

English and American Studies Popular Culture Research Group (EASPop)

Angol-Amerikai Intézet Populáris Kultúra Kutatócsoportja (EASPop)

# ENCOUNTERS OF THE POPULAR KIND: TRADITIONS AND MYTHOLOGIES

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POPULÁRIS TÍPUSÚ  
TALÁLKOZÁSOK:  
HAGYOMÁNYOK  
ÉS MITOLÓGIÁK

2021

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## **POPULÁRIS TÍPUSÚ TALÁLKOZÁSOK: HAGYOMÁNYOK ÉS MITOLÓGIÁK**

EDITED BY / SZERKESZTETTE

Bánházi Judit Anna

Beke Zsolt

Benczik Vera

Csorba Eszter Zsuzsanna

Kling Ádám Márton

Kovács Györgyi

Pikli Natália

Székelyhidi Eszter Johanna

Szujer Orsolya

Vancsó Éva

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REVIEWED BY / LEKTORÁLTA

Fehér Réka Dorottya

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of popular culture – which has been an integral part of the English-speaking academic world for the past forty years – has gained momentum in Hungarian academic circles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Contemporary culture is brimming with such fields to discover, and the present volume showcases twenty-seven different approaches and case studies, which all prove one point: studying the phenomena of popular culture is inspiring and illuminative in many areas of life, and in numerous scientific disciplines, from literature and linguistics to visual, music, and ecocritical studies, pedagogy, and even narrative criminology.

The essays are based on the conference “Encounters of the Popular Kind: Traditions and Mythologies in Dialogue,” organized at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, in October 2020. Originally planned as a traditional event, the conference had to be moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, presenting the organizers with a new set of obstacles, but also new opportunities that the online format brought with itself. Not only the quality of the papers but also the unexpectedly large number of online attendants confirmed that the study of popular culture invites interested parties from many institutions and academic fields.

The conference and the volume were called to life by the English and American Studies Popular Culture Research Group (EASPop), founded in 2017 by Vera Benczik, Natália Pikli, and an enthusiastic group of MA and PhD students. Since 2017, the research group has organized a number of workshops as well as open lectures with invited guests, and even held a joint BA lecture course on English and American popular culture at Eötvös Loránd University in spring 2020, upholding the mission of the group, which not only devotes itself to the study of the field, but also to the pedagogical uses of popular culture texts in a classroom setting. The conference in October 2020 was intended to be the first one in a series of such scientific gatherings, to be followed by many others in the future, with a more international appeal. The mission statement of EASPop emphasizes the significance of interdisciplinary approaches and open-mindedness; therefore, this volume – hopefully the first in a series – showcases the writings of young and established Hungarian researchers side-by-side. In order to foster meaningful dialogue between scholars writing in Hungarian and in English, the volume is bilingual.

The key words of the conference title proved very inspiring: the essays revolve around and elaborate on dialogues between different traditions, myths or mythologies, diverse eras, genres, and fields. The four sections group the writings not based



on their language but rather on their thematic links; and readers will experience that even essays seemingly far apart often enter into conversation with each other. Since many of them discuss key concepts, like *transmediality*, *myth*, *liminality*, *performative gender*, etc., this introduction refrains from addressing terminology, and only offers a very brief introduction to the sections and the essays.

The first section, “Transmedial encounters” opens with Kinga Földváry’s inspiring discussion of the TV serial as a form of contemporary mythology, calling attention to interconnectivity and global forms of cultural memory, while Anna Kérchy’s essay reveals how Lewis Carroll’s evergreen classic, the *Alice* novels have become embedded in transmedial worlds, offering illuminative conclusions regarding media-crossings and adaptations. Zsófia Réti’s essay continues in this vein and focuses on hybrid constructs by comparing the episode “Bandersnatch” (a reference to Jabberwocky, a poem in *Alice in Wonderland*) of the TV serial anthology *Black Mirror* and an interactive video game, *Telling Lies*. Ádám Kling examines a comic book in Marvel’s *Deadpool* series, which, thanks to Ian Doescher’s creative interest in re-writing Shakespeare, functions as a many-layered parody of both the Shakespearean cult and oeuvre and Deadpool’s figure itself, calling attention to the interaction of different forms of cultural literacy in such popular culture products. Loretta Jungbauer traces four versions of Dido and Aeneas’s story in different medial contexts, from Virgil’s epic poem to Christopher Marlowe (and Thomas Nashe)’s early modern tragedy, Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate’s opera, and a modern play by Irish playwright Frank McGuinness, *Carthaginians*. Adél Vékási examines the explorative video game *ABZÛ*, which combines features of Mesopotamian mythology and current ecological concerns in a uniquely interactive way. Finally, Zoltán Bartók’s interviews with pet owners highlight the influence of popular culture products, like Hollywood cartoons, on our individual concepts of ‘mental fauna.’

The essays in the second section focus on popular culture and genres and how they initiate a discourse with more traditional fields within academia. Edit Bódy discusses how Kazuo Ishiguro’s recent novel, *The Buried Giant*, employs and simultaneously questions the genre of *fantasy*, while Rudolf Sárdi proves that the SF film *Arrival* addresses questions of language philosophy as well as Bakhtinian, Nietzschean, and Heideggerian concepts. Anikó Sohár summarizes how Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* universe plays with the genre of the *academic* (or *campus*) *novel*, while Katalin Szlukovényi’s study on *crime stories* illustrates the way the genre aligns with the ethics of traditional Jewish communities, especially in Harry Kemelman’s Rabbi-series. 18<sup>th</sup>-century *dream philosophy* and the *gothic novel* enter into dialogue

in Györgyi Kovács's study, and Boglárka Fazekas examines *fanfiction*, a very popular contemporary mode of transformative fiction. Her corpus-based research highlights linguistic aspects in producing fanfiction, emphasizing the presence of Austin's and Searle's speech acts in these products.

The studies in section three concentrate on *myths*, *gender*, and *performativity*, and highlight border-crossing phenomena in different media and genres. Éva Vancsó examines gender performativity in the *Star Trek* universe, emphasizing how the series developed through the decades in terms of handling gender-related issues. Eszter Csorba's essay discusses how popular American TV serials, like *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *The Sopranos*, and *The Golden Girls* gradually changed stereotypical representations of Italian-American mothers, while Anna Zalavári focuses on recent TV serials featuring elderly people and suggests the emergence of a new genre that implies novel concepts regarding the representation and appearance of elderly people on the small screen. Krisztina Timár compares Terry Pratchett's *Monstrous Regiment* with the Hungarian writer Jenő Rejtő's novel *A láthatatlan légión* [The Invisible Legion], showing how expectations and stereotypes regarding women are creatively contrasted with military (and masculine) ideals by these authors. Orsolya Szujer focuses on TV cartoons featuring female superheroes, 'superheroines', targeting young audiences, and concludes that rival DC and Marvel productions display different attitudes to gender and race equality. Zoltán Peterecz examines the Pixar cartoon *Cars* and persuasively proves its strong links to deep-set American popular myths. Ádám Dési takes the reader into a less known field of study, narrative criminology, as he examines the myth of "Freestate Amsterdam" through interviews with Hungarian students travelling there.

The final section contains essays on different modes of practical and pragmatic uses of popular culture, as they place emphasis on how non-literary or non-aesthetic concerns, like legal cases, soap boxes, WW2, and national politics may interact with artistic, literary, or musical products. Nóra Pethő gives a summary of how the highly litigious culture of early modern England, and the popular image of 'the tricky lawyer' influenced such popular culture products as Shakespeare's plays, while Éva Péteri's study highlights a so-far understudied aspect of the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais's oeuvre, namely, the related material-financial concerns. Andrea Velich discusses "The Archers", a cooperation of two filmmakers, Hungarian-born Emeric (Imre) Pressburger and Michael Powell and puts their works into film historical as well as political context. Réka Fehér's summary of political pundits, "opinion-mongers" on American TV proves highly illuminating regarding both

theoretical and pragmatic issues. Krisztina Cseppentő and Balázs Fajt examine song lyrics of the music band *Years & Years* and their connectedness to biblical and mythological concepts, while Tibor Kosztolánczy's essay spotlights how locality influenced musical and artistic production in David Bowie's oeuvre. Finally, Dóra Hargitai offers some hands-on experience and pedagogical-methodological tips for using popular culture products in the EFL classroom, when teaching English to younger students.

We launch this volume with the wish that the essays will convince the reader that products intended for mass consumption highlight relevant concerns and initiate dialogue between many, seemingly distant, fields of interest, and that these encounters of the popular kind will continue in the future.

*Vera Benczik* (Senior Lecturer) and *Natália Pikli* (Associate Professor)  
School of English and American Studies  
Eötvös Loránd University  
Budapest, August 2021

## BEVEZETÉS

A populáris kultúrával kapcsolatos kutatás már négy évtizede szerves része az angol nyelvű akadémiai diskurzusnak, és a 21. században végre a magyar akadémiai körökben is egyre nagyobb teret nyer. A kortárs kultúra számtalan felfedezésre váró területet tartogat, jelen kötet pedig huszonhét különböző nézőpontot és esettanulmányt mutat be, amelyek mind egy dolgot bizonyítanak: a populáris kultúra jelenségeinek tanulmányozása az élet és számos tudományos diszciplína területén inspiráló és tanulságos, legyen szó irodalomról, nyelvészetről, vizualitásról, zenéről, ökokritikáról, pedagógiáról vagy akár narratív kriminológiáról.

A kötetben szereplő esszék alapját az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetemen 2020 októberében megszervezett „Populáris típusú találkozások: Hagyományok és mitológiák párbeszédben” című konferencián elhangzott előadások alkotják. A konferenciát eredetileg hagyományos keretek között rendezték volna meg, de a COVID-19 járvány miatt az online térbe kellett költöztetni az eseményt, ami új kihívások elé állította a szervezőket, azonban az online formátum új lehetőségeket is kínált. Az előadások minősége mellett az online résztvevők várakozáson felüli száma is azt erősítette meg, hogy a populáris kultúra kutatása összehozza az érdekelt feleket, kapcsolatot épít intézmények és szakterületek között.

A konferenciát és a kötetet az Angol-Amerikai Intézet Populáris Kultúra Kutatócsoportja (EASPop) hívta életre. A csoportot Benczik Vera, Pikli Natália, valamint MA- és PhD-hallgatók lelkes csapata alapította 2017-ben. 2017 óta a kutatócsoport több szemináriumot és nyilvános előadást szervezett vendégelőadók meghívásával, 2020 tavaszán pedig előadaskurzust tartott az angol és amerikai populáris kultúráról az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem alapszakos hallgatóinak. A kurzus tökéletesen illeszkedett a kutatócsoport küldetéséhez, hiszen a terület kutatása mellett a populáris kultúra szövegeinek tantermi, pedagógiai célú felhasználását is szeretnék elősegíteni. A 2020 októberében megrendezett konferencia a csoport első ilyen jellegű rendezvénye volt, amelyet a tervek szerint a jövőben több hasonló, a nemzetközi közeg felé is nyitó konferencia és workshop követ majd. Az EASPop küldetésnyilatkozatában kiemelt szerep jut az interdiszciplináris megközelítésnek és annak a nyitottságnak, melynek megfelelően jelen kötetben is – amely remélhetőleg szintén egy kiadványsorozat első darabja lesz – együtt olvashatók fiatal és már elismert magyar kutatók írásai. Annak érdekében, hogy a magyarul és angolul publikáló kutatók között érdemi párbeszéd jöhhessen létre, a kötet mindkét nyelven tartalmaz cikkeket.

A szerzők számára a konferencia címének kulcsszavai valódi inspirációt jelentettek: az esszék a különböző hagyományok, mítoszok és mitológiák, korok, műfajok és szakterületek közötti dialógusokat elemzik és vizsgálják. A négy fejezet kialakításakor nem az esszék nyelve, hanem az azokat összekapcsoló tematikus elemek kerültek a középpontba, azonban a látszólag teljesen eltérő jellegű szövegek is gyakran párbeszédbe lépnek egymással. Az esszék jelentős része olyan kulcsfogalmakkal (is) foglalkozik, mint a *transzmedialitás*, a *mítosz*, a *liminalitás*, a *gender performativitás* stb., így jelen bevezetésben csak az egyes fejezetek és az azokat alkotó esszék rövid bemutatása történik meg, a szakkifejezések magyarázatai az adott szövegben olvashatóak.

A „Transzmediális találkozások” címet viselő első fejezet Földváry Kinga izgalmas szövegével nyit, amelyben a tévésorozatokra kortárs mitológiaként tekint, miközben felhívja a figyelmet az interkonnektivitásra és a kulturális memória globális formáira is. Kérchy Anna esszéje azt mutatja be, hogy Lewis Carroll örökzöld *Alice*-regényei hogyan jutottak el egy transzmediális szintre, amelyből tanulságos következtetéseket von le a médiumok közötti átjárhatóságról és az adaptációkról. Réti Zsófia esszéje ezen a nyomvonalon halad tovább, a *Fekete tükör* antológiasorozat „Bandersnatch” című epizódjának (ami már önmagában egy utalás az *Alice Csodországban* ‘Gruffacsór’ címen ismert költeményére) és a *Telling Lies* interaktív videójátékának hibrid megoldásait hasonlítja össze. Kling Ádám a Marvel Comics *Deadpool* című sorozatának egyik képregényfüzetét veszi górcső alá. Ian Doescher, a füzet írója, kreatív módon alkotja újra Shakespeare történetét, egyszerre parodizálva a szerző életművét és a személye körüli kultuszt, valamint magát *Deadpool* karakterét is, ráirányítva a figyelmet arra, hogy a kulturális műveltség különböző elemei hogyan lépnek kölcsönhatásba a populáris kultúra termékeiben. Jungbauer Loretta négy különböző médiumban vizsgálja Dido és Aeneas történetét: Vergilius eposza mellett Christopher Marlowe (és Thomas Nashe) kora újkori tragédiáját, Henry Purcell és Nahum Tate operáját, valamint a kortárs író drámaíró, Frank McGuinness *Carthaginians* című drámáját elemzi ebből a szempontból. Vékási Adél szövegében az *ABZŰ* felfedező videójátékkal ismerkedhet meg az olvasó, amely egyedi, interaktív módon elegyíti az ókori, mezopotámiai mitológiát korunk környezetvédelmi problémáival. Végezetül Bartók Zoltán házikedvencek gazdáival készített interjúiból kiderül, hogy a populáris kultúra termékei – például a hollywoodi rajzfilmek – milyen hatással vannak személyes ‘mentális faunánkra’.

A második fejezet esszéi a populáris kultúra és a műfajok kérdését járják körül, illetve azt vizsgálják, hogy ez a tudományos diskurzus hogyan lép kapcsolatba más, hagyományosabb kutatási területekkel. Bódy Edit Kazuo Ishiguro legújabb

regényében, *Az eltemetett óriás*ban kíséri figyelemmel, hogyan használja fel és egyúttal kérdőjelezi meg az író a *fantasy* műfaját; míg Sárdi Rudolf arra mutat rá, hogy az *Érkezés* című sci-fi film a nyelvfilozófiai implikációk mellett Bahtyin, Nietzsche és Heidegger filozófiai fogalmait is új fényben tünteti fel. Sohár Anikó azt tekinti át, miként feszegeti Terry Pratchett *Korongvilág*-univerzuma az *egyetemi regény* műfaji kereteit, Szlukovényi Katalin krimikről szóló írása pedig bemutatja, hogy a műfaj szabályai mennyire egybevágóak a hagyományos zsidó közösség morális szokásrendjével, különösen Harry Kemelman *Rabbi*-sorozatában. Kovács Györgyi tanulmányában a 18. századi *álomfilozófia* és a *gótikus regény* találkozásáról ír, majd Fazekas Boglárka a *fanfiction*ról, a transzformatív irodalom nagy népszerűségnek örvendő formájáról értekezik. Korpuszalapú kutatása a *fanfiction*ök keletkezésének nyelvi aspektusait vizsgálja, valamint az Austin és Searle által meghatározott beszédaktusokra összpontosít ezekben a szövegekben.

A harmadik fejezet esszéinek középpontjában a *mítosz*, a *gender* és a *performativitás*, valamint ezek különböző médiumokban és műfajokban tapasztalt határátlépései állnak. Vancsó Éva a *Star Trek*-univerzum *gender-performativitását* vizsgálja, nagy hangsúlyt fektetve arra, hogy az évtizedek során a sorozat hogyan fejlődött a *genderrel* kapcsolatos kérdések megjelenítésében. Csorba Eszter esszéje három népszerű amerikai tévésorozatban (*Szeretünk Raymond*, *Maffiózók*, *Öreglányok*) vizsgálja a sztereotipikus olasz-amerikai anyafigura fokozatos változását, míg Zalavári Anna a közelmúltban idős főszereplőkkel képernyőre került sorozatok alapján jut arra a következtetésre, hogy új műfaj születik a szemünk előtt, amely új keretet adhat az idős emberek ábrázolásának és megjelenítésének a *sitcomok* világában. Tímár Krisztina Terry Pratchett *Rémes regiment* és Rejtő Jenő *A láthatatlan légio* című regényeiben veti össze, hogy a két szerző milyen kreatív módon ütköztette a nőkkel szembeni elvárásokat és sztereotípiákat a hadsereg (férfias) ideáljaival. Szujer Orsolya a fiatalabb korosztályt megcélzó rajzfilmsorozatok női szuperhőseit vizsgálja, és arra a megállapításra jut, hogy az egymással rivalizáló DC- és Marvel-sorozatok különböző módon viszonyulnak a nemi és faji egyenlőség reprezentációjához. Peterecz Zoltán a Pixar *Verdák* című rajzfilmjében mutat rá arra, hány szállal kötődik a történet a mélyen gyökerező amerikai populáris identitás mítoszokhoz. Dési Ádám egy kevésbé ismert, de egyre jelentősebb szakterületre kalauzolja el az olvasót: a narratív kriminológia segítségével elemzi a „Freestate Amsterdam” mítoszatát, a várost felkereső magyar egyetemi hallgatókkal készült interjúk alapján.

Az utolsó fejezet a populáris kultúra gyakorlati és pragmatikus használati módjaira összpontosít, amikor olyan nem irodalmi vagy esztétikai tényezők, mint jogi

eljárások, szappanhirdetések, a második világháború vagy éppen a nemzeti politika, jelentős hatással voltak egy művészeti, irodalmi vagy zenei mű létrehozására vagy felhasználására. Pethő Nóra áttekintést nyújt arról, hogy az előszeretettel pereskedő kora újkori Anglia és a „becsapós ügyvéd” népszerű karaktere hogyan befolyásolta a populáris kultúra termékeit – magát Shakespeare-t is; Péteri Éva tanulmánya pedig egy korábban kevésbé kutatott aspektust vizsgál, mégpedig a preraffaelita festő, John Everett Millais életművének anyagi-pénzügyi vonatkozásait. Velich Andrea két filmes, a magyar származású Emeric (Imre) Pressburger és Michael Powell „The Archers” névre hallgató együttműködéséről ír, amelynek nemcsak filmtörténelmi, hanem politikai kontextusát is megismerhetjük. Fehér Réka az amerikai televízió politikai kommentátorainak és megmondóembereinek elméleti és gyakorlati problémáira világít rá érdekesítő módon. Cseppentő Krisztina és Fajt Balázs a *Years & Years* zenekar dalszövegeiben elemzi a bibliai és mitológiai kapcsolódási pontokat; Kosztolánczy Tibor esszéje pedig azt bizonyítja, hogy a helyszín milyen döntő mértékben befolyásolta David Bowie életművének zenei és művészi teljesítményét. Végezetül Hargitai Dóra gyakorlati tapasztalatokkal és pedagógiai-módszertani tippekkel mutatja be, hogyan használható a populáris kultúra a diákok iskolai angoltanításában.

Szándékunk szerint a kötetben található esszék meggyőzik arról az olvasót, hogy a tömeggyártásra tervezett termékek is releváns kérdéseket vetnek fel, és dialógust kezdeményeznek számos, látszólag egymástól távol eső tudományos szakterület között. Szerkesztőtársainkkal együtt bízunk abban, hogy ezek a populáris típusú találkozások a jövőben is folytatódnak.

*Benczik Vera* (egyetemi adjunktus) és *Pikli Natália* (egyetemi docens)

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**TRANSMEDIAL ENCOUNTERS**

**TRANSZMEDIÁLIS TALÁLKOZÁSOK**



# Is the Serial the New Mythological? The Serial Format's Implications for Contemporary Popular Visual Culture

**Kinga Földváry**

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

foldvary.kinga@btk.ppke.hu

The age of classical mythology has clearly passed, and the gods of ancient times are no longer part of a complex and all-encompassing system of belief that we turn to when we search for explanations of the known universe and our own place in it – at the same time, it is equally obvious that humanity keeps on creating new forms of the mythological. This understanding is shared by a wide range of scholars, who often point out elements of contemporary culture that perform various functions that used to be part of the realm of the mythological. Writing in the 1990s, Andras Sandor located the mythological in the fantastic, claiming that “the space left empty by the withdrawal of myths under the onslaught of Enlightenment thought has been filled with stories, and the stories which have so far been the closest to myths are fantastic stories.”<sup>1</sup> Even more provocatively, Umberto Eco talks about the myth of Superman;<sup>2</sup> elsewhere we can find references to “the Batman mythos”;<sup>3</sup> in yet another context, the figure of the detective has been referred to as “a mythological culture-hero.”<sup>4</sup> David Frauenfelder reflects on the cinematic medium when he argues that “movies are endlessly reflective of our shared values, aspirations, and beliefs,” which is “the same fundamental task” that “mythmakers in the ancient and modern worlds have always had: [...] to help a particular audience validate a particular construction of reality.”<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the majority of scholars locate these new forms of the mythological in popular culture (with a few exceptions, e.g. Christopher Caudwell, who finds the continuation of mythology in poetry<sup>6</sup>), which may be explained by the fact that popular culture fulfils many of the functions and operates along similar lines as mythology used to in the past.

What most of the above listed theories regard as mythology is in fact a revival of the heroic in some form, which is certainly a relevant aspect of mythmaking and

1 Sandor 339.

2 Eco 107–124.

3 Uricchio and Pearson 182.

4 Tambling 111.

5 Frauenfelder 210.

6 Caudwell 72.

tells us a lot about dominant cultural ideologies. Nonetheless, in this essay I would like to consider the issue from another viewpoint, in an attempt to find the mythological not in a thematic, or functional, but rather in a formal aspect of contemporary popular culture: its predilection for the serial format. My contention here is that in the twenty-first century, the serial form can function as a quasi-mythological framework owing to its flexibility, which enables it to offer multidimensional approaches to the same content (similarly to the way myths can be regarded as multidimensional<sup>7</sup>). What is more, the serial can fulfil other functions of mythology as well, apart from the heroic. As G. S. Kirk states, “[m]yths can possess significance through their structure, which may unconsciously represent structural elements in the society from which they originate or typical behaviouristic attitudes of the mythmakers themselves.”<sup>8</sup> In the same way, the serial form is equally representative of the society that has created it, while it can also be seen as responding to the phenomena of the contemporary world.

I believe that these parallels between the representational power of myths and serial narratives appear obvious when we look at the dominance of the serial form in the spheres of both cultural production and consumption, or in popular responses demanding the serial treatment even when encountering non-serial products. Equally undisputable is the inclination of the adaptation industry, another flagship enterprise in our cultural milieu, to turn towards the serial when adapting a source text originating in various structures or media. As I will argue in a later section of the essay, the reasons for these tendencies are not simply industrial but also social, even psychological. After all, as David Leeming claims, myths remind us of “the journey aspect of our existence.”<sup>9</sup> The serial treatment of narratives underscores this journey aspect, which is inherently connected to our natural desire for a goal and a purpose in life. Moreover, just like certain human “preoccupations can be deepened rather than destroyed in an elaborated literary form,”<sup>10</sup> like the epic of ancient times, the complex serial structure also provides the perfect framework for the visualisation of the preoccupations that today we call psychological. At the same time, the serial form is eminently suitable for the contemplation of authorship and originality, or the identity of the artist and the work of art. Serial narratives are typically created in a collaborative process, and their origins can rarely be traced back to a single author

7 See Dowden and Livingstone xviii.

8 Kirk 252.

9 Leeming xii.

10 Kirk 253.

or source, and the boundaries of the work itself are equally hard to define, therefore, the form can be seen to reflect on the whole process and nature of artistic creation.

Even if serial television is considered to be the dominant form of popular culture today, seriality is certainly not a new phenomenon. Raymond Williams argued already in 1974 that “[t]elevision emerged, as the telegraph, the telephone and radio had before it, as a technologically synthetic response to a set of newly emergent and radical social, political and economic needs,”<sup>11</sup> a claim that is still a valid starting point for an investigation into the form and its implications today. Naturally, the serial form has further “precedents – in cinema, radio, the comic strip and the novel – but television has given them new prominence, the ‘long-form’ narrative becoming the classic form of television dramatic fiction.”<sup>12</sup> The televisual long form, a continuous narrative divided into shorter sections, is a well-known and acknowledged descendant of the “novelistic narrative” that has been with us since *Arabian Nights*. Serial television never denied owing most of its form and content “to the novel, and in particular, to the multi-character, multi-plot, temporally extended, interrupted narratives of the nineteenth-century serialised novel.”<sup>13</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup>-century rise of the novel and other forms of serial fiction, including the extreme popularity of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century pulp magazines,<sup>14</sup> was also intricately connected to the society that gave rise to this form, both the industrial background of its production, and the social background of its consumption. This was an age of imperialist expansion combined with and supported by industrialist advancement, creating an ambiance of endless possibilities, which the dominant form of storytelling – the serial narrative – did not simply describe, but also manifested.

Similarly to the various forms of serialisation presented by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the same fundamental belief in seriality can be exemplified later by comic books, or today’s video games, another rich field increasingly in the limelight of serious academic discussion. As game scholars point out, “[s]eriality is a factor not only in explicitly marked game series, but also within individual games, as well as on the level of transmedial relations between games and other media.”<sup>15</sup> We may equally notice the inclination of popular literary fiction to appear in sequels, trilogies, tetralogies, and other multi-part forms, or inhabit fictional universes that the authors

11 Silverstone viii.

12 Caughie 52.

13 Caughie 55.

14 See Smith.

15 Denson and Sudmann 261.

can revisit over several narratives. The attraction these continued or extended narratives offer results partly from the leakage that occurs between the narratives and settings, whether the stories are chronologically related, or only rubbing shoulders tangentially in a broader universe. The interconnectivity of such narrative universes maintains their popularity even when some of the later additions are seen as artistically inferior to the earlier products which established the name and fame of the franchise, like in the case of the *Star Wars* universe, a treasure trove for analyses of transmedia storytelling.<sup>16</sup>

What kinds of correspondences can then be observed between mythology and the long-form, serial storytelling dominating popular visual culture today? One of the most essential functions of mythology is *aetiology* (“an explanation of how things came to be the way they are”<sup>17</sup>), and one of the most universal ways in which this aetiological function is performed is storytelling itself. As David Leeming claims, “[m]yths might be considered the most basic expressions of a defining aspect of the human species – the need and ability to understand and to tell stories to reflect our understanding, whether or not we know the real facts.”<sup>18</sup> Yet human life is no simple matter, therefore the multidimensional structure of serial storytelling may be particularly useful, as it can provide the perfect framework for such complex explanations for past, present, and future. This may be one of the reasons why the most successful stories in contemporary popular (visual) culture are complex narratives told in a serial fashion, whether they are historical, realistic, or documentary narratives, or works of fantasy and imagination.

Furthermore, if we accept that seriality, just like mythology, reflects on the society that produces it, what can we learn of our world from the types and forms of seriality common today? The long 19<sup>th</sup> century, the earlier golden age of serial narratives, was an age of industrialisation, expansion and colonisation, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century can also be characterised as an age of expansion, although in a different sense. What we are witnessing today is the expansion, and proliferation of networks, the constant and ever-broadening dissemination of information and data, together with the spread of the simulation, and the creation of replicas of already existing worlds. Therefore, as Ruth Mayer argues, for a proper understanding of contemporary serial narratives, just like in an examination of the development of the novel and earlier serial publications, “formal aesthetic issues need to be scrutinized in close reference

16 See Guynes and Hassler-Forest.

17 Dowden and Livingstone xxii.

18 Leeming xii.

to their ideological and material bearings [...], the temporal logic of narrative seriality needs to be complemented with the spatial logic of spread. Serial narratives reach out, take over, invade, and impose, and the concurrence of these terms with the lexicon of the industrial revolution and of imperialism is far from accidental.”<sup>19</sup> Our world, whose greatest symbol and most iconic form is the (world wide) web, revels in the creation of interconnected threads, while constantly reflecting upon itself and on the fact that by nature it is always self-referential.

Another area where we can find correspondences between seriality and mythology is the concept of authorship, the nature of artistic as opposed to organic creation, with further implications for the relationships between artist, work, and recipient. We tend to think of mythology as a narrative system without known origins, or at least without a single source, even though the extant representations of classical mythologies are often attributed to named authors. Today, popular culture thrives on narratives that are based on equally unclear, or “impure” origins, sources that are a hybrid mix of elements, where literary classics are placed side by side with folklore and history, popular songs and feature films, sometimes combined with real-life settings, to ensure maximum viewer engagement, as in the case of ABC’s *Once Upon a Time* series (2011–18, created by Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis).<sup>20</sup>

The way the serial format creates, reworks, and blurs the identity of sources has the further consequence of loosening up the boundaries of the work itself, and formerly closed texts find themselves re-opened for continuation or mingling with others. Characters can also find themselves liberated from the original context of their creation, and migrate from one medium to another, a process that is crucially important for adaptation studies. A novel sometimes inspires a board game, a video game, a television series, a comic book, or all of the above, exemplifying the multi-directional flexibility of transmedia storytelling. This in turn confirms that what we are witnessing is not simply a new form of adaptation, but evidence that the serial can be transformed into the networked, the interconnected, the rhizomatic.<sup>21</sup> In this tangle of stories, characters, motifs, values, and their diverse representations, it is equally hard to distinguish between what came first and what followed, or whose story had an impact on another’s. R. Barton Palmer mentions this paradoxical feature of continuations, claiming that “the overall form of the whole now depends on

19 Mayer 192.

20 See Hay and Baxter.

21 For the application of the concept to Shakespeare criticism, see Lanier.



the expressive gestures and shaping intentions of the continuator, who is generally unknown to his predecessor.”<sup>22</sup>

But even when a commonly known literary work is the foundation of a serial narrative, the serial work dissolves its inherited authorship in a multiplicity of authorial presences, listing the literary author as one of many, often granting them a secondary role, behind or below that of the director, producer, scriptwriter,<sup>23</sup> but most importantly, the showrunner or the creator of the series.<sup>24</sup> This may happen in various ways, depending on the cultural status of the source text, but also on the intentions of the serial re-creators. In several cases, a well-known literary text’s source function is abandoned early on in the serial reworking, like in Andrew Davies’ *Sanditon*, broadcast in 2019 on ITV. The mini-series was purportedly based on Jane Austen’s work, although, in fact, no more than a fragment of the first episode is traceable back to Austen. Some series make explicit claims of textual fidelity, only to branch off from their source text at a later point, after audiences have been hooked on the literary and visual variants, as in the case of *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019, HBO). The superiority of serial storytelling over any source work is shown in the way closed literary plots are used as starting points or springboards, to be opened up and continued in a serial adaptation, like in the case of Jay Asher’s young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* and its Netflix adaptation (2017–20, created by Brian Yorkey). Although both the romantic tragedy and the crime-thriller plotline of the novel could be considered complete by the end of the first season, the production continued with an elaboration on the repercussions and the long-term, wide-reaching consequences of the initial traumatic event, and the series ended only after receiving rather negative reviews for the fourth season. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the fate of a series is often determined by commercial and industrial interests that may work against the storytelling and mythmaking potential of ongoing narratives. In this light, the fact that *Thirteen Reasons Why* survived four complete seasons should be regarded as a particularly notable success.<sup>25</sup>

As we can see, the forms of creation that serial cultural production requires are similar to the ways mythology was disseminated. Of course, as Palmer emphasises, “[q]uestions of authorial ‘ownership’ [...] come to the fore with adaptations,”<sup>26</sup> but the

22 Palmer 82.

23 See Murray, especially Ch.5: “Best Adapted Screenwriter?: The Intermedial Figure of the Screenwriter in the Contemporary Adaptation Industry.”

24 See Jensen.

25 I am grateful to Judit Anna Bánházi for drawing my attention to some of these issues.

26 Palmer 82.

adaptation process in serial television, for instance, once again shows parallels to the creation of mythology. The role of the individual author is diminished, and the power of the group, a whole community of authors is emphasised, many of whom are practically or effectively anonymous. HBO's *Westworld*, for instance, might have been able to attract such a powerful fan base precisely because its narrative came from a multiplicity of sources, and it also aspired to and in many ways achieved the complexity of a whole world, a mythology of Anglo-European western culture, which it was able to explore in depth and complexity by virtue of the serial form. Among the series' origins we can find Michael Crichton's 1973 eponymous feature film, itself reviving the narrative formulas and characters populating the myth of the American Wild West, but also a broad array of literary sources, from William Shakespeare, Lewis Carroll, and Aldous Huxley through Kurt Vonnegut to Philip K. Dick. Just as importantly, *Westworld* also builds on our knowledge of the historical past, revisiting specific periods of human history, from the frontier expansion of the American West, and the Japanese Samurai era, through the British Raj, to more recent ones. However, it is worth noticing that these are all historical eras that have survived their own age of creation and lived on in what is no longer national but a global form of cultural memory, effectively created and maintained by the power of media representation, especially of Hollywood productions. Most of these eras also have their own popular mythology, revisited here through a nostalgic lens, or the equally distorting mirror of Orientalism, which holds on to the exotic surface of the distant foreign culture, without engaging with it in its real depths. Even the WWII scenes in the third season emphasise the heroism of Italian resistance, partially counteracting the increasingly futuristic vision of the narrative. The nostalgic intention is also noticeable in many other series, through their backward glimpses at earlier periods of visual media, the revival of classical Hollywood genres (*noir*, western, crime, melodrama, and others), which are by their very nature imbued with a nostalgic longing for times past, for a golden age of heroism, for an ordered and smoothly functioning universe. These multiple sources and interconnected meta-narratives then in turn encourage viewer engagement through repeated viewings, community interaction, commitment and dedication, attention to detail, and many other personality traits that quality television demands from and rewards in fan communities.

Apart from authorship, we can see how seriality is also elementary in defining the mode of reception of contemporary popular visual culture. The presentation of a longer narrative in smaller units allows a more flexible and individual form of engagement. It is important that we are now considering contemporary television

consumption, rather than the live or strictly regulated broadcasts of the post-war decades. Today, watching serial narratives on television does not require the viewer to adhere to a regular, centrally controlled routine of viewing, or even to the official and legal channels of access. Television is no longer equal to “the box”, and series are consumed on an end device with plenty of other functions. Legal streaming providers or illegal torrent sites encourage and serve individual consumption models, and viewing is no longer confined to the domestic space, but it has acquired flexibility, even mobility. We can watch an episode during a daily commute on public transport, or lunch breaks, or any other opportune moment, or engage in binge-watching in all-day or all-night sessions. In the same way, we are not restricted to a single act of access and enjoyment. Quite the contrary, we can opt for rewatching, even repeatedly revisiting favourite bits, or enjoy fragmented watching while multiscreening, completely disregarding any recommended order or style that earlier eras of more regulated viewing patterns considered inevitable.

Even the structure of series, which to some extent still reflects the production context, is less and less distinctive in the age of global streaming providers, when the length of episodes is allowed to reflect individual creative decisions, rather than necessities resulting from broadcasting regulations. The gradually disappearing semantic distinction between the words serial and series also implies that limitations of length and rules of cohesion are less rigid and less vital than an emphasis on seriality and continuity. Moreover, this “rigidity of the format” is counterbalanced by “the structural possibility of lengthy, serialized stories,”<sup>27</sup> and it has also “spurred creators to develop new narrative formulas, stretching their creativity to the limit to attract and maintain consumer interest.”<sup>28</sup>

As a result, the contemporary mediascape happily allows such unusual formats as the ten times ten minutes of *State of the Union* (2019, creator Nick Hornby), or the ninety-minute episodes of BBC’s *Sherlock* (2010–17, creators Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat), which could be considered full feature films, were it not for the serial element that plays an undeniable part in their attraction. In *State of the Union* the ten-minute episodes add realism to the whole set-up, in which a couple meet up for ten minutes in a pub each week before they go to their weekly couples therapy session. The ten brief episodes of this series allowed the creators to play with variations on a theme, while using the continuity of the longer narrative arc to justify the repetitive elements. In the case of the recent BBC/Hulu adaptation of Sally Rooney’s

27 García 3.

28 García 4.

novel *Normal People* (2020, directors Lenny Abrahamson and Hettie Macdonald), which was adapted to television in an unusual format of twelve 30-minute episodes, the breaking up of a relatively short novel into what at times feels like fragments of the story, clearly once again adds extra meaning to the narrative. It grants a formal manifestation to the on-and-off romance, revisiting the ancient story of first love with a plethora of variations, where the recurring features, obstacles, people, and places play equally important roles. In this way, the flexibility of the serial format points out how seriality is not simply a formal problem but is always related to the content as well.

A similar diversity can be noticed in audiences' level and style of engagement with these serial products, comparable to individual variations in matters of faith. Some consumers are fanatics, who have their sacred rituals of consumption, and whose lives are completely taken over by these complex narratives. Others maintain a critical distance, yet another group can be labelled as sceptics, who claim to be able to resist the temptation and who refuse to be identified with the manipulable crowds, while others keep apologising for what they see as their embarrassing viewing habits, as Ien Ang explored in her classic study regarding the reception of *Dallas*.<sup>29</sup> Even though *Dallas* was a product of a very different era of televisual mythmaking, viewer attitudes have not changed significantly since Ang's analysis. Those who avoid series often claim that they are afraid of the form's addictive power, and therein may like another key element. In our world, we do not wish to let go or give up, and the concept of endless continuity combined with instant gratification produces what is known as on-demand television. The repetition with variation formula, when successfully employed, can maintain the tension and attraction that is at the heart of the appeal of serial narratives. The serialisation of narratives also affords the viewer a chance for the accumulation of knowledge, as Ruth Mayer argues in connection with *The Shanghai Gesture*, a postmodern Fu Manchu novel by Gary Indiana, claiming that "the text [...] is all about the pleasures of recognition, actualization, reiteration, and appropriation."<sup>30</sup>

These pleasures of recognition and appropriation are also noticeable in a seemingly marginal, paratextual feature of television series, the intro sequence, which I believe is representative of several questions I have discussed above. Series intros, similarly to magazine covers, combine repetition with variation, to attract the consumer with an intriguing combination of the familiar with the new. In fact, they

29 See Ang 20.

30 Mayer 190.

gain their power precisely from the fact that audiences will need to – and often wish to – scrutinise them more and more carefully, although their novelty may wear off with repeated viewings, but the best of them reward the careful viewer with further and further details. Some series create individualised intros for each episode, others use the same sequence for each season, or even for the whole series. Nonetheless, the more sophisticated intro sequences of quality television series are characterised by a richness of detail that the viewer can decode only over continued engagement with the narrative, therefore revisiting the familiar images is rewarded by further discoveries of previously meaningless elements. While the thematic connections of these intros to the actual episodes are often vital, they are sometimes formally distinct, employing non-filmic techniques of arts and crafts, from hand-drawn watercolour images through 3D-printing to board game-like wooden constructions.

Many intro sequences in fact resemble or explicitly represent world-building, like in the case of *Game of Thrones*, *Frontier*, *Daredevil*, *Marco Polo*, or *Westworld*, and through these short paratextual films the creation of a fictional universe that the series will engage in is foreshadowed by a sequence about the creation of a visual universe. These intros are often consciously metatexts in the sense that they lay bare their technique, reflecting on their own createdness. In this way, they display an emphasis on materiality, which also underscores the artificiality of the narratives that follow. What we see is often a diminutive world, mapped out on perishable materials before us, which can grow into epic dimensions. At the same time, they not only reflect on but also participate in the work of world building from art, and the creation of art from an already existing world – processes that can also be described as mythopoetic. These worlds, and these works of art are shown to be both organic and artificial constructs, relying on audiences' awareness of their non-materiality – it is mostly CGI, after all – and yet their impression of materiality gives them a realism that invites a bodily response, and enhances an all-body immersion in the narrative as well.

This immersion might be another response to the parallel emotions of our fear of and desire for a connection to the serial form, and through this long form, to characters who can thus become participants in our lives. These processes of desire and fear, suspicion and trust, a wish to open up and continue, while also to find closure, are also connected to a typical phenomenon noticeable in Western societies: an ever-increasing social and individual dependence on psychology. This may be partly rooted in the fact that the contemporary popular visual mediascape is unimaginable without the dominant cultural role of America, where everyday psychologising has been the norm for nearly a century. It is no accident that by now scenes of a visit to

one's shrink have become familiar sights, whether we call it armchair discussion, therapy, or analysis, as in *Westworld* and many other SF narratives. Yet the fundamental idea of psychology as a medium of problem solving, of finding answers that concern the essence of our identity and our whole universe, is also dependent on a regular, repeated, recurrent narrative, constructed of shorter sessions arranged in a long form of an indeterminate length that can be extended over time, should the need arise. The potential for continuation offers comfort and finds justification in the complex narratives of human life, where everything turns out to be intricately connected to everything else, and where a process of deconstruction is claimed necessary before re-construction can be allowed.

Whether this belief in seriality is a result of our fear of the finite and final, a fear that a conclusion will bring us not so much closure but a loss of a future which we wish to believe has endless possibilities in store for us – whether the marked increase in the psychological as a theme and a form is yet another proof of our anxieties – the answer to these questions is clearly beyond the scope of this essay. But what must be evident by now is that the functions of the serial form display a plethora of similarities to those of myth, which in Kirk's terminology can be “narrative and entertaining,” “operative, iterative, and validatory,” but also “speculative and explanatory.”<sup>31</sup> Just like mythology was born out of our need to answer questions, dispel fears, and explain the inexplicable, the serial form also surrounds us today and offers ways of engaging with the visible and the invisible world, providing us comfort in times of distress, channels for our creative energies, explanations for our queries – and nearly endless pleasures.

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31 Kirk 253–254.

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# Why is a Raven Like a Writing Desk? *Alice* & Its Adaptations in Transmedia Wonderland

**Anna Kérchy**

University of Szeged, Institute of English and American Studies  
akerchy@ieas-szeged.hu

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, first published in 1865 with John Tenniel's illustrations, revolutionised children's literature. The nonsense fairy-tale fantasy genre rejected didactic moralising to celebrate curiosity, imaginativeness, play, and the self-sufficient resilience of children via ludic poetics and politics characteristic of Carroll's oeuvre. The book's image-textual dynamics encouraged young readers to rebel against conventional meaning formations by visualising the unimaginable and verbalising the unspeakable. The combination of the transversal acoustic pleasure of sounds with metanarrative layers of social criticism and language philosophy fulfilled the agenda to poke fun at established hierarchical power structures, challenging the pre-eminence of meaning over meaninglessness, sense over sound, reason over madness, waking life over dreams, adults over children, words over images, humans over animals, rich over the poor – and in a sense original over adaptation.

In the carnivalesque topsy-turvy world of *Alice*, parody is endowed with political potential. This is an anarchic storyworld full of grotesque drolleries which persistently overturn systems of normativisation, and provoke readers to abandon commonplaces, defamiliarise meanings, disrupt stereotypes and homogenised identity positions. In fairy-tale scholar Jack Zipes' wording, *Alice* “makes children think for themselves,”<sup>1</sup> while Virginia Woolf claimed that Carroll's books allow us to become children again,<sup>2</sup> by arousing a rebellious critical sense and an unbiased empathy – gifts repressed in us throughout our socialisation, which prove to be qualities of the ideal reader of the nonsense literary genre.

My study focuses on the afterlife of *Alice*, seeking the reason of the timeless appeal of a very Victorian text. I shall focus on issues of adaptability, canonisation, commodification, and transmediation in search of the answer to this difficult dilemma.

## **Adapting *Alice*: mission impossible or rewarding enterprise?**

No matter how creative an adaptation is, absolute fidelity to the original *Alice* story is practically impossible. The language games (neologisms, portmanteau words,

1 Zipes 73.

2 Woolf 254.

polysemic play) are notoriously difficult to transplant from the verbal realm to any other media. Intersemiotic translation is rendered even more difficult by the challenges of interlingual translation: verbal humour plays with a combination of linguistic specificities and cultural references whereby finding an equivalence between the source- and target languages is a gargantuan task.

Another dilemma is that of historical specificity. As Martin Gardner's annotations – recently complemented by Mark Burstein's notes for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary Macmillan edition – revealed that the Alice books are full of references to 19<sup>th</sup> century British life. They are abundant in cultural realia practically untranslatable to other languages and difficult to grasp for succeeding generations. An example is *Wonderland's* Mad Hatter whose insanity is grounded in a literalised metaphor (the proverb "to be mad as a hatter"), but also refers to the neurological disorder caused by the mercury used by Victorian hat makers, as well as the era's changing perceptions and therapies of lunacy.

Adaptations should also pay heed to carefully negotiating the source text's complex network of references to Victorian *public* life (mockingly commenting on a wide range of topics such as the institution of monarchy, bourgeois codes of conduct, black pedagogy, political debates, colonising ambitions, scientific controversies, technological innovations) and a plethora of *personal*, 'private mythological' allusions to Carroll's life and actual acquaintances (from the heroine named after a real girl Alice Liddell for whom the story was improvised on a boating trip on a bright summer day, and the Dodo bird as the stuttering author's fictional self-portrait, to the monstrous Jabberwock reanimating a curiously shaped tree in the Oxford campus).

Carroll's nonsense fiction is notoriously difficult to decode because of its strategic clashing of literal (mimetic, referential), metaphorical (poetic), and rhetorical (meta-fictional) dimensions of meaning.<sup>3</sup> Shapeshifting Alice's sudden growth and shrinking might equally refer to Carroll's obsession with childhood and his desire to keep his child friends small, or the growing pains of adolescence. It recycles the fairy-tale trope of magic metamorphosis and takes a parodic twist on the *Bildungsroman* genre, while it also evokes the miniaturisation process by photographic technology. It reminds of the girlish corporeality's rebelliously and elusively stretching beyond the confines of patriarchal discursive discipline, and it conveys the trouble with language that can never fully communicate what we actually mean.

Another intriguing question is whom we consider to be the genuine, original, authentic Alice – a surprisingly puzzling issue even within the Carrollian textual

3 Kérchy 2011.

realm. Is it the angelic dreamchild of the prefatory poem, or the grotesque, doll-like girl on Carroll's own illustrations to the first *Alice's Adventures Underground* manuscript, the curious child trespassing to Wonderland, or the adventuress becoming queen in the book's sequel *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, the sleep-voyager on Gertrude Chataway's cover image to the *Nursery Alice*, an abridged version for pre-readers, is it the first listener and muse to the initial storytelling session, or the Victorian child actress who first animated the character on the theatrical stage? Alice's figure proliferates even within the Carrollian oeuvre that strategically plays with narratological strategies later popularised by postmodernism: recycling, patchworking, and creative reinvention.<sup>4</sup>

Paradoxically, this multi-faceted undecidability of the character<sup>5</sup> also attests to the "adaptogenic"<sup>6</sup> quality of the Alice books and reveals just how strategically Carroll elaborated on his fictional universe by repeatedly revising, reformulating, and customising his initial story to a variety of different media forms: picturebooks, musicals, theatre plays, and even spin-off merchandise like Wonderland cookie jars, parasol handles, and postage stamp cases. From this respect, Carroll can be regarded as a precursor of transmedia storytelling<sup>7</sup> practices whereby each new retelling or remediation complements, enhances the source-text with new dimensions of the Wonderland experience.

A remarkable result of Carroll's fantastic worldbuilding is that his fictional universe is highly expandable: it lends itself to be augmented by an infinite variable of add-ons. Wonderland's iconic characters, objects, and events work in a "memetic way":<sup>8</sup> the fall down the rabbit hole, the metamorphosis-inducing mushrooms and drink-me-bottle, the grin-without-a-cat or the mad tea party can be easily recognised and recycled – with each new reiteration allowing for the extension of the familiar storyworld. The gaps, open endings, ambiguities tactically integrated within the narrative create an aura of uncertainty particularly favourable for creative retellings.

Adaptations are also facilitated by the loose non-sequential organisation of the two Alice books. The episodic structure of randomly succeeding dream scenes allows for the mixture or omission of certain scenes without troubling the general sense of

4 The nonsense poem "Jabberwocky" features first in the Carroll family journal called *Rectory Magazine*, it appears as a mirror-written picture-poem in *Through the Looking Glass*, and later shows up in fragmentary form in *The Hunting of the Snark* too.

5 The absence of a precise verbal description of Alice's look also leaves plenty of freedom for reinterpretations.

6 Groensteen in Hutcheon 15.

7 Jenkins 2007.

8 Leitch 16.

the story. Moreover, the narrative is further ruptured by an omniscient narrator's remarks which intrude into the storyworld to break the fourth wall of the diegetic universe and speak out of the text, addressing young readers, asking for their opinion of the events, and inviting them to a creative continuation of the story to their own liking. (*The Nursery Alice* is full of invitations to interaction like 'What would *you* do if you were Alice?')

A fundamental feature of the Carrollian narrative, its metaimaginative quality, a thematisation of irrational functionings of the human mind such as daydreaming, pretence-play, phantasmagorias both facilitate and hinder retellings. In Carroll's metafantasy, Alice's adventures are dreamt into being by herself; hence with a revolutionary, proto-feminist gesture, implied authorship is attributed to a little girl. Yet dreams are also associated with madness troubling rational thought and spiritual revelations leading to transcendental realms, as well as philosophical insights on "life being nothing else but a dream." The metaimaginative layer guarantees the timeless appeal of the text: it fascinates Victorian alienists just as much as postmillennial scholars of cognitive narratology. Not to mention that the Alice's tales' classic riddle "Who dreams whom?" lends itself to be interpreted as yet another tongue-in-cheek commentary destabilising the hierarchy between original and adaptation: reimagers of Alice are already prefigured in Carroll's original dream story.

### **Textual afterlife: fears of high literary canonisation & popular cultural commodification**

Besides the Bible and Shakespeare, *Alice* is one of the most widely quoted texts. It has never been out of print, has been translated into more than 150 languages<sup>9</sup> and is celebrated worldwide as a children's literary classic. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Carroll's birth, in 1932 JK Chesterton lamented Alice's canonisation as a dubious honour: he feared that literary classics, praised by people who never actually read them, inevitably stiffen into a work of education. Hence nonsense's freeplay of meanings risks being arrested by the compulsory solidification of sense.

In Chesterton's wording, "the soap bubble which poor old Dodgson blew from the pipe of poetry, in a lucid interval of lunacy, and sent floating into the sky has been robbed by educationists of much of the lightness of the bubble and retained only the horrible healthiness of the soap." Scholarly scrutinisation forced "poor, poor little Alice" to come of age, and mature "from a schoolgirl into a schoolmistress,"

9 Lindseth and Tannenbaum 2015.

“to inflict lessons on others;” “[t]he holiday is over, and Dodgson is again a don.” Accordingly, the mysterious lure of the genre rooted in its incomprehensibility is doomed to be destroyed by “examination papers, with questions like: [Give a diagram of] all the moves in the chess game in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Outline the practical policy of the White Knight for dealing with the social problem of green whiskers. Distinguish between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.”<sup>10</sup>

Chesterton’s “deadly and devastating” proof of playfully polymorphous nonsense’s becoming “cold and monumental like a classic tomb” is the recognition that 20<sup>th</sup> century readers attempt “to burlesque the burlesque,” to make it sound funnier by “giving a twist to that which has no imaginable purpose except to be twisted.”<sup>11</sup> Chesterton’s paradoxical reaction finds equally condemnable both the classic oeuvre’s fossilisation by high canonisation and its fluidification by popular cultural reinterpretations. The aesthetic value of a literary work measured in terms of the transient beauty of an ephemeral soap bubble celebrates the ungraspable, kaleidoscopic multiplicity of meanings in the untouchable original.

More recent concerns fear Alice’s insubstantialisation by popular cultural commodification. As Stefan Kanfer puts it, the further we moved away from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the lighter the impact and the weight of the book grew, as the author’s grasp weakened on his text, “and the worse things seemed to get for Alice.”<sup>12</sup>

Walt Disney flattened and candified her adventures. The drug culture made much of the mushroom that caused her to expand and diminish. Freudians thought they saw lineaments of Humbert Humbert and Lolita [...]. Political scientists found references to everything from imperial skirmishes to theological wars.<sup>13</sup>

Each new generation projecting their own desires and anxieties on the figure of Alice deviated further away from the source-text, yet they also kept Carroll’s fantasy alive by updating it for a new era. In Kanfer’s view, Alice today risks disappearing into Cliff Notes, the Disney Channel, and Amazon catalogues. Her reality and authenticity fades into a series of simulacra, as a motley crew of academicians, sexologists, philosophers, logicians, pathologists, marketing experts, potheads, fashionistas, and

10 Chesterton 234.

11 Chesterton 235.

12 Kanfer 4.

13 Kanfer 4.



fans become involved in a complex power struggle over the appropriation of her meaning.

From the 1960s on, Alice's recognition as a worthy object of academic scholarly analysis (of linguistic, philosophical, psychological, historical, mathematical, medical, etc. investigations) took place simultaneously with her decisively "moving beyond the canon, into the misty and muddy realm of myth and pop iconography."<sup>14</sup> A simple google search on Amazon.com brings up over 10,000 hits for products related to "Alice" from toys to sexy lingerie and gardening tools which recycle motifs of the easily recognisable storyworld. Even the prestigious Lewis Carroll Society's meetings include "Show and Tell" sessions where members introduce their most cherished relics of their Wonderland collections: a first edition signed by Alice Liddell, a hand-crafted replica of Lewis Carroll's typewriter, a flamingo croquet mallet from Disneyland, or a Red Queen china doll.<sup>15</sup>

On looking at these objects we might ponder about the commodifiability of fantasy, and ask ourselves Kanfer's question: should Alice be rescued from the hands of her many reinterpreters? Do these materially tangible tie-in products indoctrinate audiences to become insatiable consumers of collectibles or do they provide new entries to the ever expandible storyworld through creative play that performs daring attempts at canon revision?<sup>16</sup> Can artistic adaptations, academic theoretical frameworks, and consumer goods all map out surprising, unknown aspects of a familiar fantasy realm and enhance the interactive involvement of audiences through disclosing the semiotic free play enabled by narrative variability? Do they spoil or reanimate Wonderland?

### **Alice in *Transmedia Wonderland***

Adaptation is a major structuring device within the narrative of both *Alice-books* which perform a subversive recycling of a variety of different genres and abound in intertextual allusions and cross-references. Carroll's parodic repurposing of each genre he weaves into his patchwork narrative – including the fairy tale, the anti-tale, the portal quest fantasy, the Bildungs-/Künstlerroman, the science fantasy, the didactic poem, the political manifesto, the language philosophical riddle – allows for a different entry into the original text. If parody is the perfect post-modern form,

14 Heyman 2015.

15 LCSNA.

16 Roberta Pearson calls this the 'Jekyll and Hyde aspect' of transmedia storytelling. Pearson in Samer and Whittington 268.

then Carroll was a postmodern Victorian,<sup>17</sup> who mockingly interrogated the notion of originality by revealing discontinuity at the heart of continuity, and difference at the heart of similarity, pointing out how we can say something while meaning something completely different.

The publication of the *Alice* books was soon followed by sequels, imitations, parodies, and retellings – carefully balancing between familiarity and innovation, each foregrounding a different generic layer – including telling titles such as Anna M Richards’ 1895 *A New Alice in the Old Wonderland*, Audrey Mayhew Allen’s 1897 *Gladys in Grammarland*, Charles E Carryl’s 1884 *Davy and the Goblin; or, What Followed Reading Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and Caroline Lewis’ 1902 *Clara in Blunderland. A Political Parody*. On the contemporary book market, we still find a stunning range of literary rewritings from baby board books, adult colouring books, and cookbooks, to interspecies romance, horror fantasy, philosophical manifesto, and quantum scientific investigation. *Alice*’s popular cultural recyclability is unmatched with any other literary classic: *Ulysses*, the Vampire Hunter, Automated *Oliver Twist* in Cyberspace, Mrs Dalloway’s Steamy Erotic Wonderland, or *Jude the Obscure*, a First Person Shooter Video Game<sup>18</sup> sound odd, whereas similar titles do exist in *Alice*’s case.

*Alice’s Wonderland* provides a textbook example of Henry Jenkins’ notion of *transmediation*: an easily recognisable, canonical fictional universe expands far beyond the pages of the print and paper book, and via a wide variety of media transitions moves into the realm of computer games, puppet play, classical ballet, fashion show, and fanart – allowing old analogue and new digital media platforms to interact. As a postmodernist variety of adaptation, transmediation transcends the original/remake binary, the hypotext/hypertext hierarchy,<sup>19</sup> and relies on a multitude of hypotexts, paratexts, and adoptions in many media forms instead of one single-source-text. Throughout transmedia storytelling a narrative “unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text (retelling, adaptation, extension) making a distinct and valuable contribution to the whole,”<sup>20</sup> each complementing the storyworld with a new interactive dimension or a new layer of meaning.

17 Hutcheon in Malpas 80.

18 This amusing speculation comes from Heyman 2015. Certainly, even the most ‘serious’ canonised classics can have popular cultural reappropriations (see Kocic-Zámbó’s study on Milton in pop culture) – yet they can rarely live up to the dialogic appeal of the *Alice* aca-fandom.

19 Stam 213.

20 Jenkins 2007.

As Carolyn Sigler pointed out, we can recognise “the Alice type story” on the basis of a few leitmotifs and narrative patterns like a wildly curious heroine; the transition from “real” waking life to fantasy dream world; rapid shifts in identity, appearance, location; motifs of metamorphosis; an episodic structure; encounters with nonhuman fantasy creatures or characters based on nursery rhymes; nonsense language games, verse parodies, songs; an ambiguous open ending, and a call to interactivity in the unmaking of meanings. However, the final feature of the “Alice type story” Sigler mentions, the acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carroll is no longer that obvious. Angela Carter’s brilliant short story “Alice in Prague” pays homage to Jan Svankmajer’s stop-motion-animation Alice film, Tim Burton’s *Wonderland* is inspired by Arthur Rackham’s Alice paintings, and the Royal Ballet’s *Alice in Wonderland* performance turns Victorian photography into a plot organising device. Throughout the sentimental, didactic, subversive, hallucinogenic, political, puzzling, punning, and parodic remediations we have encountered playful *Heiterkeit* Alices, aggressive malice Alices, and victimised Angst Alices<sup>21</sup> – and realised it no longer makes sense to ask which is *the* real Alice.

### A freeplay of meanings and reinterpretations: does anything go?

As Carroll put it, “whatever good meanings are in the book, I am glad to accept as the meaning of the book.”<sup>22</sup> The ideal reader simultaneously recognises that the point of nonsense as a literary genre is the proliferation of meanings and the impossibility of an ultimate, final interpretation that could close down the endless semiosis. But how do we decide what is an authentic interpretation or adaptation, and what is already too far from the original?

Jean Jacques Lecercle called logophiliac *fou littéraires* those scholarly readers who promised to solve the riddle of Carroll’s nonsense by claiming that “Jabberwocky” is a coded confession authored by the infamous serial killer Jack the Ripper, or an anagrammatic reformulation of the teachings of the Talmud. These overinterpretations seem unjustifiable. We would also likely agree that breakfast cereals or Victoria’s Secret lingerie advertised with the “Wonderland” label do not have much to do with the parodic political potential of the original Carrollian nonsense fantasy: they underestimate, “underinterpret” the source by reducing its leitmotifs to easily marketable decorative patterns.

21 Blake 1974.

22 Carroll in Wollen 63.

But would the consensus concerning the authenticity and acceptability of an adaptation be so unanimous as when it comes to Tim Burton's family adventure movie *Alice* adaptation? Burton's coming-of-age fantasy communicates a postmillennial feminist message while simplifying original ambiguities to fairy tales' dialectics: its Jeanne d'Arc-like action heroine saves Underland by slaying the queen's evil dragon, she flees the Victorian marriage market to sail away towards mysterious Oriental seas in search of new adventures. The movie omits the trademark language games but recreates in another medium the defamiliarisation effect of Carrollian nonsense discourse ('it sounds like language but there is something wrong with it')<sup>23</sup> by courtesy of the 3D CGI technology that offers a hyperrealistic replica of what has never been, creating life-like, nearly tangible beasts, and distorting in uncanny ways familiar features of star actors (one could say playing on the previous Carrollian quote: 'it looks like realistic imagery but there is something wrong with it').

Can we accept as viable interpretations psychoanalytically informed adaptations and theories if we take into consideration that the Victorian frame of mind historically precedes and radically differs from the hypersexualising Freudian agenda that postmodern criticism has already widely problematised because of its reductionist views? The interpretation of the novels' symbolism as revelative of Carroll's repressed pathological sexual urges probably sounds too far-fetched (falling down the rabbit hole as a desire to return to the maternal uterus, and a sign of the author's "unconscious desire to reject his adult masculinity and become a little girl himself"?!).<sup>24</sup> But Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's pro-pornographic feminist graphic novel *Lost Girls*, a troubling trauma narrative of grown-up children's classic heroines Alice, Wendy, and Dorothy, where the monstrous Jabberwock takes the shape of a gigantic penis embodying the repressed memory of childhood sexual abuse, moves way beyond the territory of children's literature too.

And how much does another very recent psychoanalytically rich adaptation resonate with contemporary anxieties and stay true to the spirit of Carroll in *Alice in the Pandemic*? In this online digital opera created in Fall 2020 by White Snake Project, an activist opera company founded and led by immigrant women of colour, Alice is an ER Nurse who is wandering in a deserted cityscape looking for the hospital where her Covid infected mother is being treated. Her trying to deal with the

23 Alice's reaction to the Jabberwocky poem sums up the readers' response to nonsense poetry: "It seems very pretty, [...] 'but it's *rather* hard to understand!' [...] 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are!'" (156).

24 Schilder 291.

guilt of abandonment and the panic attack caused by the isolation shattering her reality updates Wonderland for a brand-new era.

Was Chesterton right: did Alice become a classic that no one actually reads anymore, has Wonderland been invaded by adaptations twisting Carroll's original idea to unrecognisable forms? Or do new adaptations and interpretations keep the original alive and raise interest in Carroll's classic? Can superficial readings lead to in-depth analysis? Are criteria of fidelity criticism still relevant in our postmillennial era of transmediation? Is there any place for creative misinterpretations? How do we decide what is a "good meaning" in Carroll's sense of the term?

### **Adaptation as hybridisation**

Hybridity – a mixture of distinct entities into a new whole that transcends the sum of its parts – offers a fine metaphor to make sense of transmedia storytelling. If adaptation means the retelling of a story in a different medium, transmedia storytelling dynamics relies on how adaptations interact with one another. This is the exact case with Alice's afterlife: today the original and rewritings, revisions, repurposings, and remediations are layered on each other in a palimpsestic manner, creating a dynamic web of overlapping meanings which complement but also possibly contradict one another. If we think of Alice, we can have Carroll's, Tenniel's, Dalí's, Disney's, Burton's, and Marks and Spencer's Alice on our mind at the same time, as they are mutually indebted to one another. Carroll cooperates with Tenniel, Dalí reimagines Tenniel, Disney is inspired by Dalí, Burton enters into dialogue with Disney, Marks and Spencer refashions Burton, etc. In Cristina Henry's slasher horror novel, Alice the amnesiac heroine escapes from the insane asylum in the company of hitman Mad Hatcher to take bloody revenge on corrupted criminals of the underworld: a plot clearly inspired by American McGee's first-person shooter video game Alice.

The adaptations invite a multifocal perspective from their ideal readers who are meant to perform a comparative interpretation of the source- and target-text(s), interfacing the familiarity of the old text with the innovativeness of the new one. As Hutcheon highlights, any adaptation is "repetition without replication," oscillating between "the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question" and the desire "to pay tribute to it by copying."<sup>25</sup> The surplus sense in the fusion of multiple texts comes from the metafictional, metamedial

significations fuelled by the interaction of the original and its many adaptations. Young readers are more likely to recognise American McGee's computer game as the original source beneath Cristina Henry's slasher horror than the Victorian novel. One can be aware of "the Alice phenomenon" and make sense of Marks & Spencer Wonderland Christmas magic fashion ad without having read Carroll's original text. This is a symptom of post-literate societies of spectacle predominated by advanced multimedia technologies.

Understanding *adaptation as hybridisation* allows us to do away with the subaltern, hierarchical positioning of the source and target texts. It acknowledges the latter as an autonomous creative product nested in a web of ever proliferating adaptations across a variety of media; and proposes a more dynamic model of adaptation as intersemiotic translation. It is a celebration of storytelling, as the point of this recognition is that the same story can be told in multiple manners, and that "art is derived from other art, stories are born of other stories."<sup>26</sup>

The Mad Hatter's unanswerable riddle "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" provides an apt formulation of the relationship of original and adaptation today. Intersemiotic translation, creative adaptation, or transmedia hybridisation of a storyworld might distort, twist, revision the source text to such an extent that the original gets as far from the rewrite as a raven is from a writing desk – still the audience aware of the gesture of the adaptation will look for similarities in differences, just like in the case of the riddle, and will venture to take part in the creative (re)creations of meanings.

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26 Hutcheon 2.

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# Storytelling, Interactivity, and Agency in Film–Video Game Hybrids

Zsófia O. Réti

University of Debrecen

reti.zsofia@arts.unideb.hu

The case of narrativity in video games has always been a complicated one. Early video games scholars were certainly wary of the term, generally attributing the entire fervour of narrativization to the colonising attitude of literary and cultural studies, and claiming that while video games and narratives might share a few characteristic features, narrativity is not a well-suited theoretical frame to talk about video games.<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, we have reached a point where we can safely say that stories are *not* “just uninteresting ornaments or gift-wrappings to games”;<sup>2</sup> in its best examples the medium of video games has a capacity to provide an entirely different experience than traditional media: “the future of narrative in cyberspace.”<sup>3</sup> The present paper examines two examples of this experimental narrative potential of video games as paired with other media, *Black Mirror’s Bandersnatch* (2018) and Sam Barlow’s 2019 video game *Telling Lies*, to look at how the complexity of the narrative, interactivity, and agency correlate with each other in narratives with hybrid mediality. By first looking at the genre categories and considerations of temporality, and second, by exploring the significance of the tension between the avatars, the interactors, and their agency, the paper argues that the presence of interactivity in both *Bandersnatch* and *Telling Lies* is used to comment on the lack of agency.

The concept of interactivity itself has a long history in new media scholarship. Although, as Gonzalo Frasca quotes Lev Manovich, “interactive narrative remains a holy grail for new media,”<sup>4</sup> it has been clear since technological advancements allowed for hybrid media that any attempt to achieve that would render said interactivity illusory. In addition, Espen Aarseth identified a trend in trying to sell many contemporary products by branding them as interactive, as early as 1997: “This industrial rhetoric produced concepts such as interactive newspapers, interactive video, interactive television, and even interactive houses,

1 Frasca.

2 Eskeleinen.

3 Murray 17.

4 Frasca 229.

all implying that the role of the consumer had (or would very soon) change for the better.”<sup>5</sup>

Lev Manovich warns against taking interactivity too literally:<sup>6</sup> with the emergence of computer mediated, partly narrative experiences (a category not entirely overlapping with video games) it became apparent that having a controller is not enough to be in control, hence we need to distinguish between interactivity and agency in video game storytelling. As Sebastian Domsch emphasises, “the appeal of games lies in their promise of agency, in the promise of an openness that is dependent on the player and her choices.”<sup>7</sup> The ability to interact with the game and hence make decisions, however, does not guarantee that real agency is going to be bestowed on the *interactor*. More recent scholarship seems to agree that “videogame interactivity, and the sense of control that it elicits in players, is illusory.”<sup>8</sup> Still, in some cases it is precisely this recognition that gives the pleasure of playing.

If one observes the two generic categories that were used to position my two examples, “interactive film” for *Bandersnatch* and “narrative video game” for *Telling Lies*, it would come as natural to assume that the practical distinction between them relies on the different degrees of interactivity that the piece allows for. In fact, that is not necessarily the case. *Bandersnatch*, written by series creator Charlie Brooker is a standalone episode of the anthology series *Black Mirror*, and was first available on Netflix on the Christmas of 2018. Set right after the video game industry crash of 1983, the plot focuses on an aspiring game designer (Fionn Whitehead) hoping to create a video game, entitled *Bandersnatch*, based on a novel of the same title, a choose-your-own-adventure type book. Along with the central subject matter of meaningful choices, interactivity in this case means that at certain points, the film freezes and the interactor decides which path the protagonist should take. Some of the choices are fully inconsequential (for instance, picking soundtracks or cereals) but some of them have grave consequences (for instance, deciding who should jump from the top of a building), which would seemingly give a considerable amount of what Janet Murray calls “dramatic agency” to the interactor: the pleasure of making meaningful choices and seeing the impact they have on the narrative.<sup>9</sup>

5 Aarseth, *Cybertexts* 48.

6 Manovich 71.

7 Domsch 3.

8 Stang, see <http://gamestudies.org/1901/articles/stang>.

9 Murray 123.

In the other hybrid piece, Sam Barlow's 2019 "narrative video game" *Telling Lies* (Annapurna Interactive) the interactor plays as Karen, a female agent, unfolding a story about her colleague, an undercover operative who infiltrated a radical environmentalist terrorist group, and leads a sort of double life, starting a relationship with one of the group members while also keeping in touch with his wife and daughter. The game uses the same database logic as Barlow's earlier work *Her Story*. In the very brief introductory scene, the interactor sees a woman, Karen, arriving home and attaching an external hard drive to her computer, and from that point on, without any further instructions, she only appears as a vague reflection on a computer screen – one rather similar to the interactor's own while playing the game. We find a database and a PDF file describing its mechanics, but other than that, there are no prompts, the game only relies on the interactor's desire to unfold a story from the snippets of video feeds – mostly recordings of hidden cams and/or specific sides of certain conversations based on any keywords that we find in them. Interactivity here is a means of uncovering as much of the contents of the database (and hence the plot itself) as we possibly can. However, the game design guarantees that most interactors will only see around 70 percent of the videos by the time they get to the endpoint of Karen's narrative, by design focusing on one of the three female leads. *Telling Lies* gives no options to the interactor to influence the outcome of the events, but that is most likely due to the genre of detective games that it follows. In this context the plot of the game, as Tamás Bényei contends about detective fiction, is fundamentally and obviously a repetition.<sup>10</sup> In such games, interactor agency is limited to the process of investigation, hence the job of the interactor is by definition a strictly interpretative one.

Another way to approach the differences in how interactivity appears in the two works is by analysing the specific genre of each work, and, consequently, the way temporality is dealt with. Both of these pieces would belong to what Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen calls adventure games, "characterised by requiring deep thinking and great patience. These skills are employed to participate in, or uncover, narratives that are often based on detective story templates."<sup>11</sup> In this sense the genre categorisation does not reflect the very different temporalities at play: in *Telling Lies*, the actual storyline that we hope to uncover has already happened. In contrast, the plotline of *Bandersnatch* is based on the choices of the interactor, and therefore is set in present tense. It is in this sense that both *Bandersnatch* and

<sup>10</sup> Bényei 63.

<sup>11</sup> Egenfeldt-Nielsen 56.

*Telling Lies* are closely associated with narrativity, which is, in Espen Aarseth's understanding, always secondary to the actual events of a game;<sup>12</sup> although in some cases, we might want to add, this secondary nature is not temporal, but medial.

Jesper Juul's emergence-progression continuum is probably a more useful tool to understand how these games are different from each other at a structural level. Juul argues that "most computer games are the combination of two different ways of presenting a player with a challenge, one which I will term emergence (simple rules combining, leading to variation), and one of progression (serially introduced challenges)."<sup>13</sup> In this sense, *Bandersnatch* as a branching narrative (occasionally turning into a foldback<sup>14</sup> narrative, that is, the possible options still going back to an unavoidable event) is probably closer to progression games at a structural level, while *Telling Lies*, where part of the excitement is to figure out what it is that the interactor is actually looking for, is more on the emergence part of the scale. The game that Stefan, the protagonist designs in *Bandersnatch*, however, is not the same one that the interactor plays. The diegetic *Bandersnatch* is depicted as a clearly choice-based adventure game, where a single gameplay would appear linear, while the interactor shares the developer's godlike perspective, and a great deal of aesthetic pleasure on her part originates from the fact that she is being forced to revisit certain decisions that she made. Part of the fun is to get, as one of the characters, fellow game designer Colin says, not one ending, but "all of them."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, there are also progression elements in *Telling Lies*, that is, the external plot of the investigating agent browsing and eventually having to destroy all evidence necessarily proceeds by the interactor to find the right videos, the right clues (about 6–7 such videos exist in a pool of 170 short clips). In addition, the game limits the number of matches for each keyword to 5, and only features the chronologically first ones, hence providing a "gated structure"<sup>16</sup> to the otherwise unregulated flow of randomly discovered clips. This

12 Aarseth, "Genre Trouble" 54.

13 Juul.

14 Adams-Rollings 201.

15 In this respect *Bandersnatch* is clearly connected to Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The Garden of Forking Paths", to which this remark is a word-by-word reference: "The Garden of Forking Paths was the chaotic novel itself. The phrase 'to various future times, but not to all' suggested the image of bifurcating in time, not in space. Rereading the whole work confirmed this theory. In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives, he chooses one at the expense of the others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pen, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He thus creates various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times" (e-text, n.p.). What was the chaotic novel from the author's point of view for Borges, is transformed into an adventure game from the game designer's perspective in *Bandersnatch*.

16 Gasque 314.

solution is a meaningful modification and, to some extent, regulation on the rhizome root system layout, that Murray, based on Deleuze's works, mentions "as a model of connectivity in systems of ideas [...] to allusive text systems that are not linear like a book but boundaryless and without closure,"<sup>17</sup> much like the non-directional roots of ginger. Although *Telling Lies* offers the illusion of a database system with no mandatory entry and end point, game mechanics are still able to at least partially control the process of investigation.

McLuhan's famous axiom that the content of any medium is always another medium is especially relevant here.<sup>18</sup> While *Bandersnatch* in such fashion makes use of adventure books, video games, and many television genres, such as conspiracy films, one of the "contents" of *Telling Lies* is a digital medium of the moving image other than film: online video messages. These few-minute-long snippets are recorded without any cuts and alternative angles, and according to the accounts of the actors, were very similar to performing in the theatre in a sense.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is quite probable that one of the major differences between *Bandersnatch* and *Telling Lies* in terms of narrative structures and interactivity is that although both of them are in-between two media, these two media are not the same two: video games and television in *Bandersnatch*, and video games and personal video recordings in *Telling Lies*.

All these concerns about mediality and genre classifications lead us to my final point, the question of avatars and agency. *Bandersnatch* scholarship<sup>20</sup> generally agrees that although the interactor is more or less forced to choose an option from time to time (hence ensuring interactivity), their choices are invariably exposed as inconsequential: they can choose for Stefan to either take a certain drug or not, but he is going to end up having it either by his own free will or by Colin smuggling it into his drink. On a different moral and game mechanical level the interactor can choose to get Stefan killed in Colin's stead, but that way her session will be over and she will need to go back and make a different decision. And at yet another layer, at one point, the interactor can either have Stefan bite his nails or pull his earlobes, but he – as a postmodern character – is slowly regaining his senses and will defy the person who controls him,<sup>21</sup> while continuously reflecting on "dreams of losing control," and feeling like "being monitored by someone."<sup>22</sup> This observation is apparently

17 Murray 127.

18 McLuhan 10.

19 Annapurna Interactive.

20 McSweeney and Joy; Roth and Koenitz.

21 McSweeney and Joy 276.

22 *Bandersnatch*.

the source of constant frustration for protagonist and interactor alike, while also creating the fundamental subject matter of the film. Hence in *Bandersnatch*, there are two things going on at the same time: Stefan is transformed from a simple avatar – a non-intrusive representation of the player<sup>23</sup> – into a self-aware postmodern subject, and while he is trying to design a game of choices and the interactor is going through all the possible choices, they only gain interactivity on the surface, while in fact they lose agency. At one point, Stefan explains this in connection with his own game, mirroring the interactor's experience: "I've been trying to give the player too much choice. So I just went back, stripped loads out. Now they've only got the illusion of free will. But really, I decide the ending."<sup>24</sup> All in all, this is a rather sobering take on both the iconic character of the gamer/hacker emerging in the eighties as someone being able to bend the rules according to his own will, but also on the issue of gaming and real-life agency in general.

In *Telling Lies*, an equally profound criticism is offered on agency options through explicitly thematising and questioning the role of avatars. Regarding the fact that the plot revolves around an undercover agent faking a different identity to get into a certain group, avatars can be regarded as but one category of many similar concepts that are used to substitute a complex original identity. Furthermore, the quasi-confessional layout of the video chat lets the interactor see the protagonist David (Logan Marshall-Green) as if he were talking directly to them – or in fact, to anyone on the receiving end of his message. Yet, not one of these personae seems to be primary or more authentic than the others: first, as David is in a covert operation, the only non-screen mediated interactions he has are with Ava (Alexandra Shipp), the environmental activist, whom he is supposed to seduce – a relationship that is founded on lies – and, in addition, in many cases Ava and her circle become unwilling actors in scenes played for David's hidden cameras. On the other hand, even though they try to maintain the intimacy of their marriage with his wife Emma (Kerry Bishé), much of the basis of their alliance gets lost in mediatisation as they have to spend more than a year separated from each other and can only communicate through video chat. Through yet another layer of mediatisation, Emma uses their daughter's dolls to re-enact the most traumatic moment of their relationship, a manslaughter that David committed and Emma agreed to keep silent about that for the sake of their relationship. "After watching a guy bleed out together, they get married. That helps make things make sense. Even so, Emma is sure that she'll be scared of David forever and

23 Egenfeldt-Nielsen 210.

24 *Bandersnatch*.

ever”<sup>25</sup>— goes Emma’s narration of “playing dolls”. This scene therefore reveals that the basis of their marriage is, once again, a consensual lie.

Surprisingly, David’s relationship with the cam-girl Maxine (Angela Sarafyan) is both the least physical (as they only talked and in fact never met until almost the very end of the narrative) and the most honest one on David’s part. “We can be honest with each other here, it’s not like real life,” – says David. “Men are always honest with sex workers, even in real life. They save their lies for people that matter”<sup>26</sup> – answers Maxine in the very first conversation they have. In addition, Maxine can be regarded a *mise-en-abyme* of the multiple identities David puts on himself for both the camera and for various life situations, mirroring, and, as a result, drawing attention to the constructedness of David’s various personae. Even when she promises true facts about her life, she shifts her names, accents, wigs, and backstories just the way David changes his own. As she demonstrates in one of the scenes, her luxurious-looking bedroom is in the basement of a suburban family home, the big city noises are coming from a recording device, and she even creates various stories about the meaning of her tattoo. “This is my body in a costume, streaming through the camera. If I turn the camera off, that’s it. Not one of those men ever know my name,”<sup>27</sup> she says.

