Stereotypically, Italians are viewed from the perspective of their popular dishes. In this case, one can formulate the metonymic path <FOODSTUFF FOR NATION>, namely <MEATBALLS FOR ITALIANS>. *GODS* provides the following illustrative material: 1968 *Didn't I tell you to stay with that meatball and get him to work?* > 2011 *I don't like Mr Cardone [...] Treats me like a child, that meatball.*

Quite frequently, the changes discussed here are – at the same time, and yet on different levels – cases of pejorative foodsemic transfers that involve and encode negative evaluative features that on various down-to-earth occasions characterize human beings,

their appearance, but also mental capacities, as in the case of *meatball* and *hamburger*. The former may be used to stand for a person who is far from wise and lacks what is known as common sense, as documented in the illustrative quotations from *Green's Online Dictionary of Slang* 1922 *Meatball: Dumb but happy*; 1947 *He wasn't such a meatball that he couldn't find a way to get around Vince's reluctance to declare a dividend* > 2024 *You stop with that kid stuff or I'm going to start calling you Meatball*.

Similarly, Am.E. *hamburger* (also *hamburgerhead*) can be used in reference to an individual treated as stupid and worthless, as visible in the following quotations: 1955 *He had been pulling all this stuff for years and getting away with it, which just shows what a grand and glorious country of opportunity for hamburgerheads we got* > 1993 *Why don't you hamburgers try and set some sort of record for your class*. In order to encode the trigger behind the evaluative developments of *meatball* and *hamburger* one may make use of the presence of negative elements within the **DOMAIN OF MENTAL CAPACITIES** [...], such as [LACK OF COMMON SENSE], [LACK OF WISDOM] and [STUPIDITY]. Interestingly enough, the two cases of foodsemic extensions may be treated as instances of the *linguistic wammel syndrome*. Kleparski (2012) provides this label for those foodsemic transfers of food-related vocabulary items that serve as names for those foodstuffs the content of which is either difficult or impossible to determine. The author claims that human mentality tends to work in such a way that treats everything that is new, unknown and undetermined as alien and negative. Quite frequently, we “tend to fork and poke suspiciously any dish the internal composition of which is hard to determine by the system of human senses” (Kleparski 2012, 44-45).

Hence, such attributive elements as [UNKNOWN] and [UNDETERMINABLE] may justifiably be linked to such negatively charged qualities as [UNACCEPTABLE] or [DISAGREEABLE] and, consequently, it is possible to formulate the schema <UNKNOWN/UNDETERMINABLE IS PERCEIVED AS NEGATIVE> responsible for the indicated transfers.

### 2.3. Meat-specific transfers as a case of metaphonymy

We have also found evidence, albeit partial and in need of further research, that justifies the proposal made by Goosens (1990), who introduced the notion *metapho-nymy*, which may be defined as the process in which metaphor and metonymy interact in some intricate way. One gets the impression that it is not a matter of differences of perception between the two sexes, but rather one should speak of a more universal association of meat products and sexuality regardless of the sex distinction. There are other lexical items that acquired more than one figurative sense, in the rise of which one is justified to speak of the working of the process termed here as metaphonymy. For instance, at some point of their semantic evolution, the lexical items *meat*, *mutton*, *pork*, *beef* and *bacon* developed more than one secondary sense thread, the former of which is of metaphorical nature, and the rise of the latter was conditioned by the operation of metonymy. In these cases one is justified to speak of metonymy within metaphor. In other words, lexical items that at some point of their history are linked to the macrocategory **FOODSTUFFS**, develop, via metaphor, a sense related directly to the macrocategory **FEMALE HUMAN BEING** and, simultaneously, or at some later stage, via the process of metonymy they become historically linked to the microcategory **FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS**, and here, the metonymic pattern <FEMALE BODY PART FOR PERSON> is clearly at work.

Yet another pattern that emerges from the history of the lexical item *beef* is that the historically earlier sense ‘the vagina’, resulted from the operation of the metaphor <FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A FOOD ITEM>. Within the course of sense evolution discussed here, one may also speak of the rise of another figurative female-specific sense conditioned by the operation of metonymy that may be patterned as <FEMALE BODY PART FOR PERSON>. Note that this deeply rooted physicality of food metaphors and food metonymies may be further exemplified by the path of development of other *meat*-related words, such as *beef*, *beef injection*, *meat injection*, *pork* that acquired the sense ‘sexual intercourse’, and *to make bacon*, *to pork* and *to hide salami* that came to be used in the sense ‘to have sexual intercourse’.

Judging from the entirety of factual material discussed and signalled here, one may speak of some sort of task-directed metonymic chains, such as first of all, <FEMALE BODY PART FOR A PERSON>, here most often narrowed to its subcategory <FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS FOR FEMALE HUMAN BEING>, that may, in turn have led to new transfers within the microcategory <SEXUAL INTERCOURSE>, on the basis of the pattern <BODY ORGANS FOR ACTION EFFECTED WITH IT>. Let us merely add that in the case of verbal representations, one may speak of a pattern of metonymic development <OBJECT FOR ACTION>.

### 3. Conclusion

In spite of over two decades that have elapsed since the start of the *Rzeszów School of Diachronic Semantics* the problems of such metaphoric transfers as zoosemy, foodsemy and the broadly understood evaluative transfers still occupy the minds of several members of this much specialized academic circle. Here, we have attempted to throw some light on the mechanism of selected metaphorical and metonymic extensions of the lexical items that are conceptually primarily related to the category **MEAT PRODUCTS**. Although one may hardly speak of any hard-and-fast rules for any lexico-semantic system that have been formulated, or may be in the future, the mechanisms that we may have thrown some light upon are not thought to be entirely random. Earlier, certain paths and tendencies in the semantic evolution of lexical items were formulated by, among others, Schreuder (1929), Stern (1931) and Kleparski (1990). Here, an attempt has been made to provide yet another piece of evidence that figurative extensions affecting words related to meat types and meat products frequently relate both historically and synchronically (hence panchronically) to such conceptual target categories as **FEMALE HUMAN BEING** and **MALE/FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS**.

We hope to have thrown some light on the nature of the rise of euphemistic tools used to refer to female and male private parts, or more generally, human sexuality, but also the extralinguistic conditions that lie behind the rise of pejoratively loaded senses that encode negative evaluative attributes, such as immorality and behavioural looseness. More generally, most conceptual metaphors are part of an unconscious cognitive effort, and the results of this effort are frequently transferred to other related operations on other semantically-related lexical items. Hence, novel metaphorical language makes use of the existing patterns, and may be said to be a type of reapplication of certain definite patterns existing in purely extralinguistic reality. In most general terms, the foodsemic transfers

discussed here may be justifiably viewed as ones that follow a number of easily definable paths/patterns of semantic evolution, such as for example: <IMMORAL FEMALE HUMAN BEING IS PERCEIVED AS A KIND OF MEAT/ MEAT PRODUCT>, <FEMALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A KIND OF MEAT/ MEAT PRODUCT>, <MALE PRIVATE PARTS ARE PERCEIVED AS A KIND OF MEAT/ MEAT PRODUCT> and <SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IS PERCEIVED AS CONSUMPTION OF MEAT/MEAT PRODUCT>.

The data analysed in this work justifies the claim that the majority of lexical items related to the microcategory **MEAT PRODUCTS** have developed a number of secondary figurative senses through the process of metaphor, metonymy and metaphonymy. It is the task of future research to bring to light other characteristic particulars of foodsemic transfers that are certainly there for us to discover.

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# Grotesquely Gothic Textual Overflow: Depictions of Generational Female Trauma in Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*



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## Abstract

This article explores the connection between literary trauma theory and the generational female trauma in Silvia Moreno-Garcia's contemporary novel, *Mexican Gothic*. This novel, clearly situated in the Female Gothic tradition, expands on common Gothic tropes, and it is argued it presents the Female Gothic genre as one that inherently deals with the trauma of women forced into an oppressive silencing by patriarchal powers. Through the characters of Agnes and Ruth, this paper argues trauma is portrayed as sensory, textual overflow, drawing on the concept from trauma theorist Joshua Pederson. Through sensory, highly detailed and grotesque depictions of women's experiences of trauma, *Mexican Gothic* demonstrates the power of the Female Gothic genre to explicate trauma while emphasizing the grotesque oppression women face at the hands of manipulative patriarchal power, both in and out of fiction.

## Key words

*Female Gothic, trauma, patriarchy, haunting, gender oppression*

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Prominent Gothic scholar Diana Wallace, in the introduction to her book *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, writes how Ann Radcliffe is one of the first authors to establish the Female Gothic genre, as her novels feature “heroines in flight from male tyrants across fantastical landscapes and in search of lost mothers entombed in womb-like dungeons beneath patriarchal castles” (Wallace and Smith 2009, 2). These have become classic Female Gothic tropes: heroines attempting to flee the dominion of male tyrants while their mothers haunt them, lost to time and silenced by trauma. Those heroines’ experiences mirror those of women who, for hundreds of years, have been writing about their silencing in society and the suppression of their voices by the men they were led– or forced– to trust, and the pattern begins with their mothers. David Punter and Elisabeth Bronfen, experts on Gothic culture, discuss these links of violence and trauma in the Gothic genre and note how these stories tend to “exist

only in endless, unacknowledged recounting, a message that is absolutely necessary and absolutely without origin [...] the structure of the enigma” (Punter and Bronfen 2001, 4). The horrors endured by the women in the narratives become something elusive, without definite origin, as the traumatic experiences they endure are generational and repetitive. But they start with some mother forced into silent oppression, and feminist scholar Claire Kahane explicates the key trope of the Female Gothic specifically as the relationship between those lost mothers and the heroine, who must contend with that mother’s trauma. Kahane writes that “the spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all encompassing” is “a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront” (Kahane 2019, 336). The focus on these lost mothers as the genesis of patterns of patriarchal oppression is key to the Female Gothic genre. Further, scholar Edina Szalay discusses the important role of these Gothic mothers in the daughter’s psychology: “in the Female Gothic, the most important legacy daughters inherit from the mothers appear to be a general fear of femaleness: the female role, female sexuality, and female physiology. What the mother’s body chiefly embodies is female entrapment and an enclosed space of violation” (Szalay 2000, 191). Thus, Female Gothic authors convey the damaging, recurring patterns of patriarchal oppression that compound with each generation of women until they reach a bursting point, and the current heroine works to stop that pattern and give a voice to past generations of silenced women.

Published in 2020, Silvia Moreno-Garcia’s *Mexican Gothic* revitalizes everything grotesque in Female Gothic novels and builds upon that legacy of haunted, trapped, and oppressed women who work to cease generational trauma. While Moreno-Garcia situates this novel firmly in the Female Gothic tradition, postcolonial threats are essential to the story as well, featuring prominently an English patriarchy that colonized the narrative’s rural Mexican town. The grounding of this novel in the parallel Female Gothic and postcolonial genres further underscores the novel’s tyrannical men, emphasizing how generations of women under their control have been exploited like the land they colonized. Indeed, the story begins with Noemí Taboada, the heroine, receiving a frightening letter from her newly married cousin, Catalina, who feels imprisoned in High Place by her husband, Virgil Doyle, and his family. In her letter, Female Gothic tropes are immediately evident, including augmented, hyper-detailed images of the horrors she experiences. Due to her forced confinement in High Place, reality becomes incomprehensible to Catalina, who describes her new home as “sick with rot [...] stinks of decay [...] I bar my door but still they come, they whisper at nights and I am so afraid of these restless dead, these ghosts, fleshless things” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 7-8). Noemí is coerced by her father to venture into this danger to save her cousin and uncover the secrets of High Place. However, as the classic Female Gothic heroine, Noemí endures her own traumatic experiences before she can understand the true horrors perpetuated by the Doyles.

Indeed, this novel works with literary trauma theory; specifically, the narrative device of the gloom functions as a liminal space wherein the silenced women of High Place communicate the trauma they've endured. Joshua Pederson, a literary trauma scholar, describes how "traumatic memories [...] are not elusive or absent; they are potentially more detailed and more powerful than normal ones" (Pederson 2014, 339). Thus, literary critics must be "open to the possibility that authors may record trauma with excessive detail and vibrant intensity [...] thus, readers looking for representations of trauma may turn not to textual absence but to textual overflow [...]" (Pederson 2014, 339). While trauma may be perceived as a force that silences survivors through guilt or shame, it is also a force too powerful to be contained. Thus in literature, trauma often explodes as textual overflow, or hyper-detailed images. Pederson explains how "traumatic memory is often multisensory; victims may record not only visual cues, but aural, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory ones as well" (Pederson 2014, 339). Kahane mentions a similar focus on body horror and sensory details as part of the grotesquery of "modern Gothic" as she writes, "repeatedly [...] when the unseen is given visual form, when we lose the obscurity of the Gothic darkness, the Gothic focuses on distorted body images and turns into the grotesque" (Kahane 2019, 343). These grotesque, sensory descriptions are immediately evident in Catalina's letter and how she explains her feelings. She cannot comprehend the horrors she sees and feels, so she focuses on the details she can perceive to convey her experiences. She mentions in her letter how "I am bound, threads like iron through my mind and my skin [...]" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 8) and later, once Noemí arrives at High Place, she constantly complains about "the darkness and the damp. It's always damp and dark and so very cold" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 49). Her experiences are focused on the senses, as she cannot verbalize or make sense of the trauma she has endured in High Place at the hands of her husband and his family. The grotesque textual overflow is seen through each woman's experiences of trauma in High Place. More specifically, the "gloom" is a liminal space where these women live, as film critic and Gothic scholar Coşkun Liktör describes, "ghosts of female gothic" – "suspended between life and death, presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, materiality and immateriality [...] representing the plight of women who are silenced, marginalized, disempowered, hence virtually rendered invisible in patriarchal culture" (Liktör 2016, 152). Therefore, *Mexican Gothic* presents the Female Gothic genre as one that is inherently grotesque, featuring heroines who must deal with generational trauma suffered by their predecessors, and the gloom allows those violently silenced women to gain back their voices. Further, the gloom forces Noemí to contend with their trauma and her own, allowing her to gather strength from their pain, stop their oppression, and guide those traumatized women to peace.

As soon as Noemí arrives at High Place, she fights oppressors, such as the patriarch Howard Doyle and his son Virgil, but also a matriarch who perpetuates the men's pattern of domination— Florence, Howard's niece. Feminist scholar Emma Domínguez-Rué explicates this idea of females forced into conflict, writing how "according to patriarchal stereotypes of femininity, relationships among women can never involve co-operation and solidarity: their unequal position in society results in mutual jealousy, competition for male attention, and identity only in relation to men" (Domínguez-Rué 2014, 129). Under Howard's thumb of patriarchal authority, women are used to continue the Doyle bloodline; their worth is determined by how well they accomplish that goal. Florence embodies those tropes of jealousy and competition for male attention, as she is hateful towards Noemí because Howard has taken a liking to her as the next child-bearer for the Doyles. Emma Jane Tseris, a mental health scholar focused on gender inequality in psychiatric practices, notes how "understanding the narratives of women means that women are not confined to a one-size-fits-all assessment of their experiences" (Tseris 2013, 161). Francis, Florence's son, divulges to Noemí how "when my mother came of age, Howard tried to... but he was too old, too damaged, to give her a child" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 214). She was too young and now Howard is too injured. Since she cannot be of use to him as a fertile mother and thus worthless, Florence assumes the role of an oppressive mother, manipulating the other women for injured Howard. This is evident when Florence tells Noemí, "you think you have a special power simply because my uncle thinks you possess a pretty face. But that's not a power. It's a liability" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 114). Then, she explains how Howard "simply wants to have you, like a little butterfly in his collection. One more pretty girl" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 248). Unlike the other women who work to usurp the male powers at play, Florence has assumed the role of an oppressive matriarch, maintaining Howard's domination over the other women in High Place and ensuring his exploitation of their bodies. Florence perpetuates Howard's pattern of oppression, and actively works against Noemí's attempts to destroy this traumatizing exploitation.

Noemí realizes the extent of High Place's horrors through the gloom which "records" and harbors the grotesque details and terrific feelings of past High Place women. Francis, Noemí's only male confidant, describes the gloom as "a giant spider's web [...] In that web, we can preserve memories, thoughts [...] We call that repository of our thoughts, of our memories, *the gloom*" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 211). The fungi's mycorrhiza relationship with the Doyles allows Howard to gain immortality as long as an heir is birthed, hence the importance of fertile women. Thus, Howard's entrapment and exploitation lead to generations of women becoming traumatized, having no say in their fates. As Pederson explains, "trauma forces the self into hiding, and while the sensory manifold keeps "recording" sights, sounds, smells, and feelings, the brain fails to work them through" (Pederson 2014, 335). The gloom is this sensory

manifold, holding the key to the Doyle's secrets, allowing silenced generations of women to communicate their trauma. It is a space wherein their experiences are trapped and vividly depicted, as if memories in a sticky web. Here, the textual overflow corresponding with their traumatic experiences is most evident. For example, the first time Noemí sees Agnes, the first woman sacrificed by Howard, her description is highly detailed and grotesque:

It was a woman in a dress of yellowed antique lace. Where her face ought to have been there was a glow, golden like that of the mushrooms on the wall [...] the wall had started to quiver, beating to the same rhythm as the golden woman [...] the floorboards pulsed too; a heart, alive and knowing [...] The woman made a noise, like the crunching of leaves [...] like the buzzing of insects in the pitch-black darkness. (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 56)

Agnes is a golden, glowing, faceless woman, and her presence is accompanied by the grotesque descriptions of the floorboards pulsing to the beat of her heart and the sound of her buzzing, representing her trying to speak. Agnes is foundational to *Mexican Gothic* as she is forced to become the mother and mind of the gloom. Agnes's experience of being sacrificed for the gloom was so horrifying she can no longer communicate properly, and Noemí realizes this after seeing her at the end of the novel:

Noemí stared straight into the face of death. It was the open, screaming maw of a woman, frozen in time. A mummy, a few teeth dangling from her mouth, her skin yellow [...] she was clothed in a different finery: mushrooms hid her nakedness. They grew from her torso and her belly, they grew down her arms and her legs, they clustered around her head creating a crown, a halo, of glowing gold. The mushrooms held her upright, anchored her to the wall, like a monstrous Virgin in a cathedral of mycelium (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 282).

Agnes's decomposing body is found beneath High Place, anchored to the wall, trapped forever as the fungal mother so Howard could have eternal life, and after seeing her decomposing body, Noemí realizes "the buzzing" she has heard "was her voice. [Agnes] could not communicate properly any longer but could still scream of unspeakable horrors inflicted on her," thus "the frightening and twisted gloom that surrounded them was the manifestation of all the suffering that had been inflicted on this woman" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 289). Agnes communicates through images and sounds in the gloom as she cannot speak anymore as Howard murdered her, and Noemí must make sense of these enigmatic messages Agnes conveys. This is in line with how Punter and Bronfen explain, "the child" and in this case Noemí, "possesses only inadequate and imperfect ways to configure or theorise about what is communicated to him" and is "aware yet not aware of the traumatizing power of the

message, unable to escape from its mesmerizing, seductive force” (Punter and Bronfen 2001, 5). Noemí is drawn to these dream-like experiences in the gloom and is desperate to learn more, yet she is unable to piece together the full puzzle until she sees Agnes’s body in the end. Agnes’s mycelium-enabled habitation is thus symbolic of the “absent,” subdued Gothic mother as she is entombed beneath High Place, but she is nonetheless present as she conveys her experiences through her hauntings, desperate to end the cycle of exploitation that began with her.

