

# **English Voices and Echoes**



**Oksana Weretiuk**

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Recenzowały  
doc. PhDr MÁRIA HRICKOVÁ, PhD  
prof. dr hab. BEATA WALIGÓRSKA-OLEJNICZAK

Proofreading  
IAN UPCHURCH

Opracowanie techniczne i łamanie  
EWA KUC

Projekt okładki  
JULIA SOŃSKA-LAMPART

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WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU RZESZOWSKIEGO  
35-310 Rzeszów, ul. prof. S. Pigoń 6, tel.: 17 872 13 69, tel./faks: 17 872 14 26  
e-mail: [wydaw@ur.edu.pl](mailto:wydaw@ur.edu.pl); <https://wydawnictwo.ur.edu.pl>  
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*To my son Andriy  
I miss you so much*



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## Preface

The aim of the book is to reach students, researchers, and the wider community of readers. However, its main purpose is to present the diverse voices of literatures written in English and point at similar features between them and those more distant from them – linguistically, culturally and geographically – Ukrainian and Polish literatures. I metaphorically called the latter “echoes” - as a close parallel to the ideas, feeling, or events.

A cultural terrain covering a large part of Europe and North America is offered, unfortunately too often disturbed by the dangerous channels of political history. The book contains 16 essays addressing how writing in English constructs the narratives of ethnic identity, home and belonging, earth-man relations, human-animal bonds, dramatic historical events. Moreover, a comparison with selected Slavic literatures highlights these specific national accents in the discussed works by English, Irish, Canadian and American writers. This approach proves helpful for studying literature across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The First Chapter introduces the issues concentrated on English literature itself, and it is opened with an article written 15 years ago, about Andrzej Tretiak, the outstanding Polish professor of the interwar period, expert in English literature, comparatist, who was the first in Poland to define the characteristic, definitive features of English literature. Chapter Two discusses the concepts of Irish literature, mostly in comparison with Ukrainian literature and in reference to the dramatic historical events of both nations, including some Polish accents. In Chapter Three

the literary concepts of the formation of multicultural Canadian identity and Canadian literature in English are discussed as well as the phenomenon of Canadian prairie poetry (Andy Suknaski) and native Cree artist (Allan Sapp). Chapter Four deals with some issues of comparative studies in reference to literatures in English. Therefore, my research has an international character and focuses on critical understanding of how literatures differ from one another (even those written in the same English language) and what those differences mean. The book includes some articles published a long time ago, and many of them were written for the current edition. They will summarize my almost twenty-year work as a comparative scholar at the English Department of the University of Rzeszów.

Rzeszów, June 2024

# **I. On English Literature**



# Andrzej Tretiak: a great humanist, a prominent Polish anglicist and comparatist

*„I jeżeli naród jakikolwiek ma prawo  
żyć i chce żyć, musi to robić przez  
humanistykę”<sup>1</sup>*

Andrzej Tretiak

Andrzej Wojciech Tretiak (born 8 June 1886, Lviv, died 3 (?) August 1944, Warsaw) was the son of a participant in the Polish January Insurrection (1863–64), professor of Jagiellonian University, Józef Tretiak (1841-1923) and Zofia from Wilczyńskis' family. His paternal lineage came from Volyn and, apparently, it had noble roots<sup>2</sup>. Andrzej Tretiak inherited an interest in Romanticism

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<sup>1</sup> And if any nation has the right to live and want to live, it must be done by the humanities. All translations from Polish, Ukrainian and Russian, here and elsewhere, are mine, if a translator is not noted.

<sup>2</sup> The name “Tretiak” is worn by representatives of the coat of arms of Szreniawa (Sreniawa), and the first mention of the coat of arms is the seal of the Coat of Arms of Szreniaw from 1371, which belonged to Jan Kmita, Ruthenian Country Executive of Wisnicz. This name is very common today among the Ukrainian nationality in Volyn, Podole and Carpathian regions. It is not thoroughly investigated whether Andrzej Tretiak is a descendant of the Polonized Ruthenian magnates, whether he comes from Volynian Ruthenian peasants, who obtained their noble titles for their brave participation in the fighting and the uprising, and in this way they multiplied the Polish nobility.

and the “comparative spirit” from his father, Józef Tretiak, an expert in Slavonic literatures (Polish, Ukrainian and Russian).

Born in Małe Biskupice estate, which was situated to the south-west of Włodzimierz Wołyński towards the border with the Lwów region, Tretiak senior attended a secondary school in Równe, then he studied Philology at the universities of Kyiv, Zurich and Paris, in 1867-1886 he lived and worked in Lwów as a professor of the local secondary school. At the same time, he was the head of Lwów Literary Union. So, in Biskupice, Kijów, Równe and Lwów, Tretiak senior learned Polish, Ukrainian, Russian languages, literatures and cultures, which enabled him to almost parallel defense of two habilitations: in the history of Polish literature (dissertation *Mickiewicz a Trembecki*, 1890) and in Ukrainian language and literature (dissertation *Pro vplyv Mitskevycha na poezyju Shevchenka*, 1892), and, as a consequence, take over management of the Department of Ukrainian Language and Culture (for details see Jakubowski 1964, 221, 223) and conduct comparative research of the “borderland of Polish and Ukrainian literature” (see Loth 2003, 263) at Jagiellonian University. Tretiak senior was the author of the following comparative works: *Hamlet polski*, 1883; *Mickiewicz i Puszkina jako bajroniści*, 1899; *Mickiewicz i Puszkina*, 1906.

Born in multicultural Lwów (Lviv), Tretiak junior changed the interest in Slavonic literatures inherited from his father to Western literatures. He combined the knowledge learned from home and family passion for Polish literature with his knowledge of German and English literatures gained during his university studies, which eventually allowed him to form a comparative approach in English studies. It is worth mentioning that Andrzej Tretiak studied classical languages and German in a secondary school named after Jan Sobieski in Krakow. For two years he gained his knowledge of Polish literature and German literature and language at Jagiellonian University. Then he went to Vienna, where he studied English Philology until 1908. There, at the University of Vienna, Tretiak

wrote his first comparative work, entitled *Marlowe and Mickiewicz (Contribution to the genesis of the third part of Dziady)* (1907). A year later, he published his work about the similarities between two prominent writers: Robert Browning (1812-1889), English poet, playwright, a leading creator of the Victorian era, and Gerhard Hauptmann (1862-1946), the German eventual winner of the Nobel Prize (1912). After Vienna he took up a year's study in England and after returning home, in 1909, he received a doctoral degree for his work entitled: *Über hapax lego mena bei "Shakespeare"* (see Czachowska, Szałagan, ed. 2003, 344). In the meantime he began translating Shakespeare's works into Polish.

The financial situation forced him to change the direction of his career: he completed supplementary Agriculture studies at the University of Wrocław (1912). However, while working as the administrator of landed property in Malopolska, he was constantly deepening his English knowledge, paying special attention to the great author of *Hamlet*, to soon become one of the three greatest Polish experts in Shakespeare in the interwar period (the two others were Roman Dyboski and Władysław Tarnawski) (see Stanisz 2011).

The first of Tretiak's major works on English literature<sup>3</sup> appeared in 1911. It was written in Polish, *John Harington, a court epigrammer in the days of Queen Elizabeth (John Harington, epigramista dworski z czasów królowej Elżbiety)*, an eighty-five-page book about a minor poet from the perspective of the modern era, but a well-known poet who provoked an impressive admiration among his contemporaries in Shakespeare's era<sup>4</sup>. The young Polish researcher acquainted the Polish reader with Harington's

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<sup>3</sup> Before that, he published the two following articles in Polish: *Oskar Wilde jako liryk* (1907), *Angielski poemat z XVII wieku na cześć króla Jana III* (1909).