As regards Karen, the agent, who is in fact the avatar of the interactor, and whose features are vaguely mirrored on our screen, her options of agency are also limited. She moves on a fixed track, quite aware (along with the interactor) that eventually “they” are going to come for her, and she has no other choice but to leak the gathered data in order to get to the final cut scene and to get one of the endings. Even the TXT file that accompanies her external hard drive says so: “When you use the uploader it will erase the hard-drive, so please do that before they take you into custody (which they will – you know this, right???)”<sup>28</sup> The toned-down, physical action-free session of database browsing and tedious fast-forwarding and rewinding of short videos<sup>29</sup> is contrasted with and encompasses a critique of the kind of hegemonic masculinity potentially turning toxic, which, in the case of David, appears as the illusion of heroism and agency, similarly to popular cultural icons such as Jack Bauer or even Super Mario.

25 *Telling Lies*.

26 *Telling Lies*.

27 *Telling Lies*.

28 *Telling Lies*.

29 There is no scroll bar, and search keywords often index the middle or very end of a video, and this design choice makes it hard work to view an entire clip.



Using traditional fairy tale narratives as a solid point of reference to define himself, David appears as someone with a “Prince Charming-complex”: this is his chosen code name, while his nicknames to online chats include “knight81”, and apparently, the need to have active, decisive agency in most matters is something that he has very much invested in. According to his wife’s account of the above-mentioned manslaughter, David had been watching her house in which she found comfort and reassurance, and he had seen her harasser entering the house, while Emma expected David to scare him off. Instead, David, then already Emma’s boyfriend, deliberately waited for him to actually invade her personal space, so that he could come along and save her. “You wanted to be a [...] knight in a shining armour,”<sup>30</sup> cries Emma. In addition, although Emma as a nurse could have saved the harasser, David told her not to, as he sometimes points out, “it’s better just to let the bad guys die.”<sup>31</sup>

In this respect, David may be regarded as a variation on the classical video game avatar, an empty structural function with the sole purpose of advancing the plot and of letting the interactor use their skills in the coming levels, much like Mario sets out to save Peach. However, in this case he is in a game that is not suited for classical, unquestioned male video game heroes and their all-encompassing desire to save the world and to have everything under control. This is also supported by the fact that in one of the scenes David and two activist men play an arcade shooting game, and his expertise in it almost blows away his cover as an environmental activist. All this would also give a plausible explanation as to why it is so easy for him to shift his priorities, identities, and affiliations, with the only common link being that he always seeks to protect women, disregarding whether his damsels are in distress or not.

David associates his own actions with heroism and masculine power, just as he describes in his goodbye message to all three women – Emma, Ava and Maxine – before he blows up the Prosperen pipelines and kills himself in the process: “This is David Smith or Miller or Jones or however you knew me. I’m about to do something and I need it to be clear why and what I’m doing. Prosperen pipelines are a bad thing [...] We all let them happen. Strong men like me let them happen. And I’ve done a lot of bad things but I’m gonna do something right now.”<sup>32</sup> Even though this would be his last heroic act in a storyline that would fit into the arc of a classical Greek tragedy, Gasque et al. argue that game mechanics take away that kind of satisfaction

30 *Telling Lies*.

31 *Telling Lies*.

32 *Telling Lies*.

from the character: “one effect of the database structure is to undermine the sense of catharsis and closure that David’s story might otherwise have produced.”<sup>33</sup>

David’s “Prince Charming-complex”, his obsession with agency, is probably also the reason why different heroes emerge at the end of the narrative: instead of a “knight in a shining armour,” the interactor realizes that the entire plot was about “strong female leads”<sup>34</sup> (Maxine’s term for her novel that she will have written by the time she turns forty). All of them are different, yet equally powerful, and none of them have watched David’s video that was intended for them. Based on how much time the interactor spent with them, she can have one of three different endings for each woman. These are the only scenes in the entire game that maintain an illusion of unmediatedness, there is no diegetic camera into which they talk. Instead, the interactor gets to face the future selves of the protagonists by mirror shots – this time with what seems to be truly confessional layouts.

This paper argued that *Bandersnatch* and *Telling Lies* apply a high level of interactivity, yet it is used to shed light on the lack of actual agency. In *Bandersnatch*, the protagonist/avatar defies his controlling demigod, the interactor, but at the same time he still grants them the game designer’s omnipotent perspective. In *Telling Lies* the strive for control and, hence, agency is reframed as toxic masculinity and neutralised by the database mechanics and the “strong female leads” of the game. Even though active agency is exposed in both cases as an illusion, and a potentially harmful one, it might be argued that dramatic agency in these cases is the result of the interactor’s realisation of her frustration over the lack of active agency.

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33 Gasque 323.

34 *Telling Lies*.

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# Parody or Pastiche? (De)Constructing Shakespeare in Ian Doescher's "Much Ado About Deadpool"

Ádám Márton Kling

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies

08dkliada@gmail.com

## Introduction

Among Shakespearean adaptations, parodies have an exceptional role not just in preserving the Shakespearean oeuvre, but also in showcasing his lasting impact on today's popular culture. Ian Doescher, the creative mind behind the critically acclaimed *William Shakespeare's Star Wars* books, which rewrite the scripts of George Lucas' iconic films in blank verse and in a Shakespearean manner, is no stranger to the humorous appropriation of early modern culture and literature. His fictional works initiate conversations between past and present, tradition and innovation, based on different forms of intertextuality and degrees of cultural literacy. "Much Ado About Deadpool" (2016), a one-shot story that is contained within the pages of *Deadpool* #21 (2016), follows this trend, and offers a comical narrative that is built upon a dialogue between early modern and contemporary popular culture. By deconstructing the dramatic works of the playwright, such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and many other well-known plays, the comic book by Ian Doescher reintroduces Shakespeare, the cultural phenomenon, to the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader. Besides reinvigorating the contemporary audience's interest in Shakespearean literature, the graphic narrative also showcases the influence of Shakespeare's literary legacy in today's popular culture.

This paper discusses how and why certain literary conventions, theatrical clichés and concepts borrowed from William Shakespeare's plays are highlighted in the metanarrative of "Much Ado About Deadpool", while it also investigates the encounters between the early modern playwright's dramatic characters and Deadpool, the titular, self-reflective hero of the comic book. The analysis of the chaotic mindscape of this anti-hero is coupled with the exploration of culturally loaded interactions, mentioned above. In order to fully understand the meaning behind Ian Doescher's vision of both Shakespeare and Deadpool, significant attention is devoted to the comic book medium's special grammar, which creatively mingles text and imagery to create a new work. While examining a number of Shakespearean allusions and other cultural references, both on a textual and visual level, it will also be

determined whether the selected graphic narrative can be categorised as a parody, a pastiche, or something else entirely.

### Parody or pastiche?

Classifying Doescher's work as either parody or pastiche is a challenging, though necessary, task. According to Linda Hutcheon, parody and pastiche can both be described as types of imitations, which, most importantly, acknowledge the borrowed source material, unlike plagiarism.<sup>1</sup> This definition highlights the similarities, but it does not offer a much needed, clear-cut distinction. These two forms diverge in some vital aspects, considering the appropriation of the selected, original work. Method and intent are vastly different between these two forms of adaptation. Christian Benne names the comical effect (or lack thereof) as the distinguishing factor between parody and pastiche. It is suggested that the former is a type of imitation which highlights the "discrepancy between grand style and low content" to achieve the desired comical effect, whereas the latter becomes solely comical due to its overt ambition to follow the imitated work as closely as possible.<sup>2</sup> This line of thought implies that a parody is created with the specific intention to be humorous, as opposed to a pastiche, which is not originally conceived as comedic imitation of an original work, but, as an unwanted result, it may ultimately become one.

Despite containing the word "comic", comic books themselves are not necessarily required to have a comical effect. There are plenty of titles, from both past and present, which explore other genres besides comedy, including horror and drama. In the case of certain comic book series, such as Robert Kirkman's zombie apocalypse series, *The Walking Dead* (2003–2019), for instance, comedic elements appear either scarcely or they are completely absent from the narrative altogether. However, regardless of the rules of genre it claims to follow, graphic fiction rivals and, in some respects, even transcends many modern art forms thanks to its unique storytelling techniques, its special language and grammar. The combined use of two elementary components (text and imagery) allow graphic narratives to successfully capture and elevate moments of drama, gore, horror, tension, or comedy. By controlling the narrative with the composition of the panels and by focusing on the right details, comic book creators are capable of amplifying any type of emotional effect. Consequently, the comical effect, which is prominently present in parody and occasionally in pastiche, is intensified through the complex artwork, which is often accompanied by

1 Hutcheon 38.

2 Benne 278.

similarly intricate dialogues or textual elements. Bearing this in mind, the creator can choose to highlight conflicts between text and imagery as well as showcase discrepancies between style and content, thereby transforming the graphic narrative into a perfect vehicle for parodies.

Doescher's metanarrative is designed as a parody, both in method and intent, despite occasionally exhibiting characteristics of a pastiche. The comical effect in "Much Ado About Deadpool" is created through a series of chance encounters between the comic book's title figure, Deadpool, and the most recognisable characters from William Shakespeare's plays. Tensions rise when the two seemingly incompatible worlds of Marvel Comics and Shakespearean drama collide with one another, resulting in the creation of a different kind of narrative. Douglas Lanier redefines the concept of parody by describing it as a process of transformation, rather than a particular style.<sup>3</sup> This perfectly aligns with Doescher's signature writing method, which recasts the plays of William Shakespeare in a completely different light. The writer selects a well-known franchise, such as Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* or Marvel Comics' *Deadpool*, and reimagines it with a humorous Shakespearean twist. The language and style of the imitated works are replicated and also combined for the sake of comical effect. This transformative process, which merges the early modern and the contemporary popular cultural products, culminates in the birth of Doescher's newest witty narrative.

### Wherefore art thou Deadpool?

Before delving into the analysis of "Much Ado About Deadpool", two questions need to be answered regarding the title character: who is he, and why was he specifically chosen to be the protagonist of this text. Both questions can be answered with relative ease by exploring the comic book origins of Deadpool. Created three decades ago by writer Fabian Nicieza and artist Rob Liefeld, the titular anti-hero made his first appearance on the cover of Marvel Comics' *New Mutants* #98 in February 1991. Despite a relatively short publication history of 30 years, which is brief compared to other flagship titles from the same comic book company, he quickly became a fan favourite and a staple character of the Marvel brand. The fictional anti-hero's already rising popularity, which continues to increase, has skyrocketed in the last decade, even among non-comic book readers, especially after the release of his first, live-action solo film in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lanier 178.

<sup>4</sup> Deadpool's first solo film, which starred Ryan Reynolds as the title character of his own meta-narrative, became a critical hit and commercial success at the box office in 2016.

By the standards of traditional American comic books, Deadpool, also known as Wade Wilson, has an extremely clichéd origin story, which sees him undergo a secret government experiment to cure his rapidly spreading cancer, only to be granted superhuman abilities in the process. While his increased healing factor enables him to regenerate from virtually any type of injury he sustains, his entire body, as a side effect of the treatment, becomes permanently scarred and his mind remains forever fractured due to the psychological trauma he experienced in the wake of his grotesque transformation. Peter Wiacek describes Deadpool in the following way:

The professional mercenary Deadpool is a man of mysteries, most of them self-generated. Certifiably crazy, he spews a neverending stream of non-sensical babble, regularly rewrites his own “origin”, and wilfully confuses friends, foes, and allies alike. He also paradoxically aspires to insert himself into every crisis that besets Earth – and other planets and dimensions – while pursuing “big scores” and a life of ease and luxury.<sup>5</sup>

As this brief summary suggests, Deadpool’s nigh immortality is not the most unique aspect of his character. Aside from his amoral and insane behaviour, which rightfully earns him the status of an anti-hero, he appears as a trickster figure as well as an unreliable narrator. Nevertheless, what truly differentiates Marvel’s Deadpool from other heroes and anti-heroes is his extreme self-awareness, or “meta-awareness”: he is able to recognize his status as a comic book figure, and has the ability to directly address the reader by constantly breaking the fourth wall. He reflects on the outcome of his often controversial actions and frequently shares his conclusive thoughts with the audience. Moreover, he is also aware of the world outside of the pages of his comic book, as he repeatedly references other works of popular culture. This level of self-reflexivity allows him to influence or to even completely rewrite the outcome of his own narrative. All these attributes transform him into a perfect metacharacter as well as an unmistakable parody of the traditional superhero archetype.

### **(De)constructing Shakespeare**

Doescher’s five-act story begins with a full page, an announcement which imitates the textual-visual style of theatrical playbills and the title pages of early modern

5 Wiacek 256.

published playbooks. This splash page shares crucial information with the reader including the name of the publishing company, the date of presentation, the title of the work, a brief synopsis of the tale, a short list of the creators, from the writer to the visual contributors, and a humorous disclaimer. The purposefully cheap looking, printing-paper background, the arrangement of the textual data as well as the font type that is used on the page mimic the early modern playbook's peculiar design. Consequently, the creators undoubtedly signal the theatrical nature of the forthcoming graphic tale from the very start.

The narrative itself starts immediately after the conclusion of *Deadpool* #21: as the title character of the comic book, who was previously knocked unconscious by one of his arch villains, Madcap, awakens at a new location and in a completely different time period. Despite being advertised as a "lamentable tragedy" on the introductory page, the sarcastic language and the imagery quickly refute that statement, confirming it to be in fact a tragic comedy. As Ian Doescher and Bruno Oliveira assume the roles of the writer and the chief artist respectively, in contrast to the creators of the 'real' *Deadpool* issue (Gerry Duggan and Matteo Lolli), a shift in style occurs, with the artwork becoming more akin to a caricature, as showcased by the extreme close-ups of the characters. The shift from the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the early modern era is reflected by the eerie castle scenery, in which *Deadpool* unexpectedly finds himself, and is signified by the anti-hero's sudden change of attire. Although mostly retaining his original character costume and appearance, which includes the iconic mask, the Japanese katana sword, and the typical colour scheme of his red and black attire, his clothing changes to resemble the fashion worn by the people in the late-Elizabethan era, complete with ruff and doublet.

Furthermore, the language of the comic book also changes. Doescher shifts the writing style from contemporary English to early modern English, and from natural modern-day diction to the constant use of iambic pentameter in both the speech and the thought bubbles. This is realised by the self-reflective title figure as well, who believes this linguistic shift to be some sort of just punishment for his previous misconduct: "Alack, my tongue another phrase doth reach! Belike a punishment for all my crimes, I cannot stop these words, nor break these rhymes."<sup>6</sup> However, the reason behind the change is quickly explained, when the playwright, William Shakespeare, unveils his presence on the next page. The early modern dramatist, who refers to the use of iambic pentameter as "the lingua franca of the Gods"<sup>7</sup> and as "the very

6 Doescher 26.

7 Doescher 27



music of the spheres”<sup>8</sup> reveals that Deadpool is playing a character in a play of his. Shakespeare’s answer confirms to the reader that “Much Ado About Deadpool” is indeed a play within another play, defined by and constrained within the original Shakespearean work, not unlike Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* or *Hamlet*’s ‘Mousetrap’ scene. As the comical narrative unfolds, this theory is substantiated with even more evidence provided by the other players, who themselves are revealed to be actors, embodiments of their respective Shakespearean characters. Despite Deadpool’s visual and textual references to contemporary works of art, early modern linguistic styles, as well as the theatrical mode, are maintained throughout the course of the entire fiction, until the concluding page of the five-act story.

William Shakespeare’s role in the comic book appears to be brief but is still extremely crucial to the overall plot. The playwright, as mentioned before, emerges at the beginning of the tale to clarify Deadpool’s true role, only to be killed immediately by the title character in a humorous, albeit completely absurd manner. He is unable to provide any further details regarding the upcoming play, because he is accidentally shot in the chest by the crossbow of Deadpool, called the ‘Merc of Menace.’ On the one hand, the goal of this comedic scene is to strengthen the comical effect of the parody itself. On the other hand, it also echoes and heavily mocks the main tenet of Roland Barthes’ essay, *The Death of the Author* (1967), in which the French essayist argues for an interpretation of the literary text that ultimately excludes the intention and the biography, or any lingering presence, of its author. The sudden unfortunate demise of Shakespeare also serves as the catalyst for the narrative’s main conflict, which sees Deadpool confronting a number of dramatic figures from various Shakespearean works. In the absence of the creative authority and leadership of Shakespeare, the unfolding play is destined to fall into utter narrative chaos, especially with Deadpool’s involvement, which complicates matters even further. With the decision to remove the iconic bard from the scene altogether, paradoxically Doescher not only reinforces Shakespeare’s role as a writer but he also reconstructs him as an invisible spiritual force, which binds together the Shakespearean narrative threads of “Much Ado About Deadpool” even after his on-page death.

It is not solely the cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare that is reconstructed in the comic, but also the theatrical scene of early modern England. As it was announced on the introductory page, Deadpool’s adventure is indeed a theatrical performance told in multiple parts, but in this instance the page becomes the stage where the events

8 Doescher 27.

unfold. The five-act plot strictly follows the dramatic structure of a traditional theatre play (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution), with each of the five parts being named after a twisted version of a memorable Shakespearean line. These titles, which are slightly modified to fit the tone and aesthetic of the graphic narrative, serve as direct references to some of the dramatist's greatest tragedies: "Something's Rotten in the State of Deadpool" (Act I) – *Hamlet*; "Wherefore Art Thou Deadpool?" (Act II) – *Romeo and Juliet*; "King Leary" (Act III) – *King Lear*; "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Deadpool" (Act IV) – *Hamlet*; and "All's Well That Dies Well" (Act V) – *All's Well That Ends Well*. Instead of focusing on one specific drama, Doescher parodies almost the entire collection of the bard's works. This is accomplished through the inclusion of the original plays' dramatic characters, whose interactions with Deadpool create the comical aspect of the graphic narrative.

The inability to understand each other makes the encounters between the titular anti-hero and the Shakespearean figures humorously entertaining and frustratingly absurd at the same time. Despite speaking the same language and both using iambic pentameter, the vast cultural differences, which are also exaggerated for the sake of comical effect, lead to a series of comic but often violent misconceptions. The meeting between Deadpool and the suddenly emerging ghost of old King Hamlet offers the first example. The latter falsely identifies the amoral protagonist as his son, Hamlet. In return, Deadpool, the displaced mercenary initially believes the revenant of the deceased Danish king to be one of the three Christmas spirits from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* ("Which art thou: Christmas Present, Past or Future? Art thou my conscience?").<sup>9</sup> At one point the apparition is also classified by the anti-hero as a Force ghost from *Star Wars* and the spirit of Jerry Springer. Indeed, the spectral king's visual representation bears a striking resemblance to the iconic Force ghosts of George Lucas's classic films. This may also be interpreted as a clever nod to another series of parodies written by Doescher, the *William Shakespeare's Star Wars* books, mentioned earlier. During the third act of the play the ghost is actually revealed to be none other than Edmund from *King Lear*, who has plotted with Lear's daughters in order to dispose of their aging father.

The true purpose of this and other similar cases within the graphic narrative is to highlight Deadpool's seemingly infinite knowledge of contemporary popular culture as well as his lack of education regarding early modern English literature. While he is unable to fathom even the simplest of Shakespearean allusions, the dramatic

<sup>9</sup> Doescher 28.

characters are incapable of understanding the anti-hero's modern cultural allusions. According to this line of thought, it can be argued that the main source of conflict between the various players of the comic book lies in the fact that they operate on different degrees of cultural literacy. In the context of this essay this refers to different levels of cultural education. While Deadpool has a vast knowledge of everything regarding American TV culture, the actors are well-versed in Shakespearean literature. However, this does not work vice versa. Therefore, it falls on the audience to make sense of their culturally loaded interactions. In order to fully appreciate, let alone comprehend, the comedic references of "Much Ado About Deadpool," the readers themselves have to be well-versed in products of both early modern and contemporary popular culture.

Nevertheless, it is not solely the long list of Shakespearean allusions that complicate the analysis of the text. Since this is a play within a play, it exhibits some traits that are typical to metatheatrical thinking. Upon encountering Regan and Goneril, the two villainous daughters of King Lear in the second act of the graphic narrative, it becomes evident that the costumed characters depicted are in fact actresses in disguise, who are playing multiple Shakespearean roles. The women, who refer to each other as sisters, are initially introduced to Deadpool as Juliet, from *Romeo and Juliet*, and Katharine, from *The Taming of the Shrew*, respectively. As the amoral protagonist compares his newfound acquaintances to violent wasps, one of the two siblings uses a familiar Shakespearean line that confirms her role as the shrew, "If I be waspish, best beware my sting."<sup>10</sup> Similarly to the previous part's vengeful spirit, the treacherous sisters ask the title character to execute a certain king in an act of revenge. Deadpool, whose main goal is to escape this foreign narrative landscape, accepts the task, but only after being assured of a handsome payment for his services. Before Deadpool exits the scene however, the blonde actress transforms into another dramatic character, Lady Macbeth, offering further, sexually explicit rewards in return for Deadpool's successful kill. The exchanges in Act II not only emphasise the title character's amoral behaviour, which entails accepting gold and sex for the murder of a still unknown king, but they also reinforce the comic book's metanarrative nature. The latter is showcased through the highly sexualised dialogues of the Shakespearean actresses as well as through Deadpool's comments addressed to the audience regarding the unfolding events, which is a clear demonstration of his meta-ability, the breaking of the fourth wall.

10 Doescher 38. This is a direct quotation from Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew* from the Folger Shakespeare. Edited by Paul Werstine, and Barbara A. Mowat, 2. 1. 223.

In Act III, which is abruptly titled "King Leary", the true identity of the conspiring characters is finally revealed by the targeted king himself. The surprisingly agile King Lear decapitates the title character, but he ultimately exits the page, as he is pursued by a suddenly emerging bear. In all its graphic violence, the depicted image is a clever visual reference to the notorious Shakespearean stage direction from the third act of *The Winter's Tale*, in which the character of Antigonus is chased and killed by a bear. While Doescher's version of King Lear does not die at the claws of the large animal, his exit appears to be similarly absurd to that of the previously mentioned dramatic character. In addition to this, there is another Shakespeare-inspired scene at the end of this part. The final image of Act III, spread out in two pages, shows Deadpool, who has survived his own decapitation with the help of his regenerative abilities, in the iconic Hamletian posture. However, instead of holding Yorick's skull in the palm of his hand and contemplating questions of death, the protagonist is assessing his current situation and is constructing a new plan while holding his own head in his left hand:

Alas, poor Deadpool – Thou art fubarr'd quite. How fell I into this appalling mess? E'en now the time hath come to make a plan. As would the A-Team and MacGyver both: Defeat my foes and go home, by my troth!<sup>11</sup>

This short monologue is yet another successful attempt at crossing the boundaries between early modern and contemporary popular culture. While maintaining the typical patterns of Elizabethan speech throughout his monologue, Deadpool uses a 21<sup>st</sup>-century slang expression, the acronym "fubar" ('fucked up beyond all recognition') and coins a new verb in the form of "fubarr'd" to explain his current situation. He also evokes the A-Team and MacGyver, two popular American television shows from the 1980s, to aid him in his quest. This particular example showcases that Shakespearean text and imagery are not just recreated, but they are also combined with the unique visual aesthetics of Marvel Comics' and Deadpool's comedic language, which is filled with these culturally loaded references. Essentially, by applying this method, the writer and the artist of "Much Ado About Deadpool" are able to reinvent and repurpose the cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare to conform to their

11 Doescher 55.

own metanarrative. The comic establishes a rhizomatic<sup>12</sup> relationship between Deadpool and Shakespeare's collective body of works. Instead of creating a hierarchical order between Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean story elements, a vast web of interconnected allusions and cultural references is formed to create the parody of "Much Ado About Deadpool."

In the next part of the journey, the mercenary forges a new plan with an unlikely ally to exact his revenge and to finally escape the chaotic dream world of the play. Prospero, whose library of magical books prove to be of remarkable value, is the only figure in this parody who does not originate in a tragedy. For that reason, he is the only player who is left alive by the conclusion of the tale. However, there is another, perhaps more important point to be made about this chapter, besides the inclusion of the magician from *The Tempest*. Apart from reintroducing tragic characters and plotlines from the Shakespeare's dramas, Doescher's comic alludes to the existence of a particular Shakespearean adaptation. The metatheatrical play of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, written by Tom Stoppard in 1966, is directly referenced in the title of the graphic tale's penultimate act, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Deadpool." The name of the chapter seems to serve as a statement, which could either confirm the ultimate fate of the protagonist or simply reaffirm the fact that he is not a real, living and breathing person, but an invented character within a fictitious story.

Both Stoppard's play and Doescher's comic revolve around metanarratives and function as parodies of the iconic bard's dramatic works. According to Christy Desmet, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* there is a certain "tension between textual fidelity (an 'exact' mimesis of a Shakespearean text) and artistic freedom (new plots, new dialogues, newly foregrounded characters, new ideas and new registers of colloquial language)."<sup>13</sup> The internal conflict that Desmet alludes to, existing between Stoppard's metadrama and *Hamlet*, appears to be present in the case of the graphic narrative as well. In fact, this is the exact formula that is applied by Doescher and Oliveira, both in the textual and visual parts of "Much Ado About Deadpool." The tension, which is created between the imitated Shakespearean plays and Deadpool's narrative, fuels the comical effects until the main conflict is finally resolved in the fittingly titled last act, "All Is Well That Dies Well." Doescher's work

12 The concept of rhizomatic adaptation is described in more detail in Lanier, Douglas. "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value." *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 21–40.

13 Desmet 230.

ends on a bloody but certainly comical note. While the story concludes with the absurd death of the tragic Shakespearean characters, as they murder each other on the stage, the final page finds Deadpool in a brothel enjoying the warm embrace of several women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Ian Doescher and Bruno Oliveira's five-act comedic graphic narrative is more than just a humorous introduction to Shakespearean drama from the viewpoint of Deadpool, the self-reflective anti-hero of the Marvel universe. The comic accomplishes its goal which is to demonstrate the influence of the early modern playwright's timeless literary legacy in today's popular culture. The witty meta-narrative of "Much Ado About Deadpool" initiates dialogues between early modern and contemporary popular cultures based on different forms of intertextuality and degrees of cultural literacy. Instead of establishing a hierarchy between the two, Deadpool and Shakespeare are placed in a rhizomatic relationship. As a result, a vast web of interconnected textual and visual allusions is created that redesigns the cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare to fit the unique language of the comic book medium and the unique narrative landscape of Marvel Comics. The examined parody, which occasionally follows the typical textual mimesis of a pastiche, reimagines the most well-known tragic figures, plotlines, and theatrical clichés of Shakespeare's dramatic works to trigger and maintain the desired comical effect. The tension between the amoral protagonist of the tale and the various dramatic characters contributes to the comical aspect of the graphic fiction, ultimately transforming it into an entertaining Shakespearean parody.

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# Variations on a Theme of Virgil: *Dido and Aeneas*

Loretta Anna Jungbauer

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies

loretta.jungbauer@gmail.com

Classical Latin and Greek literary works have affected the development of English culture to a large extent. Their influence is obvious not only in adaptations and the imitation of inherited verse forms, but in the sister-arts as well, as is seen in various recurring characters and motives. Employing well-known characters and settings of ancient Greece and Rome offered the possibility of reflecting on contemporary issues from a distanced, seemingly less biased point of view. Throughout the centuries, famous stories and characters have often been used by authors as allegories of contemporary political issues or people to make criticism less obvious and direct. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and Henry Purcell (1659–1695) were emblematic artists of their respective eras and both employed the subtle means of criticism through classical allusions in their works. Although separated by almost a century, they found Dido's story topical and suitable to express their critical views on contemporary issues. However, both Marlowe and Purcell made certain alterations to the source story. Due to these changes, their *foci* differ both in terms of characters and in the attitudes towards them.

A present-day take on the Virgilian text was offered by the Irish playwright Frank McGuinness (1953–), who opted for an even more radical change in terms of his source material. He based his play *Carthaginians* more loosely on Virgil's *Aeneid* than his predecessors and set it in Ireland in the 1980s. Although Dido's figure was removed from the classical context, several characteristic features of the Carthaginian Dido are still recognisable and sometimes even enhanced due to which the character may be regarded as part of the "Dido tradition." This study highlights the differences and similarities in the above-mentioned pieces, most apparent in the plots and the characters, examining the positions of both Dido and Aeneas.

Each of the discussed pieces is heavily indebted to Virgil's *Aeneid* as a literary point of reference. Besides common thematical inspiration, all three authors employed a strategy similar to Virgil's in terms of using their sources. Virgil most probably relied on Gnaeus Naevius' epic *Bellum Punicum* (*The Punic War*) as the source for his Dido episode. The events of the original epic poem (extant only in fragments) are represented in Virgil's own text in a style imitating prominent



literary figures. Although Homer's influence is undeniable considering the thematic structure of the *Aeneid*, McMahon points out that Virgil did not only imitate his predecessors, but he also adopted parts of his predecessors' texts line by line, which he then embedded into his own writing. Following Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius, the main plotline is focused on a female figure, and the closer examination of Ariadne's figure in Catullus' *Carmen* 64 shows clearly that the description of the forsaken Carthaginian queen is borrowed from this poem.<sup>1</sup>

The composition of the *Aeneid* offered its author the possibility to prove his poetic aptness. Virgil shaped already well-known motives and poetic devices to suit his own taste and to foreshadow the possibility of events such as the Punic War becoming reality. According to McMahon's reading of the *Aeneid*, the characters of Dido and Aeneas are supposed to represent conflicts which are yet to develop between Carthage and Rome. While Aeneas is presented as the classical epic hero, Dido becomes his counterpoint. She is willing to put her passion before her royal dignity and her obligations as a ruler, a behaviour that stands in sharp contrast to basic Roman values.<sup>2</sup> Although Virgil does not show Dido as an antipathic, barbaric queen, her culture and set of values differ from Rome's to a great extent, due to which, from the Roman point of view, she is not a proper partner for Aeneas, and thus will not be able to remain by his side.

The plot of Marlowe's play<sup>3</sup> differs from both Virgil's epic poem and the later opera, in several aspects. Comparing this drama to Purcell's and Tate's piece, Marlowe's adaptation is a much less dignified take on Virgil's text. He selected his sources and, according to Oliver, relied mainly on Books I, II, and IV of the *Aeneid*,<sup>4</sup> at times translating the epic faithfully, at times only relying on its text as a source.<sup>5</sup> As Tamás pointed out, Carthage, lead by the *Aeneid*'s heroine and combined with the Trojan values embodied by Aeneas, could be seen as a potential alternative for Rome.<sup>6</sup> Marlowe's protagonists, however, diverge from their classical representations

1 McMahon 4–5.

2 McMahon 16–19.

3 The authorship of *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage* has been debated among scholars, many arguing for a collaboration between Thomas Nashe and Christopher Marlowe. According to the 1594 quarto's title page, it was "Written by Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Nash. Gent." Several hypotheses offer different answers to the question but none of them clarifies the issue convincingly. Since the discussion of the play's authorship is not in the focus of this present study, I follow H. J. Oliver in using "Marlowe" as shorthand for the author(s).

4 Oliver xxxiii.

5 Brammal 384.

6 Tamás 49.

from the beginning, therefore, the possibility of interpreting Carthage as an alternative Rome is not a viable option. The main changes are most apparent in Dido's character. Contrary to Purcell's queen, she loses her dignity and cannot be regarded as an example to follow. Dido is shown as a desperate character who tries to make her lover stay with all her power. In this respect, the "oar scene" becomes one of the most significant changes in the plot, when Dido decides to steal Aeneas's oars. Her despair appears most prominently in the following excerpt:

*DIDO.*

*Aeneas, I'll repair thy Trojan ships  
Conditionally that thou wilt stay with me,  
And let Achates sail to Italy.*

*I'll give thee tackling made of rivell'd gold  
[...]*

*For ballace, empty Dido's treasury,  
Take what ye will, but leave Aeneas here.<sup>7</sup>*

These lines show how desperately Dido wants to make Aeneas stay with her, while also attempting to convince Achates to take over Aeneas' mission. Her failure, however, and her way of committing suicide puts her in a miserable light and robs the Queen of Carthage of all her royal dignity. After Aeneas' departure the hurt and humiliated queen throws herself on a pyre but for the playwright this does not seem to be enough for the intended tragic effect. Dido is immediately followed by Iarbas, her suitor, and then by her sister, Anna, whose love is not returned by Iarbas. On the one hand, the triple suicide emphasises the absurdity of the situation, on the other hand, it degrades Dido even more up to the point where she almost turns into a ridiculous figure. Friedrich argues that Marlowe's unique style may be regarded as an early example of romantic irony.<sup>8</sup> His works are characterised by a kaleidoscopic manner of representation which shows each image through a double lens. This way the characters and motives are present as both themselves and their own caricatures.

Marlowe's version does not seem to direct the satiric attitude toward solely one person, but against the whole cast in general. Dido is not differentiated from the other characters; she is merely one of a company of corrupt people. The play reveals

<sup>7</sup> Marlowe III. I. 112–126.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich 1569.

that corruption has already spread beyond the surface and its presence is also observable in the individuals' private spheres. Anna's manipulations, for instance, exemplify a twisted, tainted version of sisterhood. Crowley asserts that "from start to finish, Marlowe's play questions the epic poem's central premise."<sup>9</sup> Already at this early stage of Marlowe's career, his social pessimism, combined with questioning, reshaping, and reinterpreting the inherited traditions, appears obvious. These features are even more representative of his later plays. This hypothesis is further supported by Aeneas' characterisation. Compared to Purcell's opera, Aeneas occupies a more central role in Marlowe's play. Despite his seemingly significant position, he does not have a more independent agency or a stronger voice than his operatic counterpart. Aeneas' departure is shown as a necessity: similarly to Virgil's text, he follows divine order for the greater good. However, the Marlovian alterego of Aeneas does not evoke the greatness of an epic hero. He seems to be merely a tool for not only the gods, but everybody. Aeneas serves the gods as an instrument of establishing an empire, Iarbas uses him to regain Dido's affection, while through his stay he increases Anna's chance to succeed in seducing Iarbas. Even for Dido, he becomes only the object of affection, and his mission is ignored: she tries to make him stay even against his own will. Aeneas, together with the other characters on the stage, becomes the author's tool of mere representation in a metatheatrical sense.

In the next century, the story of Dido and Aeneas returned to the world of theatre in the form of an opera. The libretto to Purcell's musical piece was written by Nahum Tate, who in his own age was mostly known for his Shakespeare adaptations. Scholars agree that Nahum Tate used Virgil's *Aeneid* as his main source for his libretto. Price, on the other hand, notes that the text of the libretto shows signs of direct influence of other literary pieces, including Tate's own play. He had already worked on the story of Dido and Aeneas in his play *Brutus of Alba, or The Enchanted Lovers* in 1678, and only changed the title to *Dido and Aeneas* following his friends' advice.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Tate made significant changes with the intent to alter the audience's perception of Dido's character. He reshaped not only Virgil's version but also his own play, probably due to political reasons. Interpreting the main characters as metaphorical representations, several allusions seemed acutely relevant, some of which proved extremely unpleasant concerning the ruler and the monarchy. According to Price, Phoebus' triumph in the prologue may have referred

9 Crowley 410.

10 Price 3.

to William of Orange's journey to England in 1688, furthermore, Phoebus and Venus may have been interpreted as representing William and Mary II.<sup>11</sup>

The glorifying tone of Tate's prologue proves rather interesting in terms of its setting to music. Numerous hypotheses have emerged throughout the decades about the missing music belonging to the prologue. Laurie argues that Purcell might have based the main thesis of the opera on its harmony structure. Following this assumption, the prologue might have been in G-major. This, on the one hand, fits the triumphant tone of the text, on the other hand, it also connects to the g-minor at the end of the opera.<sup>12</sup> Mellers claims that the content of Tate's prologue probably did not appeal to Purcell since it is in sharp contrast to the Dido plotline, therefore, he probably did not set it to music at all.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the certainty of the existence of the prologue's music, it is clear that the opera's main plot revolves around Dido and Aeneas, although the play begins with the scene of the Roman gods. This dramaturgical strategy puts the significance of the Carthaginian plotline into the focus thus establishing a new connection between England and Dido.

A closer examination of the main plotline offers the possibility of interpreting not only Phoebus as William but also Aeneas. Aeneas leaves his love behind and, similarly to William, sets sail in order to establish a new state abroad. Buttrey proposes that the opera may be considered as a warning for the monarch, foreshadowing the consequences of potential irresponsibility on behalf of the ruler.<sup>14</sup> Radical changes were called for, which, according to Price, are partly explained by Tate downplaying the Dido–Mary II parallel.<sup>15</sup> Compared to Virgil's text, Tate employed a much narrower focus in his libretto, which mainly affected the plot's development and the number of characters. The most obvious changes are his choice to shorten the storyline compared to that of Virgil's epic and to employ fewer characters. Only nine characters are differentiated from the chorus, most of them are categorised by their occupation or species. Only three of them have proper names: Dido, Aeneas, and Belinda, Dido's sister. Belinda, however, is not individualised completely, she is presented as a mediator. Mellers argues that she appears both as the spokesperson of the crowd and as Dido's confidant.<sup>16</sup> The focus seems to be even narrower concerning the remaining two characters, and the audience would justly expect the dual

11 Price 6.

12 Laurie 53.

13 Mellers 206.

14 Buttrey 235.

15 Price 7–8.

16 Mellers 207.

prominence of Dido and Aeneas. Although *Dido and Aeneas* in the title suggests equality between them, this proves to be misleading since Aeneas is treated as a minor character in the opera. Dido's majestic figure remains in the spotlight throughout the opera, while Aeneas, contrary to Virgil's version, is pushed into the background. He is diminished and reduced into a secondary figure, who stands in sharp contrast to Dido's dignity, which is shown by the significantly fewer number of his lines and also by his briefer presence on stage. He is presented as a weak character, who believes neither in his divine mission, nor in his love for Dido. While Marlowe's Aeneas is deprived only partly of his inherited heroic features, in this operatic version he loses his heroism completely.

This decision is usually interpreted by scholars as a means of propaganda. Walkling claims that in his 1687 poem (*Upon the foregoing Account of his Excellency the Earl of Castlemaine's Embassy Extraordinary to Rome*), dedicated to the celebration of James' embassy, Tate likened the deeds of James II to those of Aeneas.<sup>17</sup> Relying on this poem and the legend of the king's supposed mythological lineage, the interpretation of Aeneas as a metaphorical figure of James II becomes even more plausible. At the same time the question of Dido's identity is raised, too. According to the political analogy, Dido becomes the allegorical figure of England herself. Walkling's hypothesis is supported by Tate's treatment of Dido. The Queen exemplifies loyalty, her love towards Aeneas is honest, pure, and unbreakable. Dido remains dignified throughout the whole play, she accepts her role as the forsaken one, and becomes victimised by Aeneas as England was victimised by James II when he left for France. Dido remains strong and, despite her firm love for Aeneas, she perseveres and remains faithful to her set of values. Therefore, Dido does not accept Aeneas' vague promises to stay and love her, which is exemplified by the following excerpt:

DIDO.  
*No repentance shall reclaim  
 The injured Dido's slighted flame.  
 For 'tis enough what'er you now decree,  
 That you had once a thought of leaving me.*<sup>18</sup>

The queen preserves her dignity until the end. She insists on Aeneas leaving and dies rather of grief than being humiliated and treated badly again. Her perseverance is

<sup>17</sup> Walkling 554.

<sup>18</sup> Purcell and Tate III. 45–48.

also expressed in her swansong in which the first musical phrase already forecasts the queen's death. Fekete notes that the bass during the aria is reminiscent of Bach's *Mass in B-Minor*. She also adds that there are structural similarities between Dido's final song and Gregorian melodies.<sup>19</sup> Both musical parallels enhance the spiritualisation of Dido's fate. By combining these two elements, Purcell directs and leads Dido gradually towards the transcendental realms, thus generating a distance between her and her audience, including the characters on the stage. Other musical devices also emphasise her prominence. Fekete states that the word "laid" is not only the highest point of the first musical phrase, but it is also marked by the composer with an accent. This emphasis on 'laid' foreshadows the inevitable event of her funeral.<sup>20</sup> Purcell grants Dido a beautiful lament and her dignified death is mourned by the chorus in an elevated tone. Hoványi remarks that a textual connection may be found between Dido's lament and the epitaph on Swift's grave.<sup>21</sup> This observation proves on the one hand the popularity of the Aeneas cult in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Neo-Classicism, on the other hand, it also casts a different light on the text of Dido's surprisingly short aria:

*DIDO.*

*When I am laid in earth, May my wrongs create*

*No trouble in thy breast;*

*Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.*<sup>22</sup>

The aria gains a literary role: it becomes a performative epigraph eternalised with musical devices. It serves as the perpetual ornament of Dido's tomb together with the dancing Cupids, who are instructed by the chorus to "*Keep here [thei]r watch, and never [to] part.*"<sup>23</sup> Her lament is captivating, since, as Eastman explains, it is rooted in the Italian lament tradition which combines "musical rhetorical devices to express emotion"<sup>24</sup> coming from the depths of the soul. Dido's magnificence is expressed by not only the musical structure but also the dramaturgy. Smith claims that Dido's dignity is kept partly due to the fact that Tate omitted the character of Achates, and the dual suicide of Iarbas and Anna.<sup>25</sup>

19 Fekete 11–12.

20 Fekete 11–12.

21 Hoványi 273–280.

22 Purcell and Tate III. 60–62.

23 Purcell and Tate III. 66.

24 Eastman 377.

25 Smith 232.

Aeneas, contrary to Dido, can be easily influenced. The divine intervention known from Virgil's text and the honourable reason for leaving Carthage is also called to doubt by Tate's libretto. Aeneas is made to leave by witches instead of gods, thus pure malice takes the place of divine intervention and a noble cause. Juxtaposing Aeneas' untraditionally motivated departure to the Queen's behaviour further emphasises the nobility and dignity of Dido's character, whose love and loyalty cannot be challenged by evil supernatural creatures. Adding the figure of the Sorceress may be regarded as Tate's most radical change in terms of the plot. In Price's reading, she becomes an "anti-Dido", who steps on stage as malevolence incarnate. With her ritualistic performance, she takes control over the plotline and realises the tragedy through Dido's death.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly enough, Plank asserts that the witches in the opera may be interpreted as a reference to papistry<sup>27</sup> since witches were often associated with Catholicism on stage. Further examples of derogating Catholicism may be found in Thomas D'Urfey's epilogue to the opera. The lines "*Rome may allow strange tricks to please her sons, / But we are Protestants and English nuns,*"<sup>28</sup> depict James II's religion as the antithesis of English Protestantism. Occasionally, the epilogue reminds us of the well-known Marlovian equivocation as it is shown in the following lines:

*Like nimble fawns, and birds that bless the spring  
Unscar'd by turning times we dance and sing;  
We in hope to please, but if some critick here  
Fond of his wit, designs to be severe,  
Let not his patience, be worn out too soon,  
And in few years we shall be all in tune.*<sup>29</sup>

The words "fawn" and "spring" refer to the young age of the inexperienced singers who performed the piece. Considering the circumstances of the performance, however, the text might as well have sexual implications. The libretto notes that the piece was first performed by young women and,<sup>30</sup> according to Price, the epilogue was delivered at Mr. Priest's Boarding School at Chelsea by Lady Dorothy Burke.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the last six lines of the epilogue may be interpreted as an implication of

26 Price 11.

27 Plank 395.

28 Purcell, and Tate, Epilogue 22–23.

29 Purcell, and Tate, Epilogue 24–29.

30 Price 3.

31 Price 76.

the sexual maturity of the girls attending the school, which is soon to come. The expression “in tune” deserves additional attention for it refers to both carnal and musical harmony.

Virgil's *Aeneid* had undergone several bold changes by the time it got reshaped in McGuinness' *Carthaginians* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At first glance, the two texts seem to have very little in common. The modern author opted for a more radical strategy compared to his predecessors in terms of consulting and shaping his primary source. The play is set in Ireland in the 1980s, more exactly in a Derry graveyard, years after the Bloody Sunday events, where the characters are waiting for the dead to rise. The play is only loosely based on Virgil's epic, ancient motives become a mere medium: they are transformed into means of expressing criticism concerning contemporary issues. Rome and Carthage are only present as points of reference in order to highlight the parallels between the ancient form of suppression and the relationship between Britain and Northern Ireland. The classical framework is removed completely, and both classical and Irish traditions remain in the background. Even in tradition-bound Northern Ireland, these are often shown as outdated, instead of which the characters are in desperate need of potential alternative traditions and values. McGuinness' most radical change affects the duo of Dido and Aeneas: Aeneas as a character is omitted, while Dido becomes a homosexual male. Dido is transformed into an in-between character, which influences his position in the play. As a gay man, he embodies both female and male attributes, which illustrates the performativity of gender but also implies that Aeneas is not removed from the play but rather incorporated in Dido's character. Cadden remarks that “[f]or Dido, the ‘classics’ of the Irish past [...] are there for his queer appropriation.”<sup>32</sup> However, MacGuinness's Dido does not only play with Irish culture but also reshapes classical elements. Through his presence and behaviour, he embodies the subversion.

The performativity of gender, traditions, and identity becomes the key to the characters' self-knowledge. Dido proves to be the only dynamic figure throughout the play whose features may be rooted in his Aeneas within. As a mobile “in-betweener,” he has the power to direct and stage not only himself but also others. Throughout the enactment of his cross-gender cast play-within-the-play, *The Burning Balaclava*, he plays the roles of both actor and director. Furthermore, he is the only character to enact both a female and a male role, so his extraordinary position in both *Carthaginians* and *The Burning Balaclava* suggests that Dido has a more complex viewpoint

32 Cadden 564.



than the other characters. His flexibility allows him to criticize and challenge the absolute authority of tradition (both Irish and classical). Dido draws attention to the fact that traditions are not necessarily models to be followed, and it is possible, sometimes even advisable, to reform them. Consequently, McGuinness does not neglect Dido's cultural heritage completely. He follows Marlowe and Purcell in staging purifying rites, but, contrary to his predecessors, he removes the element of suicide, only fire and the significance of music are preserved. Dido steps over the boundaries set by his predecessors and survives, thus "Carthage has not been destroyed."<sup>33</sup> This shows that traditions and characters remain alive, as long as they are performed, but they may also be altered and "purified" through performance. The importance of playing and enacting tradition is emphasized by both the music of Purcell's opera at the beginning and Dido's last word, "play."

Despite their shared source, each work has gained a different focus through alteration and manipulation of the Virgilian text, by which the authors followed his own strategy in terms of adopting and adapting his sources. Marlowe's drama emphasizes the relationship between the characters, and, through Anna's manipulation, it shows that not only love relationships but even family bonds may be corrupt. Dido is not more dignified or powerful than the others, she is only one of the many characters in a corrupt society, while the heroic character of Virgil's *Aeneid* is transformed into a puppet. Purcell's opera seems to highlight Dido's exemplary virtue and sorrowful abandonment. Dido in his and Tate's libretto is put on a pedestal as an object of admiration, which is achieved by means of essential musical skills and a strong stage presence. In contrast to her magnificence, Aeneas becomes a traitor, and he is given only a few appearances on stage, he does not even seem to believe in either his mission or in his love for Dido. McGuinness, however, removes Dido from the classical context and partially incorporates Aeneas in her figure, creating thus an "in-between" character. Due to this difference, Dido gains the potency to survive, unlike other Didos before him, and thus he is able to keep a purified form of the inherited traditions alive. In each version, Virgil's *Aeneid* provided a suitable basis for staged criticism despite the significant temporal distance between the discussed pieces.

33 McGuinness 70.

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# Myth and Eco-messaging in *ABZÛ*

Adél Vékási

Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies.

adel.vekasi@gmail.com

## Introduction

Ecological themes, such as anxieties about climate change, environmental destruction, and biodiversity loss, and hopes for intervention and restoration have become prevalent in recent years in popular narratives, even narratives which do not center on environmental issues. The past decade in particular has seen a rise in environmental media, video games among them: *Gathering Storm*, a major expansion pack to *Sid Meier's Civilization VI* (2016), introduced a climate system and added anthropogenic climate change as one of the challenges the player needs to face while building their empire; *Frostpunk* (2018) envisions a dystopian world in a volcanic winter; and according to the developer,<sup>1</sup> the currently in-development *Endling* is set to be a critique of the habitat destruction, with an explicitly stated goal of raising awareness. In the past two years, recognizing the potential of video games to foster eco-consciousness, major game studios have even come together to collaborate in the Green Game Jam project, aiming to create game experiences with ecological messages. The video game *ABZÛ*, set in an ocean that is full of life in some areas, and completely barren in others, fits into this trend of new, ecologically-focused games.

*ABZÛ* was released in 2016, developed by Giant Squid Studios. It became a moderate indie hit even though some players, exasperated by games dubbed “walking simulators,”<sup>2</sup> which feature low amounts of traditional gameplay and interaction, felt that it was yet another walking sim, except this time redressed as a diving sim. *ABZÛ* takes the player on a journey into the depths of the ocean where they, as a diver, can explore lush underwater environments and revive any areas left barren by an ancient civilization's efforts to harvest the sea for resources. The game uses the fictional, mythologized past of this civilization, gradually revealed to the player through murals, to deliver what seems to be a message about the dangers

1 Maher, *The Verge*.

2 *Simulation games*, also called *simulators* or *sims* for short, are a genre of video games which simulate a wide range of real-world activities; some typical subgenres of sims are business management, sports, military simulation, and vehicle simulation games. Originally, the term ‘walking simulator’ gained popularity as a way to deride games in which the gameplay mainly consisted of exploration (i.e. walking around), but is now used to describe a legitimate genre of video games.

of plundering the environment for its riches. Considering the minimalistic narrative and gameplay in *ABZÛ*, whether it could be an effective vehicle of ecological messaging might at first seem uncertain; however, an analysis of the rhetorical tools it employs reveals how that minimalism serves a purpose and is itself wielded as a tool to encourage ecological consciousness. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the presence and function of myth in the video game *ABZÛ*, which, combined with the game's mechanics and features, fits into the game's message about environmental conservation and protection.

### Video game rhetorics

Games rely on a vast array of rhetorical devices to build internally consistent deep game worlds and communicate ideas to their players. A large body of published scholarship has already been dedicated to the different dimensions of rhetoric in video games and how they create layers of meaning which might be consonant or dissonant with each other within a given game.<sup>3</sup> Broadly, these can be broken down according to their modality: we can distinguish between verbal, visual, sonic, and procedural video game rhetorics. In the following, I will briefly describe what these modes of rhetoric entail in the context of video games, before moving on to how *ABZÛ* in particular employs them to deliver a message of ecological consciousness and restoration.

First, verbal rhetoric in video games can take the form of in-game dialogue between characters; narration either from the player character or an external narrator (though the latter is rather rare in games); item, skill, or quest descriptions; environment descriptions in text-heavy or entirely text-based games; or texts found in the game environment. This latter form of building lore for game worlds has become particularly common in games of all genres in the last decade, from major big-budget hits like *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011) to smaller indie titles like *Chasm* (2018), to the point that many players and some critics now find it tedious and possibly lazy. This approach has the player finding diary entries and audio logs, letters, newspaper clippings, and book passages scattered around the game world, which provide either essential information to proceed or, more commonly, just give more context and depth to the game's world and narrative. Such lore-building texts could be of particular relevance to us as, in the absence of more traditional gameplay, like action, this type of rhetoric is what many walking simulators, such as *Dear*

3 Bogost; Harper; Hawreliak; Paul, to cite only a few.

*Esther* (2012), *Gone Home* (2013), or *Firewatch* (2016), rely on heavily to deliver story and meaning – however, as it will be discussed in the following sections, *ABZÛ* eschews text almost entirely. In addition to the above, textual elements that are not strictly part of the game world, yet can be part of how the player experiences the narrative are also worth mentioning. Texts on the user interface that help with game mechanics or give feedback to the player can also become vehicles of rhetoric.<sup>4</sup>

Second, perhaps the most immediately striking dimension of video games is image. Indeed, Hawreliak notes that “image is often thought of as the dominant semiotic mode” of video games, and that much of the discourse concerning games has been centered on the visual, due in part to the semiotic power of images, and in part to the already existing frameworks in which we can analyze them.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to visual rhetoric in games, we should consider the overall presentation of game environments and characters, including stylistic design choices and the use of different perspectives, as well as specific images presented to the player. Naturally, the visual makeup of the game world relays information on what its world is like, and character design similarly has informative markers when dealing with both the player character and non-player characters, if there are any. Stylistic factors such as color palettes can make a striking difference in how we experience the game and the narrative as well, with games sometimes utilizing either very muted or even monochromatic (as in *Limbo* (2010) or *Little Nightmares* (2017)), or very bright palettes (as in *Firewatch* or *No Man’s Sky* (2016)). Besides overall design, particular imagery is also part of the visual rhetoric of video games, for example, found photographs and other still images or objects, similar to found texts, might deepen the player’s understanding of the world and the narrative, as is the case with *ABZÛ*’s murals, discussed in the upcoming sections.

A third layer of video games’ rhetorics is sonic rhetoric, that is, their audio design, which can include ambient noises, sound effects, and both intra- and extradiegetic music. The function of music in video games has grown into a sub-discipline of its own over the past two decades, with game scholars writing extensive analyses<sup>6</sup> and developing entire frameworks<sup>7</sup> for studying video game music; Roy Munday in particular has observed that video game music has certain mythical

4 One notable example of this is Telltale Games’s choice-based games, such as *The Walking Dead* (2012), where, by default, the game gives feedback on certain dialogue or action choices once the player has made them, for example, telling the player that non-player characters will remember their actions.

5 Hawreliak 50–51.

6 Munday; Whalen, “Film Music vs. Video-Game Music: The Case of *Silent Hill*.”

7 Summers, “Playing the Tune;” Summers, *Understanding Video Game Music*; Whalen, “Play Along.”

qualities.<sup>8</sup> This dimension of the rhetorics of *ABZÛ*, however, is outside of the scope of this paper (and the abilities of this tone-deaf author), and as such, will not be discussed in the following sections. However, it might be especially fascinating to study how the lush soundscapes of the game – and at times, its lifeless silences – underpin its ecological themes, perhaps in light of Michelle Comstock and Mary E. Hocks’s research on sonic rhetoric as it relates to the Anthropocene, where they argue that “sound is particularly useful for understanding and communicating our currently volatile experiences of climate change.”<sup>9</sup>

Lastly – and considering the medium’s core feature of interactivity, chiefly – their procedurality may give an important rhetorical layer to video games. The concept of procedural rhetoric was developed by Ian Bogost in his 2007 book *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*, where he establishes a framework for how the processes that make up video games can become a part of their persuasive expression. Bogost defines procedural rhetoric as “the practice of using processes persuasively,”<sup>10</sup> that is, interactive media and especially video games conveying meaning through the interactor or player’s actions and choices: their methods of interaction, their possibilities, their allowances and limitations, what they are “forced” to do by the game in order to progress, and what they can do optionally.

The procedural rhetorics of video games can provide fertile ground for analyses, as this is where games as an expressive medium can truly shine. Of course, to suggest that interactivity or procedurality are the sole domain of video games would be inaccurate: there are myriad interactive media beyond games, and similarly, processes are employed by other computational and even non-computational media. However, Bogost argues, video games are not only “among the most procedural of computational artifacts,” they also generally possess greater expressive power, more robust interactivity, and more potential for immersion than other procedural representations, lending them exceptional persuasive capabilities through the use of processes; Bogost calls such games which successfully make use of these capabilities ‘persuasive games’.<sup>11</sup>

These different rhetorical modes – verbal, visual, sonic, and procedural – can work together in consonance to strengthen each other even further, or, if misaligned, create dissonance.<sup>12</sup> One successful example is the still immensely popular massively

8 Munday 58–60.

9 Comstock and Hocks 166.

10 Bogost 3.

11 Bogost 44–46.

12 Hawreliak 97–99.

multiplayer online role-playing game *World of Warcraft* (2004), which also relies on myth, as Tanya Krzywinska demonstrates. According to her analysis, *World of Warcraft* uses the elements of myth in several facets of the verbal, the visual, and the procedural modes to create a cohesive game world, such as mythologizing quest texts, visual markers that evoke mythology, and the hero quest format.<sup>13</sup>

### Verbal rhetoric in *ABZÛ*

The verbal mode of rhetoric is almost entirely absent in *ABZÛ*: there is no dialogue, nor any textual descriptions to be found in the game. The only two types of text in *ABZÛ* are not even strictly part of the game's world; rather, they are sparse texts on the user interface: one, the game provides the player with certain hints that tell them how to interact with the game world, and two, the species of fish and other aquatic creatures are displayed as labels when the player interacts with them in some manner. The first piece of text that the player encounters after starting the game from the menu, and after a brief cutscene of the player-controlled diver coming to in the ocean, exemplifies *ABZÛ*'s minimalistic approach to using text. It says simply, "Press to Dive," under an illustration of the diving button on the player's control scheme. Such hints show up while playing from time to time, written inauspiciously in a corner of the screen, letting the player know what buttons to press if they wish to interact with the objects or creatures in the game.

While such hints are not an intrinsic, meaningful part of the game's world, it could be argued that the other type of text, that is, the labels, do indeed add meaning, not necessarily through the information they convey, but by their sheer existence. The fact that the developers decided to include these labels in a game that is otherwise almost completely devoid of text signals that they carry some significance. As the labels are always there to display information about the animals the player encounters (and either interacts with by riding or observes through meditation – more on these game mechanics later), what little text there is seems to encourage an awareness of the environment, both of that in the game and in the real world, thus contributing to an overall message of eco-consciousness in the game.

Besides the user interface hints and the labels, this almost complete lack of text in the game is fascinating especially because *ABZÛ* is a walking or diving simulator: as mentioned before, these types of games tend to rely heavily on text and visuals to convey meaning, since their level of interactivity is so light. In contrast,

13 Krzywinska 385–390.



*ABZÛ* strips away text, placing yet more emphasis on the other aspects of the game, that is, visuals and processes. In this, the conspicuous absence of the verbal dimension itself may be seen as a rhetorical device.

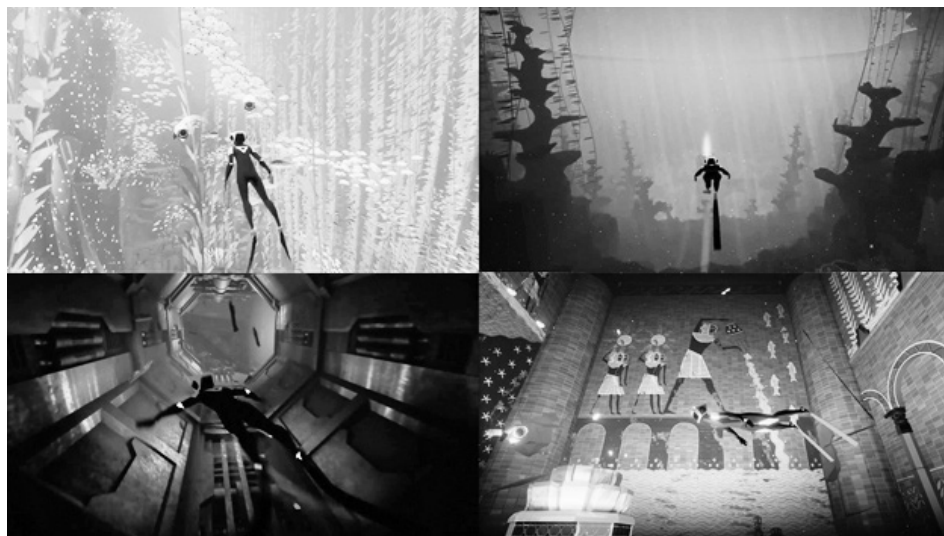


Figure 1: Game environments in *ABZÛ*

### Visual rhetoric and myth in *ABZÛ*

This brings us to *ABZÛ*'s visuals, which create the game's richest rhetorical layers. The game is primarily characterized by bright, lush environments (see *Figure 1*, upper left). These spaces are full of vivid marine life that the player can observe and swim with to their heart's content. Even later on, as the player character descends deeper and deeper into the ocean, plunging into inky blackness, the volume of diverse deep-sea creatures is striking. The game goes back and forth between these environments and barren, grey scenes (see *Figure 1*, upper right). These desolate areas stand in stark contrast to the previous, flourishing and alive ones, creating a striking visual for the player and demonstrating the devastating annihilation of an ocean previously teeming with life. Ecological destruction thus becomes a tangible reality to the player within the game's world, through the game's visual and spatial representations. Third, between each game section, the player encounters giant, menacing, pyramid-like mechanical objects, and later even enters the bowels of one (see *Figure 1*, lower left). These machines are later found to be the tool for or possibly the source of marine degradation. Although the clearly dangerous, ominous red interior is only shown in the latter half of the game, the pyramids are

marked as vaguely yet obviously threatening from the start by their sheer size and their orange-red glow. Lastly, their existence, and the story behind the collapse of the ocean's ecosystem are slowly explained by the murals found by the player (see *Figure 1*, lower right).

These murals make up one layer of the game's minimalistic narrative: that of a mythologized past, while the player's actions write the present. Although these representations are non-interactive and do not *require* the player's inspection (as some games might when providing the player with visual artifacts), *ABZÛ* steers the player in ways that they will necessarily, in the course of progressing through the game, encounter them. This, coupled with the sparse verbal – and as we will see, procedural – representations in the game, means that the murals become focal points of *ABZÛ*'s narrative. Hawreliak's observations about still images as carriers of meaning are useful here: although he is writing about still images which make up static areas of a game world, as in traditional point-and-click adventures, his assertions still apply in the case of *ABZÛ*'s murals, which are only slices of still imagery in an otherwise dynamic, traversable three-dimensional environment. Hawreliak writes that still images allow “viewers to examine an image in-depth and at their own pace,”<sup>14</sup> as is the case in *ABZÛ*.

The meaning of the murals gradually unfolds to tell the story of an ancient civilization's past: how they initially lived symbiotically with the ocean, and how the harvesting of its resources led to the downfall and destruction of both. They immediately evoke myths of distant pasts – even if the player is not familiar with the Abzu (or Apsu) of Mesopotamian mythology, where the name denotes the freshwater ocean beneath the earth. The representations of the human figures, with their distinctive, frontalist depictions, are sure to call to mind either Mesopotamian (or, as it is more widely recognized, Egyptian) mythology.

The representations on the murals also correspond to the visual markers on the player character's model, the player's avatar in the game, in a way that is instantly recognizable even at a glance, thanks to their minimalistic design. The murals' figures and the player character share a distinctive color scheme of black and yellow, wearing simple, unadorned attire, marking the unnamed and otherwise featureless diver as belonging to the same community. Further on in the game, the player even encounters a mural that seems to depict the diver – or someone like them – as a key figure of the myth, as someone who is able to wield the ocean's energy, and perhaps restore life

14 Hawreliak 52.

to it. It is also worth mentioning here that although the diver is referred to with female pronouns in the developer diary,<sup>15</sup> this is external to the game's world. *ABZÛ* contains no indicators about the player character's gender, which might contribute to the diver being perceived as a universal, mythic hero figure whose individual identity matters less than their role in the narrative. The player, then, can recognize their diver-avatar as an integral part of a myth currently in the making, and understand their in-game actions in the structure of this myth, as a capstone to it. In this way, *ABZÛ*'s murals and the mythic past they show frame the understanding of what the player is doing exactly and why, as this is never articulated verbally; they are what gives meaning to the game's present.

But what is that meaning? Besides its other social functions, such as providing people with a shared history and sense of community, as well as understanding of one's own self, myth has long been understood as a tool to deliver instruction: "the mythologic system of a people," writes Gayton, "is often their educational system, and the children who sit listening to an evening's tale are imbibing traditional knowledge and attitudes no less than the row of sixth-graders in our modern classrooms."<sup>16</sup> Owing to the nature of myth, such instruction can be universally understood; Northrop Frye in an oft-quoted passage of *The Great Code* writes that "a myth is designed not to describe a specific situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation. Its truth is inside its structure, not outside."<sup>17</sup> The structure of the story or myth itself, which shows the devastating effects of environmental destruction – and, if we consider the game's present as part of the game's mythology, the significance of restoration – then, becomes a valuable rhetorical tool in *ABZÛ*, conveyed entirely through the visual.

### Procedural rhetoric in *ABZÛ*

Finally, it also proves intriguing to examine how *ABZÛ*'s procedural rhetoric underpins the same message. As mentioned before, *ABZÛ* being a walking or diving simulator means that the level of traditional interaction is low in the game: common gameplay elements like action, platforming, or building mechanics are entirely absent. Instead, the only compulsory interactions to proceed through sections are some light puzzle solving and exploration elements as well as the simple, "press of a button" restoration of dead areas, with some light dodging of dangerous objects later in the game.

<sup>15</sup> "ABZÛ Dev Diary with Matt Nava."

<sup>16</sup> Gayton 149.

<sup>17</sup> Frye 46.

Besides these elements, there are some optional ways in which the player can engage with the game world. The first of these, introduced very early in the game's opening sequence, is riding or swimming with sea creatures. The game lets the player ride any animal large enough, from turtles to manta rays, sharks, manatees, whales, and giant squid. It is interesting to note here that while the player can, to some extent, steer more docile species, trying to control others will only bring brief success before the animal shakes itself and takes back control – while still letting the player cling on. Even more passive is the game mechanic that allows the player to watch animals while “meditating” when sitting on certain statues that are found in each area. Here the player never even touches the animals, only observes them from afar. The meditation mechanic lets the player watch any animal up close in a given scene, from the smallest to largest, even those that cannot be ridden, while the screen displays the animal's species in the corner – as mentioned previously, these labels seem to encourage awareness of the environment, while the passive process of meditation further underpins a message of non-interference.

This lack of traditional gameplay, however, does not mean that *ABZÛ*'s procedural rhetoric is weak; instead, the low level of interactivity can once again be seen as a rhetorical tool in and of itself. Bogost, when writing about interactivity, argues that what are seen as the limitations of gameplay may actually be “the very way [the game] becomes procedurally expressive” and that, while higher interactivity might suggest higher vividness<sup>18</sup> and thus, persuasion, “the total number and credibility of user actions is not necessarily important; rather, the relevance of the interaction in the context of the representational goals of the system is paramount.”<sup>19</sup> That is, when in consonance with the rest of a game's world, the “selective interactivity” of video games can in fact strengthen their persuasive power.<sup>20</sup> In the case of *ABZÛ*, the light interaction fits into the game's ecological message, that is, eco-consciousness seems to be embedded in the minimalistic, at times passive, and at others, restorative gameplay. Both the sparse compulsory mechanics, and the optional ones, riding and meditation, encourage exploration and an awareness of the environment – that of the game, and I believe, by extension, the real-world environment.

18 Bogost here is discussing vividness in terms of Charles Hill's essay on visual rhetorics, in which Hill tries to establish a spectrum of vividness wherein representations can be closer to or further from actual lived experience, making them more or less persuasive (Hill 31).

19 Bogost 43, 46.

20 Bogost 46.

## Conclusion

I have to admit that when I originally set out to write this paper, I had my doubts about the effectiveness of *ABZÛ*'s ecological messaging, even though I knew from the experience of playing the game that it *felt* persuasive. Still, I was concerned that narratives of a long-ago, fictional past might distance players from the very present, ongoing environmental issues we are now facing, or that the minimalistic gameplay may similarly understate the urgency of the climate crisis. However, on examining the game's rhetorical layers – and replaying it many times not only for the sake of this analysis, but because of its truly meditative nature – I believe that *ABZÛ* effectively uses the rhetorical modes afforded by the medium. *ABZÛ*'s verbal representations (or rather, almost complete lack of them), visuals, processes, and wrapped within the latter two, the game's use of myth, work together to make a persuasive argument about environmental conservation.

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# A mentális fauna és a populáris kultúra kapcsolata házikedvenctartók állatokról szóló narratíváiban

**Bartók Zoltán**

Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Interdiszciplináris Doktori Iskola  
zolibartok@gmail.com

Az állatok természetéről való gondolkodás az emberi élet legtermészetesebb jelenségei közé tartozik. Az állati szereplők megjelenése a populáris kultúrában nem független attól a – Paul Shepard szavaival élve – „mentális menazsériától”,<sup>1</sup> amely az állatvilággal kapcsolatban az emberi gondolkodásban megnyilvánul, és amely strukturálja a környezet emberi percepcióját. Tanulmányomban azt vizsgálom, hogy fiatal pécsi házikedvenctartóknak mely állatfajok jutnak eszükbe az „állat” kategóriájáról, milyen az a szelektív zoológiai érdeklődésen alapuló mentális fauna, ami gondolkodásukban előfordul, valamint, hogy ez milyen strukturális hasonlóságokat mutat a populáris kultúrában, és azon belül is a különböző állati szereplőket felvonultató filmekben és sorozatokban ábrázolt élővilággal.

A témaválasztás során komoly hatással volt rám Pim Martens és szerzőtársai tanulmánya, akik holland és belga középiskolás diákok között végeztek kérdőíves kutatást, amelyben a megkérdezett fiataloknak az állatokhoz fűződő viszonyokat vizsgálták.<sup>2</sup> Én a kutatás során azonban a kérdőív helyett a kvalitatív interjú módszerét alkalmaztam, úgy gondoltam, hogy ezzel sokkal mélyebben lehet megragadni az állatokhoz való viszonyulás különböző módjait. Választásommal egy sor olyan kutatáshoz kapcsolódtam, amelyek alapját házikedvenctartó gazdákkal végzett etnográfiai interjúk képezik, hasonlóan Samantha Kennedynek a kutyákkal való érzelmi kapcsolatról,<sup>3</sup> Sarah Czernynek a „*kutyatudás*” érvényesüléséről,<sup>4</sup> Lovas Kiss Antalnak a kutyákkal végzett közös rituális cselekedetekről,<sup>5</sup> Becky Tippernek kisgyermekek állat-ismerőseiről,<sup>6</sup> vagy Clinton R. Sandersnek a gazdák által kutyáiknak tulajdonított mentális képességeiről<sup>7</sup> írott tanulmányaihoz. Jelen írásom tíz pécsi egyetemistával készült etnográfiai interjú alapján készült, amelyek során többek

1 Shepard 38. Az angol nyelvű idézeteket saját fordításomban közlöm.

2 Martens et al. 1–3.

3 Kennedy 3–6.

4 Czerny 8–9.

5 Lovas 186.

6 Tipper 145–147.

7 Sanders 206–208.



között olyan kérdésekről beszélgettem velük, hogy az *állat* kategóriájáról milyen élőlények jutnak eszükbe, valamint hogy bizonyos populáris kulturális műfajokon belül, például a filmekben, milyen állati szereplőket tartanak fontosnak.

### Mentális fauna és zoológiai szelektivitás

Emberségünket nagymértékben meghatározza az állati természet. Egyrésztől azért, mert az emberi faj fejlődésének évmilliói alatt – más biológiai fajokhoz hasonlóan – a környezeti feltételekhez, a túlélésért folytatott versenyhez, bizonyos kedvező adaptációk megjelenéséhez és az azokra ható természetes szelekcióhoz, tehát a biológiai evolúció folyamataihoz volt kötve. Másrésztől ezen fejlődéstörténet során a minket mindenhol körülvevő, hozzánk leginkább hasonló útítársaink az állatvilág képviselői voltak. Számos módon léptünk és lépünk mind a mai napig kapcsolatba az állatvilággal: az állatok az élelem, a szórakozás, a társasági élet vagy akár a fenyegetés forrásai is lehetnek. A minket övező fauna kiemelkedő fontossága révén az állatok tulajdonságairól, viselkedéséről való elmélkedés bizonyára egyidős az emberi gondolkodással. Paul Shepard amerikai környezetfilozófus szerint az emberi elme a szociális kapcsolatokra hangolt, mindenevő, egyszerre vadász és zsákmány szerepét betöltő főemlős ökológiai helyzetének az eredménye.<sup>8</sup> Minden természeti faj számára előnyös, hasznos ismeret, ha tisztában van a környezet által felkínált lehetőségekkel vagy „megengedésekkel” („*affordances*”).<sup>9</sup> A ragadozó és zsákmány fajok pedig radikálisan eltérő módon tekintenek környezetükre, hiszen más-más ismeretekre van szükségük a túléléshez. Az ember esetében azonban mindkét típusú környezeti viszonyulás hangsúlyos szerepet játszott a fejlődésben.<sup>10</sup> Az emberi gondolkodás így egy kifejezetten komplex ökológiai helyzetben formálódott, amelyben őseink számára evolúciós értelemben hasznosnak bizonyult az állatvilág különböző rétegeire való aktív figyelem, akár az embert elejteni képes ragadozókról, akár az ember által elejtett zsákmányállatokról legyen szó. Ez az aktív figyelem azonban bizonyos módon szelektív is, hiszen egyes állatfajok behatóbb ismerete fontosabbnak bizonyult más fajokénál. Bizonyos fajok jobban megmozgatják az emberi fantáziát, mint mások, egészen egyszerűen az általuk felkínált lehetőségek vagy fenyegetések mértéke miatt.

Az állatvilágra való odafigyelés az emberi intelligencia és éntudat formálódásában is szerepet játszhatott. Shepard szerint a gondolkodástól elválaszthatatlan nyelvfejlődés kezdete is ökológiai alapokra épült, így az első főnevek a környezet

8 Shepard 11–15, 19–22.

9 Reed 110–113, 116–119.

10 Shepard 11–15.

elemeit, főleg pedig állatokat, valamint más fajtársakat, tehát szociális kapcsolatokat határoztak meg.<sup>11</sup> A nyelv, Szívós Mihályt idézve, „nem tekinthető a maga egészében emberi találmánynak vagy tudatos fejlesztésnek”, hanem a „biológiai örökség része,” bár a kulturális fejlődés során a nyelv természeti alapjai némileg háttérbe szorultak.<sup>12</sup> Azonban ez a háttérbe szorulás nem tekinthető teljesnek: az állatos játékok, mesék, képeskönyvek, és persze maguknak az állatoknak a hatalmas népszerűsége a gyermekek körében<sup>13</sup> és a gyermeknevelésben arra enged következtetni, hogy az emberi egyedfejlődésben az állatokról való gondolkodás a mai napig nem veszítette el fontosságát. Shepard szerint ez azért kiemelkedően fontos, mert az ember éntudatának, személyes sajátosságainak kikristályosodásához szükség van egy természetes másságra, amit a hozzánk pont kellő arányban hasonló és egyszersmind különböző állati fajok adnak meg számunkra.<sup>14</sup> Az emberi intelligencia fejlődéséhez tehát mind az élővilág evolúciója, mind pedig az egyes emberek egyedfejlődése során nagy mértékben járultak hozzá állattársaink. Úgy is fogalmazhatunk, hogy nincs is természetesebb, mint az állatok természetéről való elmélkedés.

Shepard szerint minden ember gondolkodásában létezik egy adott fauna, egy „mentális menazséria,” amely strukturálja az ember és környezetének kapcsolatát. Ez azonban nem feltétlenül felel meg teljes mértékben az embert körülvevő tényleges állatvilágnak, hanem bizonyos specifikus tulajdonságaik miatt egyes állatokra nagyobb figyelem irányul: „Ennek az ősi figyelemnek a sugarai az állatvilág csupán bizonyos csoportjait világították meg.”<sup>15</sup> Shepard modern körülmények között, egy sajátos ember–állat kapcsolat példáján, a reklámparban előforduló állatábrázolások kapcsán elemzi a mentális menazsériának ebben az adott műfajban előforduló szerkezetét. A *The Saturday Evening Post* újság 1950-es évekbeli reklámjainak összegyűjtése után a reklámokban előforduló állatokból egy 124 fajból álló faunát határozott meg.<sup>16</sup> Ez a fauna a valós környezeti viszonyokat tekintve egyáltalán nem reprezentatív, az emberi érdeklődés sajátosságainak, és nem ökológiai kritériumoknak felel meg.<sup>17</sup> Csupán két rend, az ízeltlábúak és a gerincesek rendje reprezentálódik a reklámokban, az ízeltlábúakhoz tartozó fajok azonban alacsony számban, csak elvétve fordulnak elő. A reklámok faunáját leginkább az emlősök, azon belül

11 Shepard 42–46.

12 Szívós 88, 91.

13 Az állatok fontosságáról a gyermekek kapcsolataiban lásd Tipper 145–165.

14 Shepard 253–255.

15 Shepard 56.

16 Shepard 213–214.

17 Shepard 232–237.

is főként a háziállatfajok, valamint kisebb mértékben a madarak határozták meg.<sup>18</sup> Shepard szerint ebben az adott ember–állat viszonyban, tehát az újság reklámjainak állat-reprezentációiban előforduló állatvilág „zoológiailag egy szubarktikus szigethez hasonlít, amelyen egy nagytestű emlősöket szállító teherhajó feneklett meg.”<sup>19</sup> Így e szigeten egy, csupán az emberek gondolkodásában létező, mesterséges környezet jön létre, amelynek referenciája nem a valós természeti viszonyokban, hanem az emberi érdeklődés szelektivitásában keresendő.

Ez a zoológiai szelektivitás nemcsak a reklámok kapcsán tűnik fel, hanem az általam készített interjúkban is megfigyelhető. Az interjúk egyik kérdésében arra tettem kísérletet, hogy felmérjem, melyek azok a fajok, amelyek beszélgetőtársaim eszébe jutnak akkor, ha arra kérem őket, hogy állatfajokat soroljanak fel. Meglepődve tapasztaltam, hogy több beszélgetőtársam kezdetben az állatfaj fogalmában és határaiban is bizonytalan volt: a kérdésemre sokszor kérdéssel válaszoltak. Így Ella<sup>20</sup>: „Csiga? Az annak [állatfajnak] számít?” vagy Szabolcs: „Állatfaj? Ilyen kutya-cica meg ilyenek?” Néha az állatfajokat a rendszertani osztályokkal keverték össze, úgy, mint Milán: „Állatfajokat? Madarak, emlősök, kétéltűek.” Ez az állatfajok definícióját illető bizonytalanság a fogalmi kérdések tisztázása után sem múlt el teljesen: sokszor előfordult például, hogy bizonyos állatok vagy állati osztályok legitimitását teljesen megkérdőjelezték. Ez a rovarok kapcsán jelentkezett leghangsúlyosabban. Többen nehezen tekintették például az emlősökkel egyenértékűnek a rovarfajok említését, és többször megkérdézték tőlem, hogy őket érdemes-e említeni. Ilyen volt Szabolcs is: „A csótány, mint rovar az jöhet ide, vagy az (nem)...?” Vagy Ella: „Tatu. Madár, izé, pingvin, foka, jegesmedve, bölény, oroszlán, teknős. Ez így nehéz. Bogarak számítanak?” Az is nagyon gyakori jelenség volt, hogy a kevésbé ismert állatoknál csak a rendszertani osztályt nevezték meg, nem egy adott fajt: így például olyan népszerű állatfajok, mint a kutya, a macska, a jegesmedve vagy az oroszlán felsorolása mellett találkozhatunk „madarakkal” és „halakkal” egyaránt.