Ruth is the next generation of silenced, sacrificed women, and similarly conveys her traumatic experiences through the gloom, depicted with grotesque, sensory details to warn Noemí of the danger at High Place. Her experiences are especially violent, as “the excavation of trauma” is tied with “the inevitability of violence as a way of forcing the message into coherence” (Punter and Bronfen 2001, 6). The only way for Ruth to impress upon Noemí the horrors she experienced is to relive the most violent moment of her life, which impresses upon Noemí the extent of Ruth’s trauma which forced her to this violence to escape. When Noemí first realizes she is watching Ruth enact the circumstances of her suicide in a dream, Noemí feels the house as if it is alive and the grotesque descriptions are present to emphasize Ruth’s horrific experience:

Noemí heard a heart beating, as loud as a drum [...] she ventured outside her room to find the place where it was hiding. She felt it beneath her palm [...] felt the wallpaper grow slippery [...] the floor beneath her was wet and soft. It was a sore [...] The wallpaper was peeling, revealing underneath sickly organs [...] Veins and arteries clogged with secret excesses [...] The heart pumped blood and groaned and shivered, and it beat so loudly Noemí thought she’d go deaf. (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 116-7)

Here, Ruth guides Noemí through her most traumatic memory and alludes to Agnes’s haunting presence as she was accompanied by the beating heart earlier and as the mother of the gloom, she “records” the subsequent trauma women endure. Indeed, Ruth’s suicide is described in vivid detail: “there was blood, the dark splatter marking the wall. Noemí watched Ruth fall, her body bending like the stem of a flower” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 117-8). While it is a horrific death and final image, in this moment Ruth exerts some agency and before pulling the trigger, tells Noemí, “I’m not sorry” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 117). Through a violent death at her own hands, Ruth frees herself from Howard’s oppression, and her experience further emphasizes to Noemí the extent to which Howard traumatizes the women of High Place, driving them to commit suicide rather than live under his control.

However, the gloom transmits not just those experiences, but the accompanying feelings which are more powerful than the senses in conveying the women’s traumatic memories. As described immediately after Ruth pulls the trigger,

“The suicide, however, did not unnerve Noemí [...] she felt soothed, she even thought to smile” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 118). Here, Noemí is struck with the relief Ruth felt after killing herself. While it was horrific, her blood splattering against the wall, it was a release from Howard’s torment, and she could almost smile. However, as soon as Agnes appears a moment later, Noemí is overwhelmed by the horror Agnes felt when she was sacrificed against her will. Agnes is described as “the woman with the blur of a face, her whole body rippling, liquid, rushing toward Noemí with a huge open mouth— although she had no mouth— ready to unleash a terrible scream [...] And now Noemí was afraid, now she knew terror [...]” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 118). Ruth and Agnes had startlingly different experiences of trauma. Agnes was left terrified, culminating in fury in the afterlife, whereas Ruth was filled with fury in life and in death is granted relief. The sensory details of the gloom are coupled with the women’s intense emotions during their deaths. Thus, it takes violence, but also violent emotions, for Agnes and Ruth to communicate the horror they experienced. As Punter and Bronfen question, “what new senses would we have to grow, in order to hear the message clearly – and if we ever did, how would we distinguish it from psychotic thought-broadcasting, from the ultimate delusion of the centred self” (Punter and Bronfen 2001, 6)? Moreno-Garcia has created these new senses through the gloom, giving a voice to the voiceless through visceral, multisensory recordings of their trauma, allowing Noemí to uncover the message and ultimately put their spirits to rest and stop the perpetuation of oppression at High Place.

Still, before she can truly understand the trauma of others, Noemí must endure her own horrific experiences, giving her the undeniable motivation to destroy High Place. Noemí’s experiences are described in similarly vivid, grotesque detail, especially when her mind is immersed in the gloom. When she is forced to kiss Howard and consume the fungus from his saliva, it is described thus: “Noemí felt his tongue in her mouth and then saliva burning down her throat... she felt very light; her thoughts were scattered. Drowsy” (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 204). While she cannot make sense of the traumatic experience at first, she enters the gloom and imagines the horrific things figuratively happening to her body:

[...] Noemí looked down at her hands, at her wrist, which itched terribly. Before she could scratch herself pustules erupted and there rose tendrils, like hairs, upon her skin. Her velvety body fruited. Fleshy, white, fan-shaped caps sliced through her marrow and her muscle, and when she opened her mouth liquid poured up, gold and black, like a river that stained the floor [...] Her mouth was full of blood and she spat out her own teeth. (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 208)

While Noemí cannot make literal sense of her trauma in the moment, in the gloom her experience is grounded with visceral bodily distortions which represent what is symbolically happening within her body. Thus, through the intense sensory overflow

present within the gloom, Moreno-Garcia portrays the confused emotions of women forced to endure unimaginable horrors, as well as how this trauma, inherent in the Female Gothic genre, forces itself to be seen and dealt with through violence, and the violent hauntings of Agnes and Ruth convey their experiences to the other women in High Place so they might be released from everlasting torment.

*Mexican Gothic* most notably demonstrates the strength of women when they join forces, having communicated their trauma and worked together towards freedom from their entrapment in High Place. While the patriarchal authority of Howard, Virgil, and Florence would wish them to be silenced and complicit, it is through the gloom that Agnes and Ruth become visible and material, and it is only through female bonding that those patterns of oppression are stopped. Only through Noemí and Catalina working together can they piece together Agnes and Ruth's stories and formulate a plan to destroy High Place. Further, Noemí conjures the powerful emotions these women convey to give her the strength to persist. When Noemí is about to be raped by Virgil, "she thought of Catalina and Ruth and Agnes and the terrible things they'd done to them" and only when she recalled those horrors is she able to turn around, "away from the shimmering [...] and shoved Virgil away with all her might" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 262). Thus, it is through the power of trauma, which compounds with each generation trapped in the gloom, that Noemí musters the strength to fight the patriarchy of High Place. Similarly, in the final climatic sequence as Florence holds Noemí at gunpoint, it is then Catalina who conjures the strength to attack. "A startled flash of recognition came over her and then a spark of rage [...] Catalina became a maenad" stabbing Howard over and over (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 270-1). In that moment, she embodies the rage of the other women, Agnes, Ruth, and herself, who have been violently exploited, attacking like a frenzied woman possessed by the hatred they harbor for Howard. Catalina relays their message of loathing and pain and through the combined strength of the women's trauma, he is destroyed. Noemí further makes sure of this when she "raised the gun and shot Howard twice" (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 274). Here, Noemí reiterates specifically Ruth's message, ensuring the violent end of Howard, allowing herself and Catalina to escape.

Therefore, Howard is destroyed by the power of those he sought to suppress, and the women are released from their torment as the gloom dies with them. When Noemí finally "tossed the lamp against the corpse's face," Agnes's corpse, Noemí is "jolted into complete awareness, the gloom shoving her away" while Virgil, their final antagonist, falls writhing to the floor (Moreno-Garcia 2020, 290). With the destruction of Agnes's corpse, their trauma tangled in the web of the gloom, their experiences unspeakable yet unrelenting, were finally put to rest. Thus, as Pederson claims, this "literature of trauma" conveys the experiences of Agnes and Ruth through the gloom "not as a collection of faltering or failing speech acts but instead

as efforts– no matter how halting– at rehabilitation” (Pederson 2014, 339). That is all these women wanted. They conveyed the horrors of their lives to the next generation of women who could help them. They came as ghosts, as records of their traumatic experiences so that Catalina and Noemí could rehabilitate their spirits and release them from torment. As Kahane claims, “at the Gothic center of the novels, a fearsome figure in the mirror still remains, waiting to be acknowledged” and this was Agnes (Kahane 2019, 341). Agnes’s trauma had to be reckoned with so she could finally rest in peace. The same goes for Ruth, who is desperate to tell her story and escape Howard’s control. It was through the gloom that Agnes and Ruth were given a voice, and by working in conjunction with Catalina and Noemí, Howard and the other perpetrators of patriarchal oppression were destroyed, and the women’s tormented souls could finally rest.

Thus, *Mexican Gothic* explores how generational trauma presents in the Female Gothic genre as grotesque hauntings, mirroring the horrors women face at the hands of oppressors. Further, this trauma must be and can only be resolved by women working together to give a voice and identity back to those silenced by patterns of patriarchal domination. Moreno-Garcia utilizes the gloom as a space wherein those women who lost their voices, literally and symbolically through death and exploitation, can convey their experiences and seek rectification. Indeed, Agnes engulfs High Place in grotesque horror, instigated by the immense trauma she faced at the hands of Howard, and her gloom fills the home with her incomprehensible feelings and memories of her horrific experiences. Without the gloom, Noemí never would have known the truth of Ruth’s horrific life and what drove her to murder and suicide, and Noemí would never have found Agnes’s decomposing body entombed and screaming for release under High Place. In the end, this novel shows how powerful memories and experiences of trauma are and how our minds work to make sense of those inexplicable horrors through a focus on the grotesque sensory details and powerful emotions that accompany trauma. *Mexican Gothic* exemplifies the immense combined strength of women who use their trauma and that of others as motivation to fight against oppression and give women a voice. Thus, it is ultimately a novel that demonstrates the power of the Female Gothic genre to explicate trauma, all while holding a mirror to reality, emphasizing the grotesque oppression women face at the hands of manipulative patriarchal power.

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# The 'Internal Tree:' Arboreal Symbols in Ali Smith's *Autumn*



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## Abstract

Following the publishing of *Autumn* (2016), Scottish author Ali Smith has received both international acclaim as well as negative reviews for it supposedly being a collage of seemingly unrelated subjects. This paper challenges such a view by providing insight into one of its hidden meanings – the arboreal symbols – paying attention to the concept of 'Internal Tree' as coined by J.R.R. Tolkien and which resembles the way in which other well-known authors including Smith have explored the topics of authorship and literature. I will study the origins of these symbols as a trope and examine how the 'Internal Tree' allows authors' development and connection with past, present and future writers while remaining attached to their roots. Both aspects will be briefly traced from the work of Classical authors, the Bible and Anglophone literature, and analysed in Ali Smith's *Autumn* and a number of her previous works.

## Key words

*Ali Smith, Autumn, Arboreal Symbolism, Brexit Fiction, Contemporary British Authors, Literary Tropes*

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## Introduction

Scottish author Ali Smith published her novel *Autumn* in 2016 and since then, it has been widely studied and commented on by scholars and reviewers. There are those who have seen this narrative as a start to the so-called BrexLit and have praised its accomplishments (Shaw 2018, 20-23; Einhaus 2018, 165). Even so, McAlpin has considered this narrative to be “less structurally complex than *How to be Both*” and have particularly argued that it “knits together an astonishing array of seemingly disparate subjects” (2017). O'Brien wonders likewise “Who is Smith trying to convince here? Because in many, rather unsatisfying ways, despite Smith’s undeniable skill, *Autumn* is gestational, even tangled, unsure of its position” (2017). These opinions, however, appear to disregard Smith's frequent assertion that “stories– like onions [...] are layered, stratified constructs” or that “We'd never expect to understand a piece of music on one listen, but we tend to believe we've read a book after reading it just once” (“How should” 2012; Cohen 2013). She consistently articulates the idea that narratives should be considered as complex nets of interrelations and finds fault with

the current tendency to oversimplify “that makes us expect simple solutions, closure, a beginning, middle and an end. It doesn't fit us for experiment or risk” (Winterson 2003, 2). Smith dismisses thus the possibility that any of the topics in her works are included without a predefined objective.

One of the aspects in those layers which contributes to the endless connections present in this narrative is its arboreal symbolism. Symbols have been considered by scholars like Juan Eduardo Cirlot as a tool which links the material with the transcendental. In other words, it provides unity and meaning where we would otherwise only see disconnection and chaos (2001, xiii). In the matter at hand, existing relations between books and trees are not a recent discovery. Traditionally, books have been made from raw materials extracted from trees what would explain why the root of the word “book” is suspected to share the same base as “beech” which is not only the name of a tree species but does also refer to wooden material for writing (OED online 2023). Among the significant authors studying these connections there stands John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, better known as J.R.R. Tolkien, who first mentions the term 'Internal Tree' in his personal correspondence, when he experienced a mental block while writing *The Lord of the Rings* (1968). Then, he consciously refers to his novel as a tree whose growth is influenced by external conditions, in this case, World War II. He also talks about it “throwing unexpected branches” or creating unforeseen associations. This is especially remarkable as Margaret Atwood – without explicitly using this expression – talks in similar terms about her work, asserting that a writer “can branch out in all kinds of different directions, but that doesn't mean cutting yourself off from your roots and from your earth” (Jensen 2016, 7; 100). Even if narratives are occasionally analysed as independent units, both Tolkien and Atwood seem to be aware of having been shaped by their origins, times, life experiences and other authors. Jensen compares this matter to the study of tree rings or dendrochronology since trees as well as literature are affected by external conditions (5-12). This influence of previous authors is akin to the origins of arboreal symbols which trace us back to the psychological features and material wealth inherited from our ancestors. Subsequently, I will explore these issues by providing in each case examples from Anglophone literature and Ali Smith's *Autumn*.

## **1. Arboreal symbolism**

### **1.1. Origins'**

Trees are connected to the emergence of the first human settlements. Prior to that stage, individuals were mostly nomadic, they planted and harvested crops in the same year, making their attachment to land limited. However, the beginning of the cultivation of fruit trees before 3,000 B.C. changed this disposition. Trees, as Russell explains “may go on producing for decades, and anyone who has planted a fruit-tree has a valuable and durable piece of capital, in which he takes a continued interest,

constantly visiting it to care for and harvest it” (1979, 221). This was one of the reasons for settling on a particular place and the establishment of a means of successfully proving kinship and, thus, the right to inheritance. This new lifestyle provided by itself the method for identifying the true descendants of a given family. In other words, it was not until “domesticated animals were bred under controlled conditions that the further discovery was made, that one particular male is responsible for each birth” (Russell 222).

These considerations furnished literature with a series of arboreal symbols. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant state, trees are regarded as symbols of the life cycle as they undergo the same changes as humans: birth, maturation, death and transformation. Likewise, both the *Genesis* and the *Koran* liken their growth to that of plants (1996, 1049-62). It is understandable then the frequent comparison of falling leaves with the end of life, as happens in “Oft, in the Stilly Night” by Thomas Moore: “The friends, so link’d together, / I’ve seen around me fall, / Like leaves in wintry weather” (1841, 167). The different generations succeeding one another could be equated to the changes in foliage in deciduous trees. The only real way in which living beings, including humans, may be said to obtain a modicum of immortality. Russell suggests that the biblical Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden symbolised this revelation, God's reason for fearing that it could lead Adam to the Tree of Life and, consequently, to eternal life. It is hardly surprising the leaves of the latter are said to be evergreen as a portrayal eternal life in Milton's *Paradise Regain'd* (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1028; 223; Steadman 1960, 385).

## 1.2. Kinship and cyclical time

An ever-increasing relation between kinship and trees was created resulting, firstly, from the decomposition of human bodies which serves as nourishment for plants, in the words of Zamir: “burial is thus on some irreducible level a distorted form of planting” (2011, 443). And, secondly, deriving from the tradition of planting trees upon the graves of ancestors. This symbolism can be found in the story of Tristan and Iseult or the Irish tale of Deirdre and Naoise, where plants or trees grow from the graves of the ill-fated lovers. This way, the World Tree emerged connecting the world of the living, associated with its trunk, with Heaven – thanks to its branches– and is rooted in the Underworld (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1027-28; Cirlot lii; Russell 225-26). Similarly, in Virgil's the *Aeneid*, Aeneas's uprooting of the trees or bushes placed upon the Trojan Polydorous's grave has been interpreted as the removal of any possible competitors to his lineage (Gowers 2011, 88-104). The metaphoric use of trees as ancestors is also found in *The Lord of the Rings* where Treebeard, the eldest living creature upon the Middle-earth, is described as a tree-like figure. The word 'ent' has an Anglo-Saxon origin meaning “giant” or “mighty person of long ago” and Tolkien,

who was a professor of philology at Oxford, acknowledged that these characters “grew rather out of their name, than the other way about” (Jensen 40-41).

These underlying meanings play a relevant part in Ali Smith's *Autumn* and happen particularly in relation to one of its characters, namely, Daniel Gluck. This does not seem to be a fortuitous comparison as he is the oldest character in the novel – actually, he is a hundred and one – and thus, the closest to the end of the life cycle: “Daniel Gluck looks from the death to the life, then back to the death again” (2017, 13). He is in an “increasing sleep period” in a care home where he dreams that he is inside a Scots pine and this is clearly linked to cyclical time:

Cut this tree I'm living in down. Hollow its trunk out.  
Make me all over again, with what you scooped out of its insides.  
Slide the new me inside the old trunk.  
Burn me. Burn the tree. Spread the ashes, for luck, where you want next year's crops  
to grow.  
Birth me all over again. (102)

This narrative continues to stress cycles by talking about the different seasons: “The seasons pass [...] there's nothing left of them [...] but bones in grass, bones in flowers, the leafy branches of the ash tree above them” or in the form of relationships between different generations whether they are acquaintances: “It's supposed to be someone who's a neighbour *right now* [...] And I'm supposed to ask [...] what life was like when the neighbour was my age” (127; 44), or actual relatives: “The blown-up real photographs of her grandmother and grandfather from when her mother was small. The ones of her mother when her mother was a baby. The ones of herself as a baby” (44). The inheritance of traits from the parents is emphasised several times: “Oh, you don't want to go to college, Daniel said. I do, Elisabeth said. My mother was the first in my family ever to go, and I will be the next” or “your girl's a powerhouse, Zoe says. Isn't she. But never underestimate the source, her mother says. The source? Elisabeth says. Me, her mother says” (71; 238). Additionally, Daniel's first appearance in the opening chapter takes place in an Eden-like setting whose description involves a series of arboreal references, which remind us of the importance of arboreal symbolism in the *Genesis*:

He must be dead, he is surely dead, because his body looks different from the last time he looked down at it [...] very like his own body but back when it was young [...]  
He had forgotten there is a physicality in not wanting to offend [...] He will make a green suit for himself out of leaves. (6-8)

### 1.3. Trees as hermaphrodite ancestors

The link between the cultivation of fruit trees and the need for the corroboration of true heirs has been a source for the identification of maternity with these varieties of trees. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant, their production of fruit once a year, hollow trunk or foliage which shelters small animals like birds in their nests have favoured associations with maternity and femininity (1030-31). A case in point is William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where Lady Macbeth asking to be unsexed in the first act has been understood as the confirmation of her infertility. Nature, therefore, has failed her and that is why she goes against natural laws by conspiring to commit murder. The walking forest of Birman becomes, according to Harrison, an embodiment of natural justice whereas its movement could symbolise “the limitless proliferation of fertile and onward-marching heirs, the ultimate dread of the aspiring dynast” (1992, 102-104; Russell 224). Another example is Washington Irving's “Sleepy Hollow,” where the daughter of a rich Dutch farmer is described as “ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches” when the main character, Ichabod Crane, is picturing themselves “with a whole family of children.” (1983, 1065-78). Joseph the Hymnographer also captures this notion in one of his works where he “praises Mary who gives birth to the sweet-smelling apple” (Kalish 2016, 143-44).