<sup>4</sup> John Harrington / Harington (1561-1612) was almost a peer of the great Shakespeare (1564-1616). He was one of the many godchildren of Queen Elizabeth.

epigrams - elegant, wise and witty poems, sometimes too sharp, violating moral norms, so causing Queen Elizabeth's great anger and her harsh repressive educational measures for her favorite and saucy godson. "The *Epigrams* constitute[d] a moral, political and theological critique of the state of the nation, so it is easy to see why Harington might have hesitated to have them printed" (Kilroy 2009, vii). Four hundred epigrams, collected in four volumes, written in the period of Elizabethan literary freedom, were only printed a few hundred years after the death of their author (the first editions of several selected Harington epigrams appeared in 1613, 1615, 1618. See also Harington 1930, 447 pp.; *Harington* 2009, 368 pp.). Harington's epigrams entered the history of English literature as vivid sketches of Elizabethan social life and literature, "an art whose form invited readers to relax among humour and ambiguity long before they realize that they have taken in a much more serious message" (Kilroy 2009,vii). The above-mentioned modern researchers' assessment of Harington's poems just confirms the apt choice of material by the young Polish scholar, his scientific passion and his ability to be ahead of his time. Tretiak also presented to Polish readers the greatest translational achievement of the alumnus of Eton King's College and Cambridge: Harington's wonderful, reliable, professional translation of *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto from Italian. Such a perfect translation resulted in the fact that in twentieth-century studies on the history of English literature, Harington was usually presented as an Ariosto translator (see Buchan 1923,168; Albert, 1979,123, etc.). The translation of Ariosto was enriched with numerous footnotes and comments from Harington, pointed toward the English reader. This English version of *Orlando Furio* has not lost its importance and is still in circulation among English-speaking readers. Perhaps, Tretiak, the young English Philology student, was impressed by the awe-inspiring diverse interests and talents of the study object, by Ariosto's

sumptuous Rabelaisian wit, so contrasting with late Renaissance Elizabethan England with its Shakespearian high, lofty and great tragedies.

At the University of Warsaw, in 1922, Tretiak began his scientific interest in English studies by announcing in print his work *Charakterystyka literatury angielskiej* (1923, *The characteristics of English literature*); in that year he was appointed associate professor. The next of Tretiak's important works was a short book *Środki artystyczne sceny szekspirowskiej* (65 pp. *The artistic means of the Shakespearean scene*). Printed in Warsaw in 1925, this work was the result of several years of the scholar's research. At the time of publishing this work, Tretiak was already the head of the newly created English Department at the University of Warsaw. After Poland had gained independence in 1918, the University of Warsaw, for the first time in its history, could develop in new conditions, marked by freedom and openness to the world. In the late nineteen twenties the University was the largest Polish university. Tretiak's linguistic and literary knowledge, his openness to otherness and his desire to understand foreign cultures corresponded to the spirit of the university and the spirit of time. In 1922 he started his work at the University of Warsaw, and in 1936 he became a full professor. Before the outbreak of World War II, Tretiak was the dean of the Humanities Faculty at the University of Warsaw. It is worth recalling that in the early 1930s, the University of Warsaw was already the largest Polish university, with 250 professors and associate professors and 10,000 students<sup>5</sup>. A picture has been preserved in Warsaw University's Museum: Professors of the Faculty of Philosophy in June 1927. The flower of Polish and European science, and among the outstanding scholars - forty-one-year-old Andrzej Tretiak.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://en.uw.edu.pl/about-university/history/> Accessed 15.02.2022.

For several years, before Hitler's army had seized the capital, he had been "watching over" the popularization and research of English literature in Poland: from 1921, he cooperated with the English brunch in the National Library publishing series, translating Shakespeare and English romantics, preparing editions of their works, providing translations of Shakespeare, Byron, Scott and Dickens with his comments and introductory words addressed to the Polish reader<sup>6</sup>. For example: in the introduction to the Polish edition of Byron's poetry (Jerzy Byron, *Powieści poetyckie*, 1924) he emphasizes the great importance of Byron's spirit of freedom ("woń wolności" / "the smell of freedom") for European society, including for the Polish nation. Tretiak writes that despite the fact that Byron did not put up any political programs, "Byron's poetry was almost the only permitted form of liberty propaganda, for which European society then groaned, forced to hide its longing for free action in the secret societies of Italian Car-

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning some of them: William Szakespeare/William Szekspir, *Burza*: komedia w pięciu aktach, tł. Józefa Paszkowskiego; oprac. Andrzej Tretiak, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1921; William Szekspir, *Hamlet*: tragedia w pięciu aktach, przeł. z ang. oraz wstępem i objaśnieniami opatrzył Andrzej Tretiak, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1922; William Szakespeare, *Król Lir*: tragedia w pięciu aktach, przeł. z ang. oraz wstępem i objaśnieniami opatrzył Andrzej Tretiak, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1923; William Szakespeare, *Otello*: tragedia w pięciu aktach, przeł. z ang. Józef Paszkowski, oprac. Andrzej Tretiak, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1927; William Szakespeare, *Makbet*: tragedia w pięciu aktach, przeł. z ang. Józef Paszkowski, wstępem i objaśnieniami zaopatrzył Andrzej Tretiak, Wrocław: Zakł. Nar. Im. Ossolińskich 1949; George Byron/Jerzy Byron, *Powieści poetyckie*, oprac. Andrzej Tretiak [tłum. z ang.], Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1924; Walter Scott, *Waverley*, przekł. z ang. Teresa Świdzka; wstępem zaopatrzył i oprac. Andrzej Tretiak, Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza 1929; Charles Dickens/Karol Dickens, *Klub Pickwicka*: powieść..., T. 1,2,3. Słowo wstępne Andrzej Tretiak; przekł. z ang. Włodzimierz Górski, Warszawa: Wydaw. Gutenberga 1927.

bonates, German Tugenhunds and Polish Filarets" (Tretiak 1924, VI). He also presents a detailed analysis of the poet's works included in the volume (along with parallels with Polish romantics); moreover, he discusses the issue of Polish translations of the great romantic English poet. Tretiak points out that the first translations were imperfect, second-hand, because knowledge of English at that time was poor and, possibly, German or French translations, but not English sources were used. In addition, in the first and later translations he notes the lack of fidelity to the original "because almost all translators are also original poets". Under the text he marks the most important deviations and omissions, naturally, without exhausting the whole problem of fidelity of translations, because it must be the subject of a separate work. In conclusion, he gives a short evaluation to every translation, distinguishing the best:

(...) the best translator is Korsak<sup>7</sup>; he alone truly reflects the nature of Byron's poems: *Lara* is very close to the original, the *Prisoner of Chillon* - despite a number of misunderstandings - for this reason found a place in this collection, and the *Siege of Corinth* (printed only after the death of the translator in 1865) deserves - in my opinion - the best translation of Byron in Poland. Korsak has perfect counterparts in his translations; rhythm and character resemble *Marja*<sup>8</sup>, a masterpiece of Byron's influence in Poland. (Tretiak 1924, XLVIII)

Tretiak's active administrative, didactic, social and organizational work (he was the curator of Catholic academic associations, an active member of the scout's corporation Sparta et al.) did not interfere with the scholar's scientific development, as evidenced by the above-mentioned work from 1925 and the following three

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<sup>7</sup> Julian Korsak (1806-1855), a Polish poet and translator, representative of Polish romanticism.

<sup>8</sup> *Maria: Ukrainian novel* is a poetic novel in two songs by Antoni Malczewski, the first application of this genre in Polish literature. It was published in 1825 in Warsaw.

book editions: *Literatura angielska w okresie romantyzmu 1798-1831* (*English Literature During the Romantic Era 1798-1831*) (1928, 480 pp.), *Lord Byron* (1930, 391 pp.), *Mąż stanu – kanclerz Tomasz Morus i jego Utopia* (*A Statesman - Chancellor Thomas More and His Utopia*) (1938, 47 pp.). Moreover, a dozen or so “portrait” articles appeared from under his pen, bringing the Polish reader closer to the creative heritage of Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1926), George Bernard Shaw (1926), William Blake (1926-1927), Thomas Moore (1929), Hilaire Belloc (1930), John Galsworthy (1933, 1935), James Barry (1933), Walter Scott (1933), Joseph Conrad (1934), Alice Meynell (Thompson) and Francis Thompson (1935), Robert Browning (1935), Charles Dickens (1936), Gerard Manley Hopkins (1939), William Shakespeare (1937). In addition to the exact English themes, he presented to the Polish reader an outline of the English life experience of Bartłomiej Beniowski (1800-1867), a participant of the Polish November Uprising (1831), who, after the defeat of the uprising, as a Revolutionary Refugee, emigrated firstly to France, later to England, where he joined the Chartist movement and led military training of Chartists’ combat units (*Beniowski w Anglii / Beniowski in England*, 1929).