Ha ezen zoológiai bizonytalanságok említése után azt vesszük szemügyre, hogy milyen állatok jutnak általában a beszélgetőtársaim eszébe, néhány érdekes dolgot említhetünk meg. Ezen rövid állatfelsorolásokban, ahogyan a Shepard által elemzett reklámokban is, egyértelműen az emlősök hegemoniája tapasztalható. Az emlősök tűnnek a legismertebb és az érdeklődést leginkább kiváltó osztálynak, őket pedig általában a madárfajok követik. Érdekes jelenség továbbá, hogy az eg-

18 Shepard 215–217.

19 Shepard 226–227.

20 Beszélgetőtársaim keresztnéveik publikálására szóbeli engedélyt adtak.

zotikus, távoli kontinensekről származó állatok rendkívül gyakran fordulnak elő a megnevezésekben, tehát ha beszélgetőtársaim közvetlen környezete nem is, de mentális környezete mindenképp globális forrásokból táplálkozik. Továbbá jellemző az is, hogy a hagyományos házikedvenc fajokat, tehát a kutyát és a macskát majdnem mindegyik adatközlőm megemlíti, néha pedig maga a felsorolás is velük kezdődik. István és László listájában jól tükröződnek az elmondottak:

**István:** *Kutya, macska, pók, elefánt, zebra, tigris, disznó, vaddisznó, szarvasmarha, csirke, galamb, emu, kivi, kígyó, oroszlán, izé, hal, abból mondjuk nagyon sok féle van, de... akkor cápa, nyálkahal: legundorítóbb, de mit tudom én, kenguruk, taszmán ördög, óh, hát a kedvencem, kapibara, mosómedve, róka, farkas, pingvin, jegesmedve.*

**László:** *Elefánt, kutya, macska, kígyó, denevér, majom, egér, patkány. Mi az Isten van, várjál. Medve. Kígyót mondtam. Hát, várjál. Bogarak közül is milyen bogár van, várjál. Szentjánosbogár. Várj, várj, az már bogár, az már nem állat. Vagy, hát az nem tudom, az lehet, hogy más kategória. Halak.*

Az állatok felsorolásának közös jellemzője volt még a blokkyszerűség, ami szerint nagyon sokszor a hasonló fajokat hasonló fajok követik a felsorolásban. Ez a hasonlóság lehet földrajzi (afrikai állatok után afrikai állatok), az állat rendszertani besorolása (ragadozó állatok után ragadozó állatok); de a hasonlóság forrása lehet a populáris kultúra is, például Szabolcs felsorolásában, ahol a *Micimackó* állatai mellett egy sárkány is szerepel. „*Akkor elefánt, csirke, tigris, oroszlán, Micimackó a maci, malacka, tigris volt? Nem volt még a tigris. Mi van még? Szamár, ló, teknős, kutya, cica, egér, patkány, sárkány ne?*” Ellának pedig az állat kategóriája kapcsán rögtön a *Harry Potter* állatvilága jutott eszébe: „*Legszívesebben rávágnám, hogy griff vagy hippogriff.*”

Összességében azt mondhatjuk, hogy az a fauna, amelyet interjúalanyaim az „állat” kategóriájával kapcsolatban említésre méltónak találtak, csak részben tükrözi az őket körülvevő valóságos környezetet és állatvilágot. Ezen mesterséges, egyfajta szelektív ökológiai érdeklődésben gyökerező mentális faunában az egzotikus, távoli vidékekről származó (főként emlős) fajok és a házikedvencek is hangsúlyosan megjelennek. Az állatok bizonyos csoportjai, például az ízeltlábúak, csak némely esetben említődnek meg, más csoportok pedig szisztematikusan kimaradnak, valószínűleg az interakció és az érdeklődés hiányára visszavezethetően. Tanulmányom következő

részében azt tekintem át, hogy azokban a filmekben, amelyeket az állatok témája kapcsán beszélgetőtársaim fontosnak tartanak megemlíteni, mely állatfajok előfordulására emlékeznek, milyen állatfajokkal említhető valamilyen kapcsolat. Azt láthatjuk majd, hogy az állati szereplőket felvonultató filmekben reprezentált fajok kapcsán is az előbb tárgyalt, egzotikus emlősállatokra és házikedvencekre fókuszáló zoológiai szelektivitás érvényesül.

### Az állatszereplős filmek élővilága

Az olyan narratívák, amelyekben állati szereplők hangsúlyosan előfordulnak, valószínűleg a történetmondás történetének kezdeteire vezethetők vissza. A beszélgetőtársaim esetében az állatos filmek és sorozatok, amelyeket főleg gyerekkorukban láttak, rendkívül népszerűnek tűnnek. Ezen médiatermékek egy sajátos ember–állat kapcsolatot teremtenek, ahol az állatok megjelenésükkel legtöbbször nem saját magukat reprezentálják, hanem egy művészeti koncepciót keltenek életre. Műfaji sajátosságnak tarthatjuk itt az antropomorfizációt: az állatok legtöbbször beszélnek, emberi tevékenységeket végeznek és emberi személyiségjegyeket formálnak meg. Az állatok tehát a felidézett filmekben bizonyos gondolati tartalmakat hordoznak, kvázi-állatokként jelennek meg. Az ilyen tematikájú filmekre és sorozatokra végső soron az emberi és állati világok egymásba csúszása jellemző, az állatszereplők célja pedig legtöbbször az, hogy kiváltsák a nézői érdeklődést és a velük való azonosulást.

Ha megnézzük, hogy milyen állatvilágot fedezhetünk fel azokban az állatszereplős filmekben, amelyekre beszélgetőtársaim a legjobban emlékeznek vagy amelyek a legjobban hatottak rájuk, akkor először azt láthatjuk, hogy a (nyugati kultúrától legalábbis) távol eső vidékek fajai tűnnek a legkedveltebbnek. Ilyen fajok fordulnak elő például a beszélgetőtársaim által gyakran említett *Madagaszkár* (Tom McGrath & Eric Darnell, 2005) és *Az oroszlánkirály* (Roger Allers & Rob Minkoff, 1994) című animációs filmekben. A *Madagaszkár*ban állatkerti állatok kalandjait követhetjük végig, ahogyan vissza szeretnének jutni Afrikába; végül Madagaszkár szigetén kötnek ki, így ismerkednek meg az ottani állatvilággal. *Az oroszlánkirály* az afrikai szavannák állatvilágára épít, és a *Hamlet* történetének állatokra adaptálásának tekinthető.<sup>21</sup> Ahogyan arra Andrew Walsh a madagaszkári ökoturizmus és zafírbányászat etnográfiai elemzésével rámutatott, a világon bizonyos helyek és tárgyak a kulturális gondolkodásban egyfajta „természeti csodaként” értelmeződnek, feltételezett különlegességük pedig ironikus módon éppen kommercializálódásukhoz és

21 Gavin 55.

következésképpen homogenizálásukhoz járul hozzá egy, az ilyen természeti kincsek kereskedelmére kialakult „globális bazárban”.<sup>22</sup> Talán azért jelentkeznek ilyen hangsúlyosan a távoli, egzotikus helyek állatai az állatos filmekben, mert ezen egzotikus helyek és az ott fellelhető fauna mint különleges természeti csodák könnyen eladhatók, hamar felkeltik a nézők érdeklődését és kiváltják a szereplőkkel való azonosulást. László *Madagaszkárról* szóló elbeszélésében például a benne szereplő egzotikus fajok iránti zoológiai kíváncsiságának adott hangot:

*Ugye, vannak benne ezek a fajta karakterek, akik közel állnak hozzám, mint például ez a gyűrűsfarkú makit alakító Julian király, meg akkor ott a Mort, az a kis apró kis nem tudom milyen állat. Az ilyen nagy szemeivel. Ezek így megfognak, és így kíváncsi lennék, hogy a valóságban is az most tényleg hasonló, vagy hogy kell elképzelni.*

Ella nevű interjúalanyom *Az oroszláncírályról* (annak első és második részéről egyaránt) szóló narratívájában pedig a szereplőkkel való azonosulás tűnik fel:

**Kiara:** *Nekem alapvetően a[z Oroszláncírály] kettő volt mindig is a kedvencem, mert ugye a főszereplő lány. Kislányként egyszerűbb lehet ezzel azonosulni, mint a Szimbával. Meg Timon-Pumba az egyértelmű, az tényleg mindenkinek a kedvenc szereplői. Meg a majom, mert az ilyen köcsög, de azért jó arc.*

Ezekben a filmekben sokszor az állatok antropomorf ábrázolása az, ami megmarad beszélgetőtársaim emlékeiben, ahogy azt például Szabolcs ki is fejti a *Madagaszkár*-ban szereplő zsiráffal kapcsolatban:

*Hát figyelj, ott [a Madagaszkárban] mindegyik zseni, de az egyik nagy kedvencem a Mermel, a zsiráf. Tehát az a hipochonderséggel olyan poénokat szokott lenyomni, hogy na! A kedvenc poénom tőle, amikor mennek ki az erdőbe, kiérnek, és ott a buli, így széthúzzák a sövényt, és akkor így kinéz, és így mondja, hogy hány pontban szegték meg a KÖJÁL állami szabályait! Mert tudod, ilyen vitaminokat étkszik, meg egy újabb folt megjelenik a hátán, és azt hiszi, hogy rákos. Tehát az az állat az zseni.*

Van azonban az állatoknak egy másik csoportja az egzotikus vadállatok mellett, amely gyakran előfordul az állati szereplőkre hangsúlyosan építő médiában: a házikedvenceké. A beszélgetőtársaim által említett olyan filmekben, mint például a *Marley és Én*,<sup>23</sup> a *Lassie*<sup>24</sup> vagy a *Garfield*,<sup>25</sup> kivétel nélkül házikedvencek, azaz kutyák és macskák jelennek meg. A szereplők személyével történő azonosulás itt is megtörténik, azonban úgy gondolom, hogy az egzotikus állatokat felvonultató filmekről eltérően a házikedvencek más tulajdonságaik miatt keltik fel a figyelmet. Nem az állatok különlegessége, távoli tájakon való kalandjai hordozzák a fő érdekességet, hanem éppen ellenkező folyamat játszódik le. Az ilyen alkotásokban a házikedvenceket azért jó elgondolni, és azért könnyű emberiesíteni, mert életük szorosan az emberi tevékenységhez kötődik. Ott vannak körünkben, alkalmazkodtak hozzánk, gyakori a köztük és köztünk zajló interakció. A kedvencek olyan szorosan a társadalom részei, hogy különböző kulturális tartalmak kifejezésére rendkívül alkalmassá váltak, könnyű megérteni a helyzetüket, azonosulni velük: nem természeti, hanem társadalmi csodaként tekinthetünk rájuk. Ez a közelség érezhető István a *Marley és Én* című filmről szóló narratívájában is:

*Mondjuk, csak egyszer láttam a Marley és Én-t is, de az jobban megragadott. Az azért egy jó film volt. Persze, ha valakinek nincs kutyája, vagy nem pont ugyanilyen kutyája van, akkor kevésbé tetszik neki, vagy kevésbé értékeli, vagy nem tudom, de nekem az nagyon tetszett. Felismertem benne a saját kutyámat lényegében, tehát így viselkedésre is hasonló volt meg kinézetre is.*

Zelma a *Lassie*-sorozat kapcsán a gazda és háziállata közti intimitás fontosságát emelte ki: „A *Lassie*-be meg az a kisgyerek fogott meg, hogy mennyire szerette azt a kutyáját meg ilyenek”. Végül a házikedvenc szereplőkkel való azonosulás a saját személyiségjegyek értelmezése kapcsán is megjelenhet, úgy, mint László esetében, ahol *Garfield* személyes tulajdonságai képezték az identifikáció alapját: „A *Garfield* fogott meg! Könnyen tudok hasonlítani vele. Dagadt, sokat eszik, lusta. Mint én.”

A filmek és sorozatok, és szélesebb értelemben a populáris kultúra tehát nagyban épít a távoli tájak egzotikus vadállatainak, valamint a minket mindenhol körülvevő háziállatoknak, azon belül is kiemelten a hagyományos házikedvencfajoknak, a kutyának és macskának a szerepeltetésére. Az egzotikus vidékek vadállatai egyfajta

23 David Frankel 2008.

24 Daniel Petrie 1994.

25 Peter Hewitt 2004.

természeti csodaként értelmezhetők, ahogyan azt Andrew Walsh határozta meg: elérhetetlenségük, különlegességük és érdekességük könnyen eladhatóvá és felhasználhatóvá teszi őket a filmipar számára, és ezen állatok homogenizálásához járul hozzá egy megannyi szállal összekötött „globális bazárban”. A házikedvencfajok esetében azonban más a helyzet, ugyanis ezen fajok népszerűsége nem az elérhetetlen vagy a különleges megismerésére való törekvésben, hanem a mindennapi ismerősséggel való azonosulásban kereshető. A házikedvencfajok a domesztikáció során egyre szorosabban társadalmi életünk részeivé váltak: azt is mondhatjuk, hogy ezen fajok nem természeti, hanem társadalmi csodák, és nem távolságuk, hanem fizikális és emocionális közelségük az, ami rendkívül kifejezővé teszi őket.

### **Következtetés: valóságos állatok egy elképzelt világban**

Tanulmányom elején azt láthattuk, hogy a megkérdezett pécsi házikedvenctartók számára az *állat* kategóriája főként emlősöket jelentett, azon belül pedig az egzotikus vidékek állatai és a legnépszerűbb házikedvenc fajok (kutya és a macska) előfordulása volt kiemelkedő. A többi állati rendbe tartozó faj csak sokkal kisebb arányban jelenik meg a gondolkodásukban. Az állati szereplőket felvonultató filmekről folytatott későbbi beszélgetések alapján pedig úgy tűnik, hogy ezen filmekben is hasonló zoológiai szelektivitás érvényesül. A hasonlóság bizonyára nem véletlen: úgy gondolom, hogy a populáris kultúra termékei egyfelől igazodnak az adott kulturális miliőben tapasztalható állatokról való gondolkodás folyamataihoz, másfelől vissza is hatnak arra. Az oroszlán és a kutya alakja például általában mozgósítja az emberek fantáziáját: az egyik vadsága, különlegessége, természetessége révén; míg a másik szelídsége, ismerőssége és társadalmi életbe való illeszkedése okán. A populáris kultúra kihathat a valóságos állatok tulajdonságairól való gondolkodásra is, ahogy azt utolsó példánkban, Ellának a galambok abnormális viselkedéséről adott értelmezéséből láthatjuk:

*Hát, olyanok vagyunk, mint a Simsek, és a galambok az utolsó dolgok, amiket feltöltöttek ebbe a virtuális mátrixba, amiben élünk, és csak azért megy később a fejük, mint a lábuk, mert bug-olnak, és így akadozik a járásuk. És hogyha megtudják a galambok, hogy ezt a titkot tudod, merthogy ők az ilyen hatalmas kémek ebben a világban, akkor megtámadnak.*

Az emberi érdeklődés végső soron szelektív az őt körülvevő állatvilágot illetően, és ezt a szelektivitást nemcsak evolúciós múltunk, hanem kulturális beágyazottságunk



is alakítja. Az elménkben élő mentális fauna környezetünkről alkotott referenciája nem a valós környezeti viszonyokban keresendő, hanem hatnak rá különböző természeti és kulturális kiválasztódási folyamatok. Ez azt jelenti, hogy bár egy valóságos állatvilág vesz minket körül, az állatvilág, amivel mi konceptuálisan kapcsolatba lépünk, mesterséges. Ha mindezt a jelenkori ökológiai válsághelyzetet vonatkoztatjuk, akkor feltehetjük a kérdést, hogy van-e esélyünk megállítani a tömeges mértékű fajkihalást addig, amíg a környezetünk percepciója az érdeklődés homlokterébe bevont állatfajok körét illetően szelektív, a természettel való kapcsolatunk pedig mesterséges?

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**POPULAR CULTURE GENRES  
AND INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUES**

**A POPULÁRIS KULTÚRA MŰFAJAI  
ÉS INTERDISZCIPLINÁRIS DIALÓGUSAI**



# Az eltemetett óriás: Ishiguro fantasy-variációja

Bódy Edit

ELTE Savaria Egyetemi Központ

body.edit@sek.elte.hu

Legutóbbi regényei (*Árva korunkban*, 2002; *Ne engedj el*, 2005; *Az eltemetett óriás*, 2015; *Klara és a Nap*, 2021) megírásakor Kazuo Ishiguro populáris műfajokkal kísérletezett. *Az eltemetett óriás* különösen nagy médiavisszhangot váltott ki, és ennek fő oka az Ishiguro által választott műfaj, a *fantasy* volt. Ishiguro olvasói közül sokan fanyalogva fogadták a regényt, amelyre ráadásul elég sokat kellett várniuk (hat év telt el a 2009-ben megjelent *Noktürnök* novelláskötet megjelenése óta), s most értetlenül álltak az előtt, hogy szerző „átlépett egy határt”, amikor efféle népszerű műfajt választott. Másrészt a mű megosztotta a *fantasy*-rajongók táborát is – szerzőket és olvasókat egyaránt: több keményebb hangú kritika is érkezett tőlük (a legismertebb talán az Ursula K. Le Guin által írt vélemény,<sup>1</sup> amely rövid polémiához vezetett közte és Ishiguro között), mert úgy érezték, hogy az író visszaélt a műfajjal, és végső soron nem is sikerült igazán jó *fantasy* regényt írnia. Ugyanakkor nem mindenki tartotta a regényt *fantasy*nek. Valahányszor megpróbálták kategorizálni, a kritikusok más-más következtetésre jutottak, és különféle címkéket aggattak rá, mint például allegória vagy lovagregény. A jelen tanulmány nem egy újabb kategória mellett érvel, és azt sem kívánja eldönteni, hogy miért vagy éppen miért nem *fantasy* a regény műfaja. A fenti műfajok, elsősorban a *fantasy* „alapvetően korábbi irodalmi és nem irodalmi jelenségekből táplálkoznak, és lényegében mítoszteremtő jellegűek”.<sup>2</sup> Tanulmányom arra kíván rávilágítani, hogy e műfajok újraértelmezései milyen lehetőségeket adtak a kísérletező kedvű Ishigurónak arra, hogy a regényeiben rendre visszatérő témákat – többek között az emlékezés, a trauma, a felejtés, az elfojtás jelenségeit – újabb módon járja körül, azokat más, izgalmas szintre emelje. Elsősorban a tér és helyszínek kínálta jelenségekre fókuszálok a Bahtyin-féle

1 A következő néhány szó egy Ishiguro interjúban hangzott el, és K. Le Guin idézte őket egy 2015-ös blogban: „Mr Ishiguro azt mondta a riporternek: »Vajon az olvasók követnek majd engem? Megértik, hogy mit próbálok mondani, vagy elítélnek engem a felszín miatt? Azt fogják mondani, de hát ez *fantasy*?«” Mire Le Guin reflexiója: „Igen, valószínűleg azt fogják mondani. De miért ne tennék? Az egész úgy hangzik, mintha a szerző szerint ez sértő lenne.” (K. Le Guin, *Book View Café*) K. Le Guin a blogban kizárólag a *fantasy* felől közelített a regényhez, s kijelentette, hogy Ishiguro voltaképpen visszaél a műfajjal, és a műfaj adta lehetőségeket valóban csak a felszínen, felszínesen használja, éppen ezért a végeredmény nem is működik.

2 Borowska-Szerszun 30.

kronotoposz<sup>3</sup> és Foucault heterotópiájának<sup>4</sup>, illetve azok (posztmodern) továbbgondolásának segítségével.

Ami a visszatérő motívumokat illeti, Ishiguro azt nyilatkozta, hogy korábban a múltjával, az emlékeivel viaskodó, idősödő egyén érdekelte: amint rádöbben, hogy kisiklott az élete, mert nem a megfelelő értékeket követte. Ám az idő múlásával az író ugyanazek a kérdések már társadalmak, nemzetek szintjén kezdtek foglalkoztatni – leginkább az, hogyan küszködik egy egész nemzet a sötét és szegycmentjes emlékekkel, amelyeket talán jobb békén hagyni, elfeledve, „eltemetve”. Ugyanakkor nem biztos, hogy az elfojtás célravezető, mert ezek a kollektív emlékek még jóval később is kísérhetnek, felold(hat)atlan konfliktusokhoz vezetve.<sup>5</sup> Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun is ezt hangsúlyozza egy, az irodalom és kulturális emlékezet kapcsolatáról szóló tanulmányában, s hozzáteszi, hogy „mind az irodalom, mind az emlékezet az egyes elemek szelektálásán, rendszerezésén, illetve azok koherens egészé váló rendezésén alapul.” Így *Az eltemetett óriás* „egy sor jól ismert kulturális motívumot épít magába, miközben megidézi a középkori irodalmi hagyományt és a kortárs *fantasy*-irodalmat”.<sup>6</sup> Ishiguro eltöprengett azon, hogy regény színtere akár a közelmúlt történelme is lehetne: etnikai konfliktusok jutottak eszébe, olyan problémák, amelyekről valamiért az egész közösség megfeledkezett akár egy teljes generációnyi időre is, amíg valami fel nem kavarta ezeket az emlékeket, és azok felszínre nem kerültek. Egy interjúban például a részekre szakadó, háborúba süllyedő Jugoszláviát említette, de felidézte a ruandai népirtást is. Az érdekelte, „hogyan birkóznak meg egész közösségek, egész nemzetek a sötét emlékekkel.”<sup>7</sup> A *The Guardian*-ben megjelent egyik cikkében, Ishiguro szavaira reflektálva Sian Cain azt írta, hogy *Az eltemetett óriás fantasy*-regényeket idéző világa afféle „semleges környezetet biztosított, hogy [a szerző] körbejárassa a kollektív emlékezet problematikáját, és azt, ahogyan a társadalmak a traumák után úgy próbálják gyógyítani a sebeket,

3 Bahtyin 753. Bahtyin meghatározása szerint: „Kronotoposznak az irodalomban a művésziileg megragadott idő- és térbeli viszonyok lényegbeli kölcsönös kapcsolatait nevezem (szó szerinti fordításban: időtérbeliség).” Bahtyin esszéjét kétféle fordításban használtam. Itt helyénvalóbbnak véltem Moravszky István fordítását és „időtérbeliség” terminusát a korábbi fordító, Könczöl Csaba által alkalmazott „tér idő”-nél.

4 Foucault 149. Heterotópiának Foucault a tér egy típusát nevezi: ez a „kívülség” tere, amelyet a következőképp határoz meg: „létezik [...] azok a reális, tényleges, a társadalmi intézményrendszeren belül kialakított helyek, amelyek egyfajta ellen-szerkezeti helyként, megvalósult utópiaként reprezentálják, kétségek elé állítják, kiforgatják a kultúra belsejében fellelhető valódi szerkezeti helyeket; azok a helyek, amelyek külsőek minden helyhez képest, mégis tökéletesen lokalizálhatók.”

5 Ishiguro, „Nobel Prize in Literature 2017: Official interview.”

6 Borowska-Szerszun 31.

7 Ishiguro, „The Buried Giant” (interjú Piya Chattopadhyay-jal, 2015).

hogy felejtenek.”<sup>8</sup> Így a *fantasy* segítségével elkerülte a túl direkt politikai utalásokat, másrészt az általa nem kedvelt realista ábrázolást is.

Egy 2015-ös beszélgetés<sup>9</sup> során Ishiguro azt nyilatkozta a regényről, hogy a történet az 5–6. században, abban a hézagban játszódik, amikor a római hódítók már kivonultak Britanniából, és több hullámban megjelentek az angolszászok. A regényben britonok és szászok élnek a valamikori Római Birodalom maradékain viszonylag békében, bár nem szeretetben, és ez a viszonylagos béke is olyan törékeny, hogy valamikor a nem túl távoli jövőben összeomlik: a szászok kiszorítják, eltüntetik majd a britonokat, sőt szándékuk szerint még a kollektív emlékezetből is eltávolítják őket.

A fenti érven túl, miszerint a *fantasy* segítségével elkerülheti a túlságosan is nyilvánvaló politikai tartalmat, e műfaj esetében Ishiguro valószínűleg azt is méltányolta, hogy az „nem szab merev határokat, éppen ellenkezőleg: teret enged a változtatásoknak [...] változatos célokat és narratívákat foglal magába [...], akár egy folyton változó portál, ami az emberi lét rejtelseibe vezet.”<sup>10</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin csípős megjegyzésére adott válaszában is ezt hangsúlyozza: „Szerintem a műfaji szabályoknak porózusnak kell lenniük, ha egyáltalán léteznek ilyen szabályok.”<sup>11</sup> Röviden még a Nobel-díj átvételekor elmondott, 2017-es beszédében is kitér a kérdésre: „[O]da kell figyelniük arra, hogy ne legyünk túl szűklátókörűek vagy maradiak, amikor azt próbáljuk meghatározni, mi a jó irodalom. [...] Nyitottnak kell lenniük, főleg a műfaj és a forma tekintetében.”<sup>12</sup>

Ishiguro a műfaj rugalmasságát, megváltoztathatóságát emelte ki, azaz céljainak remekül megfelelt egy efféle, Maria Nikolajeva szavaival élve, „eklektikus műfaj”, hiszen a *fantasy* „a tündérmesétől kölcsönöz,<sup>13</sup> de a mítoszoktól, románcból, lovagregénytől, pikareszkregénytől, rémregénytől, misztériumoktól, *science fiction*-től és még más műfajoktól is. Látszólag összeegyeztethetetlen elemeket vegyít össze egyazon narratíván belül.”<sup>14</sup>

A Clute–Grant féle *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* meghatározása szerint a huszadik századi *epic fantasy* valamilyen világ létrehozásával és védelmével foglalkozik.<sup>15</sup> Az *epic* és a másik népszerű altípus, a *quest fantasy* számos vonásában hasonlít,

8 Saját fordítás. Cain, “Writer’s indignation: Kazuo Ishiguro rejects claims of genre snobbery.”

9 “Kazuo Ishiguro Uncovers *The Buried Giant*”.

10 Senior 199.

11 Cain “Writer’s indignation: Kazuo Ishiguro rejects claims of genre snobbery”.

12 Ishiguro, “My Twentieth Century Evening – and Other Small Breakthroughs”.

13 Minderre korábban már Tolkien is kitér, lásd „A tündérmesékről” (1939) című tanulmányát.

14 Nikolajeva 139.

15 *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* 319.



például hosszú utazás és kalandok sora vár a hősökre. Ishiguro regényében mintha keveredne a két változat: a mű a *quest* és az *epic fantasy*vel is rokonságot mutat, mert a küldetés is kettős benne: a hősök nemcsak egyéni céljaikért, de egy nagyobb közösségért is küzdenek. Az *epic* és a *quest fantasy* főszereplői elhagyják a védett, békés otthont, és kimerészkedve a vadonba, az ismeretlenbe, küldetésre indulnak. A *gyűrűk urát* elemezve, Edward James is a *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* által bevezetett fogalmakkal határozza meg a *quest fantasy* jellemző vonásait, úgymint: a világ egyre hanyatlik (*Thinning*), eluralja a gonoszság (*Wrongness*), ezért gyógyulásra (*Healing*) szorul, és ezt célozza meg a főszereplő(k) küldetése (*Quest*).<sup>16</sup> Egyebek mellett ezek a műfaji jellegzetességek is megjelennek Ishiguro regényében, de többségükkel különös dolog történik: kiüresednek, ellaposodnak vagy éppen az ellentétükbe fordulnak át. Az itt ábrázolt világ valóban hanyatlik és megmentésre szorul, ám megmentése nem akadályozza meg a további hanyatlást, helyesebben a változást, amely a százszok uralomra törésével jár együtt. Ugyanakkor a kiüresedés a legkézenfekvőbb módon a küldetéshez kapcsolódó motívumoknál jelentkezik.

Az utazás, és vele együtt a véletlen és kevésbé véletlen találkozások kronotoposzai a cselekmény fontos összetartó és előre vivő elemei. Bahtyin „A tér és az idő a regényben” című tanulmányában azt fejtegeti, hogy egyes regényekben a tér és idő közötti köteléket leginkább az *út*, a *vándorlás* motívuma testesíti meg, mert az idő a megtett távolságot jelenti. Az egyik, általa vizsgált regénytípusról (ide tartozik például Apuleius regénye, *Az aranyszamár*) egyebek közt azt állapítja meg, hogy „benne az egyes ember életútja – legdöntőbb fordulópontjain – összefonódik reális térbeli útjával, vagyis vándorlásaival [...] Sajátos regény-kronotoposz születik meg itt”.<sup>17</sup> A találkozás, elválás és egyéb motívumok (például veszteség–visszaszerzés, keresés–fellelés, felismerés–félreismerés) „természetüknél fogva már eleve kronotopikusak”.<sup>18</sup> A találkozás szorosan hozzátartozik az út kronotoposzához: „A találkozások a regényben rendszerint »útközben« történnek. Az úton (»a nagy úton«) egy bizonyos idő- és térbeli pontban a legkülönbözőbb emberek – különféle társadalmi rétegek, állapotok, hitvallások, nemzetiségek, életkorok képviselői – tér- és időbeli útjai keresztezik egymást”.<sup>19</sup>

A találkozások során derül ki, hogy több szereplőnek is van küldetése, sőt, ezek a küldetések éppen egymással ellentétesek. Az idős briton házaspár, Axl és Beatrice

<sup>16</sup> James 64.

<sup>17</sup> Bahtyin 287.

<sup>18</sup> Bahtyin 296.

<sup>19</sup> Bahtyin 297.

emlékeiket, múltjukat, önmagukat szeretnék visszakapni, önmagukat kellene újjáépíteniük, bár ezzel együtt ismét átélik a már elfelejtett traumákat, mint ahogy az is nyilvánvaló, hogy valójában a halál felé tartanak. A szász harcos, Wistan végezni akar a sárkánnyal, a briton Sir Gawain (az egyetlen szereplő, aki az Artúr királyhoz köthető legendákban felbukkan)<sup>20</sup> ellenben nem más, mint „a sárkány és a kollektív amnézia öre” – jegyzi meg Borowska-Szerszun, és hozzáfűzi: „ha Wistan az addig elfojtott igazságot és történelmi hűséget keresi, akkor Gawain fő célja mintha az lenne, hogy értelmes magyarázatot adjon a múltban elkövetett erőszakra”.<sup>21</sup>

A sárkány-epizód az egyik legtipikusabb példa arra, hogyan laposodnak el a *fantasy*-kellékek: ez lenne a legnehezebb próba, ám a várt pusztító fenevad nem más, mint egy nyomorult, éppen csak vegetáló lény, amely ugyanakkor elválaszthatatlan a világot eluraló hanyatlástól. A „*Fairy Tale and Fantasy*” című tanulmányában Maria Nikolajeva a műfajokra jellemző kronotoposzokban látja az egyik fő eltérést a tündérmese és *fantasy* között. Ilyen például a mágia, illetve a természetfölötti jelenléte – a *fantasy* esetében sokszor egy „teljesen hihető, felismerhető világban”.<sup>22</sup> Emellett Nikolajeva arra is kitér, hogy a főszereplő az ismert és ismeretlen (valós és mágikus) világok vagy kronotoposzok között közlekedik.<sup>23</sup> Ishigurónál a természetfölötti elemek, a sárkány-epizódhoz hasonlóan, funkciójukat veszítik és/vagy összekapcsolódnak a bizonytalanság érzésével.

Talán a fentiekből is látszik, hogy regény a térrel, illetve a helyekkel kapcsolatban érdekes megoldásokkal él. Úgy tűnik, a mesékre, a középkori lovagregényekre és a *fantasy*-regényekre is jellemző menedék–vadon–menedék felépítést használja, de a szokásos csavar itt sem hiányozhat. Idős hőseink faluját ugyan menedékként emlegetik, és megképződik a védelem illúziója, ám ez nem védi meg őket a sötétségtől való rettegéstől és a képzeletben születő szörnyetegektől; másrészt az út végén rájuk váró menedék is különbözik attól, amire az olvasó számítana.

A *quest fantasy* hősei egy számukra ismeretlen világban találják magukat. Amit Tolkien a tündérmesékre vonatkozó tanulmányában megjegyyez, a *fantasyre* is érvényes, miszerint ezek a művek valójában nagyon ritkán szólnak tündérekről,

20 Gawain ismert figurája a késő középkori románcirodalomnak, bár jellemzően sárkány nélkül szerepel. A regény forrásai közül Ishiguro külön említi a *Sir Gawain és a Zöld Lovag* (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) című, 14. századi (nyomtatásban csak 1839-ben jelent meg) lovagromán-cot. Emellett Gawain feltűnik Sir Thomas Malory *Artúr királynak és vitézeinek, a Kerek Asztal lovagjainak története* (*Le Morte d'Arthur*, 1485) című, prózában írt művében, de további írásokban is (például a 15. századi „The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle” című balladában).

21 Borowska-Szerszun 35, 36.

22 Nikolajeva 141.

23 Nikolajeva 141–42.

sokkal inkább halandók kalandjairól a „Veszélyek Birodalmában”, a „Másik Világban”. Hangsúlyozza, hogy a „fantázia, a Másik Világokba való betekintés, vagy a Másik Világok megalkotása – ez Tündérföld s a tündérmesék valódi lényege”.<sup>24</sup> Tolkienről írva Edward James azt is kiemeli, hogy az író „legnagyobb érdeme így visszagondolva az, hogy elfogadtatta a másodlagos világ gondolatát [...] Középfölde az általunk megtapasztalható világtól elkülönülő alkotás”, bár Tolkien céloz rá, hogy *A gyűrűk ura* a mi világunk előtörténetének része is lehet.<sup>25</sup> Ishiguro regénye ennek az örökségnek csak egy részét folytatja, nevezetesen azt, hogy az általa felépített világ beilleszthető történelmünk egy korábbi korszakába. Ugyanakkor az előbbieken alapvető jelentőségűnek kikiáltott különbség ismert és ismeretlen világ, menedék és vadon, valós és mágikus között már nem áll fent, nincs két elkülönülő kronotoposz.

Ishiguro ismeretlen világa mindent egybevéve sivár, esős, ugyanakkor furcsán jellegtelen, mintegy félig-kész. Ishiguro azt nyilatkozta, hogy egy középkori lovagregény, a *Sir Gawain és a Zöld Lovag* ihlette meg, többek között annak a résznek a tájleírása,<sup>26</sup> amikor Gawain a Zöld Lovagot keresve egy hasonlóan barátságtalan mocsaras-ködös világba téved. Ezt a vadonleírást most az Artúr utáni korra alkalmazza, amikor Gawain már erőtlén, öreg lovag. A vadon mindazonáltal nem ismeretlen az idős főhősök számára, és még az ő mércéjükkel mérve is pár nap alatt bejárható utat tesznek meg, s valójában nem távolodnak el nagyon az otthonuknak tekintett barlangfalutól. Ugyanakkor az út hosszúnak *tűnik*, ahogy azt a hagyományos *quest fantasy*-nél várnánk, pontosan olyan, mint ahogyan W. A. Senior összegzi, amikor e műfaj jellegzetességeit határozza meg: „át a vadonon, erdőkön, folyókon, hegyeken, völgyeken, kis falvakon, néha városon át [...] a táj, mint szereplő jelenik meg, az élőkre jellemző tulajdonságokkal felruházva, mert a *fantasy*-regény világa gyógyításra szorul, különben a métely a pusztulását okozza.”<sup>27</sup> A regény valóban felvonultatja az itt felsoroltak jó részét: a dimbes-dombos táj után komolyabb emelkedők, majd az utolsó keserves hegymászás következik, de útközben még a föld alá is leereszkednek a kolostor-epizódban. Részben ezért tűnik olyan hosszúnak az út; másrészt az idős hősök minden lépésért megcszenvednek, jóllehet valójában egy kis, behatárolt területen mozognak, és alig hagyják el az általuk ismert világot, bár ködös emlékeik miatt úgy érzik, már kiléptek onnan. Ezzel együtt mintha az idő is felgyorsulna: hőseink azért halogatják az utat, hogy kellemes időben kelhessenek

<sup>24</sup> Tolkien 29, 91.

<sup>25</sup> James 65.

<sup>26</sup> Alter “For Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant* Is a Departure”.

<sup>27</sup> Senior 190.

útra, de a kezdeti tavaszias idő átcsap ősziébe, majd később egészen zord, esős-szeles télbe.

A helyszínekkel kapcsolatban több érdekességet is érdemes megemlíteni: egyrészt (a) a funkcióvesztést, másrészt azt, hogy (b) egyes helyszínek a jelenhez és a múlthoz is kapcsolódnak, továbbá (c) hozzájárulnak a regényt átjáró bizonytalanság erősítéséhez, és végül (ez összefügg a különféle idősíkokhoz való kapcsolódással) (d) heterotópiaként is felfoghatók. A funkcióvesztés az összes menedékre igaz. Ilyen például a kolostor, amely két helyet, egyben két kort egyesít. Eredetileg szász erőd volt, amelyet arra terveztek, hogy falai menedéket nyújtsanak, ugyanakkor halálos csapdákkal szerelték fel, hogy még a diadal pillanatában is kellemetlen meglepetést okozzon az ostromló seregnek. Most ismét csapdává válik azok számára, akik oltalmat keresnek a falak között, így a kolostor védelem helyett a kegyetlenség jelképe lesz. Talán itt válik meghatározóvá az az érzés, hogy a múlt időnként feldereng a jelen mögül. A múlt egyelőre homályos de egyre bizonyosabb, hogy a kód komoly krízist, sebeket takar. Elana Gomel *Narrative Space and Time* című kötetében többek között Bahtyin és Foucault elméletét továbbgondolva, a „lehetetlen terek narratív és kulturális poétikáját” vizsgálja. Magát a „lehetetlen teret” a következőképp határozza meg:

Amikor az idő egyenletes folyását valami gyökeres változás korbácsolja fel és töri meg, a tér fellázad, változatlanságát különös, szokatlan topológiák provokálják. Lehetetlen narratív terek akkor alakulnak ki, amikor az időbeli tengely ilyen gyökeres változást vetít a narratíva térbeli tengelyére.<sup>28</sup>

A szerző a tanulmány egyes fejezeteiben különféle narratív stratégiákról értekezik, amelyek „lehetetlen tereket eredményeznek a regényekben.”<sup>29</sup> Az egyik ilyen stratégiát összeomlásnak<sup>30</sup> nevezi el: „Az összeomlás olyan kronotoposzokat hoz létre, amelyek, azáltal, hogy több teret helyeznek egymásra egyetlen diegétikus helyen, maradandóan bevésik a múltat a jelenbe”, ez tehát egy olyan „narratív technika, ahol a tér jelképezi az időt”.<sup>31</sup> Az ilyen regényekben – fejtegeti Gomel – valamilyen történelmi trauma rángatja a narratíva szálait, mert ezek az események annyira

28 Gomel 25.

29 Gomel 33.

30 Az összeomlásnál kívül Gomel a következő stratégiákat részletezi: rétegezés (*layering*), felvillanás (*flickering*), beágyazás (*embedding*), féregjárat (*wormholing*) és elkerülés (*sidestepping*).

31 Gomel 37, 173.

meghatározók lehetnek, hogy az idő múlása nem segít, éppen ellenkezőleg, visszahozza a traumatikus eseményeket, hogy kísértsék a jelent. „Valójában az idő átalakul, hátra és előre is terjeszkedik, amíg repedés nem jelenik meg rajta. Ahol megjelennek ezek a repedések, ott kezdődik a kísértés” – idézi Gomel Helen Dunmore-t, és megállapítja, hogy emiatt „mind az emlékezés, mind a felejtés lehetetlenné válik”.<sup>32</sup> Bár *Az eltemetett óriás* nem a Gomel által elemzett *urban fantasy*, a regény emlékeztet erre a *fantasy* műfajra, mert világa, Gomel szavaival élve, „történelmének és emlékezetének fekete lyuka”,<sup>33</sup> azaz olyan kronotoposz, ahol lehetővé válik, hogy jelen és múlt térben és időben együtt létezzen. Az ilyen világot, folytatja Gomel,

[...] múltjának szellemei kísértik. A múltat kollektív traumák fantomszerű emlékei töltik meg. Háború, népiirtás és terror rejtélyes tereket, lyukakat hoz létre a város szövedékében, amelyek néma tanúbizonyságai a közösség azon vágyának, hogy elfeledhessék a korábbi erőszakot.<sup>34</sup>

*Az eltemetett óriás*ban a sárkány lehelte köd telepszik rá az emberek elméjére, ez okozza az amnéziát, bár a sárkány halálával ez vélhetőleg megszűnik majd. A ködbe burkolózó múlt – maga az eltemetett óriás – a jelen alatt rejtőzik, az összes sérelemmel, fájdalommal együtt. A köd Artúr király és Merlin műve, akiknek az volt a célja, hogy meglehetősen egyéni megoldással rákényszerítsék az emberekre a békét: ha a potenciális ellenfelek (szászok és britonok) arról is megfedkeznek, hogy ők ellenfelek, viszonylag békében élnek majd egymás mellett. A feledés homályába borulnak a britonok szörnyű tettei: a békés lakosság lemészárlása, amit elvileg a nagyobb jó nevében hajtottak végre, Artúr parancsára. Ishiguro szavait idézve azonban „odalent a mélyben megjelennek a repedések”,<sup>35</sup> a sárkány meggyengül, és ezzel együtt a múlt beleszövődik a jelenbe és kísértetni kezd. A regény egész világa összeomlasként funkcionál, ami a mű közepén szereplő hely, a kolostor esetében érzékelhető a leginkább. Gomel több lehetőséget<sup>36</sup> is felsorol az összeomlásra, az egyik ilyen a „vertikális város, ahol a traumatikus történelmet szó szerint a pincében tárolják [...] A földalatti

32 Gomel 173.

33 Gomel 174.

34 Gomel 177.

35 “Kazuo Ishiguro Uncovers *The Buried Giant*”.

36 A vertikális városon (*vertical city*) kívül a szimultán (*simultaneous city*) és a mindenevő város (*omnivorous city*) kategóriákat használja. A szimultán város esetében két vagy több tér rétegződik egymásra, illetve a mindenevő városnál az „időt, térét és cselekményt beszippantja a végtelen intertextualitás mohó állkapcsa” (Gomel 181).

régióval kapcsolatos konnotációk határozottan negatívak: sötétség, kosz, veszély és szörnyűség.<sup>37</sup>

A kolostor és az alagutak látszólag egymás tökéletes ellentétei, ám a helyzet ennél bonyolultabb. Amikor a szász Wistan megsejleli a kolostor épületeit és az ott tárolt eszközöket, szerszámokat, azok az amnéziától nem érintett harcos számára többször is elárulnak valamit a múltból, és rájön arra, hogy régen teljesen más célra használták őket. Ezt egészíti ki az épület alatt húzódó alagút és katakombák, a lappangó bizonytalansággal, ami félelmetes erőnek bizonyul. A kolostor az a Foucault-féle heterotópia, ahol jelen és múlt együttes jelenlétét a leginkább lehet érzékelni, mintha két egymástól eltérő világ fonódna össze.

Gomel egyik példája a lehetetlen térre, azon belül a vertikális városra London, Neil Gaiman *Sosehol* (1996) című regényében, ahol a rendezett Fenti London történelmi, és egyben társadalmi amnézia terméke. Amikor leereszkedik a Lenti Londonba, Richard ismét kapcsolatba kerül a nagyváros valódi történelmével, a nagy megrázkódások, erőszak és felkelések történetével, de a hősiesség és túlélés történelmével is.<sup>38</sup>

Az analógia Gaiman és Ishiguro regényei között nem éppen pontos, mert itt nem két külön kronotoposz létezik egymáson, de a fenti és lenti világ nagyon hasonló szereppel bír, mint ahogyan Sir Gawain szavaiból is kiderül:

De csak ássunk le a talajba, és nem is oly mélyen a százszorszépek és boglárkák alatt ott vannak a holtak. [...] Itt nyugszanak földjeinkben a régésrég lemészároltak maradványai is. Horatius meg én már belefáradtunk ebbe. [...] Azt mondd, milyen nagyon sok koponya. De hát a föld alatt vagyunk, nem? [...] Egyszer, még évekkel ezelőtt, láttam magam álmomban, ahogy az ellenséget aprítom. Mondom, álmomban történt, és nagyon régen. Több százan voltak, talán annyian, mint ezek itt, akiknek a csontjain taposunk, és én csak küzdöttem és harcoltam.<sup>39</sup>

A térrel, illetve helyekkel kapcsolatos harmadik érdekesség, ahogyan azok hozzájárulnak a regényt átjáró bizonytalanság szításához. A kolostor alatt a szereplők a sötétséggel és saját félelmeikkel néznek szembe. A kazamatákban lakozó vagy oda időnként betévedő szörnyeteggel (a sötétben bikafejű, farkastestű lénynek tűnik, de később Gawain kutyaként írja le) való rövid küzdelem mintegy megelégszi

37 Gomel 180, 182.

38 Gomel 186.

39 Ishiguro, *Az eltemetett óriás* 294–98.

a sárkánykalandot: ugyanolyan jellegtelen, és ugyanolyan gyorsan véget is ér. A másik példa a szász falu, amelynek elvileg menedéket kellene nyújtania, de káosz fogadja az érkezőket, és hiába ismerős a hely, éjjel labirintusra emlékeztet, ahol hőseink elveszetten bolyonganak. Bizonytalanság lengi körül a végső úti célt, a szigetet is, és a regény ezzel az érzéssel zárul.

A helyekkel kapcsolatban végül érdemes megemlíteni a Foucault-féle heterotópiák szerepét, mint például a római villáét, ahol Beatrice és Axl először pihennek meg az út során. A villa, azon túl, hogy menedék, a nem oly távoli múlt dicsőségét jelképezi, de mára már csak rom, mementó, ami az elmúlt aranykort idézi. Ráadásul a Kharón-szerű révész, aki összeköti a múltat a jelennel, sőt a jövővel is, azt állítja, hogy ott töltötte a gyerekkorát: mintha a villa a mítosz születésének színhelye lenne. Ahogy Foucault írja, „[v]annak olyan idő-heterotópiák, amelyek egy végtelen felhalmozódást jelenítenek meg”.<sup>40</sup> Emellett a „menedék”-heterotópia különféle variációi is felvonulnak: a kolostoron és a villán kívül ilyen a barlangfalu, ahol hőseink számára valóságos aggok házáat különítenek el, amikor egy megvilágítatlan kis szobába helyezik el őket a közösség periferiáján. Szintén figyelemreméltó szerepet kap egy másik heterotópia, a temető, amely az utóbbi években több *fantasy*-regényben is fontos helyként szerepel,<sup>41</sup> olyannyira, hogy akár önálló identitással rendelkező, de mindenesetre meghatározó narratológiai tényező válik belőle. A temetőt Foucault heterokróniaként határozza meg:

„A heterotópiák általában az idő feldarabolásával járnak, vagyis valami olyasmit eredményeznek, amit a tiszta szimmetria kedvéért heterokróniának nevezhetünk; a heterotópiák működése csak akkor teljesezhet ki, ha abszolút szakadás áll be az emberek és a hagyományos emberi idő viszonyában.”<sup>42</sup>

Ishiguro regényében a katakombán kívül nem jelenik meg úgy a temető motívuma, hogy oda bármelyik hős beléphetne. Ugyanakkor az út végén a titokzatos sziget úgy tűnik fel, mint végső „menedék”, ahova révész szállítja át az embert, és amely valószínűleg a holtak birodalma, és az olvasó egyre biztosabb lehet benne, hogy hőseink útja oda vezet. A sziget már az utazás első estéjén, a római villában szóba kerül, Axl és Beatrice ekkor találkozik először a révésszel, aki valójában narrátorként már a regény elejétől jelen van. A révész bevezető narrációja ellentétbe helyezi a jelent és

<sup>40</sup> Foucault 152.

<sup>41</sup> Például Darren Shan *Kojaszan* (2006) című regénye, vagy Neil Gaiman *horror fantasy*-je, *A temető könyve* (2008).

<sup>42</sup> Foucault 152.

múltat, és érdekes módon úgy beszél, mintha egy jóval távolabbi jövőből tekintene vissza az általa elbeszélte eseményekre: „Akkoriban még sehol sem lehetett látni afféle tájakat, mint manapság...”<sup>43</sup>

Összegezve, Ishiguro *fantasy*-variációja egyrészt felvonultatja a műfaj jellegzetességeit, többek közt a küldetést, az utazást, amely – ahogyan Bahtyin is rámutatott – egyúttal az életutat is jelenti, másrészt ezek a kellékek a legtöbbször módosulnak, elvesztik eredeti funkciójukat. Az utazás–életút analógiát az is aláhúzza, hogy Axl és Beatrice legfontosabb küldetése valójában a saját identitásuk újraépítése azáltal, hogy megelik elvesztett emlékeiket, és miután újrajárvák, újraélik a legfontosabb, sokszor legtragikusabb, legtraumatikusabb pillanataikat, már csak az életük lezárása várja őket. A regénybeli helyek mint heterotópiák több jelentésréteget is hordoznak: egyszerre jelképezik a jelent és a múltat annak összes traumájával; a főszereplők, de egyben az egész nemzet múltját is. A *fantasy* és az olyan műfajok, mint a középkori lovagregény vagy a mesék a maguk „lehetetlen terével” (ahol idő és tér összefonódik, és a tér jelképezi az időt) teszik lehetővé, hogy Ishiguro az egyéni traumák mellett a kollektív traumát, illetve az ahhoz való hozzáállást is hatásosan mutathassa be. Mind az egyén, mind a nemzet tekintetében a felejtés valóban lehet önvédelem, ugyanakkor ez az elfojtás veszélyekkel járhat: pusztító következményei lehetnek, ha az elfojtott emlékek hirtelen a felszínre törnek – ezt a pillanatot ragadja meg a regény. Az *eltemetett óriást* körüllegő melankólia jórészt ebből fakad: a szereplők látják, hogy az általuk ismert világ eltűnőben van, de nem tudnak vagy nem akarnak ezen változtatni, és az olvasó számára is világos, hogy Artúr öröksége mind pozitív, mind negatív vonásaival együtt mindörökké elenyészik.

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43 Ishiguro, *Az eltemetett óriás* 7.



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# Language and Philosophy in *Arrival*

Rudolf Sárdi

South Mediterranean University, Tunis

Rudolf.Sardi@smu.tn

*The Odyssey* is often quoted as the ultimate espousal of *nostos*, or homecoming, the idea of the hero's greatest triumph: to return from war and reunite with his family. In Homer's epic poem the "narrative circles back to the beginning, as Telemachus [...] returns to Ithaca in synchronistic harmony with his father at the end of the book."<sup>1</sup> In a similar fashion to Greek epics, Denis Villeneuve's film, *Arrival* (2016), also lays emphasis on the importance of *return* as a structuring principle behind its convoluted narrative, by raising its protagonist to the cultic status of hero for her efforts in saving humanity from the destruction of aliens during a (wrongly purported) alien invasion. In addition to featuring phonetician Henry Higgins of *My Fair Lady* and a relatively scanty list of linguists featured as filmic heroes, Villeneuve also chooses to commission a linguist as the main character to save the Earth after learning the aliens' language and managing to blend human sciences and hard natural sciences. The film is based on Ted Chiang's Nebula Award-winning novella, "Story of Your Life" (1998), addressing fundamental questions concerning language, time, memory, and otherness, all of which are addressed at one point as the film draws to its closure and viewers are confronted with the extra-terrestrial's perception of how past, present, and future are represented in simultaneity. *Arrival* can thus be read as a work of science-fiction (SF) provoking a contemplation on the texture of time as entirely different from our linear perception conceived in its broadest sense.

Dr Louise Banks, the protagonist attempts to dissolve the unsettling ambiguity about the nature of language, which is portrayed as circular. Arranging time unconventionally in the film's narrative enables the linguist to state that "[w]ords and signs have meaning for those who use them because of the contextual and relational dynamics that surround them."<sup>2</sup> This paper claims that any unilateral reliance on the film's commonest interpretation through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis seems insufficient to decode the mystery that the protagonist, Dr Louise Banks tries to solve from the outset, that is, to perceive time as the aliens do, through a sudden and simultaneous flux of present, past, and future life. Contrary to the stronger version

1 Smith 32.

2 Sticchi 50.

of the hypothesis, which is also known as linguistic relativity, Louise believes that the implication that people's thoughts are determined by the language they speak is wrong, because it prevents viewers from being able to "expand [their] experiential and semantic perspective on the world."<sup>3</sup> Given that the theory itself has been enthusiastically tested, disputed, and interpreted since the inception of Whorf's book, the paper shall instead subject to critical assessment some pertinent concepts of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Therefore, in this short analysis, their relevant theories of time and free will – which resonate more than only faint echoes behind the film's thematic, philosophical, and ethical concerns – will be laid bare.

The guiding premise of *Arrival* includes the acquiring of a new language, which should allow a person to have foreknowledge of the future. In *Arrival*, twelve extra-terrestrial spacecrafts, occupied by long-tentacled heptapods, hover over different locations on Earth. Dr Louise Banks (Amy Adams) and physicist Dr Ian Donnelly (Jeremy Renner) are hired by the American government to understand the aliens' messages and the purpose of their visit. The aliens' circular logograms, resembling nebulous inkblots, are displayed upon a glass panel within the spacecraft, representing a crossroads between humans and visitors. On the one hand, Louise writes in her book that "language is the foundation of civilization [in that] it is the glue that hold[s] people together, and it is the first weapon drawn in a conflict."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, her partner disagrees with the statement and claims that "[t]he cornerstone of civilization isn't language. It's science!"<sup>5</sup> Owing to the unfolding sequences of communication with the aliens – punctuated by pauses, intermissions, and meditative thought-processes – certain words start occupying centre-stage. In his article on the philosophical background of *Arrival*, David Roark correctly argues that "the film seems to function as a commentary on our current cultural climate, both locally and globally ... [as] the aliens' gift to humanity is something to unify our divided and hostile world, bringing peace and harmony to the nations. Louise's approach to the aliens, of course, serves as the example of how it could be achieved – an approach that begins with humility and empathy."<sup>6</sup>

Louise attempts to learn their written language while tensions with the aliens escalate toward a point of no return. She gradually advances to analysing and learning

3 Sticchi 51.

4 Villeneuve.

5 Villeneuve.

6 Roark.

the alien language only to start perceiving time as circular rather than linear. Francesco Sticchi appositely writes that “[w]e fail to understand linguistic communication if we think it is based on abstract representational categories, for we ignore the concrete life concealed under words and symbols.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, Louise’s understanding becomes an important point of departure for viewers to disagree with the dualism displayed through the Cartesian contentions that personal identity consists in the continued existence of a unique mind. An erroneously interpreted message between the aliens and the humans – according to which the extra-terrestrials in possession of a “weapon” – leads to heated confrontations between the two parties. The imminence of an all-out war ceases to be a threat against humanity as Louise unknowingly succeeds in diverting the conflict, and the alien messages from the twelve Earth’s sites are brought together in a coherent message, stating that the aliens came to Earth in order to give humans their language as a gift. This gift will enable humans to decode time and provide knowledge of the future. It turns out that the crux of delivering the gift to the humans is the initial paucity of communication, because their language differs widely from any known language and is based on a fundamentally different way of perceiving reality (especially time) than had been previously available to humans.

It is important to mention at this stage that the bulk of the philosophical ideas in *Arrival* falls into the domain of speculative thought. It might seem off the mark to underestimate the plausible inspiration of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Bakhtin by stressing the dominant role of circularity in the film’s narrative. *Arrival* literally comes full circle as Louise realises that what she believed to be her past in intermittently composed dreams is in fact her future, where she marries Ian and gives birth to a daughter, who prematurely dies of cancer. Here, the narrative framing device is a house on the lakeside, captured in desaturated colour tones during sunset, symbolising the story’s alpha and omega by connecting past and future in a similar manner as the circular logograms of the heptapods’ message to humanity. It might seem wise to agree with Sticchi’s interpretation of the heptapods’ circular writing: he claims that the writing itself “cannot be associated with a linear or finite temporality and, for this reason, Louise and Ian think that it refers to eternity, to a notion of time that includes all its finite expressions.”<sup>8</sup>

It is this widely utilised narratological framing device that unites past, present, and future almost frame by frame. When Louise enlightens her daughter that her

7 Sticchi 51.

8 Sticchi 57.

name, Hannah, is a palindrome, she also gives a lucid explanation of the film's structure, which strikes the percipient viewer as somewhat of an oversimplified analysis of its multifarious dimensions. Throughout the film, viewers are convinced that they are watching flashbacks of Louise's heart-breaking past of losing her child to cancer. The palindromic function of the story demonstrates that the scenes of love and loss are neither proleptic nor analeptic, but they all exist at one point of time. Louise's ability to understand the aliens' perception of time – the gift, that is – enables her to develop an omnipresent perspective and realise that the sequences of what is believed to be her past are in no way limited by spatio-temporal constraints.

Louise is therefore liberated from the shackles of linear time as she experiences the span of her life in a single, unitary moment with her daughter's early demise and her divorce from Ian, who is unable to come to terms with Hannah's death. Louise has no choice but to embrace the sum of her life regardless of the tragic moments within it; and, despite the tribulations she undergoes, Louise accepts the knowledge of what is yet to come by realizing the wondrous moments that accompany it. It is thus possible to reformulate Louise's grief as being a powerful emotional and psychological endeavour, embedded in its unconventional narrative, to accept her ostensibly shattered life in all its unpredictability and contradictions. At the heart of the film, Sticchi points out, lies Louise's behaviour as a means of expressing "concrete anxiety for the events taking place around her, and as an ethical care for other individuals driven by the desire to address conflicts and communicative processes in the most productive and creative way."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, from an ethical point of view, Louise is a paragon of humility, self-effacement, and altruism, who would be willing to sacrifice her life at the altar of humanity in the difficult process of understanding the aliens' language. In one way or another, *Arrival* is a modern tale of alien-encounter that empowers its hero, an already well-established scholar in possession of the gift (in both a literal and figural sense) of free will, to seal her destiny and help humanity survive.

Circularity is a quintessential theme permeating both the film's structure and plot. The scenes of attempted communication at the panel, featuring frail human beings, and the formidable, shapeless alien bodies "provoke[s] a thought about our place in the Universe and the difficulty of communicating with the unknown."<sup>10</sup> It is within this context of epistemological uncertainty that some

9 Sticchi 60.

10 Skorin-Kapov 88.

relevant theories of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Bakhtin should be introduced as possible sources of inspiration in Villeneuve's treatment of time as a circular concept.

In one memorable scene, Louise poses the film's most puzzling question: "If you could suddenly see your whole life, start to finish ... Would you change things?"<sup>11</sup> Louise's question undoubtedly resonates with the echoes of Nietzsche's philosophical notion of *amor fati*, which is often associated with his doctrine on the concept of "eternal recurrence of the same" in his seminal work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–1885). Meaning "love of your fate" in Latin, the concept is used by Nietzsche to describe an attitude in which one sees everything that happens in one's life, including all the losses and unexpected turns of events. It is common knowledge that Nietzsche employed a version of naturalism and was convinced that humans are an animal species, who are led in life by no transcendent purpose. These thoughts gave birth to one of his most controversial concepts, which has also found its way into the unsettling narrative pattern of *Arrival*. In Nietzsche, the "eternal recurrence" frames existence in terms of incessantly repeating cycles, including the universe and energy, which he claims to be recurring in an infinite number of times without spatio-temporal limitations. "Eternal recurrence" proclaims love for eternity; he urges everyone to imagine that they will live their lives time and again. It is this philosophy of predeterminism that Louise also embraces in *Arrival* as she realises, with the gift she comes to possess from the aliens, that people are predestined to continue repeating the same events; therefore, Nietzsche asserts that one must accept one's fate with courage since all that exists is finite and time is infinite. Alongside Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence," one must take note of what he means by *amor fati* and how the latter notion can be linked to the film. In Section 10 of *Ecce Homo*, he explains the concept as follows: "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it – all idealism is mendacity in the face of what is necessary – but *love* it."<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, it is essential to note that once Louise deciphers the aliens' language, she comprehends that to think in that language is to develop an extra-dimensional cognition, which enables her to conclude that language is constructed in time. Daniel Podgorski also makes the claim that Nietzsche's concept

11 Villeneuve.

12 Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* 65.

of “eternal recurrence” lies at the heart of the film. Furthermore, he expounds on the notion as follows:

[...] the concept of four-dimensional thought, the consequence of the premise is that one of choosing experiences which have somehow gained permanence. In eternal recurrence’s case, it is through potentially infinite repetition. In *Arrival*’s case, it is through stabilization; that is, each moment now gains a fourth-dimensional position which is steady and unchanging, which can be visited by fourth-dimensional minds.<sup>13</sup>

Existence – aimless, repetitive, interminable, meaningless – as displayed in Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrence”, has the dangerous potential to make Louise consider her life unworthy of living. Instead, however, she refrains from despair by having the courage to embrace the challenge of acknowledging the entire span of her forthcoming experiences.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Gilles Deleuze interprets “eternal recurrence” not as a directive to develop an understanding of the nature of time.<sup>15</sup> In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, he says that time is an ever-generated concept, which allows one to recreate one’s self-identity and act in new ways; and Louise is capable of uncompromisingly accepting reality *per se* as the film comes to an end.

Despite that Heidegger’s prolific output, his truly idiosyncratic writing style, and his heavy reliance on Greek and German etymologies make his work difficult to approach, one should be inevitably reminded of fundamental theories of time and free will – extensively employed throughout twentieth-century storytelling – in the context of *Arrival*. In juxtaposing Louise’s personal narrative with themes of determinism and free will, *Arrival* owes a debt to the German philosopher in his treatment of the idea of “being-towards-death.” The film examines this concept thematically and embodies it stylistically.<sup>16</sup> In *Being and Time* (1927), his most important work, Heidegger takes up the notion of Being (*Dasein*) as a key problem in philosophy, which, as Aladár Sarbu writes, is “paradoxically undefinable: whereas all *beings* have it, *Being* itself cannot have it.”<sup>17</sup> Heidegger argues that to understand

13 Podgorski, “Life Willed at Every Second.”

14 In a similar vein, Albert Camus also explores the notion of “eternal return” in his essay on “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942), in which the author calls attention to life’s absurdity through the repetitive nature of existence, demonstrated by the pointless upward rolling of the rock.

15 Deleuze 48.

16 Skorin-Kapov 88.

17 Sarbu 209.

what it means to be a human being and to achieve authenticity, one must live in light of one's death. In the context of *Arrival*, it stands to reason to consider the pertinence of Robert Audi's clarification of Heidegger's concept of what "being-toward-death" signifies in a cultural context:

The embeddedness of our existence [...] explains our inveterate tendency toward inauthenticity. As we become initiated into the practices of our community, we are inclined to drift along with the crowd, doing what "one" does, enacting stereotyped roles, and thereby losing our ability to seize on and define our own lives. Such falling into public preoccupations Heidegger sees as a sign that we are fleeing from the fact that we are finite beings who stand before death [...] When, through anxiety and hearing the call of conscience, we face up to our *being-toward-death*, our lives can be transformed.<sup>18</sup>

In *Arrival*, the concept of *being* features a different understanding of time – a non-linear understanding that transcends a standard notion of past, present, and future. Instead, "being-towards-death" sees everything in relation to the *now*, primarily our mortality. Heidegger's idea is particularly appropriate at this juncture, as he claims that, as finite beings, one must always face the challenge of one's finitude and forge meaning through the reality of death, that is to say, the culmination of our possibilities. Central to Heidegger's understanding of time is that it is neither simply reducible to the ordinary experience of time, nor does it originate in distinction from eternity. Heidegger explains what he means by "primordial" or "original" time and insists that it is finite.

To my mind, it can be surmised that Heidegger – and, in a broad sense, the hermeneutic circle – had been taken as a point of reference to express the concept of "being-toward-death" as championed by the German philosopher. Sarbu's rendering of phenomenology is especially befitting in relation to Louise's lived experience, as the hermeneutic circle "explored the nature of experience and of how we make sense of experience in general and in its verbal encapsulations, whether written or spoken."<sup>19</sup> Louise's ultimate enlightenment, that is, the experience that prepares her for the revelatory experience of seeing the world in the "fullness of time," occurs after she begins to understand the language of the aliens. More specifically, Louise gains

18 Audi 372.

19 Sarbu 207.



new knowledge through which she develops the ability to glimpse into the future and see the death of her beloved daughter, which is yet to happen. Louise is shown to be paralysed by what she perceives, as this “moment of vision” ultimately propels her to embrace her future role as a mother and spend the remaining time with her daughter, which she would otherwise not be able to do.

In addition to Nietzsche and Heidegger, it seems probable that the philosophy of *Arrival* also echoes of some fundamental ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, which can be used as a starting point to demonstrate yet another approach to the film’s philosophical subtext. In this relation, I would like to subject to scrutiny a single concept laid bare by Bakhtin, which the Russian theorist defines as the “chronotope” in his influential work:

We will give the name chronotope (literally, “time space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [...] Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, the “chronotope” is integral to the understanding of Bakhtin’s dialogism, according to which the construction of dialogue is a strong prerequisite of human existence. If communication fails dialogically, that is, when the dialogue ends, everything else ends. With respect to *Arrival*, Sticchi resorts to Pepita Hesselberth’s notion of the *cinematic chronotope* to help readers come to a better understanding of narrative as an embodied structure.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, dialogue occupies the most crucial role in the film, which mainly focuses on maintaining a conversation with the aliens. Bakhtin emphasises that “[t]he idea begins to live only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas [...] The idea is a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or more consciousnesses.”<sup>22</sup>

It is this chronotopic construal that helps one comprehend Louise’s general cognitive dynamics of communication with the aliens. Similar to Bakhtin, the main character’s take on language grants her the gift to start communicating without having to think of

20 Bakhtin 84–5.

21 Sticchi 49.

22 Bakhtin 88.

language as an “abstract referential phenomenon.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Louise’s method to learn to communicate in an alien language requires her to establish a relational system based on empathy, curiosity, the willingness to interact to utilise all the creative possibilities linked to our capacity to connect with sentient beings.<sup>24</sup>

Dialogue, in Bakhtinian terms, signifies the open-ended nature of interaction without being confined to a frame marked by a first word and a last word. Therefore, Louise’s recognition that past and future are interwoven and revolve around the axis of the present are relevant both to our understanding of the circular inkblots, upon which periods of time converge, and to the claim that dialogue is never abstract but embodied. Bakhtin’s argument that “the chronotope is the place where knots of narrative are tied and untied”<sup>25</sup> is successfully incorporated into *Arrival*, which is acclaimed to be an illuminating example of a chronotopic construction.<sup>26</sup> Bakhtin proposes that the “chronotope” is neither fixed nor abstract in nature; on the contrary, it serves as a force that links time to space and embodies the narrative by adding “flesh and blood” to it by “materialising time in space.”<sup>27</sup> Speculative as Bakhtinian echoes might appear in this analysis, *Arrival* can be viewed as a cinematic conundrum, requiring the intellectual stimuli of viewers to reorganise its unconventional narrative, make sense of its fragmentary nature, time loops and spatio-temporal reality. Its “peculiar narrative structure,” Sticchi writes, “embraces circularity and simultaneity [indicating] the refusal of a linear and finalistic logic to motivate actions and decisions.”<sup>28</sup>

*Arrival* clearly demonstrates that language and philosophy are, *inter alia*, intrinsically linked to the SF genre. In addition to introducing key philosophical concepts as plausible subtexts behind the narrative and the structure of *Arrival*, it has also been argued that the film is preoccupied with the idea of communication using a painstakingly designed language of the future. The circular logograms of

23 Sticchi 58.

24 Bakhtin’s claim that dialogism is polyphonic and indeterminate is central to our understanding of the film’s non-linear structure and sheds light on the circular shape of the logograms, which are at the core of its interactive dynamics and can be freely reformulated and redesigned. In quoting Bakhtin, J. A. Cuddon writes that Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoevsky’s novels are in the dialogic (or polyphonic) form, which allows characters to speak “in their own voices,” as it were. In Bakhtin’s words, they are liberated to speak “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices [...] which are not subject to the authoritative control of the author.” (198)

25 Bakhtin 250.

26 See Hesselberth and Sticchi.

27 Bakhtin 250.

28 Sticchi 61.

the heptapods represent an alien community, whose behavioural patterns, reactions, and desire to establish communication are captured as the quintessence of *Arrival*. The film is a representative example of highlighting philosophical, linguistic, and anthropological questions, because the conflict appears both in the human *vis-à-vis* alien context as well as in Louise's and Ian's recalcitrance to discover the analogies between their own disciplines. It is not suggested that the film consciously presents these philosophical theories, but there is an argument for their relevance in the process of reading *Arrival* as an intellectually inspiring SF film. In presenting these arguments by means of contributing to the otherwise scanty scholarship with respect to *Arrival*, this paper also stresses the urgent need for a deeper discussion of further philosophical terrains awaiting discovery. In doing so, one will be able to enrich and reinforce the view that foregrounding the interactive coordinates of communication is integral to the creation of a common platform for global solidarity, especially now, at an uneasy time in history.

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# ***Academia Invisus: A Representation of Academic Life in Fantasy***

**Anikó Sohár**

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

sohar.aniko@btk.ppke.hu

Being an academic as well as a researcher and a translator of speculative fiction (including a dozen Discworld novels), I have always been interested in how the world of higher education is perceived by outsiders, how it is represented in literature – in the so-called *campus novel* or *university fiction* – particularly in science fiction and fantasy, hence this research project. Besides appeasing a personal curiosity, it may also be in the public interest to reflect upon the clichés, beliefs, and fallacies which surround academia; knowing how we appear in the public eye will raise our awareness of problems and may lead to solving these problems and better communication with the populace. Here I shall look at a university invented by Sir Terry Pratchett (1948–2015), “[...] a humorist whose targets are often the pretensions of academics or scientists, but who values knowledge, understanding, and story.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Terry Pratchett’s Discworld**

Since 1983, the publication of the first novel in the series, Terry Pratchett’s creation, the Discworld has been greatly admired by an ever-increasing and surprisingly varied audience. This immense popularity has spawned a small spinoff industry: theatre, film, television and radio adaptations, board, card, video and computer games, comic strips, guidebooks, maps, quizbooks, a cookbook, and many other types of merchandise, including an Unseen University diploma, UU student notebook, UU Library Print, and has eventually led to some scholarly papers<sup>2</sup> investigating the various aspects of this comical fantasy world.<sup>3</sup> The series consist of 41 novels and several short stories; all of them immersive fantasies.<sup>4</sup> All narratives parody or satirise aspects of Western civilisation holding up a sort of distorting mirror

1 Sawyer 62.

2 As Rzyman points out, “Oddly, as of 2013, there is just about one, widely acclaimed, full length thoroughly scholarly publication on Pratchett as a writer: *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, whose second edition came out in 2004, looks into the various facets of Pratchett’s writing.” (2017, 2)

3 See, for instance, Alton and Spruiell 2014, Held and South 2014, Michaud 2016, Rana 2018.

4 Mendlesohn 2008.

in which our attitudes, customs, stereotypes, beliefs, and convictions are reflected hilariously and, if we are so inclined, thought-provokingly.<sup>5</sup>

Unseen University plays an important role in the series as it appears in 29 out of the 41 Discworld novels, all four *Science of the Discworld* volumes, all companions, plus *The Streets of Ankh-Morpork*, *The Compleat Ankh-Morpork*, *The Unseen University Cut-Out Book*, *The Unseen University Quizbook*, *The Discworld's Unseen University Diary 1998*, as well as the volumes of collected illustrations, *The Pratchett Portfolio* and *Imaginarium*. It may have been named after “the Invisible College of Elizabethan magician and mystic, John Dee.”<sup>6</sup> It seems that the author had a lot to say about – or through – this educational institution. In what follows, I shall sum up all relevant information about this university and describe how they gradually transformed in the course of time as the series progressed.

### The Disc's premier college of wizardry: a short introduction

NVNC ID VIDES, NVNC NE VIDES

motto of the UU

Institutionalisation has frequently been brought into play in our history to get rid of the unwanted, and this is exactly the reason for founding a college of wizardry. Magic is a natural force which encloses and keeps together the whole Discworld, it is therefore unsafe, able to wreak havoc with or even destroy those who have too much ability or skill at their disposal. Magic tends to concentrate, like heavy metals in certain plants, so the eighth son of an eighth son is a wizard squared, that is, a ‘sourcerer’. Thus, the celibacy requirement: wizards are not supposed to have any offspring. Unseen University, founded by Alberto Malich, the greatest wizard of his age, is a means to tame this power: in order to steer a different course, the Unseen University offers the highly competitive wizards first a hierarchy with lots of infighting, and, later, a pampered life of getting in one another's hair. According to Pratchett, knowledge is power, uncontrolled power corrupts totally, thus, the powerful wizards have to be assembled, and their energies diverted into consuming huge meals and bickering, so the institution had to come into being.

The central role of the university is reflected in its location: the campus is partly placed on unreal estates, and partly on the riverbank in the centre of Ankh-Mor-

5 For more details either about the author or his works, see Butler 2001, Cabell 2012, Colin Smythe webpage, WikiVisually or the L-Space Web.

6 Butler 2011.

pork, an important city-state on the Discworld, where it has an actual address, Sator Square.<sup>7</sup> Several of its buildings, the Great Hall, the Library, the Tower of Arts, the High Energy Magic Building (home of Hex, the university computer, and the experiment with a round world, the only building less than a thousand years old), and the Uncommon Room in the main building are the key venues of events in many novels; others are just referred to, like the University Clock Tower with its silent bell, Old Tom, the Wizard's Pleasaunce, or the University Gardens. The place is huge both in the mundane and other planes (cf. L-Space, or the Dungeon Dimensions). The campus is walled off; a curfew has been in force for centuries, so teachers and students alike have to climb the walls if they want to spend an evening in the city. The university is incredibly rich (rents, fees for magical services etc.) and receives regular donations from the citizens who, very sensibly, try to keep the wizards replete, and thus the space–time continuum intact.

### ***Alma Pater: faculty, staff, students***

UU is based on the British university system, particularly Oxbridge traditions which are widely known not only in the British Isles or the English-speaking world, but internationally, therefore, eminently suitable for travesty.

Pratchett combines the well-known elements with his equivocal attitude towards higher education when describing the wizards' college. After unhappy school years, he finished his studies early, went to learn journalism as an apprentice, and had an ambivalent relationship with formal education all his life.<sup>8</sup> He attributes his vast knowledge to compulsive reading for which he thanks fantastic fiction, not any schooling: "The fantasy books led me on to mythology, the mythology led painlessly to ancient history [...] and I quietly got an education, courtesy of the public library."<sup>9</sup> Butler writes<sup>10</sup> that using faculty for teaching staff clearly demonstrates Pratchett's outsider-ness (cf. current parlance in British tertiary education). It is exactly the outsider view what makes the portrait of UU so intriguing and provocative. Most campus novels in speculative fiction ignore the staff who run a university, and only focus on the academics and students; but Pratchett reveals the workings in the underside of the institution from Mrs Whitlow the housekeeper to Modo the gardener, from the bledlows to the Candle Knave, and he relates the

7 A double palindrome, and a typical Pratchett joke for those in the know.

8 Pratchett 2014.

9 Pratchett 114.

10 Butler 14.



interactions between the two sides with relish (see, for instance, *Reaper Man* or *Unseen Academicals*).

In the early books which feature the Unseen University, there appears to be a different cast of wizards each time, certainly a different Archchancellor, with the Librarian [...] as the only constant – indeed, the Librarian appears in most of the books even if the other wizards don't. By the time of *Moving Pictures*, the wizardly personnel settle down.<sup>11</sup>

First, let us look at the university organisation. The head of the University is called Archchancellor. In the beginning of the series this position is highly contested, the council of the highest-ranking wizards, the heads of the eight orders, elected the person chosen by the gods – and goddesses – and the Archchancellor hat, usually the most senior wizard who never lasted very long: *Sourcery* begins with the 304<sup>th</sup> Archchancellor of the 2000-year-long history of UU. However, after the all-out magical war in that novel which almost destroys the world, the wizards decide to have a period of stability, and elect a retired country wizard (Mustrum Ridcully), who leads the university all along the series afterwards, and radically changes its character: “[...] this had worked quite well, because, although Ridcully was an impossible manager, the University was impossible to manage and so everything worked seamlessly.”<sup>12</sup>

Nobody knows how many faculty members exist; the novels usually feature just a handful,<sup>13</sup> who do not have real characters, just a few qualities and habits. For instance, the Bursar becomes deranged in *Moving Pictures*, so afterwards he needs to take medication to hallucinate that he is sane. The Dean always makes nasty and snobbish remarks except when he is allowed to chase something, the Senior Wrangler swoons in female company, and knows an unbelievable amount of trivia. Rincewind embodies cowardice and survivability while saving the world, or at least playing a key role in paving the way for the happy ending. As these examples show, the wizards have recurrent leitmotifs which combined constitute one of the leading themes in the Discworld symphony and fugue.

11 Butler 12.

12 *TLC* 19.

13 The Dean, the Bursar, the Senior Wrangler, the Chair of Indefinite Studies, the Lecturer in Recent Runes, the Librarian, Ponder Stibbons, and Rincewind. Note that most of them, although have proper names, are referred to by their academic ranks which supports my argument that they are not real people, just (stereo)types.

Faculty members have various titles, ranks and letters after their names designating their specialty. This provides the author with an inexhaustible fount of mockery and mirth:

But what Rincewind has always sought is some secure, safe position somewhere, and he seemed to get this when he was appointed as **Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography** (even though the previous incumbent was probably eaten by a giant lizard). The post has no salary and total insecurity of tenure, but he does get his laundry done for free, a place at mealtimes and, because of a quirk of the coal porter, seven bucketfuls of coal every day. He also gets his own (superheated) office, and no one chases him much. **Despite the fact that he is the least senior member of the UU faculty he is also, now, Chair of Experimental Serendipity, Reader in Slood Dynamics, Fretwork Teacher, Chair for the Public Misunderstanding of Magic, Professor of Virtual Anthropology and Lecturer in Approximate Accuracy. He has in fact accumulated all those jobs that require absolutely nothing more than that something in theory is doing them.**<sup>14</sup> (*my emphasis*)

Pratchett brilliantly blends real titles (like Praelector of Oxbridge and Camerlengo of the Curia) and invents ones with ridiculous job descriptions and wordplays emphasising their absurdity: Professor of Dust, Miscellaneous Particles and Filaments; Professor of Post-Mortem Communications; Reader in Woolly Thinking; “Ladislav Pelc, D.M.Phil, Prehumous Professor of Morbid Bibliomancy,”<sup>15</sup> to say nothing of the above quoted “Fretwork Teacher.” He also makes fun of the (academic) mania for titles: “Galder Weatherwax, Supreme Grand Conjuror of the Order of the Silver Star, Lord Imperial of the Sacred Staff, Eighth Level Ipsissimus and 304th Chancellor of Unseen University”<sup>16</sup> and “my name is Dr A. A. Dinwiddie, D.M.(7th), D.Thau., B.Occ., M.Coll., B.R. That’s Dinwiddie with an o.”<sup>17</sup>

The faculty members have tenure, for life. Their main occupation is to eat huge meals nine times a day and tiff. When a wizard gets a job offer with fixed emolument, the Archchancellor is upset: “Remuneration? Since when did a wizard

<sup>14</sup> *TR*, 242.