Interestingly enough, the feminine connotations overlap with the masculine ones regarding arboreal symbolism as the tree could easily be considered as a phallic symbol due to its vertical nature, sap and relation to solar power (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1030-31). Consequently, its symbolism is ambivalent and emerges as a mixture of both genders resulting in the idea of a hermaphrodite ancestor. In Smith's novel, Daniel is sometimes referred to in feminine terms “old queen, Elisabeth's mother said under her breath” and his dreaming of being inside a tree is much in line with the 'regressus ad uterum' and thus, an urge to return to the beginning of our life cycle and be united with nature: “Daniel in the bed, inside the tree, isn't panicking. He isn't even claustrophobic. It's reasonable in here.” Daniel's metamorphosis into a tree easily reminds of dryads, the female spirits of trees in Greek mythology. But the image of the tree as a phallic symbol is present as well: “the trunks of Scots pines do tend to be narrow. Straight and tall” or more explicitly “she is slipping out of her summer dress [...] Up go all his pinecones. He groans. She doesn't hear a thing” (43; 90-91). It is notable then that, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant, the pine “stands for the elevation of the life force and the glorification of fertility” (755). This ambiguity is even more noticeable when he is compared to Puck, a Shakespearean character who is famously considered androgynous (113). Additionally, the pine emerges as a relevant image because of its representation of the Greek god Attis, who was initially hermaphrodite and brought to life after death (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 756, Cirlot xix-xx).

Actually, *Autumn* has an intertextual relation with a Shakespearean play that works as a summary of these hermaphrodite traits: *The Tempest*. Jensen highlights Prospero's fixation with wood when he does not only make use of Caliban but also of Ferdinand to compulsively deforest the island. The two men are a potential threat to the chastity of his daughter – Caliban tried to rape Miranda, and Ferdinand due to their incipient relationship – thus, the cutting down of trees, as these can be interpreted as a phallic symbol, is a means of protecting his only heir and avoiding the existence of an illegitimate son (16-20). In Smith's narrative, Daniel, in addition to being referred to as a tree, consciously chooses a character disguised as such when playing a game of his invention about creating a story. In this scene, there are associations with ascendants transmitting a series of values, and descendants as well. This man dressed as a tree is also interpreted as a threat to progeny:

Think what it'd be like if everyone started wearing tree costumes [...] It'd be like living in a wood. And we don't live in a wood [...] it was good enough for my parents, and my grandparents and my great grandparents [...] But if you got your way you'd be dressing our kids up as trees, dressing our women up as trees. It's got to be nipped in the bud. (125)

#### **1.4. The tree as pillar of the community**

The constant linking of trees with kinship explains the graphic interpretation of the family tree that has arrived in our times. What is more, “in Judeo-Christian tradition [the tree] is the central pillar which holds up the temple or house” (Russell 223-30, Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1027-32). In the *Song of Songs*, the beloved maintains “Our couch is green; / the beams of our house are cedar, / our rafters are pine” (*Bible*, 2001, 1.16-17). This certainly reminds us of Odysseus and Penelope's bed which was erected upon the roots of an olive tree embedded in the house foundations. Once more, a tree is at the core of the household. As a result, an analogy can be established between family and community as any family can be identified as the first long-term association among individuals and, consequently, the foundation for tribes, communities or nations. As Russell states “clan segments are naturally referred to as branches of long-lived trees” (229).

Smith's work in general and *Autumn* in particular establishes connections with her community on different fronts: the repetition of history in Western society, her Scottish roots and the interrelations inside the literary community. She has repeatedly discussed that human beings are conditioned by time and that time is cyclical, highlighting the multiple links between trees and literature. In one of her interviews, she described humans as being

time-containers, we hold all our diachrony, our pasts and our futures (and also the pasts and the futures of all the people who made us and who in turn we'll help to make) in every one of our consecutive moments/minutes/days/years, and I wonder if our real energy, our real history, is cyclic in continuance and at core, rather than consecutive. (Anderson 2018, 2-3)

She also commented that “trees are great. Don't get me started about how clever they are, how oxygen-generous, how time formed [...] Their organic relation to books” (Anderson 4). For Smith trees are “time formed” as humans, that is, influenced by their conditions, which is on par with Tolkien and Atwood's view on arboreal symbolism. And, even more so, because she also mentions “their organic relation to books,” in fact, she once asserted that “books and trees are the same thing. I think books are all interrelated. Stories are all interrelated to other stories, to other books [...] in their very form, in the way they are made” (Boddy, 2010, 71). Smith seems to be taking the helm here of Renaissance authors and, particularly, Shakespeare as at the time “the process of literary invention was [...] compared to a search for timber in the woods,” being that timber the writings of previous authors. Scholars like Jensen have seen Prospero as the embodiment of Shakespeare himself who, in drowning his book at the end of *The Tempest*, is regarding it as timber that will be used by future authors (13; 25). These authors' viewpoint about literature could definitely be summarised in the form of a tree where the roots would be the sociocultural origins and literary influences of a writer; its trunk, their authorial intent influenced by individual traits; the branches, the expected or unexpected associations with other authors or works; and, finally, the leaves, the unique characteristics in each one of the writings as the most mutable part of a tree. It is precisely this structure the one that I am going to follow to examine Ali Smith's Internal Tree in *Autumn* with comparisons to a number of her previous works.

## 2. Ali Smith's Internal Tree

### 2.1. Roots

The first aspect of her Internal Tree to be briefly analysed is her sociocultural roots. She often, and particularly in *Autumn*, alludes to Western history to provide a new perspective on current matters by emphasising the repetition of history: “It was a typically warm Monday in late September, 2015, in Nice, in the south of France [...] It was a typically warm Friday in late September 1943, in Nice, in the south of France” (Smith 63-64). These allusions have, at least, two functions: warning us about the mistakes that we are repeating as a society and offering solace through the cyclical nature of time.

Regarding her literary influences, several of them can be extracted from *Autumn* where there are intertextual references to Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Ovid<sup>1</sup> and others like Sylvia Plath: “Daniel says it doesn't matter how she died so long as you can still say or read her words” (79). These are authors who have greatly influenced Western literature and society, especially in Anglophone countries. They are the “timber” that other writers, like Ali Smith, employ for their works. Modernism is also one of her main sources of inspiration that has clearly affected the construction of her novels inviting the reader to play an active role in them. In a BBC podcast, she commented that “[I] loved the way they [modernists] asked of me to make a text come together even if the text seems to be in pieces [...] it just made sense to me” and how she was particularly enticed by James Joyce's experimentation (Wilson 2022).

One of the most relevant features which has impacted Smith's writings is her Scottishness. In *Autumn*, she repeatedly refers to a pine species native to Scotland: “The Scots pine doesn't need much soil depth, is remarkably good at long life, a tree that can last for many centuries” and she also talks about “the opening of the Scottish Parliament [...] Her mother who has seen it several times already herself, was in tears from the start” (90; 197). A number of traits commonly identified with Scottishness are “bravery, nobility and royalty” although sometimes they are also identified with “negative attributes like unapproachableness, rudeness, violence, or primitiveness.” It is usual to encounter stereotypes such as the use of “kilts, tartan, whisky, bagpipes.” Most of them are regarded from a masculine perspective and, according to Schwarserová and Jelínková, this has resulted in a greater invisibility of women in Scotland than in other territories (2021, 14-16; 2019, 29-30). It is not surprising then that Smith “had no expectation of *Hotel World* making the 2001 shortlist, and when it did, she didn't bother to prepare a speech because she knew it wouldn't win: ‘The gay girl from Scotland? No!’ (Winterson 2). It seems, therefore, fitting that Scottish writers who do not identify with these stereotypical features challenge them and try to create their own space in this culture. As it is defended several times throughout *Autumn*: “It depends on how you'd define normal, Elisabeth said. Which would be different from how I'd define normal” (78). And this takes me to the trunk of her Internal Tree.

## 2.2. Trunk

Smith's work has obviously been influenced by a great number of personal experiences but what certainly, has affected her literary work is the fact of being a homosexual woman. This together with her Scottish origins could be interpreted as a disadvantage. However, she has been able to transform this marginalisation into a resource for including the silenced voices in her narratives such as those of women,

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<sup>1</sup> These other allusions will be studied as part of the “branches” extended to other works.

immigrants or homosexuals. The *Seasonal Quartet* brings to the fore a series of forgotten female artists like Pauline Boty in *Autumn*, whose case is presented to the reader in the following terms: “Elisabeth [...] had been having an argument with her tutor, who'd told her that categorically there had never been such a thing as a female British Pop artist” or “I bet it goes like this, Zoe says. Ignored. Lost. Rediscovered years later [...] Then ignored. Lost. Rediscovered ad infinitum. Am I right?” (150; 239). This is not the only case where she mentions other arts as the *Quartet* is characterised by the overlapping of references to different arts such as photography, painting, music and cinema.

The trunk is also a perfect representation of the unifying nature of literature, of how it includes every aspect of life and works as a space where there is room for different realities. *Autumn* shows the reader how people cannot be divided into fixed categories when Elisabeth claims that Daniel is “not *just* one thing or another. Nobody is. Not even you” (77). That “you” directed to Elisabeth’s mother, could equally be addressed to the reader. Actually, she will subsequently start a relationship with another woman: “Her mother is sitting in her new friend's lap. They've got their arms round each other like the famous Rodin statue, in the middle of the kiss” (220). This fluctuation in sexuality is also present in Elisabeth’s life when describing her love relations: “He kissed her at the school back gate [...] then Marielle Simi, who was French, put her arm round Elisabeth and kissed her [...] Tom and Elisabeth had been together for six years” (146-47). As claimed by Schwarzerová, this intends to prove that non-heteronormative sexualities are more widespread than society generally thinks and need not be considered as a negative feature (20).

Smith also contests the stereotypical characteristics which are usually applied to both genders: “I'm going to be an artist. Women don't get to be that, Beryl said. I will. A serious artist. I want to be a painter” (252). The imposition of certain “masculine” values on men is also present: “The brother who wanted to go to art school, their father made him an accountant. She got to go eventually, well, after all, not a proper job, so it was maybe more okay, for a girl” (249). In previous works, she had already displayed this concern by blurring the characters’ gender as happens in *Artful* or in *How to Be Both* from its very title (Lecomte, 2019, 41-46). But this refusal of categorisation can be seen elsewhere. In *Autumn*, she also defies how old people are commonly regarded by society: “If he was very old [...] he didn't look anything like the people who were meant to be it on TV” (46-47). Her interest in breaking conventions has also led her to the rewriting of a series of classical myths and topics treated by previous authors. This takes us to the branches of the Internal Tree, where she stretches the associations of her writings through intertextual references giving a new perspective to canonical literary works.

## 2.2. Ramifications

Throughout *Autumn*, she frequently alludes to the necessity of reading “What you reading? [...] Always be reading something, he said. Even when we're not physically reading. How else will we read the world? Think of it as a constant” and we are told that Daniel's sister “reads all the time, and she prefers to be reading several things at once, she says it gives endless perspective and dimension” (68; 183). These allusions to other works are truly transformed when they are seen in a new light. That is why she makes use of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* to disclose the similarities between different national crises and offer the reader solace in relation to the climate of discord generated by Brexit: “It was the worst of times, it was the worst of times. Again. That's the thing about things. They fall apart, always have, always will, it's in their nature” (3). Sometimes, this means changing the original stories:

Is my spraypaint can any more made up than the rest of the story? Daniel said.  
Yes, Elisabeth said.  
Then she thought about it.  
Oh! she said. I mean, no.  
And if I'm the storyteller I can tell it in any way I like, Daniel said. (120-21)

By underlining that narratives are constructed by a particular person with a specific set of values, Smith, following the steps of Jean François Lyotard, is warning us about the consequences of metanarratives: “Whoever makes up the story makes up the world [...] So always try to welcome people into the home of your story [...] I mean characters who seem to have no choice at all. Always give them a home” (120). That is why one of her most important literary influences is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as her deconstruction of these myths intends to create a space both for women and queer people in literature, culture and society in general and in the Scottish one in particular. Accordingly, Smith has participated with *Girl Meets Boy* in the *Canongate Myth Series*, where authors as renowned as Atwood or Philip Pullman have retold different classical myths. She focused on the myth of Iphis, blurring once more gender categorising: “He was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen in my life. But he looks really like a girl. She was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen in my life” (2007, 44-45). This description corresponds to the moment when Robin is dressed in a Highland male costume, thus defying Scottish stereotypes.

Likewise, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* will work as a hypotext in *Autumn*: “She gets her new/old book out and opens it at its beginning: *My purpose is to tell of bodies which have been transformed into shapes of a different kind*” (112). As Zamir stated, a person metamorphosed into a tree implies that there is a “loss of agency” which also “includes degendering.” (446). This is not only seen in the case of Daniel: “Daniel Gluck taking leaf of his senses at last, his tongue a broad green leaf, leaves growing out of his eyes [...] till he's swathed in foliage, leafskin, relief” where the connection with the

image of the hermaphrodite ancestor has already been stated (181). There is also a reference to the myth of Apollo and Daphne: “Overnight, like a girl in a myth being hunted by a god who's determined to have his way with her, she has altered herself, remade herself so she can't be had by anyone” (94). In this scene, the woman's metaphorical metamorphosis into a tree seems to work as a defence against the loss of agency caused by the coercion during a trial.

### 2.3. Leaves

The different treatment of the same hypotext during *Girl Meets Boy* and *Autumn* leads us to the leaves of this tree which are characterised by their mutability. This is not only related to the different intertextual associations that can be established with a given hypotext in different works, it does also include the variety of literary genres which an author explores along his or her career. In Smith's case, these range from plays written for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to short story collections like *Free Love and Other Stories* and, of course, her novels. Additionally, there is a variety of topics treated in her writings. Each of the books of the *Seasonal Quartet* deals with a variety of contemporary social issues including the COVID-19 pandemic in *Summer* or our dependency on new technologies in *Autumn*:

A blank screen means [...] all the knowledge is disappearing. There'll be no way she'll be able to access her workfiles [...] There'll be no way she'll be able to do anything ever again. (203)

But this is not the only extract from *Autumn* that covers present concerns. This novel was published in 2016 during the outbreak of Brexit: “Here's an old story so new that it's still in the middle of happening, writing itself right now with no knowledge of where or how it'll end” (181). There are several extracts that reflect its consequences like the division of the country: “All across the country people felt history at their shoulder. All across the country, people felt history meant nothing” or the situation of immigrants in the UK: “She realizes she hasn't so far encountered a single care assistant here who isn't from somewhere else in the world” (60;111).

Regarding arboreal symbolism, it has been previously included in one of her works, that is, in her short story “Erosive,” an apple tree infected by ants is related to the different phases of the narrator's unrequited love for a woman. The tree is actually uprooted at one point but the story refuses to have a traditional order and at the “end” it is still planted in the protagonist's garden. This is probably a way of expressing that love has a cyclical nature and we can find love with a new person. Moreover, in “May,” the main character falls in love with a tree. There are different associations to be found in each of the novels composing the *Quartet*. Although this is even more significant in *Autumn*, the symbolism does not end there and extends

to the other narratives. Orosz-Réti highlights how trees in *Winter* seem to work as a meeting point, there is one present on Sophia and Daniel's first date and also when the former is reunited with her sister at Christmas time, as Iris arrives at her house with a magnolia tree. Orosz-Réti also observes that, in *Spring*, there is a reference to a pear tree in relation to Katherine Mansfield's short story "Bliss," where one of the characters, Richard Lease, considers it "as a counterpoint of all mundane things." A powerful passage in *Summer* mentions a poem carved into a tombstone: "The tree in me shall never die. Be I ashes be I dust. That is the tree that joins the sky. To earth and us" (2021, 63-64). This last quote is significantly a good summary of several aspects treated in this paper as it addresses both immortality and the tree as a link whether it is between generations or different literary works. This is not the only focal point in the *Quartet*, though. Daniel Gluck, who is metamorphosed into a tree in *Autumn*, is present in the four novels and connected to the most important characters and that is why, arguably, he could be understood as an embodiment of Smith's Internal Tree as he appears in relation to nearly all the topics that have been discussed.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper began with a desire to challenge the bad reviews received by *Autumn* and to prove that it is composed of various intertwined layers. Our object of study, arboreal symbolism, has shown the multiple connections that exist inside this narrative, the *Seasonal Quartet* and with other literary works. As she said in one of her interviews "even things which seem separate and finished are infinitely connected and will infinitely connect" (Cohen). With this purpose in mind, I have constantly referred to her own dendrochronology, the rings of her Internal Tree, understood as the external influences that Smith received during the conception of *Autumn* and her other works. That is, she made use of arboreal symbols inherited from previous authors, including allusions to current and past historical events as well as rewriting topics treated by well-known writers through intertextuality.

The role of novels throughout history has not only been to resume and adapt their influences to their times. They perform a cyclical role as sources of inspiration for our present generation and can help to raise awareness about important issues. Her Internal Tree – and its embodiment in the character of Daniel Gluck – appears as a portrayal of her authorial intent that grows from the conditioning traits imposed both by her roots and life experiences and attempts to give a voice to those individuals who, like her, do not conform to sociocultural stereotypes. As she claims in *Girl Meets Boy*: "Nobody grows up mythless... It's what we do with the myths we grow up with that matters" (2007, 98).

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# The metaphor of “sinking to one’s knees” as a narrative element in the essays of Alexander Matuška



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## Abstract

The presented paper examines the meaning of the metaphor of dropping or sinking to one’s knees in the works of Slovak essayist Alexander Matuška. Drawing on the cognitive theory of metaphor formed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, this paper attempts not only to describe the concrete realisation of the orientational metaphor of the up-down type in the context of ceremonial symbolism, but also to interpret this metaphor as a certain narrative element in the history narrative that Matuška presents in his essayistic work, and as an element present across different cultures.

## Key words

*Alexander Matuška, essay, orientational metaphor, ceremonial symbolism, culture, narrative elements*

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In recent decades of research, cognitive literary science has opened up a number of approaches to exploring and rediscovering the meanings of texts. This includes cognitive narratology, which examines the processes of human perception, reception, and interpretation of narrative texts. Humans, according to the findings of cognitive narratology, are far more literary beings than we might have initially thought – they do not think in charts and exact numbers, they think in stories. We thus believe that even texts that, at first glance, do not have a strong narrative or epic core can, thanks to analogy, be figuratively seen as fragments of historical narrative. Authors present these fragments through their own lens, influenced not only by their own values and beliefs, but also by their lived experiences. From these fragments, it is possible to reconstruct an individual rendering of the historical narrative on the basis of contemporary literary or cultural phenomena, thus creating a literary action (text) in which a given phenomenon from the author’s immediate environment is analysed and interpreted. Such a type of text can be, for example, an essay, in our case the social-critical essays of Alexander Matuška, one of the most important Slovak essayists to date.

Magdalena Bystrzak (2021, 12), a Polish literary scholar based in Slovakia, traces “how the notions of ‘nation’, ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ changed and what position Matuška took in the dispute over modern Slovak society, its culture, and, ultimately, its literature”. After generalising, one can speak of this dispute as of the struggle for a position in the creation of the modern Slovak nation, in which tradition and progress competed with each other in the 1930s<sup>1</sup>: “Matuška also participated in the debate on Slovak culture in the 1930s as an opponent and critic of the cultural model, which still had national revivalist parameters and whose protagonists wanted to homogenise society on a national basis” (Bystrzak 2021, 16)<sup>2</sup>. Matuška depicts the story of this dispute in a series of essays in which he sharply criticises contemporary Slovak society, its over-theologizing and over-politicisation, but above all, its clinging to tradition. Mária Bátorová (2015, 101) describes Matuška as “a small Goliath [...] hammering onto bastions” of culture that was on its rise. His sarcastic statements are often directed not only against the groups of writers and critics who have been reinforcing these values in Slovak society, they are often directed against specific representatives.