First of all, Tretiak's works of synthetic and review nature, introducing researchers, students and lovers of English literature into the era of English pre-romanticism and romanticism, had scientific and didactic importance. The above-mentioned *English Literature in the Romantic period (1798-1831)* showed the distinctiveness of English literature in relation to the other European literatures of the same historical period, therefore it had a clear comparative nature. The author constructed a structural periodisation of English Romanticism, defined the chronological boundaries of English literary Romanticism and gave the general characteristics of English literature. Tretiak determined the boundary markers of this period of English literature, they are 1798 and 1831: the date of the publication of a joint collection of poems by

two young friends, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, and the last year of creative work of Sir Walter Scott, who lived only one more year, but this last year was entirely infertile creatively. The scientist is very careful with such a delimitation:

However, these dates are borderlines, conditionally, it means that with some other agreement they can be shifted to one side or the other. In fact, national literature forms a continuous totality, where a few dozen years, sometimes several tens of them have the character of transitional periods, clearly heterogeneous in the direction of its main currents, without losing the essential characteristics resulting from the temperament and character of an ethnic group which cultural, social and political literature is expressed. (...) In our journey through the eighteenth century with English literature (...) we stop almost surprised in 1798, at the preface to the "Lyrical Ballads", at the content and form of each piece. We see that we are already in the new country. With further study, there is clear distinct organization of the state, representing the specificity of the era. It is above all a period of great names (author's form of recording- O.W.). (Tretiak 1928,1-2)

The "time of great names", according to the researcher, is the first characteristic feature of this epoch. In the following chapters of this section, Tretiak is going to discuss the works of the leading representatives of this period: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Walter Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and the lesser-known authors. The next generation of Polish Anglicists, his disciples, decorously evaluated the efforts of the scholar:

Each chapter - is a living man and his living work, a masterfully recorded history of life, motives, lines and character of the development of views and excellent rating tracks. With meticulous, happy knowledge (...) mined by the values of particular works, introduces the reader to them, shows the beauty of the whole, emphasizes the detail here and there. Every poet sees as it was in its rich diversity. There is no one, singular, treatment of artists [...] (Helsztyński 1946, 401)

The second feature of the era is that it was “a period of masterpieces.” The scientist understands a masterpiece as what “fulfills its dual function: the expression of individual experience of the poet and expressing the slogan of his time, discoveries and capture in the rhythm of his generation”, because

An amalgamation of these two functions in a harmonious whole creates a masterpiece of eternal values, since the ratio of masterpieces to humanity is the same as the ratio of each act or work for a particular person, if the act or work concluded a word of the whole of his being in the moment. (...) The condition for the creation of masterpieces is very broad, covering all sections of society and the nation’s shared experience, high voltage rhythm of life at a time. (Tretiak 1928, 2-4)

For greater visibility, Tretiak exemplifies his views on examples well-known to the Polish reader: he juxtaposes a masterpiece of Mickiewicz (*Improwizację z Dziadów/ Improvisation to Forefathers*) with Ossian’s works which “galloped all over Europe, like those shadows of his ancestors on steeds rushing among the clouds, and how these shadows disappeared from the cultural life of mankind, because it was only a product of fashion” and has its place in the history of culture, “but only in history, not in life” (3-4).

Among the characteristics of English Romanticism a special place for the synthesis is the diversity and contrasts, a feature mentioned by Max Deutschbein, an expert in European romanticism. The views of the professor from Marburg had special prominence in the nineteen twenties<sup>9</sup>. Referring to Deutschbein, and

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<sup>9</sup> In 1921 Max Deutschbein published a monograph on *Fri Das Wesen der Romantischen* (Gothen O. Schulze, 120 pp.), where he, according to the anti-positivist tendency, using the phenomenological method, presented the essence of Romanticism and its new definition. According to Mario Praz, “In his essay on “Romatisch und Romanesk” in *Britannia, Max Förster zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1929), Max Deutschbein has tried to make use of the two terms (of romanticism: “romantic” and “romanesque” -

also to Watts-Dunton, Fehr, Elton, Herford, Kant, Pierce et al., he presented a good knowledge of the achievements of European and global aesthetic and literary thought.

Being a comparatist, Tretiak sees a similarity in the ideals and content of Romanticism in Poland and Scotland which derive from the psychomental characteristics of both nations, and mainly from the chivalry of Scottish highlanders of Gaelic origin and "the honor of the Poles" (238). He also notices points of differences between the French revolutionary romanticism and conservative English.

Scott proclaimed to the whole world the same good news that Napoleon was bringing, that a man is a brother to another and that his brotherhood could be fulfilled in nationality, but he proclaimed it, not as a product of a revolution that could not be believed in the absence of a past, but as a product of the past it was precisely ... [...] Scotland was not moved by the revolution, because it did not need to be moved - it had had everything that the revolution proclaimed for a long time. (236)

After years it can be discussed with some of the assumptions of the Polish Anglicist, but most of them have passed the test of time and to this day it surprises in content and original form of concise and metaphorical interpretation.

Tretiak's study *Byron-Chateaubriand-Słowacki* (1935) revealed the author's competence in the field of three European literatures, the ability to perform a comparative typological analysis of the characteristics of English, French and Polish Romanticism, and in turn, in his scientific work entitled *Zagadnienia literatury katolickiej w Anglii / The issues of Catholic literature in England* (1937) "[he] carried out the most profound research in Polish science on mys-

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O.W.) in order to distinguish between external romanticism, to be associated with fancy, and inner romanticism, the product of imagination" (Praz 1974, 89).

tical and metaphysical texts of English poetry and showed the Catholic trend in the development of contemporary English literature and culture" (Śródka 1998, 393). Some of his works are sketchy in nature; recalling broader lecture notes; however, they are distinguished by the freshness of thoughts, the ability to "tame" literary phenomena when they are transferred from a misty island to Polish soil, and the ability to familiarize the Polish reader and researcher with foreign culture.

Along with the generalizing works on particular literary periods, there came other works, in which he strove for a comprehensive understanding of English literature. Among others important in English studies in the interwar Poland, the aforementioned work of a synthetic character entitled *Charakterystyka literatury angielskiej / Characteristics of English Literature* has not lost its relevance to this day. It distinguished itself with original understanding of the object of research, balanced, objective evaluation made by a careful, observant external observer. The concepts of Andrzej Tretiak passed the test of time and provided interesting material for modern Anglicists and connoisseurs of European literature. Seeing English literature as "plastic totality", "a block of three dimensions", the scholar divided its individual characteristics into three basic groups according to their three-dimensionality. First - is its "continuity (length)":

Although during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the literature in England used the Latin language as a whole, we also have remains of the literature in the native language, and, moreover, the Latin literature of these two centuries constantly revolves around familiar topics. After the eleventh century, however, even the civil war of the Two Roses was not able to cause a complete stagnation in literary work, because it was the time of the beginning of the activity of the first printer of England, the tireless translator Caxton. This literature has grown in size since the Tudors, with giants behind it (...) (Tretiak 1924, 4)

The second is "its breadth", which Tretiak connects with the imperial essence of the British state, "embracing different races and different climates, ideas", extending the boundaries of English literature to colonies on different continents, to areas "living completely different vegetative and psychological lives, with different traditions cultural, social, with different morals, different ways of looking at the world", which in consequence resulted in "deepening and broadening [its] spiritual horizons" (23). Such a perspective of a comprehensive approach to heterogeneous English (British) literature brings the Polish scientist closer to contemporary post-colonial criticism in literary research and anthropology, which does not bypass the beneficial developmental impact of small cultures of submissive countries on the Canon of Metropolitan High Culture. He juxtaposes the work of "the most perfect eulogist of English imperialism", Rudyard Kipling, with the colonial and imperial experiences of his compatriot (with Polish roots), Joseph Conrad, the creator of "the best psychological novel on the background of colonial relations". He also confronts the English colonial literature with the French colonial literature (23-24).

The third dimension is "the depth" of English literature, i.e. its way of recognition of the problems, which, for Tretiak "surpasses all other modern literatures, reaches depths so great that it loses its national character in its highest manifestations" (25). The scholar addresses this dimension with honesty, openness and objective self-criticism of English writing.