<sup>15</sup> *GP*, 171.

<sup>16</sup> *TLF*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *TT*, 31.

work for wages? We are pure academics, Mister Stibbons! We do not care for mere money!”<sup>18</sup> It slightly contradicts the fact that professors are supposed to teach and for that they do get compensation: “Many of the faculties also support a sponsored Professorship, which, although carrying a sturdy stipend, also carries with it the stigma of actually being expected to teach the students.”<sup>19</sup> Everybody is free to pursue their interests and change reality in their rooms, for instance, inserting “half a mile of trout stream in his bathroom;”<sup>20</sup> the goal is to keep the wizards out of mischief.

This sinecure is available to all males with magical potential, females are not accepted (only as staff), the equal opportunity attempt in *Equal Rites* stopped there, although “the all-male world of wizardry could be critiqued by offering a female wizard’s experiences.”<sup>21</sup> Officially, a boy or man can enrol in college if he has a sponsor among the wizards or did a great service to magic. Once enrolled, he will enter one of the eight orders of wizardry (similar to the houses of British public schools). When he obtains his degree, he will have his staff, and may leave (see *Mort*), or stay on and likely spend the rest of his life there, separated from civil society.

### ***Alma Mater: teaching, research, library***

Universities are traditionally seats of learning, the reason for their existence is teaching the next generations and doing research, that is, being the cutting edge of knowledge and providing their successors. Neither is fancied by the wizards who go to any lengths to avoid the former and tend to stay clear of rigorous scholarly investigations in favour of unthinking experimentation as it is clearly demonstrated in *Science of the Discworld*.

‘Students?’

‘Er. Yes?’ said Ponder, backing away. ‘That’s all right, isn’t it? I mean, this is a university ...’

Ridcully scratched his ear. The man was right, of course. You had to have some of the buggers around, there was no getting away from it. Personally, he avoided them whenever possible, as did the rest of the faculty, occasionally running the other way or hiding behind doors whenever they saw

18 UA, 25.

19 TR, 287.

20 UA, 23.

21 Butler, 2011, on gender issues see Williams 2015 and *Gender Forum* 2015, Issue 52.

them. The Lecturer in Recent Runes had been known to lock himself in his wardrobe rather than take a tutorial.<sup>22</sup>

This attitude of course is not unheard-of in higher education: all of us know colleagues who think and even say that the university would be a better place without students and keep their interactions with the student body at a minimum. Since teaching appears to be unavoidable in certain cases, the university has only one-week long terms, officially eight of them – eight is the magical number on the Discworld –, but the Archchancellor often forgets to open them which of course means no tutorials, a great relief for all involved. When teaching cannot be dodged formally, an unspoken pact helps wizards sidestep their duties, and students evade unwanted classes:

One room, amongst the more than 5,000 known rooms in UU, which we may experience trouble visiting is 3B. It is not locatable on any floor plan of UU – but all virtual lectures take place there. That is to say, those lectures that neither the students nor the lecturers wish to attend, but which must have some type of existence since they are down on the timetable, are therefore held in this room which, in fact, does not exist.<sup>23</sup>

In the whole series, we read about examinations (for instance, the “byzantine examination regulations”), but the only one described in *Moving Pictures* shows an incredibly lucky and totally unfair pass, when the trap set for the student who carefully achieves just a few points less than the pass mark every year in order to retain a scholarship and live a peaceful student life, catches another, who thus gets through the exam successfully and is tenured. It is also interesting to compare the exam questions of UU – “What, right, what is the name of the outerdimensional monster whose distinctive cry is ‘Yerwhatyerwhatyerwhat’?”<sup>24</sup> – with the competitive examination system of the Agataen Empire described in *Interesting Times* – for instance, the candidates for the post of Assistant Night-Soil Operative have to write “a sixteen-line poem on evening mist over the reed beds”<sup>25</sup> – there is not much difference: both require all participants to know totally irrelevant and pointless

<sup>22</sup> SM, 182.

<sup>23</sup> TR, 294.

<sup>24</sup> MP, 34.

<sup>25</sup> IT, 106.

things. It certainly goes against the cultivated image of meritocracy in academe, particularly if we take the received way of advancement, that is, killing one's peers and superiors, into consideration; then again, it may also be interpreted as mocking the lack of learning on the part of the masses.

Similarly, the only lecture ever presented does not paint a complimentary picture of academic oration, either of delivery or intelligibility,<sup>26</sup> while it plays with some concepts of modern physics and philosophy of science – most scenes written by Pratchett have several layers, that is what makes them so captivating and challenging to decipher:<sup>27</sup>

When the wizards had settled down, Simon began to talk. He read from notes, and every time he stuttered over a word the wizards, as one man, without being able to stop themselves, chorused it for him. [...]

Even allowing for the stutter, he was not a very good speaker. He dropped notes. He corrected himself. He ummed and ahed. And as far as Esk was concerned he wasn't saying anything very much. Phrases filtered down to her hiding place. "Basic fabric of the universe" was one, and she didn't understand what that was, unless he meant denim, or maybe flannelette. "Mutability of the possibility matrix" she couldn't guess at all.

Sometimes he seemed to be saying that nothing existed unless people thought it did, and the world was really only there at all because people kept on imagining it. But then he seemed to be saying that there was lots of worlds, all nearly the same and all sort of occupying the same place but all separated by the thickness of a shadow, so that everything that ever could happen would have somewhere to happen in.

[...] There was something disturbing about the phrases Simon used. Half the time he seemed to be saying that the world was about as real as a soap bubble, or a dream.

[...] Simon talked on, about the world being made up of tiny things whose presence could only be determined by the fact that they were not there, little

26 Although the reader sees the whole scene through a young girl's eyes, and since female and male approaches to magic differ significantly, this point of view may be interpreted as a parody of, or deficiency in female understanding as well as the reaction of the (wo)man in the street to lofty scientific parlance.

27 "I do bury, er, resonances and obscure references in the text, but I hope I do it in such a way that it won't spoil the narrative for readers who don't recognise them." (Pratchett interview 1995, *TR*, 328)

spinning balls of nothingness that magic could shunt together to make stars and butterflies and diamonds. Everything was made up of emptiness. The funny thing was, he seemed to find this fascinating.<sup>28</sup>

Since the author focusses on the faculty members, students are mostly ignored. Just a few are named and of those, only three (Rincewind, Ponder Stibbons, and Adrian Turnipseed aka Big Mad Drongo) figure in at least two novels who later obtain tenure, and may serve as another cliché. University traditions, for instance, the degree ceremony called *Convivium* (J), a whole-term-long Rag Week (MM), or the use of Latatian, the Discworld version of Latin for mottoes and formal occasions, like awarding an honorary degree of *Doctorum Adamus con Flabello Dulci* (J), appear quite frequently, and add to the *couleur locale*. A few study books – *Occult Primer* (S, J) and *Occult Companion* (UA), *Necrotelicomnicon Discussed for Students, with Practical Experiments* (MP) – are mentioned incidentally. Other trappings of university life – for instance, curricula, essays, theses, job descriptions – are only referred to in passing, or not at all, evincing that only the most apparent aspects of academic life are discussed in the series.

Ideally, academics are expected to do research and contribute to the total of human knowledge. Pratchett himself obviously loved doing research for his books as well as for fun, so it was familiar terrain; that might be the reason why his critique of the wizards' research seems much more cutting. Having a look at what the author implies by the titles of research papers or monographs and their qualities, well, I for one find them apt, but at the same time feel uncomfortable reading “*Dangerous Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians, Birds, Fish, Jellyfish, Insects, Spiders, Crustaceans, Grasses, Trees, Mosses & Lichen of Terror Incognita* (at least 29 volumes and three parts)” (TLC) or “*Wesentlichen Ungewissheiten Zugehörig der Offenkundigen Männlichkeit, Das (Ofleberger)*” (UA), or Dr Bentley Purchase's *The Vicar is Coming to Tea and One Hundred and Twenty-seven Other Warnings of Social Embarrassment* (Unseen University Press) (*Snuff*). Each of them typifies and exaggerates certain title conventions.

Wizards tend to commit themselves to arcane research topics: “The Dean had spent seventeen years writing a treatise on The Use of the Syllable ‘ENK’ in Levitation Spells of the Early Confused Period.”<sup>29</sup> Scholars are often accused of doing research that is useless from a societal perspective, and these jokes seemingly substantiate the accusation, like the student pursuing an inquiry abroad:

28 ER, 200–201.

29 SM, 131.

‘That’s Devious Collabone, sir. He’s out studying Oyster Communications in a Low Intensity Magical Field for his B.Thau.’ ‘Good gods, can they communicate?’ said Ridcully. ‘Apparently, Archchancellor, although thus far they’re refusing to talk to him.’<sup>30</sup>

Another feature of scholarly works, creatively and funnily put into service by the author, is adding footnotes to his text as well as to his footnotes,<sup>31</sup> thus producing a marked *Verfremdungseffekt*, certainly unusual in immersive fantasy fiction – though Pratchett frequently employs distancing effects as an artistic device to promote critical thinking.

Neither learning, nor research can be done without a library, and the Library of the UU, but even more so, the Librarian – a human turned orangutan who only says ook, is a mean keyboard player and goalkeeper and all-round favourite of fans – features in most Discworld novels and commemorates Pratchett’s love of reading. According to the Library-Space general and specific theories, the Library contains all books, even those that are not written yet. The Archchancellor encourages students to take advantage of the Library:

You know how to read. There is a library. You’re here to learn, not to be taught. [...] We tell our students that there are some things that are sooner or later unavoidable, and these will probably include opening a book.<sup>32</sup>

Harsh criticism of student behaviour, indeed, and it certainly anticipated the 21<sup>st</sup> century problems we have to face these days in higher education.

### The transformation of UU

To my knowledge, only Penelope Hill (2000, 2004) examined the University’s development in an essay, but after the second edition of that collection six more Discworld novels have added to the portrayal of UU, making it more nuanced, giving it more depth, distancing it from the primordial pure burlesque in the first books.

The final university is indeed very different from the initial light-hearted parody. The last Discworld novels focus on Ankh-Morpork and its industrial revolution which

30 GP, 308.

31 E.g. 24 footnotes in *UA*, 35 in *Snuff* compared to one and five, resp. in *COM* and *TLF*, the first two volumes.

32 UUD, UU Terms.

changes the world. Of course, UU partakes in this progress, although only one plot-line in *Unseen Academicals* takes place there. In these novels, as opposed to the previous ones, the wizards are capable of changing at several levels. For instance, the Dean accepts a job offer from another university, and becomes its Archchancellor, an act regarded as treason by his erstwhile colleagues. More importantly, the head wizards display more wisdom and more tact, champion social and economic justice, and play a significantly more active role in the city's life: the wizards' college becomes a flagship university in equal opportunity employment for all species, publicising their belief that nobody should be discriminated against based on the happenstance of their birth, and prejudices should be re-assessed in each and every case.

Obviously, UU, like the whole Discworld, gradually took shape, so inconsistencies do occur, particularly when we contrast the early novels with the late ones. The metamorphosis of UU ran parallel with that of Discworld and manifests the author's evolving world view and moral stance which found its best expressive form in the fantasy genre.

Fantasy should present the familiar in a new light – I try to do that on Discworld. It's a way of looking at the here and now, not the there and then. Fantasy is the Ur-literature, from which everything else sprang – which is why my knuckles go white when toe-sucking literary critics dismiss it as 'genre trash'.<sup>33</sup>

Pratchett considered fantasy a fundamental, essential part of world literature whose neglect by literary studies is unforgivable, and his postmodern use of fantasy traditions which conquers the hearts of millions while nourishing their intellects clearly shows the value inherent in the genre.

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33 Pratchett 2014, 100.



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# Crime Fiction as a Moral Roly-Poly Toy

Katalin Szlukovényi

Eötvös Loránd University

szlukovenyi.katalin@btk.elte.hu

Edgar Allan Poe begins “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, often celebrated as the first genuine crime story in English-speaking literatures, with an essayistic introduction on the analytical mind: “As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play.”<sup>1</sup> After a list of examples taken from mathematical studies, language puzzles, and card games, the narrator turns his attention to the detailed description of a case in which the analytical mind was employed by his friend Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin to investigate the murders mentioned in the short story’s title. Thus, the pursuit of solving mysteries is defined at the very beginning of the genre as a “moral activity”. My impression is that this moral aspect of crime stories has received relatively little attention because mysteries tend to be categorised as popular culture, enjoyed for the cheap thrill, although numerous renowned authors have emphasised the significance of moral concerns. Therefore, I will briefly survey a few classics that indicate how essential moral considerations are in mysteries, and then give a detailed analysis of the Rabbi Small series by Harry Kemelman as a lucid example of crime fiction aimed to restore a presumed moral order.

In her autobiography, Agatha Christie, the “Queen of Crime Fiction”, writes about “the detective story that has a kind of passion behind it – that passion being to help save innocence. Because it is innocence that matters, not guilt.”<sup>2</sup> Many of her plots are driven by this passion, from *Five Little Pigs* (originally published as *Murder in Retrospect*) to *Ordeal by Innocence*, to name just two obvious examples of her several narratives in which protecting innocent suspects or possible further victims is a substantial motivation for the investigation. In the latter novel, a mother, Rachel Argyle, is killed and suspicion falls on every member of her family until the real culprit is revealed; whereas the former book shows how an unsolved mystery casts a shadow even on future generations, threatening to prevent the alleged but actually innocent murderer’s daughter from marrying the love of her life. In both examples,

1 Poe 166.

2 Christie 425.

the ordinary course of life is blocked by sin, and normality can only be restored by identifying the perpetrator and eliminating him or her – by imprisonment or execution – from everyday society. This type of narrative, however, implies a faith in normality as the basic condition of the world – a feature that can be observed in Kemelman's novels, as well.

The plot of crime fiction, however, does not always culminate in the punishment of the perpetrator. A good counterexample is G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, a Roman Catholic priest and amateur detective, who always solves the mystery, but rarely hands the perpetrator over to the police. In "The Queer Feet", for instance, Father Brown convinces a thief to return the stolen property – some valuable silver kitchen utensils – to the rightful owners but lets him go, implying that anyone who commits only a minor crime deserves a second chance. This ultimate trust in the redemptive power of sincere repentance is most visible in the character of Flambeau. He makes his debut as a thief stealing from the priest himself in "The Blue Cross", the opening piece in *The Innocence of Father Brown*, the first of the five Father Brown story collections; he serves his time in jail and then attempts yet another theft in "The Flying Stars", but finally returns the stolen diamonds and mends his ways after a conversation with Father Brown. From that moment on, he is the permanent sidekick of the priest in numerous stories.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, Father Brown thinks of sin rather in Christian than in criminal terms. In "The Hammer of God", he goes as far as to promise the murderer – to whose confession he has just listened to while they were standing on the top of a church tower – that he would not reveal what he heard to the others waiting below: "I know what you did – at least, I can guess the great part of it. [...] I say I know all this; but no one else shall know it. The next step is for you; I shall take no more steps; I will seal this with the seal of confession."<sup>4</sup> The relative location of the characters (the confession taking place high above the crowd of common people) as well as the outcome (the murderer voluntarily giving himself up) suggest that for Father Brown sin is rather a transcendental than a legal issue – just like for Kemelman's Rabbi Small.

As for the moral ground of solving mysteries, another possible reason – besides protecting innocent individuals and assisting in the triumph of transcendental

3 It is worth mentioning that Flambeau shows remarkable parallels with Vidocq, a real-life detective who also started his career as a criminal but gained fame for establishing Sûreté, a branch of the French civil police in 1811. (Spencer 97)

4 Chesterton 257.

laws – can be social justice. In his seminal essay, “The Simple Art of Murder”, Raymond Chandler, possibly the most prominent master of hard-boiled crime fiction, criticises many British novels from the Golden Age of detective fiction for lacking the realism that he finds and celebrates in the work of Dashiell Hammett. He insists on realism in order to hold up a true mirror to society, instead of offering the readers an exciting story just to escape reality: “The realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels [...] It is not a fragrant world, but it is the world you live in.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, even the dark universe of hard-boiled fiction seeks its legitimisation in a moral framework, claiming for an authentic representation of a corrupt society with the implied intention of improving it. A similar sense of social responsibility is also present in Kemelman’s series.

All the above-mentioned ambitions seem to derive from the ancient human desire to restore order. This drive has been present in literature long before the actual genre of detective fiction appeared. John Scaggs, for example, starts his monograph on *Crime Fiction* by pointing out similar patterns in canonical pieces of literature that he reads as forerunners of crime narratives: “The story of Oedipus the King, as set down by Sophocles and first performed in about 430 BC, draws together all of the central characteristics and formal elements of the detective story, including a mystery surrounding a murder, a closed circle of suspects, and the gradual uncovering of a hidden past;”<sup>6</sup> and “[t]he revenge tragedy of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period [...] is structured by the overriding imperative of restoring the social order, as embodied in the act of revenge.”<sup>7</sup> In his first example, *Oedipus the King*, the plague is a powerful image for the “pollution of an entire society,”<sup>8</sup> as Martin Priestman points out, “and it is significant that this contamination can only be lifted by the banishment of the criminal.”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Hamlet’s famous outcry articulates the urging need to examine his father’s death with the purpose of re-establishing universal order: “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!”<sup>10</sup> Apparently, the essential motivation for investigations in murder mysteries as well as in their classical predecessors is

5 Chandler 8.

6 Scaggs 9.

7 Scaggs 11.

8 Martin Priestman quoted by Scaggs 10.

9 Scaggs 10.

10 Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.5.210–211.

the wish to return to normality, as experienced before the crime. Observing this recurring pattern, I contend that the basic psychological dynamism in crime fiction is quite similar to that of the roly-poly toy. Just like a child finds joy in watching how the plump figure first loses and then gradually regains its balance, the reader of crime fiction is happy to follow the plot from its beginning, when the universe is tipped out of balance by the criminal activity, until the very end, when order, at least to some extent, is restored by the detective.

Restoring order corresponds to an old Jewish concept called *tikkun olam*. Literally, it can be translated as “fixing the world”, and it is understood nowadays as “the establishment of Godly qualities throughout the world.”<sup>11</sup> The expression first appeared in the *Aleinu* prayer dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century;<sup>12</sup> it became widely popular in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a central term in the mystic school of Lurianic kabbalah, suggesting that virtuous human deeds can contribute to the restoration of divine order;<sup>13</sup> whereas in the “1950s [...] the concept reemerged within liberal Jewish communities as the new shorthand for ‘social justice.’”<sup>14</sup>

Harry Kemelman’s protagonist Rabbi David Small pursues the goal of *tikkun olam* on two levels simultaneously in each of the series’s twelve volumes. In harmony with the rules of the genre, he is an amateur sleuth, who regularly helps his friend Chief Lanigan, the head of the local police in a fictitious suburban town called Barnard’s Crossing, near Boston, MA. The two of them succeed in finding the murderers and restoring justice in a legal sense in most of the stories. The rabbi, however, always gets involved in the criminal investigation because he feels responsible for his local religious community, some members of which are affected by the crimes in question each time. For instance, the victim in *Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry* dies by suffocation in his garage. The question whether he committed suicide or was murdered is vital not only for the police but also for the rabbi because people taking their own lives cannot be buried in the sacred grounds of the Jewish cemetery. As a result, each novel includes a double plot, and the two plotlines are closely intertwined: one is a usual whodunit story, whereas the other tells about some tension and its release within the Jewish congregation. The successful completion of the former is generally a prerequisite to the fulfilment of the latter, in accordance with the Jewish principle of *dina d’malkhuta dina*, often translated as “the law of the land is the law,” which

11 Jacobs 27.

12 Jacobs 25.

13 Jacobs 34–35.

14 Jacobs 37.

states that Jewish people are bound by the civil law of the country where they live.<sup>15</sup> However, the relationship between the religious and the legal understanding of the law is far from lacking difficulties.

[...] once again, the atmosphere which had warmed somewhat, cooled.

"You said you were first and foremost a policeman. Well, first and foremost I am a rabbi. Mr. Goralsky is a member of my congregation, and I cannot see myself inviting his confidence in order to transmit it to the police."

"You mean that if you found a member of your congregation had committed murder you would not inform the police?"

"I am bound by the duties of citizenship just as is everyone else," said the rabbi stiffly.

"But you won't help us find him."

"I will not cast suspicion on innocent people so that the police can harass them."<sup>16</sup>

In the Rabbi Small novels, tension arises not only between legal and religious approaches to the same subject, but also between majority society and various minorities in the USA. When a petty drug dealer is killed in *Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home*, the police immediately suspect Jenkins, the only young black man who happens to be in the neighbourhood. As he is at the site of the murder because he is attending a party thrown by his Jewish friends – all of them college students and further possible suspects – Rabbi Small needs to intervene to protect the innocent, as Christie emphasized, by revealing the actual perpetrator. Published in 1969, the novel represents the final years of the civil rights movement in the US, when racial conflicts were current issues of fierce social debate and individual deeds tended to be interpreted as the indicators of the attitude of entire communities. The high level of tension in American society is reflected in temple politics as well: there is a threat of split within the Jewish community between those socially committed to civil rights and universal egalitarian movements, and the ones who want to only mind their own business, that is, people and issues directly related to Judaism. In a plot where most of the suspects are either black or Jewish, the question cannot be avoided whether defending one minority involves putting the blame on another. Thus, Rabbi Small's responsibility lies not only in detecting the truth, but also in addressing the

15 *Tikkun Olam* 155.

16 Kemelman, *Saturday, the Rabbi Went Hungry* 193.



general issues of his contemporary society. The conclusion, when a WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) character turns out to be the actual murderer, seems to indicate that the author, Kemelman takes a stand and suggests that minority issues are just spectacular surface but it is individual crime and individual responsibility that matter; or, possibly, that the sinner is not to be sought among minorities forced to compete against each other but in majority society, which creates and directs the situation in the first place. Both interpretations point out, however, that there are certain underlying questions of moral standards and of social responsibility at the core of any crime fiction plot.

Kemelman's primary intention was to write about the Jewish American subculture which he lived in and which he dearly loved:

Fifty years ago, I moved to the Yankee town that I have called Barnard's Crossing in my books, where the few Jews in the area had decided to establish a synagogue. Of necessity, since there were so few of us, it was set up as a Conservative synagogue so that the few older members who were likely to be Orthodox on the one hand and the Reform on the other, would not feel the service too strange. In point of fact, most of them knew little or nothing of their religion. They were second and third generation Americans; their parents had received little from their immigrant parents and passed on even less to their children. Only one or two of the older Orthodox members kept kosher homes. [...] I was fascinated by the disaccord between the thinking of the rabbi and that of the congregation, and the problems it gave rise to.<sup>17</sup>

However, Kemelman was advised by his manuscript's first reader, his editor, that he could "brighten it up by introducing some of the exciting elements in the detective stories,"<sup>18</sup> especially since Kemelman already had a solid reputation as a crime fiction writer due to the success of his Nicky Welt stories. A rabbi seemed the ideal choice of a protagonist for combining Jewish tradition and mystery novels since his original duties included that of a judge as well, as it is carefully explained to Jewish community and readers alike in the very first chapter of the very first volume in the series:

"So if two members of the temple quarrel, what would you suggest, rabbi?"  
The young man smiled faintly. "Well, in the old days I would have suggested

17 Kemelman, "The Creation of Rabbi Small" 8.

18 Kemelman, "The Creation of Rabbi Small" 8.

a Din Torah.”

“What’s that?” asked Schwarz.

“A hearing, a judgment,” the rabbi answered. “That, incidentally, is one of the rabbi’s main functions – to sit in judgment. In the old days, in the ghettos of Europe, the rabbi was hired not by the synagogue but by the town. And he was hired not to lead prayers or to supervise the synagogue, but to sit in judgment on cases that were brought to him, and to pass on questions of law.” “How did he make his decisions?” asked Schwarz, interested in spite of himself.

“Like any judge, he would hear the case, sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with a pair of learned men from the village. He would ask questions, examine witnesses if necessary, and then on the basis of the Talmud, he would give his verdict.”

“I’m afraid that wouldn’t help us much,” said Schwarz with a smile. “This is about an automobile. I’m sure the Talmud doesn’t deal with automobile cases.”

“The Talmud deals with everything,” said the rabbi flatly.

“But automobiles?”

“The Talmud doesn’t mention automobiles, of course, but it does deal with such things as damages and responsibility. Particular situations differ from age to age, but the general principles remain the same.”<sup>19</sup>

The parallel drawn between the role of the rabbi and the representatives of the secular legal system – the detective or the judge – as appointed members of the society to guard its moral standards is complete with the comparison of their methodologies. Chief Lanigan represents conventional police logic whereas Rabbi Small contributes to their shared projects with his Talmudic reasoning. The *Talmud*, or the Oral Law consists of various interpretations of the *Torah*, the Written Law – in Christian terms the first five books of the *Old Testament* – produced by numerous rabbis through many centuries and accumulated in a thematic system and in a dynamic form which goes beyond the simple declaration of theoretically sacred truth by succeeding authorities. Instead, the Talmud offers a variety of opinions articulated and debated by diverse voices, and the task of the student is not so much to acquire some ready-made wisdom but rather to learn how to decipher a valid understanding of any particular situation from its often apparently controversial interpretations and

19 Kemelman, *Friday, the Rabbi Slept Late* 12–13.

how to act rightly on the basis of known precedents. One of the first conversations between Rabbi Small and Chief Lanigan introduces this parallel between – or rather the complementary nature of – police investigation and Talmudic *pilpul*:

But when I began Talmud, instruction was different. Imagine a large table with a group of students around it. At the head of the table was the teacher, a man with a long, patriarchal beard in this case. We read a passage, a short statement of the Law. Then followed the objections, the explanations, the arguments of the rabbis of old on the proper interpretation of the passage. Before we quite knew what we were doing, we were adding our own arguments, our own objections, our own hair-splitting distinctions and twists of logic, the so-called *pilpul*. Sometimes the teacher took it on himself to defend a given position and then we peppered him with questions and objections. I imagine a bear-baiting must have been like that – a shaggy bear surrounded by a pack of yelping dogs, and the moment he manages to toss off one another is ready to charge. As you begin to argue, new ideas keep presenting themselves. I remember an early passage I studied, which considered how damages should be assessed in the case of a fire resulting from a spark that flew out from under the blacksmith's hammer. We spent two whole weeks on that one passage, and when we finally reluctantly left it, it was with the feeling that we had barely begun. The study of the Talmud has exercised a tremendous influence over us. Our great scholars spent their lives studying the Talmud, not because the exact interpretation of the Law happened to be germane to their problems at the time – in many cases the particular laws had become dead letters – but because as a mental exercise it had a tremendous fascination for them. It encouraged them to dredge up from their minds all kinds of ideas –”

“And you propose to use this method on our present problem?”<sup>20</sup>

To sum up, Kemelman tells a double story in his novels about Rabbi Small. On the one hand, the series is an exciting example of crime fiction, which combines Talmudic wisdom with the usual detective logic in new and productive ways. At the same time, it is also a narrative about the eternal and ambiguous human wish for and fear of tension – between religious and secular, majority and minority,

20 Kemelman, *Friday, the Rabbi Slept Late* 164-165.

traditional and modern, etc. – which always needs to be resolved but which always returns with every new generation and every new crime. It is a comfort offered by the genre to the readers that at least the good old principles still apply in these mysteries.

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# Dreams in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic Novels

Györgyi Kovács

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies

kovacsorgyi0528@gmail.com

## Introduction

Dreams have always been regarded as an intricate part of human life and many people have sought to find meaning in them. In literature, dreams are often used as a device for warning of future events; this is what happens in Homer's, Chaucer's and Milton's works as well. Norman N. Holland stated that in a literary world everything points towards a purpose – bearing in mind that the purpose may be to show that there is no purpose. Thus, dreams must be included in that purposiveness and must have something significant to say in the literary world.<sup>1</sup> Dreams can be used as a device to illustrate emotions on an unmediated level, they can reveal deeper layers in the personalities of the characters, and it they can even be used to introduce a supernatural force.<sup>2</sup> Dreams provide an opportunity to include something meaningful in the literary work without the need to explain it.

In this essay, I am going to look at dreams in 18<sup>th</sup>-century gothic novels. The presence of the supernatural is a key feature of gothic novels and the mysticism surrounding dreams provided an opportunity for gothic authors to introduce the preternatural. I will briefly summarize the dream theories available in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with special emphasis on the biblical tradition of prophetic dreams. I included four gothic novels in this essay: *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), *The Old English Baron* (1777), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe, as well as two theatrical adaptations of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). The essay will show that dreams enabled authors – who were considered conservative in their reliance on the supernatural – to include it in their novels.

## Medieval dream theories

Medieval treatises tended to look to Christian theology for guidance on how to interpret dreams. There are many examples of meaningful dreams in the *Bible*, maybe the most famous being Pharaoh's dream in *Genesis*. His dream is interpreted by Joseph and serves as a warning that it is God's will that seven years of abundance be fol-

1 Holland xviii.

2 Porter 38.

lowed by seven years of famine, so he should economize and store enough food for his people to survive. Pharaoh follows Joseph's advice and Egypt survives the lean years. Pharaoh's dream was prophetic in nature; it communicated God's will and helped Pharaoh prepare for the difficulties. At the same time, the correct interpretation set Joseph free and made him one of Pharaoh's right-hand men.

In the *New Testament*, dreams are also a way for angels to communicate with people. Joseph – the legal father of Jesus – had four significant dreams in which angels spoke to him: in the first they informed him that Mary has conceived by the Holy Spirit. This possibility of communication is present in Islam as well: Prophet Mohammed was visited by the Angel Gabriel in his dream and the *Koran* is the collection of the revelations he received from the angel. Thus, the concept is present not only in Christianity, but also in the religious culture building on it.

Religious faith therefore maintained that dreams could have a supernatural nature. In the Middle Ages, St. Augustine wrote extensively on the nature of dreams. He emphasized that not only God, but Satan also has the power to communicate with people in their dreams as well, and to interpret the message, it is important to first ascertain its origin. To be able to do this, the effects of the dream must be considered since Satan wishes to make people do wicked deeds.<sup>3</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Moses Amyraldus considered the question in detail in *A discourse concerning the divine dreams mention'd in Scripture together with the marks and characters by which they might be distinguish'd from vain delusions: in a letter to Monsieur Gaches*. He stated that certain practices, such as going to sleep in a holy place after fasting and prayer could increase the likelihood that the dream had a divine, and not a demonic, origin.<sup>4</sup> He also claimed that if the message of the dream was in line with the teachings of God, then it could be trusted, but dreams which encouraged the dreamer to do something against God's teachings, were temptations, and had come from Satan.<sup>5</sup>

### **Dream theories in the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

According to scholarly consensus, the Enlightenment favored rational thinking and people tended to dismiss the supernatural explanations of dreams.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the supernatural influence was not entirely discarded, especially in popular publications: many cheap fortune-telling tracts included dream divination (along

3 Rees 32.

4 Schreier Rupprecht 127.

5 Craig 155.

6 Kramer 3.

with astrology and *moleosophy*, which tells one's personality and future from the birthmarks they have on their bodies).<sup>7</sup> According to a survey conducted in 2015, many people even today believe that their dreams can tell the future.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Tryon's *A Treatise of Dreams & Visions* was first published in 1689, followed by two more editions. With the new title *Nocturnal Revels*, it was published many times in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, even as late as 1789. He claimed that dreams can have a supernatural cause, but they can be influenced by natural causes as well, such as one's thoughts during the day, the humors (the medieval concept of the four humors which determine a person's temperament), and included the position of the planets as a natural influence on one's dreams.<sup>9</sup> In the period, it was believed that other natural causes can influence dreams as well, such as noise, the position of the bed, the temperature in the room, and the position in which somebody sleeps.<sup>10</sup>

As for the supernatural influence, it was also believed that in sleep people are vulnerable to attacks by evil spirits. The concept of the nightmare was more complex than today – based on John Bond's *An Essay on the Incubus, or Night-Mare* (1753), the 18<sup>th</sup>-century understanding of nightmares was closer to today's concept of sleep paralysis. People felt as if somebody was sitting on their chest and suffocating them<sup>11</sup> and many believed that this was the result of witchcraft – even as late as 1875 people were accused of sending nightmares to others.<sup>12</sup>

It was also believed that in sleep the soul is freed and can function independently of the body. This was seen as evidence of the immateriality and immortality of the soul. This view was supported by Charles Drelincourt's wildly popular *The Christian's Consolation Against the Fears of Death* (1641), and Andrew Baxter's *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul* (1733). Tryon also stated that it is possible for the soul to communicate with other people through their dreams after death.<sup>13</sup> The communicative aspect of the dream was not restricted to souls: Daniel Defoe emphasized the possibility of the devil speaking with people in their dreams, stating that it was the primary means for him to interact with humans.<sup>14</sup> He also explored the possibility of angels communicating with people in their dreams.<sup>15</sup>

7 Rivière 3.

8 Valášek and Watt 65.

9 Rivière 30.

10 Rivière 50.

11 Rivière 158.

12 Rivière 166.

13 Hirst.

14 Carter 327.

15 Hirst.



John Bond's, Thomas Tryon's, and Daniel Defoe's works suggest that even though the Enlightenment advocated rationalism, supernatural beliefs concerning dreams coexisted with rational explanations.

### Dreams in early gothic literature

The gothic novel is a famously multivalent form; many critics have attempted to define it, focusing on different aspects of the genre, but there is general agreement that the supernatural is present in some way in the novels. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives the following definition: "pseudomedieval fiction having a prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terror. Its heyday was the 1790s, but it underwent frequent revivals in subsequent centuries."<sup>16</sup> Maggie Kilgour lists the stock elements that characterize most gothic novels: settings such as a castle, preferably in ruins; gloomy mountains, preferably the Alps; a haunted room that locks only on the outside; and characters: passive and persecuted heroines, sensitive and rather ineffectual heroes, dynamic and tyrannical villains, evil prioresses, and talkative servants.<sup>17</sup>

Dreams presented an opportunity to include the supernatural in gothic novels, and the authors frequently made use of this device. Horace Walpole famously claimed that his inspiration for writing *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) originated in a dream. His letter, written to William Cole, 9 March 1765 says,

I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate.<sup>18</sup>

By claiming that the story stemmed from a dream, Walpole could create a comparable illusion that he was only a mediator, and the source was something greater than himself. This way, he could produce a context in which he himself was the recipient of supernatural inspiration and acted as a mere amanuensis, writing "without knowing in the least what [he] intended to say or relate." The story could thus be perceived

16 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 'Gothic novel'.

17 Kilgour 4

18 Riely 2.

as a dream-text, which might appear incoherent on the surface, but also offers clues for the right interpretation by the adept reader.

The prophecy that plays a key role in the novel is delivered to the villain's ancestor in a dream. As we learn by the end, the ancestor Ricardo murdered his lord and forged a will that made him the new lord:

Haunted by his guilt he vowed to St. Nicholas to found a church and two convents, if he lived to reach Otranto. The sacrifice was accepted: the saint appeared to him in a dream, and promised that Ricardo's posterity should reign in Otranto until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as long as issue male from Ricardo's loins should remain to enjoy it.<sup>19</sup>

Ricardo's dream follows the biblical tradition in two respects. First, it tells a prophecy that comes true in the course of the novel (like Pharaoh's dream that came true in the *Bible*). Secondly, the dream made it possible for Ricardo to communicate with Saint Nicholas and to make an arrangement that Ricardo's descendants would remain Otranto's owners for a time. As previously mentioned, Saint Augustine wrote about divine and demonic dreams, and following his distinction, Ricardo's dream is to be interpreted as a divine one because he was visited by a saint, and not by Satan. On the other hand, Saint Nicholas sanctioned Ricardo's murder of his lord and unleashed vengeance on his descendants irrespective of whether they were conscious of Ricardo's crime or not. This terrifying aspect of religion in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is one of the features that make it gothic.

Communication with a supernatural being is a significant theme in Frances Sheridan's *The History of Nourjahad* (1767) as well. Even though Sheridan relies on the explained supernatural, for the most part of the novel, the protagonist Nourjahad – and the reader as well – believes that he made an agreement with an immortal spirit in his dream. This possibility of communicating with an angel is part of the biblical tradition and is in line with the ideas of St. Augustine, Moses Amyraldus, and Daniel Defoe.

In the *Preface* to *The Old English Baron* (1777) Clara Reeve called her novel a literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Nevertheless, she faulted Walpole for his too violent supernatural machinery, she herself refrained from Walpole's excesses

19 Walpole.

and was much more conservative in the supernatural scenes. Literary criticism often blames *The Old English Baron* for being too tame for a gothic novel.

The following dream is experienced by a friend of a murdered aristocrat:

He thought he received a message from his friend Lord Lovel, to come to him at the castle; that he stood at the gate and received him [...] he bid Sir Philip follow him; he led him through many rooms, till at last he sunk down, and Sir Philip thought he still followed him, till he came into a dark and frightful cave, where he disappeared, and in his stead he beheld a complete suit of armour stained with blood, which belonged to his friend, and he thought he heard dismal groans from beneath.<sup>20</sup>

The dream describes the ghost of Lord Lovel as he communicates with his friend through a dream. His aim is to reveal the truth so that his heir can receive his rightful inheritance. This intention and active agency of the ghost resembles the ghost of Hamlet's father. According to Protestant doctrine, people could not communicate with the living after they died, yet Tryon stated that people could be contacted by the souls of the deceased. Sasha Handley claimed in her dissertation that ghost stories often publicized instances of social injustice. As they expressed divine displeasure, they referred to an authority that overwrote the laws of society, and so the victims of injustice could use them to demand justice independently of social authorities.<sup>21</sup> In her novel, Clara Reeve introduced ghosts who could fit into an accepted belief system of the period. By doing so, she also offered an example for later gothic writers in giving the ghost agency.

### Dreams in Ann Radcliffe's novels

There are examples of extraordinary dreams in two of Ann Radcliffe's novels: *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1797). The supernatural aspect of the dreams in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) was pointed out by Holly Hirst and Robert Miles.<sup>22</sup> It was also emphasized by Maria Anna Mackenzie in the Preface of her novel *Mysteries Elucidated* (1795) when she wrote about Radcliffe: „Dreams and apparitions favour too much of the superstition which ought never to be encouraged.”<sup>23</sup>

20 Reeve.

21 Handley 27.

22 Hirst and Miles 112.

23 Mackenzie xii.

In contemporary medicine, it was believed that nervous people were more likely to experience vivid dreams. William Rowley writes the following about nightmares in *A treatise on female nervous hysterical, hypochondriacal, bilious, convulsive diseases*: “the most common cause of disturbed sleep amongst the nervous is a quick perceptibility of mind [...] therefore love, hope, fear, suspense, vexation, grief, or even the contemplation of past pleasures or sufferings, will easily disturb sleep, and occasion horrid or frightful dreams.”<sup>24</sup> The “quick perceptibility of mind” is characteristic of Radcliffe’s heroines. Nagel states that the potential of Radcliffe’s protagonists for affective sensitivity is almost supernatural, and this potential is heightened when they are dreaming.<sup>25</sup> Rowley’s medical explanation makes it plausible for Radcliffe’s characters to experience nightmares in extraordinary situations. Radcliffe has a reputation of explaining away her supernatural mysteries, and when she introduced the real supernatural, she usually relied on a belief system that the readers were familiar with. She could rely on this medical explanation as the most likely, scientifically accepted theory of how the mind works to introduce the supernatural. According to her own theoretical work, *On the Supernatural in Poetry* (1826), her aim with the supernatural scenes was to achieve a sublime effect.

In *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), the heroine Adeline experiences four dreams, three of which reveal the fate of her father who was imprisoned and murdered in the abbey. The first one warns her of the danger she faces in the house where her father’s murderers wanted to kill her as well:

[G]loomy unpleasing images flitted before my fancy, and I fell into a sort of waking dream: I thought that I was in a lonely forest with my father [...] a mirror, which he held before my face; I looked in it and saw, (my blood now thrills as I repeat it) I saw myself wounded, and bleeding profusely. Then I thought myself in the house again; and suddenly heard these words [...] ‘Depart this house, destruction hovers here.’<sup>26</sup>

The man Adeline believes to be her father is later revealed to be a criminal who was hired to murder her. Her dream tells her that this man wants to harm her and urges her to escape the house. It is not clear who is speaking in the dream – the novel does not analyze it by applying St. Augustine’s or Moses Amyraldus’ method. It is

24 Rowley 214, 217–8.

25 Nagel 2013, 61 and 80.

26 Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* 41.

implied that a supernatural force – Providence – is at work helping Adeline, but not one specific angel or saint: “Such a combination of circumstances she believed could only be produced by some supernatural power, operating for the retribution of the guilty.”<sup>27</sup> Unlike the dreams in early gothic novels, Adeline’s dream, therefore, does not follow the dream theories of the period in establishing communication through the dream or having a prophetic nature as in the *Bible*, instead it suggests the existence of a supernatural power. Robert J. Mayhew also argues for the presence of Providence in Radcliffe’s novels, which ensures that virtue is rewarded, although he connects it to Latitudinarian theology and argues for the absence of the supernatural in the novels.<sup>28</sup> I believe that Radcliffe relied on the belief system of Christian religion but did not follow its doctrine concerning dreams. She rather followed Rowley’s medical explanation of dreams experienced by nervous people and used Adeline’s dream to invoke the possibility of the supernatural. Instead of giving a definite source of the warning, she employed obscurity, which is – according to Burke’s treatise – a necessary condition of the sublime.

Adeline’s other dreams show her the way to the secret chamber of the ruinous abbey where she finds evidence of the murder: a bloody dagger and a manuscript written by her father before his death.

[S]he heard a low voice call her, and, looking towards the place whence it came, she perceived by the dim light of a lamp a figure stretched on a bed that lay on the floor. The voice called again, and, approaching the bed, she distinctly saw the features of a man who appeared to be dying.<sup>29</sup>

She now thought herself in a large old gallery, and saw at one end of it a chamber door standing a little open and a light within: she went towards it, and perceived the man she had before seen, [...] beckoning her towards him [...] followed him into a suite of very ancient apartments, hung with black, and lighted up as if for a funeral [...] she found herself in the same chamber she remembered to have seen in her former dream: a coffin, covered with a pall, stood at the farther end of the room.<sup>30</sup>

27 Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* 141.

28 Mayhew 294.

29 Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* 108.

30 Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* 109.

The dreams tell Adeline that a man was murdered in the abbey. Diane Long Hoeveler praises Adeline's ability to read her dreams and emphasizes how much it helps her to uncover the truth.<sup>31</sup> The suggestions of the dream are later confirmed by the contents of the manuscript and the confession of the villain at the end of the novel. Radcliffe follows Clara Reeve in giving the dream a revelatory, supernatural aspect. This instance of the supernatural is not explained in the novel, as it was noted by Robert Miles in his scholarly work on Radcliffe<sup>32</sup> and by Holly Hirst in her paper *Theology of Gothic Dreams*.<sup>33</sup>

In the scenes describing Adeline's dreams and her finding the chamber and the manuscript, Radcliffe employs obscurity, and it is only at the very end of the novel that the reader learns that the victim is Adeline's father. In the dream, it is the murdered man who leads Adeline to the secret chamber. Unlike in the previous dream, here Radcliffe follows Clara Reeve not only in making the ghost able to communicate through dreams (building on the dream theory of Thomas Tryon), but in relying on the tradition of *Hamlet* as well in which the ghost of the murdered father reveals the truth to his child. As it becomes obvious when Adeline reads the manuscript, her father wants revenge for his death and wants to experience other people's sympathy with his sufferings.

Both theatrical adaptations of the novel include Adeline's dreams about the murder, but they focus on different aspects. In James Boaden's *Fontainville Forest* (1794), Adeline experiences a bond with her father without knowing who he is, and she finds the chamber and the manuscript on her own, even before her dream. This adaptation focuses on the emotional aspect of the scene and follows Radcliffe's technique in presenting the close connection between Adeline and her father and providing an explanation only later. In William Dunlap's *Fontainville Abbey* (1795), the dream explicitly leads Adeline to the chamber, even showing her which part of the abbey she should be headed. Dunlap emphasizes Adeline's active agency in investigating the secret ("I am the instrument in God's high hand / To drag from darkness deeds which gloom the day"),<sup>34</sup> and completely excludes the sympathy between Adeline and her father from the play. In this version, the supernatural is present not only in the dream, but on waking up, Adeline experiences all the gothic stock elements of a ghost-scene: groans and sighs, and the hanging on the

31 Hoeveler 104.

32 Miles 112.

33 Hirst.

34 Dunlap 177.

wall which conceals a door waving to and fro. The aim of the supernatural elements is to help Adeline gain knowledge to uncover the secrets.

Helping the dreamer understand obscure circumstances is a key feature of the dream in *The Italian* (1797) as well. The hero Vivaldi is haunted by a strange figure whom circumstances suggest is a ghost. Vivaldi always fails to see his face and he suspects him to be the villain Schedoni. Nearing the end of the novel, Vivaldi has the following dream:

The monk, whose face was still shrowded, he thought advanced, till, having come within a few paces of Vivaldi, he paused, and, lifting the awful cowl that had hitherto concealed him, disclosed – not the countenance of Schedoni, but one which Vivaldi did not recollect ever having seen before [...] something of that strange and indescribable air, which we attach to the idea of a supernatural being, prevailed over the features; and the intense and fiery eyes resembled those of an evil spirit, rather than of a human character. He drew a poniard from beneath a fold of his garment, and, as he displayed it, pointed with a stern frown to the spots which discoloured the blade; Vivaldi perceived they were of blood! [...]

A groan awakened him, but what were his feelings, when, on looking up, he perceived the same figure standing before him.<sup>35</sup>

The supernatural nature of the dream becomes obvious soon: what Vivaldi perceives in his dream is followed by the same sequence of events right after he wakes up. He sees the stranger first in his dream and then he recognises him when the stranger finally shows his face to him. The stranger also displays a bloody knife with which a murder was committed – first in his dream, and later in the reality of the novel as well. Similarly to the dreams in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), this dream is also revelatory to the dreamer, it shows him details of the mystery that he was not conscious of before. It is another similar feature in the two novels that these details do not provide Adeline, Vivaldi, or the reader with a full explanation, they merely serve to increase suspense.

The source of the dream is even more obscure in *The Italian* (1797) than in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). In *The Romance of the Forest* (1797), it was Adeline's dead father who communicated with her in her dream, and in her first dream she

35 Radcliffe, *The Italian* 318.

also received a providential warning of her danger. In *The Italian* (1797), the person who appears to Vivaldi in his dream is alive, he has no supernatural abilities and is unaware of the nature of Vivaldi's dream. He is a villainous figure who follows his own agenda when he shows Vivaldi the bloody knife and is not consciously involved in any way in the contents of Vivaldi's dream. Yet in the dream he reminds Vivaldi of an evil spirit, and a supernatural aura surrounds him. This dream does not fit such a well-established belief system as the tradition of the ghost of Hamlet's father or the belief that souls could communicate with people through their dreams. It could be likened to Adeline's first dream in the aspect that it warns Vivaldi of the villainous character of the stranger, but the message is much more obscure. What Radcliffe does here is to make uncommon but human circumstances supernatural to capitalize on the effect.

### Summary and conclusion

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century both natural and supernatural explanations for dreams coexisted. In religion, angels could communicate with people through their dreams and dreams could also have a prophetic nature. Gothic novels used dreams to include the supernatural in the story, and this is also true for authors who were considered conservative in the use of the supernatural, such as Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe.

In *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Horace Walpole relied on the religious aspect of dream theories and introduced a dream in which the villain made an agreement with a saint which also served as a prophecy. In *The Old English Baron* (1777), Clara Reeve used revelatory dreams and relied on the supernatural explanation given by dream theories in the period in having the soul of a deceased man be able to communicate through dreams. She also relied on the tradition of the ghost of Hamlet's father, who speaks with his son in order to restore order in the world. Ann Radcliffe followed Clara Reeve's example in including revelatory dreams in the story, while also capitalizing on the effect the supernatural dream had. Adeline's dreams in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) are portrayed as having a supernatural nature, as it was noticed by Holly Hirst and Robert Miles as well. In Radcliffe's time, these dreams were received as supernatural, as it was remarked by Maria Anna Mackenzie in the *Preface* of her novel, and the supernatural nature of the dreams was preserved by the two authors of the dramatic adaptations. In the novel, the first dream suggests the presence of Providence and invokes the sublime. The other dreams give an opportunity for Adeline's father to reach out to his daughter, in a similar manner as in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777). Boaden's adaptation focuses on the emotional



connection between Adeline and her father, whereas Dunlap's version emphasizes Adeline's agency in uncovering the mysteries. In *The Italian* (1797), Radcliffe arranged the context of the dream in a way which made it supernatural.

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# Speech Acts in Online Fan Communities

**Boglárka Fazekas**

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Linguistics

fbogi42@gmail.com

The Internet Age has greatly reorganized the structure and operation of fan communities, who have published their fandom-related works in *fan magazines* – (*fan-zines*) – and have gone to conventions. Due to the World Wide Web, the geographical boundaries of fan communities have disappeared, allowing participation regardless of location, and thus making it possible for fanworks to reach a broader audience. These communities have their own vernacular, a *fan lingo*, which can be used in any media-oriented fan community, although there are fandom specific vocabularies as well. In my previous research I observed the usage of some of the most important elements of this lingo: I examined a corpus of personal fan blogs on *Tumblr* and entries in fan forums in a functional pragmatic frame.<sup>1</sup> Language usage is crucial in these fan communities, as due to the platforms they use for communication, the primary mode of expression is via written texts. In this paper I will examine what kind of speech acts are used in these online fan communities, based on J. L. Austin and John Searle's theories.

## Online fan communities

Firstly, I will briefly explain what fans and fan communities are, based on the articles of Roberta Pearson and Zoltán Kacsuk. Kacsuk defines a fan as “a person, who spends an excessive amount of time and energy on a certain topic or activity.”<sup>2</sup> They “think of the object of their interest as a part of their personality and they are building social relationships on it as they enter a fan community.”<sup>3</sup> In my research, I observe media-oriented fan communities, which are “groups organised around the consumption and interpretation of science fiction, comic books, films, television series, etc.”<sup>4</sup> For the sake of simplicity, from now on I will refer to them as fan communities.

Fans have the need to share and discuss their experiences of the reception of these texts, and because of that, Kacsuk sees them as interpretive communities, as,

1 Fazekas 53–83.

2 Kacsuk 223.

3 Pearson 102.

4 Kacsuk 223.

according to Stanley Fish, the very act of reading is an act of interpretation as well. Thus, the readers are creating the text while they are also interpreting it. This interpretation can be based on their own personal ideas or on the rules and assumptions of a community which they are a member of.<sup>5</sup>

It is also mentioned that these fan communities, or with another word, fandoms, have their own practices of interpretation, such as re-reading and analysing the texts, involving different texts, such as other works by the same author, in the interpretation. Also involved is the information that goes beyond the text itself, for example, the circumstances of the creation, the filming of a TV series, etc. Another practice is the creation of the canon: when they define the most important works that would frame future interpretations. Conversely, many times fans extend and/or rewrite their favourites,<sup>6</sup> meaning that they are using the object of interest as a base text and creating new texts based on those.<sup>7</sup>

At this point I would like to mention shipping, which comes from the word 'relationship' and it refers to the support of a romantic relationship of two characters.<sup>8</sup> Most of the time this includes an emotional bond to the supported pairing. It can be a canonical pairing – in the base text, for example, Arthur and Gwen in the BBC series *Merlin*; or non-canonical – as Merlin and Arthur. I consider shipping to be one of the fans' interpretation practices because I have noticed that in fan communities shipping is one of the most important phenomena and it has a huge impact on one's interpretation of the base text, as they often build up their headcanons (personal canons) in a way to support certain pairings.

### Speech acts

In this part I will give a brief summary of speech acts, based on John Langshaw Austin's and John Searle's works. A speech act is an utterance that not only presents information but performs an action as well.<sup>9</sup> For example, a request, a promise, or an apology are considered speech acts.

*1) That girl is beautiful.*

*I promise I'll introduce you to her.*

<sup>5</sup> Kacsuk 224.

<sup>6</sup> Kacsuk 226.

<sup>7</sup> Wiatrowski.

<sup>8</sup> Driscoll 79–97; Kaplan 134–153.

<sup>9</sup> Austin 32; Tátrai, "Pragmatika" 1009.

According to Austin, these utterances do not describe or state anything, nor are they true or false, but by saying them one performs the action they are talking about. These are performative sentences, or performatives.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the relevance of the utterance is not whether it is true or false, but if it can successfully meet the goals of the performed action. In the case of a promise, it will only be successful if the speaker is willing to do what they promised.<sup>11</sup>

Austin stated that when uttering a sentence, one performs not one, but three speech acts at the same time: the locutionary act, or the act of uttering the words of the sentence; the illocutionary act, the result of the communicative act that we performed by uttering the sentence; and the perlocutionary act, which is the effect of the locutionary and illocutionary act.<sup>12</sup>

The prototypical way to mark the illocutionary force of an utterance is by using performative verbs. These verbs are first person, present tense verbs which explicitly name the illocutionary act. However, not all speech acts can be performed with these kinds of words. In a discourse the intonation, word order, or, in written form, the punctuation can also help detect speech acts, and, in some cases, one needs to heavily rely on the contextual background information of the given interaction in order to process it.<sup>13</sup>

2a) *I ask you to close the window.*

2b) *Could you close the window?*

2c) *It's cold in here.*

The speech acts that explicitly mark the illocutionary force of the utterance are direct speech acts, while the ones that require the usage of the contextual background are indirect speech acts. From the examples above, the first, 2a) (*"I ask you to close the window"*) is a direct speech act as it has a performative verb, while the other two are indirect speech acts. The second one implies that the listener is capable of closing the window, while the third one refers to the result of completing the request, that is, if we close the window, the room will not be cold.<sup>14</sup>

10 Austin 35.

11 Tátrai, „Pragmatika” 1010.

12 Austin 113; Sbisá 234.

13 Tátrai, *Bevezetés a pragmatikába* 91.

14 Tátrai, „Pragmatika” 1013, 1020.

## Corpus and method

I created my corpus for this research from 15 personal fanblogs on *Tumblr* and posts from two Hungarian fan forums. Personal blogs are “centered around the presentation of a person’s life events, opinions and feelings, while a fanblog is an unofficial source about a celebrity, a book, TV show, etc. posting pictures, news, opinions.”<sup>15</sup> Personal blogs usually have one single editor and fanblogs are often run by several people together. A personal fanblog is the mixture of the two types, as it is edited by one user, who shares his or her life events, opinions, etc, but the fandom-related content is also important.

My corpus includes the first 200 text posts and “About” pages of 15 personal fanblogs: 5 of them edited by users whose first language is English, 5 of them by users whose first language is not English, and 5 of them by users whose first language is Hungarian. Based on their “About” pages, 13 of the users were female, while 2 of them did not mention their gender. As for their age, the 11 publishing users were all between 16 and 24 years old. From their blogs I chose the first 200 text posts – regardless of whether they were reblogs or original posts – starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014 in reverse chronological order.

My forum-based corpus consists of the first 200 posts of 4–4 topics of 2 different Hungarian fan forums: the forum of *gameofthrones.hu*, a Hungarian fanpage of *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and the *swsaga.hu*, a *Star Wars* fan community. There are 150–150 posts of 2 additional topics of the latter. As for the 4 topics, one was about the object of interest in general (i.e., *Game of Thrones* or *Star Wars*), one about fanfictions, one about pairings, and the fourth one was a topic unrelated to the object of interest: in both cases it was about movies in general. The two additional topics from *swsaga.hu* were about the community itself: the members could greet the others and tell them how they had become fans of *Star Wars*. In the case of the forum posts, all of them were written in Hungarian, while on *Tumblr*, most of the posts were written in English. I did not mind this because I wanted to find out whether the users knew and used these words, so the language these posts were written in was not important.

## Results

In the corpus I found 32 entries including speech acts, which is fewer than expected. I divided these posts into two groups: general speech acts and fandom-related

15 Domonkosi 193.

ones. Here I present the entries the same way they appeared on the websites and in brackets I put the nickname of the user or the name of the blog it originates from. In the case of the Hungarian examples, the translation can be found in square brackets. The bold highlights are made by me unless stated otherwise.

**General speech acts:**

3) *Üdvözöllek itthon, Tyrannus Caseyjones nagyúr! [Welcome home, Lord Tyrannus Caseyjones!]* (Rajmesz)

4a) *Engedjétek meg, hogy a 7000-esek háromtagú klubjában üdvözöljem magam, immár a top 15-ben! [Allow me to welcome myself to the club of 7000, with only three members, now in the top 15!]* (Csoli1138)

4b) *Gratula, Csoli! [Congrats, Csoli!]* (Darth Krande)

4c) *Szép teljesítmény. [Well done.]* (Darth Revan9)

In *example 3*), we can see an entry from the swsaga.hu forum in which a user welcomes another newly registered user. We can also see that most probably the welcomed person was a member before due to the word “home” and the mention of their previous username. In *example 4a*) we can see another welcoming, but in this case the user welcomes himself to the elite club of members with more than 7000 entries in the forum. In *examples 4b*) and *4c*), they are congratulated by another user with a prototypical performative verb, that is, “congrats” *Example 4c*) is an indirect form of congratulating, with a reference to the effort Csoli1138 made to achieve this number of entries.

According to Szilárd Tátrai’s speech act typology, which is based on Searle’s categorisation of speech acts, all three examples fit into the category of expressives. With these kinds of utterances, the speaker adjusts their words to the world around them without changing their knowledge about it. The goal of these utterances is to express the speaker’s emotional state, or their feelings.<sup>16</sup> In Austin’s terms, these speech acts are called behabitives.<sup>17</sup>

5) *Először engedjétek meg, hogy bocsánatot kérjek amiért pár éve csak úgy se szó, se beszéd leléptem! [First of all, please allow me to apologise for leaving without a word a few years ago!]* (SZKipi Padawan)

6) *If you don’t reblog this from a JB [Jaime and Brienne from Game of Thrones] shipper, I judge you* (yellowdelaney)

<sup>16</sup> Tátrai, *Bevezetés a pragmatikába* 94.

<sup>17</sup> Austin 145.



*Example 5*) is also an expressive or behabitive speech act, although it operates with a different kind of emotion: the apology. In this utterance we can observe that this user used to belong to the forum, but left it, and, after a while, has now returned. *Example 6*) is another type of expressive: when someone judges the other for their behaviour, which is, in this case, not reblogging something from a Jaime/Brienne shipper's blog. Besides apology or congratulations, giving thanks or condolences are also considered expressives.

7) *Quarron... a név ismerős, de már az idejét se tudom mikor hallottam utoljára 😊 [Quarron... the name is familiar, but I don't know when was the last time I heard it] (Palpi)*

*Csak ne folytasd az idézetet, csak könyörgöm, ne folytasd! 🙏🙏 [Don't continue with the quote, I'm begging you, don't continue!] (Dzséjt)*

*Már akkor sem használtam az Obi.... nyugi, csak Quarronhoz mértén szükségesség 😊 [I haven't been using the name Obi... no worries, it's only necessary due to Quarron] (Palpi)*

In *example 7*), we can see a request, or rather a plea: when one of the users mentions an old member of the forum along with a quote from *Star Wars: A New Hope*, another user begs him not to continue. In this example we can see the perlocutionary act as well: the effect that the plea had on Palpi, who, after a bit of teasing, did stop quoting. This speech act falls into the category of directives, where the utterer wishes to adjust the world to his words, that is, to persuade the other participant to behave according to his plans. Besides pleading, orders and requests also belong to this category. Austin called these speech acts the exercitives.<sup>18</sup>

8) *I bet there's no drama like this in the teletubbies fandom (geronimo-sherlock)*

*Example 8*) is from one of the *Tumblr* blogs where the performative verb has a metaphorical meaning as they most probably did not actually place a bet on the above statement; however, the utterance can still be considered a speech act. In this one, the user expresses their opinions on how large or small the drama is in the Teletubbies fandom. This speech act is a representative or an assertive in which the utterer is adjusting their words to the world around them. Their goal is to convince the other

18 Austin 145.

participants that what they are saying is true. With these utterances they aim to add to the other participants' knowledge. This category also includes descriptions, definitions, explanations, and even questions as they are also related to our knowledge about the world around us. Austin calls these speech acts *expressives*.<sup>19</sup>

### Fandom-related speech acts

Moving forward, I would like to show a few examples of speech acts that are related to the interpretative activities of fan communities, such as intertextuality, canon creation, or shipping.

9) *Én mondjuk ezért drukkolok Jaime/Brienne-nek, mert halálian viccesek együtt és Cersei idegrohamot kapna. [I am rooting for Jaime/Brienne, because they are extremely funny together and Cersei would get a nervous breakdown]* (Stannis Baratheon)

10) *i will go down with these ships: steve/bucky, thorin/thranduil, dany/jon snow, nat/clint, dean/cas, cesare/lucrezia, kieren/simon, tons more* (mahbucky)

In *examples 9) and 10)*, we see two utterances about shipping, or the support of the romantic relationship of two characters. In 9), the user uses the Hungarian equivalent of rooting to express their support, while in 10) we can see a metaphorical expression to share what pairings they support. “*I will go down with this ship*” originally means that I will sink with this ship which in fan communities means to be a devoted supporter of, or shipper of, those pairings. The metaphor is based on the homonymy between ship ‘vehicle’ and ship ‘relationship’. It is due to this that fans started to conceptualise shipping as sailing.<sup>20</sup>

Both examples fall into the category of *expressives*, as shipping itself often involves strong emotions, but since shipping can play an important part in constructing fan identities, these speech acts, especially 10), can also be considered *declaratives* as well. Declaratives are speech acts which can alter the worlds of the participants, such as getting married or baptised or when one becomes a doctor. These speech acts are often related to a social institution.<sup>21</sup> This is not the case in *example 10*, so this would not be a prototypical declaration, but it can alter the utterer's world as

19 Austin 145.

20 Fazekas 53–83.

21 Tátrai, *Bevezetés a pragmatikába* 95.

many fans consider their ships as part of their constructed identity. Therefore, I think *example 10* is not just an expressive, but a declarative as well.

*11) so Louise and I were lamenting the lack of a proper red button interview for the Series 3 finale so I jokingly told her I should write my own. And then I ended up actually doing it. This is ridiculously stupid and self-indulgent but I'm taking it as my headcanon. Copious amounts of Hartis in this [I love you josefine:~] (alfrescotree)*

*Example 11)* features another important interpretative practice of fan communities: creating canon. In fan communities we can talk about three types of canon: first there is the canon which includes the base text and any related additional material published by the creators, in other words, the official source; then there is the ‘fanon’, which includes the tendencies in fan interpretations (i.e. the existence of the ship Merlin/Arthur); and, finally, we have headcanons, which are the individual interpretations of a single fan. It can be influenced by the canon and the fanon, but contrary to the latter, it only includes the interpretations of one person.<sup>22</sup>

In this case, the user imagined an interview with the comedian Miranda Hart related to her sitcom, titled *Miranda*, then made it into a fanfiction, and then decided to incorporate it into her personal interpretations by using a speech act, the phrase “*I’m taking it as my headcanon.*” And while in the case of shipping one can express their support of a certain pairing without having to write it down as a performative, such as posting or reblogging pictures about them or writing fanfiction, in the case of headcanons, the most effective way to express the acceptance of an interpretation is to declare it, as seen in this example. However, as headcanons are not as emotionally influenced as shipping (although they cannot be fully separated), this example is a mix of assertives and declaratives, because it does not alter the fan’s identity, but it does change or add up to their interpretation of the base text.

## Conclusions

To conclude, in my corpus I found fewer speech acts than expected: there were only 32 and most of them could be found in forums. This can be due to the differences of the two platforms, as Tumblr is more monological than the forums which resemble an offline conversation. There are certain fan activities that could be performed by speech

<sup>22</sup> Fazekas 53–83.

acts, such as shipping or sharing headcanons, but this is not the only way to do these activities. For example, one can show what pairings they support by posting and/or reblogging many pictures of them and sharing their headcanons in their fanfiction.

We can also note that these speech acts seem to be in overlapping categories, like in *example 10*), which could be considered an expressive and a declarative at the same time or in *example 11*), which is an assertive and a declarative speech act. As for future research, it would be interesting to observe the speech acts of other online communities, such as Facebook groups or the comment sections of blogs.

## **Tumblr blogs:**

[www.alfrescotree.tumblr.com](http://www.alfrescotree.tumblr.com)  
[www.geronimo-sherlock.tumblr.com](http://www.geronimo-sherlock.tumblr.com)  
[www.jackiecello23.tumblr.com](http://www.jackiecello23.tumblr.com)  
[www.kinnabaris.tumblr.com](http://www.kinnabaris.tumblr.com)  
[www.luzan.tumblr.com](http://www.luzan.tumblr.com)  
[www.oathkeepers.tumblr.com](http://www.oathkeepers.tumblr.com)  
[www.raynelove.tumblr.com](http://www.raynelove.tumblr.com)  
[www.kingmakings.tumblr.com](http://www.kingmakings.tumblr.com)  
[www.yellowdelaney.tumblr.com](http://www.yellowdelaney.tumblr.com)  
[www.yungarnet.tumblr.com](http://www.yungarnet.tumblr.com)  
[www.blackdirewolf.tumblr.com/](http://www.blackdirewolf.tumblr.com/)  
[www.yumikoooo.tumblr.com/](http://www.yumikoooo.tumblr.com/)  
[www.letskilljackharkness.tumblr.com/](http://www.letskilljackharkness.tumblr.com/)  
[www.merminea.tumblr.com/](http://www.merminea.tumblr.com/)  
[www.mahbucky.tumblr.com/](http://www.mahbucky.tumblr.com/)

## **Topics:**

‘The love between Anakin and Padmé’: [www.swsaga.hu/topic/1177-anakin-es-padme-szerelme/](http://www.swsaga.hu/topic/1177-anakin-es-padme-szerelme/).  
 ‘Rebels’: [www.swsaga.hu/topic/1300-rebels/](http://www.swsaga.hu/topic/1300-rebels/).  
 ‘Fan fiction’: [www.swsaga.hu/topic/29-fan-fiction/](http://www.swsaga.hu/topic/29-fan-fiction/).  
 ‘Films 11.0’: [www.swsaga.hu/topic/1533-filmek-110/](http://www.swsaga.hu/topic/1533-filmek-110/).

The forum's community: [swsaga.hu/topic/247-a-f%C3%B3rum-k%C3%B6z%C3%B6ss%C3%A9ge](http://swsaga.hu/topic/247-a-f%C3%B3rum-k%C3%B6z%C3%B6ss%C3%A9ge).

'Then/Now': [swsaga.hu/topic/345-akkormost](http://swsaga.hu/topic/345-akkormost).

'[ADWD spoilers] News, opinions, ideas, thoughts about season 5': [www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,492.0.html](http://www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,492.0.html).

'[ADWD spoilers!] Fanfic section': [www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,232.0.html](http://www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,232.0.html)

'[ADWD spoilers!] Pairings, meddling, mixing': [www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,152.0.html](http://www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,152.0.html).

'Films': [www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,131.0.html](http://www.gameofthrones.hu/forum/index.php/topic,131.0.html).

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**BORDER-CROSSING:  
MYTHS, GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY**

**HATÁRÁTLÉPÉS:  
MÍTOSZ, GENDER ÉS PERFORMATIVITÁS**





# Gender-leckék a holofedélzeten: Egy kiborg női identitásának alakulása

Vancsó Éva

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies  
vancso.eva@gmail.com

Tanulmányomban a *science fiction* nőábrázolásának egy sajátos vetületét vizsgálom meg, egy kiborg nőiségét a *Star Trek Voyager* című amerikai televíziós sorozat két epizódjában. Az elemzés során a női identitás megalkotásának folyamatát járom körül, arra fókuszálva, hogy a holofedélzetnek nevezett *science fiction*-berendezés szimulációi hogyan nyújtják a gender performatív jellegének illusztrációját, és mennyiben mennek szembe azzal.

A *science fiction* kutatásában a hatvanas évek végétől vissza-visszatérő megállapítás, hogy a zsáner a jellegzetességeiből adódóan különösen alkalmas a nemek problematikájának ábrázolására, és új szempontokat tud adni a gender szociokulturális értelmezéséhez, ezzel felhívva a figyelmet a nemek közti viszonyok konstruáltságára.<sup>1</sup> Ennélfogva a hetvenes évektől kezdve előtérbe került az irodalmi vagy mozgóképes szövegekben megjelenő nőalakok feminista nézőpontú elemzése, amely azt kutatja, hogy egyes korokban mi jellemzi a nők ábrázolását, egyrészt a tulajdonságok, viselkedésmódok, szereplehetőségek másrészt a narratívában betöltött szerep szerint. Ezzel összhangban a *Star Trek*-filmeknek a női(ség) kérdésköréről alkotott képét vizsgáló elemzések elsősorban többségben a női karakterek jellemzőire, szerepeire, a sorozat univerzumának gender hierarchiájára összpontosítanak, és arra, ahogyan ezek tükrözik a társadalmi változásokat 1966-tól napjainkig.

Közhely, hogy a *Star Trek*-sorozat indulása óta tapint rá jó érzékkel a kor kérdéseire, köztük a feminizmus és a nőiség problémáira. Elég a hatvanas évekbeli *The Original Series* című sorozat színesbőrű női szereplőjére, Uhura hadnagyra gondolni, akinek karaktere, a feminizmus második hullámára rezonálva, (többek között) a nők nyilvános szférában betölthető szereplehetőségeire reflektál. A kilencvenes években indult két *Star Trek*-sorozat, a *Deep Space Nine* (1993) és a *Voyager* (1995) a feminizmus harmadik hullámának kérdéseire köthetően a női szereplőkön keresztül a női identitás kérdését (is) boncolgatja. Az előbbiben Jadzia Dax a trill fajba tartozik, amelynél emberi gazdatestben él egy szimbionta. A két életforma egyesülése révén Jadzia

1 Vö. Veronica Hollinger, Helen Merrik írásaival.

rendelkezik az előző, férfi gazdatest tudásával, emlékeivel, sőt szokásokat vesz át tőle – ebből fakadóan néha ellentmondásos, töredezett, egyszerre férfi és női identitással rendelkezik. A *Voyager* minden korábbi sorozathoz képest egyértelműen szembe megy a hagyományos nőábrázolással, női csillaghajó-kapitány (Janeway kapitány), női főgépész (B’Elenna Torres) és leginkább a negyedik évadtól a női kiborg, Hét Kilenced szerepeltetésével. Utóbbi esetében nem (csak) az kérdés, hogy milyen tulajdonságok, szerepek, viselkedésmódok halmaza jellemző rá, hanem hogy milyen módon sajátítja el ezeket, és miért, hogyan válik nemtelen kiborgból nővé.

### A (ki)borg

Hét Kilenced helyzetének megértéséhez először szükséges röviden kitekinteni a kiborg fajra a sorozatban. A *Star Trek* univerzumának kiborg faja a Borg, egy ember-robot hibridek alkotta társadalom, amelynek egyedei félig szerves, általában humanoid lények, akiknek a testükbe ültetett kibernetikus implantátumok és nanotechnológiai gépek az eredeti biológiai testen túlmutató képességeket biztosítanak. A Borg technológiailag a galaxis egyik legfejlettebb társadalma, amely más kultúrák és fajok leigázásán és magába olvasztásán keresztül terjeszkedik, működését összefoglalja a legjellemzőbb mondata: „Mi a Borg vagyunk, asszimilálni fogjuk magukat, minden ellenállás hasztalan.” Az asszimilálás után a Borg társadalmon belül a névtelen, számokkal jelölt *dolgozók* nem rendelkeznek érzelmekkel, egyéni gondolatokkal, gender- és különösebben másféle identitással sem, egy kollektív tudat részei. Hozzá kell tenni, hogy elméletileg egyértelmű nemtelenségük ellenére a Borg dolgozókat a sorozatban elsősorban többségben férfi színészek alakítják, férfi személyes névmással hivatkoznak rájuk, általánosságában maszkulin vonásokkal rendelkeznek, és alapértelmezetten férfiasak, amely alól csak a Borg királynő képez kivételt.<sup>2</sup> Mindezek révén a Borg szembemegy mindazzal, ahogy a nyugati kultúra, és egyben a *Star Trek* univerzuma a faji, nemi identitás működéséről gondolkodik, és ebből fakadóan a sorozat egyik legfontosabb antagonistájaként jelenik meg. A Borg sajátosságaiából adódóan a kollektívából kikerült dolgozókon keresztül a *Star Trek* az identitás kérdéskörét feszegeti. Számukra ugyanis – a biológiai test legalábbis részleges helyreállítása mellett – a nehézséget az egyénként való létezés újratanulása jelenti. Ez a reindividualizáció, az egyéni vonásokkal való újrafelruházás számos területet érint, kezdve

2 A Borg királynő nőiségképevel, illetve hogy az hogyan és mennyiben ellenpontoszza Hét Kilencedet, valamint Janeway kapitányt, többen foglalkoznak, köztük Tamara Leaver, Mia Consalvo, Lorrie Palmer, David Greven stb.

jelképes értékű névadással, és, mint azt a továbbiakban látni fogjuk, Hét Kilenced esetében ebbe beletartozik a nemi identitás problematizálása is.

Míg a kiborgot, annak kibernetikus implantátumaival, hibriditása révén Haraway – kultikus *Kiborg manifestum*-ában – a határok elmosódásának, a hagyományos bináris oppozíciók megkérdőjelezésének jelképeként láttatja, és a női kiborgot az új posztgender világ teremtményének írja le, a *Star Trek Voyager* kifordítja ezt a nézőpontot.<sup>3</sup> Hét Kilenced nem egy új, nemek nélküli világ hőse; esetében a kiborg posztgender nemtelenség, a töredezett identitás, amelyből a nőiség hiányzik, nem pozitívum, hanem hiányosság, amelyet pótolni kell. Hét Kilencedtől, miután több évtized után felnőtt nőként kikerül a Borg kollektívából, a legénység tagjai elvárják, hogy (újra)felépítse emberi identitását és beilleszkedjen a társadalomba, amit adott körülmények között a csillaghajó képvisel. Ahogy arra Mia Consalvo rámutat, az emberség újrafelépítésének sarkalatos pontját a karakter nőisége jelenti, kimondatlanul azt sugallva, hogy az ember férfi és nő, így a *gender*-identitás elengedhetetlen az emberi identitáshoz.<sup>4</sup> Ennek következtében Hét Kilenced nővé válása és az ehhez kapcsolódó nehézségek és konfliktusok a teljes sorozatnak egyik mellékszálát alkotják ugyan, de a „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” (*Someone to Watch Over Me*, S05/E21) és „Az ember téved” (*Human Error*, S07/E17) című epizódok kifejezetten eköré a probléma köré szerveződnek, így esettanulmányként szolgálhatnak a *Star Trek Voyager* sorozat nőiségről, női identitásról alkotott elképzelésének elemzéséhez.

### Biológiai és társadalmi nem a *Star Trek Voyager*ben

A nő meghatározása a feminista és *gendertudományi* diskurzusok visszatérő témája, ezért elsőként érdemes megvizsgálni, a *Star Trek Voyager* sorozatban hogyan definiálódik a nő, amire, sajátos határhelyzetéből fakadóan, Hét Kilenced alakja kiemelkedő lehetőséget nyújt. Biológiai neme kezdettől megkérdőjelezhetetlen, ahogy egy párbeszédben fogalmaznak: a női mivolta „egyszerű biológiai tény, amelynek külső jegyei bajosan leplezhetőek”.<sup>5</sup> A Borg testmódosítás látványos kibernetikus testrészei, a kopaszság és a halálsápadt, hullafoltokat idéző arcbőr Hét Kilencedet elsőként nemteleként, és nem mellékesen szörnyetegként ábrázolja, ugyanakkor a felszín alatt a biológiai nem már az első pillanattól jelen van. A fedélzetre lépésekor már nőként kezelik, elhangzik, hogy „Hozzák a nőt az eligazítóba!”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Haraway 108.

<sup>4</sup> Consalvo 11.

<sup>5</sup> „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám”.

<sup>6</sup> „Skorpió” 1–2.

és amint megszületik a döntés, hogy Hét Kilenced nem tér vissza a Borg kollektívába, megkezdődik a rendellenes női test normativizálása. Eltávolítják a borg kibernetikus implantátumok nyolcvankét százalékát, amelynek eredményeként Hét Kilenced hosszú szőke haja, dús keble, karcsú dereka már egyértelmű jelzőjévé válik biológiailag női mivoltának; a megmaradt arcimplantátum finomságában akár ékszernek is tekinthető.<sup>7</sup> Az öltözet általánosságában a testhasználatot tükrözi. A fekete, implantátumokat és a test mesterségességét előtérbe helyező Borg öltözék ezüst latex kezeslábasra változik, amely jellegében a legénység többi tagjának alapvetően nemsemleres egyenruháját idézi, de azokkal ellentétben szorosan testre simuló. A női vonalakat hangsúlyozó öltözék a sorozat egyes kritikusai szerint egyenesen hiperszexualizált, és Hét Kilencedet nem is “csak” nőként, hanem egyenesen az erotikus férfivágy tárgyaként pozicionálja.<sup>8</sup> Hét Kilenced nyilvánvalóan (és többszörösen hangsúlyozott) női teste mint biológiai nemének jelölője a csillaghajó mikrotársadalmában meghatározza a társadalmi nemét, vagyis azt, hogy nőként definiálja magát, ez pedig előhívja a nőiséghez társított társadalmilag meghatározott normák és elvárások sorát. Ugyanakkor Hét Kilenced nem rendelkezik női identitással, nem tartja magát nőnek a szó társadalmi nemi értelmében (a biológiai tekintve nem száll vitába az orvossal), és ami még fontosabb, nincs is tisztában azzal, mit jelent nőnek lenni. Borg dolgozóként nem követte a hagyományos, nemileg meghatározott viselkedést. A nemi szocializáció szempontjából kulcsfontosságú éveket, hat és huszonhárom éves kora között a Borg kollektívában élte le, dolgozóként nem kellett nemi szerepet játszania, részt vennie a nemekhez köthető tevékenységekben. Ezzel összefüggésben alapvető attribútumai is egyértelműen férfiasnak számítanak: érzelemmentes, racionális, fizikailag erősebb a férfiaknál, és mindenkinél magasabb szintű műszaki-technológiai ismeretekkel rendelkezik. Ráadásul domináns, képtelen a gyengéd, szubmisszív viselkedésre, ezzel nem felel meg a Voyager világán belül uralkodó normáknak. Láthatóan Hét Kilenced esetében ellentmondás feszül a nőiség két értelmezése között, a karteziánus dualitást test és szellem helyett a biológia és társadalmi nem kettőssége tükrözi. A konfliktus feloldására a sorozat nemekről alkotott felfogásában egyetlen út kínálkozik: az “igazi” nővé válás, vagyis a biológiai nemnek megfelelő női társadalmi nemi identitás megalkotása. (A nemi identitás fogalma alatt azt értve, hogyan alakítja ez a konstrukció az adott kultúrában, vagyis a csillaghajón a környezet által elfogadott nemi vagy nemiséggel átitatott szerepeket és attitűdöket.)