In the 1930s, Alexander Matuška was not an established critic in the Slovak circles – he was a young student in Prague who had yet to enter the processes forming the Slovak literature. It was in Prague that he became a member of the R-10 group – a group of Prague university students. The members included M. Chorváth, D. Chrobák, K. Bezek or J. Kostra<sup>3</sup>. The members of R-10 “published in *DAV*<sup>4</sup>, organized sociographic tours, lectures, and discussions, and tried to define themselves as the opposite of the young authors from Bratislava” (Bystrzak 2021, 41). Vladimír Petřík (2010, 9) contemplated that this group believed that Slovakia was held prisoner by the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that it should move on from its influence much quicker than it had been at that time. One of Matuška’s professors, who had a considerable influence on the way the young critic wrote, was František Xaver Šalda. In this context, M. Bystrzak (2021, 36) states that Matuška’s aim “was to dominate the communicative space [...] thanks to his style”, and for this very reason, he claimed allegiance to the type of critic represented by F. X. Šalda. Several representatives of the Slovak left, especially young

<sup>1</sup> We can also reflect on the struggle between the right and the left, even on the struggle between the “old” and the “young” Slovakia. The word “old” does not allude only to the generational gap between older and younger members of the Slovak intelligentsia – it is Matuška’s expression, which was meant to illustrate the orientation towards tradition and the past professed mainly by members of the Slovak right.

<sup>2</sup> This corresponds with Vladimír Petřík (2010), Slovak literary scientist, who also writes about how Matuška believed that the state of the society determines the state of the culture and thus the state of literature itself.

<sup>3</sup> All of them became active participants in Slovak literary life. M. Chorváth, like Matuška, became a literary critic. The others were authors who wrote prose (D. Chrobák), poetry (J. Kostra), and drama (K. Bezek).

<sup>4</sup> *DAV* was a literary journal issued in the 1920s and 1930s. It was issued by “davists” – a group of leftist intellectuals gathered around Daniel Okáli, Andrej Sirácky, and Vladimír Clementis – it was the initials of their names that formed the title of the journal.

davists, but also Catholic and autonomist-oriented youth, claimed allegiance to F.X. Šalda (Bystrzak 2021, 36).

In one of his outspoken critiques, the essay *Playing the Fujara and Progress* (*Hra na fujaru a pokrok*)<sup>5</sup>, published in the Czech literary magazine *Přítomnost* in 1930 (Slovak literary magazines refused to publish Matuška's first texts), Matuška writes the following: "Who is zealous? Who is trembling at the sight of Vajanský's writing desk, who is falling to his knees in front of Matica, who is falling to his knees before the Liptov cheese, who is falling, falling, and constantly falling" (Matuška 1990, 36). It is the metaphor of falling or sinking to one's knees that Matuška presents here as a gesture, as an attack against the group of "zealous ones", i.e. the young generation that continued the tradition of the previous one, which he calls the generation of "the fathers". Matuška (1990, 30) writes<sup>6</sup>:

Among [them] are such young gentlemen whom you may not have bought, but who agree with you to the last point, no matter what. These are the gifted children; these are the youth who hold the morning! They may not have it right in their heads, but it doesn't matter in the end. And you call them zealous.

Why the fall to one's knees? Why a metaphor working with the image of falling? In the presented paper, we will try to answer not only the question of how and why Matuška works with this expressive image<sup>7</sup>, but we will also try to portray the metaphor of falling to one's knees in the context of ceremonial symbolism and also in the context of the struggle for the modern Slovak nation. The theoretical groundwork is based on the cognitive theory of metaphor introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, specifically focusing on the orientational metaphor of the up-down type. At the same time, we will work with the thesis that Matuška's literary gesture can be seen, through the optics of S. J. Schmidt's theory, as a literary action in the social system of literature<sup>8</sup>, specifically in the category of subsequent processing of literature<sup>9</sup>. We suggest that Matuška "reads" the narrative of history being made around him in a similar way to the way that literary scholar Joseph Carroll "reads"

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<sup>5</sup> The fujara is a woodwind musical instrument closely associated with the notions of tradition and folk art. It can also be linked to the tradition of shepherding, and today it is a typical instrument played during folk festivals in Slovakia.

<sup>6</sup> M. Bystrzak (2016, 82) writes in this context: "Matuška's cultural-critical texts from the 1930s should [...] be seen as a purposeful effort to attack the conservative [...] camp of the Slovak cultural elite."

<sup>7</sup> This image was later adopted by literary scholars and critics who evaluated Matuška's work. Vladimír Petřík (2019, 57) writes, for example, in the context of the surviving remnants of the "nationalist" mindset of the 1930s, that "Czechoslovakism is undoubtedly dying, but it should not be buried by those who fall on their knees in front of Vajanský's writing desk, Matica slovenská, and the Liptov cheese".

<sup>8</sup> The theory of social systems is one of the central theories of empirical literary science. Siegfried J. Schmidt introduced it in the 1980s as a theory based on the theory of communication.

<sup>9</sup> In the category of subsequent processing of literature, S. J. Schmidt includes, for example, the analysis, interpretation, or translation of literary phenomena (Schmidt 2010, 3). Matuška mainly relies on analysis and interpretation in constructing his essayistic texts.

it in his studies *Hierarchy in the Library: Egalitarian Dynamics in Victorian Novels* (2008) and *Agonistic Structure in Canonical British Novels of the Nineteenth Century* (2016), i.e. through the lens of agonistic<sup>10</sup> structure. It can thus be assumed that in this structure, Matuška profiles, with the help of metaphorical networks, a group of protagonists and a group of antagonists who wage a mutual struggle for the shape of the modern Slovak nation, thus presenting the historical narrative of this struggle through his own lens.

Kneeling or falling to one’s knees “has been known in almost all cultures and religions since the dawn of civilization” (Mrozowski 1998, 37). In various forms and meanings, the act of kneeling can already be registered in ancient literary monuments, for example in Greek or Roman myths: “Then Psyche fell on her knees before her [Venus], watering her feet with her tears, wiping the ground with her hair, and with great weeping and lamentation desired pardon” (Apuleius 2018, 29). Kneeling continues to appear in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments: “Aaron repeated everything the Lord had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people. The people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped” (The Holy Bible 2017, 50); “They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage” (The Holy Bible 2017, 904).



**Picture 1.** The Statue of Kneeling Hatshepsut, cca 1479-1458 BC



**Picture 2.** Luca Giordani: Abraham in Prayer, 17th century

<sup>10</sup> From the Greek word *agon*, which denotes a conflict. Agonistic structure is thus a structure of protagonists and antagonists. Both of these groups are in a conflict and are fighting each other in order to reach a specified goal.

A historical image of the development of various meanings of kneeling is given by Przemysław Mrozowski (1988) in his study *Kneeling in the culture of the Middle Ages West: gesture of expiation – prayer posture (Kłęczenie w kulturze Zachodu średniowiecznego: gest ekspiacji – postawa modlitewna)*. Although initially kneeling, e.g. in many cultures of the Ancient East, had the semantic function of expressing reverence, Christian ceremonial rituals perceived kneeling as a symbol of sin tied to the metaphorical fall of Adam and Eve. Mrozowski (1998, 55) argues that this symbolism was gradually changing, as evidenced by the iconographic depiction of the kneeling Virgin Mary on the tympanums of cathedrals in various European cities. The Virgin Mary was perceived in Christian symbolism as untainted by sin, so her kneeling could not be a symbol of it. In this case, kneeling depicts the process of intercession or supplication.



**Picture 3.** Tympanum showing the annunciation of Mary, Mariankapelle Churh in Würzburg, Germany

In the times of feudalism, this ceremonial symbol was taken over by the secular power, namely during the taking of the vassal oath (Mrozowski 1988, 56). With the advent of royal courts and their culture, kneeling also found significance as an expression of affection, e.g. in the case of knights courting ladies. Thus, in the West, the act of kneeling changed in meaning from a humiliating sign of falling into sin to a gesture of a more spontaneous expression of feelings: trust, loyalty, love, and adoration (Mrozowski 1998, 60).

Matuška's depiction of "falling to one's knees" comes close to the last meaning of the act of kneeling. Here Matuška depicts the young generation taking on the values of the previous generation, the "generation of the fathers", by letting them fall to their knees in front of the symbolic "Matica slovenská"<sup>11</sup> and the "Liptov

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<sup>11</sup> Matica slovenská is a Slovak cultural institution founded in 1863. Its task was to focus on national revival activities, for example by spreading awareness of the Slovak language or publishing the works

cheese”<sup>12</sup> – that is, in front of the values and institutions that were founded or maintained by the “generation of the fathers”. Thus, there is a metaphorical representation on a physical basis – “to have authority or power is up; to be subject to authority or power is down” or “high status is up; low status is down” (Lakoff and Johnson 1981, 16). In this metaphor, the authority or the role model (e.g. the aforementioned Svetozár Hurban Vajanský<sup>13</sup> or Matica slovenská) is on top; the young generation that shows trust in it falls on its knees before it, kneels down and does everything as its role models do.

However, Matuška does not portray the act of kneeling as a positive gesture, mainly because he does not consider the role models to whom the kneeling affection is shown to be worthy of such praise – he describes the “generation of the fathers” as “Old Testament prophets” who are “chaste, pure, moral, but prostitute the youth” (Matuška 1990, 57). Matuška thus disdains the act of kneeling in this case, formulating his statement as a mockery, especially with the sarcastic undertone and the repetition of the words “falling, falling, and constantly falling”. He is not concerned merely with the depiction of the uncritical adoption of role models that members of the younger generation are guilty of; he is mainly concerned with mocking and ridiculing his opponent. He achieves this by hyperbolization. Thus, in the historical struggle in which Matuška depicts the protagonists and antagonists of the story of the struggle for the shape of the modern Slovak nation, the metaphor of “falling to one’s knees” is ultimately not only a mockery, but the act of falling may also symbolise another realisation of the orientational metaphor of the up-down type, namely in the realisation of “more is up; less is down”. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1981, 15) state that “the victor in a fight is typically on top”. By letting his antagonists kneel and not kneeling himself, Matuška creates a structure that can be seen in an interpretive framework as an attempt to assert dominance in the struggle between the Slovak left and the right. Therefore, the decision to use such a metaphor to symbolically place someone up and someone down seems, at least to us, quite deliberate<sup>14</sup>. Raymond W. Gibbs (2017, 83) writes that “[m]etaphor scholars have long

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of Slovak writers. During its activity, important literary magazines were created, e.g. *Slovenské pohľady* (*Slovak Views*).

<sup>12</sup> Liptov is a region of Slovakia known for its tradition of shepherding and the production of cheese products. Liptov cheese is thus associated with a long tradition of cheese production, which is why Matuška uses it in his essay as a proxy symbol of the tradition itself.

<sup>13</sup> The writer Svetozár Hurban Vajanský (1846 – 1916) was a role model, in a sense even an idol, for many members of conservative and nationally based groups, especially for his writing of poetry, prose, and his publishing activities. Later, Matuška subjected Vajanský’s prosaic work to harsh criticism, in which he directly attacked the myth that had arisen around this writer and the values that his work and name embodied.

<sup>14</sup> A pioneer of the Deliberate Metaphor Theory, Gerard Steen (2015, 2), believes that “[d]eliberate metaphor use hence reveals a communicative dimension of metaphor, pertaining to the value of a metaphor as a specific means of communication *between* language users, which is a dimension that has been mostly left aside during the development of the contemporary theory of metaphor”. Matuška’s use of the metaphor of “falling to one’s knees” can be understood as a deliberate attack against his ideological

argued that certain notable metaphorical expressions in speech and writing may have been deliberately composed and quite consciously employed for their unique, didactic qualities and sometimes poetic beauty". Matuška uses this metaphor to create a deliberate attack against a group he disagrees with, taking on a role of a judge who condemns his opponents.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, anthropologist Christopher Boehm (2001) writes about the aversion to subordination, which he frames as a universal human trait. Humans tend to rise against tyrants, they tend to protest if they feel their freedom is at danger. Subordinated groups revolt against the dominant ones in a constant historical struggle for power. While there have been many bloody revolts even in recent human history, a metaphor is a tool by which one can discredit an opponent without physically attacking them. As a result, a revolt that once would be bloody takes on more of a symbolic meaning. For Matuška, metaphor is a weapon used to discredit an opponent whom the essayist lets fall to their knees – he relegates them to a lower level, consolidating the position of the protagonists of his historical narrative. These protagonists are often left-leaning young writers and artists. Matuška was among the young leftist intellectuals who professed values at odds with nationalist exploitation of tradition, conservatism, isolationism, or an exaggerated confessional approach to the problems of society. It is natural that he would seek to advance the interests of the group with which he sympathises at the expense of groups for which he harbours antipathy. Joseph Carroll writes about this tendency, stating that in war it is common to “glorify” the group one belongs to while also emphasising its cooperative nature. On the other hand, we tend to treat enemies as embodiments of the desire for dominance.

Matuška proves this by using other metaphors in which the influence of the up-down orientation can be discerned. For example, he writes about the backbone<sup>16</sup> of certain people that is twisted out of meek reverence for the past – “[the twisted backbone] *takes away all our courage, it twists us*” (Matuška 1990, 46). Here again, metaphors overlap. In Slovak proverbs, there is a well-known notion of “a man without a backbone”, i.e. a man without a firm character and without principles. Matuška plays with the phrase “backbone” by not letting it be absent in his opponents – he deliberately “only” twists it. By contorting it, he indicates the presence of principles in his

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opponents. Its meaning in the discussions that took place in the discourse of the formation of Slovak culture communicated his plea for change. For more information on the Deliberate Metaphor Theory, see, for example *Deliberate Metaphor Theory: Basic assumptions, main tenets, urgent issues* (Steen 2017).

<sup>15</sup> More information on the matter can also be found in *Taking metaphor studies back to the Stone Age: A reply to Xu, Zhang, and Wu* (Gibbs and Chen 2017).

<sup>16</sup> It seems interesting that Matuška often works with metaphors using body parts. That correlates with the opinions of Ning Yu (2008, 250), who writes: “It also follows that our body, with its experiences and functions, is a potentially universal source domain for metaphorical mappings from bodily experiences onto more abstract and subjective domains.” Although Yu (2008, 259) believes that “metaphorical mappings are grounded in bodily experience”, he also highlights the role of “cultural understanding and interpretation”. The deliberate character of such metaphors once again serves the purpose of an attack against the dominant social group, conceptualized by Matuška in an antagonistic way.

opponents, but it is a presence in a distorted, imperfect form. These principles thus acquire the symptom of a defect. In this way, Matuška refers to another common phrase, which is “twisted/crooked character”. Moreover, he puts these expressions in close proximity to the word “meek”, thus once again placing people who possess a metaphorically twisted backbone lower than those who do not. Therefore, Matuška once again conceptualizes his antagonists in a worse light than his protagonists.

By conceiving the disputes between the two groups as struggles, or as wars, one might also consider that the up-down orientational metaphor comes into close connection with the conceptual metaphor that Lakoff and Johnson (1981, 4) describe as “argument is war”<sup>17</sup>. This war between the representatives of conservative and progressive groups in the 1930s takes place in terms of the struggle for dominance in the creation of modern Slovak society, and it also finds its way into the statements of literary scholars, historians, and critics, who write: “In the 1930s, Matuška had to choose on which side of the struggle he would fight, who he would help” (Petřík 1986, 17). His texts can thus be “seen as a purposeful effort to attack the conservative<sup>18</sup> [...] camp” (Bystrzak 2016, 82). With “Šaldaean vehemence and venomous sarcasm, he attacked established ideological, literary, and social values” (Petřík 2019, 7). At the same time, he has been given adjectives such as “combative polemicist” or “warrior essayist” (Petřík 2019, 19, 78).

The “warrior essayist” with a metaphorical weapon<sup>19</sup> in his hand deliberately uses specific stylistic means in his texts to attack and provoke, to make a targeted appeal to Slovak society, to portray his opponents in an often unpleasant light, to let someone fall, fall, and continuously fall, while not letting others’ knees buckle. Matuška, who in addition to the title “warrior essayist” also bears the title “angry critic”, especially because of his sharp criticism of Slovak shortcomings in the field of literature and culture, himself wrote in the later phase of his life: “Being angry can cause one to ridicule. I exaggerated for pedagogical reasons<sup>20</sup>, I defiantly denigrated, sowed [...] the seeds of scepticism” (Jurík 1975, 115). And it was through expressive

<sup>17</sup> Lakoff and Johnson reflect on how we use this conceptual metaphor in everyday thinking. We can win or lose an argument, we attack our opponent’s arguments, we create strategies, etc. It is this kind of thinking that allows us to think about Matuška’s literary actions in terms that take much from the very content recognisable within that conceptual metaphor.

<sup>18</sup> For example, regarding the “generation of the fathers”, Matuška writes: “... they are some kind of prehistoric, diluvial creatures, some kind of Old Testament prophets, at the very least” (Matuška 1990, 57). In a very similar way, he attacks even the members of the younger generation: “Man is not physei zoon politikon, as Aristotle said, but physei zoon stupid, and therefore he feels the need to associate, to seek out fellow men – fellow fools” (Matuška 1990, s. 41).

<sup>19</sup> Vladimír Petřík (2010, 14) writes about Matuška’s “sharp pen”. Mária Bátorová (2015, 100), on the other hand, writes even more specifically about Matuška’s use of a sharp critical “rapier”.

<sup>20</sup> This brings us back to the quote of Raymond W. Gibbs (2017, 83): “[M]etaphorical expressions in speech and writing may have been deliberately composed and quite consciously employed for their didactic qualities.” Matuška knew he was not giving an exact depiction of the struggle between the two groups in their fight for influence over the formation of Slovak culture, yet he deliberately used metaphors and vivid imagery to make the society think about the matter at hand, to make everyone consider his views.

stylistic means that Matuška wanted to “shake the Slovak man, indeed the whole society” (Petrík 2019, 24) and thus remove the remnants of the traditional (romantic) thinking that stayed in the contemporary mind-set of people and which led to the rise in popularity of nationalist movements.

It can thus be concluded that Matuška’s historical narrative, which he “reads” as well as “writes”, relies heavily on the use of figurative means, more specifically, on the use of metaphors. The critic finds himself in the middle of a culture war between several groups keen on more influence and power. Therefore, he chooses to conceptualize who will be the protagonist in this war and who will not, who he will show affection for and who he will show antipathy to, who he will leave “up” and who he will let fall “down”. The metaphor of falling to one’s knees serves him as a narrative element, which he uses in its imagery and symbolism to depict the struggle for the influence over the Slovak nation, culture, and literature, the war for dominance in the process of their formation and further development. The critic’s gesture here is at the same time a literary action – Matuška here processes literary and non-literary materials, inserting them into narrative structures that can be abstracted back from his essays. We also see it as interesting that Matuška presents the historical narrative in a series of essays, in a genre that does not typically operate with a strong narrative core. Thanks to his texts from the 1930s, we can reflect on the changes in the contemporary Slovak nation and on which residues in human thinking persist and even today form the value orientations of individual groups that wage symbolical wars for the current shape of the nation, culture, and society.

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#### Picture references:

Picture 1 (May 15, 2024): <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544449>.

Picture 2 (May 15, 2024): <https://www.artnet.com/artists/luca-giordano/abraham-in-prayer-HngaAuNuX23Y8mvGYS9NYQ2>.

Picture 3 (May 15, 2024): <https://www.flickr.com/photos/hen-magonza/48742680967>.

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# Elegizing an Aristocracy: The Anglo-Irish Protestant Gentry in the Poetry of Richard Murphy



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## Abstract

The Irish poet Richard Murphy was a minority within a minority: an Anglo-Irish Protestant of the landed gentry. His privilege, property, and Anglican background set him apart from the common people of an independent Ireland which was Catholic, Gaelic, and nationalist in character. As the last major poetic representative of his culture, Murphy holds a special place in the Irish literary tradition. However, he lived and wrote during a time of significant decline for his patrician caste. His poems documenting the decay of Ireland's once powerful and prominent Protestant elite is the subject of this paper's critical inquiry. With greater consideration for the cultural climate and historical circumstances of his time, a clearer and more accurate understanding of Murphy's conception of the complex facets of Irish identity will be achieved in this analysis.