The Englishman is never an absolute worshiper of his nation - a satirical tour against foreign nationalities are generally rare in the literature.(...) However English literature is a harsh and merciless judge of all social errors and flaws of his country. (...) It has no compromise with any social evil (...), with no dirty internal or external policy. For every social error, for every political offense (...) society expects in the eyes of posterity the verdict issued by the literature contemporary to these facts (25),

and thus he emphasizes its strong satirical focus, its soothing, healing properties (“evil must be treated”), its tolerance towards the Other (foreigner, stranger).

Of course, one can disagree with some of Tretiak's views, for example, it is worth mentioning the grotesquely caricatured depiction of the conquered and hated Irishman in the British press and literature written by Empire writers, the creators of colonial myths and stereotypes (see Beller and Leerssen 2007,192). Ten years later, Tretiak would come back to the problem of the Other (“mine” and “foreign”). This research topic reaches of paramount importance and will place the Polish scientist among the first European comparatists.

In 1933, Andrzej Tretiak presented his imagological research in the form of an interesting essay entitled *The spirit of English culture*. He subordinated the study of the national characteristics of the Englishman to educational goals: to compile the innate sense of respect for the value of the individual inherent in the islanders and the following: the ability to submit to freely and democratically chosen power (Tretiak 1933/1934,144), the content of the ideal of a gentleman (150), the cult of personality in religion (151-152) - with the characteristics of their own nation. Thus, the axiological assessment of the Englishman's national features, made through the moral assessment of English culture (including the one exemplified in literary texts). Study of the national characteristics of Englishman surrendered educational goals: Tretiak wanted to compile the islanders' “innate sense of respect for the value of the individual” and, in consequence, “their ability to submit to freely and democratically elected power” (144), “the content of [their] ideal of being a gentleman” (150), “the cult of religion” (151-152) - with the characteristics of his own nation. Thus, the assessment of axiological national characteristics of Englishman, made by a moral evaluation of English culture

(including exemplified literary texts) was used “as a kind of spotlight that allows you to get to know your own national culture better, as a manifestation of the national character, to get to know this character objectively, as a given and unchanging material, which educational factors, the government and the school, above all, must take into account” (158). The imagological analysis carried out by Tretiak is still helpful for understanding one's own national characteristics, strengthening awareness of the national character and, consequently, national self-identification. His views on the improvement of the national character and the strengthening of national virtues are distinguished by wise restraint and a peculiar respect for “the value of the individual, the cultural value of the collective unit”, when the individual reacts, behaves as a whole. He warns: do not forcibly change the national character formed in many years of trials of life - fights, conflicts, difficult historical situations, but develop and use certain components of the repertoire of “national character material” for various types of construction, needed in “given” historical conditions.

Wood cannot be made into marble, nor bronze made from marble. However, wood, marble or bronze are not good or bad materials in themselves, you just have to use each of them when trying to achieve the same goal. The same should be done with the national character, which, above all, must be known well. And get to know it by studying the national culture compared to other foreign cultures. (158)

The enormity of the editorial and translation work carried out by the scientist is surprising. He issued: *The Storm* (1921), *Hamlet* (1922), *Macbeth* (1922), *King Lear* (1923), *Othello* (1927) by William Shakespeare, *Poetry novels* (1924) and *Manfred and Cain* (1928) by George Gordon Byron, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1928) and *Waverley* (1929) by Walter Scott. In the years 1933-1939 he worked as the editor of the magazine “Neofilolog”, collaborated

with the magazine "Przegląd Współczesny" (Contemporary Review) (1922-1935 published in Krakow, in 1935-1939 and in Warsaw). Tretiak translated and provided comments for the Polish reader for the following works: *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by Oscar Wilde (1911), *Hamlet* (1922;1925), *King Lear* (1923;1929) by Shakespeare, selected works of Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1924), *Sketches* (1933) by Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>10</sup>

The Second World War suddenly interrupted his very active creative work. In occupied Warsaw, Andrzej Tretiak maintained contact with the underground community organizations, for example, he was working in an organization that took care of prisoners and refugees from fascist slavery, was a member of the Delegation of the Polish underground, an underground teacher at the university<sup>11</sup>, took care of the scout groups. Warsaw became a "vision of inexplicable suffering" (Kołaczkowska 1976, 23), the externality is unbearably heavy. He confessed in a letter:

In the evening, I read a bit in bed by a candle, but this reading is disturbed again by the cold. (...) Today the wind is north and even in the dining room where I am sitting now, steam from my mouth rises in a pole in front of me. The house, once unusually warm, apparently relaxed as a result of the tremors and became a beacon of imperceptible veins in the wall (...) Taking all things together, we are probably going through the greatest collective suffering that the world knows... (29)

The underground activity of the scholar caused suspicions among the occupiers, he was searched for in 1942, and on April 13, 1944, he was imprisoned in Pawiak. Then the changed name saved him from death. A week before the Warsaw uprising

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<sup>10</sup> The re-release took place in 1994: R.W. Emerson, *Szkice*, trans. A. Tretiak. Wrocław 1994.

<sup>11</sup> As he himself relates in his letters: "I am now lecturing on English culture, on the empire, on the foreign policy of England" (Kołaczkowska 1976, 28).

broke out (the uprising began on 1 August 1944 as part of a nationwide Operation Tempest), he managed to get a release but in a short time he died in tragic circumstances in the first days of the liberation struggle. Stanislaw Helsztyński, a former student of Andrzej Tretiak, informs: "Short days of freedom were interrupted by the rise and fatal events of 3<sup>rd</sup> August, when he was abducted along with his son Tomasz and other men [from the professorial house], he never returned nor gave a message about himself. In all likelihood, he was shot in the nearby building SCHICHT, or on the Szucha street, on 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> August" (Helsztyński 1946, 398-399). After the war Helsztyński would resume activities on English Studies at the University of Warsaw, and his name is known to every Polish researcher of English literature.

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### Abstract

The paper presents the colorful figure of Andrzej Tretiak, an outstanding Polish professor of the interwar period. An English teacher, expert in English literature, comparatist, editor of Polish-language editions of the classics of English literature and their popularizer, Andrzej Tretiak. He was an example of a humanist scientist, a patriot open to the world.

**Key words:** Andrzej Tretiak, English Romanticism, English literature, editor, teacher

## **Racial stalking, harassment and prejudice in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George***

The historical novel *Arthur & George* (2005) by Julian Barnes (1946) - boasts a masterful composition and a multi-layered construction, which presents a story that actually happened involving Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a doctor, a well-known writer, and George Edalji, a lawyer, a humble son of an English pastor of Indian descent and a Scottish mother. Two storylines - one about George, the second about Arthur - develop separately and simultaneously, each in its own chapter. George Edalji falls into trouble, not on account of his own fault, but because of the fault of racially prejudiced society, and then the fates of both men and two plots become intertwined.

The novel is steeped in Victorian racism. Racist views from the very beginning have been based on the idea of unequal biological, social and intellectual values of human races, usually connected with faith in the inherent superiority of one race, often recognizing its right to rule over others. The overall concept of racism in the sense of Victorian ideology and doctrine consists of three theses. The first - that has been just mentioned above - is the idea of the existence of higher races which are endowed with outstanding abilities of "culture creators" and hence appointed to the role of "commanders". In the Victorian era the Anglo-Saxons were considered themselves a higher race, "superiors"; and this was prompted by Robert Knox (Davies 1988, 73-75; Biddiss 1976, 249), a Scotsman by birth, the so-called "British Gobineau", the creator of the Anglo-Saxon myth. The second is the idea of the

innate physical and psychological differences between the races of mankind, which allows us to speak of higher races and lower races. It promotes the notion of “superior” and “inferior” human races and has a direct impact on the level of social and political life of Victorians. Benjamin Disraeli (whose origin was not Anglo-Saxon either!) realized it in his political and literary activities<sup>12</sup>. The third thesis stresses the harmfulness of racial intersection and calls on Victorians to maintain the purity of blood of their higher race, the Anglo-Saxons. Francis Galton's concept of voluntary eugenics, aimed at producing anti-immigrant government programs, reinforced by phrenology (developed by Franz Joseph Gall already in 1796), influenced this view<sup>13</sup>. Racism always tries to explain the cultural diversity of humanity and civilization on racial diversity grounds. So did Victorian racism.