<sup>7</sup> Barber 136.

<sup>8</sup> Cranny-Francis 157.

### A holofedélzeti szimulációk performativitása

A gender-identitás létrehozásának elkerülhetetlensége felveti a kérdést, hogyan jön/jöhet létre a nemi identitás, és pontosan mit is vár el a legénység Hét Kilencedtől, mint nőtől? A „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” és „Az ember téved” című epizódokban a holofedélzeten zajló szimulációk elemzése egy lehetséges választ kínál a felvetett kérdésekre.

A „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” a Pygmalion-történet *science fiction* kontextusba helyezett újraírásaként olvasható. A csillaghajó orvosi segédhologram-programja fogadást köt a legénység egy másik tagjával, hogy Hét Kilenced férfi kísérével érkezik egy fogadásra és vele is távozik. A Doktor ezt követően Higgins professzorként kísérletet tesz, hogy Hét Kilencedből a férfiak számára elfogadható partnert faragjon. A leckék a holofedélzeten folynak, ahol Hét Kilenced a tradicionálisan nőiséghez köthető képességeit igyekszik kibontakoztatni olyan gyakorlatok és feladatok során, mint a megfelelő öltözködés és hajviselet, az informális beszélgetés, a tánc. „Az ember téved” az előző rész folytatásának tekinthető, amelyben Hét Kilenced ezúttal tanár nélkül folytatja női a viselkedésre vonatkozó kutatást a holofedélzeten. Berendezi otthonát, majd párkapcsolatot szimulál a legénység egy létező tagjának, Chakotay parancsnoknak a holografikus másával. Az epizód a kapcsolat alakulását követi, az első randevútól a közös programokon át komolyabb elköteleződésig, majd a szakításig.

A két epizód nyilvánvaló hasonlósága, hogy a holofedélzeti szimulációk Hét Kilenced nőiségéhez kapcsolódnak, és tekintve, hogy egyfajta *science fiction* keretben zajló színpadi játékok, a performativitás fogalma segít megérteni szerepüket a női identitás megalkotásában. A holofedélzeten zajló eseményeket könnyű volna úgy értelmezni, mint performanszt a szó színházi értelmében – ahogyan részben azok is. A holofedélzet kódolható színpadként: egy a hajó többi részétől egyértelműen elkülönített tér, ahol háttér munkások helyett a technika teremti meg a szereplés terét és kulisszáit. A legénység tagjai a szimulációkban adott, szerepekbe lépnek be, amelyeket a „színpadról” kilépve maguk mögött is hagynak. Ugyanakkor nem lehet figyelmen kívül hagyni, hogy a holofedélzeten a színházzal ellentétben nincs közönség, a szimulációk nem kifelé, hanem befelé irányulnak, a legénység tagjai kikapcsolódásra, önismeretre, önfejlesztésre használják a szerkezetet.

Annak megértéséhez, hogy pontosan mi zajlik a holofedélzeten, és az miért jut kiemelt szerephez Hét Kilenced nővé válásában, Judith Butlernek a társadalmi nem performativitására vonatkozó elképzelése nyújthat egy lehetséges keretet. Nyilvánvaló megkülönböztetést kell tenni a színpadon eljátszott szerep performativitása és

a gender értelmében vett performativitás között: az előbbi lehet szabad játék, míg az utóbbinál a kényszerítő erő alapvető feltételként jelenik meg. Hét Kilenced holofedélzeti szimulációja nem pusztán játék virtuális díszletek között, hanem a nemi normák gyakorlását jelenti, amelyhez elkerülhetetlenül kapcsolódik a kiközösítés, vagyis a legénységbe való nem-integrálódás veszélye. Mindebből az következik hogy a „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” és „Az ember téved” című két epizódban nem választható el teljesen a performativitás kétféle értelmezése.

Butler 1990-ben írt *Problémás nem – Feminizmus és az identitás felforgatása* című művében fektette le a nemi szerepek performativitására vonatkozó elméletének alapjait, amelyben azt mondja, hogy a nemi szerepek szabályokhoz kötött citálása, ismétlése hozza létre a nemi szerepnek megfelelő identitást, így konstruálja meg azt, amit megnevez.<sup>9</sup> A holofedélzeti szimulációk számos szempontból rokoníthatók a performativitás butleri értelmezésével. Hét Kilenced a Borg kollektíva után nem rendelkezik (társadalmi) nemi identitással, és az az elvárás felé, hogy azt valamilyen módon létrehozza, megalkossa. Ennek érdekében a két epizódban a bevett női szerepek szerinti viselkedést ismétli és gyakorolja, a holofedélzetet arra használja, hogy elsajátítson és ismétljen a nőiességhez kapcsolódó tevékenységeket – más szavakkal, hogy női szerepet alakítson, amely végeredményben létrehozza azt, amire vonatkozik. Így a szimulációk a *gender performativitás* egyfajta Petri-csészéjeként szolgálnak, ahol egyértelmű idő- és térbeli korlátok közé szorítva, sűrítve, leegyszerűsítve, de megfigyelhetőek a női identitás megalkotásának legfontosabb elemei.

### Milyen női identitás?

Felmerülhet a jogos kérdés, hogy miért van szükség Hét Kilenced női identitásának megteremtéséhez a holofedélzetre, miért nem elegendőek erre a mindennapi interakciók a legénység, vagyis a mikrotársadalom tagjaival – ahogyan legtöbbször a nemi identitását szerzi? Ennek a magyarázatát egyfelől a *Voyager*-sorozat alaphelyzetében kell keresni, miszerint a legénység harmincezer fényévyire kerül a Földtől és a többi embertől, tehát értelemszerűen szűkebbek a tapasztalatszerzési lehetőségeik a való élet helyzeteiben. Másfelől a holofedélzeti szimulációk a sorozat nőábrázolásának egy sajátosságára mutatnak rá, és egyben a női identitás mindenkor társadalmi konstrukció mivoltára, ami az adott közösségből származik.

A *Voyager*-sorozatban egyértelműen elkülöníthető kétféle női szerep- és attitűd-repertoár, a munka és a magánélet kettőssége mentén. A *nyilvános/privát szféra*

9 Vö. Butler (a hivatkozott rész nem szó szerint idézet, hanem összefoglalás).

megkülönböztetés magától értetődően van jelen a nemekről való gondolkodásban, ahol a nőiséghez a privát szféra, az otthon, a család, a magánélet társul, míg a nyilvános szféra a férfias szerepek, attitűdök színtere. A privát/nyilvános dichotómia fontos témája a gender-kutatásoknak, de jelen esetben (Hét Kilenced női identitáshoz kapcsolódva) annak csak egy részterületére összpontosítok. Tekintettel a csillaghajó speciális helyzetére, amelyben az otthon és a család elérhetetlen távolságban van, a *Voyager*-ben a privát szféra korlátozottan jelenik meg, és hangsúlyozottan a párkapcsolatra (ritkábban a barátságra), házasságra szűkül. Ezeknek a kapcsolatoknak a vizsgálata feltárja, hogy a nők maszkulin vonásai a munkához köthető tevékenységekben elfogadottak, de az intim kapcsolatokban azok a tulajdonságok és cselekvések kerülnek előtérbe, amelyek hagyományosan nőiesnek számítanak.

Janeway az első női kapitány a *Star Trek*-sorozatokban, akit kevésbé kötnek a bevett nemi szerepek, a sorozat hét évada során felváltva kódolódik túlnyomórészt férfias vagy túlnyomórészt nőies karakterként, egyszerre erős vezető és gondoskodó anyja a legénységnek. Élete ugyanakkor kettéválk a nyilvános és magánélet tengelye mentén. A csillaghajó kapitányaként úgy véli, nem kezdhet kapcsolatot legénysége egyetlen tagjával sem, mert a párkapcsolatban immanensen jelen lévő, megforduló alá-fölérendeltség aláásná a tekintélyét.<sup>10</sup> Az aggodalom mögül kiolvasható, hogy a magánéletben nőként mutatott gyengé(de)bb viselkedés kerülhet ellentmondásba a domináns, erős vezetői léttel, ugyanakkor valamiféle hiányérzet is tetten érhető egy holografikus férfival folytatott rövid románcban.<sup>11</sup> A *Voyager* másik meghatározó női karaktere, B'Elanna Torres kemény, szókimondó, félig klingon származásából adódóan agresszív karakter, aki főgépezsként egyértelműen férfias pozíciót tölt be a hajón, a magánéletében azonban sok tekintetben „megszelídül”: férjhez megy és gyermeke születik. Mindez arra is rámutat, hogy ha párkapcsolatról van szó, a *Star Trek* univerzumában néhány mellékes (általában az alakváltáshoz vagy testcseréhez kötődő) kivételtől eltekintve csak heteroszexuális párkapcsolat jelenik meg.<sup>12</sup> Az első nem heteroszexuális csókra a „Régi láng” (S04/E06,) című *Star Trek Deep Space Nine* epizódban kerül sor, de 2017-ig, a *Star Trek Discovery* sorozatig ez továbbra is

10 A problémakör a *The Original Series*-sorozatban is megjelenik, ahol a férfi kapitány sem kezdeményezett kapcsolatot nőnemű beosztottjaival. Ezekben az esetekben azonban nem tekintélyvesztéstől való félelem áll a háttérben, hanem Csillagflottán belül szövődő kapcsolatokra vonatkozó, kvázi etikai kódex szabályai. Ezt támasztja alá az is, hogy a nem legénységi tagokkal létrejövő kapcsolatai éppen férfiasságát és dominanciáját hangsúlyozzák.

11 Bowring 15.

12 Érdekesség, hogy ez alól kivételt jelent a „Tüköruniverzum”, amely ebben is a *Star Trek* világának képét adja, és ahol kezdettől láthatóan vannak egyértelműen bi- vagy homoszexuális karakterek.



marginális marad. Mindezt figyelembe véve magától értetődő, hogy Hét Kilenced a *Voyager*-sorozatban (és ez fontos kitétel!) csak heteroszexuális kapcsolat lehetőségét veszi figyelembe, „amelynek lehetséges kimenetele a házasság.”<sup>13</sup>

Mindezekből következik, hogy a Hét Kilenced női identitására vonatkozó elvárás is kettősséget hordoz. A férfias attribútumai – mint a racionalitás, a határozott, domináns viselkedés – tudományos tiszt lévén elfogadhatóak; a hadseregek eleve hagyományosan maszkulin értékrend mentén működnek, így Hét Kilenced a munkahelyi feladatok során nem (vagy jóval kevésbé) kerül összetűzésbe a nőiségre vonatkozó normákkal. Ez azonban nem mondható el a magánéletbeli helyzetekről, amelyekben Hét Kilenced mondhatni notórius normasértő. Janeway kapitánnyal és B’Elannával ellentétben Hét Kilencedet, bár a legénység szexuálisan legvonzóbb tagja, nem érdekli az ellenkező nem, legalábbis nem mutat hajlandóságot arra, hogy használja a vonzerejét. Amikor a legénység egy tagja magánemberként és férfiként érdeklődését fejezi ki Hét Kilenced iránt, a következő választ kapja: „Párosodni akar? Akkor vegye le a ruháját!”<sup>14</sup> A későbbiekben egy másik szereplő úgy fogalmazza meg a fenti kettősséget, hogy Hét Kilenceddel mindenki randevúzna (külsője alapján), de a találkozót katasztrófába fulladna, mert olyan domináns és maszkulin partner lenne, amitől „bármelyik férfi kimenekül a légzsilipen”.<sup>15</sup>

Látható, hogy Hét Kilencednek nem általában női identitást kell kialakítania, hanem annak egy specifikus elemét: magánéletbeli változatát, amelynek, mint azt később látjuk, a párkapcsolat a végső tesztje. Ez egyszersmind azt is megmagyarázza, hogy a női identitás megalkotásában oly fontos holofedélzeti szimulációk középpontjában miért a randevúzás áll, ami férfiak és nők leginkább ritualizált magánéletbeli találkozási formája.

A „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” című epizód „társadalmi érintkezés”-leckének nevezi a holofedélzeti gyakorlatokat, amelyek valójában a randevúzás genderszkriptjeit jelentik. A holofedélzeti randevú egyértelműen rámutat Hét Kilenced azon tulajdonságaira és viselkedésmódjaira, amelyek a privát szférában elvárt nőiségnek nem felelnek meg: a randevúra hívás majd a vacsora során sem képes levetni a munkában jellemző domináns, maszkulin vonásait, és hagyományosabb nőiséget alakítani. A partner kiválasztása nem érzelmi, hanem kifejezetten racionális alapon történik, a férfi szolgálati lapjának és beosztásának alapján, a randevúra hívás pedig olyan formában hangzik el, hogy: „Elvárom a jelenlétét a holofedélzeten.”<sup>16</sup>

13 „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám”.

14 „Undor”.

15 „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám”.

16 „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám”.

A 'dominancia kontra nőies alárendeltség'-probléma szimbolikus és kézzelfogható jelzője a táncolásra tett kísérlet, melynek során Hét Kilenced annyira nem hagyja vezetni férfi partnerét, hogy végül kifecmíti a karját. A Pygmalion-fogadás tétjéül szolgáló eseményre Hét Kilencedet már a holografikus orvos kíséri el. A befejezés implicit módon azt sugallja, hogy a szereplőt a nőiségre vonatkozó elvárásoknak nem megfelelő viselkedése csak egy olyan ember számára teszi elfogadható partnerre a magánéletben, akit kevésbé kötnek a társadalmi nemi konstrukciók, nem lévén ember, de még csak biológiai életforma sem.

„Az ember téved” című epizódban, közel két évvel később, Hét Kilenced az előzőhöz hasonlóan a magánszférában elvárt nőiség alakítását tűzi ki a holofedélzeti gyakorlatok céljául. Az epizódban a magánélet tereként, a nőiséggel azonosítva, az otthon – vagyis a csillaghajón a saját kabin – jelenik meg, ellentétben a Borgra jellemző regenerációs kabinnal. A holofedélzeten létrehozott jelenetek elsőként a kabin, az otthoni tér berendezésére irányulnak: annak nőiességét a saját, az otthon szférájába tartozó tárgyi környezet megteremtése hangsúlyozza. Ezt követi a randevú Chakotay parancsnok holografikus szimulációjával, amelynek során vacsorát főznek, boroznak, beszélgetnek. „Az ember téved” szimulációjában Hét Kilenced képes a nőiség magánéletben elvárt formáinak alakítására: a randevú sikeres, második is követi, és egy párkapcsolat formálódik. Ekkor viszont újabb probléma merül fel, a nyilvános és a privát szféra másfajta szembeállása, a munka versus magánélet összeegyeztethetlensége tematizálódik. Az epizód elején utalásszinten jelenik meg, hogy Hét Kilencednek egyáltalán nincs magánélete, majd amikor ez megváltozik, a holofedélzeti párkapcsolat összeütközésbe kerül a szakmai kötelességeivel. Chakotay parancsnok holografikus szimulációja azt várja, hogy Hét Kilenced a párkapcsolatra összpontosítson, és ezért dolgozzon rövidített műszakban. A magánélet és a szakmai kötelességek szembekerülése az epizódban idegösszeomláshoz (a Borg implantátumok és az emberi agyműködés kognitív funkcióinak rendszerhibájához) és szakításhoz, sőt, mi több, a szimuláció befejezéséhez vezet.

### A nővé válás folyamata

A butleri performativitás értelmében az ismétlés és citálás hozza létre a nemi identitást, és ehhez nem csak azt szükséges látni, hogy a *Voyager* nőábrázolása szerint ennek milyen jellemzői vannak, hanem azt is, hogy mikortól válik a holofedélzeti szimuláció többé pusztá játéknál, szerepjátszásnál.

Kezdetben a holofedélzeti szimulációk tanulásként is értelmezhetőek, társadalomtudomány-, illetve- és táncórák, amelyeket Hét Kilenced elsajátít, mint az

evőeszközzel evést, de az nem íródik bele az identitásba. Annak belátására, hogy a két epizód eseményei nem csupán a nemi szerepek külső nézőpontból zajló *elsajátítását* jelentik, hanem azok internalizálását, a folyamatot kell tekintetünk. Hét Kilenced kezdetben tudományos kutatásként tekint az egészre, megfigyeli és jegyzeteli az emberi párkapcsolatokat, így szerez ismereteket a témában. Ezzel szemben a holofedélzeti szimuláció, egy jellegzetesen science fiction és *Star Trek*-eszköz, a működés módjából adódóan tágitja ki az ismeretszerzést az identitásalkotás irányába.<sup>17</sup> Szemben a korábbi objektív, külső megfigyelő pozícióval Hét Kilenced egyszerre alanya és megfigyelője a kísérletnek, egyszerűen mondván a saját bőrén tapasztalja meg a randevúzást és a párkapcsolatot. Másfelől a legénység párkapcsolatainak megfigyelésekor, egymás mellett, egyszerre látja a férfi és női viselkedésmódokat, a holofedélzeti kísérletekben a biológiai neméből adódóan egyértelműen a női szerepet kapja, azt kell „alakítania”. A részekben a folyamat jól kivehető, ahogy a kezdeti külső nézőpontból először szerepjáték lesz. A „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” kezdetén Hét Kilenced a bárpultnál ülve kedvetlenül felolvassa az előírt női szerepet, és a későbbi jelenetben engedelmesen teszi, amire a rendező, a Doktor utasítja. Ezzel szemben „Az ember téved” című epizódban Hét Kilenced már belső motiváció hatására dönt úgy, hogy a holofedélzeten párkapcsolatot szimulál, amelynek a kereteit már maga programozza be. Az identitás létrehozásának a külső szemlélőből a belső igényig terjedő ívnek köszönhető, hogy bár mindkét holofedélzeti szimuláció látszólag kudarccal végződik, hiszen Hét Kilenced a holofedélzeten nem tudta a megfelelő nőiséget alakítani, a válasz ennél jóval összetettebb.

Érdeemes megemlíteni, hogy miközben Hét Kilencedtől a testi jegyei alapján elvárják, hogy azonosuljon a neki szánt nemi szereppel, ez visszairódik a külsejére, ez esetben a hajára, amely a holofedélzeti szimulációkban „felpробált nőiségének,” később a női identitásának látványos és szimbolikus jelölője. A „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” randevújához a szoros konty helyett hosszú, szőke haját kibontva érkezik. Ugyanez „Az ember téved” című epizódban is megfigyelhető, ahol szintén laza hullámokban a vállára omló hajjal jelenik meg. Mindkét esetben a holofedélzet elhagyásával a nőiességet jelző frizura helyét is átveszi a megszokott konty. Azonban „Az ember téved” esetében egy későbbi jelenetben Hét Kilenced a holofedélzeten kívül tanácsot kér a legénység egy másik nő tagjától, hogy hogyan ápolja a haját, és milyen frizurát

17 A holofedélzet pontosan a működés módjából adódóan nem csak Hét Kilenced esetében az identitásalkotáshoz kapcsolódó tevékenységek színtere is a sorozatban. Ezzel párhuzamba hozhatóak B'Elanna Torres kettős faji identitásához kapcsolódó kísérletezései vagy Janeway kapitány szimulált párkapcsolata.

készítsen, a későbbi hét epizódban pedig kétszer is viseli kiengedve a haját, amikor nincs szolgálatban. Így a hajviselet a nyilvános és a privát szerepkörök elválasztásának szimbólumaként is működik.

Míg a hajviselet apró, jelképes tükre Hét Kilenced nőiségének, a *Star Trek Voyager* sorozat zárórésze egyértelműen a női identitás létrehozásának kérdésköréhez kapcsolja „Az ember téved” virtuális párkapcsolatát. Az epizód felfedi a legénység tagjainak (mint később kiderült, egy lehetséges) jövőjét, amelyben felvillantja Hét Kilenced és Chakotay parancsnok párkapcsolatát. A befejezés rámutat arra, hogy holofedélzeti szimuláció értelmezhető a gender performativitás irányából, hiszen Hét Kilenced mondhatni azzá vált, akit a holofedélzeten „Az emberi hiba” című részben eljátszott, ezzel véglegesítve a szimulációk szerepét az identitása alakulásában. Ugyanakkor Hét Kilenced nincs rákényszerülve minden norma ismételtesére, szabadságában áll a neki tetsző gender identitás-elemeket leakasztani a szekrényből. A *Voyager* befejezése feltárja, hogy a holofedélzeti szimulációkban tapasztaltakból Hét Kilenced nem mindent „épít be” az identitásába, amelynek legjobb példája, hogy a későbbiekben sosem táncol, vesz magassarkút vagy főz vacsorát.

A kiborg nővé válásának folyamata ezzel együtt *Voyager*-sorozat nőiség-felfogásának a korlátait is kijelöli: Hét Kilenced hiába igazíthatja bizonyos mértékig magára a női identitást, a lehetőségei korlátozottak maradnak; nem szabadulhat meg teljesen a nemek társadalmi konstruálódásának működésmodjától, amíg a sikeres beilleszkedés szükségszerűen kiterjed a normatív nemi szerepek megélésére és elfogadására. A *Star Trek* a 24. században az univerzum másik végében játszódik, de azon nem lép túl, hogy társadalom még mindig nemi szerepeket ír elő a tagjai számára. Ahogy Veronica Hollinger is megfigyelte, a science fictionben a kiborg identitás sem garantálja a menekülést a szex/gender rendszerből, amely alól láthatóan Hét Kilenced sem jelent kivételt.<sup>18</sup>

## Konklúzió

Judith Butler úgy fogalmazott, hogy „az irodalmi (ez esetben filmes) narratíva az, ahol az elmélet megvalósul,” és a „Valaki, aki vigyáz rám” és „Az ember téved” szimulációi olvashatók az elmélet egyfajta megvalósulásaként.<sup>19</sup> Amennyiben a holofedélzeti szimulációkra úgy tekintünk, mint performatív aktusokra, a két epizód megmutatja, ahogy a *science fiction* és annak jellegzetes eszközei, egy kiborg és a holofedélzet, hogyan árulkodik a női identitásról, annak folyamatos alakulásáról.

18 Hollinger 133.

19 Butler 182.

A párkapcsolat összességében a női identitás vizsgájaként olvasható, ezt követően Hét Kilenced már nem nemtelen kiborg, hanem egy nő, akinek *vannak* férfias attitűdjei, és így a korábban zavaró erős, domináns maszkulin vonások már elfogadhatóakká válnak.

Mindeközben Hét Kilenced nőiségének alakulása nem ér véget a *Star Trek Voyager*-sorozatban, így reflektál arra, hogy a nemi identitás történeti nézőpontból nem homogén és változatlan. Tizenkilenc évvel a *Voyager* lezárása után a karakter mellékszereplőként 2020-ban visszatér a *Picard* című sorozatba. Ezúttal férj nélkül, bosszúálló amazonként jelenik meg, nyilvánvaló utalással arra, hogy biszexuális, így átlépve azokat a korlátokat, amelyek előtt a *Voyager* megtorpant: a normatív nőiség elfogadása (már) nem szükségszerű. Hét Kilenceden keresztül ilyenformán nemcsak a női identitás kialakításáról kapunk képet, hanem azt is jelzi, hogy az identitás és hozzá tartozó szerepek nem stabilak és állandóak, hanem átmenetiek és kontextusfüggőek. Ez egyszersmind azt is megmutatja, hogy a *Star Trek* univerzuma általában hogyan tükrözi a világban ez idő alatt zajló, a nőiséggel kapcsolatos változásokat.

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# Breaking with the Stereotype: Representation of Italian American Mothers in Television

Eszter Zsuzsanna Csorba

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies  
csoresz91@gmail.com

The everyday viewer is not unfamiliar with Italian American characters on television. They have been around ever since *The Godfather* premiered in 1972 on the big screen, and members of the Italian American community have appeared in some of the most famous television shows of all time. At the beginning of the list is Henry Winkler's Fonzie (Arthur Fonzarelli), one of the main characters in *Happy Days* (1974–1984); followed closely by Rhea Perlman's Carla Tortelli from *Cheers* (1982–1993), a character that she reprised in a spin-off show about her family, as well as hits like *The Simpsons* and *Frasier*; and, last but not least, Tony Danza's Tony Micelli, a retired baseball player turned housekeeper in *Who's the Boss* (1984–1992). There has been a clear progression of the Italian American "character" since their appearance on the big screen. In fact, cultural changes in the second half of the twentieth century have also been included in movies and TV shows, as Italian American representation has grown.

At first, Italian Americans were side characters, the supporting cast, with stereotypical traits, mostly confined to their own communities. Slowly they evolved into main characters on the big screen, in blockbusters such as *The Godfather* (1972), *Rocky* (1976), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), and *Raging Bull* (1980), where their surrounding community played a vital role in the way the characters were built. In contrast, being outside of their community often meant being a fish out of water, and their interaction with the world outside of their own was the basis for their behavior. This is a form of antilocution, as established by Gordon W. Allport's book *The Nature of Prejudice*,<sup>1</sup> which argues that those in their confined inner group do not take kindly towards the outside and stay within their boundaries. However, slowly leaving the community also means that they become more "Americanized" (not in terms of legal citizenship),<sup>2</sup> which in this context means losing the recognizable elements of an Italian American character or anything that confines them to a minority. As a last step, they disappear once again, no longer showcasing any of the stereotypical

1 Allport 94.

2 Speek 237.



elements identifying this character; they only bear a last name that helps the viewer pinpoint their origin. Writer, media theorist, and political critic Walter Lippmann defined stereotypes as “images in our heads”<sup>3</sup> and they are also a form of knowledge that remains “in place,” already known and constantly repeated,<sup>4</sup> helping viewers and audiences recognize it. If one were to define the image of one specific stereotype, it is much easier to identify when one breaks out of its boundaries. The destruction of the image slowly leads into the disappearance of the stereotype. For Italian Americans, leaving their community helped them assimilate and slowly fade into the mainstream, becoming almost invisible. This paper analyzes Italian American characters that were naturalized or were born in the United States and have an Italian heritage. These characters thus include first, second, and even third generation Italian Americans that display stereotypical traits in the audience’s mind.

After a brief description, the study details how three iconic television mothers, from the shows *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996–2005), *The Sopranos* (2000–2008) and *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992), have broken out of the frame of the stereotype, its limitations and confinements which they were put in at the beginning of their character arc, whilst comparing them to major female characters from the big screen that remained within their assigned stereotypical boundaries. In addition, despite being prominently used in representation, most immigration studies failed to incorporate women’s experiences until the 1980s, when this absence was slowly remedied.<sup>5</sup> As newer findings on migrant narratives came about, so did the 1980s allow Italian American women to emerge and come into the foreground as main characters of sitcoms and drama TV shows, besides blockbusters. Upon the analysis of these characters, the following traits were highlighted: most women adhered to Southern Italian folk culture, as approximately eighty percent of Italian immigrants came from the south of Italy, which meant having a patriarch at the head of the family.<sup>6</sup> It was expected of the wife to keep a clean house, the children in order, and always have a hot meal on the table, insisting that everyone eats, almost to a satirical degree. These gender roles were embedded in the culture that Italian migrants brought with them. But living in big cities like New York, women were surrounded by a “modern metropolis” and it became harder for families to keep up the traditional upbringing of girls in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

3 Allport 286; Lippmann 3.

4 Bhabha 370.

5 Gabaccia 36.

6 Egelman 188.

7 Egelman 188.

Due to its format, a TV series allows for more profound character development than a movie, at least, that is the case in the examples elaborated in this essay as far as Italian American characters are concerned. On top of that, most background characters do not evolve as much as the main character. For example, in the span of fifty years, from *Marty* (1955) to *My Cousin Vinny* (1996), grandmothers and mothers were represented the exact same way on the big screen. But a small revolution was happening on family home television when it came to the stories of Italian American mothers in the 1980s. These characters no longer adhered to the image of the supporting stereotypical cast but had much more agency when it came to their purpose. The best way to demonstrate the evolution of these characters is to juxtapose those on the big screen with the ones on the small screen.

In *Marty* (1955), the main character's mother Teresa Piletti, played by Esther Min-ciotti, is an Italian who emigrated and was naturalized as a United States citizen.<sup>8</sup> In the movie, her main aim is to make her son find a wife, as he is too old to be alone. However, when a potential lady could fill that position, her possessiveness over her son becomes more important. She actively intervenes in her son's desire to further court the girl and possibly leave his mother behind. A similarly possessive character is Marie Barone, played by Doris Roberts in the TV show *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996–2005). She is the mother of Ray, the main character in the title of the show.<sup>9</sup> Ray is already married with three kids, and they live next door to his parents, which leaves plenty of opportunities for his mother to form a relationship with her daughter-in-law, Debra. The comedy of the show derives from the differences in the interactions between Marie and Debra, however, over the span of nine seasons, the two develop a friendly relationship, many times teaming up against the men in the story. Marie steps out of the role of the feared and despised mother-in-law and lets go of her son. Most of the holiday special episodes, from Thanksgiving to Christmas, nevertheless focus on the comical elements of a mother using food as a means to remain relevant in her children's life, not understanding dietary choices and continuously criticizing the cooking of her daughter-in-law, as it could never be as good as hers, except for one episode, where Marie relied more on her daughter-in-law than on the men in the family. In season 4, episode 10, Marie decides to battle her cholesterol and attempts to change the Thanksgiving menu, something the men deem to be sacred. It is only Debra who helps Marie in discovering alternative options in line with her diet, and they even bond in the kitchen. The end of the episode resolves in Marie

8 Mann.

9 Rosenthal.

herself giving up her diet, but not before she confronts Raymond for not helping her in this process.<sup>10</sup> There are various episodes that focus on the dynamic of the “girls vs. boys” theme in the show, but this is exemplary for the way in which Marie consciously gives up the role of the family cook, something quite sacred to her.

All the other episodes of this long running show emphasize how she trusts not only her son’s choice of spouse, but her daughter-in-law for who she is. Marie has her husband and another son. She is never alone, thus her motivations might seem to be different from that of Teresa in *Marty*, but her initial possessiveness appears the same. A recurring theme of American sitcoms is the fear of in-laws, this is true in the case of Ray himself, who has a very distant relationship with Debra’s parents, while with Ray’s parents next door, Debra can never be far enough from them. More comical elements of the sitcom stem from the uncomfortable relationship that Ray has with both his father- and mother-in-law, and over the course of the series, he barely develops a deeper connection to them. Other famous examples of television in-laws include the thirty-year run of *The Simpsons*, where Homer has a horrible relationship with his wife Marge’s sisters, Patricia and Selma Bouvier,<sup>11</sup> who never deem him good enough for their sister. The show *Desperate Housewives* (2004–2012), despite being a drama series, features as a comical device many mothers not adored by their own children, let alone their in-laws. Marie Barone in the end cannot be kept in the image of a stereotypical mother, possessive of her children and cold to her in-laws, rather she takes agency and breaks out of the expected behavioral pattern to improve her relationship with her son’s family.

The second example of a revolutionary separation from the stereotypical image is that of Carmela Soprano, played by Edie Falco, in the whole six-season run of *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), where she personifies the wife of Tony Soprano and the mother of their two children. Chiara Francesca Ferrari writes in a book about dubbing stereotypes that *The Sopranos* “has become, in the United States at least, a real phenomenon of popular culture, and has influenced viewers’ clothing, food, travel destinations, and so on.”<sup>12</sup> The show managed to enrage many Italian American associations that felt the urgency to complain about the negative connotations of having this minority be, again, represented as gangsters, as Ferrari writes.<sup>13</sup> However, this setting is crucial in understanding why one of its main characters was able to break away from the

10 Sandler and Van Allen.

11 Groening.

12 Ferrari 101.

13 Ferrari 101.

mold. The representation of mobsters of Italian heritage throughout popular culture paints a clear picture of the expectation of both the male and female characters within these stories. As harmful as it is to the community itself, one can easily draw comparisons among the famous women of *The Godfather* movies and the story of Carmela Soprano.

Carmela, at the beginning of her story, seemed to be just an accessory to Tony, a husband who showed infidelity through most of their relationship, but she did, however, gain agency when she divorced him. Quite unlike any Catholic married woman of the Italian American community, Carmela's story made her one of the first to divorce not only a husband, but a bully and a mobster. In contrast, *The Godfather* shows the only daughter, Connie (played by actress Talia Shire), beaten and mistreated by her husband. Her family, instead of taking her out of that abusive relationship, in the end has got her husband killed, but only after a series of missteps and other threats.<sup>14</sup> Marrying into a crime family, up until Carmela Soprano, meant 'till death do us part', for both women and men.

Women have often been simply accessories to male characters, like Adrian in *Rocky* (1976), also played by actress Talia Shire. She was an additional character to the story of the male lead, someone who added to his overall arc, but showed very little distance from her male counterpart in the original movie. Mostly, she went from being oppressed by her brother Polly to being freed by Rocky, only to remain equally complacent and passive next to the new man in her life.<sup>15</sup> Again, on the big screen, the most autonomous female was the character of Loretta in *Moonstruck* (1987), played by Cher, whose goal was to find true love. It is no coincidence that she was not in a supporting role, but the protagonist. The point of the story was to make her active in finding love and make this aspect the core of her personality. In the span of her story on screen, Loretta stayed true to the image one perceives of Italian American characters within the stereotype, as she pursued "real love" and remained in the confinement of her community and peers.<sup>16</sup>

In *The Sopranos*, Carmela's community confined her within the boundaries of stereotypical expectations: she was expected to be a great mom, a housekeeper, a devoted Catholic, who stays with her husband. Despite the show rekindling her relationship with Tony and never truly letting them lose sight of each other, their marriage was still unique, as Carmela showcased much more agency than she

14 Coppola.

15 Avildsen.

16 Jewison.

had demonstrated in the beginning. The TV show in many ways focused on their relationship, and not around them as separate people. Carmela did, however, fight herself out of the position of an accessory to her male counterpart, and became his equal. In a monologue in the first season of the series, she admits in a conversation with Father Phil that she knows that her husband is not a good man, and that she has flaws herself:

I have forsaken what is right for what is easy. Allowing what I know is evil in my house. Allowing my children... Oh my God my sweet children to be a part of it because I wanted things for them; a better life, good schools. I wanted this house. I wanted money in my hands, money to buy anything I ever wanted. I'm ashamed. My husband, I think he has committed horrible acts. I think he has... you know all about him Father Phil. I'm the same. I've said nothing. I've done nothing about it. I've got a bad feeling. It's just a matter of time before God compensates me with outrage for my sins.<sup>17</sup>



*Screenshot 1:* Father Phil / Paul Schulze (left) and Carmela Soprano / Edie Falco (right) talking over wine. Episode 5, season 1, "College", written by James Manos Jr.

Carmela as a homemaker is strongly connected to food, which remains the utmost Italian stereotype that these twenty-first century gangsters have as a link to their

<sup>17</sup> Manos, see *Screenshot 1*.

heritage.<sup>18</sup> Carmela, too, often welcomes Tony's friends to dinner, as most of the meetings take place while they are eating. Ultimately, food remains the only connection and the only control that a housewife has on both her children and her husband. But this is just one tradition that is assumed to be passed on without one noticing; love for food, among other things, becomes something that one inherits. And despite traditional hospitality, Carmela often refuses the idea that being part of the Mafia can be hereditary.<sup>19</sup> As a result, once Carmela is no longer a homemaker, she challenges Tony to exert more freedom and she breaks out of the frame that defined the stereotype expected of her: to portray a woman who fell prey to mobsters.

On the silver screen, there was a list of supporting characters of older Italian American women who all performed similar roles in the background of the male protagonists. In *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), Tony Manero's grandmother tells him to eat in a scene where he is having a feud with his family at the dinner table,<sup>20</sup> and as established, Teresa Piletti is quite involved in the love life of their son in *Marty*.<sup>21</sup> The mother, then grandmother Mama Corleone, played by Morgana King, matriarch in *The Godfather*, remains a background character throughout the original movie, not interfering in the business of the men.<sup>22</sup> Closest to expressing concern and involvement actively in the life of their child is Rosa Castorini, played by Olympia Dukakis, in *Moonstruck*, where she expresses her opinion on the love life of her daughter Loretta.<sup>23</sup> When turning back to television, although satirical and ironic about the life choices of her child, the one to break from the norm of being this background character that only remarks on the eating habits of her grandchildren, is *The Golden Girls*' grandmother, Sophia Petrillo. She was played by Estelle Getty throughout the span of seven seasons (1985–1992).<sup>24</sup> Sophia, most famous for her one-liners, is the most active Italian grandmother on the screen: she is not a supporting character, she does not live with her daughter out of a tradition of taking care of the elderly in Italian families, she has an active love life, and almost never cooks on screen. It seems that she not only retired to Florida for her years as a pensioner, but she also retired from the stereotype of a boring grandmother who, although naturalized, is used as an example of the motherland. Sophia is as American as it gets, and her famous stories

18 Larke-Walsh 180.

19 Larke-Walsh 196.

20 Badham.

21 Mann.

22 Coppola.

23 Jewison.

24 Harris.

from her childhood in Sicily serve as a reminder that she lived a full life, but that does not alienate her nor confine her to a minority.

The agency that Sophia showcases is not by mistake, nor is just for comedy's sake. And although she is a grandmother as well, her relationship with her daughter is more central to the story of the sitcom, and thus she is still more prevalently a mother than a grandmother. The original idea of the show, pitched by Paul Witt and Tony Thomas, aimed to present women that "[s]ociety has written off, has said they're over the hill. We want them to be feisty as hell and having a great time."<sup>25</sup> And so, in 1985, the first episode aired. In her book *The Golden Girls*, author Kate Browne describes how these elderly women process "double aging", a term coined by Kathleen Woodward, as they lose vitality as well as beauty and desirability, making them outright invisible to society.<sup>26</sup> This is both a biological and a cultural process. This is the first stereotype that *Golden Girls* break out of, which allows them endless opportunities.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, dismissing it as a typical sitcom, it has been relegated to the family-friendly and mellow shows that were produced from the 1940s to the 1980s.<sup>28</sup> But while breaking away from stereotypical images portrayed on the small screen to that point in time, this show chooses to anchor itself in cultural stereotypes in order to showcase how four very different women of different heritage can easily live together in just one house, in somewhat of a translation of the American nation of immigrants.

As introduced, each character represents a well-known stereotypical image which comes out mostly when they all sit around the kitchen table and have long conversations over cheesecake. Sophia tells stories of her childhood in Sicily, between the 1920–1930s, and mostly her rivalry with other women in her town.

Let me tell you a story. Sicily. 1912. Picture this. Two young girls, best friends, who share three things: a pizza recipe, some dough, and a dream. Everything is going great until one day a fast-talking pepperoni salesman gallops into town. Of course, both girls are impressed. He dates one night, the other the next night. Pretty soon, he drives a wedge between them. Before you know it, the pizza suffers, the business suffers, the friendship suffers. The girls part company and head for America, never to see one another again.

25 Colucci 6.

26 Browne 13.

27 Browne 13.

28 Browne 14.

Rose, one of those girls was me. The other one you probably know as Mama Celeste.<sup>29</sup>



*Screenshot 2:* Sophia / Estelle Getty (left) and Rose / Betty White (right) talking over milk and cookies. Episode 5, season 1, “The Triangle”, written by Winifred Hervey.

By referring to the brand of pepperoni frozen pizza that bears the logo of Celeste Lizio – quite famous in the USA, a clear popular culture reference within the show<sup>30</sup> – Sophia embeds lessons in her stories, or simply wishes to entertain with them. Sophia, instead of being a quirky grandmother, is a trickster, one who manipulates the trajectory of the narrative in order to teach the protagonists a lesson, such as the one quoted above,<sup>31</sup> drawing further away from the passive Italian grandmother represented on film. Blanche Deveroux, played by Rue Machlahan, is a Southern belle, has an accent, and often talks in dialect throughout the show.<sup>32</sup> She is very popular with men, and is the most active of all the four, being a widow, like Rose. Rose Nylund is played by Betty White, who is Norwegian American, a good-natured but often naive

29 Hervey, see *Screenshot 2*.

30 Freed.

31 Browne 68.

32 Browne 40.



and somewhat borderline childish character whose stories focus on the little town of St. Olaf, Minnesota, where she grew up. She often references items and games of the town that bear Norwegian names she does not translate.<sup>33</sup> Most of her stories are lost in translation, which is the main comedic component of her lovable character. In comparison to Sophia's strong-willed Mediterranean Italian woman, Rose does support the claims of a calm Northern European stereotype often recurring in sitcoms. The strangest of the four is Dorothy Zbornak, played by Bea Arthur, who plays Sophia's daughter and as a result would also belong to the Italian American minority. But actually in her portrayal, "Dorothy is typically described as a divorced substitute teacher originally from New York City with a signature dry wit that can make her seem aloof or standoffish,"<sup>34</sup> closer to her husband Stanley Zbornak's Jewish heritage. Her husband is a recurring character, and their interaction in Miami, Florida, resemble that of New Yorkers who are out of place. In a way, Dorothy completely broke from the expected base image of her Italian heritage, and now belongs to another.

To conclude, stereotypes are no more than images that the audiences agree on, and once a character breaks out of the frames of said image, their interpretation changes, and most importantly, they no longer bear the responsibility of representing that stereotype. Marie Barone, Carmela Soprano, and Sophia Petrillo start from a place well recognized by the viewer, in the role of the mother-in-law, the homemaker, and the aging grandmother, but showcase much more agency in their decisions and actions than women in similar positions on the big screen have displayed before. By drawing a comparison between their representations, it is clear that the span of several seasons of a show allows for a kind of character development that not only upends the frames of the picture that they are put into, but some end up breaking out of these constraints completely.

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33 Browne 54–55.

34 Browne 21.

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# **The Forerunner of an Emerging Genre? Unconventionality in *Grace and Frankie***

**Anna Zalavári**

independent scholar

zancsur@gmail.com

Recently, in light of the COVID-19 virus, the well-being of pensioners over the age of sixty-five has become a topic of great concern, as they are the ones most sensitive to the negative effects of the disease. Yet even though they occupy an important place in society, the detailed representation of elderly characters has been extremely rare in television series, especially situational comedies. Given that sitcoms reflect on changes within society, it is typical of the genre to focus on relationships in the home, workplace, and the community.<sup>1</sup> Although it might be yet too soon to see the consequences of the ongoing pandemic reflected in television, elderly characters as protagonists have slowly been emerging on the screen in recent years.

In television shows, there are often recurring elderly characters, and, in family sitcoms, they may also be members of the main cast. In general, television programs mostly portray them as grandparents in a stereotypical way: they are either there to emphasize generational differences through their more conventional and fixed views, as compared to that of the main characters (which can also serve as a frequent source of comic relief), or they offer their wisdom to the younger generations. In other words, they can be helpers or obstructers and, thus, creators of conflicts for the younger main characters. However, neither of these typical roles shows the elderly characters themselves in focus since generally the target audience of sitcoms is younger audiences. Only a few North American shows offer exceptions to this pattern. The most well-known example is *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992) at NBC, and recently two productions of the streaming platform Netflix: *The Kominsky Method* and *Grace and Frankie*.

In the following essay, I will discuss one of these shows, namely the comedy series *Grace and Frankie* and argue that it is not a conventional sitcom since in several ways it is quite revolutionary. I am going to examine the possible new genre of television shows that it might represent and the traditional tools it uses differently than other series of the genre, such as gendered spaces or the topics the show addresses.

1 Feasey 20.

First of all, *Grace and Frankie* is revolutionary in two main aspects: the protagonists are women, and they are both over the age of seventy. These simple aspects might create a new, possibly emerging genre or subgenre of television series in terms of the age of the protagonists. Since, for example, the teen comedy genre is an already existing one, following its analogy, the elderly comedy genre could also be established by *Grace and Frankie*, which premiered in 2015. In 2018, the premiere of *The Kominsky Method* followed with an aim to depict a fundamentally similar idea by choosing to follow the everyday lives of elderly characters. This show became so popular that it even received four Emmy Award nominations in 2020. Similarly, *Grace and Frankie*, with its complete six seasons, has been renewed for a seventh season as well. Thanks to the success of these shows, they could easily become forerunners of further television series of the freshly (re)established elderly comedy genre: re-established, as they are not entirely unprecedented (see *The Golden Girls*, for example). In addition, their main themes have recently been rediscovered by millennial and generation Z audiences as well.

In the teen genre, there is a tendency to place the emphasis on friendships over romance.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, same-sex friendships have become central in the teen genre because they are suitable for portraying the transition of the characters from childhood to adulthood.<sup>3</sup> This transition in their lives is essential to the conflicts and, thus, the plot. If a teen genre exists that focuses on these kinds of relationships of the characters, then in the elderly genre, the same kinds of relationships could enjoy similar emphasis. In the light of this, in *Grace and Frankie*, the friendship of the two women in the title roles is in focus, while key transitions in their lives can also be found.

In the show, Grace (portrayed by Jane Fonda) and Frankie (portrayed by Lily Tomlin) become friends because their husbands decide to leave them at the same time. The two married couples represent different segments of white middle-class society. Grace used to run a beauty company and her soon-to-be-ex-husband Robert (portrayed by Martin Sheen) works as a successful lawyer. They enjoy the materialistic pleasures of life, own a huge modern house, and value appearances as well as politeness in social interactions over “making a scene” in public, so to say. As opposed to them, Frankie and her husband Sol (portrayed by Sam Waterston) represent a freer, more hippy-like lifestyle. Frankie is an artist and Sol works as a lawyer (he and Robert are colleagues and work for the same firm). They are sensitive to social issues, familiar to protests and thus more rebellious against established societal norms,

<sup>2</sup> Berridge 17.

<sup>3</sup> Berridge 17.

an attitude they do not shy away from expressing. As the four of them have known each other for decades, it comes as a huge surprise to Grace and Frankie when both men come out as homosexuals and plan to get married. The plot is driven by, as well as, defined by this situation.

Thus, consequently, a number of transitions can be found in the lives of Grace and Frankie. Firstly, there is the transition from being married to being single. It is often emphasized in the show that both couples had been married for forty years, out of which the last twenty were spent living a lie, as the two men's affair had been going on for two decades before their coming out. This transition is not simple, since these couples have established their lives, raised children, and basically already grown old together. This turning point and shared experience, which is quite traumatic in their lives, is also the catalyst that leads the two women to form a bond and friendship. In addition, besides their divorce being by nature transitional, their relationship also slowly shifts from disliking each other into true friendship, depicting another form of transition.

Another transition that the protagonists experience is the process of getting old, which represents a much more general life experience of people over seventy than the more unique situation of divorce. The physical limitations of the aging body that they experience include, for example, aching joints, difficulty hearing, reading texts with small fonts, or even standing up from a sitting position. Nevertheless, these problems are portrayed in comedic, yet relatable situations, and as a result the show also promotes the recognition of the body as it is at an old age.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, one of the main reasons why *Grace and Frankie* appears revolutionary is because old age becomes naturalized for women in the show.<sup>5</sup> It does not wish to depict the negation of female aging. As Karina Gomes Barbosa writes, "[O]n the contrary, the bodies exhibited in the series do not want to appear younger to increase their capacity for seduction: they seek to seduce as they are."<sup>6</sup> However, it is not entirely accurate to claim that the female protagonists do not try to appear younger in the show. The character of Grace, who is the former head of a beauty company, often struggles with accepting that she has aged. Nevertheless, generally, the taboo of elderly female (as well as male) sexuality is openly addressed and depicted just as the characters encounter it in their lives. For example, there is an entire episode centered around the issue of low vaginal lubrication for postmenopausal

4 Barbosa 1440.

5 Barbosa 1440.

6 Barbosa 1440.

women. Another example is when Grace and Frankie start their own business after inventing a special vibrator, designed specifically for elderly women who can use the product comfortably despite arthritis caused by old age, and, therefore, without any pain or discomfort in their wrists. These are topics that are otherwise not addressed in society, yet the show incorporates them into the plot in a way that results in their natural and open discussion.

*Grace and Frankie* is able to create redefined spaces in terms of their gendered coding. As England warns, “[T]elelevision – through its depiction of everyday life in the workplace, the home, and third spaces – creates gendered codings of space,” and these conventional gendered codings often reinforce traditional patriarchal frameworks.<sup>7</sup> The space of the workplace is usually a male-dominated space whereas “[W]omen are traditionally linked to private space due to their performance of reproductive duties such as the upkeep of the home and the caretaking of children. This reproductive work is valued as inferior due to the lack of paid wages. The link between women and private space has been naturalized over time.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, even within the home, according to normative ideals, the kitchen is usually a female space, while the garage or the study rather represent male spaces. Yet, in *Grace and Frankie* these spaces are redefined, and spaces are not separated within the home, but between homes. The old family home of Grace and her husband, Robert, in San Diego becomes the home of the homosexual couple. This previously shared place between a man and a woman becomes an inclusively male space. However, the new female space is more interesting: the two women move into the family beach house in La Jolla. For the women, this house is a place of refuge, somewhere to get away from their former lives. It represents both a marginalized state and newly found freedom. Furthermore, given the position of the house right next to the sea, the water also becomes symbolic of their freedom and independence.

The beach house also becomes a space for creativity and business, which thus proves that these two functions are not restricted inclusively to the masculine. This is the place where Frankie, an artist, can create her paintings. In addition, this is also where the new business that Grace and Frankie establish together operates from. They keep extending and redefining their own spaces with multiple functions, as they redefine themselves and their own places in the world after their divorces. However, the two women cannot completely escape away to the beach house from patriarchal society, since there is “a further definition of space in which space is

<sup>7</sup> England 81–82.

<sup>8</sup> England 83.

a dynamic net of dominant and subordinate relations.”<sup>9</sup> The beach house in La Jolla is in a marginal position relative to the city of San Diego, which represents the marginal, subordinate position of women in society.

The social circles and friends of the previously married couples do not really change in general, but the women and men are treated differently in the new situation after the men’s coming out. Even though Robert and Sol are open about their homosexual relationship, their superior positions as privileged white males remain. In season 1 episode 4, entitled “The Funeral,” the death of a mutual friend brings the four characters together to attend their first social obligation since the separations. Their friends keep on congratulating the men on being courageous by coming out while the women only receive pity from others. “Would you look at them? The life of the funeral party,” says Frankie in reaction to seeing how people gather around Robert and Sol to express their support for the brave men’s relationship. “Everything’s so easy for them, isn’t it?” replies Grace.<sup>10</sup> Grace later even confronts her ex-husband, referring to the men’s superior position in the situation: “You get to be happy now, don’t you? ... You’re not losing anything.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, when Frankie expresses her condolences to the grieving widow and says, “I can’t imagine what you are going through,” the widow, Sally, replies, “Oh. I think your situation is much worse, dear ... I’ll be dead soon, but what are you going to do? You may live another twenty years.”<sup>12</sup> This pity comes to the point where the grieving widow thinks the sad event is not even her husband dying, but that of the abandoned wives’.

The double standard of the situation glorifies the men for coming out of the closet, disregarding the fact that they had been cheating on their wives for twenty years. At the same time, friends who represent society express pity for the embarrassment that Grace and Frankie, the abandoned wives, go through. In season 1 episode 3, entitled “The Dinner,” the sons and daughters of the two families are invited to dinner hosted by Robert and Sol where the children articulate the question whether they would feel so forgiving if their fathers had cheated with other women, raising the moral issue of acceptance related to homosexuality in the light of cheating. The adult children, part of a younger generation, realize that the way their fathers are treated as opposed to the situation of their mothers is not fair.

9 England 82.

10 00:07:53–00:08:00.

11 00:23:22–00:23:27.

12 00:22:27–00:22:41.



Lastly, the show manages to unconventionally portray the experiences of elderly people in society in general as well. For example, in the same episode, “The Dinner,” the closing scene is a memorable one in this regard. Grace and Frankie go to a grocery store to buy some cigarettes for Grace who feels cigarettes could help her overcome stress. They seek a cashier to ask for a packet of cigarettes. They see a male worker showing his back to them, and Grace has to repeatedly call for assistance. The man ignores her completely. He does not answer or turn around, although Grace is clearly audible. Grace gets more and more upset as not only does the store clerk ignore them, but he also starts serving and helping a young, attractive blond woman instead. Grace cannot tolerate feeling invisible and starts frantically screaming:

Hello?! What kind of animal treats people like this?! Do you not see me?! Do I not exist?! You think it’s all right to ignore us, just because she’s got grey hair?! (*she points to Frankie*) And I don’t look like *her*?! (*she points to the attractive blonde*)<sup>13</sup>

At this point, Grace reaches the point of a meltdown. Of course, the store clerk turns around when she starts screaming, but does not really react or say a word, only listens to her with an expression of surprise on his face. When the women leave the shop, Grace says, “I refuse to be irrelevant.”<sup>14</sup> This scene accurately represents how old people must feel when they are overlooked and sends the message that they should not be treated as if they were invisible. They are just as valuable as anyone else is. They also have a voice that is worth listening to. Furthermore, if the store clerk’s reaction is representative of society, it shows us how women are only seen as worthy of attention when they are young, attractive, and potentially fertile, and explains why women are so often obsessed with looking and staying young as well as beautiful according to the normative images of beauty.

One reason why elderly people have not really been in the focus of television shows might be because series attempt to portray society as is. Given that people over the age of sixty-five do not work anymore and thus are not productive, GDP-generating members of society, so to speak, they quickly become unimportant and marginalized. Society tends to treat elderly people as if they were invisible, even though they are very much alive and active.

13 00:27:05–00:27:25, emphasis and explanation added.

14 00:27:48–00:27:52.

Sitcoms provide a medium that is “viewed by the entire family,” tries to grab the attention of “the widest possible audience,” and is “designed with the same purpose and aspiration in mind – to remain relevant [...] in a constantly changing world [...] to make a cultural impact on [the] audience.”<sup>15</sup> Elderly people have always been part of society, however, their recent focalized position in television shows may point to a new and positive tendency to be more inclusive of them and give them a proper voice.

The series *Grace and Frankie* might be the first of many, a forerunner of the elderly comedy genre of television shows. It portrays female protagonists who, despite women’s subordinate position in patriarchal society, still manage to redefine their own gendered spaces and themselves in light of life-altering events. *Grace and Frankie* also succeeds in showing the audience the everyday struggles of people over seventy in a relatable way that does not alienate the problems that they regularly face. Overall, it shows the unique perspective of elderly people in an unconventional way, unprecedented in television.

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15 Rolsky 42–44.



# Nemi szerepek és világfelfordítás a hadseregben: Rejtő Jenő: *A Láthatatlan Légió* és Terry Pratchett: *Rémes regiment*

Timár Krisztina

Verseghy Ferenc Gimnázium

timar.krisztina@verseghy.net

Két olyan életműből választottam ki egy-egy darabot, amelyek (komikus) határynitásokon, szabályszegéseken alapulnak. Mindkét regény a hadseregben játszódik, mégpedig olyan hadseregben, amelynek már a pusztá léte határokat lép át, és szabályokat szeg meg. Mindkét regény az én és a másik ellentétpárját és az identitások közötti átmeneteket helyezi a középpontba. Mind a kettő önmagában is lehetne többféle tanulmány témája. Nem is törekszem most arra, hogy kimerítően tárgyaljam bármelyiket, munkámat kezdeményező jellegűnek szánom. Főleg ami a Rejtő-mű olvasását illeti; annak ugyanis még gyakorlatilag semmilyen szakirodalma nincsen.<sup>1</sup>

Sántha Attila olvasta először Bahtyin felől Rejtő Jenő regényeit. 1999-ben jelent meg az az esszéje, amely fölveti, hogy Rejtő úgy alkot groteszk világparódiát, ahogyan Rabelais vagy Cervantes. Két világot állít szembe egymással, az egyik a „hivatalos, nappali világ”, a bahtyini „fent”, a másik a „lent”, „az éjszakai világ, a csavargók, kalandorok, bűnözők világa”,<sup>2</sup> amely felfordítja, de újjá is teremti (egyúttal jobbá teszi) a „fenti” rendet. Én *Az ellopott futárt* és *A Néma Revolverek Városát* olvastam ebből a szempontból. Mindkét esetben működött ez az olvasási mód, de kiderült az is, hogy a regények világa jóval bonyolultabb és ellentmondásosabb ennél. Bahtyin elsősorban a kora újkor, más néven a premodern irodalmára koncentrált, Rejtő pedig a modernség írója volt; a kettőt feltétlenül érdemes ugyan összevetni, de semmiképpen nem lesz maradéktalan az átfedés. Terry Pratchett életművének olvasásakor úgyszintén (bár korlátokkal) használható a bahtyini értelmezés. Ennek egy változatát alkalmazza Eve Smith tanulmánya,<sup>3</sup> amely a Korongvilág-sorozat négy különböző darabját kapcsolta össze a karneváli törvényszegésekkel. Ő azonban olyan műveket választott, amelyekben a felfordult, karneváli világ csak kiinduló-

1 Szitányi György „Rejtő Jenő regényvilága” című tanulmánya *A Láthatatlan Légiót* Rejtő filozófiai mélystruktúrájú regényei közé sorolja. Sajnos, mivel nem ez a regény adja a tanulmány fő fókuszát, csak néhány mondatot szentel neki (185).

2 Sántha 11.

3 Köszönöm Sohár Anikónak a Pratchett-szakirodalom felkutatásában nyújtott segítségét.

pont, a regényszereplők feladata pedig az, hogy helyreállítsák a szilárd világrendet, a normalitást. Smith a karneválnak nem az újjáteremtő erejét, hanem az időleges uralmát tartja szem előtt, amikor Pratchettet elemez, vagyis azt, hogy a karnevál csak egy megadott időkeretben működhet, előtte-utána a törvény hivatalos uralma érvényesül.<sup>4</sup> Ezért ő nem is tér ki a *Rémes regimentre*.

A *Rémes regiment*ben ugyanis mindennek éppen az ellenkezője történik. A *Rémes regiment* kiindulópontja egy olyan világ, amely szomorú, nyomasztó, kaotikus, és pontosan megfelel az aktuális társadalmi normáknak. (Ez egyébként több Rejtő-regényre is elmondható, ilyen pl. *A elloptott futár*, *A Néma Revolverek Városa*, a *Csontbrigád*, a *Piszkos Fred*, *A szőke ciklon*.) Egy évtizedek óta tartó háborúról van szó, amelynek a kezdetére már senki nem emlékszik, már a szereplők szülei is ebbe születtek bele, ezért tekintik normálisnak. A főszereplők érkezésükkel és a nevetés erejével felforgatják az egészet, majd – mivel a hatalom gyakorlói is elégedettek a végeredménnyel – új, emberibb normákat építenek ki. Ha ehhez a regényhez kapcsoljuk a bahtyini karnevált, akkor nem annak időlegessége fog elsősorban számítani, hanem a megváltó ereje. Ahogy Bahtyin hangsúlyozza, a „karneváli paródia úgy tagad, hogy egyszersmind új életre kelti, meg is újítja azt, amit tagad.”<sup>5</sup>

A *Láthatatlan Légio* ettől (és a fent felsorolt többi Rejtő-regénytől) nagy mértékben különbözik, és a Smith által olvasott Pratchett-regényekhez áll közelebb. Azzal kezdődik, hogy szabályszegő erők megbolygatják a szilárd és kényelmes világrendet (két különböző afrikai helyszínen támadást indítanak európai érdekek ellen). Hiányzik tehát, illetve egyáltalán nem a felsorolt Rejtő-regények világának megfelelő szerepet kap a „lent” és a „fent” ellentétpárja. Inkább „kint” és „bent” ellentéte tapasztalható, amelyek közül az előbbi jelenti mindazt, ami az európai értékek (és érdekek) világán kívül található, megváltásról pedig szó sincs. A megbomlott rendet egy hadsereggel próbálják helyretenni, amely ugyan maga is szabályszegő, karneváli hadsereg, de a cselekmény végére szabályossá válik és rendet tesz. Ekkor a karnevál is véget ér, a felforgatás vereséget szenved.

A két regényszöveg közötti összehasonlítási alapot az adja, hogy mindkettő cselekményének kezdetén olyan személyek lépnek be a seregbe, akik nem felelnek meg az ott uralkodó normáknak. A célok, amelyekért a seregbe lépnek, szintén különböznek attól, amit hivatalosan elvárnak tőlük. Egyéni célok, hétköznapiak, békebeliek: hozzátartozójukat keresik, menekülni akarnak kilátástalan helyzetükből, megélhetést szeretnének. Akik a világ működésén akarnak változtatni, azokról ez csak utólag derül ki. Más kér-

4 Bahtyin 15, 87; Smith 30.

5 Bahtyin 19.

dés, hogy a többi szereplő is csak akkor oldhatja meg a saját személyes problémáját, ha közben egyúttal közösségi célokat is megvalósítanak: kiiktatják a veszélyes ellenfelet, illetve békét teremtenek.

A *Rémes regiment* középpontjában álló, önkéntesekből verbuvált osztag összes tagjáról sorban kiderül, hogy nők,<sup>6</sup> kivéve Zubbony hadnagyot, aki elvileg a parancsnokuk volna; ámde gyakorlatilag őt is, ahogy mindenkit, az őrmester irányítja. Függetlenül attól, hogy az ország törvényei szerint nők nem lehetnek katonák, ők a hadseregben maradnak, végrehajtják a feladatukat, békét teremtenek, és lehetővé teszik, hogy a törvény, a norma megváltozzon. A *Láthatatlan Légión* katonái közül az egyikről már a seregbe lépése idején megtudjuk, hogy Izabellának hívják, a másik, Renoir hadnagy a cselekmény utolsó harmadában vallja be, hogy nő. Itt azonban bonyolultabb a helyzet, mint a *Rémes regiment* esetében. Először is Izabella őrzetőről kizárólag az olvasó és a hadsereghez vele együtt csatlakozó családtagjai tudják, hogy nő, és a feladat teljesítéséig a hadseregben is marad. Renoir ellenben, miután lelepleződik, kikerül onnan. Másodszor nemcsak ők azok, akik más körülmények között nem léphetnének be a hadseregbe, hanem a légión összes többi tagja sem. Mind azt hazudják, hogy katonai múltjuk van, de mindegyiken látványosan csak jelmez az egyenruha, amelyet egyébként is rendhagyó módon állítanak össze, mert akik bevásárolnak, azok is csak megjátsszák, hogy értenek hozzá, és csak akkor tudnak keresni a bevásárláson, ha mindenféle raktáron maradt bolondságot megvesznek. Az egyetlen szereplő, akinek valóban van katonai múltja, nem áll közéjük – ő azt játssza el, hogy csak véletlenül jár arra, holott pontosan ezzel a sereggel vannak tervei.

Jelmez, szerep, játék – színjátszás. Mindkét regény szereplői egy színjáték résztvevői, a színjátszás pedig karneváli művészet, a határáthágások művészete.<sup>7</sup> Azért, hogy a hadseregbe léphessen, mindenki maszkot ölt, és pontosan ez kell ahhoz, hogy egyáltalán legyen hadsereg. A *Rejtő-regény* Yolland grófja ugyanis szökött légionistákból akarna századot létrehozni, de ilyet Afrikában egyet se talál, nemhogy százat. A Pratchett-regény katonái pedig akkor csatlakoznak önként a hadsereghez, amikor

6 Ami a magyar olvasó számára meglepetés lehet, az angol anyanyelvűeknek azonban nem. A cím ugyanis szó szerint idézi John Knox XVI. századi skót protestáns prédikátor *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* című nőellenes röpiratát (Tabasy 1). A Knox-szöveg címében a *regiment* szó nem 'katonai egység', hanem (a korszaknak megfelelően) 'uralom', 'kormányzás' jelentésben szerepel. Ha egy angol anyanyelvű olvasó erről a szövegről hallott, akkor a Pratchett-regénynek már a borítóját látva kiegészíti magában a *Monstrous Regiment* kifejezést azzal, hogy „of Women” (*Nők rémes regimentje/uralma*), tehát már az előtt ismeri a szereplők nemét, hogy kinyitotta volna a könyvet. Az más kérdés, hogy Pratchett világa szöges ellentétben áll Knox röpiratának nőellenességével. Pratchett éppen a kontraszt kedvéért játszik rá a röpirat címére.

7 Bahtyin 15.

egyébként már csellel és erőszakkal kell újoncokat fogni. Ráadásul mindkét regény szereplői éppen azért tudják teljesíteni a regénybeli küldetést, mert katonai szerepük valóban csak *szerep*. Ha a *Rémes regiment* katonái nem a saját kis hétköznapi céljaikért dolgoznának, az sem jutna eszükbe, hogy a békekötésben segítsenek, amelyet pedig mindenki szeretne, csak az nincs, aki kezdeményezze. Ha *A Láthatatlan Légión* katonái valóban tapasztalt sivatagi harcosok volnának, akkor nem lehetne őket becsapni, és az eredeti helyszíntől eltérő helyre vezetni, ahol sokkal nagyobb szükség van rájuk.

Ha már bináris ellentétpárokról beszélünk: amikor szerepjátásra kerül a sor, akkor a központi ellentétpárrá az én és a másik válik, és a tét a kettő közötti határ átjárhatósága. Bahtyini nyelven úgy hangzik ez, hogy „a maszk motívuma a természetes határok átmeneti, változékony, áthágható voltát fejezi ki”, lehetővé teszi az önazonosság kétségbe vonását.<sup>8</sup> A most elemzett két regény egyikének világa sem esik ugyan egybe azzal a (késő középkori–reneszánsz) világgal, amelyről Bahtyin beszél, tanulságai azonban bizonyos mértékig Rejtőre és Pratchettre is alkalmazhatók, amennyiben mindkét regényben olyan emberek kerülnek katonai szerepbe, akikhez ez a szerep az aktuális normák szerint nem illik. Ennek alapos végiggondolásához viszont egy olyan szempontot is figyelembe kell venni, amelynek Bahtyin kevés teret szán, és a reneszánsz óta már nem kevés változáson ment keresztül. A regénybeli bizonytalan körvonalak és komikus identitásváltások ugyanis a legtöbb esetben összekapcsolódnak a szereplők nemével, illetve általában véve a nemekkel kapcsolatos elvárások megszégésével is.

A hadseregek hangsúlyozottan férfias, maszkulin eszményeket követnek. Mindkét regényben kezdettől fogva magától értetődőnek, „normálisnak” is tekintik azt, mi számít férfiasnak: testi erő, tűrőképesség, az irányítás képessége, bátorság, komolyság, érzelemmentesség, racionális gondolkodás. A férfias eszményt szintén magától értetődően azonosítják a katonai eszménnyel: az állam érdekeinek szolgálata, kötelesség (parancsok teljesítése), hősiesség. Illetve vannak még bizonyos külső, testi jegyek, mozgásformák, cselekvések, szóhasználat.

Mindkét regényben pontosan itt kezdődik a világfelfordítás és a komikum: ami magától értetődőnek tűnik, az kérdőjeleződik meg leghamarabb. Először is kiderül, hogy ami elvileg mellékes lenne (testi jegyek, mozgásformák stb.), az voltaképp nagyon könnyen utánozható; a szereplők utánozzák is, arra számítva, hogy ezek majd hozzák magukkal a férfiaság (és a katonai erények) többi szükséges elemét. Részint igazuk lesz, részint – ha nem is lesz igazuk – kiderül, hogy a fenti tulajdonságok

8 Bahtyin 50.

nemcsak férfiakra lehetnek jellemzőek, illetve az ellenkezőjük se kötődik automatikusan nőkhöz. Sőt: a normának a férfiak közül sem mindenki felelhet meg. A paródia pedig ki is használja az ebben rejlő lehetőségeket, az öröktől fogva valónak tekintett keretekről bebizonyosodik, hogy közmegegyezésen alapulnak: maszkként vagy jelmezként letehető-felvehető.

– Polchon hadnagy alázatosan jelentkezik. [...]

Polchon hadnagyból úgy dült a vöröshagyma és a pálinka odörje, hogy a gróf megtántorodott, mintha találat érte volna.

– Ön hadnagy volt valamikor?

– Mint hadnagy szereltem le a légióban. Becsületrendem, elsőrangú vitézségi érmem és haslövéssem van. [...]

Polchon csakugyan matróz volt. De nyugodtan ajánlkozott, amikor hallotta, hogy leszerelt légiós tisztet keresnek egy expedícióhoz. Szerzett hamis papírokat. [...] Polchon tudta, hogy megállja a helyét. Menetelni, kommandírozni tud, ami meg a szaharai ismereteket illeti: lesz ott igazi tiszt is, aki ért hozzá, ő meg majd utánozza mindenben, ráhagyja, amit mond és kész.<sup>9</sup>

– Ezekre szükséged lesz – suttogta a hang. [...] Egy gyapjúgombóc volt az. Az ujjaival felderítette a részleteket.

– Egy pár *zoknira*? [...]

– Nézd – kezdte magyarázni a hang türelmesen –, neked nem dudorodik ott, ahol nem is kellene dudorodnia. Ez jó. De ott sem dudorodik, ahol pedig kellene. Érted? Ott lenn, hm? [...] Kimondottan jól csináltad. Olyan benyomást keltettél, mint egy riadt fiatal legény, aki igyekszik nagynak és bátornak látszani. Az orrod talán túrhatnád egy kicsit többször. De ez csak egy javaslat.<sup>10</sup>

A *Rémes regiment* szereplői azzal, hogy a nemi szerepeik határait feszegetik, egyúttal a hagyomány által kijelölt határokat is megbontják. Nemcsak azáltal, hogy nő létükre belépnek a seregbe, és nem is csak azáltal, hogy megváltoztatják a tanult viselkedési formáikat. Bár ez önmagában sem kis munka: a főszereplő, Mari esetében végig is nézhető, hogyan gondolja át és dolgozza ki a szerepet. Emellett az is fontos, hogy ezeket a nőket olyan tulajdonságok és cselekvések segítik hozzá az érvényesüléshez,

<sup>9</sup> Rejtő 57, 60.

<sup>10</sup> Pratchett 58–59.



amelyek elvileg nőiesnek számítanak, ám sorra kiderül róluk, hogy a hadseregben szükség van rájuk. Nem tartoznak a normához, de azért kellenek, csak éppen kényelmesebb nem beszélni róluk. Például: minden egységnek szüksége van szakácsra. Vagy: a tábori sebésznek jól kell tudnia varrni. Az egyik nő éppenséggel olyan közösségből érkezik a hadseregbe, ahol vonzó női tulajdonságnak számít a testi erő, sőt a kövérség, mivel ebből látszik, hogy el tudja végezni a ház körüli nehéz munkákat, vagyis az ő világában az a norma, hogy egy nőnek komoly testi ereje legyen. Ennek ellenpontja, hogy az egység egyetlen hímnemű katonájának sem testi ereje, sem irányítási képessége, sem köznapi józan esze nincsen, nem lehet komolyan venni. Ennyiben nem felel meg a fent említett normának, azonban a nagyobb stratégiai műveleteket és a matematikát illetően igen, azokban zseni. Pratchett viszont ezt ismét ellenpontozza azzal, hogy ő a társaság legjobb színésze, és női szerepet jobban játszik, mint a nők maguk. Többek között ezek miatt a karneváli határnyitások, határátlépések miatt lehetséges az, hogy a regény végére bahtyini recept szerint maga a társadalmi rend, a törvény, a szabály is átalakul, mégpedig közmegegyezésre. Az is kiderül, hogy a háttérből mások is segítettek az osztagnak a békekötésért végzett munkában, történetesen éppen egy férfi vezetésével, aki más nézeteket vall a férfias viselkedésről: számára az lenne a fontos, hogy hazamenjen gyereket nevelni.

*A Láthatatlan Légió* esete más. Itt a leendő katonák, bár tudatában vannak, hogy szerepet kell játszaniuk, nem dolgozzák ki azt előre. Mind arra számítanak, hogy rögtönözni fognak, hogy majd közben megtanulják, hogyan kell viselkedniük. Előbb-utóbb mind kudarcot vallanak, mivel mind ugyanazt szeretné, tehát nincs, akitől megtanulhatnak. Egy kivétel akad, az pedig éppen az egyik nő. Izabella ugyanis már a hadseregbeli szereplése előtt is megszokta, hogy ne a nőktől elvárt módon viselkedjen: egyrészt cirkuszi súlyemelő, másrészt férjének és felnőtt, de infantilis fiának is ő parancsolt egész életében. A fenti transzgressziókból adódó fonák helyzetek szolgáltatják a regény fő humorforrását. A regény nagy részében olyan ez a hadsereg, mint a Bahtyin által jellemzett vándorló színtársulat: „mint különleges, félig reális, félig utópikus világ áll szemben az egész környező, rendezett és biztos talapzatra épített világgal; mintegy kibújik az utóbbiban általános érvényű konvenciók és kötelmek alól, s bizonyos fokig a karnevál előjogait és szabadságait élvezi.”<sup>11</sup>

*Realitását* mutatja a vezényszavak rendszere, az induló, a logisztika – karneváli jellegét pedig az, hogy a vezényszavak egy hobbinyelvűből valók, az induló egy operából, a logisztikát pedig egy hajdani bécsi konflis biztosítja a Szaharában.

11 Bahtyin 119.

Egy konflis állt a sivatagi műúton, szabad zászlóval, a bakon szürke körgallérral, kokárdás cilinderrel egy kövér, vörös arcú, bibircsókós kocsis, akinek ősz pakumpartja pamacsban végződött az álla körül. A kocsilámpa ég, és mellette az ostor kísértetiesen lóg. [...] Beült a kocsiba, Polchon a bakra. Strudl úr lecsavarta a zászlót, a taxi ketyegett. [...]

– Ruzsenoár!

Fesztes vigyázzba álltak.

– Fetvozsó!

Egyszerre megindultak, és felharsant az Aida.

Miután elvonultak a kocsi előtt, a marsall hangja nyújtottan süvöltött végig a síkon:

– Rien... Növaplü!

Egy zörrenéssel állt a század, és elhangzott egy újabb vezényszó, amely kártyás nyelven azt jelentette, hogy Podvinecz marsall minden tétet tart.

– Bankuver!<sup>12</sup>

A regény végére azonban ez a közösség gyökeresen átalakul. A sivatag és a vezetőjük katonákat csinál belőlük, bár ennek a belső folyamatnak a bemutatásával az elbeszélő adós marad. Mire bevetésre kerül a sor, már megfelelnek annak, amit elvárnak tőlük. Nem a törvény változik, hanem az emberek. A maszk az arcukká válik, Izabella esetében is. Az a világ pedig, amelyben ez megtörténhet, már nem a Bahtyin által elemzett karnevál világa, mert nevetés helyett a félelem és a halál határozza meg.<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Kayser vizsgálta meg a groteszknak ezt a fajtáját. Az általa felsorolt jellemzők sorra felbukkannak a regény vége felé: a titokzatos és mindenható erő, az elidegenedés, legfőképpen pedig az ijesztő bizonytalanság.<sup>14</sup> A szereplőknek fogalmuk sincs, merre járnak, mi az útjuk célja, milyen veszélyek várnak rájuk, ki az, akinek az akaratát teljesítik, és mi ez az akarat. Azt tudják, hogy csak a vezetőjük tud eligazodni a sivatagban, tőle viszont babonásan rettegnek.

– Mit akar velünk! – kiabált Wolfram. – Meghalunk mind!

Öklök emelkednek fenyegetően a levegőbe.

– Amíg én itt vagyok – mondja nyugodtan az overallos –, addig nem pusztulhatnak el, mert van, aki vezesse a csapatot.

12 Rejtő 78–80, 102.

13 Lásd Bahtyin 103.

14 Kayser 43, 51–52.

Az öklök lehanyatlottak. Tudták jól, hogy az ördög kezében vannak. Most már csak ő tudja, merre járnak.

– Viselkedjenek rendesen és fegyelmezetten. Akkor nem lesz semmi baj.<sup>15</sup>

Két olyan szereplő jelenik meg a regényben, akik végig tudják játszani a szerepüket, majd szabad akaratukból hagyják abba, visszaalakulva önmagukká. Egyikük Anna Livingstone, újságíró, Yolland gróf fő ellenfelének a lánya, aki részint riportot akar, részint bosszút állni azért, amit a gróf az apjának okozott. Több szerepben is megjelenik: egyrészt nemzetközi szélhámost, *femme fatale*-t alakít testi adottságainak kihasználásával, másrészt a *femme fatale* paródiáját is megjeleníti viselkedésével és beszédstílusával. Nagyon nehéz eldönteni róla, hogy komolyan kell-e venni, azaz veszélyt jelent, vagy nevéssünk rajta, azaz ártalmatlan. Folyamatosan hazudik, szándékosan úgy, hogy pillanatonként lelepleződjön, ugyanakkor semmi esély ne legyen rá, hogy kiderüljön az igazság. Hazugságai komikusak.<sup>16</sup> Két nőiesnek tekintett sztereotípiának is megfelel, a veszélyes kalandornőnek és az irracionális, komolytalan, hazudozó kislánynak. Ez azonban éppen két olyan női szerep, amely száznyolcvan fokos ellentétben áll egymással, és ő erre tudatosan rá is játszik, így válik kétszeresen vonzóvá. Ha pedig nőnek nőies szerepet is maszkként lehet felvenni, ráadásul két ennyire különbözőt egyszerre, akkor a magától értetődőről megint csak kiderül, hogy nem magától értetődő.

A másik szereplő, Durien százados (a fenti idézetben szereplő „overallos”) tevékenysége viszont arra való, hogy megerősítse a megbolygatott ellentétpárrendszert. Neki nincs szüksége színészi képességekre, két véletlen is a kezére játszik.<sup>17</sup> A hadseregben valaki éppen az ő nevét (maszkját) vette föl, mivel nem tudja, hogy ő is ott van, tehát már nem keresik; illetve összetévesztik egy szélhámossal. A regény vége előtt, miután az addigi parancsnokot betegen hátrahagyták, tudatosan és szándékosan leleplezi saját magát. Egyúttal beismeri, hogy mindvégig manipulálta az eseményeket, a hadsereget, mindenkit becsapott és/vagy sakkban tartott. A jelen helyzetben szükséges összes információval csak ő rendelkezik, tehát kezdettől fogva övé a hadsereg fölötti valódi hatalom. Erről ugyan nagylelkűségből lemondana, a katonák azonban rögtön visszaadják neki, és egyhangúlag engedelmességet fogadnak. Durien állítása

15 Rejtő 228.

16 Önálló tanulmányt érdemelne megszólalásainak alapos nyelvészeti elemzése, mivel elszakítja egymástól a „hivatalos” nyelvszemlélet szerint elválaszthatatlanul összetartozó jelölőt és jelöltet azáltal, hogy újabb és újabb hazugságaival következetesen tovább és tovább távolítja az igazságot.