## Key words

*Anglo-Irish, Aristocracy, Ascendancy, Ireland, Big House, Protestant, Colonizer*

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## Introduction

Richard Murphy (1927-2018) was the last poet of Ireland's Protestant aristocracy. He came from an elevated Anglo-Irish caste (of the wider Church of Ireland community often termed the Ascendancy) that had contributed greatly to the country's literary tradition. Notable figures from this background include the philosopher George Berkeley, the poets Aubrey De Vere and Emily Lawless, the dramatist and director of the Abbey Theatre Lady Gregory, and the novelist Elizabeth Bowen. Yet Murphy was born in and lived through a time of decline for Ireland's landed gentry. Irish independence led to the partition of the island in 1921 and the establishment in the following year of the Irish Free State (officially becoming the Republic of Ireland in 1949). While Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom and operated under a Protestant-dominated Unionist government, independent Ireland sought to rid itself of the imperial connection and move on from the colonial legacy. Protestants in the South were now a weakened minority. As Terence Brown points out:

[...] Catholic nationalist Ireland was in the ascendant, Protestant in decline [...] The new Ireland, convinced of its Catholic nationalist rectitude on social issues, was prepared to grant Anglo-Ireland the right to remain in the country but was neither to be cajoled [...] nor browbeaten into great regard for the values of a defeated caste. (Brown 2004, 116-121)

The sense of defeat was particularly profound for those of Murphy's background whose historically privileged and propertied condition had led them to be labelled as 'Big House' Protestants. Many from this background self-identified as British and were deemed "unerringly loyal to Britain" (Clare 2021, 1-2), but as independent Ireland began to turn away from Britain, the "Big House" Protestant class began turning inwards on itself.

This retreat from Ireland's cultural, social, and political life inevitably led to the caste's decline and virtual extinction as a distinct group. The community's insularity could hardly be considered a surprise. Following independence, their traditional notions of loyalty, lifestyle, education, religion, and social outlook were being challenged in a nationalist, anti-colonial polity that harbored many Anglophobic sentiments. They could neither "muster any effective political or indeed ideological opposition to the social and political orthodoxies of the period [...] nor counter the cultural protectionism and Catholic nationalism" (Brown 2004, 122) of the new Irish state. Significantly, Murphy's poetry not only records the Protestant aristocracy's decline, but seems accepting of it. There is a sense that the poet is content to elegize the passing of his caste while at the same time deliberately refraining from eulogy. This defeatist posture can be traced to two main points: discomfort with the colonialist origins of his background and the influence of a nationalist conception of authentic Irish identity. A postcolonial reading can be applied to much of Murphy's work dealing with his colonial identity<sup>1</sup> as an Anglo-Irish aristocrat. For the "Colonizer",

It is impossible for him not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status [...] he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant [...] a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper. (Memmi 2003, 52-53)

It is instructive to an understanding of the tensions in Murphy's work to realize the extent to which the poet internalizes the Anglo aspect of his Anglo-Irish identity in such terms. This paper will analyze Murphy's treatment of his caste in his poetry and forwards the argument that his conception of Irishness could not accommodate the English dimensions of his "Big House" Protestant background. This will be shown to

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended definition of "Colonial Identity," see D. George Boyce's *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Croom Helm, 1982)

have been greatly influenced by an internalized perception, drawn from the nationalist ideology of his time, of his social class as illegitimately established and culturally dissonant.

### **We Ourselves Limit That Legacy**

From the start of his career, Murphy can be seen elegizing the culture of the “Big House” Protestant aristocracy. *Sailing to an Island* (1963) marked Murphy’s first full collection to be published by a major press, Faber and Faber. Within the volume, poems like “Auction,” “Epitaph on a Fir-Tree,” and “The Woman of the House” reflect on the decline of his patrician caste. In the years following independence, the Protestant minority in the South were in a disconcertingly unfamiliar position:

[...] the Church of Ireland community found itself in vastly changed circumstances by the time independence was declared. Wherever they looked, their once secure and legally established position of dominance had been broken over the last 100 years. Although they remained economically privileged and highly segregated, their confidence had been especially shaken by the loss of the Ascendancy leaders [...] They could no longer hope to rely on Britain for their protection, and with their colonial past they were less than certain what the future might hold. Thus, they faced their newly independent country weakened and intimidated by the events of recent years [...] (Bowen 1983, 19)

For the Anglo-Irish elite, the overall response was to become more insular as a community, retreating from their once active roles in public and social life for fear of upsetting the newly established Catholic nationalist order. During the war of independence and civil war, “Big Houses” had been violently targeted by nationalists, not only because of the generally unionist sympathies of upper-class Protestants but because of the historical association of “Big House” estates with dispossession and displacement, landlordism and tenancy, and rack-rents and evictions. As David Clare observes, the “Big House” tended to conjure images of either “Irish-resident landlords who habitually treated their tenants cruelly during famine and other times of hardship” or “heartless absentee landlords who lived in London off the rents from their Irish estates and who rarely if ever visited their Irish Big Houses” (Clare 2021, 3).

The nationalist state imposed its ethos on the public sphere and social morality, but it largely left its Protestant minority communities to themselves. Yet the Protestant landed gentry, which anyway tended to keep within its own privileged circles to the point that “gout was endemic” and marriage between close relatives had “brought a harvest of mental retardation” (MacAodha 1991, 25), became even more isolated from the general life of the country. They withdrew within the walls of their estates in both a literal and metaphorical sense. As the Protestant minority as a whole in the Free State/Republic continued to dwindle due to intermarriage, emigration,

and low birthrates, the patrician minority within the minority decayed in its demesnes, seemingly resigned to its fate on the one hand, seemingly oblivious to it on the other.

Yet the insularity and meekness that the community displayed in the face of the new regime was not without its critics from within. The essayist Hubert Butler commented, often harshly, on the passivity of the Southern Protestants in general to their marginalization from the mainstream of Irish political activity and social discourse. In his “Portrait of a Minority,” Butler states, “We Protestants of the Irish Republic are no longer very interesting to anyone but ourselves [...] we merely exist and even that we do with increasing unobtrusiveness” (Butler 2000, 618-19). Butler eschewed an “Anglo-Irish” designation and castigated the Protestant community in the Irish Republic for their cultural stagnation. He had a declared “commitment to Irishness” with “an equally persistent commitment to the values of Irish Protestantism – as he saw them” (Foster 2002, 190). Butler reflects that Protestants in the South

enjoy telling each other and being told either that they have no stamina or that they would “only do harm by interfering” [...] They have an excuse for whatever form of disengagement may be comfortable and for devoting themselves agreeably to what they call “wider issues” in larger society. But for a small historic community can there be any issue wider than survival [...] (Butler 1990, 142)

Murphy’s poems do not reflect much hope for the survival of his “Big House” culture. Perhaps one could not have expected the poet to have approached his heritage in any other way. Demographic trends forecast the disappearance of a distinguishable Southern Protestant community, irrespective of class distinctions. Recent census data indicates that those identifying with a Church of Ireland background compose barely over two percent of the population (Central Statistics Office, 2023). In general terms, “As southern Protestants have embraced civic nationalism, the insularity of their social life declined, partly in response to declining numbers [...] The result is that the Protestant population is now substantially less of a distinct ethnic group” (Poole 1997, 141). From inception, “the links between the Free State political parties and the Catholic Church enhanced the Catholicity of the State” and “Catholicism was deeply embedded in the framework of Irish public life” (Doyle et al. 2024, 209-210). In response, Murphy’s caste withdrew and tightened its circle to such an extent that by the mid-1970s, “Big House” Anglo-Ireland seemed all but dead (Butler 1977, 69).

### **The Good of Being Alive Was Given through Them**

Thus, Murphy’s early poetry does not so much participate in the psychic decline of his community, instead it posthumously memorializes its “way of life” and “its

passing” (Grennan 1999, 238). In “Auction,” the passing off of property is correlated to the passing away of a generation:

When furniture is moved  
From a dead-free home  
Through lean, loved  
Rooms alone I come,  
  
To bid for damp etchings,  
My grandaunt’s chair,  
Drawers where rings  
Of ruby in water flare. (Murphy 2013, Part One)

Dispossession of a social order occasions the elimination of the poet’s family history. The home is a symbolic representation of Anglo-Irish dominion, and the speaker is a lonely figure, evocative of the endangered status of his social class. Kurt Bowen comments, “Protestants will eventually disappear by being absorbed into the larger Catholic community [...] it is obviously of greatest concern to southern Protestants for whom it is a matter of life and death” (Bowen 1983, 4). Yet in Murphy’s poetry, the “Big House” culture is framed with respect only to its death. Murphy does not express concern about the “wider issue” of “survival” which Butler implored, and is instead resigned to elegize the passing of his once important and impactful “small historic community.” With the house in the poem cleared of its patrician dead, the property can be absorbed back into the larger community from whom the land upon which it was built had originally been taken:

A sacked gardener  
Shows me yew hedges  
House-high, where  
The dead made marriages.  
  
With what shall I buy  
From time’s auctioneers  
This old property  
Before it disappears? (Murphy 2013, Part One)

“Auction” reflects “a spectacle familiar in the annals of postcolonial criticism” on Ireland, of independence furthering the dispossession it was meant to overcome (Stasi 2022, 69). The traditional power structure of the household is reversed as a “sacked gardener” leads the speaker around the estate, the overgrown hedges a likely result of the gardener’s dismissal. Such descent into disorder is emblematic of Ascendancy decay, and there is a sense of helplessness in the speaker’s tone when he

asks, “With what shall I buy.” Neither the property itself nor the dead who once maintained it are retrievable.

The speaker in “Auction” noted the overgrowth of the property’s garden. The important function of the garden to an Ascendancy estate is articulated several times in Murphy’s work. The preface to the poet’s final iteration of collected poems, *The Pleasure Ground*, is an updated version of a 1964 essay of the same name. In it, Murphy recalls:

We loved our Pleasure Ground. A great grey limestone wall wreathed in ivy surrounded it on three sides, enclosing us with midges and horse-flies in a seedy paradise of impoverished Anglo-Irish pride [...] It was the happiest time of my life. Looking out on the Pleasure Ground or sitting under the copper beech [...] (Murphy 2013, Preface)

Seamus Heaney notes:

It had run wild, but under the untutored profusion of yews, laurels and briars there lingered the ordered lines of ancestral care. When he arrived there as a boy with his mother, brother and sister, they made an effort to restore its decorous features, and the delight that came from this adventure of entering and ordering such natural abundance, he tells us, pervaded the disciplines of his education. (Heaney 1978, 20)

The care with which the family took to rehabilitate the garden reflects Murphy’s upper-class Protestant ethic of orderliness and authority. Yet when Murphy writes of “pleasure grounds” in his poetry, the gardens are usually shown to have reached a point where mastery over the landscape is beyond capability. This is symbolic of the decline of the Protestant gentry but is also suggestive of Murphy’s acceptance of his culture’s lost dominion. It must be recognized that the loss of dominion occasions loss of the culture itself. As Eóin Flannery comments, “All that was lost to history was well lost [...] the landscape is purged of its historical details” (Flannery 2010, 91). This would seem anathema for a poet like Murphy, for whom “the grandeur of history and the handed-down versions, the stories of tradition” (Dawe 2019, 72) were so cherished.

Yet Murphy expresses neither bitterness nor objection in his work. Rather, the emotional tone that most strongly resonates is resignation. “Epitaph on a Fir-Tree,” later renamed “Epitaph on a Douglas Fir,” correlates the disempowered symbolism of the tree with the end of Protestant aristocratic authority:

She grew ninety years through sombre winter,  
Rhododendron summer of midges and rain,  
In a beech-wood scarred by the auctioneer,

Till a March evening, the garden work done,  
It seemed her long life had been completed,  
No further growth, no gaiety could remain. (Murphy 2013, Part One)

Like the property in “Auction,” the tree is a symbol of a bygone era. That there will be “No further growth” forecasts the gentry’s own diminishment. Brandon C. Yen notes that trees were associated in Ireland on a more abstract level with Anglo-Irish “improvement” and “land-owning oppressors who could afford to plant [...] who planted hedgerows to exclude the poor” (Yen 2020, 131). The foreshadowed fall of the tree metaphorically anticipates a kind of decolonizing surrender.

The poem follows some conventions of seventeenth century English “Country House” poetry. One convention is the “family tree,” the fir being to Murphy’s poem what the Lady Oak is in Ben Jonson’s quintessential poem of the genre, “To Penshurst.” Another convention is the allusion to founders and predecessors, a “family tree” in a different sense:

We think no more of granite steps and pews,  
Or an officer patched with a crude trepan  
Who fought in Rangoon for these quiet acres.

Axes and saws now convert the evergreen  
Imperial shadows into red deal boards  
And let the sun into our house again. (Murphy 2013, Part One)

There are some political sentiments that can be discerned from these stanzas. The first is the abandonment of Anglicanism, which was the main social criteria for membership in the Ascendancy (Foster 1988, 170). The other is in the recollection of the family’s history. Alistair Fowler notes that “most estate poems are epideictic, urging their subject’s praises [...] often the poem culminates in explicit eulogy for the family’s virtues” (Fowler 1994, 7). However, the tree’s demise coincides with an abandonment of the family’s imperial history. Murphy mentions the imperial legacy, his grandfather’s participation in the Anglo-Burmese Wars, but cannot bring himself to eulogize its virtues. Linked to this is the fact that the felling of the tree and its “imperial shadows” allows the sun back into the house. Natural light being no longer obstructed by imperial shadows carries nationalistic symbolism. When the poem ends with the hope “that we might do better,” it may be understood as an espousal of a more enlightened ideology than the imperialism of the past.

The poet’s sense of ambivalence, this dynamic of feeling fond for his family while being averse to his family’s virtues, is evident in Murphy’s eulogy for his grandmother, “The Woman of the House.” Yet there are also cultural and political implications underlying his memorialization. Murphy expresses deep affection for

his grandmother, Lucy Mary Ormsby, in both his poetry, “She fed our feelings as dew feeds grass,” and prose, “Granny was our ally in trouble, sickness or romance” (Murphy 2013, Preface). However, after she was left in charge of the family estate, the property witnessed substantial decay:

Soon our grandmother was left alone in the big empty house, where we stayed for short holidays. Her mind wandered. The copper beech was cut for firewood to keep her warm. Chickens fouled the beds of our mother’s lupins, and rabbits burrowed into our tennis court. When rust unhinged an iron gate, an errant cow ate a mouthful of yew leaves and died. The yew still bore a crop of berries, the fig tree survived, but the planted symmetry of our Pleasure Ground had vanished. The aura I had breathed under the yew, the fig and the copper beech had gone [...] There was no young energy with a will and money to mend walls, plant trees, sow and cultivate and labour. I felt guilty and lost. (Murphy 2013, Preface)

The poet’s beloved Pleasure Ground “went to wrack and ruin because of an absence of the shaping spirit” (Heaney 1978, 21). However, the 1964 version of this excerpt originally stated that “there was no masculine energy in the place” rather than “no young energy.” Murphy’s self-consciousness about too strongly reflecting a masculine ethos reflective of both Protestantism and imperialism is indicative of a larger anxiety about his colonial identity. Traces of that ethos are apparent in the excerpt’s statement of needing to “mend,” “plant,” “sow,” “cultivate,” and “labour”; clearly “a reflection of the masculine ordering spirit of Ascendancy families who cultivated gardens and built great houses, transforming the disorder of rural Ireland into a coherent beauty” (Garratt 1989, 270). Yet one might consider an observation made by Seamus Deane on the work of Heaney, who himself was the first to make note of the significance of an “absence of a shaping spirit.” Deane states that paternity belongs to those who build or cultivate the earth, “in political or sectarian terms [...] that which is unionist or Protestant, belongs to paternity, the earth cultivated” (Deane 1985, 175). The gendered sectarian paradigm is well known, and Murphy’s revision may indicate a further desire to distance himself from the political and cultural implications of masculinity in its Irish context.

However, the subject of “The Woman of the House” is ostensibly feminine. It begins with Murphy recalling, “On a patrician evening in Ireland / I was born in the guest room: She delivered me” (Murphy 2013, Part One). Yet “those happy days” will soon give way to discomfiting descriptions of his grandmother’s descent into madness, “The undeveloped thoughts died in her head.” The poem is an extension of the “Big House” literary tradition:

The Big House novels of Ascendancy decay in the early twentieth century [...] feature a recurrent trope of male corruption and decline [...] Ascendancy decay is represented through the declining virility and eroded authority of landlords and patriarchs.

Masculinity, the prerogative of the imperial ruler, ebbs away. Mothers, in turn, become monstrous as a dying colonial order turns inward on itself. (Kenney 2004, 17-18)

His grandmother's mental degeneration mirrors that of both her house and the aristocratic Protestant social order:

'I don't know who you are, but you've kind eyes.  
My children are abroad and I'm alone.  
They left me in this gaol. You all tell lies.  
You're not my people. My people have gone.'

Now she's spent everything: the golden waste  
Is washed away, silent her heart's hammer.  
The children overseas no longer need her,  
They are like aftergrass to her harvest. (Murphy 2013, Part One)

The children "overseas" and "abroad" reflect a larger trend of migration witnessed in all rungs of society in twentieth century Ireland, but for an already tiny minority this would mean larger ramifications in terms of demographics. The "Big House" is now a prison for the lone inhabitant. Her demented declaration, "You're not my people," reflects the unrecognizability of her once-proud community. Eventually, Murphy's grandmother is "removed / to the hospital to die there." Her nonsensical insistence, "I must get back, get back. They're expecting me," evokes the futility of the Ascendancy ever reliving its heyday and reinforces the notion "that setting is not a neutral category, but rather one freighted with the baggage of social and cultural determinants" (Bootes 2024, 82).

Murphy's grandmother had been a benevolent figure to the poor Catholics who lived on the family acres, "Mistress of mossy acres and unpaid rent / She crossed the walls on foot to feed the sick... People had faith in her healing talent... She bandaged the wounds that poverty caused" (Murphy 2013, Part One). However, the ideology of empire and colonialism often "masked its exploitative structures under the guise of paternalistic benevolence" through acts of generosity and welfare; over time, the colonized "began to see the colonial masters exactly as the masters wanted themselves to be seen: as gentle, firm, just and benevolent protectors" (Nayar 2010, 35). The grandmother is "loved" in a maternal sense, and the historic context in which she "Gave her hands to cure impossible wrong" does not go unnoticed in the poem. Kiberd notes that Ascendancy women often developed close relationships with their kitchen maids and domestic staff, and when "the doom of the big houses was sealed," they often wondered

whether the lot of the landless labourer would prove happier under peasant proprietors than it had under paternalistic landlords. These fears were most often articulated by ascendancy women, among whom Edith Somerville, Violet Martin [Martin Ross] and Augusta Gregory were the outstanding literary figures. (Kiberd 1996, 68)

Yet later in the poem, it is witnessed on bookshelves that “Somerville and Ross \ Have fed the same worm as Blackstone and Gibbon.” Somerville and Ross were authors of the “Big House” literary genre, active during a time of relative tranquility for the Ascendancy in the 1890s, “a decade of fine consciences and a humour that was uncombative, mellow and disengaged,” but only a generation before the wider Anglo-Irish sense of security in the country would be thrown into disarray (Moynahan 1995, 162-163). The poem’s imagery indicates that the gentry’s sense of security and social order has been upset for good.