All three of the above-mentioned arguments were based on the achievements of Victorian science (sic! Darwin was not quite followed by his contemporaries) and pseudosciences.

The issues of Victorian racism, the relationships between colonizers and the colonized were presented from the postcolonial perspective in the aforementioned contemporary novel by Julian Barnes. One of the main characters of this fiction is George Edalji, a man of Scottish and Hindu ancestry who feels himself “true-born” English. As he confides to Arthur Conan Doyle at the end of the novel (when the fates of both men and their two

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Banton, a contemporary researcher of the Victorian period ascertains in his *The Idea of Race*, Westview Press, 1978, p. 25 that Benjamin Disraeli's “leading character [of political trilogy *Conningsby*, *Sibyl* and *Tancred*, 1844 – O.W.] explains that the historical success of England is ‘an affair of race. A Saxon race, protected by an insular position, has stamped its diligent and methodic character on the century. And when a superior race, with a superior idea to Work and Order advances its state will be progressive and we shall...”

<sup>13</sup> Later on, Charles Davenport (1866–1944) in his *Race Crossing in Jamaica* (1929) made statistical arguments that biological and cultural degradation followed white and black interbreeding.

plots became intertwined), his father, who himself comes from Bombay, but was converted to the Church of England by Scottish missionaries and left India for England, "brought [his son] up an Englishman" (304).

Edalji senior lives with his family in his vicarage in Great Wyrley, a large village in the district of South Staffordshire, England. Forced to leave India for the metropolis by the persecution of the Parsee, he adopts in England what Bhabha described as mimicry. He imitates the language, dress, politics and cultural attitudes of his colonizers (Bhabha 1994, 86) but deep down he stays in his native country, which has an effect of "a flawed colonial mimesis in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English" (87). Thus, the dark-skinned vicar has a dual identity (that of a conquered nation and imperial one) marked by adaptation and tolerance, while the pastor's son, a mixed-race child, has assimilated quickly and his relation to the acts of colonization is characterized by apologia. Consequently, from the first years of George's conscious life his father makes him assimilate, teaching him to acquire the language, adapt to culture and adopt the religion of the group and its high ideals, in other words, to be faithful to the British Empire. Sometimes, in the early morning, after waking, the father examines his son:

"George, where do you live?"

"The Vicarage, Great Wyrley."

"And where is that?"

"Staffordshire, Father."

"And where is that?"

"The centre of England."

"And what is England, George?"

"England is the beating heart of the Empire, Father."

"Good. And what is the blood that flows through the arteries and veins of the Empire to reach even its farthest shore?"

"The Church of England."

"Good, George." (Barnes 2010,23)

George spent his childhood in the peaceful and calm Vicarage, where

[T]here is Mother, who is constantly present in his life, teaching him his letters, kissing him goodnight; and Father, who is often absent because he is visiting the old and the sick, or writing his sermons, or preaching them. There is the Vicarage, the church, the building where Mother teaches Sunday school, the garden, the cat, the hens (...). This is George's world, and he knows it well.

Inside the Vicarage, everything is quiet. There are prayers, books, needlework. (8)

Consequently, brought up in a confined parish space, George perceives his Englishness as something quite obvious and natural. Since his father in the depths of his soul is Hindu, Parsee, and is aware of the real state of "colony-metropolis" relations, George becomes the son of his great empire, with its "Australia and India and Canada and islands dotted everywhere" (23), and he does not see himself outside Englishness being a "freeborn Englishman" (126), a full Englishman. Even his countrymen's doubts about the purity of his origin could not evoke the unpleasant feeling of uncertainty and duality. His birth, citizenship, education, religion, profession confirm his current British status: "He has no other land. He cannot go back two generations. He can hardly return to India, a place he has never visited and has little desire to" (304). These are the effects of assimilation in the half-Hindu and half-Scottish family. George's father brought him up as an Englishman, as reported several times by the son (58, 304, 300, etc.). Edalji senior is aware of their insufficiently strong position as Englishmen in the opinion of the community ("You are an Englishman. But others may not always entirely agree"), and for this reason reinforces the son's feeling of ethnic and political unity with Britain, with his English identity, by forcing him to repeat - like the morning or evening prayers - the catechism of British-

ness, "And where do we live - "The centre of England, George responds..." (58). When marginalized groups are exposed to racism and discrimination by mainstream society, they become forced to mimic, to hide their otherness, to adapt to the mainstream culture. This is very common among newcomers. Edalji senior tried to make his son fully assimilate with his adopted homeland, without emphasizing that it was their colonizer. In English Staffordshire only the form of colonization changed, from external to internal. This internal colonialism was a practice of oppression and exploitation of racial and ethnic minorities within the borders of the state<sup>14</sup>. A foreign name, skin color, keeping some of their own ethnic traditions, however, blocked them from full assimilation in the foreign and hostile place for newcomers. Some of the greatest barriers to assimilation were prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, and British law itself.

Growing up, George finds it increasingly necessary to have contact with the outside world. More and more often, the intelligent, slow, too introvert "hybrid" is exposed to acts fueled by the racist intolerance of the local community members, which occurs behind the rectory fence of the vicarage. At the beginning someone planted a large stolen key from the school door under their door. George was sixteen at that time. It was almost dark when he noticed an object lying on the step of the front door of the Vicarage. It was a key. He and his father sent it with a note to the police station. Having given the key back, instead of being re-

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<sup>14</sup> According to Gonsalez-Casanova, the concept of "internal colonialism" evolved from the traditional notion of colonialism when "with the disappearance of the direct domination of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerged". This Mexican sociologist reinforced it with the element of cultural heterogeneity: "internal colonialism corresponds to a structure of social relations based on domination and exploitation among culturally heterogeneous, distinct groups" (Norma Beatriz Chaloult and Yves Chaloult 1979, 85-86).

warded, George is wrongly accused by the local police of having stolen it. A few years later George, a student of law in Birmingham, notices that even his colleagues, generally polite and intelligent, publicly make fun of his origin, his otherness and mock dark-skinned Englishness. Like once in childhood, they like to question him and tease him:

‘George, where do you come from?’

‘Great Wyrley.’

‘No, where do you really come from?’ George ponders this.

‘The Vicarage, he replies, and the dogs laugh. (77)

His father was worse off; it was already at the beginning of his clerical career in England when Edalji senior, faithful to his new homeland, experienced such intolerance from the locals “saying they didn’t want a black man in the pulpit telling them what sinners they were” (113). George was brought up as “decent and honourable boy” (43). But racist prejudice, a dislike of the other, destroys the local community's ability to see these qualities in a young person.

The worst experience in the lives of the Edalji family is connected with anonymous letters. Then George recognizes how intolerance of his person is reinforced by stalking and harassment. When he was twelve his parents informed him with impatience about the first anonymous letters they received. “They [letters] say wicked things. About... everyone”, the vicar explained. All the time the family suffers from the racist / racially motivated attacks of unknown people. These letters, put into the main narration, play a prominent role in the construction of the novel, especially in its ideology. The anonymous letters written by his countrymen turned out to be the most effective and drastic measure of racial harassment against Edalji. As is known, the word *anonymity* derives from the Greek word *ωνωνυμία*, *anonymia*, meaning “without a name” or “namelessness”. In colloquial use,

“anonymous” is used to describe situations in which the acting person's name is unknown. The term “anonymous letter” typically refers to a message that does not reveal its sender. Just by means of the same words Edalji senior explains to his son the sense of the first anonymous letters they received at the beginning of the 1890s. In many countries, anonymous letters are protected by law and must be delivered as regular letters. So were they in Victorian England; though, at the same time, the principles of Victorian Etiquette - *Do's and Don'ts of Letter Writing*, apart from guidelines for writing letters, included the clear-cut prohibition of anonymous writing: never write an anonymous letter, it is the sign of a coward, and is written by some moral coward.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this instruction did not turn out to be useful in practice.