17 Feljegyzendő, hogy a véletlen irracionális erő, nem éppen az úgynevezett férfias eszménynek felel meg.

szerint a hazája, illetve az európai kultúra érdekében akar leleplezni (maszkjától megfosztani) egy afrikait, aki az önálló állam paródiáját hozta létre a sivatagban. Ezzel voltaképpen tömeggyilkosságot készít elő. Egy Rejtő-hős, aki szabályos hadsereget csinál egy parodisztikus hadseregből, hogy elpusztítson egy másik paródiát – ijesztően képtelen dolognak tűnik. Ami a hazája érdekét illeti, az a Francia Birodalom érdeke, és afrikai területek elfoglalását jelenti.<sup>18</sup> A hadsereg kiképzése ekkorra már befejeződött: gyilkológépként működik, katonái arctalan lények, nem komikusak többé: „Csak úgy fröcsköl a halált, miközben szabályosan fejlődve, elszántan közeledtek.”<sup>19</sup> Nincsenek lelkiismereti gátlásaik, nem érzik úgy, hogy emberek ellen küzdenek, sőt az ellenség vezetője (aki viszont komikus és komolytalan) is csak bábuknak tekinti a népét. Szokatlan mindez: egy Rejtő-regény, amelyiknek szomorú a vége, vagy legalábbis zavarba ejtő. Akárcsak a százados viselkedése a menyasszonyával szemben: infantilizálja, és kizárja a hadseregből. A színházból bábszínház lett,<sup>20</sup> dróton rángatott marionettfigurákkal, akik voltaképpen élőhalottak. Hiányzik belőle a szabadság, helyette egy ördöginek tartott hatalom működik – akiből egyébként a nála is nagyobb hatalom később hőst csinál: tevékenységét elismeri, becsületrendet ad neki. Sőt, a magánéletben is megkapja jutalmát, mivel menyasszonya most még jobban szereti, és a korábbi bánásmód ellen nemhogy nincs kifogása, de még helyesli is.

Ha az énről, a másíkról és a kettő közötti problematikus határsávról beszélünk, nemcsak a nemi szerepek kapcsolódhatnak az ellentétpár két feléhez, hanem az élet és a halál is – akár egymással összefüggésben. Bahtyinnál ez a kettősség mindig az élet győzelmét emeli ki, bár a halál nemcsak ellentéte, hanem tőle el nem választható kiegészítője is az életnek, átjárás van közöttük oda-vissza.<sup>21</sup> *A Láthatatlan Légió*ban ennek az ellenkezője történik. Sajátos és ijesztő, ahogyan Renoir beszél arról, miért veszett össze a vőlegényével: mert őneki nőként az élet volt a fontosabb, a vőlegényének férfiként a kötelesség. Ezzel a logikával a kötelesség gyakorlatilag a pusztulás szinonimájává válik. Nem csoda, ha az illető vőlegény a férfiásnak tekintett eszményhez minden további nélkül hozzákapcsolja a halált is, és a századból a kiképzés végére marionettfigurákat farag. Ebben az időben születnek a hadseregről a regény elején megidézett első kísértethistóriák, és kezdik „Láthatatlan Légiónak” nevezni.

Más kérdés, hogy a regény másik történetszála, amelyet többé-kevésbé Anna Livingstone irányít, hogyan zárul. Ott ugyanis senkivel nem az történik, amit

18 Megjegyzem, tudtommal a rasszizmus kérdését sem vizsgálták még Rejtő életművében.

19 Rejtő 231.

20 Lásd Kayser 90.

21 Bahtyin 61.

eltervezett, mert irracionális erőknél (érzelmeknek és véletleneknek) köszönhetően minden szereplő számára meglepő fordulatot vesznek az események. Legfeljebb abban hasonlít az előbb elemzett történetszállra, hogy itt sem foglalkozik senki azzal, mi az afrikaiak véleménye az európai érdekekről. Ennek a szállnak még akkor is (vagy éppen azért) megvan a karnevalizáló ereje, ha az az ember mondja ki benne az utolsó szót, aki pontosan azáltal válik karneváli figurává, hogy soha nem változik, soha nem játszik szerepet, mindvégig önmagát adja: Strudl úr, a kocsis. Sajnos hely hiányában róla sem szólhatok részletesen, sem pedig arról – ami különben szintén önálló elemzés tárgyát képezhetné –, hogy a légióról szóló groteszk kísértethistóriák mennyiben felelnek meg mégiscsak a megújító, megváltó nevetéskultúrának, és mennyiben a Kayser által ismerttetett megsemmisítő nevetésnek, egyfajta összetett hatásmechanizmusban.

Pratchett *Rémes regimentjének* vége szintén ambivalens: a szereplők minden erőfeszítése és vágya ellenére újrakezdődik a háború – és ez nem mindenkit érint rosszul. A főszereplő Mari, akit mindvégig egyetlen cél mozgatott, hogy a testvérét megtalálja, ekkor fogja fel igazán, hogy ugyanaz a háború tette teljes értékű felnőtté és önmagával azonossá, mint amelyikben maszk mögé kellett rejtjenie az identitását. Az újrakezdődő háborúban pedig pillanatok alatt megtalálja a helyét. A regény középpontjában álló egységnek vannak élőhalott szereplői is: egy vámpír és egy zombi, akikről ránézésre senki meg nem mondja, milyen neműek<sup>22</sup> – rájuk viszont egyáltalán nem vonatkozik az, amit a Rejtő-regény marionettszínházáról írtam. Nem dróton rángatott figurák, önálló akarattal bírnak végig, ez pedig (különösen a vérfüggőség leküzdése céljából szándékosan kávéfüggővé váló vámpír esetében) a komikum forrásává is válik.

Sok kérdést nyitva kell hagyni egy ilyen rövid tanulmányban, de így is bebizonyosodhatott, mennyire gazdag, átgondolásra érdemes szöveg ez a két populáris regény, akár egymással összefüggésben, akár külön-külön, és mennyi mindent mutat meg általuk a *szoros olvasás* módszere. Bahtyin elméletét érdemes kiindulópontként használni az értelmezéshez, ám nem szabad megfeledkezni Bahtyin kritikáiról, illetve a groteszk hagyomány más elméletirőiről sem. Így válik igazán világossá, mit jelent az, hogy ha egy szöveg komikus-parodisztikus – attól még az általa képviselt világértelmezést lehet és érdemes is nagyon komolyan venni.

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# Cultivating a New Audience: Changing Gender Dynamics in Superhero Animation

Orsolya Szujer

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies  
orsolyaszujer@gmail.com

The newfound social and physical availability of superhero narratives brought on by the popularity of the superhero blockbuster and changes in distribution methods has created a new, more diverse, and significantly female audience. This in turn has prompted comic book publishers to produce more female-oriented and female-created content. Furthermore, such engagement has also proven that women are a viable market worth exploiting. For these reasons, in recent years a previously unseen phenomenon has emerged: both DC and Marvel are now actively targeting young girls with animated shows featuring superheroines to cultivate a new generation of female audience and ensure the longevity of the new female market. The following paper focuses on these animated shows – the two iterations of *DC Super Hero Girls* (2015–2018 and 2019–present) and the *Marvel Rising* (2018–2019) franchise – studying how they reinforce or challenge the gender roles previously established by animated children’s media and superhero narratives.

Children’s animation has long been known for its sexism, as the genre “has always been male dominated,”<sup>1</sup> with specific focus on shows made for boys. They have been seen to constitute the majority of the Sunday morning audience, and while girls are generally willing to watch shows with a male lead, according to Thompson and Zerbinos, boys will not watch a show if it has a female main character.<sup>2</sup> Although the authors noted that there was a marked rise in the number of female characters in children’s animation between 1980 and 1992 compared to the pre-1980 shows, male viewers continued to dominate,<sup>3</sup> therefore, the gender divide remained, both in quantity and quality. They also noted that the representation of male characters showed a greater variety than of girls.<sup>4</sup> This is especially concerning, as, citing the works of Signorielli, television plays an important role in the socialization process of children, and, thus, seeing women and girls only in stereo-

1 Poltrack, qtd. in Thompson and Zerbinos 653.

2 Thompson and Zerbinos 653.

3 Thompson and Zerbinos 663.

4 Thompson and Zerbinos 654.



typical depictions might lead to “more sexist views of women’s role in society.”<sup>5</sup> To illustrate this problem, Katha Pollitt coined the term “The Smurfette Principle” in 1991, which describes “a group of male buddies” who are “accented by a lone female, stereotypically defined.” She said that: “[t]he message is clear. Boys are the norm, girls the variation; boys are central, girls peripheral; boys are individuals, girls types. Boys define the group, its story and its code of values. Girls exist only in relation to boys.”

Although the number of female characters and girl-oriented shows has continued to grow, the systemic sexism in animation did not diminish, only changed due to the gender segregation of the toy market, which continues to be dominated by men.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Sweet notes that although gender-coded toy advertisements were common in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their numbers declined due to the effects of the Second Wave of Feminism, so much so that by 1975 “less than 2 percent of toys [found in Sears catalog ads] were explicitly marketed to either boys or girls.” Yet, in the mid-eighties gender became an increasingly important factor once again, as due to loosening regulations, children’s television became “program-length advertisement” for their tie-in toys. So much so that by the mid-nineties, the percentage of gender-coded toys reached levels last seen in the first half of the century. However, Sweet notes that marketing strategies have changed:

Late-century marketing relied less on explicit sexism and more on implicit gender cues, such as color, and new fantasy-based gender roles like the beautiful princess or the muscle-bound action hero. These roles were still built upon regressive gender stereotypes – they portrayed a powerful, skill-oriented masculinity and a passive, relational femininity – that were obscured with bright new packaging.

Such division also reinforces the societal teaching that feminine traits are less desirable than masculine ones, which, as research shows, is connected to sexual violence.<sup>7</sup> And although in recent years the number of gender-neutral toys has been on the rise, fewer people think that boys should be encouraged to “play with toys or participate in activities that are typically associated with the other gender” than girls.<sup>8</sup>

5 Thompson and Zerbinos 652.

6 Lam.

7 Maas.

8 Menasce Horowitz.

Yet, the still-presumed gender segregation has affected animated superhero narratives as well. Even if some series, such as *Teen Titans* (2003–2006) and *Green Lantern: The Animated Series* (2012–2013) have anecdotally had a considerable female audience, and some female readers had verifiably found the *X-Men* comics through the *X-Men: The Animated Series* (1992–1997), which had a much wider target audience than the comics,<sup>9</sup> the vast majority of these series were made with a predominantly male audience in mind. There are even some persistent, widely circulated rumors that some of the aforementioned shows were specifically cancelled because of their female following, although none of these rumors have been proven true, and, in the case of *Green Lantern: The Animated Series*, the cause for cancellation was revealed to be subpar merchandising sales.<sup>10</sup> The source of such rumors might be a 2013 episode of the podcast *Fatman on Batman*, where host Kevin Smith discussed the state of children's programming with long time DC contributor Paul Dini. Dini noted that in recent years studio executives had wanted to target young boys who like “goofy, random humor,” which led to the marginalization of more serious narratives in superhero animation. He also added that some executives specifically said they did not want girls to watch their shows, because “[t]hey don't buy toys. The girls buy different toys.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, when comic book companies decided to create animated superhero narratives aimed at young girls, they faced a complicated challenge. They had to incorporate – traditionally masculine – core values associated with the superhero genre, such as activity, aggression, bravery, and violence, into a female-centered narrative while also keeping the merchandising potential of the show in the highly gender-segregated toy market. As demonstrated below, DC and Marvel employed starkly different strategies.

The earliest of such cartoons was *DC Super Hero Girls*, the first iteration of which debuted in 2015 as a series of animated shorts released on YouTube. Altogether five seasons and 112 episodes were made between 2015 and 2018, along with a 44-minute-long TV special, five direct-to-DVD movies, and various tie-in media. The series was structured in a way that it would not challenge the pre-existing gender divide of the genre in any way. The story is set at Super Hero High, a fairytale castle-like high school specialized in training teenaged superheroes, although the term is used loosely: the predominantly female student body is comprised of most of DC's easily recognizable, but not central characters, frequently regardless of their canonical

9 Cocca 140–143.

10 Goldman.

11 Qtd. In Pantozzi.

alignment. For example, although such characters as Harley Quinn, Poison Ivy, and Catwoman are usually antagonists or antiheroes, here they are portrayed as morally uncomplicated heroes, highlighting that the central characters of the show are chosen for recognizability and marketability, and not for how their presence can influence the plot. The main characters are exclusively female, while the role of male students is severely limited. Even Beastboy, who has the most screen time amongst the male characters, has no character arch on his own, and is only utilized as comic relief. However, although the school has a headmistress, most of the members of the faculty are male, which reinforces the idea that girls should look up to male authority figures.

As noted above, the narratives are mostly centered on a small group of exclusively female characters: Wonder Woman, Bumblebee, Harley Quinn, Poison Ivy, Katana, and, later, on Supergirl and Batgirl. The main cast of the series is highly uniform, both in visual representation and characterization. All characters have approximately the same body type and face shape, with only a small variation in height: a slender, elongated body, with a slim waist, small breasts, and narrow shoulders; round faces with big eyes, slightly pointed chins, and voluminous hair. Even in the case of the two ethnic characters, Katana (Japanese) and Bumblebee (African American), their racial features are minimized. This visual style also distances the show from other popular DC animated series where the dominant silhouette for women is an exaggerated hourglass, while the norm for men is an inverted triangle – extremely wide shoulders and narrow hips – with pronounced square jaws. Furthermore, although some effort can be detected to give each character some semi-unique character trait, with the exception of Harley Quinn, who is portrayed in an over-exaggerated, clownish fashion, most of the main characters are virtually interchangeable. This is especially evident in the direct-to-DVD movie, *Legends of Atlantis* (2018). One of the subplots of the movie is that due to a magical mishap, Supergirl and Batgirl switch powers, resulting in the former possessing technological expertise and strategic thinking, while the latter is granted superhuman abilities, such as flight and heat vision. However, due to the fact that they have very similar characterizations, and, therefore, are prone to act very similarly, and that they take on subtle visual clues to emulate the other, the two characters might as well have gotten their bodies switched instead of powers, because the overall effect would have been the same.

On the one hand, this simplified and uniformised representation allows what McCloud calls “amplification through simplification” to take effect. On a visual level,

he argues that “by stripping down an image to its essential ‘meaning,’ an artist can amplify that meaning in a way realistic art can’t.”<sup>12</sup> In this case, the near identical character designs might help the audience not to focus on one individual character but on the whole cast as a group and identify with the values they represent together. Furthermore, McCloud goes on to explain that while we perceive detailed portraits as other people, we see ourselves in cartoon faces, since even though we are constantly aware of our faces, we only have “a sense of shape... a sense of general placement” of it.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, he explains children’s fascination with animated media by saying that “the cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled [...] We don’t just observe the cartoon, we become it!”<sup>14</sup> However, on the other hand, the uniformity of the characters reinforces Katha Pollitt’s observations that in animation girls are presented not as individuals, but as types – even in the absence of significant male characters.

The series also stresses the importance of qualities and activities traditionally seen as feminine. Fashion and style especially play a significant role. A recurring storyline in the first season of the animated shorts is that as a requirement for the class “Super Suiting” each hero is required to design their own costume.<sup>15</sup> Newcomer Wonder Woman struggles with the task, so after various hideous attempts which prompt her friends to help her, she creates a version that is deemed to be fashionable but turns out to be highly impractical.<sup>16</sup> Finally, by the end of the season, she creates a final, functional, and fashionable version, which earns her top marks.<sup>17</sup>

Focusing on traditionally feminine qualities is even more pronounced in the case of Katana. Recognizable because of the deadly swords she is named after, the character had to be “softened” to fit into the narrative style of the cartoon. Therefore, she is continuously seen using her swords for tasks traditionally seen as feminine: cutting cake, forming metal discs into shurikens and using them as jewelry, styling hair,<sup>18</sup> creating decorations,<sup>19</sup> and cutting fabric for clothes.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, several of the “Hero of the Month” segments of the series, featuring various characters emphasize acts and qualities associated with femininity, such as organizing a birthday party or being

12 McCloud 30.

13 McCloud 36.

14 McCloud 36.

15 “Crazy Quiltin”.

16 “Designing Disaster”.

17 “Saving the Day”.

18 “Hero of the Month: Katana”.

19 *DC Super Hero Girls: Hero of the Year*.

20 *DC Super Hero Girls: Legends of Atlantis*.

fashionable.<sup>21</sup> This tendency is reminiscent of the Silver Age of comics, when female characters frequently took on traditionally feminine, nurturing, and often maternal roles while also taking part in superheroics.<sup>22</sup> The difference between the two situations is that while the superheroines of the Silver Age were fulfilling the Smurfette Principle within their respective teams, and, thus, their feminine occupations highlighted their “subordinate position in comparison with the male members of the patriarchal teams,”<sup>23</sup> the lack of a hegemonic male presence in *DC Super Hero Girls* allows them to keep their plot-central position, while also reinforcing feminine stereotypes.

To sum up, the 2015 version of *DC Super Hero Girls* is a very traditional girls’ cartoon, where the characters just happen to be superheroes – even if many of the fundamental tropes of superhero narratives, such as a secret identity, have been omitted. And although the series does focus on the main characters taking part in heroic acts, saving people, and defeating supervillains, it is also imbued with enough traditional femininity and has the “teachy-preachy” quality – a kind of aggressively didactic way of storytelling – that Thompson and Zerbinos associate the most with female-led cartoons,<sup>24</sup> and which does not challenge pre-existing gender roles or the gender segregation of the genre. While this concept allows maximum marketability for this series in particular, its ability to cultivate a next generation of female readers of *traditional comic book narratives* is questionable, since the narrative world and style of the series is only loosely tied to the greater DC narrative universe, therefore, audiences are less likely to “graduate” to consuming other DC products.

In 2019, the series was rebooted with a completely different concept and tone, the only similarities between the 2015 and the 2019 versions being that both feature a group of teenaged superheroines and both are loosely connected to the greater DC narrative canon. The new version consists of eleven to thirteen-minute-long episodes, and is aired on Cartoon Network, while, with some delay, is also available on Netflix. The narrative features a likewise exclusively female ensemble of main characters, consisting of Batgirl, Wonder Woman, Supergirl, Bumblebee, Green Lantern, and Zatanna. It is, again, set in a high school, albeit at a “normal” one. The story centers on the superhero-obsessed Batgirl, who, upon moving to a new city, notices that some of her classmates have superpowers, and convinces them to form a superhero team.<sup>25</sup>

21 “Hero of the Month Compilation”.

22 Darowski 45; Madrid 113.

23 Darowski 45.

24 Thompson and Zerbinos 666.

25 “#SweetJustice” Parts 1–4.

While the original version employed characters with very little variation in character design and characterization, the 2019 version focuses on difference. The design of the characters shows a great variation in body shape and size, face shape, and even in skin tone. For example, the African American Bumblebee has a rounded face with full lips and natural black hair in pigtails, her body is petite, the width of her shoulders about half the width of her face, her torso is rectangular, her breasts are basically non-existent, and her hips are slightly wider than her waist. Meanwhile Supergirl is nearly a head taller, with shoulders and hips both slightly wider than her head, cinched waist, full breasts, thick legs, and clearly defined biceps. Unlike in the original version, these new characters are easily recognizable by their silhouettes. However, due to an overall more stylized visual design, the “amplification through simplification” effect is not lost.

Furthermore, the characters do not only have individual traits, but they are over-exaggerated. Whatever happens, the characters give a very specific, very radical response, which, on the one hand, makes their interactions less realistic and lifelike, while, on the other hand, makes it easier for the audience to see the characters not as types, but as individuals. For example, Supergirl – in a considerable deviation of her usual characterization – is identified by her anger and quick temper; Bumblebee by her shyness and apologetic nature; Batgirl by her eagerness and over-excitedness; Zatanna by her ego and propensity for self-promotion. Even fashion, which was used to signify unity, a shared area of interest in the original series, is used to illustrate individuality in the 2019 version. The beginning of the story depicts Wonder Woman (Diana) as an outsider with no knowledge of adolescent behavior. Therefore, to help her blend in, the other characters try to get her to adopt a part of their signature style. The rapid influx of information only confuses Diana, until Zatanna steps in and creates Diana’s individual style through magic,<sup>26</sup> highlighting the importance of individual self-expression.

Along with the more varied visual design and characterization, the new series also employs a wild, exaggerated, random narrative style. This deviation from the 2015 version’s more uniform and subdued, but at the same time more “teachy-preachy” style – as in more imbued with positive messages and lessons – is most likely due to executive decisions. As Paul Dini noted, there is a relatively new trend in animation, especially within the superhero genre, where network executives are trying to reach out to a younger audience, especially by using “random, goofy humor,” which young

26 “#SweetJustice” Part 2.

boys seem to prefer. He saw the same thing happen to the fan-favorite *Teen Titans* (2003–2006), which had a considerable older audience, and its successor, *Teen Titans Go!* (2013–). Dini said that the first few episode of the *Teen Titans Go!* series felt like “the wacky moments in the *Teen Titans* cartoon, without any of the more serious moments.”<sup>27</sup> And just like *Teen Titans Go!*, *DC Super Hero Girls* (2019) also focuses on the moments and goofy humor, like “fighting over pizza, or running around crazy”<sup>28</sup> instead of trying to create a narrative with more depth.

However, the way this approach is handled in storytelling makes it hard to determine the intended audience, as some of the storylines have elements which might not be suitable for younger viewers. One of these elements is the trivialization of violence, which is often used for comedic effect. In the case of the original series, the depiction of violence was limited and very deliberate. The early shorts did not even depict fight scenes, and instead showed the heroes stopping accidents from happening in respect to heroic acts. At the same time, while the movies did use supervillain antagonists, most of the actual fighting usually took place between the main characters and non-humanoid lackeys, such as shadow monsters<sup>29</sup> or trench monsters.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the very first episode of the 2019 series shows Supergirl and Wonder Woman ruthlessly fighting each other, moments after having met, because of a slight, verbal challenge. The animation explicitly shows Wonder Woman being thrown through a wall by Supergirl, after which Wonder Woman tosses Supergirl to the floor and repeatedly punches her in the face, breaking the floorboards.<sup>31</sup> This type of cartoon violence is unlike the kind seen in the type of animation which Thompson and Zerbinos call “chase-and-pratfall,” such as the *Bugs Bunny* and *Road Runner* cartoons,<sup>32</sup> where the character who incites the violence is always the one who, as an act of karmic justice, falls victim to it. Nor is it like the justified violence against villains seen in other superhero animation. It is simply violence for violence’s sake.

If the 2015 version of *DC Super Hero Girls* was a very traditional girls’ cartoon where the characters just happened to be superheroes, then the 2019 version is a typical boys’ cartoon featuring superheroes where the characters just happen to be female. On the one hand, this approach, using a masculine style of storytelling with female protagonists, might make the idea of watching cartoons with girls as

27 Qtd. in Pantozzi.

28 Dini qtd. in Pantozzi.

29 *DC Super Hero Girls: Hero of the Year*.

30 *DC Super Hero Girls: Legends of Atlantis*.

31 “#SweetJustice” Part 1.

32 Thompson and Zerbinos 659.

the lead more palatable for boys, and, thus, work towards dismantling the gender divide in the genre. On the other hand, the series still excludes male characters from the central narrative, which in turn reinforces gender segregation within the story. Furthermore, the strong focus on wacky humor, at the cost of neglecting more serious storylines, deprives the series of the positive messages and educational potential of the original version. Finally, even though the 2019 series has more structural similarities with traditional superhero narratives than its predecessor, it still takes place within its own, stylistically unique universe, which is very different from the greater DC canon, therefore, its ability to cultivate a new generation of readers is also questionable.

Marvel's attempt to reach out to young girls, *Marvel Rising*, falls right in the middle between the 2015 and 2019 iterations of *DC Super Hero Girls* both in time and in narrative approach. The franchise debuted in 2018 with six interconnected animated shorts that aired on Disney XD, titled *Initiation*. A couple of weeks later it was followed by the feature length animated movie, *Secret Warriors*, which debuted simultaneously on the Disney Channel and Disney XD. The five subsequent specials, released between January and December 2019, were first made available on the Marvel HQ YouTube channel. Now the whole franchise is available for streaming on Disney+.

The visual style of *Marvel Rising* is both closer to reality and to the visual style of other Marvel properties than either version of the *DC Super Hero Girls*. The character designs are less stylized, with all characters having realistic body proportions, yet there is a considerable variety in body shapes, and the individual cast members can still be identified by their silhouettes. There is also greater ethnic diversity in *Marvel Rising*: while the original version of *DC Super Hero Girls* had two (African American Bumblebee and Japanese Katana) and the reboot arguably three non-white characters (African-American Bumblebee, Latina Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman, who, while not belonging to any explicit minority, has a darker skin tone, which is meant to signify a minority identity), out of the seven main characters in *Marvel Rising* only two, Ghost-Spider and Squirrel Girl, are white. The art style also shows a closer kinship in visuality to other animated Marvel series – close enough to allow for a potential crossover, which would have been impossible with the distinctive styles of the *DC Super Hero Girls* shows. This suggests that *Marvel Rising* is not considered to be a marginalized, standalone story, but is an integral part of a greater narrative.



This assumption is reinforced by the evident effort to visually and narratively tie *Marvel Rising* to both the comic book universe and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Visually, while the characters in *DC Super Hero Girls* were given distinctive suits that resembled their iconic comic book counterparts to varying degrees, from near identical to completely different designs, the evident intention of the designers behind *Marvel Rising* was to make the character designs as close to as seen in different media as possible. This is especially clear in the case of Shuri, whose battle suit in the episode *Operation Shuri* (2019) is the exact replica of what the character wears in the live action *Black Panther* (2018) movie. Furthermore, other connections are evident on the narrative level as well. While in *DC Super Hero Girls* important male DC characters are never seen, only mentioned, or are also de-aged to be presented as peers of the main characters – who generally take care of emergency situations as a primary superhero team – the leads of *Marvel Rising* are clearly presented as a second, in-training generation, operating parallel to such heroes as the Avengers. Even some of the “adult” heroes make appearances, such as Captain Marvel and Captain America, who serve as mentors to the main characters, and allude to the missions they take part in off-camera. Moreover, the *Marvel Rising* tie-in comics take place within the main Earth 616 continuity, albeit with a slightly different character line-up, which allows for a smoother transition from the cartoon to the comics. Members of the audience can easily move from the *Marvel Rising* animation to the *Marvel Rising* comic, and then, for example, to the various self-titled series of Ms. Marvel or Squirrel Girl. Therefore, while *DC Super Hero Girls* fails to act like a gateway to the greater narrative universe, *Marvel Rising* properly fulfills this function, allowing the supposedly young, female audience an easier intro into the more central parts of the fandom. Lastly, there are ties to the MCU, or more specifically to the *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* television series, on the production level as well. Several actresses who worked on the live action show return in *Marvel Rising* as voice actors: Chloe Bennet reprises her role as Quake, while Ming-Na Wen and Dove Cameron, who appeared in the series as Agent Melinda May and Ruby respectively, here portray Hala, the main antagonist, and Ghost-Spider.

Beyond their connection to the greater narrative universe, the greatest difference between *DC Super Hero Girls* and *Marvel Rising* is their treatment of male characters. Unlike its DC counterpart, *Marvel Rising* does not marginalize male characters in the narrative. Instead of an exclusively female ensemble, the franchise operates with a seven-character main cast, consisting of five female (Ms. Marvel, Squirrel Girl, America Chavez, Ghost-Spider, and Quake) and two male (Inferno and Patriot)

characters. The presence of two central male characters saves the narrative from utilizing a “reverse” Smurfette Principle. Furthermore, the male characters (unlike Beast Boy) are not just there as comic relief but are central to the narrative. The main conflict of *Secret Warriors* (2018) revolves around a mysterious group wanting to capture Inferno, which makes the other characters initially believe him to be a villain, while *Playing with Fire* (2019) deals with his guilt and estrangement from his family after having accidentally burned down their home. At the same time, Patriot’s lawful good, “by the book” personality is used as a source of conflict both in *Secret Warriors*, when a rescue mission is jeopardized because he is reluctant to break the rules, and in *Chasing Ghosts* (2019), when he clashes with the spontaneous Squirrel Girl, allowing the two characters to balance each other out and learn from each other.

Furthermore, the narrative contains a certain degree of diversity in sexual orientations as well. In the comics, America Chavez is not only depicted as a lesbian, but she also has two mothers.<sup>33</sup> Although her sexuality is not addressed in the cartoon – even though her behavior can be easily read as queer – scenes with her mothers are included, moreover, several lesbian couples are shown amongst the background characters,<sup>34</sup> which is still a rare and bold move in children’s animation.

*Marvel Rising* also has more nuanced and higher stakes narratives, and more complex villains in general. The introductory narrative, for example, begins with Ghost-Spider being framed for the murder of her best friend, which causes her to be hunted by her own father, who is unaware of her civil identity.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, the inclusion of Inhumans – a subset of humans who spontaneously develop superpowers upon coming into contact with the substance ‘Terrigen’ – allows the franchise to metaphorically discuss such topics as racism, homophobia, and passing. For example, in the beginning of *Secret Warriors*, Ms. Marvel intervenes when a young girl is bullied for being Inhuman. Ms. Marvel is both an Inhuman and a second-generation Pakistani Muslim immigrant, allowing this scene to read as a stand against racism and xenophobia. In the same movie, in a later scene, Quake reveals herself to be an Inhuman in a stereotypical “coming out” moment. This, too, can be read as part of a queer narrative – especially with the story’s continued insistence that Inhumans should be their “true selves” – or a racial narrative. The latter option, however, is confirmed when the background of the character’s voice actor is taken into consideration. Chloe Bennet is biracial, born to a Chinese father

33 “Miss America”.

34 *Marvel Rising: Secret Warriors*.

35 *Marvel Rising: Initiation*.

and a white mother and has faced discrimination within the industry because of her heritage. She even changed her surname, Wang, to be able to pass as white.<sup>36</sup> Considering this, the moment in the cartoon when Quake reveals her powers reads not only as the character giving up passing as human, but also losing the ability to pass as white.

Taking everything into consideration, out of the three analyzed series, *Marvel Rising* is the one that utilizes a structure that is the closest to traditional superhero narratives. In other words, while both iterations of *DC Super Hero Girls* significantly strayed from the tropes of the genre to create a narrative that might be attractive to young girls – first by creating a sanitized girls’ fantasy, secondly by creating a simple goofy cartoon with female protagonists and added superheroic elements – *Marvel Rising* simply opened up the narrative for women, and switched around the usual gender ratio of the characters without significant change to the tone or plot of the series. Furthermore, DC’s treatment of these shows still somehow reinforces the idea that “women do not read comics” – after all, as illustrated above, neither versions of *DC Super Hero Girls* actively encourages engagement with other DC properties, and instead treats the girls’ market as a completely separate entity. Marvel, on the other hand, actively ties *Marvel Rising* to their greater narrative universe, allowing women and girls a place within the fandom instead of only existing on the margins of it, and thus acknowledging that women can be and are interested in traditional superhero narratives.

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# Amerikai mítoszok a popkultúrában: *Verdák*

Peterecz Zoltán

Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem

peterecz.zoltan@uni-eszterhazy.hu

Az animációs filmkészítés viszonylag korán, már az 1890-es évek végén elkezdődött, de igazán az 1920-as évtized folyamán kezdte kivívni magának azt a helyet a tömegszórakoztatásban, amit a hagyományos élőszereplős filmek képviseltek. Az animációs rövidfilmek – később egész estés filmek – lehetőséget adtak a valóság másfajta bemutatására, ahol a realitás és fantázia határai szinte teljesen elmosódnak, ahol a másság lesz a norma. Éppen ezért a rajzfilm igen alkalmas formának bizonyult Amerika kulturális beágyazottságának képi megjelenítésére (is): magában hordozta és hirdette az amerikai történelmet, a szabadságot és természetesen a mítoszokat.<sup>1</sup> A rajzfilm – majd később az animációs film – az előbbieket remek hordozóeszközeként nyíltan vállalkozott az amerikai értékek ünneplésére; globális léptékű sikerének köszönhetően pedig nem csupán az amerikai fogyasztókat tudta és tudja befolyásolni, de hatással volt és van a világ többi országának lakosságára is – elsősorban a gyermekekre. Jelen tanulmány a *Verdák* című filmen keresztül kívánja vizsgálni ezt a jelenséget: hogyan jelennek meg amerikai mitikus motívumok a számítógéppel animált alkotásban, és ezáltal hogyan próbálják indoktrinálni elsősorban az amerikai, de a más országok kisgyerekeit is bizonyos amerikai értékminták átvételére.

Talán nem volt még egy annyira nagy hatású és meghatározó személy, illetve cég az animációs filmek történetében, mint Walt Disney és az általa alapított filmstúdió. Walt Disney elsősorban abban számított úttörőnek, hogy a mások által már kikísérletezett technikákat ötvözve modern képi világot teremtett, amely tartalmát tekintve ugyanakkor konzervatív maradt, és amely így képessé vált arra, hogy egy klasszikus narratívát képi realizmussal párosítson.<sup>2</sup> A cégen belüli családias atmoszféra alkalmassá tette az amerikai (és globális) piacon egy olyan *brand* megteremtésére, amely a családra koncentrált, és kevésbé ismert életkori, nemi vagy kulturális határokat, miközben el tudta hitetni, hogy alkotásai és termékei nemcsak élvezetesekek, de hasznosak is a gyermekek számára – elsősorban a fehér, középosztálybeli, protestáns amerikai gyermekek számára, noha természetesen a beván-

1 Wells 17.

2 Wells 46.

dorlók gyermekeit is célba vette az üzenet.<sup>3</sup> A Disney-filmek a szórakoztatás mellett az amerikai alapértékeket is közvetítették – a gyerekek számára értelemszerűen legtöbbször burkoltan –, azoknak egyúttal fontos hordozójává válva.<sup>4</sup> Disney már az 1930-as évektől komolyan részt vett a „gyermeknevelésben,” illetve elfogadottnak és pozitívnak tekintették tevékenységét e téren, jelentős szerepet játszott tehát abban, hogy a popkultúra milyen mértékben befolyásolja a gyerekek világnézetét.<sup>5</sup> Mivel a fogyasztók között megtalálható volt a társadalom minden rétege, Walt Disney filmjei az amerikai társadalom homogenizációját is elősegítették, az amerikanizáció egyik eszközévé váltak.

Miki egér 1928-as és Donald kacska 1934-es megjelenése után a stúdió első nagy sikerű egész estés mozifilmje, a *Hófehérke és a hét törpe* (1937) jól illusztrálja a már akkor kialakított Disney-hagyományt. A recept azóta is rendszeresen beválik: a 'nosztalgia és haladás' sajátos egyvelegében a film nézője érzelmileg óhatatlanul a múlt felé fordul, míg a látvány időben előre mutat a modernitást kínálva fel.<sup>6</sup> Ráadásul ez a sikeres Disney-recept lett az alapja és kiindulópontja az utána következő, azt másolni vagy azzal versenyezni kívánó animációs produkcióknak. E recept lényege a varázslatos mesebeli környezet; romantika, némi áthallással az esetleges napi problémákra; egyértelműen pozitív vagy negatív karakterek; elbűvölő képi világ; nosztalgikus betétdalok és a törvényszerűen örömteli végkifejlet. Ugyanakkor Disney abból a szempontból is fontos hagyományt teremtett – bár ebben sem ő volt az első –, hogy az amerikai piaci kereteket ismerve és alakítva a filmek nyomán elkezdte árusítani a különböző figurákat és játékokat, ami azután busás kereskedelmi hasznot hozott. A különböző Disney-figurák túlmutatnak a filmek közvetlen élményén és hatásán, egyfajta kulturális ikont hozva létre. Így a Disney-cég az olyannyira amerikainak tekintett fogyasztói társadalomra építve és saját imázsát annak keretei közt kidolgozva lett először amerikai, majd hamarosan globális termék. A Disney hagyományainak részleges felelevenítője és továbbvivője, egyben megújítója lett az 1990-es évek közepétől a Pixar Animation Studios.

A Pixar Stúdió első áttörő sikere a *Játékháború* (1995) volt, amely új korszakot nyitott az animációs filmkészítésben. A teljesen komputeranimációval készült film nemcsak anyagilag térült meg busásan, megalapozva a stúdió jövőjét, hanem több Oscar-jelölés mellett különdíjat is kapott, a szakma elismerte a filmet. Ezután

3 Sammond 10, 85.

4 Booker 13.

5 Erről a témáról részletesebben lásd Sammond és Booker már említett könyveit.

6 Wells 48.

a stúdió rendszeresen jelentkezett további sikeres filmekkel, melyek gyakran dolgoztak fel és építettek be a történetbe különböző amerikai mítoszokat. A *Játékháború* két főszereplője (Woody és Buzz Lightyear) például a cowboy és az űrhajós figuráját helyezi a történet középpontjába, akik az amerikai határvidék eredeti, majd kiterjesztett értelmezésének két legnépszerűbb és legismertebb mitikus hősét reprezentálják. A film ugyanakkor az Amerikai Ádám tizenkilencedik századi irodalmi megjelenítéséből is táplálkozik (lásd pl. James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne vagy Herman Melville műveiben), ahol a hős az utazása végén a gyengék és elesettek védelmezőjévé válik.<sup>7</sup>

A Disney által képviselt mítoszok (amerikanizált klasszikus mesék mellett az amerikai természet és kultúra, határvidék és társadalom stb.) egyfajta folytatása jelentkezik tehát a Pixar filmjeiben, egy magasabb technológiai szinten: a digitális filmkészítésben.<sup>8</sup> Ebből kiindulva azonban más reklámstratégiát alkalmaznak. Míg Disney a régi, jól bevált receptre hagyatkozva a film egészét és családias hangulatát emeli ki, addig a Pixar az amerikai technológia csúcsteljesítményét hangsúlyozza, ami nem meglepő, hiszen a képi világ megteremtése a George Lucas által életre hívott Industrial Light and Magic nevű cégből nőtt ki.<sup>9</sup> A Pixarnál a látványos animált képi világ megteremtése után jöhetnek a produkció egyéb tartalmi vonatkozásai. Ez utóbbiak nemigen változtak:<sup>10</sup> továbbra is a gyerekek kulturális indoktrinációja zajlik, tipikus amerikai vagy amerikanizált toposzokkal. Ez azért történhet meg, mert a szülők sok szempontból ebben az üzenetben nem látnak kivetnivalót, sőt egyet is értenek vele, részben azért, mert már ők is ezen nőttek fel. Ahogyan Booker felhívja rá a figyelmet, ezek az alkotók nem feltétlenül direkt módon és tudatosan használnak bizonyos motívumokat: valószínűsíthetően a gyermekkorukban megismert ideálokkal és mítoszokkal nőttek fel, amelyeket óhatatlanul kivetítenek alkotómunkájukra. A különböző Pixar-filmekben az amerikai történelem és nemzetépítés olyan mítoszai jelennek meg, hol burkolt, hol evidensebb formában, mint az amerikai teremtés (Amerikai Ádám), az amerikai piaci kapitalizmus felhajtóereje, az amerikai kivételesség, az amerikai álmok, a határvidék elmélete vagy az amerikai imperializmus – noha van olyan film is köztük, amely az amerikai tudatban mélyen gyökerező mítoszokat és szimbólumokat kérdőjelezi meg.

7 Meinel 45–59. Az Amerikai Ádám részletes kifejtéséhez lásd Lewis.

8 Meinel 23–30.

9 A Pixar történetéről részletesebben lásd: Meinel 3–11. A Pixar Stúdió első tizenöt évének filmterméséről lásd Booker 78–122.

10 Booker 127.



Tanulmányom következő részében egy Pixar-film (*Verdák*) elemzésén keresztül mutatom be az ott megjelenő mitikus elemeket, melyek mindmáig az amerikai kulturális tudat szerves részét képezik. Ezáltal egyrészt azt kívánom demonstrálni, hogy ezek a filmek többletjelentéssel bírnak, amelyet az amerikai közegben felnövő gyerekek a kulturális környezet miatt könnyen befogad(hat)nak, miközben a szülei számára már eleve ismerős mítoszokról van szó. Másrészt a felsorolt toposzok filmbeli megjelenítése implicit módon történik, így alkalmas az amerikai mítoszok sikeres globális fogyasztásának elősegítésére. Noha az eltérő kulturális közeg miatt a világ legtöbb országában ezen mítoszokból kevesebbet és máshogyan értenek meg, mint Amerikában, a filmbeli utalások tehát közel sem biztos, hogy egyértelműek, ezt a hiányt sokszor áthidalja a képi világ, mely szavak nélkül is képes tartalmat hordozni.

2006-ban mutatták be a *Verdák* (*Cars*, rendező: John Lasseter) című alkotást, amelynek érdekessége, hogy minden egyes szereplő autómobil, de ezek a szereplők olyannyira antropomorfizáltak, hogy a négykerekű külső ellenére teljes értékű személyeknek lehet őket tekinteni. A történet alapvetően egy sportalapú sikertörténet, amely hosszú múltra tekint vissza az amerikai filmkészítésben (gondoljunk csak a *Rocky*-filmekre). A film főhőse Villám McQueen, egy feltörekvő és sikerre predesztinált fiatal versenyautó. Már a névválasztás sem véletlen: szinte lehetetlen nem Steve McQueenre asszociálni, aki nemcsak az 1960-as és 1970-es évek egyik legnagyobb filmsztárja volt, de „másodállásban” autóversenyzőként is ismert volt. Így a filmbeli McQueen egyben az ő „reinkarnációja”, ami elősegíti a nosztalgia érvényesülését. A film versenyautó-főhőse a Szelep Kupa meghódításáért folytatott küzdelemben hármas holtversenyben áll a régi nagy versenyzővel, Motor Ottóval, A Királlyal (eredetileg The King), és a nem túl sportszerűen versenyző Joe Komposztorral (eredetileg Chick Hicks). Mint látható, a magyar elnevezések nem teljesen következetesek, és nem adják vissza az eredeti nevek mögötti tartalmakat. Chick Hicks esetében például a vezetéknev a faragatlan vidékiességre utal. A narcisztikus McQueen éppen túlságos önhittségének köszönhetően nem nyeri meg az utolsó versenyt – így alakul ki a hármas holtverseny –, ezért az egyenlő pontszámmal rendelkező versenyautóknak egy Kaliforniában rendezendő külön versenyen kell eldönteniük, ki lesz a bajnok. A győzelemnek nem csupán a sportdiadal a tétje, hanem a busás anyagi és egyéb előnyökkel járó Dinoco szponzori szerződés is, amire McQueen jobban vágyik, mint a pályán elért sikerre. A Kaliforniába (nyugatra) tartó utazás alatt azonban McQueen véletlenül egy kisvárosban reked (Kipufogó-fürdő), ahol a helyi hatóság megbünteti gyorshajtásért és károkozásért. Amíg a legendás 66-os út arra vezetett,

Kipufogó-fürdő virágzó település volt, s a turisták rendre megálltak ott, de miután az új országúti hálózat felépült, a város elhagyatottá vált, azóta pangás jellemzi – gazdasági és kulturális értelemben egyaránt. McQueent a kisváros bírása (akiről később kiderül, hogy a korábbi legendás versenyző, Doki, azaz Doc Hudson – egy 1951-es Hudson Hornet alakjában) az általa okozott kár megjavítására kötelezi, így az öntelt versenyautó kénytelen néhány napot a kisvárosban tölteni. Ez idő alatt és a kisvárosi autókkal való megismerkedés hatására McQueen megváltozik: hinni kezd a csapatmunka fontosságában, az elődök tiszteletében, a barátságban (a helybéli Matuka – eredetileg Mater – lesz a legjobb barátja, aki ugyan nem a gyors felfogásáról híres, de aranyszíve van), a vidéki Egyesült Államok természeti szépségeiben, a múlt kínálta nosztalgikus idillben, és persze még a szerelemre is rátalál Sally (Porsche) Carrera „személyében”. Miután új autóként érkezik meg a mindent eldöntő kaliforniai versenyre, nem is kérdéses, ki a legjobb versenyző. Azonban mielőtt győztesen áthaladna a célvonalon, Joe Komposztor csúnya balesetet okoz, amitől Motor Ottó, a Király kipördül, és McQueen a győzelem helyett inkább azt választja, hogy átsegití riválisát a célvonalon annak utolsó versenyén. Így, ha hivatalosan nem is, de mindenki szívében ő lesz a nyertes, mert nemes tettével igazi bajnokká vált. Még a Dinoco-szerződést is visszautasítja, mert már nem a csillogás számára a legfontosabb az életben. Erkölcsei diadalát Kipufogó-fürdő felvirágoztatására fordítja, ahol Sallyvel és barátaival boldogan élnek ezután. A film hatalmas sikert aratott, mind anyagi értelemben (a globális bevétel majdnem 500 millió dollár volt – közel négyszerese a gyártási költségeknek), mind szakmailag (jelölték a legjobb animációs film kategóriában Oscar- és Golden Globe-díjra).

Az első, amit a filmben megjelenő amerikai alapértékekkel és mítoszokkal kapcsolatban érdemes megemlíteni, az maga az autós környezet. Az Egyesült Államok híres az autós kultúrájáról, amelynek nem csupán a technikai vívmányokkal való közeli viszony az oka, hanem az ország földrajzi adottságai is. A tengerentúli ország hatalmas méretei és az ebből adódó távolságok miatt a gépkocsi és vele a távolságot könnyedén leküzdő amerikai a huszadik század egyik ikonikus alakjává vált. Az autó máig a mobilitás kézzelfogható jelképét, illetve annak eszközét testesíti meg. Így, noha elsőre érdekes és szórakoztató, hogy a filmben minden szereplő autó, egy olyan kultúrában, ahol az autó és az ahhoz való viszony szinte életérzés, ez cseppet sem meglepő. Ráadásul ez is a nosztalgia és modernitás hibrid benyomását kelti.

A főszereplő, Villám McQueen, az amerikai individualizmus megtestesítője – az egyén kemény munkájával és szorgalmával elért siker jelképe, melyben másokra nem feltétlen számíthat. Különösen a film első felében még a rossz értelemben vett

egyénieskedés jellemző a piros versenyautóra. A Kipufogó-fürdőben megtapasztalt átalakulás vezet a másik fontos amerikai alapérték bemutatásához: a csapatmunka fontosságának megértéséhez. McQueen az elfeledett kisvárosban tanulja meg értékelni a csapatmunka hasznosságát és szépségét.<sup>11</sup> Utóbbi jelenti az amerikai demokrácia egyik sarokkövét: a társadalmi összefogás szükségessége és annak pozitív kihatásai az egyénre, a termelékenységre és a társadalomra. Párhuzamosan fut tehát az egyéni pozíció és sors fontossága a másokkal való összefogás szükségességével. Ez a filmben fellelhető erős motívum régi amerikai mítosz, de mint minden mítosznak, ennek is van alapja, igazságtartalma.

Szorosan összekapcsolódik az előbbi szempont a leginkább Frederick Jackson Turner nevéhez köthető határvidék-elmélettel, aki 1893-ban fogalmazta meg először hipotézisét.<sup>12</sup> Az elmélet lényege, hogy az amerikai történelem első majd' háromszáz évében folyamatosan nyugatra terjeszkedő határvidék (az ún. '*Frontier*', az a mezsgye, ahol a „civilizáció” és a „vadon” találkozik) nem csak individualizmust követel az egyéntől a túlélés érdekében, de csapatmunkát is. Ebben a civilizációtól távol eső régióban az amerikai ember újjászületik, és itt formálódik az amerikai demokrácia, amely visszahat az ország keleti régiójára is. A határvidéknek tehát – Turner értelmezésében – nemzetformáló ereje van, és jelentős szerepet játszott az amerikai demokrácia sajátosságainak kialakulásában. A sok szempontból leegyszerűsítő és számos ponton kritizált határvidék-elmélet valami fontosra tapint rá: az amerikai telepesek, majd az Egyesült Államok történelmében a határvidék valóban kiemelkedő szerepet játszott. Nem csupán a kontinensen nyugati irányba történt fizikai előrenyomulásról van szó, hanem az ezzel kapcsolatos mitikus gondolatok megéléséről is: a feltáratlan nyugat mindig is a *vadont* (*wilderness*) jelentette, amelybe be kell hatolni, meg kell szelídíteni és meg kell művelni (így válik a „szűz föld” termékennyé) – ebben a küldetésben találja meg magát az igazi amerikai. Amikor elviszi a vad természetbe saját „jótékony” civilizációját, nemcsak Isten parancsát teljesíti, de spirituálisan újjá is születik. Ezt a nyugat felé tartó vonulást nevezték „sorsszerű elrendeltetésnek” (*Manifest Destiny*). A terminus jól reflektál az amerikaiaknak saját mítoszaikba és kivételességükbe (*exceptionalism*) vetett hitükre.<sup>13</sup> Így a nyugat meghódítása (ezzel az ott lakó indián törzsek leigázása és a természeti javak sokszor pazarló kiaknázása) ebben az olvasatban történelmi szükségszerűségként, isteni sugallatként értelmeződik. A *Verdákban* ezeket a mítoszokat éli újra McQueen. Az egykor virágzó, de most csak múltjából élő

11 Meinel 194–195.

12 Turner 1–38.

13 Az amerikai kivételességről lásd Peterecz.

kisváros testesíti meg a vadont, amit McQueennek meg kell hódítania, hogy olyan, az amerikai alapértékeket hordozó egyéniség lehessen, aki már méltó a győzelemre. Így Kipufogó-fürdő felvirágoztatójává válik. A település a nosztalgikus dicső múltat idézi, egyben a jelenkori Egyesült Államok mint „hervadozó Éden” kritikája is.<sup>14</sup> Fontos megemlíteni, már a küldetés teljesítésének pusztá ténye valamiféle be nem teljesültséget sugall, az előrelépés fontosságát, a továbbfejlődés szükségességét hangsúlyozza. Ez rímeli a McQueen által bejárt útra a *Verdákb*ban.

A fenti mítoszok bemutatása mellett további bújtatott társadalmi üzenetek fedezhetők fel a *Verdákb*ban: fehér (f)elsőbbiség, a nő férfivágyakat kiszolgáló természete, a „kisebbségi immobilitás” vagy fenyegetés, az autózás már említett kultusza.<sup>15</sup> Ahogyan Meinel fogalmaz, „azzal, hogy egy öregedő fehér férfi (Doki) testesíti meg a múltat, míg egy fiatal fehér a látnoki jövőt, a puritánokat idéző jeremiád már a film elején végkövetkeztésre jut: az 1950-es évekbeli déli kisváros és annak privilegizált férfi mobilitása áll szemben a női és a multikulturális immobilitással.”<sup>16</sup> Például Sally Carrera Kipufogó-fürdőben marad, míg McQueen Kaliforniában versenyzik – tehát Sally immobilitásra van ítélve. A McQueent szállító kamiont megzavaró huligánok pedig az angol nyelvű, eredeti változatban olyan kisebbségi akcentust használnak, amely egy jól értelmezhető társadalmi (faji) sztereotípiát sugall. Ráadásul a film végén ők börtönbe kerülnek, ami azt az üzenetet hordozza, hogy a szabályokat be nem tartó nem-fehér kisebbség lakat alá való.

Az egész filmre alapjába véve jellemző a romantikus és nosztalgikus megközelítés – különösen az 1950-es évekbeli Egyesült Államok iránt. A kisvárosi idill úgy jelenik meg, mint az amerikai értékek és életmód fontos képviselője, amely természetesen kontrasztot alkot a nagyvárosra jellemző kapitalista fejlődéssel. Ezt erősíti McQueen azon lépése is, hogy a korábban hőn áhított szponzori szerződés helyett a tradíciót és a barátságot választja, mert egy kisvárosban találhatja meg valódi önmagát.<sup>17</sup> A múltba való visszatekintést és McQueen útját rejtett üzenetként is fel lehet fogni: a sikeres jövőhöz a múltbéli kisvárosi – természetesen mitizáltan idillikus – amerikai életmód adja az alapot.<sup>18</sup> A négykerekű karakterekből adódóan a film az utazást mint metaforát is kézenfekvő természetességgel használja fel: McQueen hosszú utat jár be

14 Meinel 193–196.

15 Meinel 198–201.

16 Meinel 204.

17 Booker 97–98.

18 Clarke 118–120; Meinel 188–190.

fizikailag, érzelmileg és spirituálisan is, amelynek végén férfivá éretten és az amerikai értékekkel felvértezve foglalja el helyét a világban.<sup>19</sup>

A filmben hangsúlyosan megjelenik a maszkulinitás, mint alapvető amerikai érték, mint a társadalom szövetébe ágyazott, megváltozhatatlan elem. Természetesen ennek is régi hagyományai vannak az amerikai irodalomban és popkultúrában – az egész társadalomban –, de a *Verdák* és a Pixar filmjeinek legtöbbje ezt a maszkulin világképet nem kérdőjelezi meg, inkább tovább erősíti. Így közvetve már a Disney által is ápolt nosztalgikus hagyományt viszi tovább, amelynek fő üzenete, hogy az egyénnek egy idealizált konformitásban kell megtanulnia boldogulni, mert azon kívül egyfajta büntetés vár rá – leginkább kirekesztés formájában. Mivel az amerikai felnőttek többsége is ebben a modellben nevelkedett, ezért – sokszor nem tudatos szinten – szívesen nézi és nézeti a Pixar filmek lélegzetelállító képi világát gyermekeivel, amelyek így egy férfiak által hierarchizált társadalmi rendet vizionálnak és közvetítenek.<sup>20</sup> Erős a kontraszt a Pixar-filmek nosztalgikus aurája és a technológiai szempontból úttörő munka között, amely a páratlan képi világot eredményezi.<sup>21</sup> Tehát míg technológiai értelemben úttörő alkotásról van szó, tartalmában a film konzervatív és nem alkalmas progresszív társadalmi üzenet átadására.

Néhány kritikusa a mélyen bevett amerikai mítoszoknak tartott görbe tükörként tekint a filmre, mondván, hogy olyan társadalmi normákat figuráz ki, mint kisebbségi elnyomás, maszkulinitás, szexizmus, felfokozott nosztalgia és így tovább. Amennyiben esetleg lehet ilyen nézőpontot találni, az a film alkotóit dicséri, amiért több rétegűvé tudták tenni a történetet, de ez nem lehetett elsődleges cél. A fenti értelmezés ugyanis a célközönöség – a gyerekek – számára természetesen nem elérhető, csak a szülőknek (és közülük sem mindenkinek). Így felvethető, hogy az alkotók esetleg tudatosan szórakoztatják a gyerekeket a jelentés egy szintjén, míg a felnőtteknek egy másfajta szórakoztatást kínálnak. Noha ez feltételezhető, sőt még részben igaz is lehet, de mivel a gyerekek nem tudnak különbséget tenni a két szint között, rájuk az első, fő irány vonatkozik: az amerikai mítoszok és toposzok megismerése és fogyasztása. Utóbbi aspektusból úgy is megközelíthető a film, hogy az a gyermeknézőket egy beavatási rituálén vezeti keresztül. A filmből kapott kulturális mítoszok és értékek szellemi értelemben bevezetik a gyerekeket a felnőtt társadalom világába, ha minimálisan is, de képessé téve őket arra, hogy ott kulturálisan és értékalap szempontjából eligazodjanak.

<sup>19</sup> Clarke 116–117.

<sup>20</sup> Wooden xii–xxxv.

<sup>21</sup> Wooden 2.

A *Verdák* különösen alkalmas volt a filmhez kapcsolódó termékek forgalmazására. Már a filmben is megjelent a termékárusítás, látens módon előkészítve a való életben bekövetkezett temérdek *Verdák*-figura eladását. Érdeemes felidézni, hogy az első verseny után McQueen hogyan ábrándozik arról, hogy ő válik majd a Dinoco arcává; vagy hogyan veszi magát körül a szállítókamion belsejében saját reklámtermékekkel; vagy hogy saját „személye” üzleti előnyt jelenhet Kipufogó-fürdő bizonyos vállalkozóinak. Egyszóval – nem is annyira a felszín alatt – a fogyasztói társadalom hangzatos ünneplése folyik, bár a fentebb jelzett önirónia is értelmezési pontot kap.<sup>22</sup> Ez a régi termékforgalmazási Disney-recept autók esetében különösen jól működő piaci stratégiának bizonyult, és a film utáni időszakban a piros Villám McQueen beköltözött számos gyermekszobába – ezzel ugyanannyi család életébe –, óhatatlanul tovább terjesztve a film üzeneteit. Mellesleg a filmhez kapcsolódó különböző eladási bevételek meghaladták az egy milliárd dolláros küszöböt, ami a filmstúdiónak az addigi rekordot jelentette.<sup>23</sup> Mindez arra is jól rávilágít, mennyire a kapitalista rendszer szerves része a szórakoztató filmipar. Az ilyen filmekkel valójában két legyet lehet ütni egycsapásra: terjesztetni az amerikai értékeket és mítoszokat otthon és a világban, ráadásul olyan busás megtérüléssel és profittal, amivel több újabb hasonló vállalkozást lehet indítani – és indítanak is.

Mindezek után összegzésként meg lehet állapítani, hogy a *Verdák*ban markánsan tetten érhető a kulturális indoktrináció: az amerikai mítoszok hazai és globális elterjesztése az animációs filmeken keresztül, amelynek a hagyománya visszanyúlik egészen a korai Disney-alkotásokig. A Pixar-filmek és a hozzájuk hasonló kulturális termékek ennek legújabb megjelenési formái, és továbbra is az Egyesült Államok – és óhatatlanul a világ – gyermekei és fiataljai között terjesztik az amerikai mítoszokat mint alapvető és meghatározó kulturális értékeket.

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<sup>22</sup> Wooden 109–10.

<sup>23</sup> Booker 94.

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# **Fű, szabadság, Amszterdam: Egy modern mítosz kulturális hatása**

**Dési Ádám**

ELTE ÁJK Kriminológiai Tanszék, Doktori Iskola

desiadam.d@gmail.com

Amszterdam számos okból lehet vonzó célpontja a potenciális látogatóknak, hiszen egyaránt nyújt otthont olyan kulturális kincseknek és örökség(ek)nek, mint Rembrandt, van Gogh művészete, Anna Frank hagyatéka, a híres virágpiac vagy éppen a múzeumnegyedi bolhapiacok. Egy jelentős többség számára mégsem jelent mást, mint elsősorban a legális marihuánafogyasztás fővárosát. A város maga és drogpolitikája egyaránt modern mítosszá, legendás helyé vált, egyformán megjelenve a popkultúrában és a valódi, egyéni történetekben, olyan helyként, ahol végre szabadon lehet fogyasztani.

Doktori disszertációmban az egyetemi kábítószer színterét vizsgálom, és számos interjút készítettem fogyasztókkal, terjesztőkkel és közvetítőkkel, ezekben pedig időről időre felbukkantak amszterdami élményeik is. Ami elsöre csupán a fogyasztás egy különleges helyszínének, egyszerű kalandnak tűnt, arról fokozatosan kiderült, hogy mélyebb jelentéssel is bír. Amszterdam egyenlő azzal, hogy látogatói részesei valaminek, amit hallomásból, popkultúrából, anekdotákból ismertek, de szinte túl szép ahhoz, hogy igaz legyen. A felszínen ez csupán a jó (és jobb) minőségű fogyasztás élményét jelenti, azonban azoknak, akik túljutnak az első kellemes meglepetésen, ennél jóval többet. Szimbólumot, amely szemükben szinte teljesen demisztifikálja a káros droghasználat képét, valamint támadhatóvá teszi azt a rendkívüli szigort és elutasítást, amivel itthon találkozunk a drogszcénában. A tanulmány célja annak bemutatása, miként fonódik össze egy velünk élő mítosz a hétköznapi élettel, és ez hogyan jelenik meg a személyes narratívákban és világmagyarázatokban.

## **Módszertan**

A kutatásom során 41 félig strukturált interjút készítettem 38 személlyel, olyan egyetemistákkal, akik a budapesti kábítószerescéna aktív szereplői. Pozíciójuk tekintetében egyaránt megjelentek köztük alkalmi és problémás fogyasztók (9 fő), közvetítők, kisegítők (18 fő) valamint profitorientált terjesztők (11 fő) is. Az alanyok életkora 20–28 év közé esik, három kivételével mind budapesti egyetemek hallgatói, több mint kétharmaduk (26 fő) Budapesten született.



Az alanyokat *hólabda* és *networking* módszerekkel értem el,<sup>1</sup> mivel a személyes ajánlás volt a megbízhatóságom garanciája. Kettő kivételével egyetlen alanyt sem ismertem korábbról, ezért is kellett a referálási rendszerre támaszkodnom.

Mivel a kutatás témája súlyosan büntetendő, törvénysértő magatartásokból áll, ezért minden interjút anonimizáltam, a felhasznált idézeteknél pedig véletlenszerűen generált kódneveket kaptak az alanyok. Az interjúkat elsősorban olyan kávézókban és bárókban vettem fel, melyek a budapesti egyetemista élet természetes, informális és biztonságos környezetei.

### Narratív kriminológia

A narratív kriminológia a diszciplína egyik újabb ága, a megközelítés egyszerre van jelen a kutatás során alkalmazott módszertanban,<sup>2</sup> valamint az elméleti keretrendszer felállításában is. Röviden összefoglalva, az irányzat bűnözésmagyarázatának alapja a történetközpontúság, melynek során a különböző cselekmények motivációja, valamint önigazolása egységes narratívaként épül be (vagy igazodik) az adott személy identitásába.

Sandberg<sup>3</sup> megfogalmazásában az európai civilizáció úgy kondicionálja tagjait, hogy az életüket egységes történetnek lássák. A különböző tapasztalatok meghatározzák, milyen belső narratívákat tudunk létrehozni, ugyanakkor a folyamat a másik irányba is állandóan hat, vagyis a megismert (vagy akár átélt) történetek segítségével keretezzük tapasztalatainkat.<sup>4</sup> A narratív kriminológia így a bourdieui habituselméletre alapozva kapcsolatot teremt a mozgósítható szerepek és a korlátozó társadalmi rendszerek között.<sup>5</sup> Vagyis az emberek ágenciával rendelkező aktorok, de a lehetséges választásaikat a struktúrákhoz való hozzáférésük korlátozza.

### „Freestate Amsterdam” – Amszterdam popkulturális legendája

Amszterdam zászlaján a hagyományos címerek helyett ezt láthatjuk: XXX. A három X, a történelmi városra leselkedő három legfőbb veszélyre, és az azokkal való állandó küzdelemre utalt: tűz, víz és járvány. Azonban ez a szimbólum úgy is működik, mint a modern Amszterdam- mítosz három (hírhedt) turisztikai eleme, a legális és stigma nélküli hozzáférhetőség a szexhez (vöröslámpás negyed), az alkoholhoz (*Heineken*

1 Geddes 349.

2 Holstein és Gubrium 130.

3 Sandberg, „The importance of stories” 7.

4 Presser és Sandberg 4.

5 Fleetwood 4.

*Experience*), és a marihuánához (*coffeeshop*-rendszer). Mindezek az élvezetek itt könnyedén elérhetők, viszont máshol törvénybe ütköznek. Már-már túl szép ahhoz, hogy igaz legyen. És pontosan ezt testesíti meg a „Freestate Amsterdam” toposza.

A *vtropes*<sup>6</sup> popkulturális toposzokat gyűjtő oldal meghatározása szerint Amszterdam a filmekben és sorozatokban olyan helyként van ábrázolva, ahol minden megengedett. Az előbb felsorolt hármas (szex, drog, alkohol) valóban legális a városon belül, ezzel bizonyos mértékben alapot biztosít az amszterdami mítosznak. A „Freestate Amsterdam” toposz három módon került elő az interjúkban: egy olyan város képeként, ahol (1) jóval nagyobb szabadsághoz lehet jutni különböző szerek fogyasztása vagy első kipróbálása tekintetében, mint másutt; (2) lehetőséget biztosít egyfajta kontrollált lázadásra és kalandra; valamint (3) a hedonizmus lokálisan elfogadott megélésére.

A felvett interjúk során gyakran kérdés nélkül is felmerült Amszterdam szerepe és jelentősége a budapesti egyetemista kábítószerescéna tagjai közt. Az empirián keresztül a mítosznak/toposznak két szintje emelkedett ki, melyekben keveredett a popkultúra és az első kézből származó tapasztalatok. Ezt a megközelítésmódot a *Grounded Theory* módszerére építettem, mely szerint az „elmélet a kutatás folyamán körvonalazódik, mégpedig az elemzés és adatgyűjtés folyamatos interakciója során”.<sup>7</sup>

Az első szint lényegben magától értetődő, és az általánosabb kelet-európai tapasztalatból/elvárásból indul ki, amely szerint a nyugat-európai termékek magasabb minőséget képviselnek. A legális és illegális árukra egyaránt érvényes ez a különbségtétel (a legális termékek piacán megjelenő eltérések pedig jól dokumentáltak),<sup>8</sup> ami bizonyos mértékű aggodalomra is okot ad a centrumországokhoz való viszonyunk tekintetében.<sup>9</sup>

A mítosz értelmezésének második, mélyebb szintje abban jelenik meg, hogy az Amszterdamba látogatók azt tapasztalják: nem okoz súlyos társadalmi problémát a jelenlegi kábítószerpolitika – szemben a kábítószerprevenciókon és hivatalos csatornákon keresztül kapott sokkoló jellegű információkkal.<sup>10</sup> (Ugyanakkor helyi szinten felmerült a kábítószer-turizmus visszaszorításának és a szabályok szigorításának igénye, de a lakosokra vonatkozó hozzáférhetőség korlátozása nem.)<sup>11</sup>

6 Freestate Amsterdam.

7 Gelencsér 146.

8 MTI.

9 Böröcz és Sakar 168.

10 Ruiz 185.

11 Sárosi.

## A mítosz elterjedése

Ahogy a bevezetőben is írtam, Amsterdam az európai kultúrában és történelemben jóval jelentősebb szerepet követelhetne magának, mint csupán a jelenlegi, lényegében a hedonizmuson alapuló arca. A teljes képhez érdemes hátralepnünk kettőt, hogy átlássuk, mik voltak azok a strukturális tényezők, amelyek elvezettek ahhoz, hogy a várost övező legenda megkérdőjelezhetetlenül és egységesen gyökeret verjen az interjúalanyok világképében. Ehhez röviden a popkultúra hozzáférhetősége és fogyasztása, valamint a közvetlen tapasztalatszerzés dimenzióit érdemes megvizsgálni.

Ha a szimbolikus határokat szeretnénk meghúzni, akkor 1989 és 2004 az két pont, ahonnan el lehet indulni. A határoknak a korábbiakkal ellentétben szinte korlátlan átjárhatósága, az egyre elterjedtebb fapados utazás és olcsó szállás lehetősége (*couchsurfing*, *airbnb*) mind lehetővé tették, hogy egy rövid amszterdami utazás elérhetővé váljon a középosztálybeli háttérrel rendelkező egyetemisták számára, akik az egyetemi populáció felülreprezentált tagjai.<sup>12</sup>

Kulturális szempontból fokozatosan Magyarországon is megtörtént a helyi szintű normalizáció, vagyis bizonyos jól körülhatárolt közösségekben – mint például az egyetemeken – a kábítószeres fogyasztása, és azok megítélése jóval kedvezőbbé és elfogadottabbá vált, mint ami a társadalmi átlag.<sup>13</sup> A droghasználat egyre inkább részévé vált bizonyos szinten az egyetemista életnek, ahogy korábbi szubkulturális jellege is kiterjedtebbé vált.<sup>14</sup>

Az internet egyre szélesebb körű használatával az információhoz és szórakozási termékekhez való hozzáférés is radikális méreteket öltött. A különböző kulturális termékek egyetlen kattintásnyi távolságra kerültek, ahogy az egymással való tapasztalatmegosztás és kommunikáció is jelentős módon leegyszerűsödött. A közösségi médián keresztül hangsúlyosabbá vált a reprezentációs kényszer, amely, összekapcsolódva a kábítószeres helyi szintű normalizálódásával, tovább erősítette a folyamatot.<sup>15</sup>

## Empirikus tapasztalatok

Az elméleti háttér áttekintése után az interjúkon keresztül bemutatom, miként jelennek meg az egyes amszterdami élményekben és meglátásokban az ismertetett kulturális jellemzők, toposzok. Négy jól elkülöníthető csoportra oszthatók az egyes

12 Hajdu 28.

13 Rác 117.

14 Werse és Bernard 16.

15 Walsh és Phil 61.

részletek: (1) nyugati minőség; (2) zarándokút; (3) mindent szabad, és minden meg is történik; valamint (4) az igazságtalan világ tapasztalata.

Az interjúrészletek elemzésén keresztül látható, hogy a budapesti egyetemista közegben miként jelenik meg Amszterdam mítosza, hogyan értelmezik a szerepét és jelentőségét. A módszertan kvalitatív voltánál fogva a feltárás célja nem a reprezentativitás volt, hanem az, hogy a közhelyszerű „Amszterdam egyenlő a szabad marihuánafogyasztással” képen túl milyen mélyrehatóbb jelentésekkel és dimenziókkal ruházzák fel amszterdami élményeiket és meglátásaikat az interjúalanyok.

### Nyugati minőség

A különböző kábítószer minősége függ a származási helytől, a megtett úttól, az előállítás folyamatától, és számos más tényezőnek is ki van szolgáltatva. Az illegalitásából pedig egyenesen következik, hogy nincs állami kontroll és felügyelet a szer minősége és a biztonsága fölött, ellentétben a legális termékekkel.<sup>16</sup> Magyarország 1989 előtt minimális szerepet játszott a nemzetközi kábítószerpiacon, a fogyasztás és a fogyasztók mértéke a mai adatokhoz képest elhanyagolható volt.<sup>17</sup> Elsősorban csak az áthaladó forgalom volt jellemző, vagyis hazánk pusztán tranzit-zónaként szerepelt a térképen.

Ahogy Magyarország bekapcsolódott kapitalista világrendszerbe,<sup>18</sup> úgy a legális termékek mellett a kábítószer piac és kultúrája is egyre jobban kiépült. Ugyan az összбүнözési statisztikában sosem ért el 2%-nál magasabb értéket,<sup>19</sup> a fogyasztást célzó lekérdezések egyértelműen növekvő tendenciát mutatnak.<sup>20</sup> Ahogy pedig egyre kiterjedtebbé (és bizonyos körökben elfogadottabbá) vált a marihuána fogyasztása, úgy alakult ki annak kultúrája és a hozzáértés.<sup>21</sup> Utóbbinak markáns része volt a minőségbeli különbségek felismerése, ahogy az egyik adatközlő meg is fogalmazza:

*Ugye előtte is szívtam már a magyar cuccokat, de a hollandhoz képest az lófasz volt, szörnyen szar a hollandhoz képest, ahol így bemész kábé az első kábé arab kávézóba és így érzed a szagán is, meg ahogy beüt, az is nagyon más minőség. (Csaba)*

16 Reuter 110.

17 Lévay és Ritter 543.

18 Éber 28.

19 Lévay és Ritter 543.

20 Elekes 40.

21 Murphy 333.

Csaba gyakran segítette ki ismerőseit és barátait, szinte kizárólag marihuánára fókuszált, bár nem definiálta magát terjesztőként. Ahogy a nyelvezetéből is látható, érzékenyen érintette a téma, és meglepően éles szavakkal illette a hazai piacra kerülő marihuánát. (Általánosságban elmondható, hogy interjúalanyaim tartózkodtak a káromkodásoktól a hangfelvétel és az interjúhelyzet egésze miatt, és ritkán mellőzték az öncenzúrának ezt a formáját.) A minőség megállapítása azért is játszik kiemelt szerepet, mert a fogyasztók így tudják hozzáértésüket demonstrálni, ezen keresztül bizonyíthatják be, hogy értenek a marihuánához (és ahhoz, amit csinálnak), vagyis valódi szakértők. Ellentétben azokkal a laikus fogyasztókkal, akiket a szakértők lényegében lenéznek, mivel ők csak a puszta bódulatot keresik, és hiányzik belőlük az ingyenceket jellemző kifinomult ízlés.

### Zarándokút

Amszterdam több, mint egy egyszerű piac, ahol törvényszegés nélkül lehet vásárolni és fogyasztani: egyszerre jelent célt és kulturális élményt. Johanna példáján keresztül láthatjuk, hogy kialakulhat az emberben egyfajta belső késztetés és igény arra, hogy elutazzon Amszterdamba.

*Van a legjobb barátnőm, és nagyon sokat, hát régen még többet, de most is szoktunk találkozni, és akkor általában amúgy így füvezgetünk és szóval, hogy régóta terveztük, hogy elmegyünk Amszterdamba, mer' hogy az ugye ilyen kézenfekvő cél, úticél. (Johanna)*

Az interjú során Johanna részletesen kifejtette, hogy a barátnőjével ez az utazás egy évek óta érlelődő terv volt. Szerinte „kézenfekvő”, hiszen akinek az életében jelentősebb szerepet játszik a fogyasztás, annak illik felkeresnie e jelenség (szub-) kultúrájának európai fővárosát.

Amíg az interjú felvételének idején Johanna és barátnője csak tervezte a látogatást, addig Csaba már a hazatérése utáni tapasztalatairól mesélt.

*Hazajöttem, és mások is mondták, hogy milyen volt Amszterdam. Leültünk, odaadja, megtekered? Mondom, hát megtekerem persze. Baszott jól teker-ek. És akkor jött ez az ilyen belekerültem ebbe az ilyen... hogy ez így jó. Mert az ilyen menő vagy, vagy ízé... mint a cigi. Hogy kimész cigizni, és tudsz máris ismerkedni emberekkel, és hogy ilyen közös kapocs tud lenni. (Csaba)*

Csaba értelmezésében Amszterdam nem csupán azért érte meg, mert kipróbálhatta a hazainál jobb minőségű szereket, ahogy azt az előző idézetben kifejtette, hanem mert a kinti élményeit egyértelműen át tudta konvertálni státusszá, társadalmi tőkévé a társas kapcsolataiban.<sup>22</sup> Az amszterdami élmények meghatározták a saját viselkedését és mások hozzá való viszonyát, olyan színben mutatva őt, mint aki tapasztalt, világlátott ember a kábítószer kérdésében, a többiek már tőle kérnek segítséget.

A közös élmények megerősítik az összetartozás érzését, kifejezve azt, hogy létezik az a „mi” csoport, akik már látták Amszterdamot, és köztük „közös kapocs tud lenni,” ezzel egyfajta hierarchiát is létrehozva, amiben elkülönülnek azok, akik már veteránok, azoktól a zöldfülektől, akik még nem jártak ott, és így nem rendelkezhetnek azokkal a utcai tőkére jellemző ismeretekkel, amiket csak ott lehet igazán elsajátítani.<sup>23</sup>

Felmerül persze a kérdés, hogy mennyiben felel meg Csaba leírása a valóságnak? Tényleg, saját szavaival élve, menőbb lett az ismerősei körében csak azért, mert megjárta Amszterdamot? A narratív kriminológia szakirodalmára erre a típusú kérdésre több választ is adhat, annak fényében, hogy mi volt a kutatási kérdés.<sup>24</sup> Ebben a helyzetben a cél az amszterdami élmények és a popkulturális ismeretek keretezése és az identitás kapcsolata, ebből a szempontból pedig az interjúalany saját helyzetére vonatkozó értelmezése (narratívája) a kulcs. Az, hogy Csaba valóban magasabb státuszt szerzett-e, nem része a kérdésnek, számunkra az a fontos, hogy ő úgy érezte, igen, és ezt egyértelműen az amszterdami tapasztalataihoz kötötte.

### **Mindent szabad, és minden meg is történik**

Csaba saját pozícióját az is igazolta, hogy tapasztalatlan barátait ő avatta be Amszterdamban. Igaz, leírása szerint ez közel sem volt problémamentes.

*Volt egy baráti társaságom, velük kimentünk Amszterdamba, és ők teljesen kezdők voltak. Mondtam is, hogyha nem csináltad még, akkor mondd, mert akkor ilyet nem szívnak, nem megyünk sütitni, meg gomba, semmi. De, de, de ők csináltak, akkor betépettem őket, satöbbi. Akkor mondták, hogy jó, igazából nem volt még semmi ilyesmi, mondom, jó, hogy kérdeztem, mint a szar, úgy betéptek. (Csaba)*

22 Bourdieu 158.

23 Sandberg, „Case study” 409.

24 Sandberg, „What can lies” 462.

Ahogy az előző részletből kiderült, Csabában korábbi amszterdami tapasztalatai alapján bíztak meg a barátai, és lett egyfajta vezetőjük ezen az úton. Számukra Amszterdam képviselte azt a helyet és lehetőséget, ahol szabadon ki lehet végre próbálni azokat az élményeket (és szereket), amik otthon nehezebben hozzáférhetőek, vagy akár stigmatizáltak is. Ebben az értelmezésében jelenik meg a legtisztábban a „Freestate Amsterdam” toposza.

A jelenség másik, nem várt oldala az, amiről Flóra mesélt az interjúbán.

*Hollandiában egy olyan fura helyen szálltunk meg, ahol kiderült, hogy drog-dílereké az airbnb, és akkor tökre összehaverkodtunk, és akkor kaptunk tőlük ilyen kéjgázos lufit, meg mittudomén, egy késhegynyi kokóval indítottuk a napot. (Flóra)*

Az Amszterdamba látogatónak nem kell aktívan keresnie a kábítószeres élményeket és eseményeket, mivel azok hajlamosak maguktól is megtalálni az embert, ahogy ebből a rövid történetből is látszik. Ebben az értelmezésben a kábítószeres léte szervesen összefonódott a környékkel, annak szinte kikerülhetetlen eleme lett. Ezt azzal a kulturális kriminológiai megfigyeléssel állíthatjuk párhuzamba, amikor a különböző bűnügyi filmekben és sorozatokban a fő történetszálát jelentő ügy mellett irreleváns, a háttérben zajló bűncselekmények kerülnek elő. A jelenség legélesebb megjelenése az 1971-es első *Dirty Harry* (r. Don Siegel) ikonikus „Do you feel lucky, punk?”-jelenetében kerül elő. A főszereplőt körülvevő világot alapjaiban megfertőzte a bűnözés,<sup>25</sup> hiszen még ebédelni sem tud elmenni anélkül, hogy ne futna bele valamiféle erőszakos cselekménybe. A korszakra jellemző emelkedő bűnözési statisztikák és a növekvő (utcai) bűnözéstől való félelem így jelent meg a kor kulturális termékeiben. Az üzenet egyértelmű: a nagyvárosok folyamatos veszélyzónákká váltak, ahol bárki bármikor áldozat lehet.<sup>26</sup>

Flóra tapasztalatai is értelmezhetőek a fenti logika mentén, ahogy a külső körülmények és a környezet hatására maguktól jelennek meg körülötte a kábítószeres. Azonban mivel Hollandiában, és nem más helyen játszódik a történet, ezért nem is okoz akkora meglepetést számára, sőt, kifejezetten beleillik a kialakult narratívába. *Dirty Harry* számára ez az újfajta megközelítés az amerikai város bűnözés elleni háborújának kudarcát mutatja, ahol legjobb esetben is csak megtorolni lehet a társadalmat ért károkat, de a civilizációt megjavítani/megmenteni már esélytelen.