In his criticism of the Protestant gentry in “Portrait of a Minority,” Butler had humorously satirized the upper-class mentality through allegory in the character of an elderly patrician “Mrs. A.” Like the poem, Butler’s essay mentions emigration, “I’m thankful to say. Amy is in the Brussels branch of Thomas Cooks and Arthur is in the British Consulate in Cuba,” and he is critical of her continued affiliation with Britain, “She is really more concerned that England should get the ports than that the Anglo-Irish should be able to raise their voices again in Ireland.” As for “Mrs. A.,” “For thirty years and more she has grown used to the Cassandra-like mournings of her hybrid race; gradually they have become less shrill and have the familiar monotony of a lullaby” (Butler 2000, 620-621). Butler’s critique could be read as a call to action, a reprimand of Protestant failure of nerve in the Republic. However, Murphy’s representation of an Ascendancy woman of the “Big House” portrays a character who, like her community, is beyond redemption. “Mrs. A.” maintains “an air of assurance based on a long inheritance of privilege of which only the tradition now remains” (Butler 2000, 620-621), but the poet’s grandmother has become “monstrous,” her airs undermined by her insanity, and the tradition that bequeathed her privilege is outdated and decayed, “The mildew has spotted *Clarissa’s* spine / And soiled the *Despatches of Wellington.*”

When other connections with Britain are made in the poem, it is through violent contexts and imagery: an uncle “slaughter[s] a few sepoys,” a “pistol that lost an ancestor’s duel,” “Rangoon prints and the Crimean medal” (Murphy 2013, Part One). With her nonsensical mutterings, the woman of the “Big House” assumes the role of Cassandra, her “mournings of her hybrid race” heard by no one, save for the poet who can only put her to rest. That Butler’s essay and the composition of the poem are roughly coterminous, speaks to the different, defeatist mentality that the poet writes from with regards to the prospects of his desolate caste.

Perhaps “Big House” Protestant culture was “doomed to fail” long before Murphy could have been expected to attempt to redeem or assert its virtues in his poetry. Declan Kiberd considers that by 1916 the Anglo-Irish gentry were hopeless provincials, “if by provincial one means to indicate people who have no sense of their own presence” (Kiberd 1996, 364). It is true that from the time of Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800), authors from C.R. Maturin to Elizabeth Bowen concerned themselves with the major issues confronting the “Big House” aristocracy in their works of fiction. It has become commonplace to point out that once the community assumed the title of “Ascendancy” at the end of the eighteenth century, it marked the beginning of their descendancy. Yet in Murphy’s case, the decline of his social order seems like something regarded as necessary in order to shed the discomfiting aspects of his colonial identity. The trajectory of “The Woman of the House” leads from “a patrician evening in Ireland” in the poem’s first stanza to “a wet winter evening in Ireland” in the its last, signaling an acceptance that the era of the “Big House” tradition, as it had existed for the poet’s ancestors, had definitively drawn to a close.

Even late in Murphy’s career, as evidenced in some of the sonnets from *The Price of Stone* (1985), there is a continued self-consciousness about the colonial and imperial aspects of his family’s propertied inheritance. The narrative voice in each sonnet is the structure or building referred to in the poems’ titles. “The Family Seat” is characterized by the “grim, grey face / Of limestone cut by famine workmen” (Murphy 2013, Part Five). This repeats the imagery of “The Woman of the House,” the house having been built by exploited “famine labourers” with the poet’s ancestors being implied to have committed an “impossible wrong” (Murphy 2013, Part One). Murphy’s “Birth Place” states, “I’d been expecting death by absentee / Owner’s decay, or fire from a rebel match” (Murphy 2013, Part Five). If the gentry have no sense of their own presence, this is a further mark of distinction for Murphy from his community. Murphy’s poetic persona is almost always self-conscious of a “colonizer’s” presence on “colonized” places. In mid-century Ireland and after, his family’s “Big House” assumes the characteristics reflective of how the nationalist politician and commentator Daniel Corkery had described the Ascendancy estates some three to four decades prior:

The typical Big House was as ill-cared for as the cabin – as untidy in its half-cut woods, its trampled avenues, its moss-grown parks, its fallen piers, its shattered chimney stacks [...] The slatternliness of the Big House was barbaric: there was wealth without refinement and power without responsibility. (Corkery 1925, 10)

Murphy’s descriptions of the Ascendancy world join his early poetry with the “Big House” genre; the gentry are isolated from the wider society around them by the walls encircling their demesnes while events outside those walls unfold that the aristocrats

make a point of not noticing (Kiberd 1996, 364). By the time Murphy sets to write about his “Big House” colonial Anglo-Irish Protestant heritage, the poetry must leave the demesne and confront reality in the ninety-nine percent republican atmosphere (Murphy and O’Malley 2013) where a more viable tradition that is native, Gaelic, and Catholic holds sway.

## Conclusion

Having been born in the nascent years of the Irish Free State, Murphy was part of a Protestant minority that was “a dwindling and infinitesimal proportion” of the new confessionally Catholic and politically nationalist independent Ireland (Foster 1988, 534-535). The Protestant gentry, bereft of imperial safeguards from Britain, found itself in an unfamiliar position of disempowerment and uncertainty. This new status caused the community to draw itself inwards, sealing their obsolescence in modern Irish life and sowing the seeds of their own extinction as a distinguishable community. While some, like Butler, advocated for the reinvigoration of Anglo-Irish Protestant culture in the South, Murphy took a different approach. His poetry, observant of the conditions of the period’s cultural climate and his caste’s already deteriorated state, sees to the passing of the Protestant aristocracy in an ambivalent and elegiac mode. A community that had long identified with the English dimensions of its ancestry could not be sustained in an Ireland which was making a concentrated effort to rid itself of the English influences of its past. The colonial identity of the Anglo-Irish Protestant aristocrat as an illegitimate “colonizer” was entrenched and either had to be abandoned by its holder, or its holder had to abandon Ireland. Indeed, many chose to emigrate while others, as has been shown, rotted away in isolation on their estates. However, Murphy stayed and dedicated much of his poetry to the lives and landscapes of his native western region of Ireland. Though the poet could not reconcile himself with the imperialistic and violent aspects of his lineage, if his poems could be said to have passively recorded the death of his caste, they undoubtedly did so with a characteristically aristocratic sense of measurement and restraint.

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# Identifying “Hidden Meanings” in Vanda Rozenbergová’s Book *Freedom for Pheasants*



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## Abstract

The study focuses on identifying hidden meanings in Vanda Rozenbergová’s short story collection called *Freedom for Pheasants* (2011). Being based on the concept of hermeneutic circle, the study aims to identify places of indeterminacy in the book, focusing especially on metaphors. The primary focus is on the meaning of the metaphor of birds, while relying on the theoretical solutions of Paul Ricoeur, George Lakoff and other authors, who have been dealing with this issue. It also follows up on the solutions of cognitive linguistics, especially the theory of prototypes. The study accents the role of metaphors of birds in the short stories, for instance the role of metaphor of the pheasant and swallow, while analysing their function as regards portraying the literary characters.

## Key words

*hermeneutics, places of indeterminacy, metaphors, Vanda Rozenbergová, pheasants, women*

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*A metaphor is a kind o’ lie to help people understand what’s true.*

Terry Pratchett

“The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding”, Leonardo da Vinci once said<sup>1</sup>. While he likely referred to understanding the physical world’s contexts with the term ‘understanding,’ his quote can also be interpreted within the context of literature. It suggests that through literature, we gain insights into both others and the world around us. After all, one of the most common reasons why people read literature is the pursuit of a better understanding of the world around them, and one of the ultimate experiences that literature does offer is this deeper insight. In our study, we will focus on the issue of understanding a literary work by finding hidden meanings in the text. Our research will be based on hermeneutics, and we will focus

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particularly on how the reader can achieve a better understanding of the literary works by filling in the places of indeterminacy.

### **Theoretical Framework: Hermeneutics, Horizon of Expectations, Places of Indeterminacy**

Traditionally, the term ‘hermeneutics’ has been associated with theological studies, focusing on the interpretation of sacred texts, but also with methodology of musical works interpretation. In our research, we adopt the interpretation of ‘hermeneutics’ as outlined by the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. He defines it as a theory of methods, processes, and principles of searching for the essence and meaning of a works of art. Hermeneutics is an attempt to understand not only the apparent but also the hidden aspects and implicit meanings of artistic phenomena, including both rational and irrational, discursive and intuitive aspects of the work, according to him (Encyclopaedia Beliana – Hermeneutika). Gadamer based his comprehension theory on the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which he believed was crucial for the process of understanding. This concept elucidates “*how interpretation, measured against the ‘thing itself,’ unfolds*” (Gadamer 1994, 43). It is a process that takes place between the pre-understanding of the text that is given by its situatedness and the effort to understand what the text “communicates.” The fact that the interpreter approaches the text with a certain expectation formulates the interpreter’s prejudice as a necessary condition of comprehension. Even the first meaning emerges only because we read the text with particular expectations. The gradual adjustment of various meanings until the end – until the meaning in the work is grasped – is the process of understanding the text (Fridmanová 2005, 193). Central to Gadamer’s approach is the recognition of the reader’s prejudices as essential for comprehension. He claims that “*prejudices must be exposed in order to be confirmed or disconfirmed on the ‘thing itself’*” (Gadamer 1989, 269). The relationship between interpretation and comprehension is to be understood as a dialogue in which meaning emerges through the dialogue between the interpreter and the text. The essential structure of this dialogue is a question-answer format in which not only the interpreter questions the text, but the text also questions the interpreter, thereby challenging their preconceptions. The ‘fusion of horizons’ is a term by which he names the method of dialogue, in which the interpreter successfully cancels his unproductive prejudices and manages to reach an authentic understanding of the text (Fridmanová 2005, 194). His belief that it is possible to contain the literary experience and the artistic character of the work is expressed by the category of horizon of expectation. If the work exceeds the horizon of the historical reader’s expectations, the reader’s horizon is modified. Thus, the aesthetic value of the work is indicated. If the work meets the horizon of the recipient’s expectations, it only fulfils the function of distraction and pastime (Hyperlexikon literárnovedných pojmov – Hermeneutika).

Within the framework of hermeneutics, philosopher and literary theorist Roman Ingarden discerns between the inherent structure of a literary work and the responses elicited from the reader or perceiver. He bases his theory on the idea that a literary work shows conceptually definable linguistic constants, but he claims that it is also ambiguous and interpretable, or, in other words, concretizable (Zima 1995, 243). According to him, a literary work represents an “*organic whole*” (Ingarden 1976, 7); it is kind of a schematic entity whose purely “*schematic nature*” (Ingarden 1989, 329) can be objectively reconstructed. However, he perceives the literary work as a gap-shaped and ambiguous construct at the same time, which contains places of indeterminacy filled with meanings or concretized in the reader’s aesthetic experience (Zima 1995, 244). The concept of “places of indeterminacy” refers to the relative openness of the meanings of the work of art, i.e., the fact that the author of the work does not say everything explicitly. This openness of meaning allows the recipient to give particular expression to such places in the aesthetic perception of the work. Such concretization is necessary for the work to operate properly because it is only through this process that an aesthetic object is generated, meaning the artefact starts to function as a work of art (Estetický slovník – Miesta nedourčenosti).

Ingarden suggests that a literary work should be perceived as an intentional object, distinct from autonomously existing real objects. Human consciousness “does not create real objects, but intentional objects (characters, plots, events) in the case of literature. These intentional objects only “pretend” real existence” (Ingarden 1989, 223). The particularity of intentional objects is that they are not “complete” since they are schemas. They cannot be filled in, and therefore, they show places of indeterminacy, or, in other words, empty places. Thus, while real objects are completely knowable because they show no gaps, a literary work, as an intentional object, is “full of voids or places of indeterminacy that can never be removed because there is an indefinite number of them” (Ingarden 1989, 251). Ingarden distinguishes four different levels in the literary work as a schematic entity, with places of indeterminacy occurring in each of them. He states that the word sounds and phonetic formations of higher order may be found in the “layers of meaning units, various schematized aspects, and represented entities and their fates” (Ingarden 1989, 42).

Based on the views of these two literary scholars, we may assume that a deeper comprehension of literary work may be achieved by eliminating harmful biases as well as by filling in the gaps in the layer of units of meaning. What is more, the horizon of the reader’s expectations could be modified. The existence of these places could therefore contribute to the aesthetic value of the works in question, considering that literary works would not thus primarily fulfil the function of distraction and pastime, but their main goal would be to modify the horizon of the reader’s expectations and thus to stimulate the reevaluation of his attitudes (Hyperlexikon literárnovedných pojmov – Hermeneutika).

A similar theory was developed by Wolfgang Iser, who emphasized that places of indeterminacy form the basic starting point of the text’s effect. According to him, readers navigate the interpretative space, determining the implicit connections between various elements. The text offers participation in the process of creating a fictional reality in this way. If the number of places of indeterminacy in a fictional text is smaller, there is a risk that the work will bore the reader because it will confront him with an increasing degree of determination, which can also be ideologically or utopianly oriented. Only empty spaces allow the reader to participate in constituting the meaning of the event. When a text affords such opportunities, “readers are inclined to perceive the interpretations they formulate not only as plausible but as actual, since humans tend to regard their creations as tangible realities” (Iser 2001, 46-47).

### **Theoretical Framework: Aristotle's and Ricoeur's Notions of Metaphor**

We focus on identifying and interpreting the metaphors in our study, therefore we will present Aristotle's and Ricoeur's notions of metaphor at first. Aristotle defines metaphor as “the transfer of a name from one thing to another, either from genus to species, or from species to genus, from one species to another, or the like” (Aristoteles 1980, 30). Metaphor, as conceived in this concept, involves substituting the proper name of one thing with a non-proper, borrowed name from another thing. The basis of this substitution is the perception of similarity; according to Aristotle, “to create good metaphors means to observe the similarity between things” (Aristoteles 1980, 30). The definition of metaphor, which is still widespread today, is based on this concept, which defines it as a “transferred naming on the basis of similarity”.

However, the literary scholar Paul Ricoeur defines his theory of metaphor against Aristotle's notion of metaphor as transferred naming based on similarity. He shows that Aristotle’s understanding fails to account for the phenomenon of a “living metaphor,” wherein a metaphor generates a novel statement that prompts a creative act of interpretation from the recipient. In Ricoeur’s view, a living metaphor is a creative aspect that goes beyond the established framework of the semantic fields of words. Such a metaphor is a process of the birth of a new meaning in the act of predication. The meaning does not appear to be static in a living metaphor. It is an event of the emergence of a new meaning, which Ricoeur calls “semantic innovation”. Ricoeur understands metaphor as a kind of challenge to find a new meaning. A living metaphor challenges us by saying that on a literal level, that is, in the space of established word meanings, it does not make sense. Metaphor thus appears as a “kind of absurdity or inadequacy requiring a solution” (Ricoeur 1993).

It can be said that metaphor is a “calculated mistake,” the result of which is the connection of things that do not belong together in ordinary life, thus introducing a new, previously non-existent, meaningful relationship. This collision of factual

contexts, which otherwise appear unrelated, stimulates the reader's imagination. One should be taken aback by the metaphor; only then can they appreciate how the extraordinary is connected with the mundane through it, offering an atypical, even bizarre interchange. The power of a metaphor lies in its semantic innovation; it creates a new, unexpected view of reality or an original arrangement. The metaphor cannot be interpreted literally because there is a shift in meaning. The meaning deviation that occurs tends to expand the original meaning by means of imagery. This indicates that words with their customary meaning are not enough to portray certain topics, so the author resorts to images (Orságová 2020, 25-26).

### **Searching for Meaning of Pheasant Metaphor**

The objective of our work is to try to apply these theoretical aspects to a specific literary work that was published in recent years and was favourably received by literary critics. It is a collection of short stories called *Freedom for Pheasants* (2015) by Vanda Rozenbergová. However, since the issue of places of indeterminacy is too complex to be applied to the selected book within one article, we will focus only on the category of places of indeterminacy in the layer of meaning units. We will focus on that part of the process of understanding the work, which is represented by the completion of the place of indeterminacy in the title of the work, formed by a metaphor.

The very name of the collection of short stories, *Freedom for Pheasants*, which we want to address in our work, could be described as a living metaphor. Since this is a collection analysing the theme of interpersonal relationships, such a title really seems absurd or inappropriate in this context. Therefore, we decided to explore the pheasant metaphor in the context of this work.

The book is named after a specific short story in which the protagonist frees pheasants from the zoo and returns them to nature. In this way, the reader may not even think of searching for some deeper meaning. Thus, it could be argued that the readers initial prejudice (in the meaning as understood by Gadamer) could be the assumption that the title of the collection was simply derived from the title of the short story. However, when reading short stories from the collection, musical readers should not perceive this prejudice as something immutable. They should expose it to the fact that it can be confirmed or not in the process of communication with the text.

### **Similarities Between Pheasants and Characters in the Book**

Upon closer examination of the protagonists within the collection, we would find out that even though they may seem to be simple characters at first glance, they are always specific in some way; their otherness is also emphasized by the choice of the "exclusive" names (Metod, Jenová, Kiril, Altaluna, Lino). Female characters in the collection often find themselves constrained by societal expectations as mothers or

wives, leading to feelings of unfulfillment and isolation (as depicted in *Explosion as Vigorous Exothermic Reaction*, *Rat*, *Robbers of Worlds*, and *Icelanders*). Meanwhile, male characters behave in a dominant, even despotic manner towards their surroundings (as depicted in *Art Techniques*, *Skin*). Animals play significant roles in the narratives but typically occupy passive positions. The narratives are mainly based on unique characters, and the story is told by various male, female, and kid narrators. The narrative perspectives change (as depicted in *Sauno Paulo*, *Freedom for Pheasants*, and *Altaluna*). Most of the stories take place in the space of the family and mutual family relationships (Sokolová 2016). At this point, we can think about the reason why a collection that analyses such topics is called *Freedom for Pheasants*. Thus, we challenge our initial prejudice regarding the name of the book. At the same time, we admit that it is a place of indeterminacy that we should fill in ourselves.

Given that the essence of metaphors lies in the fact that one conceptual area (target) is understood from the point of view of another conceptual area (source), while certain selected aspects of the entity from the source area are always highlighted and others are relegated to the background or ignored (Vaňková 2013, 27-28), one might assume that the pheasant entity is a metaphor for the protagonists in the collection, in which the very aspect of flightlessness is selected from the source area. This assumption also forms our new prejudice (as defined by Gadamer), which we will further verify in the reading process. Both the protagonists (mostly female protagonists) and these birds are somehow disadvantaged in comparison to others. They are limited in some way, and we can claim that they are on the periphery of the life they would like to live (or that would mean the use of their full potential). Our thoughts are based on the theory of prototypes by Eleanor Rosch as regards this process of filling in the place of indeterminacy and thinking about the meaning of the pheasant metaphor. Rosch introduced the notion of graded semantic categories. According to this theory, a semantic category includes members that form around prototypes (prototypical members that represent the category). Properties, or the attributes of other members, are usually graded, and a property or set of properties may not be shared by all members of a category (Rosch 1978, 2-3).

If we were to look at the pheasant as a potential member of a certain category, we would find out that it belongs to the semantic category of “birds,” the prototype of which might be, for example, the sparrow. The set of properties characteristic for this category would include properties such as “can fly,” “has feathers,” “lays eggs,” “feeds on insects,” and so on. When thinking about the position of the pheasant within this category, we would come to the conclusion that the pheasant – given that it does not have or has only a very weakly developed basic property characteristic of this semantic category – the ability to fly – will be on the periphery of this group. In our process of verification, we encountered a significant quote that ultimately reinforces our interpretation of the pheasant metaphor:

...When a pheasant flies for a long time, which is short compared to other birds anyway, it gets very tired, and if the hunter flushes it out of the bushes or from the hiding place three or four times in a row, it doesn't even take off anymore, it is completely done and it rather gets shot (Rozenbergová 2015, 196).