Anonymous threatening letters were sent to the vicarage both ways: officially (in the 1880s, roadside letter boxes were already used in the British Isles, the first pillar boxes were erected in 1852 at St Hellier in Jersey at the recommendation of Anthony Trollope, who was working as a Surveyor's Clerk for the Post Office) and the hole-and-corner way. These messages included - as the vicar softly explained to his son - unpleasant things about all of them. Simultaneously, graffiti slandering the Edaljis was written on the outside and inside walls of the vicarage. Furthermore, “gifts”, press with compromising announcements signed by the vicar and his son, and other unwanted material was sent to them (a pewter ladle on a window sill; a garden fork pinning a dead rabbit to the lawn; three eggs broken on the front step; dead birds, excrement and so on). Very soon the anonymous letters became worse and worse - instead of “unpleasant things” they were filled with violent hatred towards the Edaljis. When vicar

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<sup>15</sup> Anonymous letter UK Case Law, <https://www.casemine.com/search/uk/anonymousletter>, Accessed 28.11.22.

and his wife informed police Sergeant Upton about the similarities between vicarage maid-of-all-work Elizabeth Foster's handwriting and that of the anonymous threatening letters, the police accused George of the anonymous writing. After that the father and the son received a new letter, which had an entirely new form – an impertinent, bravura and praiseworthy poem in honor of Sergeant Upton:

Ha, ha, hurrah for Upton! Good old Upton!  
Blessed Upton. Good old Upton! Upton is blessed!  
Dear old Upton!  
    Stand up, stand up for Upton  
    Ye soldiers of the Cross  
        Lift high your royal banner  
        It must not suffer loss. (47-48)

The vicar and his wife decided that in future they would open all mail to the Vicarage themselves.

George's studies must not be interfered with. Therefore he does not see the letter which begins: 'I swear by God that I will do harm to some person. The only thing I care about in this world is revenge, revenge, sweet revenge I long for, then I shall be happy in hell.' Nor does he see the one that says: 'Before the end of the year your kid will be either in the graveyard or disgraced for life'. (48)

They understood perfectly well that their family – and especially George – were being stalked by unknown persons. It was distressing; his son's future, his social status of a lawyer, furthermore, his life was threatened. Somebody was persecuting them with unwanted and obsessive attention in order to threaten them all. Stalking is a crime, a criminal offence in many states. The Victorian law stated that a person was guilty of stalking if they were engaged in a series of prohibited acts with the intention of causing physical or mental harm to the victim, or causing fear or apprehension with regard to

the victim's safety, or the safety of their loved ones. In everyday life stalking takes place when a person keeps contacting or spying on somebody without their permission, causing fear or distress. It includes sending letters, notes, 'gifts' or other unwanted material, interfering with or damaging their property, spreading malicious gossip, making direct or indirect threats to harm them or their loved ones. The number of letters sent to the Vicarage started increasing; they were posted from Cannock, Walsall, Rugeley, Wolverhampton and even Great Wyrley itself. They were dangerous - they evoked a sense of fear and danger.

The top letter is in childish, unconfident scrawl. 'Unless you run away from the black I'll murder you and Mrs Brooks I know your names, and I'll tell you wrote.' Others are in a hand which, even if disguised, seems more forceful. (56)

These messages and hoaxes continued. It seemed that Shapurji's plea to the police to examine them triggered further provocation. The Vicar did not know how to cope with it. "After more than two years of persecution, Shapurji decides to approach the Chief Constable again. He writes an account of events, encloses samples of the correspondence, points out respectfully that a clear intention to murder is now being expressed" (63), but Captain Anson ignores the request. Furthermore, he believes that George wrote these letters with the cleverness of a prospective lawyer. The harassment of the Edaljis continued for two years and became more and more oppressive; however, the local police did not interrupt it. Firstly, British Victorian police - regardless of Victorian Etiquette - gave credence to anonymous letters. Secondly, the Victorian police, and especially that in South Staffordshire, was steeped in racial prejudice<sup>16</sup>. Later on, in the second half of

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<sup>16</sup> It can be exemplified by the fact that on 5 October 1888 a letter was sent anonymously to the City of London Police claiming that Richard Mansfield, a well-known actor, was Jack the Ripper; the police were on his trail.

the book, where the fates of the historical person, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the fictitious George Edaljis and their two plots are connected, Doyle's close investigation of the Edaljis-police correspondence would unmask the police and prove them to be liars.

George, protected - with the help of his parents - from the attacks of the most harmful letters, graduates in Birmingham. He opens an office at 54 Newhall Street and "feels confident and happy with the law" (89). But the anonymous letters do not stop. Diabolic revenge, aimed at his family, fills them. The vicar and his wife still conceal these messages from George, but some of them were addressed to him. The sender filled in his name as Beelzebub. "The same sort of letters; libelous, blasphemous, lunatic. They come to his office, which he feels as an insolent instruction: this is where he is safe, and respected, where life is orderly" (113). George as a solicitor, a lawyer, attempts to continue his life as normal: "this is, after all, his right as a freeborn Englishman. But it is difficult when you feel yourself spied upon" (126). The only moment during the day when he considers himself safe is when his father locks the bedroom door. In this way he spends at least a more or less normal twenty four years of his life. Receiving "hate mail" is deeply disturbing. Especially that which is full to the brim with malice and spite. Anonymous letters can be both psychologically and ethically difficult to deal with. This is because the author usually knows that he/she will have free reign with the content of their letter. In Great Wyrley of the 1890s the free reign meant giving vent to somebody's hatred; in the first instance the countrymen felt hatred towards the racial otherness.

The faithful priest of the Church of England noticed that there was more and more religious fanaticism of a maniac in the

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Sometimes anonymous letters were written by the police. See Haia Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Oxford University Press 2011, p.133.

anonymous letters. They were signed by God, Beelzebub, by Satan and the Devil. The unknown author of these messages claimed “to be eternally lost in Hell”. “When this mania begins to show violent intent, the Vicar fears for his family. ‘I swear by God that I will murder George Edalji soon’. ‘May the Lord strike me dead if mayhem and bloodshed do not ensue.’ ‘I will descend into Hell showering curses upon you (...)’ ” (63). Later on, acquiescing in George’s request to defend him, they were carefully read by Sir Arthur, who noticed lunatic racist moods in these anonymous letters.

‘My dear Shapurji’, he read, ‘I have great pleasure in informing you that it is now our intention to review the persecution of the Vicar!!! (shame of Grate Wyrley).’ It was a competent hand, he thought, rather than a neat one. ‘... a certain lunatic asylum not a hundred miles distant from your thrice cursed home... and that you will be forcibly removed in case you give way to any strong expressions of opinion.’ No spelling mistakes either, so far. ‘I shall send a double number of the most hellish postcards in your name and Charlotte’s [the Vicar’s wife] (...) I repeat that there will be no need for the lunacy act to take you in charge as these persons are sure to have you arrested.’ And then, in four descending lines, a mocking farewell:

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and New Year,  
I am ever  
Yours Satan  
God Satan

‘Poisonous,’ said Sir Arthur. (314)

All the time the Edalji family suffers from the attacks of the anonymous racist letters. Also the residents who are in closer contact with the pastor receive anonymous threats. One of these letters, scribbled “in a childish, unconfident scrawl”, with incorrect spelling and punctuation, testifies to the fact that the bacillus of racial prejudice has infected the youngest inhabitants of the village.

With the help of this overall campaign, in which anonymous letters (addressed to the Edaljis and to the police) played a role of knock-down blows, the fictitious George Edalji, as well as the real George Ernest Thompson Edalji (March 1876 - 17 June 1953), an Anglo-Indian solicitor and son of a vicar, served 3 years of hard labor, having been unfairly found guilty of the charge of injuring a horse. He was pardoned after a campaign in which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle played a prominent role.

In Barnes's novel, the author of *Sherlock Holmes* read carefully all the letters. Many times he sat at his desk with the bundles of letters, a magnifying glass, a notebook and his propelling pencil. Once:

He took a deep breath and then slowly, cautiously, as if watching for some evil spirit to escape, he undid the ribbons on the Vicar's parcels and the twine on Brookes'. (...) He read them through in all their poisonous hatred and leering familiarity, their boastfulness and their near insanity, their grand claims and their triviality. *I am God I am God Almighty I am a fool a liar a slanderer a sneak Oh I am going to make it hot for the postman*. It was risible, yet risibility on risibility amounted to cruelty of a diabolical kind, under which the very minds of the victims might have broken down". (339-340)

He tried to keep peace in his penetrating mind and wrestled against his emotions. He read and reread, sorted and re-sorted, analyzed, compared, annotated. "He read the letters forwards; he read them backwards; he read them in a random sequence; he shuffled them like a pack of cards" (341). He used all the methods of examination for authentication. Sir Arthur examined the literary fingerprints, style and grammar of the writing which could tell the general age and demeanor of an author. He knew well that some words were only used in certain areas and some physical accents were highly noticeable in the text. The author of *Sherlock Holmes* noticed that the correspondence had been planned with care to hit the target and then retreat into hiding to await the results. Many of the samples he analyzed were mo-

tivated by malice, spite, revenge and racial prejudice. He discovered the recurrent themes and motifs of the letters. He built hypotheses and conclusions. And before long his analytical mind tracked down the real criminal injuring horses and those letter-writing evil-doers.