<sup>25</sup> Rafter 17.

<sup>26</sup> Ferrel 155.

Flóra olvasata hasonló logika mentén történik, bár valamivel optimistább módon, a különböző kábítószeres szerves részei az életünknek és világunknak, Amszterdam pedig ennek előtérbe helyezett illusztrációja.

### Az igazságtalan világ tapasztalata

Az, hogy a kábítószeres illegálisak, nem kérdés. Az, hogy milyen társadalmi hatással jár(t) a betiltásuk, már jóval vitatottabb téma úgy a szakirodalomban, mint a közbeszédben és a drogpolitikában.<sup>27</sup> A hivatalos narratíva jelenleg Magyarországon egyértelműen elítéli a kábítószeres és annak fogyasztóját, az is előfordul, hogy nem szakmai, hanem morális modellre építve.<sup>28</sup>

Éppen ezért okoznak több, Amszterdamot megjárt interjúalanyom számára disszonanciát az ottani tapasztalataik. Az, ami eddig számukra nem csupán tiltott, de morálisan terhelt szer és élmény volt, új megvilágításba került. Egy olyan országnak a fővárosát láthatták, amit kábítószer-liberalizációja ellenére nem fenyeget teljes gazdasági és/vagy társadalmi összeomlás vagy éppen normavesztett, anómiás állapot.

*És milyen jól jár Hollandia egyébként? Egész jó helyen tartanak, egész jó kis ország, nem igaz? Csak ha már nekik bejött. (Flóra)*

*Fű, ha Hollandiában legális, akkor nem olyan rossz dolog, mint aminek beállítjuk itthon, és ezt sokan nem fogadják el. (Medárd)*

*Nézzük meg, ott van Amszterdam, ott van Amerika. Hány helyen legalizálták a füvet vagy a marihuánát ... eljutottak oda, hogy eldöntötték, hogy ez nem egy szar dolog, mindenki el tudja dönteni, ugyanúgy, ahogy az alkoholról, hogy iszik vagy nem iszik. (Tóbiás)*

Hollandia egyikük szerint sem lett a kábítószer liberális szabályozása miatt Magyarországnál (vagy a világ bármely más országánál) problémásabb hely. Minden objektív gazdasági mutató és adat egyértelműen fejlett nyugat-európai országgént jellemzi Hollandiát,<sup>29</sup> ahol a kábítószeresekhez való jelenleg viszony nem okozott jelentős társadalmi kárt.<sup>30</sup>

27 Lévay „Héják, Baglyok” 51.

28 Kaló 33.

29 *Index of Economic Freedom*.

30 Lévay „Héják, Baglyok” 50.



Az interjúalanyok első kézből (azt) tapasztalták meg Amszterdam példáján keresztül, hogy a kábítószerrekhez való nem büntető jellegű hozzáállás igenis létezhet és működhet. Önmagukban a liberálisabb drogpolitikák, a megkérdezettek szerint, közel sem jelentenek akkora veszélyt egy ország népességére, mint azt a hivatalos narratíva sugallja.

### Konklúzió

A budapesti egyetemisták számára Amszterdam és a várost a kábítószerekkel összefonó mítoszok saját tapasztalatból és a populáris kultúrából egyaránt jól ismertek. Olyan általános szimbólumokat és jelentéseket hordoz magában számukra, mint a *szabadság* (kipróbálásra és stigma nélküli fogyasztásra), *státusz* és *ágencia* megszerzése (megjárták Amszterdamot és értenek hozzá), valamint élő bizonyítéka annak, hogy a *legalizáció* igenis megvalósítható és nem jelentene az alkoholnál nagyobb veszélyt.

A narratív kriminológia eszköztárával feltárhatóvá és megismerhetővé válnak azok a tapasztalatok és történetek, melyekre az identitás épül. Természetesen mindez folyamatos mozgásban és az önkorrekció állapotában van, olyan dimenzióktól függ, mint a hallgatóság, a környezet, a mesélő hangulata és a többi. Azonban így is lehetőségem volt arra, hogy betekintést nyújtsak: melyek azok a központi elemek, amelyek mentén Amszterdam legendája megjelenik és értelmezésre kerül, illetve beépül az egyes élettörténetekbe. Ami viszont egyetemes tapasztalat mindenki számára, aki Amszterdamból hazatért, hogy rögtön a *Ponyvaregény* (1994, r. Quentin Tarantino) első jelenetében találja magát, megkapva az ikonikus kérdést: „*Okay so, tell me again about the hash bars?*”

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**POPULAR MYTHS AND PRAGMATICS:  
WHAT SELLS**

**POPULÁRIS MÍTOSZOK ÉS PRAGMATIKA:  
A PÉNZ BESZÉL**



# Legal Traditions and Popular Legal Myths on the Shakespearean Stage

Nóra Pethő

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies  
pethonora@student.elte.hu

This study gives an overview of the relationship of law and early modern English theatre from the aspect of popular culture. Its starting point is the now already widely accepted view that both law and theatre were essential cultural aspects of early modern England. We may speak not only about the popularity of the theatre, but also about an important popular legal culture of the age.<sup>1</sup> This paper claims that popular culture had an essential role in reinforcing the relationship of law and theatre in early modern English culture. Drawing on some of the essential works of relevant scholarship, this paper sums up the most important reasons why early modern English popular culture could have been responsive to Classical Graeco-Roman legal-theatrical traditions and, at the same time, open and ready for creating new legal myths of its own. Traces of these legal traditions and myths in the plays of Shakespeare will be shown and interpreted in the following analysis.

Drama and law have probably been interrelated since their birth in Ancient Greece. As regards form, their kinship is obvious: “[a] public spectacle, the Athenian trial owes [...] its peculiar shape to the adversarial nature of Athenian legal procedure: two litigants before a judge or judges, each responsible for its own cause and encouraged to present for consideration whatever legitimately supports his claim.”<sup>2</sup> The same can be said about the legal procedures of Ancient Rome. Some of the legal transactions had to be performed by means of a ritual to be valid (for example, the *negotia per aes et libram*).<sup>3</sup> Lorna Hutson invokes the etymological connection of the word ‘forensic’ (*forensis* meaning ‘in open court, in public’) with the Roman *forum*.<sup>4</sup> Regarding content, serious moral issues in Greek tragedies are often rephrased as collisions of godly, religious, or earthy laws. While soliloquies may remind us of court pleadings, the audience, like judges, are to be persuaded by a narration of a fiction. As it is well-known, “[the] Greek verb

1 See, for instance, Hutson, *The Invention* 1.

2 Eden 13.

3 Földi-Hamza 379.

4 Hutson, “Noises Off...” 161.

*krinein* means ‘to judge’, and a *kritēs* is a judge. Hence criticism is called criticism, and a critic a critic – that is, a critic’s criticism is a kind of judgement, and the action of criticizing is judging.”<sup>5</sup> As Kathy Eden demonstrated, the aesthetic relatedness of poetic and legal fiction in the Aristotelian tradition was basically reaffirmed by Philip Sidney in *The Defense of Poesie*, written in approximately 1580 and first published in 1595.<sup>6</sup>

Early modern English social practices re-invigorated these Classical theatrical traditions rooted in legal culture. The preparation of the potential wider public for the appreciation of Classical traditions started in grammar schools at an early age, with the reading of Classical texts to teach Latin, grammar, or argumentation. The most frequently used texts included the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (a classical treatise on rhetoric and persuasion), and Aphthonius’ *Progymnasmata* (preparatory exercises in declamation and oration).<sup>7</sup> Links between early modern English grammar school education and the writing and appreciation of plays has been suggested in scholarship on multiple occasions.<sup>8</sup> As Colclough refers to it, *Lily’s Grammar*, which “contained an account of the principles of *elocutio* [...] was the most widely used ‘set text’ in English grammar-schools throughout [the] period, and it was repeatedly reprinted, sometimes on a massive scale,” with at least seven reprints from 1570 to 1580 alone, one of the prints run in one year consisting of at least 10,000 copies.<sup>9</sup> Looking at the numbers, it has been, most probably correctly, concluded that “grammar texts provided the foundations of rhetoric for all but the most highly educated.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, thanks to an ideal of active citizenship, popular print products, such as sermons, pamphlets, or petitions, circulated on the market in relatively high numbers of copies,<sup>11</sup> thereby disseminating not only ideas but also a culture of argumentation and persuasion.

Additionally, it has been posited on multiple occasions that during the 1580s and 1590s English Renaissance dramatists adapted the plot-handling of their Latin

5 Zurcher 2.

6 Eden 157–175.

7 Colclough 244.

8 Qtd. in Hutson, *The Invention* 106; Joel B. Altman. *The Tudor Play of Mind*. University of California at Berkeley, 1978, pp. 130–228.

9 Colclough 245.

10 Qtd. in Colclough 245. Lawrence D. Green. “Grammatica Movet: Renaissance Grammar Books and Elocutio.” *Rhetorica Movet: Essays in Honour of Heinrich Plett*, edited by P. L. Oesterreich, and T. O. Sloan, Martinus Nijhoff / Brill, 1999, pp. 73–115, and pp. 97, 105, 78 n. 9.

11 Peltonen 252–262, esp. 253.

predecessors they read at grammar school.<sup>12</sup> The style of Roman New Comedy resembled the arguments composed by “speech-writers” who composed pleadings.<sup>13</sup> Young Shakespeare, too, had been “immersed” in those Classical plays whose plots are said to be “popularly litigious.”<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, the use of classical rhetoric seems to be a compulsory element in *Troilus and Cressida*, set in Troy, and *Julius Caesar*, set in Rome. In the latter it efficiently contributes to character-building: Portia, “husbanded” by Brutus and “fathered” by Cato, uses the most professional legal language and argumentative style of a Roman *rhetor* in her own little rhetorical exercise when trying to convince her husband Brutus, this time not on the *forum*, but in their family home in the middle of the night. As a matter of course, Portia’s pleading against her “husband on trial” is an important source of humour as well, but her use of legal terminology (“bond of marriage”, “excepted”, “appertain”, “in sort or limitation”) remains striking:

Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,  
Is it excepted I should know no secrets  
That appertain to you? Am I your self  
But as it were in sort or limitation?  
(*Julius Caesar* 2.1.279–282)<sup>15</sup>

All these legal traditions could not have found their way into popular theatre, had it not been for the age of Shakespeare itself. “Being legal” seems to have been a general way of living in Elizabethan England. The fact that lay people were frequently involved in legal procedures and events may have been an even more important factor in facilitating the general spread of legal concepts and an important growth of legal awareness. Stretton refers to a “dramatic litigation boom in English history” with “one million civil suits a year by 1588” in England and Wales.<sup>16</sup> In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century nearly every adult in England was engaged in a lawsuit or was preparing for one.<sup>17</sup> Sharpe mentions that for some, “litigating was a familiar experience” and that

12 In her book, Lorna Hutson already refers to this as a well-known fact. See also Altman (see footnote 8) 130–228 qtd. in Hutson, *The Invention* 106.

13 Qtd. in Hutson, *The Invention* 50–67. Adele C. Scafuro, *The Forensic Stage*.

14 Scafuro (see footnote 13) qtd. in Hutson, “Noises Off...” 158.

15 In this paper, line numbers refer to the following edition: *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, Clarendon Press, 1995.

16 Stretton 74.

17 MacKay 371.



“[d]ispute settlement [...] had clearly habituated people to using the law.”<sup>18</sup> The sharp rise in the number of court cases required an increase in the number of representatives of the legal profession.<sup>19</sup> “The common law experienced a phenomenal growth, both in the number of practitioners and jurisdictional power.”<sup>20</sup>

For some, however, “involvement with the law might also [have] come through jury service, through being a witness in a court case, or through participation in a local office holding.”<sup>21</sup> The English judiciary, therefore, involved a democratically organised element. As Hutson summarizes, “the strongly participatory structures of English [...] justice [...] ensured that [...] evidential concepts [...] were relatively widely diffused through society.”<sup>22</sup> In 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century English popular legal culture, Hutson also highlights a certain “popular evidential awareness”, which decisively determined the characteristics of early modern drama: it has become “evidentiary”, using judicially derived *narratio* for the purposes of dramatic mimesis, and permitting competing interpretations of the same circumstances.<sup>23</sup> That approach necessitates the careful assessment of motives and probabilities by the audience as ‘jury’,<sup>24</sup> which is true for most Shakespearean plays as well, such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, or *Othello*, just to mention a few.

For a fuller picture of the popular legal phenomena of the age, it is worth shortly mentioning the courts of assize, which meant yet another crossroads of law and theatre. The court of assize was an itinerant tribunal that convened twice a year in a given locality.<sup>25</sup> Assize sessions were long-awaited important public events and “produced a powerful spectacle for public consumption.”<sup>26</sup> Even church rituals celebrated this special kind of festivity: before the court hearing, prayers were presented in the local church and an ‘assize sermon’ was preached.<sup>27</sup> Such sermons – which dealt with notions of the ‘good judge’ and ‘just decisions’ and belonged to a genre that was equally rooted in popular religious and legal culture – were so well received

18 Sharpe 224–225.

19 Winston 123.

20 Geng 97.

21 Sharpe 224.

22 Hutson, *The Invention* 3.

23 Hutson *The Invention* 4, and 104–145.

24 Cf. Hutson, *The Invention* 69.

25 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 134. The Courts of Assize and the similar Courts of Quarter Sessions existed in England and Wales till 1972 (till the adoption of the Court Act 1971) when they were replaced by a permanent Crown Court.

26 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 139.

27 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 141.

that many reached print for enjoyment by the greater public, in certain cases, even years after their first presentation at church.<sup>28</sup>

Lastly, it should be recalled that public issues such as political debates, constitutional affairs, geographical discoveries, religious controversies, royal succession, and economic changes often manifested in legal disputes. Taking into consideration the theatricality of the law, politically motivated show trials and public executions (the so-called “spectacle of the scaffold”) also contributed to the diversity of the interrelatedness of law and theatre. The relationship between Shakespeare’s plays and famous show trials or executions is well-known. A notable example was the case of Doctor Roderigo Lopez, physician to Queen Elizabeth I, who was charged with treason in 1594 and whose case influenced *The Merchant of Venice*. The performance of *Richard II*, on the eve of the failed rebellion of Essex, was another politically charged event in the context of Essex’s fate, leading to his execution in 1601. The trial of Father Henry Garnett and the Jesuits involved in the Gunpowder Plot against King James in Parliament (1605–6) was recalled through the repetitive echoing of its key word – ‘equivocation’ – in the Porter scene of *Macbeth* (2.3.1–21).

As law gained importance, so did the legal profession. In the age, the “number of legal officers tasked with the administration of the law grew steadily, as did the rate of matriculation at the Inns of Court.”<sup>29</sup> Frequent encounters with justice and the judiciary made the phenomenon of law and the figure of lawyers commonly known. Legal characters in Shakespeare’s plays may contribute to a better understanding of the general picture English men and women had in their minds about law and its representatives. One of the important questions in the age was: ‘What is a good judge like?’ Sir Francis Bacon, in his essay “Of Judicature”, writes that “[t]he principal duty of a judge is to suppress force and fraud [...] a judge ought to prepare his way to a just sentence.”<sup>30</sup> It is a virtue of a judge “to make inequality equal” and he “ought [...] to remember mercy.”<sup>31</sup> As Geng points out, “preachers and moral writers combed the Bible for examples [...] and they found their exemplars in [...] judges

28 A typical example, though later than Shakespeare’s lifetime, could be Antony Fawknor’s *Nicomachus for Christ: The Moot of an Honest Lawyer*, which, according to the title page was “preached at the Assises at Okelham, in the County of Rutland, March. 10. 1627” and printed in London 1630, “to be sold in S. Pauls Churchyard.”

29 Qtd. in Geng 98. See Knafla. “The Matriculation Revolution and Education at the Inns of Court in Renaissance England.” *Tudor Men and Institutions*, edited by Arthur Slavin, Louisiana State University Press, 1972, p. 237.

30 Bacon 447.

31 Bacon 447.

of the Old Testament.”<sup>32</sup> A related example could be *The Merchant of Venice*, where Portia is compared to “Daniel” (4.1.2164) by Shylock. There was also a long tradition of calling judges ‘priests.’ Strain refers to an explanation from Ernst H. Kantorowicz, according to which “jurists [were] styled by Roman Law so suggestively [as] ‘Priests of Justice,’” and “this tradition made its way into works important to the development of the English common-law tradition.”<sup>33</sup> To illustrate the fusion of the images of God, king, and lawyer, Lee Strain mentions a speech from 21 March 1610, when James I declared that kings, like Gods, are “Judges over all their subjects and in all causes.”<sup>34</sup>

What happens when this person of excellence and authority is not present? As Virginia Lee Strain explains in her book chapter entitled “The Assize Circuitry of *Measure for Measure*,” “the court of assize was responsible for overseeing and reforming the execution of local justice and governance throughout the country.”<sup>35</sup> In the absence of assize judges, justices of the peace were charged with the administration of justice. Strain argues that the play *Measure for Measure* can be analysed as an action taking place between an assize judge’s departure from and return to a certain locality.<sup>36</sup> The play is set in Vienna, which has very strict laws concerning sexual activities, including capital punishment for fornication. However, laws are not respected nor enforced: people engage in sexual activities unlawful under Viennese law, such as extramarital sexual relationships or the operation of brothels. The Duke of Vienna pretends to leave town and names Angelo as deputy in charge. In fact, the Duke, disguised as a friar, stays to observe the events and finds that Angelo administers the law in a partial, immoral, and excessively strict manner. Since in real life, too, local justices of the peace could have abused their power, there could have been an expectation towards the “good” assize judge to “fix all,” that is, to pass judgement in pending cases long awaiting trial, to punish abuses of power, and in general to benefit local people by reinforcing the central authority. As Strain points out, the assizes were an “especially apt venue for public shaming.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Shakespeare’s Duke declares “[T]wice treble shame on Angelo” (*Measure for Measure* 3.1.525), so he could be identified with an assize judge checking upon and punishing his local deputy who is finally made to confess his misdeeds publicly.

32 Geng 104.

33 Qtd. in Strain, “*The Winter’s Tale ...*” 178. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*.

34 Qtd. in Strain, “*The Winter’s Tale ...*” 186. *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. J. P. Sommerville, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 181.

35 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 136.

36 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 134.

37 Strain, “The Assize Circuitry...” 141.

The popular idea of longing for authority is also present in the myth of the good magistrate interpreted as a loving father. As Penelope Geng convincingly demonstrates, “[p]opular writing on justice [...] centered on the law’s failure to protect the poor, weak, and otherwise marginalized members of society [...] Authors of assize sermons and character books defined the character of a ‘good magistrate’ as a ‘loving’ father.”<sup>38</sup> Geng quotes powerful sermons to that end: addressing an imaginary judge, the preacher Robert Harris emphasised that “you are termed [termed] *Fathers*: direct you must, correct you may, but all in love.”<sup>39</sup> Geng also refers to the character of the Lord Chief Justice in the first half of *Henry IV, Part 2*: at the beginning of the play he is an approachable magistrate who wanders in Cheapside, directly addressing ordinary people (“Sir John Falstaff, a word with you.” 2 *Henry IV* 1.2.93) and, similarly, Falstaff is allowed to greet him casually (“I am glad to see your lordship abroad,” 1.2.96). Geng also refers to “his scenes with Mistress Quickly,” where “the Chief Justice outdoes the justices of the peace, Shallow and Silent, in his attentiveness toward her affairs,” with his judicial approach being “personal and intimate.”<sup>40</sup> Finally, he passes judgement on Falstaff in the quarrel between him and the Hostess: “Pay her the debt you owe her, and unpay the villany you have done with her” (2.1.120–2).

On the other hand, popular criticism towards lawyers was based on their lack of willingness to help clients, what is more, to cheat them. ‘Trick’ is a word often associated with lawyers, referring to covert, hidden intentions to misuse the trust of clients. Geng cites an unpublished 1603 assize sermon from George Crosse, in which a lawyer defines law as “a pretty tricke to catche mony w[i]t[h]all.”<sup>41</sup> Not only highly technical legal vocabulary, but also the word “trick” is used by Hamlet: “Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his **quiddits** now, his **quilllets**, his **cases**, his **tenures**, and his **tricks**?” (5.1.95–97, my emphasis).<sup>42</sup> While Hamlet “sees” tricks by looking at the skull of a lawyer from the outside, Portia in *The Merchant*

38 Geng 97.

39 Robert Harris. *Saint Paul’s Exercise. A Sermon Preached before the Judges at Assize, in Two Sermons: The One Preached before the Judges of Assize at Oxford. The Other to the Universities* (London, 1628), D4r. qtd. in Geng 101.

40 Geng 113.

41 Geng 98.

42 B. J. Sokol et al. confirm that the word ‘quilllets’ means both “small pieces of land” and “verbal quibbles”, so ‘quilllets’ here suggest simultaneously pieces of land (held by tenures), and the subtle legal fictions or “tricks” used for protecting or devising these. The alliterative word ‘quiddits’ here refers to “quiddities,” i.e. arguments of excessive subtlety (See B. J. Sokol et al. p. 316). ‘Tenure’ in the feudal system referred to the services due to the lord in exchange of which the rights to land were granted. Accordingly, ‘tenure’ refers to the rights, the legal title to or the terms of holding landed property (Cf. B. J. Sokol et al. pp. 189–190, 316).

of Venice, dressed up as a male doctor of laws, “sees” the lawyer’s head full of tricks from the inside as she identifies herself with the role played: “**I have within my mind / A thousand raw tricks** of these bragging Jacks / Which I will practise” (3.4.76–8, my emphasis). *Law-trickes* (1608) by John Day is another literary reflection of the idea that law is trickery.<sup>43</sup>

However, the most annoying tricks of lawyers was (and perhaps still is) their language. Already in 1560 Thomas Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique*, develops on the rhetorical exercise “To aduise one, to studie the lawes of England,” concerning which he admits that “the Lawe [is] in a straunge tongue.”<sup>44</sup> Wilson explains “Ambiguitie” as follows: “Sometymes a doubt is made vpon some worde or sentence, when it signifieth diuers things, or may diuersly bee taken, whereupon full oft ariseth much contention. The Lawiers lacke no cases, to fill this part full of examples. For rather then faile, they will make doubtess oftentimes, where no doubt should be at all.”<sup>45</sup> The *Arte of Rhetorique* was very popular: “it passed through numerous editions and was eagerly read by two generations of seekers after eloquence and literary skill,”<sup>46</sup> therefore, Wilson’s predilection to associate lawyers with ambiguous language potentially exerted a strong influence on later generations as well, while also echoing a common, general concept of the age.

Underhill notes that in Shakespeare’s time, the most puerile distinctions were made by judges in cases where “no sane person could have had the least doubt of the truth” and “the verbal quibbles solemnly discussed without regard to the obvious reality of things, suggest to a modern mind that the whole administration of justice was regarded as an elaborate intellectual game in the course of which justice itself was entirely lost sight of.”<sup>47</sup> This may immediately remind us of Portia awarding Shylock a pound of flesh but not even a drop of blood. The legalistic trick of interpretation is somehow foretold by Bassanio:

So may the outward shows be least themselves —  
The world is still deceiv’d with ornament.  
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt  
But, being season’d with a gracious voice,

43 Day.

44 Wilson 31.

45 Wilson 72–73.

46 Mair 3.

47 Underhill 392 and 389.

Obscures the show of evil?  
 (*The Merchant of Venice* 3.2.73–77)

Opposition against lawyers and their use of language is expressed more radically in the well-known quote by Dick the Butcher, one of Jack Cade's rebels: "The first thing we do let's kill all the lawyers" (*2 Henry VI*, 4.2.78). This popular sentiment and wish are announced, at least in part, due to a frustration caused by the inaccessibility of legal language (and language in general). Lord Saye, who had been in charge of administering justice, is "tried" and executed by Jack Cade's men. In his mock trial Lord Saye is charged with being the literate justice of the peace who disfavours illiterate people: "Thou hast appointed justices of peace to call poor men before them about matters they were not able to answer" (*2 Henry VI*, 4.7.38–40).<sup>48</sup> Lord Saye is someone whose "tongue hath parleyed unto foreign kings" and who pleads for his life with great eloquence. All he manages to achieve is highlighting the difference between his own linguistic capacities and those of Cade's (i.e. "ordinary") men, thereby producing yet another formal argument against himself: "(*aside*) [...] He shall die an [(even) if] it be but for pleading so well for his life. (*Aloud*) Away with him – he has a familiar under his tongue" (*2 Henry VI*, 4.7.103–105).<sup>49</sup> The ordering of the execution of Saye despite the covert admittance of his innocence by Cade also suggests an understanding of law by the latter as factually superior social position and actual control of physical violence. In Bernthal's view, Shakespeare's portrayal of Cade's "legal carnival" might be interpreted "as an unmasking of the Tudor (and all other) judicial systems: a demonstration that judicial decision-making is really just the exercise of raw power **cloaked in the rhetoric of equitable language**" (my emphasis).<sup>50</sup> At the same time, the Cade theme, no matter how grotesque and exaggerated it is, perfectly highlights popular perceptions about the nature of juridical language and persuasion.

Even this brief overview has been able to show that early modern English theatre was sensitive to Classical traditions of law and theatre, due to education, popular print culture, popular legal events, and general everyday involvement with the law. Some of the most widely held popular perceptions or myths about lawyers, ranging

48 Hutson 151–152.

49 In popular culture 'familiars' or 'familiar spritis' were creatures accompanying witches or other persons possessing supernatural powers. Familiars usually appear in the shape of normal, domesticated beasts, such as cats, but also in unnatural or hybrid forms, such as a hedgehog with an owl head. Familiars were believed to be the devil's agents or the devil himself. Cade's use of words shows his deep attachment with popular culture.

50 Bernthal 271.

from the figure of the protective, father-like good judge to allusions to the highly artificial and deceptive uses of legal language, can be traced in Shakespeare's highly popular plays. From that perspective, the meeting of law and theatre in early modern England, indeed, seems to be an encounter of the popular kind.

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# Művészet, népszerűség, üzlet: John Everett Millais esete a szappangyárossal

Péteri Éva

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem

peteri.eva@btk.elte.hu

John Everett Millais (1829–1896) a viktoriánus kor talán legnépszerűbb és legjobban fizetett festője volt. Éves jövedelme 1877-ben úgy 30 000 fontra rúgott, két évvel később pedig már a 40 000 fontot is elérte.<sup>1</sup> Mindez lehetővé tette, hogy impozáns négyszintes házat építtessen magának London egyik előkelő negyedében, South Kensingtonban, a Royal Albert Hall közelében található Palace Gate-en. A ház grandiózus márvány előcsarnokából egy széles, perzsaszőnyeggel borított márvány lépcsősor vezetett a felsőbb szintekre, így például az elegáns különteremhez, a fogadószobákhoz és a festő hatalmas, két szint belmagasságú, több mint 50 négyzetméteres műterméhez.<sup>2</sup> Amikor Thomas Carlyle, a kor elismert gondolkodója és írója először járt Millais fényűző otthonában, lenyűgözve kérdezte: „És mondja csak, Mr. Millais, ezt mind festékekkel hozta össze?” Millais igenlő válaszára ironikusan csak annyit mondott: „Akkor több bolond van ezen a világon, mint korábban hittem.”<sup>3</sup>

A sikert Millais elsősorban kivételes tehetségének köszönhetette. 1882-ben Emilie Isabel Barrington így fogalmazott: Millais „született festő”, olyan művész, aki „rendelkezik a tökéletes megfigyelés kiváló képességével, és a formák és színek iránti igazi érzékenységgel.”<sup>4</sup> Millais tehetségét jól mutatja, hogy minden idők legfiatalabb növendékeként, 11 évesen nyert felvételt a Királyi Akadémia (*Royal Academy*) festőiskolájába, és már 14 évesen átléphetett az iskola „antik” tagozatából (*Antique School*) az úgynevezett „élet” iskolájába (*Life School*), és ekkor készült vizsgarajzával az Akadémia első díját is elnyerte. 1848-ban mégis szembefordult iskolájával és annak művészetfelfogásával, és két növendéktársával, Dante Gabriel Rossettivel és William Holman Huntal megalapították a Preraffaelita Testvériséget. Az akadémiai konvenciók helyett a Raffaello előtti festők egyszerű őszinteségével kezdték festeni. Elvetették az

1 Todd 174, Ash 295. Összehasonlításképpen érdemes tudni, hogy a Bank of England kormányzójának éves fizetése 400 font volt, és Albert hercegnek – az 1861-ben bekövetkezett haláláig – évi 30 000 font jövedelmet biztosított a parlament. Picard 312.

2 Musson 113.

3 Cf. Todd 174; Husson 116. Millais fiának visszaemlékezése szerint a kérdést nem maga Carlyle, hanem az őt kísérő unokahúga tette fel a festőnek. Millais 2: 159.

4 Barrington 60.

idealizálást, és egy minden részletében realista ábrázolásmódot követtek. Millais két fontos korai munkája, a John Keats verse nyomán készült *Izabella és a bazsalikom-cserép* (*Isabella or the Pot of Basil*, 1849), valamint a *Krisztus a szülei házában* (más néven: *Az ácsműhely*) (*Christ in the House of His Parents / The Carpenter's Shop*, 1850) című képek ennek az időszaknak a termései. Az utóbbi képet élesen támadta a korabeli kritika: a Szent Család realista megjelenítését istenkáromlónak találták. Millais egy helybéli ácsról mintázta Szent Józsefet, akinek körmei koszosak és töredezetek, karján kidudorodnak az erek. Mária alakja szintén nem idealizált, sőt, Charles Dickens szerint kifejezetten csúnya: „olyan rút, hogy a legundorítóbb francia kocsmában és a leghitványabb angol ivóban is kitűnne rémségével.”<sup>5</sup>

Millais talán még örült is annak, hogy a kritikusok felháborodása miatt már huszonegy évesen az angol művészvilág egyik legtöbbet emlegetett festője lett,<sup>6</sup> később azonban gondosan ügyelt arra, hogy képeivel elnyerje mind a kritikusok, mind a nagyközönség tetszését. Két évvel a *Krisztus a szülei házában* balsikere után már tolongtak a lelkes látogatók, hogy az Akadémia éves kiállításán megnézhessék Millais két új képét, az *Ophéliát* (*Ophelia*) és *A Hugenottát* (*The Huguenot*). Ugyanebben az évben a szakmai elismerést is meghozta John Ruskin a *The Times*-hoz intézett két levelének elismerő kritikája. Ettől kezdve Millais karrierje szépen ívelt felfelé. 1853-ban az Akadémia levelező tagjává választották, 1863-ban pedig rendes tag lett. 1885-ben nemesi rangot kapott, és élete utolsó évében, 1896-ban néhány hónapig ő töltötte be a Királyi Akadémia elnöki tisztjét.

A szakmai elismeréssel párhuzamosan Millais népszerűsége is egyre nőtt. Barrington, a már említett 1882-es cikkében ezt írja: „Senki sem tagadhatja, hogy Mr. Millais a legnépszerűbb festőnk.”<sup>7</sup> A hatalmas közönségsikert Millais annak is köszönhette, hogy okosan alkalmazkodott a műkereskedelemben, a művészet értékesítésében végbement igen komoly változásokhoz. Míg az 1840-es években szinte kizárólag a Királyi Akadémia és annak éves kiállításai voltak a művészi érvényesülés fórumai, és a műkereskedelmet a festő és a vásárló közvetlen kapcsolata jellemezte; a '80-as, '90-es évekre már több fontos kiállítóterem is megnyitotta kapuit, és az értékesítésben egyre nagyobb szerepet töltöttek be a műkereskedők.<sup>8</sup> Ők sokszor nemcsak a műveket, hanem azok publikációs jogát is megvásárolták, s ezzel igen komoly jövedelemre tehettek szert. A műkereskedők közvetítői szerepben álltak a festők és az új vásárló

5 Dickens 265–266.

6 Fleming 64.

7 Barringer 60.

8 Bradley 182.

réteg, a vagyonos, de a művek értékének megítélésében bizonytalan középosztály között.<sup>9</sup> S mint ahogy a műkereskedő is üzletember volt, sokszor a középosztálybeli vásárlók sem esztétikai okból, hanem befektetési szándékkal vásároltak képet. Így Millais akadémiai elismertsége minden bizonnyal hozzájárult anyagi sikeréhez.

Népszerűsége ugyanakkor sokak szerint ártott művészi teljesítményének: többen azzal vádolták Millais-t, hogy – különösen az 1870-es évektől – tudatosan olyan képeket kezdett festeni, melyek biztosan számíthattak a nagyközönség tetszésére. Ilyenek voltak a „bájos gyerekek[et], a szívbe markoló szerelmi történetek[et], a befolyásos férfiak[at] és ünnepelt szépségek[et]” ábrázoló festmények.<sup>10</sup> Millais ugyanakkor nem hagyott fel az emelkedett témájú történelmi festészettel sem. 1886-ban például megfestette a hugenotta téma, a Szent Bertalan-éjszakai vérengzés egy másik változatát *Könyörület: Szent Bertalan napja, 1572* (Mercy: *St Bartholomew's Day, 1572*) címen, 1885-ben pedig a *Legfőbb szenvedélyt* (*The Ruling Passion*), mely a híres ornitológust, John Gouldot ábrázolja madarai és családja körében; de egyikkel sem aratott sikert. „Az emberek észre sem veszik,” írta Millais egy levelében a *Könyörület* kiállítása kapcsán, „csak a kisgyerek-képhez mennek, és azt mondják, »Ó, de édes!«. Mindig ez történik, ha valami komoly dologgal próbálkozik az ember.”<sup>11</sup> A *Legfőbb szenvedély* sem hozott sikert, két komoly érdeklődő is végül elállt vételi szándékától. Millais keserűen meg is jegyezte, hogy „nem fogja többet a kritikusokat és a közönséget »fontos képekkel« fárasztani”.<sup>12</sup>

S valóban, míg a *Legfőbb szenvedély* nem talált gazdára, Millais portréi és gyerekképei hamar elkelték. William E. Gladstone 1879-ben készült portréját még a kép kiállítása előtt vette meg a műkereskedő William Agnew, 1000 fontért. A kép sikere nyomán 1881-ben a Fine Art Society megbízta a festőt, hogy Gladstone riválisának, Benjamin Disraelinek a portréját is megfesse. Szintén 1000 fontot kapott a *Graphic szerkesztőjének*, William Lushon Thomasnak ötéves unokahúgát ábrázoló *Érett cseresznyéért* (*Cherry Ripe, 1879*), mely kevesebb mint egy hét alatt készült el. A képnek a folyóiratban megjelent színes nyomata is példátlan sikert aratott. A festő fiának visszaemlékezése szerint a nyomat az angolszász világ legtávolabbi pontjaira is eljutott: „ausztrál bányászok, kanadai telepesek, dél-afrikai vándorkereskedők keresték meg

9 Bradley 182.

10 Bradley 195.

11 Millais levele Mr. Briton Riviere-nek, 1886. július 11-én. Cf. Millais 2: 196.

12 Millais levele Mrs. Perugininek [Kate Dickens], 1885. május 7-én. Cf. Millais 2: 174.

Millais-t hálálkodó, lelkes levelekkel,” írja.<sup>13</sup> A művészet népszerűsítésének, avagy a művészet üzleti célú felhasználásának ezt a módját azonban nem mindenki nézte jó szemmel. Aggodalomra adott okot a nyomatok sokszor gyenge minősége, mely sokak szerint nem volt elég jó ahhoz, hogy az eredeti művek esztétikai értékét megmutassa. Ezenkívül úgy látták, hogy a széles körben való terjesztés és az ezáltal könnyen megszerezhető népszerűség és anyagi siker arra ösztönzi a művészeket, hogy emelkedett témák helyett silány alkotásokat készítsenek. Mások bizakodóbban tekintettek a művészet ilyen „vulgarizálására”, inkább annak jótékony hatását hangsúlyozva, hiszen a nyomatoknak jelentős szerepük volt az egyszerű emberek esztétikai nevelésében.<sup>14</sup>

A XIX. század vége felé egy új módja is megjelent a művészet üzleti hasznosításának, s ennek éppen Millais egyik gyermekképe volt az első példája. 1885-ben Sir William Ingram megvásárolta Millais-tól a *Buborékok* (*Bubbles*, 1885) című képét és annak minden reprodukciós jogát az *Illustrated London News* számára. Azután azonban, hogy a kép nyomatát megjelentette a lap egyik mellékleteként, eladta a festményt s a publikációs jogokat a Pears Szappangyár igazgatójának, Thomas J. Barrattnek, aki 2200 fontot fizetett érte. Barratt, akit a „modern hirdetés atyja”-ként tartanak számon, kiváló lehetőséget látott abban, hogy Millais képét a cég reklámjaként használja fel: újsághirdetéseken, plakátokon. A nyomatok felső részére rátették a cég logóját, az alsó részre pedig egy Pears szappant, s már kész is volt a tökéletes hirdetés. Millais szőke, szappanbuborékokat fújó kisfiúja hamarosan a késő viktoriánus kor egy szinte mindenki által ismert, ikonikus alakjává vált.<sup>15</sup> A népszerűségnek azonban ára volt: sokan azzal vádolták a festőt, hogy anyagi haszonért elárulta a művészetet. Így vélekedett a kor kedvelt regényírója, Marie Corelli is, aki – abban

13 Millais 2:121–122. A kép további érdekessége, hogy itt nem csupán egy bájos gyermek portréjáról van szó. A kislány egy 1879-es, a *Graphic* által szervezett karácsonyi jelmezbálon Joshua Reynolds portréja alapján Penelope Boothbynak öltözött be (*Penelope Boothby*, 1788). Másnap a nagybácsi, Thomas felkérte Millais-t a kislány kosztümös képének megfestésére (Fleming 262–263). A kép tehát parafrázis, és ráadásul épp annak a Reynoldsnak állít így emléket, aki a XVIII. századi portréfestészetet úgy próbálta meg emelkedett műfajjá tenni, hogy jól ismert antik és reneszánsz alkotásokkal vont képein párhuzamot (Wilson 36). Ilyen például Augustus Keppel admirális 1853-ban készült portréja, mely a belvederei Apollón márványszoborra utal, vagy a *Mrs. Siddons, a tragédia múzsája* (*Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse*) című 1784-es festmény, mely a Sixtus-kápolna Michelangelo által alkotott mennyezetfreskóinak egyikét, az Ézsaiás prófétát ábrázoló részletet idézi. Millais más parafrázisokat is készített, ilyen még például a *Velázquezi emlék* (*A Souvenir of Velázquez*, 1868), mely a spanyol festőt, vagy *A szívük visznek mindent* (*Hearts are Trumps*, 1872), mely Reynolds-ot idézi. Lásd Barlow 119–29.

14 Bradley 199–200.

15 A plakát egy pár évvel később, 1893-ban készült, a King’s Cross vasútállomást ábrázoló festményen is megjelenik, mint a kor emblematisztikus képe. George Earl: *Észak felé, a King’s Cross vasútállomás* (*Going North, King’s Cross Station*).

a meggyőződésben, hogy Millais kifejezetten a Pears gyárnak festette a képet – élesen kritizálta a festőt. *A sátán keserve* (*The Sorrows of Satan*, 1895) című regényében az egyik szereplő a következőket mondja:

Azok közé tartozom, akik úgy gondolják, hogy Millais ártott a jóhírének, amikor annyira lealacsonyodott, hogy megfestette azt a Pears szappanbuborékokat fújó zöld kisiút. Mert ez egy reklám volt, és bár az egész lényegtelennek tűnhet, mégis ezért nem fog soha Millais az olyan tiszteletre méltó, kiváló művészek közé tartozni, mint Romney, Sir Peter Lely, Gainsborough vagy Reynolds.<sup>16</sup>

Miután Millais egy levélben tisztázta helyzetét, Corelli a festő elnézését kérte, s válaszlevelében leírta, hogy a festményt magát mennyire szereti és milyen nagyra becsüli művészi értékei miatt. „Sir Joshua [Reynolds] *Az ártatlanság kora* (*The Age of Innocence*, 1788) című képe mellett lenne a helye a Nemzeti Galériában”, írta. A Pears hirdetést viszont egyszerűen „közönséges”-nek tartotta Corelli.<sup>17</sup>

A hirdetésen a képhez hozzáadott logó és Pears szappan valóban megváltoztatja a kép eredeti jelentését. A festmény Millais unokáját ábrázolja, de – mint arra Treuherz rámutat – a kép nem igazi portré: nem azért készült, hogy „megörökítse a kisiú vonásait.” A falusias környezet, a XVIII. századi portrékat idéző, csipkés szélű gallérral és zsabóval díszített bársonyruha is mutatja, hogy ez inkább egy kitalált, képzeletbeli portré,<sup>18</sup> melynek elsődleges célja nem a modell és az adott pillanat megörökítése. A művészi hagyományban a szappanbuborék *'vanitas'*-szimbólum, vagyis „[a] földi dolgok hiábavalóságát, értéktelenségét és mulandóságát” jelöli.<sup>19</sup> A mulandóság Millais képén is megjelenik: erre utal a bal oldal előterében látható törött, csorba cserép, és erre utal a festmény eredeti címe, *A gyermek világa* is. A gyermekek ártatlan világa tehát csalóka ábránd, tűnékeny, mint a szappanbuborék.<sup>20</sup> A szappanbuborék mint szimbólum legtöbbször a halál képzetével és jelképeivel társul.<sup>21</sup> Julien Treuherz egyenesen a halál szimbólumaként értelmezi, s így Millais képét a *'memento mori'* képek közé sorolja. Érdekes ellentmondás, hogy Simon Schama értelmezése szerint Millais szappanbuborékja épp a „gondtalan, Pán Péteri-i idill állandóságának

16 Lásd Millais 2: 190.

17 Cf. Millais 2:190–191.

18 Treuherz np, Bradley 190.

19 *A keresztény művészet lexikona* 316.

20 Cf. Bowdler 226, Cooper, Suzanne Fagence 34.

21 *A keresztény művészet lexikona* 316.

szimbóluma,” egy olyan álmvilágé, „ahol a szappanbuborékok sosem pukkannak szét”,<sup>22</sup> mint ahogy a történetben Pán Péter is mindig gyermek marad.<sup>23</sup>

Bár a festő fia azt állítja visszaemlékezésében, hogy Millais nagyon dühös volt, amikor tudomást szerzett a festmény hirdetésként való felhasználásáról, más források arra utalnak, hogy a dolog egyáltalán nem volt ellenére.<sup>24</sup> Mivel Barratt a hozzáadott részletekkel megváltoztatta Millais képét, a festőnek lehetősége lett volna peres eljárást indítani, és kártérítést, valamint az összes megváltoztatott kép elkobzását követelni,<sup>25</sup> ezt azonban nem tette meg. Amikor néhány évvel a *Buborékok* hirdetésként való megjelenése után, 1889-ben egy másik szappangyáros, William Hesketh Lever megvette és szintén hirdetésként használta fel William Powell Frith *Az új szoknya* (*The New Frock*, 1889) című képét, Frith nyilvánosan tiltakozott a kép más címen való megjelentetése és reklámként való felhasználása ellen. De nem mindenki osztotta Frith és Corelli véleményét. A *Pall Mall Gazette* egy 1889-es cikkének szerzője egyenesen követendő példának tartotta ezt az eljárást, hiszen, mint írja, „a kiplakátolt utca a szegény emberek képtára, és minden, amit azért teszünk, hogy igazi művészetet vigyünk London csúf utcáinak poszttereire, a társadalom javát szolgálja.”<sup>26</sup> Még Millais fia is elismeréssel adózott Barrattnek azért, hogy a művészi hirdetések bevezetésével emelte az újsághirdetések és a hirdetőplakátok esztétikai színvonalát.<sup>27</sup>

Bár az *Érett cseresznye* és a *Buborékok* hatalmas népszerűséget hoztak Millais-nek a késő viktoriánus korban, a modernisták már a „viktoriánus szentimentalizmus” megnyilvánulásainak tartották ezeket a képeket, és sokszor egyenesen giccsnek nevezték őket.<sup>28</sup> Mint Julian Treuherz megjegyzi, „az a feltevés, hogy a gyermekkor bájos és ártatlan, Freud és a pszichoanalízis után már teljesen megdőlt”, és már so-

22 Schama 516.

23 Millais buborékjai egyébként tényleg nem pukkantak szét. Mivel a tovaszálló, majd pillanatokon belül megsemmisülő szappanbuborékokat képtelenség volt lefesteni, a festő üveggömböket készítettett, azok alapján dolgozott.

24 John Guille Millais minden bizonnyal apja művészi rangja, hitele megőrzése miatt írta ezt. Lásd Fleming 285–286.

25 Cooper, Elena 245.

26 „The Artist and the Advertiser.” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1899 július 19. Lásd Cooper, Elena 245.

27 Millais 2:189. Barratt egyébként nem csak üzletemberként jeleskedett, hanem komoly műgyűjtő is volt. Gyűjteményében Millais mellett olyan festők képei is szerepeltek, mint John Constable, Thomas Lawrence vagy Edwin Landseer (lásd Davenport, np). Lever (később Lord Leverhulme) szintén jelentős gyűjteményt hozott létre, mellyel 1922-ben megalapította a liverpooli (Port Sunlight) Lady Lever Galériát (Lady Lever Art Gallery). Mivel Millais volt Lever kedvenc festője, a gyűjteményben több festménye is megtalálható. 1914-ben, Barratt halála után a Lever Testvérek megvásárolták a Pears gyárat, s ezzel együtt a *Buborékok* is az ő tulajdonukba került. A kép most a Lady Lever Galériában látható, a Király Akadémia hosszú távú kölcsöne révén (Treuherz np.)

28 Barlow 1–2.

sem fogunk tudni úgy tekinteni Millais képére, mint ahogy a viktoriánusok tették. Millais művészetével csak a XX. század utolsó évtizedeiben kezdtek újra komolyan foglalkozni: kiállítások nyíltak, tanulmányok, könyvek jelentek meg, ami új lendületet adott Millais népszerűségének is. Ekkor azonban a nagyközönséget már nem a portrék és a bájos gyermekképek érdekelték, hanem Shakespeare tragikus Opheliája, vagy a hugenotta vérengzés megrendítő szerelmespárja; de legtöbbször az irodalmi és történeti kontextus figyelembevétele nélkül. Mi sem bizonyítja ezt jobban, mint a képek populáris felhasználási módjai. A lassan vízbe fúló, utolsó dalát éneklő Ophelia életnagyságú poszterét ma már kithetjük a kanapé fölé a nappaliban, vagy magunkkal vihetjük egy táskán vagy a mobiltelefon védőborítóján. Sőt, a legutóbbi divat szerint viselhetjük egy miniszoknya hátsó, domboruló felén, vagy egy ruha rakott szoknyájának redőiben.<sup>29</sup> S bár a képi tartalom ilyen megjelenési formája meglehetősen bizarr, mindez mégis Millais ma is élő, tagadhatatlan népszerűségének a jele.

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# **The Archers' Arrows: The films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger during World War II and their Reception**

**Andrea Velich**

Eötvös Loránd University

velich.andrea@btk.elte.hu

It is now a commonplace of film history to identify the 1940s as the golden age of British cinema, the point at which British films established a distinctive profile and a national identity.<sup>1</sup> However, the government's decision to close cinemas at the outbreak of World War II, to requisition some of the studios, to conscript film workers, and to ration film stocks forecast a dark future for the film industry which had fought for many years to establish itself against the power and popularity of Hollywood.

Therefore, in my paper I would like to highlight The Archers' Second World War activity in a broader, interdisciplinary context. I intend to underline the significance of The Archers' cinema by focusing on the role of their war films with the help of the autobiographies of two film directors, Michael Powell and Kevin McDonald, the grandson of Pressburger and by further various international academic literature.

The British film industry owes a lot to the Hungarian-born Korda brothers setting up the London Film Studios in 1933 as well as to some of his fellow Hungarian-born scriptwriters, including Pressburger, who also got acquainted with Powell via Korda in 1939, as he had been working for the Korda brothers since his arrival to London in 1935.<sup>2</sup> Powell claims that the Korda brothers were confident that everything was possible, while "the rest of us got on with the job of making it happen."<sup>3</sup> Korda arrived in Britain in 1931 and had an early, huge international success as the producer/director of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), which ignited his excessive ambition. He then borrowed money to build Denham studios, but he could not follow up the popular appeal of *Henry VIII*, thus later he sold it to Rank and, after 1940, he divided his time between the US and Britain.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ryall 1.

2 Moor 27.

3 Powell 611.

4 Murphy 242.

At the outbreak of World War II there were fears in Britain that, as in World War I, film production would collapse. Indeed, the early years of the war were characterised by disruption and uncertainty over state protection and production finance. Studio space was restricted, over half of it was required for war purposes and for the production of propaganda films sponsored by the Ministry of Information.<sup>5</sup> Even so, studios managed to produce an average of 60 feature films a year, a third of the annual output of the 1930s, while cinema admissions in Britain almost doubled to reach 1.635 million by 1946.<sup>6</sup>

Ironically, the war also started an aesthetic revival that was to last to the end of the decade. It is true that fewer films were produced in the 1940s than in the 1930s, but critics noted the emergence of what they termed a new 'quality' cinema.<sup>7</sup> The new kind of British cinema combined art with popular appeal, European sophistication with American vigour, and the realism of the documentarists with entertainment. This mix was to leave its mark on British cinema for many years to come.<sup>8</sup>

While the reception of *The Archers* might be ambiguous in Britain, in Hungary it is positive, but limited to film scholars and journals. Besides the recent research of Zsolt Győri, Kata Anna Váró, Teréz Vince, and the work of some Hungarian film critics including Ferenc Takács, a special issue of the Hungarian film journal *Filmvilág* was devoted to Emeric Pressburger in September 2009.

The image of dreams is commonly applied to films as there is a considerable gap between someone's dreams and what life offers. This gap, as Jeffrey Richards notes, can be partly bridged by daydreaming found in most fiction films made by the 'dream factory'.<sup>9</sup> When in 1939 Britain entered World War II, the only place left for daydreaming and escapism was the cinema. British wartime cinema also brought ordinary British life to the screen in a sharp contrast with the upper-middle-class ethos and world of South Kensington of the 1930s. The new films, it was felt, connected with their audiences, and the box-office returns seemed to endorse this.<sup>10</sup> This was also true for the films made by *The Archers*.

The easy-to-recall logo (an archery board with a few arrows) of the British Film production company, *The Archers*, is one of the hallmarks of British film history during World War II. The company, with their logo referring to the Robin Hood

5 Ryall 2.

6 Street 12.

7 Street 14.

8 Ryall 2.

9 Richards 1.

10 Ryall 2.

legend, was created by one of the best-known British film making partnerships of film director Michael Powell and scriptwriter-co-director Emeric Pressburger in 1941; their work together lasted until the late 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Few people would, however, guess that Emeric Pressburger was actually born in Hungary as Pressburger Imre. The significance of The Archers' war films was far greater than anyone could imagine.

The Archers' most successful war films included, chronologically, *The Spy in Black* (1939), *Contraband* (1940), *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *The Volunteer* (1943), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945).<sup>12</sup> They also made a few ground-breaking and well-received art house films after the war, including *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947), *The Red Shoes* (1948), *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951), *Oh, Rosalinda!* (1955), *III Met by Moonlight* (1957),<sup>13</sup> which fall outside the scope of this paper.

Although Powell and Pressburger were given a BAFTA fellowship (lifetime award) in 1981, Ian Christie in 1994 still argued that the real significance of The Archers in British Cinema has not yet been properly recognised.<sup>14</sup> This can be explained with the mainstream Griersonian documentarist-realist film tradition in Britain, in which The Archers were considered outsiders with their continental approach, crews, and their mysterious, surrealistic, and semi-Expressionist films.<sup>15</sup>

It is a fact that in the British film industry there is a deep divide between the Social Realist and the Conservative-labelled heritage films and their receptions. Art house films in Britain are traditionally linked with directors following the footsteps of the interwar Griersonian documentarist movement associated with names such as Karel Reisz, Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, and Stephen Frears, among others. Some of the directors of the *auteur* cinema (e.g. Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway) followed the continental avant-garde movement. However, directors, who would not follow either, were less well-received.<sup>16</sup>

While British cinema may have a prestigious tradition of realist drama, "it has been poor at mythologising the worlds around us, a feat achieved by Hollywood, which created iconic genres (westerns and gangster movies)."<sup>17</sup> However, I believe

11 Murphy 240.

12 IMDb, "Powell & Pressburger Films".

13 Macdonald 24.

14 Christie 1.

15 Murphy 240.

16 Lay 99.

17 Leggott 53.

that Britain likewise created iconic genres including ‘the monarchy films’ and ‘the war films’ of the 1930s, which became marketable all over the world, including the US.

Earlier, the founding father of ‘the monarchy film,’ Hungarian-born Alexander Korda, sought to create high budget, quality ‘history’ films (to literally outshine low-budget quota films), which were international while based on national (English or British) history, a genre meant to succeed worldwide and to survive in the long run.<sup>18</sup> We can also argue that The Archers created high quality iconic war feature films. The ‘quality’ film became the basis for the exportability of British cinema since the 1930s.<sup>19</sup>

According to Murphy, “The Archers’ oeuvre stands out in world cinema, and although this is beginning to be recognised, still a degree of scepticism persists as to how they could have worked so productively in the provincial backwater of the British film industry.”<sup>20</sup> In his autobiography *A Life in Movies*, Powell underlines that the British film industry in the 1940s was not provincial compared to the American film industry, it was turning out films as good as anything from Hollywood.<sup>21</sup>

In 1938, after a few years of making B pictures, Powell transformed his career by taking a film crew north to a distant island to shoot the all-location *Edge of the World* (1938). This earned him a contract with Korda, who then “teamed him with a congenial writer in Pressburger.”<sup>22</sup> Powell’s autobiography is full of tributes to Pressburger, whom he regarded as such an invaluable collaborator that between 1941 and 1956, he shared his writer, producer, and director credits with him as The Archers.<sup>23</sup>

The first film script written by Emeric Pressburger in Britain has proved to carry a metaphorical and prophetic title, *The Challenge* (1938). The film tells the story of the expedition of the British climber, Edward Whymper, who wanted to be the first British man to reach the peak of Matternhorn in 1864.<sup>24</sup> The title of this idealising and romanticising film, with its metaphorical snowy mountains covered in fog and mist blurring borders and boundaries, would sadly, within a year, prove prophetic at the outbreak of the war.

18 Velich 221.

19 Monk 184.

20 Murphy 241.

21 Powell 612.

22 Barr.

23 Powell 611.

24 Murphy 241.

In 1939, Powell was looking for a scriptwriter to rewrite the script of his film-in-progress, *Q-planes* (screened then as *The Spy in Black*). The film then became the first of a series of the Powell–Pressburger collaborations, in which Korda also had an immediate financial interest as its producer.<sup>25</sup> Powell held Korda in high esteem, whom he described as a clever, quick-witted, and humorous man with very good taste and intuition, and, thus, he trusted him when giving the script to Pressburger.<sup>26</sup> Powell also remembers his first meeting with Pressburger as a kind of plot, hatched by the Hungarian-born artist geniuses in London Film Studios to please the lead actors of the film, Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson, who were dissatisfied with the original script of the film.<sup>27</sup>

As Powell remembers, “Pressburger turned the story of *Q-planes* inside out, rewrote the ending and he was overjoyed to work with such a creative scriptwriter.”<sup>28</sup> At the same time Pressburger emphasised that they (with Powell) could easily guess what the other one was going to say or what he was thinking, which is very rare.<sup>29</sup> Their meeting and collaboration was successful right away and could even be compared symbolically to the penetration of the arrows of their co-founded company, The Archers. Therefore, I will argue that despite the mixed and often undertoned reception of The Archers, the significance of their filmmaking partnership is far greater than has so far been globally acknowledged.

Pressburger was convinced that there was no such thing as a plot, a film does not consist of words but of thoughts, feelings, surprises, and suspense.<sup>30</sup> The German visual style, Expressionism, is evident in several Powell–Pressburger films. According to Natacha Thiery, as they disturb perception, these films question the supposed realism of the cinematographic image: “They substitute for reality, which remains their referent, the invention of a world in which the invisible part is privileged and permeated by the feeling of the fantastic.”<sup>31</sup> Ferenc Takács claims that we can see the Weimar Expressionist visual style in *The Spy in Black* with its extensive use of light, shadow, high contrast, delusional, and expressionist styles in its sets and backdrops.<sup>32</sup> Sarah Street attributed this partly to their film technicians, who also

25 Moor 27.

26 Powell 613.

27 Powell 304.

28 Powell 305.

29 Powell 302.

30 Powell 593.

31 Thiery 4.

32 Takács 35.

came from the continent. The cameraman of *I Know Where I'm going* (1945), Erwin Hillier, for example, who used to work for Fritz Lang as his lighting and deep focus photography, also proves this.<sup>33</sup>

There is also a new iconic visual symbol in the first Powell–Pressburger film, the sea, which is a returning feature and metaphor in many of The Archers' films. The sea represents the power of nature and, therefore, mastering it can stand for victory in the war. The sea has always been a recurring *leitmotiv* in most British films due to the geographical feature of the British Isles, as well as a symbol of the nation and of the British Empire. The sea, moreover, is not only a compulsory feature of British history and heritage films but it is also emblematically present in the Social Realist British *auteur* cinema addressing the issues of power and freedom.<sup>34</sup> The main themes of The Archers' films, the war and the sea, both appeared already in their first joint enterprise, *The Spy in Black*, a spy story set in the World War I, first screened in August 1939, just a few days before the outbreak of the World War II.<sup>35</sup>

Both *The Spy in Black* and their next film, *Contraband* (1940) are mixed genres, reflecting British concerns in the 1930s in a Gothic style while mixing spy stories with some elements of Expressionist cinema.<sup>36</sup> Both films are Hitchcock-style thrillers, but, at the same time, important war propaganda pieces with the sea as a metaphor. *Contraband* also paved the way for the further war film collaborations of Powell and Pressburger, including their next and maybe most important film, 49<sup>th</sup> *Parallel*, again made for Korda in 1941. Both *Contraband* (a tale with spies and smugglers in the blackout and unreal shore London life of the 'phoney war') and 49<sup>th</sup> *Parallel* addressed the issue of national-cultural boundaries, the difficulties of settling in foreign countries.<sup>37</sup>

The well-known German actor, Conrad Veidt plays the role of Captain Anderson, the neutral Danish ship's captain in *Contraband*, risking his life to reveal German spies when stepping on British grounds without a valid ID.<sup>38</sup> We might see parallels between the lives of Captain Anderson, Conrad Veidt, and the life of Pressburger. Many of the Powell–Pressburger films address the issues of identity, nationality, borders, communities, how losing one's nationality might affect somebody, what

33 Street 161.

34 Lay 101.

35 *The Spy in Black* (1939).

36 Moor 28.

37 Murphy 242; *IMDb*.

38 *Contraband* (1940), Cf. Bergfelder and Cargnelli 6.

roles communities play in keeping our identity.<sup>39</sup> Sarah Street argues that the impact of Pressburger's work at UFA is unmistakable, the influence of his German film *Abschied* (1930) is obvious in *Contraband*.<sup>40</sup>

From *Contraband* in 1940 to *A Matter of Life and Death* in 1946, Powell and Pressburger single-mindedly applied themselves to making eight films in direct and indirect support of the British war effort and its aftermath. Although they maintained a close and friendly liaison with the Ministry of Information's Films Division, only two films, *49th Parallel* (1941) and *The Volunteer* (1943), had financial backing from the government.<sup>41</sup> The others were funded by British National Films or by Arthur Rank. *49th Parallel*, however, showed a good example of the possible collaboration of the government and the film industry during the war.<sup>42</sup>

Powell and Pressburger in early 1940 proposed a bold location venture to Canada, to make a big film with big stars, on an international scale and with an international theme, very different from anything that the native industry was then doing. It also cemented their long-term partnership.<sup>43</sup> *49th Parallel* is one of the great thrillers of World War II with one of the finest amalgams of suspense and propaganda.<sup>44</sup> The film's plot is simple: during 1941, a German submarine raiding Canadian coastal waters is sunk by Royal Canadian Air Force bombers, but six German survivors attempt to reach safety in the then-neutral United States. Along the way, as they flee from the manhunt in their wake, they meet a cross-section of multicultural Canadians in a series of encounters that are alternately lyrical, humorous, and savage.<sup>45</sup>

However, *49th Parallel* was more significant than a thriller, and it was even far more important than its two Oscar nominations, including *Best Picture* and *Academy Award for Best Original Story*, would indicate. During the darkest days of World War II, immediately after the fall of France, it set a standard for filmmaking that transformed British cinema during the war. *49th Parallel* may not be the best of The Archers' films but it is a key film in several ways: "it consolidated their partnership, its bold example showed a way forward for British cinema in terms both of ambition and of funding, and at the same time it did a skilful job of war propaganda."<sup>46</sup>

39 Moor 28.

40 Street 161.

41 Barr.

42 Naficy 31.

43 Barr.

44 Eder.

45 *49th Parallel* (1941).

46 Barr.



Powell and Pressburger made a movie that defied the limits of filmmaking in wartime. In the midst of crippling travel restrictions, they crisscrossed the Atlantic and the length and breadth of Canada, covering more than 50,000 miles making their film.<sup>47</sup> In the face of a British film industry that was close to collapse, they forged ahead with a film that had a cast drawn from all over the world. They assembled from all of this a film “filled with such beauty, vision, and vibrancy, that it was taken to heart by American audiences in a way that no British film before it ever had been.”<sup>48</sup> Released in the United States as *The Invaders*, it meant to underline the growing Nazi threat and help to support the American war sentiment to join the war.<sup>49</sup>

While some films, like Leslie Howard’s *Pimpernel Smith* (1941), caricatured the Germans as incompetent, *49th Parallel* reminded its audience, both at home and in North America, that they rather represent a threat that had to be taken seriously. It was bold both in using Nazis as protagonists and showing them as ruthless and resourceful.<sup>50</sup> The long set-piece pro-Hitler speech delivered by the German Lieutenant Hirth (Eric Portman) to the German-speaking Hutterite colony in Canada is answered by an even more impressive anti-Nazi speech by their quiet but passionate German priest and leader in Canada, Peter (Anton Walbrook).<sup>51</sup>

In *49th Parallel* as they travel across Canada, the Nazis die through failures of nerve or judgment. Lohrmann is knocked cold in a cave by the English intellectual Philip Armstrong Scott (Leslie Howard). The final survivor, the leader Hirth, is trapped in a railway car on his way to being arrested by the Canadian authorities.<sup>52</sup> As Powell’s memoirs confirm, *49th Parallel* was directed above all at the American market; it intended to raise awareness of the Nazi danger and to secure the film’s success in that market.<sup>53</sup>

British cinema was dominated during the war by the Rank Organisation, founded by Arthur Rank. Originally, he was a successful flour miller, when, in 1933, his intention to equip Methodist halls and Sunday schools with film projectors accidentally brought him into the film industry. Soon he became the most influential figure in British cinema, “tying together many of the disparate industry elements

47 Barr.

48 Eder.

49 Moor 47.

50 Murphy 243.

51 *49th Parallel*.

52 *49th Parallel* (1941).

53 Powell 614.

from production to exhibition under the Rank Organisation.”<sup>54</sup> By 1940 Rank had also developed a powerful distribution base and acquired a quarter share in the US company Universal, which brought lucrative distribution rights to popular Hollywood movies. It owned Pinewood Studios, opened in 1936, and Denham (the largest studio in Britain) bought in 1939 from Korda, when London Films floundered.<sup>55</sup>

In 1941 Rank acquired the Odeon chain of suburban cinemas and the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation including its cinema circuit, thus establishing the Rank Organization as a strong, vertically integrated company.<sup>56</sup> While other British studios were cutting back on operations, Rank used *49th Parallel* and its success in America (where, by Powell's estimate, it netted an unheard of \$5 million in box-office receipts) as the basis for establishing independent production companies headed by Powell and Pressburger (The Archers), David Lean (Cineguild), and Laurence Olivier (Two Cities).<sup>57</sup>

The success of *49th Parallel* allowed for forging a deeper bond of The Archers, officially formed in 1941, encouraged by Rank. They had equal standing within the company, sharing the film credits for production, writing, and directing, although Powell was principally responsible for direction and Pressburger for writing.<sup>58</sup> In a letter to Wendy Hiller in 1942, asking her to appear in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, Pressburger explicitly set out The Archers' manifesto. Besides their financial responsibility towards their investors and the responsible planning and timing of filmmaking, they emphasised the significance of the self-respect of the artists and their collaborators and underlined two important things: they refused to be guided or coerced by any influence but their own judgement.<sup>59</sup> The first film made under the new The Archers' formula was *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* in 1943.<sup>60</sup> They also moved into a new building in Central London, into Dorset House at the beginning of 1942, where they remained until 1947.<sup>61</sup>

The Archers' second official propaganda project was *The Volunteer* in 1943.<sup>62</sup> It seems to have been taken on at the suggestion of their friend, actor Ralph Richardson, who divided time between military service and film production. Like Olivier,

54 Murphy 268.

55 Murphy 269.

56 Ryall 8.

57 Powell 613.

58 Macdonald 192.

59 Macdonald 189.

60 Powell 387.

61 Macdonald 192.

62 *The Volunteer* (1943).

Richardson was in the Fleet Air Arm and wanted to encourage recruitment with the kind of publicity boost that had been given to the navy by Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*, and to other fields of civilian and military work by a host of more modest documentaries.<sup>63</sup> Richardson himself, in his own star persona, narrates an episodic tale of how his theatrical dresser joins the FAA and makes a success of it, learning new skills and becoming an efficient cog in the war machine. It ends optimistically with the volunteer receiving a medal from the king, when a photographer (a cameo for Michael Powell in the film) steps forward, and his still picture of the occasion becomes the final image of the film.<sup>64</sup>

The Archers' films were deliberately designed to embody British qualities of endurance and self-sacrifice in the face of war. One striking feature of the 1940s production is its teamwork.<sup>65</sup> In the 1930s, with the growing strength of Hitler, history and heritage films proved not only popular in Britain but also significant in underlining the importance of joint community efforts and human solidarity.<sup>66</sup> The best example for this of The Archers' war films is Pressburger's favourite film, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943).<sup>67</sup> The film portrays in warm-hearted detail the life and loves of one extraordinary man, General Clive Wynne-Candy of out-moded values. Traveling backwards forty years, we see a different man altogether: the young and dashing officer 'Sugar' Candy. Through a series of relationships with three women and his lifelong friendship with a German officer, we see the transformation of military honour to the modern notions of 'total war'.<sup>68</sup>

The film's idea was based on the caricatures of David Low (1891–1963) who created the Conservative officer, Colonel Blimp with his moustache in the columns of the *London Evening Standard*, who shared his Conservative and naive political and military beliefs in the spa. The term 'blimp' later became associated with an absurd and anachronistic political attitude.<sup>69</sup> However, the film's portrayal of Colonel Blimp was much kinder than the original cartoon, even almost lovable. Christie also praises the allegory of the film and Candy diving under to reappear with his young, energetic self.<sup>70</sup> The film was also an important stage regarding the

63 Barr.

64 *In Which We Serve* (1942).

65 Street 38.

66 Győri 14.

67 Powell 388.

68 *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), Cf. Street 63.

69 Takács 36.

70 Christie 3.

technical innovation of *The Archers*, being their first Technicolour film, allowing them a more artistic visual.<sup>71</sup>

Sue Harper claims that “pastoralism runs like a leitmotiv through most British cultural forms, except the cinema.”<sup>72</sup> This may not, however, stand for some Powell–Pressburger films including the *49th Parallel*, *A Canterbury Tale*, and *Ill Met by Moonlight*. This might, at the same time, partly explain the moderately enthusiastic reception of the Powell–Pressburger films, as ruralism as a *leitmotiv* went against Griersonian realism.<sup>73</sup> For various reasons, however, ‘the culture of country nostalgia’ was a key source of sentiment and imagery for wartime Britain. The countryside was, quite literally for many people, a haven from the destruction being wreaked in the blitzed cities.<sup>74</sup> For many, wartime experience intensified the perception of England and its identification with the rural.<sup>75</sup>

Powell, as an Englishman of Kent, well understood ‘English rural idyllicism’ and it was already embodied in the opening sequences of the first propaganda feature film of the war he directed, *The Lion Has Wings* (1939), despite it being set largely in RAF control stations and the cockpits of RAF bombers. The film opens with a shot of the Dover coast followed by a few rural images including village scenes, ivy-clad cottages, churches, rolling hills, and sheep.<sup>76</sup> *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) is probably the most distinctive and widely discussed of the wartime rural films. The film is also marked by several picturesque open-air sequences celebrating the beauty of the Kentish countryside. It has been described as “a key representation of the Second World War home front.”<sup>77</sup>

*A Canterbury Tale* is a film which enlisted Chaucer in the campaign for national salvation and attempted to recover for England a medieval innocence and a romantic optimism it had lost. “It seems to have an elusive, philosophical agenda containing mystical and magical qualities which go against both the British realist tradition and wartime austerity.”<sup>78</sup> Although Powell himself stated that “its aim was explaining to Americans, and to our own people, the spiritual values and traditions, we were fighting for,”<sup>79</sup> the film was not propaganda in a realist sense, but of a different sort,

71 Powell 399.

72 Harper 149.

73 Ryall 6.

74 Ryall 7. For types of nostalgia, see Hargitai 2019.

75 Wright 81.

76 *A Canterbury Tale* (1944).

77 Christie, *History is now* 75.

78 Street 201.

79 Powell 437.

a popular romantic picture of Britain appealing to a specific sense of national identity which emerged from rural traditions. The film created a semi-religious mythical landscape, with a sequence of images and sounds which expressed forcibly the “mystical sense of the numinous in the landscape.”<sup>80</sup> As Martin Lefebvre suggests, “landscape, at least in the visual arts, is space freed from eventhood,” which seems to fit with the way in which images of the countryside are designed in *A Canterbury Tale* to evoke “a timeless, mysterious space, a recurrent feature of war-time neo-romanticism.”<sup>81</sup>

The narrative, running along two parallel timelines (addressing both Chaucer’s age and World War II) is built on the permanent beauty and myth of the English landscape and appeals to the audience’s cultural memory.<sup>82</sup> Powell also claims that the film shows the traditional English countryside for which it is worth fighting and dying for.<sup>83</sup> Besides the landscape, sounds and music are equally significant in The Archers’ last war film, *I Know Where I’m Going* (1945). Joan Webster (Wendy Hiller) travels to marry a Scottish laird (lord), when on her way she meets a farmer and finds true love. During her emotional struggles, Joan symbolically hears painful industrial voices destroying the beauty and purity of the Scottish landscape.<sup>84</sup>

After their mixed post-war reviews, there was a turn in The Archers’ artistic reception in the 1970s and 1980s. Several European and American film directors, including Brian De Palma, Terry Gilliam, Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, Francis Ford Coppola, Bernardo Bertolucci stated that they had found inspiration in their work, in their film language. The most impressed director appears to be Martin Scorsese, who had been The Archers’ fan since his teenage years, and in 1972, he even made an interesting tribute to them by naming the two clowns in his film, *Boxcar Bertha*, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.<sup>85</sup>

According to Teréz Vincze, the Powell–Pressburger films are both fairy tales and social criticism, both abstract and real.<sup>86</sup> This might partly derive from the cultural roots and experience of Pressburger, all the influence of the Hungarian, German, and French film industry. This multiculturalism may also explain their earlier mixed British reception and underrated significance. As Christie explains, “[T]he Powell

80 Hockenhull 118.

81 Lefevre 22.

82 Chapman 112.

83 Powell 610.

84 Street 165.

85 Christie xix.

86 Vincze 39.

and Pressburger's films were created out of no obvious cinematic tradition."<sup>87</sup> Sarah Street warns, however, that "The Archers' work should not be seen as an isolated exception to the realist rule but as an inheritor of the British diverse traditions."<sup>88</sup>

Emeric Pressburger died in 1988, aged 86, and is buried in East Anglia.<sup>89</sup> His biography was written by his grandson, Kevin Macdonald, who is a film director and made a documentary about his grandfather. A blue plaque was unveiled in Miskolc, Hungary in 2007 to commemorate the birthplace of Pressburger, and seven years later, in 2014 a blue plaque was placed on Dorset House in London, where they worked from 1942 to 1947 to commemorate The Archers.<sup>90</sup> Michael Powell's autobiography was published in 1986, four years before his death. When Kevin Macdonald in 2013 visited *CineFest*, the Miskolc Film Festival in Hungary, he handed over the main film award named after his grandfather, Emeric or Imre Pressburger personally.<sup>91</sup> Thus, we might finally conclude that The Archers' arrows hit the target well both during World War II and later decades.

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88 Street 200.

89 Pressburger.

90 Macdonald 134.

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# **A Priest, a Bard, and an Oracle Walk onto a Cable News Set: One Theoretical Framework for Political Punditry**

**Réka Dorottya Fehér**

Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Literary Studies

feher.reka.d@gmail.com

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, print and radio media became important enough in the lives of the average American that serious thought was put into how influential the news could be. The idea that the role of the news media was to inform and teach the average voter about the world was optimistically pursued by many within and without the realm of journalism. In an ever-expanding world where, thanks to technology, information started to flow faster and faster, many worried that the citizen would lose their way and would not be able to understand what was happening all around them. Enter the pundit. A person who could explain what was important and the reasons behind certain events and decisions made by elected representatives. This job became so ubiquitous and wide-spread, that by 1988 Eric Alterman coined the phrase punditocracy to describe a “small group of [...] columnists, editors and Sunday talk-show guests” who have “been able not merely to shift the terms of political debate but, in some cases, to redefine the English language.”<sup>1</sup> He refined this definition later to “punditocracy is a tiny group of highly visible political pontificators who make their living offering ‘inside political opinions and forecasts’ in the elite national media.” Alterman is extremely worried about this punditocracy that has been created in the US because “it is their debate [...] that determines the parameters of political discourse in the nation today.”<sup>2</sup> He concludes his book by discussing the importance of language in politics highlighting that “[t]he same people charged with upholding the value of our political language, of defending its honor and protecting its content, are the ones who manipulate it most shamelessly.”<sup>3</sup> Although it would be vital to research such a large part of the news media, few have actually done that. One of the most thorough theories of pundits was published by Nimmo and Combs where they categorize different types of political pundits in order to better understand how they affect the news and political discussion.

1 Alterman, “A Neo-Con”.

2 Alterman, *Sound*, 4-5.

3 Alterman, *Sound*, 284.



The goal here is to look at the theoretical framework for pundits that was published by Nimmo and Combs in 1992 in *The Political Pundits* and try to apply it to the contemporary media environment. After a general review of the three main categories of pundits – priests, bards, and oracles – I will highlight how the priest category is still applicable today, but the bard category essentially does not work anymore for the political satire/comedy scene found in the US.

Nimmo and Combs trace the tradition of punditry back to ancient times with prophets and priests. “The modern contemporary pundits who are familiar fixtures of the political scene are [...] direct descendants of the pundits of ancient times.”<sup>4</sup> The authors trace the idea of pundits back to ancient cultures, where after literacy was born an entire separate social class of people came to be who had specialized knowledge in interpreting texts, that is, understanding and interpreting language. These people soon became a fixture of the ruling class as they were integrated into the role of advisors for the rulers themselves.<sup>5</sup> These roles would be labeled priests, scribes, advisors, or prophets. In this theoretical framework, Nimmo and Combs see pundits as the modern version of this class of people, all of whom belong under the umbrella terms of media professionals or “opinion-mongering”<sup>6</sup> depending on the context. They base their categorization on Lessl’s theory on how science is portrayed in the media.<sup>7</sup> Nimmo and Combs expand on Lessl’s ideas by applying his terms of priest and bard to modern political pundits, and adding another group of their own, oracles. Each category has distinct characteristics, which are based on real people and certain media formats that could be found at any point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since each category is attached to specific pundits, it has resulted in different aspects of the theory becoming obsolete over time. As media has changed, so have formats and the people who are considered pundits today. Perhaps the broad generalizations still have a kernel of truth to them, but the details are very different when looking at the contemporary pundit scene of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

4 Nimmo and Combs 11.

5 Nimmo and Combs 3.

6 Safire, “On Language.”

7 Lessl describes two main rhetorical voices, priests and bards, that exist when considering scientific rhetoric in cultural contexts in the United States. According to him, the scientist is the priest who indoctrinates and spreads the word of science, while the bard is the voice of the people and common sense. The priest uses rhetoric “that crosses the boundaries between a particular elite subculture and the broader social groups within which it is nested as *priestly*; discourse which confines itself to the world of common sense experience already integral to its audience’s identity... *bardic*.” Lessl 184.

First, the “priestly pundit” is one who is both an insider in the political world yet has authority over outsiders and explains the world and events to them. The characteristics of a priestly pundit are “one whose reputation [...] yields stature among political elites [...] The priest not only speaks to them [elites] and with them but has permission to speak of and for them to those outside elite circles. [...] In sum, the priest mediates political knowledge among insiders (elites) and between insiders and outsiders (the populace mass).”<sup>8</sup> Trust is placed in priestly pundits by both elites and non-elites, their opinions and words can influence those who make decisions, and they can be influenced by decision makers as well. “The priestly establishment is a loose collectivity of journalists, analysts, policy experts, and other specialists who voice their special knowledge in public forums.”<sup>9</sup> The tone of these pundits is always very serious, they tend to explain events and decisions deeply, through disinterested logic and forethought, using language specific to the topic and aimed at the ruling elites. However, it is not necessary for these pundits to be professionals or have special knowledge of the topic they are analyzing. Only one thing is important: credibility and their skill at cultivating the appearance of credibility.<sup>10</sup> The main format for this type of punditry is the column, especially the op-ed. On TV this type of punditry can be found on cable news networks as news analysis shows in primetime slots that follow one another.