The characters, whether people or animals, from the short story collection *Freedom for Pheasants* are very similar to pheasants in this respect. There are abused women, animals, and, finally, dozens of hunted pheasants. These characters seem paralysed, as if they have given up trying to free themselves from the oppression of their partners; “it doesn't even take off anymore [...] it rather gets shot” (Rozenbergová 2015, 196). This tragic position of some women is illustrated in the short story *Robbers of Worlds*, for example. Here, the husband creates a kind of imaginary cage around his wife through his pragmatism in this story: “Anna Bergmanová lives on such a street, where everything is within reach. A pharmacy, a confectionery, a flower shop, even a library” (Rozenbergová 2015, 41). The position of this protagonist in relation to men is indicated by the perspective of her view: “...she watches people. She watches men, by the way, she looks at their legs” (Rozenbergová 2015, 41). This view from below intensifies the feeling of male dominance in the marital relationship and places the husband on an imaginary pedestal: “Her husband's shoes must always be clean and shiny. [...] She will stand behind the curtain, and she will look at his feet in clean, freshly washed sneakers” (Rozenbergová 2015, 41-42). The motif of physical and mental abuse can also be found in the short story *Art Techniques*, in which the abuse takes on a more specific form:

He locked my mother in the cellar. Even for the night. She was terribly afraid of the dark. [...] No one noticed her screams because of the cackling of the chickens and the sounds of the pig. [...] The father swore terribly and humiliated us; he shouted and cursed. Everything provoked him, every differently uttered sentence (Rozenbergová 2015, 96-97).

There is only one abused woman in the book who considers the possibility of revolt. However, she is unable to escape, and thus, she remains in the position of a submissive partner like all of the other women:

...it will be easy and quick; a small gap is enough for me because the wind resistance is strong, and I will flip out; I will get off during the ride. I'll get off during the ride. I didn't do it. I'm standing on the balcony again like the swallow; it's morning, half an hour after dawn (Rozenbergová 2015, 82).

The analogy between a swallow and an absurd woman who chooses to remain in a home with a bully may pique the reader's curiosity. After all, the swallow has diametrically different characteristics from the pheasant discussed in this

context (it can fly long distances to exotic countries). One could think about which features the author picked from the source area when constituting this metaphor. Swallows were dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite in ancient Greece, as they symbolized love and fidelity. Known for choosing only one mate for life, these birds are associated with loyalty and devotion. In addition, they appear in several Greek poems in connection with travelling or returning home. Since swallows appeared relatively close to land, their presence meant proximity to home for seafarers (Reese 2023, no p.). These traits of love, fidelity, and devotion to home, embodied in the metaphor of a swallow, seem paradoxical in relation to a frustrated female figure. Thus, even though staying with the family may outwardly appear to be a manifestation of the highest virtues, the metaphor becomes an ironic gesture accentuating the frustration of a woman, who, because of her acquired submissiveness, is condemned to live with a tyrant.

The pheasant’s inability to fly renders it an easy target for hunters, mirroring the vulnerability of the female figures and abused animals in the collection who fall victim to tyrants and predators due to their lack of resistance. After a longer period of being forced into activities that are not natural and beneficial for them (“if the hunter flushes it out of the bushes or from the hiding place three or four times in a row, it doesn't even take off anymore” (Rozenbergová 2015, 196)) they resign, which also means their death in a metaphorical sense.

## Conclusion

In our study, we tried to bring a better understanding of the book *Freedom for Pheasants* by identifying and interpreting hidden meanings in the text. Our research was based on hermeneutics, and we focused particularly on how the reader can achieve a better understanding of the book by filling in the places of indeterminacy.

Since we recognized potential effects that filling in the places of indeterminacy in the literary work *Freedom for Pheasants* may have on the reader, we may assert that the function of these places does not have to lie only in the reader’s discovering certain hidden meanings and better understanding a particular literary work in its context by adding them – these places can also offer space to correct the internal attitudes of the reader. The fact that the reader can not only understand what the work of art is trying to convey but also becomes sensitive to it by filling in the places of indeterminacy in the context of the work also indicates the aesthetic quality of the literary work in question.

The significance of our study therefore lies not only in its contribution to interpretation the prose collection *Freedom for Pheasants*, but also in highlighting the particular elements in the book that seem to be aesthetic quality indicators.

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# Overcoming challenges posed by intertextuality: Translation strategies employed in Polish and German translations of Agatha Christie's novel titles



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## Abstract

The article investigates problems associated with the translation of selected Agatha Christie's novel titles containing intertextual references to various literary works including but not limited to Shakespeare's plays (*By the Pricking of My Thumbs*) and English nursery rhymes (*A Pocket Full of Rye*). Original English title versions with their respective Polish and German counterparts (with their English back translations) are compared and analysed (*Hickory Dickory Dock* – *Entliczek pentliczek* – *Die Kleptomanin*). Translation challenges involved in rendering titles encompassing intertextual elements are identified and deliberated on in more detail. Strategies employed by translators to render the titles are established (equivalence, literal translation, adaptation). The study shows that the strategy of adaptation is applied when it is not possible to replicate intertextuality in translation. Title versions rendered with the use of adaptation allude to other significant elements in the plot to maintain the title-novel interface.

## Key words

*title translation, multiple titling, intertextuality, literary references, translation strategies, retranslation hypothesis, intralingual translation*

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## 1. Introduction

Agatha Christie can be regarded as one of the most prolific crime writers of all time. She has written 66 novels in total. While the translation of the novels constitutes a challenging task, rendering their titles may be viewed as a formidable task as well. The aim of the paper is to identify the challenges associated with the translation of Agatha Christie's intertextual novel titles. Specifically, it will be explored how these challenges are addressed with respect to translation strategies employed. It will be investigated whether intertextuality is maintained in translation and what solutions

are implemented to maintain the link between the title and the novel when it is not possible to retain the intertextual reference from the original title.

## **2. Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is by no means an easy notion to define. Various scholars have proposed different definitions of the term. The most straightforward definition limits intertextuality to “the actual presence of one text within another” (Genette 1997, 2). This definition explicitly points to the embeddedness of one text within another. Kristeva (1980, 66) defines this phenomenon in a broader sense, i.e. “the absorption and transformation” of one text by another and the “transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another” (Kristeva 1984, 59-60). According to text linguistics intertextuality is related to “the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts” (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981, 10). This definition is significant within the framework of analysis conducted in this paper. The knowledge of a particular intertextual reference enables one to predict the plot of Agatha Christie’s novels based on their intertextual titles. In this paper, intertextuality is understood as a reference to other literary works. It consists in employing quotations, character names or motifs from other literary works as novel titles.

Intertextuality has been frequently examined in relation to translation. Sakellariou (2019) discerns two approaches to intertextuality in connection with translation studies. The first approach consists in employing a specific concept of intertextuality in order to respond to translation problems. The latter approach, conversely, revolves around altering the notion of translation in intertextual terms. The first approach portrays intertextuality as background knowledge of text users as well as textual conventions which are linked to aspects such as rhetoric and style. In light of this approach, intertextuality may be analysed from a text-linguistic perspective. This was done by Neubert (1981, 143) who claims that “the key notion of translatability is in fact synonymous with intertextuality”. He perceives intertextuality as “a phenomenon that a communicatively equivalent translation or interpretation shares with its source” (Neubert 1981, 143). In a similar vein, Hatim and Mason (1990, 132-137) analysed the phenomenon in question drawing primarily on text linguistics. This gave rise to a framework involving the recognition of intertextual signals. The translator is therefore, in this sense, an individual able to process intertextual references and, as a result, a mediator. Federici (2007) suggests that a literary translator performs not only the role of a mediator, but also of a rewriter, and interpreter between different linguistic and cultural worlds. This approach is also inextricably linked to the necessity or attempt to recreate intertextual facets of the original in translation. It has to be acknowledged that certain allusions “may not ‘function’ in another culture”, e.g., Macbeth does not have

the same impact for German, French, or Spanish readers Nord (2019, 340). This is tightly associated with intercultural intertextuality which is tantamount to “intertextual references to texts that originate in different languages and cultures” (Schäffner 2012, 347). Research on intertextuality in relation to translation encompasses a wide array of topics such as the English translations of ancient Greek drama (Roberts 2010), rendering elements referring to tradition in classic plays (Komalesha 2014) and poetry translation (Canani 2014).

Research which fits into the second tendency aims to redefine translation rather than address translation hindrances. In order to do so, the relationship between the source and the target text plays a pivotal role in these kinds of deliberations. This tendency acknowledges the interconnectedness of all texts where it is impossible to consider any text an original while at the same time it tends to be a challenge to pinpoint the exact sources a given text was influenced by (Farahzad 2008, 126). It is therefore apparent that this tendency gives rise to the perception of the distinction between translation and the original that is vague (Littau 2010). Subsequently, yet “another intratextual context and another network of intertextual and interdiscursive relations” is created (Venuti 2009, 162). It can be viewed in a twofold manner both as “a formal and semantic loss” but also “an exorbitant gain” for the source text (Venuti 2009, 162). This approach does not envisage the existence of a definitive translation. On the contrary, it fosters the practice of retranslation. As can be inferred from the analysis, translations of Agatha Christie's novel titles are a combination of these two approaches. It is evident that in certain cases translators strived to maintain or replicate intertextuality. That being said, the existence of several title versions points to the second tendency as it involves the practice of retranslation.

### 3. Translation strategies

There are a plethora of various terms used to describe a particular course of action undertaken by a translator to overcome translation challenges. The *modus operandi* in question may be referred to as a strategy, a method or a procedure. Lörscher (1991, 76) provides a general description implying that “a translation strategy is a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language into another”. Chesterman (1997, 86) presents strategies as “ways in which translators seek to react to norms: primarily, but not necessarily always, to try to conform to them”. Newmark (1988) differentiated between translation methods and translation procedures. Whilst translation methods are phenomena related to whole texts, translation procedures are pertinent to sentences and smaller units of language (Newmark, 1988). Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) referred to the course of action undertaken by the

translator to solve a particular problem as a 'procedure'. They identified 7 procedures divided into 2 groups, namely direct (or literal translation methods) and oblique translation methods. As far as direct translation methods are concerned, 3 procedures can be taken into account, i.e., borrowing, calque and literal translation, whereas in terms of oblique translation methods, 4 procedures can be enumerated, namely transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. For the purpose of this study, the term "strategy" is applied. Analysed titles are classified according to a simple typology encompassing three strategies, namely literal translation, equivalence and adaptation. In this study, literal translation denotes a word-for-word translation, equivalence encompasses translation involving retention or replication of the metaphor or concept present in the source language in the target language. It may also involve alluding to the form of the original title (e.g., replacing one rhyme with another one that has a similar form, despite their different meaning). Last but not least, adaptation consists in replacing the original title with a completely new one by completely disregarding the meaning and form of the source text title.

#### **4. Title translation**

Titles are frequently regarded as paratexts. In most general terms, paratexts could be referred to as the additional textual matter of the book such as "titles and subtitles (of chapters, sections, and volumes as well as the whole work), epigraphs, dedications, prefaces, afterwords, running heads, the copyright page, and all jacket copy" (Gorman 2005, 419). Some researchers point out that a paratext ultimately allows a text to be transformed into a book (Genette 1997, Alvstad 2003). Batchelor (2018, 142) highlights that a paratext "is a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received".

Newmark (1988, 56) suggests that a "title should sound attractive, allusive, suggestive, even if it is a proper name, and should usually bear some relation to the original if only for identification". However, Hejwowski (2004) believes that translated book titles usually do not bear enough resemblance to the original title to render them identifiable with the original as a more faithful translation could possibly make the book less marketable. Title translation is challenging due to the fact that the author usually creates the title before or after the work has been finished whereas a translator is usually faced with the challenge of creating a translated title once the book has been finished (Genette and Crampé, 1988). Genette and Crampé (1988) do not deny notwithstanding, that the involvement of editors, publishers and social norms should not be overlooked when pondering upon what factors might have influenced the final wording of the title. This may be even the case within the same language, e.g., the British title *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was rendered into *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the USA (Balińska 2020, 150). Boyko (2011) even dubs the phenomenon of alternative titling in arts a 'disease'

which stems from back-translating from another language where the title has already been rendered instead of translating directly based on the original title of the work.

In the spirit of the functionalist approach to translation, Nord (1995) states that title translation should start with the analysis of the translating instructions or *skopos* (purpose) provided by the commissioner either in an implicit or explicit manner. The translator's creativity takes form based on the framework provided by the (intended) function (or set of functions) of the target title. Nevertheless, she stresses that the requirements posed by the *skopos* should not interfere with the principle of loyalty. Grivel (1973) discerns three title functions: 1) identifying the work 2) designating its content and 3) highlighting it. Nord (1995) distinguishes six functions of titles altogether, namely distinctive, phatic and metatextual which pertain to each title (essential functions) as well as referential, expressive and appellative which refer only to some titles (optional functions).

Research related to title translation helps shed light on the specific challenges ingrained in the translation of the paratext. Viezzi (2013) showcases an overview of various novel and film title translations, thereby highlighting the relationship between the title and the reader's perception of the work. He also mentions that Christie's novel originally titled *Murder on the Orient Express* was published as *Murder on the Calais Coach* in the US in order to avoid confusion with Graham Greene's novel *Orient Express* published several years earlier. In another paper, Viezzi (2015) explores the phenomenon of multiple titling in Italian with respect to Agatha Christie's novel titles. He states that the role of multiple titling is to increase the novel's marketability and to find a new way to promote older work. Percec and Pungă (2019) show that intertextuality, which can be found in original Agatha Christie's titles, is frequently lost in Romanian translations. Literal translation was frequently applied as a strategy and it also contributed to the loss of intertextuality. Additionally, Romanian translators did not attempt to apply the strategy of adaptation to create new titles in order to make up for intertextuality loss. The authors point out that this could have resulted in an apparent incongruity between the adapted version of the title and the unchanged content of the book.

The challenging nature of title translation has been underscored by miscellaneous scholars. Bobadilla-Pérez (2007, 17) aptly encapsulates the crux of the issue by claiming that "titles are the most imprecise, capricious and subjective component of the whole narrative". Eco (2004, 6) stresses the great potential of reinventing and reimagining the work anew when approaching translation. However, in terms of title translation, the freedom is certainly constrained. Bantaş (1994, 81) puts forward an interesting statement which conveys the essence of title translation: "To push the metaphor further, translators should pack coffee without decaffeinating it and also preserve its full flavour". Hence, title translation should

yield the same effect in the target culture and in the source culture by striking the balance between remaining loyal to the original essence of the title while at the same time bringing the realities of the fictional universe from another culture to the reader.

## 5. Method

Intertextual British English titles (15) have been selected out of all Agatha Christie's novels that have Polish and German translations (66). Polish and German were selected as representatives of two different language families, with Polish being a Slavic language and German being a Germanic language like English. Juxtaposing these languages will enable one to assess whether there is any relationship between the translation strategy employed and the language family. American titles were also provided to show that different titles were created to cater to the American market. Upon deeper analysis, it transpired that there is a need for distinction between a title and a title entry in the corpus. One title entry corresponds to one work of the author. Yet each title entry may include several titles. The phenomenon of multiple titling accounts for this distinction. Therefore, these intertextual title entries give rise to 66 titles (23 British and American English titles, 21 Polish titles and 22 German titles). The study involves both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, the frequency of intertextual British English titles is calculated. Secondly, intertextual British English titles are grouped according to the intertextual reference. One can discern 5 groups of the references in question, namely nursery rhymes, Shakespeare's works, religious texts, British literary works other than Shakespeare's and Greek mythology. The distribution of these titles across the categories is calculated. Last but not least, titles encompassing intertextual references and their Polish and German translations are analysed in terms of translation challenges involved and translation strategies applied. English back translations of Polish and German titles are provided in order to facilitate comparing and contrasting the title versions in question. Thus, the main research questions that are addressed in the study are as follows:

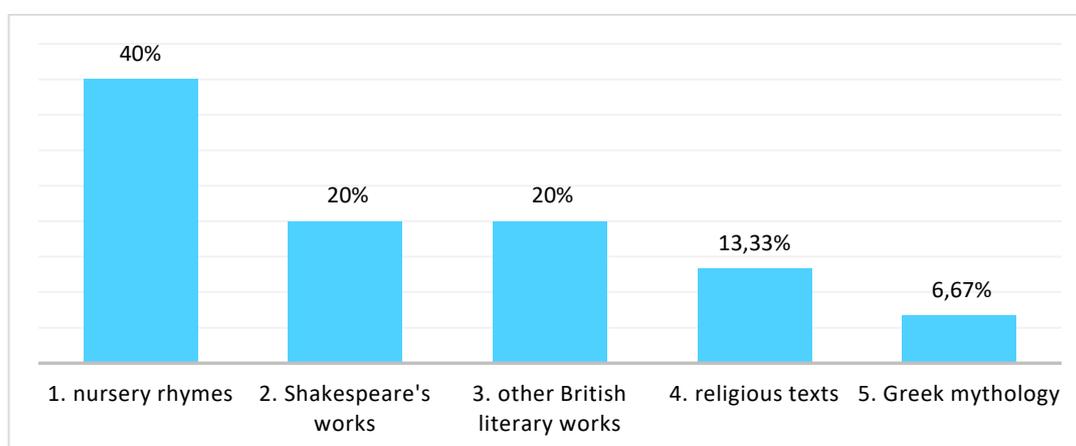
- What translation strategies are applied to render intertextual titles of Agatha Christie's novels?
- What is the relationship between the original intertextual title of the novel and its plot?
- Is this unique relationship between the title and the novel maintained in translation?

## 6. Quantitative analysis

Out of 66 title entries, 15 are intertextual. Hence, the percentage of intertextual British English title entries is (22.73%) which constitutes approximately one fifth of all title

entries. The majority of intertextual titles are those which are excerpts from English nursery rhymes (40.00%). These rhymes were written by various mostly unknown authors, yet their authorship is assigned to an imaginary figure referred to as Mother Goose (Opie and Opie, 1997). The second most frequent group of intertextual references are Shakespeare's works such as Macbeth and Julius Caesar (20.00%). The frequency is identical to references to British literary works other than Shakespeare's such as Fitzgerald, Flecker etc. (20.00%). This group is followed by references to religious texts, i.e. the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer (13.33%). The least frequent title reference is the Greek mythology with only one instance in the corpus (6.67%).

**Figure 1.** Frequency of intertextual references in British English titles of Agatha Christie's novels



## 7. Qualitative analysis

### 7.1. Translation of titles derived from nursery rhymes

#### Title entry 1

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Ten Little Niggers (1939) UK	Dziesięciu Murzynków (1960) [Ten Little Niggers]	Letztes Weekend (1944) [Last Weekend]
Ten Little Indians (1964) US	I nie było już nikogo (2004) [And Then There Were None]	Zehn kleine Negerlein (1982) [Ten Little Niggers]
And Then There Were None (1940) US		Und dann gabs keines mehr (2003) [And Then There Were None]

This title has been retranslated multiple times on account of the original title's racist connotations. *Ten Little Niggers* was a song at blackface minstrel shows in the second half of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The first English version saw the change from niggers to Indians until it was finally replaced by a line from the rhyme referring to the fact that all the characters died (*And Then There Were None*). Guests on the island die according to the order and manner described in the very nursery rhyme. The new version of the rhyme from the edition published in 2003 under the title *And then there were none* treats of "ten little soldier boys". Polish and German translations followed suit with regard to politically correct title versions. The translated version of the rhyme in the Polish novel refers to ten little soldier boys as well. The first German title completely discarded the reference to the rhyme as *Last weekend* completely removes the intertextual quality. All the presented translations of the title are a result of applying literal translation except for German *Last weekend* that constitutes an instance of adaptation.