The novel shows how a growing aversion to the dark-skinned neighbor, whose otherness became sufficient evidence of his alleged guilt, not only for the local community, but also for the most part of British society, including public institutions such as the police, courts, and even the government, turned into acts of virulent racism and destroyed his life. As a result, after a trivial investigation George was accused and convicted of animal mutilation (“probably ‘Hindu ritual knife’” (!)) and writing (!) anonymous threatening letters. Invisible, subcutaneous racism operates insidiously. Racial prejudices permeated the minds of the official authorities, and even educated people belonging to the aristocracy. Arthur Conan Doyle, while investigating the crime, notices that Captain Anson “dislikes people who are colored” (319) and is convinced that “the introduction of a colored clergyman into such a rude and unrefined parish was bound to cause a regrettable situation”, and, in addition, the introduction of “three half-caste children” (372-373). George’s otherness, as a half-blood Hindu-Parsee and half-blood Scot, was disheartening for the Anglo-Saxons; in their eyes he was not different, but a stranger, “not their guy”.

Aversion and prejudice towards George’s otherness seemed to have all the signs of fanaticism. In the eyes of the local community a thoughtful foreign person would confirm this strangeness in anything, whatever he/she did. For George’s persecutors not only the origin of the father testifies to his otherness, but also his personality traits and lifestyle, as George did not practice sports, had few friends and did not meet with women. He slept in the room locked up with his father and developed short-sightedness. This behavior, though conforming to acceptable standards, to which in other circumstances

people would not pay attention, became evidence for his dangerous otherness. Someone once marked by it will forever remain a misfit. These are the consequences of looking at the world from the perspective of the colonizer. This perspective becomes fertile ground for prejudice, a judgment, usually negative, we make about another person or other people without really knowing them. On the other hand, again, discrimination and intolerance are often justified by prejudice and stereotyping of people and social groups, consciously or unconsciously; they are an expression of prejudice in practice.

Although Edalji's story above all makes us see race in terms of individual bodies and racism as purely about individual prejudices, the reader cannot fail to notice that prejudice and racism are intricate parts of social history and the larger social order. Even when individual prejudices wane, racial inequality can perpetuate itself through larger social systems like education, housing, judiciary, police, etc. Race and racism have social sources and consequences, including the Western perception of the West as "civilized" and "advanced" but the Orient (Asian and Middle Eastern cultures) as "under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth" (see Said 1995, 150).

**Conclusions.** The postcolonial reading<sup>17</sup> of *Arthur & George* has shown that:

1. Colonialism and racism go hand in hand. The anonymous letters, introduced into the plot of the novel, help to understand the racist stereotype in the colonial context.
2. This masterfully composed, multi-layered novel very subtly and skillfully unmask Victorian colonialism and racism. It does not show racism manifested in acts of overt discrimination or aggression – a seemingly perfect Victorian British so-

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<sup>17</sup> I used the method of postcolonial reading described by Peter Barry in Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory. An Introduction to literary and cultural theory*, Manchester 2009, p. 187-190.

ciety is free from racial prejudice. Nobody comments aloud on George's skin color. It seems that England needn't have complained. British Indians are placed in the British educational system, in palestra, in the structures of the church, and even on parliamentary benches. Invisible, subcutaneous racism operates insidiously, and the form of an anonymous letter entirely corresponds with its sense.

3. Local racial prejudice was supported by the police in both ways - openly and secretly, quite in harmony with imperial ideology and colonial power, which, as Said (quoted by Dathorne 2009, 216) notes, "very often constructed the colony as the other". Such conditions transformed racial prejudice into diabolic revenge, aimed at the minority family and destroyed its life.
4. It is Power that drives someone to write anonymous letters motivated by malice, spite, revenge and jealousy. In *Arthur & George* it is the power of the empire and its racial prejudice. Subaltern could not speak. "(...) since that subaltern is a construct - man, woman, member of the lower order and so on - it can never be truly seen in a rigid state. Always the subaltern will be a floating signifier, never fixed in any definite signification" (Dathorne, 218). Then, Barnes, who is English, speaks from a totally different point of view and yet emerges with answers that are similar to those of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Chinua Achebe or Ngugi wa Thiong'o.
5. Even though *Arthur & George* does not meet the criteria for an epistolary novel, which must be "written in the form of a correspondence between characters" (Morner and Rausch 1998, 69), the one-way anonymous letters fulfil in Barnes's novel a similar role: allow the author to present different points of view: local community, public institutions such as the police, courts, and even the government. Furthermore, they give the opportunity to explore the emotions of their authors and the readers as well.

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## Summary

The article is an attempt to provide a postcolonial interpretation of racism in *Arthur & George*, a historical novel by Julian Barnes. The main character, George Edalji, a son of an English pastor of Indian descent and a Scottish mother identifies himself as "full English". His birth, citizenship, education, religion, profession confirm his British status. More and more often, the intelligent, slow, too introvert "hybrid" is exposed to acts fueled by racial

intolerance, stalking, harassment and prejudice of the local community members, which occurs behind the rectory fence of the vicarage. All the time the Edalji family suffers from the attacks of the poisonous racist anonymous letters. In "Arthur & George", the author of Sherlock Holmes runs a private investigation in defense of George. He reads carefully all the letters and becomes certain of a growing aversion to the Edajis and especially to intelligent George, a solicitor. The novel shows race-based aversion to the dark-skinned neighbor, whose otherness was sufficient evidence of his guilt, not only for the local community, but also for the most part of British society, including public institutions such as the police, courts, and even the government. With the help of the anonymous letters, introduced to the plot, Barnes does not present racism as an act of overt discrimination or aggression, as Victorian-era British society is apparently free from racial prejudice. Invisible, "subcutaneous" racism operates insidiously.

**Key words:** Victorian racism, anonymous letters, postcolonial criticism, historical novel, Arthur Conan Doyle

## Identifying the Ukrainian: Marina Lewycka's *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*

In her first published book, with an ironically attractive title, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005)<sup>18</sup> Marina Lewycka (1946 -) created a female type of *Lucky Jim* in the new European realities: a dexterous, blazingly beautiful, smart, impudent and vulgar divorcee from a poor country who makes plans for a comfortable life in a much richer country and employs any means to achieve them. In the state of things as they actually exist in Europe, she had to be someone from Eastern Europe whose desire is to become a British immigrant. The author's competence in Ukrainian history - which follows from her biography<sup>19</sup> - makes her heroine a woman from Ukraine. Therefore, "a hilarious tale of a gold-digging Ukrainian, Valentina, a fluffy pink grenade" (Lewycka 2006, 1) who snares an elderly widower appears. But it is also a story about Valentina's 'victim': an eighty-four-year-old, eccentric post-war immigrant from Ukraine, a widower and the

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<sup>18</sup> Lewycka's debut novel - *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* - won the 2005 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic writing at the Hay literary festival, the 2005/6 Waverton Good Read Award, and the 2005 Saga Award for Wit; it was also long-listed for the 2005 Man Booker Prize and short-listed for the 2005 Orange Prize for Fiction.

<sup>19</sup> Lewycka was born to Ukrainian parents in a refugee camp in Kiel, her family subsequently moved to England.

narrator's father, whose past makes this tale a "heart-rending account of the bloodstained history of Ukraine"<sup>20</sup>. How is the Ukrainian newcomer perceived by the narrator and the narrator's family? Do their opinions differ and why? To answer these questions it is necessary first of all to make clear who the perceiving characters are.