One example of a prominent priestly pundit on who the category was based was Walter Lippmann. He was a founder of the magazine *New Republic* in 1914, which is still in print today, the editor for a time of Pulitzer’s *World*, and a syndicated columnist whose regular contribution to political discourse through his column “Today and Tomorrow” between 1931-1950 was the foundation of much of today’s political punditry. Lippmann was a regular presidential advisor from Woodrow Wilson through Richard Nixon<sup>11</sup> as well as a much sought-after counsel for various heads of state. “When he traveled [...] he conferred with heads of state. They often sought him out, eager for the privilege of being interviewed by a man who commanded so many faithful and influential readers. He was ‘the name that opened every door.’”<sup>12</sup> He had an impeccable sense of professionalism and considered himself someone who was an outsider to politics who could confidently explain politics to the general American

8 Nimmo and Combs 24.

9 Nimmo and Combs 25.

10 Nimmo and Combs 12.

11 Steel 589.

12 Steel xiv.

public, while, in reality, he was very much a part of the political elite. Along with his regular contributions to numerous news outlets, he also wrote several books on the state of the media. In his most well-known publication, *Public Opinion*, he paints a picture of the general public as passive and barely literate and argues that the mainstream news media's role should be to educate the public on the most important events of the day, so that the general citizenry can make better informed decisions when taking part in the democratic processes of voting. This perfectly reflects how he thought about his position as a pundit: part of the news media whose job it is to instruct the public and the leaders on the best course of action by providing context and explanations to the events of the world. In this case it is worth speculating on whether the category of priestly pundit was conceived around the person of Walter Lippmann or whether Lippmann just happens to perfectly fit the category which was formulated without him in mind.

The next large category of pundits that are defined by Nimmo and Combs are the bards. The bard is outside the realms of power and makes sure to stay that way. They speak to the popular and not to the elite. Here, the term popular is used to denote the general population, those who do not necessarily belong to the elite leadership of a country. They appeal to common sense and populist sentiments while criticizing the ruling elite and the decisions made by them. Emotional appeals and gut reactions characterize the rhetoric of bards and above all suspicion of those that are not "one of the people." "People expect analysis of major events from priests but reactions from bards."<sup>13</sup> As a celebrity, the bard is very careful to cultivate the image of someone who does not rub elbows with the elite, even if this is untrue.<sup>14</sup> They are comedians and satirists who are elevated to the level of pundit, not because of their professional knowledge of a situation, but because of their popularity. In order to stay popular, they use humor to stay relevant. The main format for this type of pundit today is the television and the internet. Many examples are given for this category, including Mark Twain, especially his lectures and quips; Will Rogers, an actor and vaudeville performer, who also lectured and did funny cowboy tricks while making jokes about politicians; Mr. Dooley, a character created by Peter Dunne, and in whose voice Dunne wrote columns critical of politics; Walter Winchell, a columnist and radio personality, who is credited with popularizing the gossip column;<sup>15</sup> Paul Harvey, a radio broadcaster;

13 Nimmo and Combs 52.

14 Nimmo and Combs 51.

15 Nimmo and Combs 60.

Art Buchwald, a humorist best known for his syndicated column; and Mike Royko, a Chicago-based syndicated columnist, who was also a humorist.

The third large category of pundits are the oracles. These are priestly pundits who have stood the test of time. They are people who started out as political commentators and over time, as they have aged, they have come to be regarded as someone who no longer belongs to either extreme on the political spectrum (if they ever did in the first place), but instead are those centrists who have enough experience in their lifetimes to see through the bullshit of everyday petty politics and give an accurate, or at least convincing, description of what will happen in the future. The primary media for this type of punditry is writing, mainly the op-ed column or the essay format. The authors bring Walter Lippmann in his later life and William F. Buckley Jr. as examples. Buckley started the magazine *National Review* that is still a bulwark of conservatism today in the United States. His debate show *Firing Line* aired for over 30 years, where he would sit down and discuss politics and current events with people from the other side of the political aisle. "Buckley represented a dying breed of public intellectuals who could argue their opinions forcefully but without malice on American television."<sup>16</sup> This category is all but extinct these days because the way it is described by Nimmo and Combs makes it obvious that the entire category was conceived around the personalities of Lippmann and Buckley. Today, there is no one who fits the high standards that these two distinguished pundits had established.

Since the publication of *The Political Pundits* the world has sped up even more and numerous changes have affected the news culture of the United States. Before investigating whether this theoretical framework can be applied to today's pundits, it is worth mentioning one of the most influential change to the modern pundit scene: the rapid development of technology.

The rise of cable television and especially the sudden growth in channels that became available for people to watch changed both the expectations of media companies and the way the audience related to the content. When television first entered the average American home, there were three channels to watch. This meant that for the three broadcast networks – CBS, NBC, ABC – to get as large a piece of the audience as they could, they would have to produce content that was as inclusive as possible. Over the decades, the number of channels rose to 33 by 1990.<sup>17</sup> By the next year, cable had made its way into 60% of homes,<sup>18</sup> providing even more channels for

16 Cogan and Kelso 211.

17 Webster 367.

18 Parsons 481.

people to choose from. By the early 2000s, the average household had access to at least 100 TV channels.<sup>19</sup> This outcome of such a variety was that the TV audience has become ever more fragmented. Whereas at the beginning networks tried to get as large a percentage of audience as possible, now, with an increasingly fragmented audience, media companies instead try to carve out a niche and cultivate a loyal following of people. This, in turn, has had an effect on the content being produced. In order to keep the loyalty of a small group of audience, the content had to reflect more extreme versions of itself, leading to increasing polarization in audiences and in the content.<sup>20</sup> The effects this had on news programming led to a sharp rise in punditry, both in breadth and influence. 24 hours of programming is a long time to fill and so cable news stations hired people to provide political commentary to fill out that time. This was especially apparent on Fox News.

When it comes to punditry, the effects of polarization can best be seen in the rhetoric of cable news channels. CNN was started in 1980, MSNBC went on air in 1996, and Fox News began in 1997. By the early 2000s it was obvious that the polarization of cable news really became pronounced after Fox News took off. In combination with conservative radio, an army of pundits on Fox News was able to reframe mainstream media as liberal and untrustworthy to their audience. These ideas took root in the general rhetoric of television journalism when CNN and MSNBC hired conservative hosts on various shows.<sup>21</sup> With the advent of smart phones and the spread of the internet and social media, the media audience has become even more fragmented, and this type of polarization is happening even more in news outlets. Branding and appealing to increasingly smaller subsets of audience takes priority when content is produced. Of course, many other changes affected the news' political rhetoric of today. This includes but is not limited to 24-hour news channels portraying news in a rolling format, constantly announcing breaking news, mixing entertainment and news, the lack of boundary between hard news and soft news, the celebrity status of pundits and media professionals, etc. but, due to space constraints, it is not possible to cover this complex topic here.

There are numerous problems with the theoretical framework Nimmo and Combs set up when trying to apply it to contemporary punditry. The only category of punditry that could work in today's news climate is the priestly pundits because they are professionals and academics who provide commentary and analysis on

19 Webster 367.

20 Webster 370.

21 Jamieson and Cappella 237.

the events discussed in the news. The best examples of these can be found on CNN during prime time. The lineup of pundit shows begins with *Erin Burnett OutFront* at 7 pm ET, followed by *Anderson Cooper 360* at 8 pm ET, *Cuomo Prime Time* at 9 pm ET and *CNN Tonight* with Don Lemon at 10 pm ET. This list does not even include those pundits who take part in various shows during the daytime lineup.

*The Political Pundits* was published a few years before major changes in culture, news, and comedy led to the rise of new comedic genres and changes in political rhetoric and political satire. As can be seen from the examples given by Nimmo and Combs, comedians and humorists commenting on politics in a humorous manner has been around a long time, but in the 1990s and especially after 2001, political satire became mainstream in the US and inserted itself into serious political rhetoric. There are numerous factors that led to the explosion of political satire, not all of which can be explored here. On one side politicians started to break down the artificial barrier between politics and popular culture when presidential hopefuls began to appear on daytime and late-night talk shows, especially on cable.<sup>22</sup> Though this was criticized at first, today it is a given that most presidential hopefuls do the rounds on all the mainstream talk shows. From the side of the media, big changes happened because channels that had previously no politically oriented content started to experiment with a wide variety of genres. One of the most prominent and arguably innovative was Comedy Central. From 1993-1996 the show *Politically Incorrect* was aired, hosted by comedian Bill Maher.<sup>23</sup> The premise was to gather people who were not affiliated in any professional manner to politics, to discuss politics, all of which was mediated by the humor of Maher. Later, in 1996, the channel introduced *The Daily Show*, which began to concentrate more heavily on politics with its new host, Jon Stewart, in 1999. *The Daily Show* did not achieve success until after 2001.<sup>24</sup> The third ingredient in the rise of political satire was the George W. Bush administration, which, during the eight years Bush was in office, greatly limited transparency and expanded presidential power. After September 11, 2001, mainstream news media felt limited in scope as no one wanted to seem too adversarial to the presidential administration in their efforts to retaliate for the attacks on US soil.<sup>25</sup> This left a vacuum in the news media as there was no one to question the problematic decisions made by the various branches of the federal government and the president himself. This void was filled by Jon

22 Jones 7.

23 Jones 8.

24 Jones 8.

25 Day 4.

Stewart who became one of the most consistent people on television in disputing the rhetoric of politics, leading to *The Daily Show* inserting itself into mainstream political debate. It could be argued that with this the floodgates opened for a variety of political satire shows and genres to air on television and be taken seriously, both by the press and audiences.

Finally, due to the many societal and cultural changes that have already been mentioned, and numerous others that would not fit this limited space, the distinctions of the categories described by Nimmo and Combs are also problematic. The issue here is two-fold: first, there is a significant overlap between priestly pundits and bardic pundits, and second, the category of bardic pundits is so vague that it is useless for today's political satire. To keep to the practice that was set out by the authors, the following are examples of popular pundits from 2021. As was discussed earlier priestly pundits are those who speak of serious events and issues in the news and provide professional commentary and analysis, whereas bards are more populist and discuss the news as outsiders, using emotional appeals. However, a number of pundits fall into both categories or at least parts of both categories. This is best shown through the example of Tucker Carlson. He hosts *Tucker Carlson Tonight* and has the second highest ratings during the primetime lineup on all the cable news channels with more than 3 million viewers a night, surpassed only by *The Rachel Maddow Show* on MSNBC.<sup>26</sup> Before ending up on Fox News, he was the co-host of *Crossfire* on CNN and later had a show on MSNBC as well. In 2016 his show went on air on Fox News, and he has been hosting it ever since. Carlson is known for his loud, opinionated style when analyzing the news. The reason he is a good example of the overlap of categories is precisely this: he discusses serious events in a populist, out-right opinionated tone. He could fall into the category of priestly pundits based on the topics he analyzes. However, he could be categorized as a bard as well based on his commentary. He positions himself as an average person who is fighting against the corporate and corrupt leadership that is ruining the United States. He is a strong supporter of Donald Trump and is very loud in his critique of the left. Carlson is also, undeniably, a celebrity, especially in conservative circles. Although he was born into a very wealthy family and went to top tier boarding schools and university, he portrays himself as an average person. "Only the smartest kids were told, get into Yale. Undeniably incandescent minds! Like Cory Booker and Chris Cuomo and the kids of other Democratic office-holders. [...] The ordinary

26 Johnson.

among us, meanwhile, go to Rutgers.”<sup>27</sup> Even though Carlson graduated from Trinity College, a private liberal-arts college, here he positions himself to be one of the people who finished public college at best. In fact, even Carlson himself has affirmed how little he can be taken seriously. In 2020, a judge dismissed a slander lawsuit against him by agreeing with his own lawyers who stated that the “general tenor” of the show should then inform a viewer that [Carlson] is not ‘stating actual facts’ about the topics he discusses and is instead engaging in ‘exaggeration’ and ‘non-literal commentary.’”<sup>28</sup> According to Nimmo and Combs, this is a characteristic of the bard type of pundits. Even this one example shows how much the lines are blurred between the categories. It is important to note here though that Carlson does not completely fit into the bard category either. One of the commonalities that tied the examples of bardic pundits together was the element of humor. Tucker Carlson is entirely serious in his performance. His heavily populist rhetoric is the main characteristic that can be emphasized as bardic. However, this is very confusing and just further points to how dated the categorization is.

This brings me to the final point, the problem with the entire category of bardic pundits. As was seen earlier, Nimmo and Combs provide a few examples of who they believe embody the bardic pundit. The one thing all those people have in common in their punditry is the use of humor and/or satire. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that all political humorists and satirists fit in this category according to this framework. However, then that would expand the category too much, including those who cannot be construed as political pundits today. The category is too broad. It is best seen through the example of Dave Chappelle. Chappelle is a comedian and actor, best known for his wildly successful, short run series the *Chappelle Show* and his stand-up career. He is a Grammy and Emmy winner with a very large following. The topics of his stand-up routines include race, gender, politics, the everyday mundane aspects of life. He does not avoid political topics, in fact, his jokes about politics and politicians routinely make the rounds on the Internet in the form of memes. Although politics is not the central topic in his comedy, it is a topic that shows up very often. Looking at the examples of Nimmo and Combs, Chappelle could be compared to Will Rogers as someone who is a bardic pundit. However, it would be false to categorize Chappelle here. If he is included into the category of bardic pundit, one would be hard pressed to not include other stand-up comedians as well. The only problem here would be where to draw the line. How many jokes does

27 Tucker.

28 Folkenflik.



a comedian need to make to be categorized as a pundit? Countless comedians make jokes about politics and politicians. If the category of bardic pundit is too broad, then too many people could be included which would effectively make the category itself impractical. This is especially obvious when comparing Chappelle and his stand-up routines to Trevor Noah and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*. As mentioned earlier, *The Daily Show* first launched in 1996, really becoming popular by 2001 as a satirical news program hosted by Jon Stewart, and, since 2015, by Trevor Noah, a South African comedian. The show includes fake journalists and “on-site” reporting, as well as satirizing both the events of the day and the news media in general. Including Trevor Noah and *The Daily Show*, along with the other comedians into the category of bardic pundits makes sense, since their main topics are politics and politicians. The pundit nature of the show was especially obvious when in 2007 Pew Research published a list of journalists that the public admired the most, and Jon Stewart was the only comedian in the top ten journalists on the list.<sup>29</sup> Comparing political satire shows to stand-up comedians is obviously false and does not give an accurate picture of a political pundit in today’s climate. The category of bardic pundit cannot work for today’s political satire in its current form. Even the phrase political satire cannot encompass the range of comedic commentary that is part of the mainstream political rhetoric in today’s news culture. Perhaps a more nuanced category, or several more categories would work in the place of one as broad and general as bardic pundit.

The aim of this article was to investigate the theoretical framework on punditry published by Nimmo and Combs and compare it to today’s pundit scene. Because the three categories of pundits were partially constructed around specific people and media formats, it has become outdated in today’s media environment, partially due to the technological changes that have happened since 1992, but also because of the change in political rhetoric. The category of priestly pundits is the only one that can be considered valid today, but even that category is too strict. The category of bardic punditry is too general to fit today’s wide variety of political humor and satire. If this is the best way to characterize pundits, then a new categorization is needed, one that is more nuanced and that better fits the contemporary climate. In any case it is vitally important to take seriously and study the role of pundits in contemporary news media as their sizeable influence on today’s political debates could possibly

29 “Today’s Journalists”.

undermine or reinforce the democratic structures that the United States was built on in the first place.

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# Rituálék és szakrális motívumok a Years & Years együttes dalszövegeiben

**Cseppentő Krisztina**

Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Neveléstudományi Doktori Iskola  
cseppentokrisztina@gmail.com

**Fajt Balázs**

Budapesti Gazdasági Egyetem  
fajt.balazs@yahoo.com

A zene minden hagyományban nagy jelentőséggel bírt az emberi közösségek életében. Így van ez napjainkban is, amikor évszázados, évezredek tradíciók átstrukturálódásának lehetünk tanúi. A popkultúrát gyakran éri az a vád, hogy nem képes olyan értékek közvetítésére, mint a magas- vagy elítőkultúrához sorolt, kanonizált műalkotások; azonban az elmúlt évtizedekben számos kutatás vizsgálta és bizonyította, hogy a popkultúrához tartozó tartalmak, legyenek azok a filmipar<sup>1</sup> vagy akár a videójáték-ipar<sup>2</sup> részei, nagyon is alkalmasak lehetnek az értékközvetítői szerepre.<sup>3</sup> Jelen tanulmány is hasonló vállalkozás: a mítoszok, mitizálások és populáris kultúra fő kérdéseire kapcsolódva a popzene mítoszalkotásban betöltött szerepét hivatott vizsgálni. Ezen belül a brit Years & Years együttes dalszövegeinek mitikus és rituális vonatkozásaira fókuszál. Korpuszát az együttes *Communion* (2015) és *Palo Santo* (2018) c. albumainak dalszövegei alkotják. A sokféle lehetséges megközelítés közül a rítuselméletet és a mítoszkritikát választottuk elemzésünkhöz. Nemcsak szövegelemzést végeztünk, hanem a tanulmány utolsó szakaszában – a szinkron vizsgálatot történeti perspektívába helyezve – rámutatunk arra is, hogy a két album által szövegszinten megalkotott szimbolikus világ újrakonstruál és tovább élte egy eredetileg keresztény mítoszt. Jelen írásunk elején bemutatjuk a vizsgálat elméleti hátterét, ezen belül is néhány mítosz- és rítusértelmezést, majd összefoglaljuk az empirikus rész mögött meghúzódó módszertani megfontolásokat. Ezután ismertetjük a kutatás eredményeit és következtetéseinket, végül pedig kijelöljük a témával kapcsolatos jövőbeni lehetséges kutatási irányokat is.

Számos kutatási irány és módszer létezik a popzene megközelítésére, kutatásunkban mi a kulturális antropológia, azon belül a rítuselmélet, a vallástörténet,

1 Vö. pl. Nagy 156.

2 Vékási (lásd jelen kötetben, 79–90).

3 Cseppentő, 2021.

illetve az irodalomelméleten belül a mítoszkritika és a szociológia egyes elméleteit alkalmazzuk. Kutatásunk tehát erősen interdiszciplináris jellegű, ami hatással van az általunk használt fogalmi hálóra is, így az alábbiakban a fent említett tudományterületek szakirodalmára támaszkodva tisztázzuk, mit is értünk *mítosz*, illetve *rítus* alatt. A különböző tudományágakban forgalomban lévő értelmezések miatt nem könnyű egzakt módon meghatározni, mit is takarnak ezek a kifejezések. Jelen tanulmányban nem célunk a különféle elméletek átfogó áttekintése, csupán néhányat mutatunk be a fentebb említett területek képviselőinek értelmezési közül. A fogalommeghatározások alatt sorra vesszük a fent említett diszciplínák témánkhoz kapcsolódó elméleteit, amelyek együttese körvonalazza jelen dolgozat elméleti hátterét.

A görög mítosz (*μῦθος*) szó isteni eredetű lényekről és hősökről szóló történetet, elbeszélést jelölt. A mítoszokat az ember az őt körülvevő világ magyarázatára találta és találja ki napjainkig is, azzal a céllal, hogy egy probléma megoldására vagy egy konfliktus feldolgozására egy múltbéli helyzet felelevenítésével példát adjanak; azaz felidéznek egy múltbeli eseményt, arra reflektálnak, és így nem csupán magyarázatot adnak, hanem viselkedési modelleket is kínálnak a jelen problémáival való megküzdésre.<sup>4</sup> Ezt erősíti meg Mircea Eliade vallástörténész is, aki a huszadik század eleji pszichoanalitikus iskola képviselőinek kortársaként a mítoszt szintén a kollektív tudat termékének tartja, és meglátása szerint annak eredete visszanyúlik az ősidőkre. A szent idő és a mítoszok összefüggésében úgy fogalmaz: „[m]ítoszt >>elmondani<< azt jelenti, hogy tudtul adjuk, mi történt eredetileg.”<sup>5</sup> Ugyanitt magát a mítoszt is példaadó mintának írja le; annak „fő funkciója, hogy megadja minden rítus és minden lényeges emberi ténykedés (táplálkozás, szexualitás, munka, nevelés) példaadó modelljét,”<sup>6</sup> valamint azt is hozzáteszi, hogy „a mítoszok az istenek gesztáit beszélik el, és ezek a geszták minden emberi tevékenység példaképei.”<sup>7</sup> Ugyanerre reflektál Székely János, amikor a mítoszlól a következőket mondja: „[a] mítosz maga a működése közben meglesett, működésében ábrázolt világtörvény.”<sup>8</sup> Hasonló gondolatot fogalmaz meg Kerényi Károly is, aki szerint a mítosz a résztvevője számára mindig élő dolog, egyfajta kifejezőmód.<sup>9</sup> Jól látható, hogy a mítoszok alapvető antropológiai szükségletet oldanak meg, tehát a közösség minden tagjához szólnak. Így nem meglepő, hogy a mai napig születnek modern „mítoszok”, amelyek napjainkban éppen

4 Fülöp 118–119.

5 Eliade 88.

6 Eliade 90.

7 Eliade 98.

8 Székely 22.

9 Kerényi 15.

olyan jelentőséggel bírnak, mint évezredekkel ezelőtt. Emellett fontos kiemelni azt is, hogy Northrop Frye értelmezésében a mítosz „nem azért van, hogy leírjon, hanem hogy magába foglaljon egy adott helyzetet olyan módon, hogy jelentőségét ne korlátozza arra a helyzetre.”<sup>10</sup> Ezzel Frye tulajdonképpen rámutat a mítoszok univerzális jellegére, ami implikálja, hogy mindenki egyénileg meg tudja találni azt a mítoszt, amely a saját személyes problémaival rezonál. Pierre Brunel irodalomkritikus ezzel az univerzalitással kapcsolatban kitér arra is, hogy a mitikus elemek, amelyek szövegekben jelennek meg, felismerhetők „kisugárzási erejükről.”<sup>11</sup>

A mítoszéhoz hasonlóan problémagazdag a rítusok és rituálék fogalomköre is. A *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* meghatározása szerint a latin eredetű ‘rítus’ szó vallási intézkedést, vallásos-mágikus, vagy társadalmilag megszabott hagyományos szokás-cselekményt, szertartást jelent; azt az előírt módot jelöli, „ahogyan egy vallásos vagy mágikus cselekményt végre kell hajtani”.<sup>12</sup> Ezek a cselekvéssorozatok általában csak egy adott közösség keretein belül értelmezhetők; a közösségen kívül állók nincsenek „beavatva” az adott közösség szokásaiba és a rítus értelmezési dimenzióiba. A különböző kultúrákban egy adott rituális tevékenységnek egymástól függetlenül teljesen más értelmezései létezhetnek. Ha egy egyszerű cselekményt, a tűzgyújtást vesszük alapul, láthatjuk például, hogy az bizonyos közösségekben tisztító (pl. Dél-Amerika), máshol áldozati (pl. hinduizmus), megint máshol megszentelő (pl. kereszténység) szimbolikus funkciót tölt be.

Az élet fontos átmeneteihez fűződő rítusok mindenfajta társadalmi szerveződésben megjelennek és kultúrákat átívelő közös vonásokkal bírnak. Funkciójuk, hogy az emberi élet kríziseire szerepeket és közösségi formákat kínálnak, lassítják a hirtelen átmeneteket azokban a helyzetekben, amikor az egyén számára új világok nyílnak meg. Arnold van Gennep ezeket mind küszöbátlépésnek tekinti, és a rítus határát a *limen* szóval jelöli. 1909-ben kidolgozott elmélete szerint az átmeneti rítusok általában hármas séma szerint épülnek fel; ezeket *elválasztó* (preliminális), *határhelyzeti* (liminális) és *befogadó* (posztliminális) rítusoknak nevezi el.<sup>13</sup> Az elválasztó rítusok az elhagyandó állapotból (pl. gyerekkor) kivezetik az egyént, mégpedig egy olyan határhelyzethez, amelyben a beavatandó személyt, miután elválasztották saját közösségétől, különböző fizikai, szellemi és lelki megpróbáltatásoknak vetik alá. Ezek során a beavatandó személynek a teljes kirekesztettség, meztelenség, megaláztatás

10 Frye 98.

11 Brunel 64–67.

12 *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*, ‘rítus’ (szócikk).

13 van Gennep 55.

és névtelenség nehézségeit kell elviselnie. Amikor kiállja a próbát, akkor a befogadó rítus keretében a saját közössége visszafogadja. Ezzel visszakapja nevét (vagy új nevet kap), ismét ruhát kap, így felöltheti felnőtt identitásához tartozó materiális és szimbolikus öltözkét, amellyel véget ér számára a megaláztatás és kirekesztettség időszaka, valamint megkapja azt a felhatalmazást, amely felnőtt szerepeinek betöltésére teszi alkalmassá. A premodern átmeneti rítusok fontos jellemzője volt ez a státuszváltás; mindig struktúrától struktúráig vezettek, és „[garantálták] a megváltozott státusz társadalmi elfogadtatását”.<sup>14</sup>

A fentiekből kiindulva kutatásunkat arra a hipotézisre építettük, hogy a szekularizáció ellenére napjainkban is vannak olyan szakralitáshoz kötődő motívumok, amelyek ugyanúgy tovább élnek, mint amikor még a vallásosság hagyományos formái a mainál nagyobb szerepet töltöttek be az emberek életében. Ezek a 21. században már más környezetben és más formában jelennek meg, mint korábban, ahogyan erre a (neo)durkheimi szociológia kapcsán Császi Lajos is felhívja a figyelmet, amikor a rítusok szekularizálódásáról ír.<sup>15</sup>

Kutatásunk módszertani alapjául a kvalitatív paradigmát, azon belül is a megalapozott elmélet (*grounded theory*) tartalomelemzés-módszerét (*content analysis*) választottuk. A vizsgálatot a Years & Years együttes két albumának (*Communion* és *Palo Santo*) dalszövegein végeztük, a korpuszt az ezeken található dalszövegek összessége képezte. Először végigolvastuk a korpuszra összeállított harmincegy dal szövegét, és jelöltük bennük a vallás, mítosz, rítus fogalomkörébe tartozó kifejezéseket, mondatrészeket, szavakat. Következő körben ezeket kódoltuk oly módon, hogy kulcsszavak alapján nagyobb csoportokba rendeztük őket. Az összeállított korpuszt kétszeres tartalomelemzésnek vetettük alá, vagyis a két szerző külön-külön kódolta a szövegek tartalmát, majd az így keletkezett kódokat összevetettük egymással. Azt próbáltuk meg összehasonlítani, hogy az egyes kategóriákba sorolt elemek miben hasonlítanak, és miben térnek el egymástól. Ezután szükség esetén nagyobb csoportokba soroltuk azokat, és az elemzési kategóriákat is ezek mentén alakítottuk ki.

A vizsgálat eredményei a következőképpen összegezhetők röviden: a módszertani háttérnek megfelelően a kutatást a *szakrális elemek*, a *mítoszok* és a *rítusok* fogalmainak fókuszával végeztük el, így eredményeink három fő csoportra oszthatók: az egyiket a hagyományos vallások szakrális szókincse képezi, a másik a rituális motívumokra vonatkozik, a harmadikba pedig a mítoszokkal kapcsolatos találatok tartoznak. Az eredmények bemutatásakor először röviden szót ejtünk az albumokon

<sup>14</sup> Vö. Bakos.

<sup>15</sup> Császi 69.

található egyes dalok címeiről, ezután az albumokon sorrendjében az egyes dalok szövegeinek elemzése következik a három téma szerint.

A dalok címei beszédeselek, sok bennük a szakralitáshoz kötődő szó, melyek a hagyományos vallásosság fogalomrendszeréből ismertek és erős szimbolikus tartalmakat hordoznak. Ilyen a *Communion*<sup>16</sup> albumról a „Foundation”, „Real”, „Shine”, „Take Shelter”, „Worship”, „Border”; a *Palo Santo*<sup>17</sup> albumról a „Sanctify”, „Hallelujah”, „Karma”, „Preacher”, „Palo Santo”, „Up in Flames”. Ezek mind az első nagy témakörhöz kapcsolódnak. A spirituális és szakrális motívumokat illetően továbbá azt találtuk, hogy nagyon magas azon szavak száma, amelyek a hagyományos vallásosság keretein belül használatosak. Az 1. táblázat ezeket mutatja be felsorolásszerűen a két vizsgált albumon.

**1. táblázat.** Az albumokban előforduló, a vallásossághoz kapcsolódó szavak és kifejezések

<b>Communion</b>	<i>forget</i> [elfelejt], <i>forgive</i> [megbocsát], <i>redefine</i> [újrafogalmaz], <i>confession</i> [vallomás/gyónás], <i>unholy</i> [szentségtelen], <i>worship</i> [imádat], <i>kingdom</i> [királyság], <i>grace(s)</i> [kegyelem], <i>open arms</i> [tárt karokkal], <i>pray</i> [ima], <i>pray for truth</i> , [imádkozik az igazságért] <i>grace of God</i> [az Úr kegyelme]
<b>Palo Santo</b>	<i>pray</i> , <i>confession</i> , <i>sanctify</i> [megszentel], <i>pain</i> , “ <i>Father, forgive me for finding the truth</i> ” [Atyám, bocsáss meg nekem, amiért ráleltem az igazságra], <i>heavenly</i> [mennyei / nem e világi], <i>hallelujah</i> , <i>devotion</i> [odaadás, áhítat], <i>holy</i> [szent(séges)], <i>true</i> , “ <i>You instructed all the demons instead</i> ” [Helyette megparancsoltad a démonoknak], <i>forgiven</i> [feloldozott], <i>temple</i> [templom], <i>karma</i> , <i>fate</i> [sors], <i>vision</i> [látomás], <i>preacher</i> [predikátor], <i>preaching a lie</i> [„hazugságot prédikál”], <i>creature</i> [teremtmény], <i>temptation</i> [kísértés], <i>bite</i> [harapás], <i>salvation</i> [megváltás], <i>pure dedication</i> [hű áhítat], <i>speak in tongues</i> [nyelveken való szólás], “ <i>So help me God</i> ” [Uram, segíts meg], <i>falling</i> [letaszíttatás], <i>devil’s sin</i> [az ördög bűne], <i>saviour</i> [megváltó], <i>innocence</i> [ártatlanság]

<sup>16</sup> Years & Years. *Communion*.

<sup>17</sup> Years & Years. *Palo Santo*.



A fentiekből látható, hogy szembeötlően sok keresztény jelentéstartalmat hordozó szó és kifejezés fordul elő a dalszövegekben; amelyek kulcsjelentőségűek a szövegjelentés megteremtése szempontjából. Egy sor további olyan kifejezés is szerepel a szövegekben, amelyeknek szintén elképzelhető érvényes keresztény eszkatologikus olvasata. Ilyen például a „*scratch on my shoulder*” [karcolás a vállamon], a „*mark on my skin*,” [jel a bőrömon] a „*The branches of me are distorted*” [tagjaim kicsavarva], vagy az „*I’ve got three more days*” [még három napom van] – hogy csak párat említsünk. Ezek más keretben akár Krisztus-allúziókként is értelmezhetőek lennének (Krisztus vállának a kereszt hordozása által okozott sebe, a keresztre feszített test kicsavarodottsága, illetve a kereszthaláltól a feltámadásig tartó három nap), amit csak erősít a hasonló képek feltűnően nagy száma, nem is beszélve a gyötrelem, a fájdalom szavairól („*Sanctify my pain*” [szenteld meg fájdalmam], „*Time never could heal this pain*” [az idő soha gyógyíthatja be sebem], „*Is all of this pain what I wanted?*” [erre a fájdalomra vágytam?]). Természetesen, ha saját kontextusukban vizsgáljuk meg a dalszövegeket, akkor ez az értelmezés kevésbé helytálló, hiszen a történelmi időszakot és az együttes szubkulturális beágyazottságát figyelembe véve ez legfeljebb mellékes intertextuális olvasata lehet ezeknek az elemeknek.

A szakrális, vallásos töltetű motívumok felhasználásánál az együttes nem szorítkozik a kereszténységre, hanem a keresztény kultúrkörből kitekintve globális perspektívában gondolkodik. Ilyen kitekintésként értelmezhető a „Karma” című szám, amelynek nemcsak címében jelennek meg a keleti vallásosság (buddhizmus, hinduizmus) motívumai, hanem szövegében is reflektál arra a világnézetre, amely a földi életet illuzórikusnak tételezi: „*So many questions in my life / Is every truth just an illusion?*” [túl sok a kérdés az életben / minden igazság csak illúzió?]. Ebben előtűnik a szómágián alapuló autoszuggeszció is: „*good things are coming to me*” [a jó dolgok elérkeznek hozzám] – ugyan ez inkább a lélektan, mint a vallás körébe tartozik. Ugyanakkor találhatunk utalást a kereszténységgel rokon vallásos tradíciókra is. A „*Who can breathe me into life*” [Ki lehelhet életet belém?] mondatrészben például felismerhető a kabbalisztikus hagyomány teremtmény, szent szelleme, a „rúach” (a kereszténységben a Szentlélek fogalma hasonlít hozzá leginkább). Megjelenik továbbá a népi vallásosság a babonával („*superstition leads me*” [babona vezet engem]) és a rontással („*I wanna break that spell that he taught me*” [meg akarom törni a varázslatot, amit ő tanított nekem]), sőt, a „*the drug of a Gemini cusp*” [az Ikrek fordulópontjának kábítószer] a csillagkép fordulópontjának, mint szerencsés napnak az említésével már az ezoterikus elgondolások tárgykörébe tartozó asszociációkat nyit.

Előbbiekén felül láthatunk példát a transzcendentális működésre is. Mindenféleképpen valami emberfelettire utal például a „*psychic kind of power*” [szellemidéző/látnoki erő], a „*surround me, body and soul*” [végy körbe, testem s lelkem] pedig akár misztikus élmény leírása is lehetne. Felbukkannak szellemek („*sleeping with ghosts*”) [szellemekkel alvás], és a természet ereje is az „*It's like thunder and lightning*” [mint a dörgés és villám], illetve a „*Too loud, thundering sound*” [túl hangos, dörgő hang]. Önálló csoportot képeznek a kategórián belül a vízhez kötődő képek. Az alámerülés többször a (szimbolikus?) halállal összekapcsolódva a „Rendezvous” és a „Howl” című számokban: „*Water's rising, gonna choke*” [a vizek megáradnak, és én fuldoklom] „*Something in the water / Is it me that's going under?*” [valami van a vízben / én merülök alá?]. Más jelentést hordoz a víz megjelenése a „Play”-ben: „*Diving into my ocean*” [óceánomba merülök], és a „Don't Panic”-ben: „*Deep water / Shore to shore, I swim / Have no hesitation*” [mélyvíz / parttól partig / úszom / nem tétlenkedem]. A víz kapcsán megemlíthető még, hogy gyakoriak a kék színre tett utalások: sokszor tűnik fel a *blue*, nem ritkán a bánat árnyalataira utalva<sup>18</sup> („*Dye your hands the color blue*” [kezeidet kékre ferd]), és legalább ugyanennyiszor találjuk meg a színek gazdagságát ragyogás vagy a fény formájában („*All your colors start to burn*” [s minden színed felragyog], „*Pull me into your glow, make me blush*” [ragyogj be fényeddel, hadd piruljak el]).

A rítusokra vonatkozó találatokból több mintázat is kirajzolódik. Egyfelől megjelennek bennük a különböző rituális elemek, mint például a tánc vagy a futás képei, a tűzgyújtás rituáléja; másfelől pedig egy összetett rendszer különféle fragmentumai is fellelhetők bennük. Ezek az átmeneti rítusok van Gennep által kidolgozott és Turner által továbbfejlesztett elméletében<sup>19</sup> a beavatási rítusok cselekményeit (futást, táncot, tűzgyújtást, vadászatot) és megpróbáltatásait idézik elének.

A szövegekben előbukkanó rituális futás motivációja különböző; legtöbbször a vadászat („*only one of us escapes alive, I / shoot the arrow*” [csak egyikünk éli túl / hát feszítsd ki íjad]) vagy a menekülés, üldözöttség szimólumaként jelenik meg („*I used to be so ready to run*” [régén kész voltam futni]; „*And I'll be running fast, 'cause I can't be owned*” [így hát sebesen futok, mert nem vagyok senkié]), de van, ahol a verseny („*soul race*”) szerepel a dalban. A rítusokon belül a rituális tánc képezi a következő kategóriát, ami mindkét albumon megjelenik. Az elsőn csupán a „Ties” című számban („*And you're a dancer, well I'm a spy*” [és te táncos vagy, én pedig kém]), a másodikon viszont számos alkalommal szerepel: „*I breathe the richness of*

18 Angol nyelvben az „*I am feeling blue*” a szomorkás, depresszív hangulatra utal.

19 Turner 2002.

*the dancer's dance*” [a táncos táncának gazdagságát lélegzem]; „*I wanna dance 'til I'm drunk on the feeling / Dance, like it's my first time / I wanna dance 'til I speed up the healing*” [addig táncolok, míg ez az érzés megrészeget / úgy táncolok, mint először / táncolni akarok, amíg felgyorsítom a gyógyulást] (ez egyébként magában foglalja a tánc általi gyorsítást);<sup>20</sup> vagy a „*Somebody like you that I could dance to this to*” [veled, akivel táncolhatok erre], amelyben az alkalmas partnert, illetve „*And we'll dance 'til the night is through*” az egész éjszakán át tartó táncsal az ünnepet jelzi.

A tűzzel kapcsolatos rítusok legkiemelkedőbb példája a második album címadó száma, a „Palo Santo”. Ebben a „*waking spirits*” [a lelkek megidézése], „*strike a match, whisper my name*” [gyújts meg egy gyufát és suddogd a nevem], „*Let it all begin when the fire starts*” [kezdődjön hát minden, mikor a tűz fellángol] kifejezések fontosak. De megjelenik a tűz máshol is, mégpedig: „*And our past is going up in flames*” [a múltunk lángokban áll], és a tűzzel együtt a füst: „*And the memories are filling up with smoke*” [és az emlékek megtelnek füsttel], illetve „*Wanna fill myself with all the smoke*” [azt akarom, hogy megtöltsön a füst].

A dalszövegekben sorjáznak a testi, lelki, szellemi megpróbáltatás és kiszolgáltatottság kifejezései. A saját testi mivoltát és érzelmeit intenzíven megélt fiatal szíve gyorsul („*My heart accelerates*” [felgyorsul a szív(verés)em]), szégyenében (*ashamed*) többször elpirul (*blush*). Birkózik testével és érzéseivel, derül ki a szövegből: „*My body won't obey*” [a testem ellenkezik], „*My body will be stronger*” [testem erősebb lesz], „*Emotion keeps troubling me / Cold body, hot anxiety*” [az érzélem folyton zavar / hideg test, forró szorongás], „*A brand new emotion come true*”, [egészen új érzés tölt el], „*My philosophy don't let nobody come too close*” [filozófiám: ne engedj senkit túl közel].

A testiség kapcsán a szövegek sokszor játszanak a fogalmak többértelműségével. Ez megjelenik például az elköteleződés, valakihez tartozás és ugyanakkor a rab-ság kötelékeinek szimbólumában („*Ties*” című szám), valamint olyan kifejezések-nél, amelyeknek potenciális szakrális jelentésük mellett aktuális profán áthallásuk is lehet („*Kneeling at your temple*” [templomod előtt térdelni], „*tempestous rising*” [viharos emelkedés], „*Pour some honey down my heavy throat*” [önts hát mézet el-szorult torkomba]).

Szintén a beavatási rítusokhoz kapcsolódik a bujkálás, rejtőzködés („*I was trying to hide*” [igyekeztem elrejtőzni], „*Wanna hide in your light*” [fényedben akarok elbúj-ni], „*But you're hiding, yeah, you're hiding*” [de te csak rejtőzködsz, igen, rejtőzködsz],

20 Vö. *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*, 'rítus' (szócikk).

„*Am I enough to keep your other lovers hidden?*” [elég vagyok, hogy többi szeretődöt rejtsem/rejtve tartsam?]. De megjelennek a diadal és az uralkodás szimbólumai és szereplői is: a ragyogás („*You know that you make it shine*” [tudod, hogy miattad/tőled ragyog], „*My heart, it will start to shine*” [a szívem is ragyogni kezd]); a király és a királyság (*king, kingdom*, „*My kingdom for your graces, triumph*” [királyságom a kegyelmedért, győzelem]; a meg nem adás, az önálló akarat ereje (sokszor tagadó szerkezetekben, pl. „*I won't prove myself to you*” [nem fogom bizonygatni magam neked], „*I'm not the one you should be playing with*” [nem velem kéne játszadoznod], „*I won't behave myself for this*” [ezért nem fogok jól viselkedni], „*I won't be ashamed*” [nem fogok szégyenkezni], „*I won't keep you out of trouble*” [nem tartalak távol a bajtól], „*Nothing I won't overcome*” [nincs semmi, amit ne győznék le]).

A mítoszokra vonatkozóan az alábbi következtetéseket tudtuk levonni. A vizsgált mintán is kimutatható volt azok modellképző szerepe,<sup>21</sup> a narratív váz erősítését szolgáló mivoltuk,<sup>22</sup> valamint az erős érzelmi töltetű metaforák, hiszen a vadászat, a menekülés nyelvi képei, valamint az európai kultúrkörben általánosan ismert mítoszok is szerepelnek bennük. Egyik ezek közül a görög antikvítás egyik legismertebb hősére, Odüsszeuszra történő implicit utalás. Ebben a dalban („Hypnotized”) megjelenik az örökös úton levés, útkeresés toposzát szimbolizáló hajó, a napnak az amúgy is misztikus konnotációval bíró éjszaka, valamint a szirén csábító éneke: „*I had a dream of a ship that we sailed in the night / Such a sweet, sweet call / The siren<sup>23</sup> soothes my mind.*” [Volt egy álmom, amelyben az éjszakában hajóztunk / Édes (hívogató) ének / a szirén nyugtatja meg az elmém]. Itt pedig pontosan tetten érhető a Brunel által “kisugárzási erőnek”<sup>24</sup> nevezett tényező, hiszen Odüsszeusz alakja a neve megjelölése nélkül is egyértelműen felismerhető (egymástól függetlenül mindkét elemzésben ez az eredmény jött ki). Ugyanakkor az eredeti mítoszra való utalást követően rögtön megjelenik a gyötrő bizonytalanságra utaló kérdés: „*Who am I going to be when the curtain is drawn?*” [És én ki leszek, amikor lehull a lepel?]. Ez a függöny a show végén legördülő függöny is lehet, de akár

21 Vö. Eliade 90.

22 Vö. Fülöp 119.

23 Érdekes kontraszt, hogy itt a szirén éneke megnyugtatóként jelenik meg, míg az eredeti szöveg nem éppen erre enged következtetni. Lásd a kiemelést: “So they spoke, sending forth their beautiful voice, and my heart was fain to listen, and „*I bade my comrades loose me, nodding to them with my brows; but they fell to their oars and rowed on.*” Homer, *Book 12*, line 194; magyarul Devecseri fordításában: „Így szóltak, gyönyörűszip hangon zengve, s a szívem / vágyott hallani: *kértem a társakat, oldjanak el már, /intve szemöldömmel, de azok nekidölve eveztek.*” Homérosz (XII.165–198) 203.

24 Brunel 64–67.

a végső lepel fellebbentésére, az apokalipszis *un-cover*-jére, a végső revelációra is utalhat, hiszen e kettő etimológiailag is összefügg. Jó példaként szolgál ez arra, hogy a dalszövegekben megjelenő mitikus allúziók jelentősége a konkrét helyzet(ek)en túlmutat.<sup>25</sup>

Másik példa a kisugárzási erővel bíró mitikus elemre egy olyan figura, akinek felismeréséhez anélkül is elegendő lenne egyetlen attribútuma: „*I’ve got arrows*” [van nyilam], hogy tudjuk, a szerelem témakörén belül mozgunk. Erósz/Cupid az, felismerjük, akinek az alakját a vágyakozás, a vonzódás mondataival gyakran előhívják a dalszövegek. Ha azonban tekintetbe vesszük a vallást, kézenfekvőnek tűnik egy másik mítosz is: Szent Sebestyéné.<sup>26</sup> Különösen fontos ez annak tükrében, hogy a 3. században mártírhalált halt, a katolikus hagyományban szentként tisztelt történeti személy alakja az LGBTQ+ közösség saját mitikus hőségé, sőt, ikonjává vált. A dalszövegek elemzésekor nem elhanyagolható szempont, hogy az együttes énekese is az LGBTQ+ közösség tagja, valamint elkötelezett LGBTQ+ aktivista, így a szövegek értelmezésekor érdemes ezt a nézőpontot (is) szem előtt tartani.

A Michael Sweas emlékének szentelt tanulmányban Richard A. Kaye alapos művészettörténeti kutatást végzett, hogy felderítse, hogyan változott a Szent Sebestyénhez köthető kulturális narratíva a 3. századtól napjainkig. Átfogó kutatásában nagy hangsúlyt kap a vizualitás, azaz a Sebestyén-ábrázolások, melyek történeti változásait végigkövetve Kaye megmutatja, hogyan váltak Sebestyén reprezentációi szubkulturális műtárggyá, emblémává, alakja pedig az öntudatos homoszexualitás jelképévé. Az olasz reneszánsz festményeken tradicionálisan ábrázolt római vértanú képéből indul ki, amelyen Szent Sebestyén gyönyörű, félig meztelen, nyilakkal áttört fiatalelként jelenik meg.<sup>27</sup> Ez a megköztözöttségében<sup>28</sup> és teljes kiszolgáltatottságában is elérhetetlen eszményi szépség meghatározónak bizonyult a római vértanú későbbi percepciójában. Ahogy minden egymást követő korszak létrehozta a maga Jézus-képét, úgy az egymást követő kulturális korszakokban Szent Sebestyén is új és új módon öltött testet.<sup>29</sup> Legfontosabb eredményünk tehát az, hogy ha ezzel a háttértudással olvassuk a dalszövegeket, a különféle allúziók szövevénye kirajzol egy képet – egy régről ismert, mégis új mitikus hős képét, Szent Sebestyénét.

25 Vö. Frye 98.

26 Ezúton szeretnénk megköszönni Beke Zsoltnak, hogy felhívta a figyelmünket erre az értékes párhuzamra. [A szerzők.]

27 Kaye 86.

28 Vö. „Ties”.

29 Kaye 87.

Cikkünkben a Years & Years brit együttes dalait és dalszövegeit vizsgáltuk meg kvalitatív módszerekkel, és összegzésként megállapíthatjuk a következőket: eddigi eredményeink azt mutatják, hogy az együttes dalszövegeiben számos kapcsolódás figyelhető meg a rítusok és a mítoszok témaköréhez egyaránt. A rituális motívumok vonatkozásában a legfontosabb eredményünk annak felismerése volt, hogy a kulturális antropológia által átmeneti rítusként megfogalmazott beavatás mintázatait mutatják a dalszövegek. Fontos következtetésünk, hogy a *Communion* partícipatív szertartásában a dalszövegek értő hallgatója, a koncertek résztvevője egy szubkulturális közösség beavatott tagjává válik.

Míg a 2015-ös *concept album* szimbolikusan még a beavatásra szolgál, addig a három évvel későbbi *Palo Santo* már egy meglévő mítoszi világot sző tovább. Ahogyan eredményeink utolsó szekciója is rámutatott, a szövegek a keresztény szakralitás egészét is mítoszként működtetik. Ez lehetővé tette, hogy felismerjük azt, ahogy az együttes a hagyományos vallási szimbólumrendszer kifejezéseit felhasználva, tulajdonképpen remitologizációs stratégiát folytat. Ennek során a kereszténység bizonyos fogalmait a dalszövegírók új értelmezési keretbe helyezik, és ezáltal a hagyományos vallásos szakralitáshoz kötődő szimbólumvilág más megvilágításba kerül, és teljesen új jelentéstartalmat nyer. Ezt felfoghatjuk mitikus világteremtésként is – a „Howl” című szám szavaival: „*Now’s the time, and now’s the hour of making*” [Itt az idő, a teremtés órája] – hiszen a szövegek valóban önálló világot alkotnak. Ennek a teremtési folyamatnak fontos mozzanata Szent Sebestyén alakjának, mint példaképként azonosulásra lehetőséget adó mitikus hősnek az ábrázolása. Ebben a keretben a katolikus eredetű esztétika homoszexuális esztétikaként válik értelmezhetővé.<sup>30</sup>

A kutatás további irányaként az együttes munkássága a *popular media studies*, a diskurzuselemzés, a *body studies*, a *gender studies*, a képelemzés szempontjai szerint is vizsgálhatóak lennének, különös tekintettel a performansz elemeire. Kézenfekvő lenne egybevetni a dalok nyelvi- és képi síkját a hanggal is, hiszen hatás szempontjából a hangzásvilágnak elsődleges szereppel bír. A különböző lehetséges vizsgálati dimenziók közül kiemelendő továbbá a *gender*-szempontú kutatási irány, mivel az együttes frontembere, Olly Alexander az LGBTQ+ közösség tagja és aktivistája, ami a zenekar szubkulturális beágyazottságára természetesen jelentős hatással van. Szent Sebestyén összetett kulturális örökségének ez a popkulturális felhasználása megerősíti a feltételezésünket, hogy a hagyományos vallási elemek új köntösben tovább élnek.

30 Kaye 94.

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# A New Career in a New Town: David Bowie in Berlin (1976–1978)<sup>1</sup>

**Tibor Kosztolánczy**

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem

kosztolanczy.tibor@btk.elte.hu

David Bowie seemed to be exhausted after finishing the five-month *Station to Station* world tour in May 1976. He had become famous in 1972 and was extremely successful in the following years, but hardly had any time to relax. Having finished the tour, Bowie lacked inspiring ideas for a new record, so instead, he decided to produce a solo album for Iggy Pop at the Château d'Hérouville recording studio near Paris. Initially, Bowie's promise did not seem to be more than a friendly gesture, yet it is worth following how he soon integrated oddish topics as well as novel musical attitudes into his own art finding a completely new direction.

Bowie and Iggy Pop started to work on the record in the summer, continuing in Munich in August, with the band arriving in West Berlin a couple of weeks later. Bowie and Pop settled down in the Schöneberg district, renting a seven-room apartment above a car spares shop at 155 Hauptstrasse.<sup>2</sup> Pop's album was mixed at Hansa Tonstudio 1 on Nestorstrasse in the Halensee neighbourhood. The record's title (*The Idiot*) was taken from Dostoevsky's novel; Bowie and Pop insisting that their friends too should read the book.<sup>3</sup>

Most probably, drafting musical guidelines for the next Bowie musical project also started at the Château, though, for recording, they chose Hansa Tonstudio 2 at 38 Kötherner Strasse in Berlin (walking distance from Hauptstrasse). Originally, the building was a concert hall, but the rear wing was mostly destroyed by an allied bombing attack in November 1943. The bomb-damaged rooms were partially renovated after the war, but the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 brought about an abrupt end to all musical activities since the Wall at Stresemannstrasse

1 David Bowie's *Berlin Trilogy* is rather alienating for many of his listeners. I have often felt these records to be disturbing. The topics that Bowie sang about did not reflect on my dilemmas; I have not gone through the life situations he dealt with. But the oeuvre appears more and more inspiring from a philological point of view. I tried to reconstruct David Bowie's one and a half years in Berlin based on the newly published memoirs and interviews of Bowie's musicians and other acquaintances.

2 On August 22, 2016, Berlin's mayor Michael Müller unveiled the plaque commemorating that David Bowie lived in the house between 1976 and 1978.

3 Trynka 33.

was less than 100 meters from the premises. In the mid-1970s, Meisel Musikverlage (The Meisel Publishing Group) set up five Hansa recording studios in the building.<sup>4</sup> The dancehall, called Meistersaal, was reborn as Studio 2 with perfect acoustics.

In the meantime, long time Bowie producer Tony Visconti arrived in Berlin. Bowie also invited former Roxy Music member Brian Eno to work with them. Eno was well-known for his electronically inflected pop music. He believed, “something musically interesting happened when a sound was ‘treated’ – divided between two musicians playing the same sound.” According to Eno, “music should be intentionally confused and incoherent,” and musicians with different artistic backgrounds should play together. As he summarized, “[M]usical accidents were to be left in, and instruments that were grossly out of tune were often preferable to those in tune.”<sup>5</sup>

In the studio, Bowie and his colleagues used *Oblique Strategies* cards, which were developed by Eno with multimedia artist Peter Schmidt in 1975. The “messages” were supposed to help artists break creative blocks, for instance: “A line has two sides,” “Don’t break the silence,” “Do the washing up,” “Imagine the music as a moving chain or caterpillar,” “You don’t have to be ashamed of using your own ideas.”<sup>6</sup> The sessions lasted until November 18, 1976.

The new Bowie album was scheduled for Christmas, but the recording company was shocked. What the management at the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) heard from the master tapes of *Low* was a kind of static, fragmentary, and incomplete music.<sup>7</sup> The second side only contained instrumental tracks. The band followed the same recording technique in 1977 and 1978 when working on the second and the third parts of the trilogy called “*Heroes*” and *Lodger*, respectively.

When someone tries to analyse inspirations for a new film, song, or book, the process often ends with uncertain results. Looking from the outside in, one can think that the high regard for the Hansa Studios attracted Bowie to West Berlin. Understandably, there were deeper motivations, among them, Expressionism was an important factor. While studying at Bromley Technical High School in South-East London in the early 1960s, Bowie was introduced to German expressionist art and Fritz Lang’s epic film *Metropolis* from 1927. “Since my teenage years, I had obsessed on the angst ridden, emotional work of the expressionists, both artists and filmmakers, and Berlin had been their spiritual home. This was the nub of the Die

4 Brady-Brown.

5 Edwards and Zanetta 354.

6 Eno and Schmidt.

7 Edwards and Zanetta 358.

Brücke movement, Max Reinhardt, Brecht and where *Metropolis* and *Caligari* had originated. It was an art form that mirrored life not by event but by mood,” Bowie recalled in 2001.<sup>8</sup> He also studied literature and art coming from Berlin before settling down in the city. Christopher Isherwood’s 1939 book *Goodbye to Berlin* fascinated him. Likely, it is more than a coincidence that Isherwood too lived in Schöneberg for two and a half years in the early 1930s. His apartment at Nollendorfstrasse 17 was a short distance from the club scene he depicted in *Goodbye to Berlin*.<sup>9</sup> Isherwood’s stories were adapted into the 1966 musical and 1972 film *Cabaret*, and he was on the guest list of Bowie’s concerts in Los Angeles during the *Station to Station* tour.<sup>10</sup>

The first pop record about West Berlin sung in English was created in the vicinity of the Bowie oeuvre: *Berlin* by Lou Reed was released in 1973. The previous year, Bowie produced Reed’s *Transformer*, after which Reed wanted to go in a different direction. He wrote a chamber rock opera about a doomed couple, Caroline and Jim depicting “a walk on the real wild side of life.” At the time of writing *Berlin*, Reed did not have any personal experiences of the city. Allegedly, he first visited Berlin during Bowie’s stay there, sharing the flat at Hauptstrasse 155. So, where could Reed’s idea have come from?

During the early period of Velvet Underground – Reed’s former band – Nico was the lead singer. Nico was German, born as Christa Päffgen in Cologne in 1938. When she was two years old, her family moved to Spreewald near Berlin. After the war, they settled down in Berlin, where Nico attended school until the age of 13 when her modelling career started. Velvet Underground (VU) had an exceptional impact on Bowie, he started to play his own covers of VU songs as early as the band’s first LP was released. Brian Eno could not escape the influence of VU, either; he said, ironically, that he got involved with rock after he heard their songs because he realized that none of the musicians could play.<sup>11</sup>

Bowie was by no means a blind admirer of Berlin; he saw the bright sides and dark shadows of the city and its controversial role in 20<sup>th</sup> century history. He described Berlin as a city of creative vibes, “and you couldn’t find a place with more tension than West Berlin [with its] factional elements, both musically and artistically,” he confessed.<sup>12</sup> Iggy Pop thought that West Berlin was comprised of a separate world

8 “Bowie on Kraftwerk and his Florian Tribute”.

9 Doyle.

10 Buckley, *David Bowie* 292.

11 Edwards and Zanetta 354.

12 Shaw.

like the volcanic islands in the ocean. “The opposing world powers created a kind of vacuum here, and you could easily disappear. It was fabulous,” he said.<sup>13</sup>

During their Berlin years, Iggy Pop and Bowie frequently travelled together to East Berlin in a Mercedes-Benz 600, though, it was not the first time they had visited the Eastern Block. In 1973, after his tour in Japan, Bowie embarked on a week-long journey from Vladivostok to Moscow on the Trans-Siberian express. He spent three days in Moscow and saw the military parade on May 1.<sup>14</sup> On April 23, 1976, Bowie and Pop only spent seven hours in Moscow on their way to Helsinki. The previous day, their train had been delayed for a few hours at Dworzec Gdański (Gdansk Railway Station) in Warsaw, so Bowie went for a walk in the Żoliborz district up to the Plac Komuny Paryskiej (Paris Commune Square).<sup>15</sup> He stopped at a record shop and bought a few LPs, one of which featured a composition called “Helokanie” sung by the folk ensemble Śląsk. The choral work was based on Polish herders’ songs which were transcribed by the leader of the choir, Stanisław Hadyna.<sup>16</sup> Bowie sang the lyrics of “Helokanie” phonetically and converted the song into a dirge called “Warszawa,” opening the B-side of *Low* with this longer piece. It evoked the fate of the once flourishing city, Warsaw, which was almost completely ruined in the Second World War.

Bowie’s statement on contemporary Berlin, “Heroes,” his most enduring song, can be found on the eponymous LP. Spontaneity seems to be the key to the song’s success. Nothing was fixed or planned before going to the studio, “sonic layers” were created during a series of improvisations. The backing tracks were almost completed when Bowie asked his musicians to take a break so he could finish writing the lyrics. Producer Tony Visconti went for a walk on an empty plot of land by the Wall with his secret lover, singer Antonia Maas, holding hands and kissing. Bowie saw them from the window of the studio, and he also noticed the East German frontier-guards looking at them with binoculars, with their machine guns over their shoulders.<sup>17</sup> The lyrics of “Heroes” were finished quickly. Bowie depicted the divided Berlin from the point of view of two doomed lovers, living on opposite sides of the Wall; their future was as hopeless as of the couple appearing in Lou Reed’s *Berlin*.

13 Trynka 239.

14 Devine.

15 The square has been renamed again and now bears its pre-Communist name, Plac Wilsona (Wilson Square). In 2016, on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bowie’s walk, a mural tribute by Dawid Celek near Wilson Square was unveiled in commemoration.

16 Sosnowski.

17 “David Bowie’s Heroes” 53.

When arriving in Berlin in 1976, Bowie's commercial and critical stock was extremely high, though, personally, he was in trouble. "He was divorcing his wife, separating from lawyers and management – and it cost him a fortune," recalled Toni Visconti in relation to the beginning of their stay in Berlin, adding that "[B]ecause Berlin was cheap, it suited his financial situation at the time, as he was almost bankrupt."<sup>18</sup> Bowie bought ordinary, cheap clothing in department stores, and often wore a worker's cap.<sup>19</sup> He kept in contact with only a few people around him. His son, Zowie attended school in Berlin and lived with his father who wanted to conduct a moderate lifestyle.

In his semi-seclusion, Bowie realized that he was free to go to music stores, the cinema, or parks again. He was even able to do his own shopping without being disturbed by fans. People did not recognize him at first glance. Bowie travelled with Iggy Pop a lot on the U-Bahn. Pop also used the S-Bahn almost every day. These trips, especially the lines that went out to the Wannsee, inspired Iggy's song "The Passenger,"<sup>20</sup> a "hymn" to Berlin's transport system. As mentioned earlier, Bowie was mesmerized by the works of the German expressionists, he admired the Brücke Group, and often visited the Brücke Museum on the edge of the Grönewald Forest.<sup>21</sup> The album covers of "Heroes" and Iggy Pop's *The Idiot* were both inspired by the same painting, Erich Heckel's *Roquairol*, an expressionist picture from 1917. Bowie also regarded himself as an expressionist artist.

Bowie tried to regain control not only of his personal life, but also of his artistic independence, step by step. When he posted the master tapes of *Low* – which did not sound like masters at all – to his record company's management in November 1976, he declared that from then on he would produce *his own* music. Though, this new kind of music was not yet powerful enough to create the basis of a convincing concert program. The next year, when Bowie returned to the concert halls, he appeared onstage strictly as the keyboardist in Iggy Pop's band. Playing with Iggy strengthened Bowie's reputation, for the most important components of it were to be fresh and experimental. Iggy and his former band The Stooges were remembered as one of the seminal bands in the punk movement. Bowie had had different personas during the previous years, though, none of them had anything in common with punk. Playing together with Iggy proved to be far too innovative, but after the

18 Shaw.

19 Edwards and Zanetta 356.

20 Schneider.

21 Schneider.

experience, Bowie could reintroduce himself as “the father of one of punk’s founding fathers.”<sup>22</sup> Following the tour, in the summer of 1977, Bowie recorded the LP “*Heroes*” with the contributors to *Low*. The sound was experimental, distorted, and often dissonant. Among the tracks, there was a masterpiece, the song “*Heroes*,” by which Bowie demonstrated that besides being avant-garde he could still write hits.

Bowie embarked on a new world tour called *Isolar* in March 1978. The first halves of the shows were devoted to music from *Low* and “*Heroes*”. Guitarist Carlos Alomar conducted the band using a baton and presented Bowie as a composer. The staff quickly realized that the once erratic and moody Bowie was now “in total control of every musical and production element. [...] The musicians perceived him as down to earth, considerate, someone to be respected for his artistry and brilliance.”<sup>23</sup> He tried to control his publicity too: the message was professionalism. He gave several television interviews, seemed to be clean, and, without a doubt, was humorous and collected. Bowie often mentioned his son, depicting himself as a caring father.

The tour went well, some gigs were even fantastic, and its commercial success re-established Bowie’s prestige as a cutting-edge artist. Bowie insisted that RCA should count the double live recording called *Stage* as two records from the point of view of contractual commitments. The dispute was resolved, but it was evident that Bowie wanted to supply the required number of albums as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup> And in the long run, the conflict indicated too that he had started to look for a new record company, which would have the commitment and the financial strength to promote his future albums worldwide.

The first leg of the *Isolar* tour ended in July 1978, and in August, Bowie returned to Berlin. He packed up his belongings at Hauptstrasse 155 and moved to Switzerland.<sup>25</sup> The recording process, which finally ended in releasing *Lodger* the next year (the closing part of the *Berlin Trilogy*) started in Geneva in September. After a couple of weeks, the work was suspended – more or less due to the lack of ideas. Bowie continued recording in New York the next year, and the album came out in May 1979. Since 1974, it has been the first Bowie record containing no less than ten songs with lyrics. It was a great relief for RCA that most of them sounded complete.<sup>26</sup> However, the critics were disappointed that the record lacked the expected synthesis. Greil

22 Edwards and Zanetta 360.

23 Edwards and Zanetta 367.

24 Matthew-Walker 49.

25 Griffin.

26 Edwards and Zanetta 371.

Marcus from the Rolling Stone called *Lodger* “just another LP,” one of Bowie’s weakest ones: “scattered”, a footnote to “*Heroes*.”<sup>27</sup>

Bowie’s next LP *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*, in 1980, was a farewell to alt-rock with some wonderful tunes (*Ashes to Ashes*, *Teenage Wildlife*). Bowie carried out different goals from 1983. He worked on a disco-oriented style in appearance and music. Albeit his forthcoming records did not contain pure disco music but some kind of drum and funky bass, the pulsating rhythm, the bombastic horn section, and the platitudinous lyrics proved to be almost unbearable for many of his former fans. Nevertheless, the trilogy of “disco” albums under his lucrative contract with EMI–Capitol brought Bowie worldwide success, which lasted throughout the decade.

According to his later interviews, Bowie himself suffered from his own artistic mediocrity in the mid-1980s which ended in serious burnout. It is as if he had forgotten the lessons of the *Station to Station*-period: one cannot live continuously in the limelight, lacking the private side of life has a devastating effect on one’s psychological integrity. Finally, he realized that he had to have a break to recollect his creative energies. In many ways, the circumstances in which he established the band Tin Machine in 1988, resembled the time that he arrived in Berlin twelve years earlier. For Bowie, the most important point would have been to re-invent himself artistically yet again. He recruited Tony and Hunt Sales from the rhythm section of Iggy Pop’s 1977 tour band, and he declared himself just one of four equal members. They recorded their songs live, without studio trickery and overdubs, leaving the sound unpolished in order to maintain a spontaneous feeling. But having spent decades in the music business would not help with playing authentic garage rock. The Sales brothers cannot be considered artists in the same sense as Brian Eno, yet they had a reputation as troublemakers. All in all, Tin Machine compromised themselves with their weak repertoire.

Nevertheless, this failure had broader underlying causes. In art, one can reconstruct the circumstances that were once inspiring, but cannot revitalize them in the same way. Metaphorically speaking, this time Bowie had chosen “wrong cards” from the *Oblique Strategies* collection; the magical inspiration of the Berlin era remained a unique gift.<sup>28</sup>

27 Marcus.

28 I would like to express my special thanks to Viviane Harangozo for her help in the translation.



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# The Importance of Popular Culture in Teaching

**Dóra Hargitai**

Teacher of English as a foreign language

hargitaidora1990@gmail.com

## Popular culture's presence

The author of this paper has been using various mediums of popular culture in her language teaching classes and this article is going to dissect these in order to understand the importance of applying everyday knowledge in the classroom. Through teaching actively in the past four years, the information presented here are the fruits of my labor, that also includes discussions with colleagues and experimenting. This research has been conducted with small children at the age of seven, nine, and ten; and then, simultaneously, teenagers from the ages of thirteen to sixteen, and adults between the ages of thirty and forty; both working in one-to-one sessions and, occasionally, with larger groups of children in elementary and high schools. This paper is going to focus on utilizing popular culture in teaching English as a foreign language.

What exactly does popular culture entail? When doing a quick search on the internet, *Cambridge Dictionary* explains it as follows: music, TV, cinema, books, etc. that are popular and enjoyed by people.<sup>1</sup> According to *statista.com*, as of October 2020, there were approximately 4.66 billion active users of the internet<sup>2</sup>, which is a huge portion of the world's population of approximately 7.8 billion people<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, popular culture is now becoming less of an exclusive source of amusement to the so-called "very educated" people and is becoming more general entertainment. Despite being present in every medium, popular culture is rarely discussed or mentioned within the boundaries of an ordinary elementary or high school class, in the traditional sense of a curriculum. However, as teaching has many methodologies and practices which keep evolving as the years pass by, it is impossible to prevent popular culture from seeping into the classroom, especially because the internet is now in every student's pocket, within their easy reach at all times.

That is the reason why the author of this paper has decided to facilitate this presence and willingly use it to her advantage and observe its uses and limitations. Despite the fact that it may seem problematic since free-spirited popular culture and

1 "Popular Culture".

2 Statista Population Worldwide.

3 Worldometer.

supposedly strict classroom behavior should not go hand-in-hand, the importance of at least acknowledging pop culture in this environment is rather significant.

A well-placed reference has a very positive response in the classroom. First, the teacher must choose a reference that is known by the students. This part is especially important, because for popular culture to be used in class, both participants have to be familiar with it. One of the best ways is demonstrated through using common pranks with videos everyone knows. From personal experience, the author tried to do a “rickroll”<sup>4</sup> prank on her teenage students. However, this attempt at humor had fallen short, as the children did not know either about “rickrolling” or the song. The mistake was made by the teacher: she assumed that her students knew about this song and the popular culture prank it cultivated. Although the reception was awkward, the good relationship between the teacher and the students still remained strong due to the fact that previously the teacher had built up a strong connection between her and the students using popular culture in her class successfully. While using popular culture might sound like a simple method, it actually requires quite a bit of research and communication with the students. It is a form of teaching practice which requires knowledge, charisma, and empathy.

### Popular culture as a common language in the classroom

Whereas it sounds positively delightful that *The Avengers*<sup>5</sup> can be introduced in a high school classroom, it is certainly a step that has to be well-organized in order to produce positive effects. First and foremost, popular culture can be used as a common communicative platform between the teacher and the students. Whenever there is a new teacher introduced, a certain awkwardness may be present in the classroom, which is normal, since it is the first encounter between an authority figure and students. Building up rapport is one of the key objectives a teacher must achieve. Rapport is the connection between the students and the teacher, which counteracts the rigidity of hierarchy.

One of the many possible ways to do that is to talk with the students and encourage them to comfortably share something about their lives: favorite show, book. This activity must begin with the teacher setting an example and it is here where

4 The term “rickrolling” means that Rick Astley’s “Never Gonna Give You Up” is played at a random section of a video; the first section of the video is usually a buildup to something serious or heavy and at an inappropriate moment, Rick Astley’s video plays. It is very popular on the internet and has become a part of internet culture.

5 Whedon.

popular culture as a favored subject should be mentioned. For a very enthusiastic teacher, it is important to remember there is a fine line between sharing too much and sharing just enough. The moment students see that the authority figure is no longer just an unfamiliar face but also a person who likes the same shows or video games they do, it immediately starts building up a familiar and safe environment for the students. This is especially important when teaching a foreign language because there are exercises where students have to talk about their favorite movies and they also practice using certain adjectives. My personal experience is when popular culture was utilized in the class, the students became more active when they knew their favorite show, video game, or series were appreciated in the classroom. In addition, showing preference for popular culture strengthens the belief in students that they do not stand out in the classroom, and they have validity and acceptance. It is one of the teacher's responsibilities to make sure the learners are comfortable in the classroom. It is also vital to remember that teaching a language also means learning about cultures as well, therefore, popular culture and language learning go hand-in-hand.

Familiarity helps with the method of transferring knowledge. During the author's teaching career, she had to teach a group of 15 children, aged between 11 and 13, at an elementary level. The majority of these children had either behavior or learning issues and at first it was difficult to teach the simplest grammar to them. During the first part of the semester, the author had to teach the children personal pronouns and the children had difficulties with the third person singular. No matter what examples she used, nothing seemed to work, not even when the pronouns were substituted for family members. However, at one point of the semester, the author found out that the children were massive fans of the video game called *Among Us*. After that, she used the terms "impostor" and "crewmate" to demonstrate the third person<sup>6</sup>. It had an immediate impact: the children were not only eager to learn more, but from then on, EFL classes became something they looked forward to. The most impressive feature was that the moment these characters were introduced, the children immediately could form sentences without any issues, as if the issue had previously never even existed. The children loved the idea of having little Impostors and Crewmates from the game become part of the lesson. When there was a new grammar section, it was always introduced with the help of these characters. As this was a huge success with the junior group, similar tactics were used for older students.

6 See Figure 1.

After learning that the majority of the teenagers were Marvel fans, the author of this paper used certain Marvel characters for motivation<sup>7</sup>. For example, when it was time to discuss personal traits and adjectives, the class was given instances such as “she is a generous person because she donated money.” After the example, the task turned into a gap-filling exercise and instead of using general examples, Marvel examples were used:

“Tony Stark is \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.”

“Black Panther was a \_\_\_\_ movie because \_\_\_\_.”

After introducing such prompts, the unresponsive class turned into a very active one. The medium of popular culture make it possible to have serious discussions as well. The discussions were done in the second language.

A group of high schoolers familiarized themselves with the TV series *Black Mirror*<sup>8</sup>. They had seen the show’s advertisement on Netflix and when they read the reviews they were immediately interested. Furthermore, when they asked the teacher whether she likes the series and she replied with an affirmative answer, the students grew more excited and interested. They wanted to know why it is so popular and there was one student who wanted to understand a picture she saw on the internet. She described the picture as such: a man is holding a protest sign which said, “This episode of Black Mirror sucks.” The students asked to view an episode in class, in the original language and to have a discussion after. The name of that episode was “Nosedive.”<sup>9</sup> After watching that episode, the class had a discussion about inappropriate online behavior and bullying. The children felt relieved that they could talk about the topic because either they or a friend of theirs had experienced something similar. Most of these discussions were done in English, although when the topics became too complicated, some sentences were uttered in their native tongue, nonetheless, they were eager to participate and contribute to the discussion. These classes were important because the children learned more about appropriate online behavior, all the while also learning important vocabulary and phrases in English. Even though there are educational videos online about these topics, using a *Black Mirror* episode was more effective with the children because they had already seen the advertisement for this series on Netflix and YouTube. They wanted to watch something that was part

7 Whedon and Coogler.

8 Booker.

9 Wright.

of popular culture even though it was not in their native language, thus they asked the person they trusted in this regard the most, their English teacher. The reason why *Black Mirror* was brought up in the class was because the show was advertised on a medium that was frequently visited by the students, furthermore they had seen references to it on social media, therefore it was a part of popular culture at that time. This popularity was intriguing to the students and the fact that their teacher was also familiar with the show amplified their interest considerably. Two main factors played a major role in this session's success: *Black Mirror* was very relevant, due to its popularity, and an approachable teacher was there who was open to discussion. Relevancy and trust are inseparable when a teacher decides to use popular culture in class. After this session, the students turned to the author for support or advice on more serious topics because they felt more comfortable with the teacher. They were also more open to voicing their fears in class because they knew they would not be mocked. Popular culture can be used as a language medium to present an issue, the discussion it follows can have an immense effect on future classes.

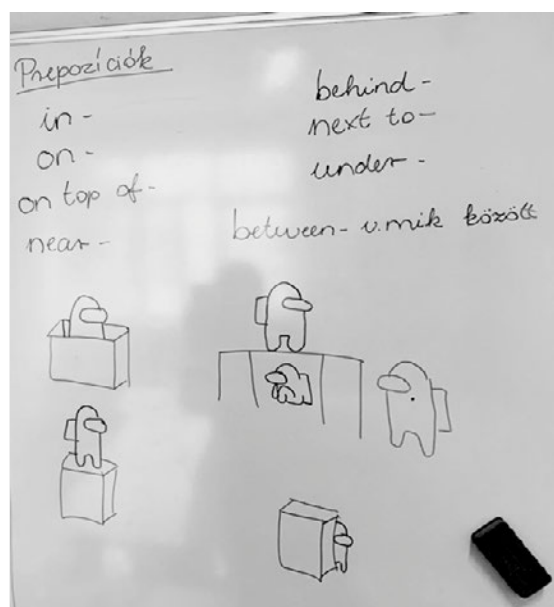


Figure 1: teaching prepositions using *Among Us* characters.

### Roles of a teacher and their compatibility with popular culture

It is important to note here that a teacher should always use methods and practices according to one's own style and personality. Originality is vital when teaching and

the students will immediately notice when a practice is forced, therefore creating a slightly awkward atmosphere in the classroom. There are certain roles a teacher has, and each and every teacher has their very own style which work well with their role. A short list from Jeremy Harmer's book is now paraphrased for better understanding:<sup>10</sup>

**Facilitator:** one who is democratic rather than autocratic and one who fosters learner autonomy through the use of groupwork and pair work and by acting as more of a resource than a transmitter of knowledge.

**Controller:** they are in charge of the class and of the activity taking place and often lead from the front. This, however, may deny students' own experiential learning by focusing everything on the teacher; it cuts down on opportunities for students to speak.

**Prompter:** sometimes teachers are involved in a role-play activity for example, when students lose the thread of what is going on, or they are lost for words. A prompter can nudge them forward in a discreet and supportive way.

**Participant:** when a teacher joins the activity, taking part in a discussion for example. When it goes well, students enjoy having the teacher with them. There is the chance for the teachers to dominate the proceedings since their language level is superior. Furthermore, the teacher is always viewed as an 'authority'.

**Resource:** there are activities where it is inappropriate for teachers to take part in. In these situations, the students might still need their teacher as a resource, however.

**Tutor:** working with groups and individuals, pointing students in directions they have not yet thought of taking. Combined roles of prompter and resource.

It is imperative that the teacher understands and actively plays their role. It is possible that their role can change, for example, between controller and facilitator, as different situations require different approaches. A controller-type of role certainly narrows down the topics as less interaction is required when choosing this option. Therefore, free-spirited discussion is entirely omitted when the teacher takes on a frontal, strict role, thus topics that are relevant to free time and leisure are avoided.

10 Harmer 108–110.

It is certainly possible to merge teacher roles that are lax and still emit a certain authority.

The author of this paper identifies her role as a mixture between facilitator and participant. For the use of popular culture in class, utilizing the facilitator role is the best option. Core qualities of a facilitator according to Rogers:<sup>11</sup>

**genuineness:** means being yourself, not playing a role in front of your learners; **acceptance:** means prizing the learner, prizing their feelings. It implies a basic trust, a belief that this other person is fundamentally trustworthy; empathy, or empathic understanding.

The teacher has the option to select a popular culture reference that may appeal to all the students, therefore proactively attempting to find a topic where no one feels excluded. In addition, natural interest in these topics allows for an authentic and genuine dialogue between the participants. Before deciding to use popular culture in class, it has to be made sure that it is applicable with the specific role the teacher chooses.

In conclusion, it is imperative to acknowledge that technology is slowly seeping into every aspect of our daily lives, including the world of teaching. Because of this phenomenon, the students nowadays are all users of said technology and it has become a part of their lives. Therefore, wherever they go, technology will be a part of who they are, and the classroom is no different. As students change, so must the teachers' view on this issue. This new generation of students also have different learning habits than the teachers had. Whereas reading books was certainly an activity that was always done by the young, nowadays this generation rather consumes audiovisual entertainment and less literature. The author of this paper does not claim that nobody reads books nowadays. She merely states once again, that there is a high chance of a higher number of series-watchers and movie-goers than before. Rather than denying and banning popular culture from the classroom, using this content can actually be helpful. Not only does it help to build up a connection between the students and the teacher, it will also start to enhance/create/produce an emotional connection with the subject. As it was mentioned before, using popular culture is not ideal to all subjects in school. It is, however, a great tool when teaching a foreign language. This way, when teaching a foreign language, not only the students will be more willing to participate, but it will also help build up their

11 Rogers 125.



self-confidence by showing them it is all right to like and enjoy certain things which are considered generally not welcome in a school environment. It is the opinion of the author that encouraging self-confidence, love for the language, and cultural awareness is also a part of a teacher's job and the introduction of popular culture can help achieve these aims.

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The study of popular culture has gained momentum in Hungarian academic circles in the 21st century. The present volume showcases 27 studies, which all prove one point: studying phenomena of popular culture is inspiring in many areas of life, and in numerous scientific disciplines, from literature and linguistics to visual, music and ecocritical studies, pedagogy and narrative criminology.

A populáris kultúrával kapcsolatos kutatás a 21. században a magyar akadémiai körökben is teret nyert. E kötet 27 tanulmányt közöl, amelyek bizonyosságul szolgálnak arra, hogy a populáris kultúra jelenségeinek tanulmányozása az élet és számos tudományos diszciplína területén inspiráló, legyen szó irodalomról, nyelvészetről, vizualitásról, zenéről, ökokritikáról, pedagógiáról vagy narratív kriminológiáról.

EDITED BY/SZERKESZTETTE

Bánházi Judit Anna  
Beke Zsolt  
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Csorba Eszter Zsuzsanna  
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