### Title entry 2

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe (1940) UK	Pierwsze, drugie, ...zapnij mi obuwie (1992)	Das Geheimnis der Schnallenschuhe (1951)
The Patriotic Murders (1941) US	[First, Second,...Buckle My Shoes]	[The Secret of Buckle Shoes]
An Overdose of Death (1953) US		

The title *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* was rendered as *The Patriotic Murders* and *An Overdose of Death* in order to appeal to the American audience. *Overdose of Death* alludes to the way the Greek character Amberiotis died due to the overdose of an anaesthetic. In comparison to the British version, these titles explicitly indicate the subject matter of the novel, i.e., murder and death. Despite the attempt to recreate the original title by means of literal translation, the Polish title does not yield the same effect as *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*. The nursery rhyme in question is not popular in Poland. In order to overcome this hindrance, namely the lack of popularity of the rhyme in Germany as well, the German title was translated by means of equivalence. The title still contains the reference to the shoes present in the rhyme and also in the plot where they play a pivotal role in solving the mystery.

### Title entry 3

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Five Little Pigs (1942/1943) UK	Pięć małych świnek (1957)	Das unvollendete Bildnis (1957)
Murder in Retrospect (1942) US	[Five Little Pigs]	[The Unfinished Painting]

The American title yet again directly indicates the genre of the novel by referring to murder in addition to identifying the way it was analysed in the novel, namely in retrospect or in hindsight (sixteen years after the murder had been actually committed). This title entry aptly encapsulates challenges which may be encountered by translators when similar versions of fairy tales and rhymes exist in various countries, albeit with slight modifications. Polish children are familiar with a story about three, not five little pigs. The similarity notwithstanding, the stories diverge significantly. In order not to refer to the Polish story, Polish title was rendered with the use of literal translation. In the Polish version of the novel, the rhyme is rendered literally so that readers know that the title is derived from the rhyme. The detective in the novel, Hercule Poirot, attempts to solve a murder mystery from the past. The people who were at home when the murder was committed and whom Poirot wants to interrogate are referred to as five little pigs. Each line of the poem refers to the characteristics of a particular suspect. German translator opted for a reference to a painting playing a significant role in the storyline as an artist dies during the creation of the painting. This title diverges from the original to a large extent as it was rendered via adaptation.

#### Title entry 4

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Crooked House (1949)	Dom przestpców (1992) [The House of Criminals]  Dom zbrodni (2001) [The House of Crime]	Das krumme Haus (1951) [The Crooked House]

This title constitutes an example where solely a collocation (crooked house) was drawn from a rhyme of the same title. Hence, it is challenging to decode this intertextual reference at first glance. Apart from being a part of the rhyme, the adjective crooked is polysemous in English. It may both pertain to the house being tilted but also to the moral corruption of the family residing in it. Since this double meaning was challenging to convey in Polish, the titles *Dom zbrodni* and *Dom przestpców* solely refer to the latter meaning invoked above. In the Polish translation of the rhyme, the word crooked is rendered as *krzywy* (tilted), therefore referring to the former meaning of the adjective. Polish titles were rendered through equivalence. Due to the similarity between German and English, the German word *krumm* has the double meaning as well and the same message can be conveyed in German simply by applying literal translation.

### Title entry 5

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
A Pocket Full of Rye (1953)	Kieszka pełna żyta (1968) [A Pocket Full of Rye]	Das Geheimnis der Goldmine (1956) [The Mystery of the Gold Mine]  Das Geheimnis der Amseln (2002) [The Secret of Blackbirds]

*A Pocket Full of Rye* is drawn from a rhyme *Sing a song of sixpence*. The murders taking place in the novel parallel particular elements of the rhyme, namely Rex passed away at his office with rye in his pocket. His wife died in the parlour of the house drinking tea. With a clothespin acting as a bird and pecking at her nose, Gladys passed away in the garden amidst the laundry. Polish translator rendered the title literally. The older German version employs adaptation as a strategy as it refers to the gold mine that is associated with the culprit in the plot. The newer German version encompasses blackbirds in view of the fact that they are also mentioned in the rhyme. Hence, it can be inferred that the translator strived for equivalence by referring to the element from the rhyme.

### Title entry 6

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Hickory Dickory Dock (1955) UK	Entliczek pentliczek (1991) [-]	Die Kleptomanin (1958) [The Female Kleptomaniac]
Hickory Dickory Death (1955) US		

The British title alludes to the nursery rhyme with the same title. It also refers to Hickory Road i.e., the street name where a student hostel is located and where the story takes place. The American title is slightly modified in comparison to the British one. Since it contains the word “death” it explicitly indicates the subject matter of the book. In order to replicate the intertextual quality of the original, Polish translator opted for equivalence and used a Polish rhyme *Entliczek pentliczek* by Jan Brzechwa as a title. Even though the storyline of the Polish rhyme is vastly different from the English *Hickory Dickory Dock*, it yields a similar effect as it is also a nursery rhyme and has a similar form. *Die Kleptomanin* is the result of applying adaptation which consists in referring to the protagonist who has a propensity to steal certain objects. The German suffix *-in* indicates the female gender of the kleptomaniac and partially reveals the identity of the person. Thus, the German version utilises adaptation to refer to a different significant element in the storyline, i.e., one of the characters.

## 7.2. Titles alluding to Shakespeare's works

### Title entry 7

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Sad Cypress (1940)	Zerwane zaręczyny (1966) [A Broken Engagement]	Morphium (1943) [Morphine]

*Sad Cypress* comes from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and it simultaneously constitutes the epigraph of the novel. The intertextual aspect is lost in both translations. The Polish title does not allude to the cypress from the translated version of *Twelfth Night*. Instead, it provides a succinct preview of the event taking place in the fictional universe and is an adaptation of the original. It draws on the fact that Roddy falls in love with Mary Gerrard and breaks his engagement to Elinor. The German title rendered through adaptation, on the other hand, involves the name of a poison which points to the genre of the novel and makes for an appealing title. Specifically, it aims to mislead the reader by drawing their attention to a substance which was not the actual cause of Mary's death. As it is discovered later on, it was apomorphine that killed Mary.

### Title entry 8

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
By the Pricking of My Thumbs (1968)	Dom nad kanałem (1968) [Canal House]	Lauter reizende alte Damen (1970) [Just Charming Old Ladies]

The title of the book comes from Act IV, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It is derived from an utterance of one of the witches: "By the pricking of my thumbs, /Something wicked this way comes" (Shakespeare 1623). The title foreshadows the discovery of very grim murders of several children. Polish and German titles are descriptive, with the former marking a location and the latter presenting characters mentioned in the novel. The Polish title refers to a mysterious canal house first seen on a painting where later on the murderer is found. They are both adaptations. This could be due to the fact that Shakespeare's works are not as well-known in Poland and in Germany as they are in the United Kingdom.

### Title entry 9

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Taken at the Flood (1948) (UK) There is a Tide (1948) (US)	Pora przyływu (1963) [High Tide]	Der Todeswirbel (1950) [The Vortex of Death]

Both *Taken at the Flood* and *There is a Tide* are a reference to a line in a speech by Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act IV): "There is a tide in the affairs of men,

which taken at the flood leads on to fortune . . .” (Shakespeare, 1623). The quotation is given in full as the epigraph to the novel. Staying close to the concept of a tide, was achieved in Polish owing to the use of equivalence. *Pora przyływu* is derived from the Polish translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar. Der Todeswirbel*, translated with the use of adaptation, explicitly introduces the notion of death which points to the fact that the novel is a crime story.

### 7.3. Titles referring to religious works

#### Title entry 10

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Evil Under the Sun (1941)	Hotel na wybrzeżu (1947) [A Hotel On the Coast]	Rätsel um Arlena (1945) [The Riddle of Arlena]
	Zło czai się wszędzie (1971) [Evil Lurks Everywhere]	Das Böse unter der Sonne (1982) [The Evil Under the Sun]
	Zło, które żyje pod słońcem (1993) [The Evil that Lives Under the Sun]	

The title *Evil Under the Sun* refers to Ecclesiastes 6:1, namely “There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon humankind” (*New Revised Standard Version of the Bible Updated Edition 2021*, Ecclesiastes, 6:1). *Hotel na wybrzeżu* provides one with a description comprising a type of a building (a hotel) and where it is situated (on the coast). The strategy of adaptation was applied to render this title. *Rätsel um Arlena*, rendered via adaptation, fits into a popular title format of crime stories, i.e. the mystery/riddle of + the character’s name. Intertextuality is sacrificed and compensated for the sake of providing a brief summary of the plot. The newer German title (1982) and two newest Polish titles (1971, 1993) are closer to the original in that they make use of the biblical reference which is comprehensible in both Polish and German target cultures. This biblical context is even brought up in the dialogues in the novel. Equivalence was applied in the translation of two newest Polish titles (1971, 1993) as they draw on the concept of evil from the original. *Das Böse unter der Sonne* is a literal translation of the original title.

#### Title entry 11

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
N or M? (1941)	Piąta Kolumna działa (1947) [The Fifth Column Works]	Das Haus der Mrs. Perenna (1946) [Mrs Perenna’s House]
	N czy M? (2008) [N or M?]	Rotkäppchen und der böse Wolf (1960) [Little Red Riding-Hood and the Bad Wolf]
		N oder M? (2019) [N or M?]

The title is derived from the catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* which asks, "What is your Christian name? Answer n or nn". The n or nn stands for the Latin, *nomen vel nomina*, denoting name or names. Not only is this title intertextual but also one of the characters in the book utters their last words on the deathbed: "N or M. Song Susie". However, due to the fact that two lowercase letters n might resemble an m this utterance was misconstrued as n or m. *Piąta Kolumna działa*, rendered through adaptation, makes use of the term fifth column which denotes a "clandestine group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation's solidarity by any means at their disposal" (Britannica, n.d.). Adaptation was employed in the translation of the first German title, *Das Haus der Mrs. Perenna*, which reveals the location where detective Tommy stayed to solve the mystery. What is particularly striking is that the second German version employs an intertextual reference of a completely different nature than the English one. The English original refers to the *Book of Common Prayer* while the German version alludes to the *Little Red Riding Hood*. This example shows the use of adaptation. Hence, this could be referred to as intertextuality shift, i.e. one intertextual reference is replaced with another one. The newest German and Polish titles were rendered literally.

#### 7.4. Titles referring to British literary works other than Shakespeare's

##### Title entry 12

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side (1962) UK	Zwierciadło pęka w odłamków stos (1994)	Dummheit ist gefährlich (1964) [Stupidity is Dangerous]
The Mirror Crack'd (1963) US	[The Mirror Cracks into a Pile of Shards]	Mord im Spiegel oder Dummheit ist gefährlich (1980) [Murder in the Mirror or Stupidity is Dangerous]

The title comes from the poem *The Lady of Shalott* by Alfred Tennyson. Since this very part of the poem constitutes a motto of the novel which has been rendered into Polish, Polish readers have access to it and are cognisant of the fact where the title comes from. Polish title is equivalent to the source text in that it revolves around the concept of a mirror and so is the second German title. However, the first German title is devoid of any reference to the mirror as it was rendered through adaptation.

##### Title entry 13

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Postern of Fate (1973)	Tajemnica Wawrzynów (1997) [The Mystery of the Laurels]	Alter schützt vor Scharfsinn nicht (1978) [Old Age Doesn't Protect from Sharp Wit]

The English title *Postern of Fate* comes from the poem *Gates of Damascus* by James Elroy Flecker. The Polish title is a reference to the name of a new residence bought by the detectives in the novel, its name being the *Laurels* (*wawrzyny* in Polish). The German title alludes to the fact that the detectives are in their seventies. In spite of their age, they have managed to maintain an astute mind and are still capable of solving intricate mysteries. Both translations were rendered through adaptation.

#### Title entry 14

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
The Moving Finger (1942)	Zatrute pióro (1956) [The Poisonous Pen]	Die Schattenhand (1944) [The Shadow Hand]

The title is derived from an excerpt of Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. This very poem pertains to Belshazzar's feast presented in the Book of Daniel and so does the German version. During the feast, the writing appears on the wall. It is determined in Christie's novel that envelopes were all typed by someone using one finger. Both translations revolve around the concept of writing in some respect. The German version, however, shifts the focus towards the hand and the Polish version focuses on the tool that one holds in the hand, which is a pen. English and German titles retain the intertextual quality of the original. Equivalence was used as a strategy with respect to both translations.

### 7.5. Title referring to Greek mythology

#### Title entry 15

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Nemesis (1971)	Przeznaczenie (1992) [Destiny]  Nemesis (1997) [Nemesis]	Das Schicksal in Person (1972) [The Fate in Person]

Miss Marple dubs herself as Nemesis in Agatha Christie's novel *A Caribbean Mystery*. This pseudonym, in turn, becomes the leitmotif of the novel *Nemesis*. Miss Marple is supposed to take on the role of the Greek goddess of revenge. The Polish title *Przeznaczenie* triggers numerous associations and is somewhat mysterious. However, it does not explicitly refer to Greek mythology. Adaptation was used in the translation of the title. The newer Polish title (1997) is a literal translation of the original. The German title employs a metaphor which is of a slightly more descriptive nature, namely *The Fate in Person*. It was translated via adaptation.

## 7.6. Introducing intertextuality in translation

### Title entry 16

ENGLISH TITLE	POLISH TITLE	GERMAN TITLE
Hallowe'en Party (1969)	Wigilia Wszystkich Świętych (1993) [All Saints' Eve]	Die Schneewitchen-Party (1971) [The Snow White Party]  Die Halloween-Party (2018) [The Hallowe'en Party]

It is a peculiar example where intertextuality is introduced in the German translation even though it did not exist in the original. Halloween was not widely celebrated in Poland and in Germany when older translations were created (1993, 1971). Hence, the Polish title employs metonymy to refer to Halloween in a descriptive manner as a day before the All Saints Day, a religious holiday celebrated in Poland. Polish translator employed equivalence to render the title. An intertextual reference to *Snow White* can be identified in the older German title most likely due to the same reason. This reference is tied to the plot where children play the game of fishing apples and one girl is killed in an apple-bobbing bucket. The German version most likely alludes to *Snow White*, who ate a poisonous apple, to maintain the reference to apple-bobbing at the Halloween Party and the name of the house in the novel referred to as Apple Trees. The strategy of adaptation can be identified in this example. The newer German title, however, is a literal translation of the English original.

## 8. Discussion

The corpus enables one to conduct a diachronic analysis. On the whole, newer title translations were predominantly rendered with the use of literal translation. First title translations were mainly rendered through adaptation. The findings seem to corroborate the retranslation hypothesis (Berman 1990; Chesterman 2000) that indicates that older translations are more target text-oriented, while newer translations tend to be more source text-oriented. Globalisation may perpetuate making the titles more alike by the more frequent use of literal translation over time in the corpus. The practice of retranslation might be motivated by striving to look for a better translation aptly encapsulating the essence of the original.

It is interesting that multiple titling pertains to English versions as well. This could be perceived as an instance of intralingual translation. It clearly shows that even in two English speaking countries expectations of the market and the understanding of intertextuality are divergent. Frequent replacement of nursery rhymes in American titles suggests their lack of legibility for the general public. Intertextuality was lost more frequently in German titles compared to their Polish

counterparts. It constitutes an interesting finding. It would appear that literal translation would be more common in the English-German language pair due to them belonging to the same language family. On the contrary, Polish titles have been rendered with the use of word-for-word translation more frequently. German titles diverge from the original to a greater extent both semantically and structurally. It seems that whenever intertextuality was not replicated in translation, translator opted for adaptation that highlighted a significant element in the plot, e.g., a character, an object or a place. As a title is meant to be a business card of a book, it is a suitable way of introducing other salient elements from the plot when intertextuality would have caused misunderstandings in the target culture. It appears that the intertextuality of the original titles serves as a plot scaffolding, especially in the novels where the characters are killed according to the sequence and manner depicted in the rhyme. Percec and Pungă (2019) stress that there might be a potential clash between the adapted title and the book's content. The present study shows that the adapted titles were linked to significant elements from the storyline, therefore this kind of incongruity was avoided.

Considerable differences can be identified between Polish and German translations. Overall, Polish titles are predominantly translated with the use of equivalence, while German titles via adaptation. Retention of intertextuality can be identified in a greater number of Polish than German titles. Literal translation does not always foster maintaining intertextuality in translation. No correlation between the use of strategy and retention of intertextuality could be established. The possibility of intertextuality retention does not hinge solely on the strategy applied; rather it is the result of the interplay of the type of intercultural reference and strategy applied. Literal translation is conducive to intertextuality retention only when the reference is familiar to the target culture readers. Otherwise, the translation only becomes understandable after having read the book. However, it should evoke some associations already upon seeing the title as it certainly does for native speakers. Adaptation mostly leads to the loss of intertextuality. It is used as a compensatory strategy when it is impossible to replicate a literary reference. Therefore, in order to make the title more comprehensible and appealing at the same time translators utilise the strategy of adaptation. Equivalence frequently leads to the loss of intertextuality. Still, titles translated with the use of this strategy usually revolve around a similar concept as the original. It has to be borne in mind that the final choice of title translation may not be solely the translator's decision but the result of collaboration with the publishing house. The main goal of publishing houses is to boost the title's marketability even if it may result in a translation that is more detached from the original title's meaning.

It is also noteworthy to mention specific challenges ingrained in rendering intertextuality. Differences between languages play a pivotal role in this realm. This issue can be exemplified by the title *Crooked House* which makes use of a polysemous

term *crooked* in English which has no one-to-one equivalent in Polish. Another challenge is references to British literary works which are not as popular in Poland and Germany. This leads to the frequent use of adaptation which is meant to provide a completely new title and make it appealing. The issue of a superficially similar story as in the case of *Five little pigs* and a Polish story involving three pigs poses a challenge as the translation has to clearly refer to the source language story. There are three different scenarios related to the translation of intertextuality:

1. Retention of the same intertextual reference as it is likely to be understood by the target audience
2. Replacement of the reference with another reference from the target culture (intertextuality shift)
3. Removing the reference and replacing it with a salient element from the plot

The title entry related to the novel *Hallowe'en Party* shows that it is also possible to make a title translation intertextual even though it was not the case in the original. This phenomenon could be referred to as intertextualisation as it consists in introducing intertextuality in translation even though there was no intertextual reference in the original.

## 9. Conclusions

The most important finding to emerge from the study is that whenever it is not possible to retain intertextuality in translation, translators opt for the strategy of adaptation. This results in the creation of a new title that draws the reader's attention to another significant element in the plot, e.g., important characters, poisons, names of places, objects or events. Such elements 'pave the way' to the text so that there is a throughline between the novel and the title despite intertextuality loss. The study also shows that retranslation hypothesis pertains to the translation of intertextual titles. Older Polish and German titles used to be predominantly rendered with the use of adaptation. The newer ones, however, liken the English ones both in terms of form and meaning. It is important to note that certain translation choices may be due to varying titling conventions in languages subject to analysis. This could also indicate a shift in titling conventions which consists in making the wording of titles more similar to the original. In certain cases, the use of literal translation enables one to retain the intertextual reference. In others, this translation strategy leads to the utter loss of title intertextuality. Therefore, each title has to be approached separately with consideration to the intricate web of connotations that its intertextuality is inextricably linked to. It is apparent that the translator has to decide whether the reference will have the same or at least similar impact on the target culture reader. It can be established that maintaining the link between the title and the plot remains a priority when it is not possible to convey intertextuality in translation. Further

research pertaining to other novel title translations could be conducted to assess the magnitude of changes which have occurred over time in the realm of title translation in other literary genres than crime stories.

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