The narrator's father, Nikolai Mayevskyj, an English draftsman and engineer, having been assimilated into official language and manners, is still Ukrainian deep in his heart of hearts, is still 'working' with his mind for the good of his first country, the ancestral motherland he left, with a desire to return to his sweetheart Ukraine. In spite of the fact that he is more concentrated on his tractors and poems than on his contacts with the diaspora, his emotional well-being in many respects is diasporic. Mayevskyj retains a "strong ethnic group consciousness; a sense of empathy with co-ethnic members" (in his case – with Ukrainians from an established homeland, Ukrainian Ukrainians); "an idealization of the ancestral home (...); a strong tie to the past and a block to assimilation in present". His individualistic nature, probably, hinders his "collective commitment to its (Ukraine's) safety and prosperity"<sup>21</sup> and directs him to his private responsibility.

Nikolai Mayevskyj, the narrator's "Pappa" (very likely, a contamination of the Russian word "папа" [papa] and the English "papa, daddy"<sup>22</sup>), with his permanent Ukrainian-English

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<sup>20</sup> Marina Lewycka interview for *We Are All Made of Glue*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/5796045/Marina-Lewycka-interview-for-We-Are-All-Made-of-Glue.html> accessed 12.03.23.

<sup>21</sup> I refer to the features of the traditional diaspora defined by William Safran and Robin Cohen (Cohen 2008: 6-7; 17).

<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately in the Polish and the Ukrainian editions the translators did not save this Russian element, a special feature of the original. See: Marina Lewycka. *Zarys dziejów traktora po ukraińsku*. Z ang. przełożyła Anna

“‘Aha. Yes. No’, ‘vat’” [instead of “what”], is the most Ukrainian person on Coronation Street, where the Mayevskyjs lived together. An immigrant of the first generation, he is always thinking of his motherland, with its “[b]lue-painted wooden houses, golden wheat fields, forests of silver birch, slow wide sliding rivers” (26). Physically living and working in one space, Mayevskyj emotionally lives across geographical and political boundaries. Being in deep pain in his loneliness for Ukraine, after his Ukrainian wife's death, he decided to marry Valentina: she and her son would become his substitute family. From his idealistic point of view it is doubly useful for both of them – his pretty young wife (with her “hair like the golden wheat fields (134), with her handsome Slavic profile” (115)) and her son will escape from the very poor and unstable Ukrainian post-communist reality and he – as he thinks – “can speak with them in his own language. Such a beautiful language that anyone can be a poet. Such a landscape – it would make anyone an artist. (...) Instead of going home to Ukraina, Ukraina will come home to him” (26). Moreover, the narrator remarks that such patriotism in him is stable, durable and consistent and at all times there were his countrymen who – with truth or with untruth – were ready to immigrate to the rich West with the help of his altruistic and idealistic invitation.

This isn't the first time he has harboured fantasies of rescuing destitute Ukrainians. There was once a plan to track down members of the family whom he had not seen for half a century, and bring them all over to Peterborough. (...) Dozens of replies came pouring in from dodgy-sounding ‘relatives’ (...) (26)

Presenting – from time to time – the fragments of his book on the Ukrainian tractor industry to his family (mainly to his English

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Jeżmuk. Warszawa: Albatros 2006; Марина Левицька. *Коротка історія тракторів по-українськи*. Переклав Олекса Нагребецький. Київ: Темпора 2013.

son-in-law) he also introduces a detailed history of Ukraine describing as “a terrible tragedy what has happened in this beautiful country”. His exact and at the same time poetic mind names the cause of its tragedy very shortly and metaphorically: “The twin evils of fascism and communism have eaten her heart” (32).

Nikolai Mayevskyj comes from an educated family (the place of its residence is not known). As the narrator informs us, “The Mayevskyjs were part of the small Ukrainian intelligentsia” (68). The use of the attribute “small” has a very important historical sense: after the long period of assimilation of the Ukrainian gentry and intelligentsia with Russians (in the East) and Poles (in the West) under colonial or half-colonial conditions, the very small group remaining saved its Ukrainian identity – apart from the clergy, nearly all the intelligentsia, and especially the nobility, were in the service of foreign overlords. But those who preserved their identity preserved their native language and culture. Mayevskyj-senior, like real historical figures – Mykhaylo Hrushevs'kyj, Dmytro Doroshenko, Serhiy Yefremov, Volodymyr Vynnychenko – tried to create and defend Ukrainian independence directing the Ukrainian national movement in The Central Council of Ukraine of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UPR). “In the brief flowering of Ukrainian independence in 1918 he (Nikolai’s father) was even Minister for Education for six months” (68). After the UPR was overthrown and Civil war passed, he managed to survive in soviet Ukraine, adapting himself and his Ukrainian identity to the new conditions. His granddaughter notes: “After Stalin came to power and all ideas of Ukrainian autonomy were stamped out, he became the head teacher of a Ukrainian language school in Kiev, operating on voluntary subscription and under constant pressure from the authorities” (68).

Mayevskyj-junior keeps alive the independent spirit of his father and his pro-Ukrainian orientation. In his student years in

Kiev he “belonged to a secret circle of Ukrainian poets, which had been outlawed as part of the drive to impose Russian as the lingua franca of the Soviet Union” (31) (probably in the stream of the Ukrainianization process of the 1920s<sup>23</sup>). Then, Nikolai Mayevskyj could speak standard Ukrainian but in England he preserves his native tongue for himself only. He does not speak Ukrainian with his daughters and, probably, he has lost his “standards” in spoken Ukrainian, but he composes poems, he writes prose in good Ukrainian. His younger daughter/narrator – who mainly presents his image – observes again: “He writes (the history of Ukrainian tractors) in Ukrainian then translates it painstakingly into English (he studied English and German at high school)” (59). His written English is good, but he prefers creative writing in his native language.

His late wife, Ludmilla, Milla, Millochka Mayevskyj – unlike him – never assimilated with the British. She spoke to her daughters in her native tongue, “with its infinite gradations of tender diminutives. Mother tongue”. (15) Ludmilla kept her house and cooked in the traditional Ukrainian way, she regularly kept in touch with the Ukrainian diaspora in Britain, and she presented the most characteristic ethnic features<sup>24</sup>. For a long time the Ukrainian people have been famous for their exceptional hospitality, industry and good order in domestic life. The Ukrainian

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<sup>23</sup> See for details: Орест Субтельний, *Історія України*, Київ: Либідь 1993, сс. 476-79; Мирослав Семчишин, *Тисяча років української культури*, Київ: АТ «Друга рука» м.г. «Фенікс» 1985, сс. 425-434.

<sup>24</sup> The Ukrainian ethnic character was studied by Mykola Kostomarov, Hryhorij Vashchenko, Volodymyr Lypyn'skyj, Volodymyr Antonovych, Yuriy Lypa, Dmytro Chyzhevskyj, Ivan Ohiyenko, Oleksandr Potebnia, Oleksandr Kulchytskyj, Petro Hnatenko etc. For example, Antonovych noticed that ethnic characteristics were formed, based on those inherited, in that nation's history, and in its cultural and historical upbringing. See: Володимир Антонович, Три національні типи народні, in: Володимир Антонович, *Твори*, Т. 1., Київ 1932, сс. 196-210.

woman had to be a good mother, wife and a very good housekeeper. Her great heart warmed each member of their family. Her pantry and table were never empty. Such a woman was Ludmilla Mayevskyj. The narrator recalls a fantastic "fabulous soup with halushki" cooked by her mother and in detail describes her mother's purveying talent (18-19) and garden with flowers, fruit trees and greens (12-13); she also recalls her mother's thoughtfulness and sensitivity toward others, her desire for cleanliness and beauty: "When my mother was here there were always fresh flowers, a clean tablecloth, the smell of good cooking" (30). Ludmilla was held in high respect at home and in the local diaspora.

In spite of her close contact with the Ukrainian and her ethnic style of domestic life she did not speak standard Ukrainian. Her family history was more tragic and the conditions in which she lived were not conducive for her learning Ukrainian. She came from Ocheretkos, wealthy farmers, former Cossacks. Vera, the elder sister of the narrator, recalls the very traditional ethnic appearance of her grandmother's relatives on her wedding:

The Ocheretko men strode into the church in their riding-boots, embroidered shirts and outlandish baggy trousers. The women wore wide swinging skirts and boots with little heels and coloured ribbons in their hair. They stood together in a fierce bunch at the back of the church and left abruptly at the end (...) (63)

They were Ukrainian not only in their appearance - they had the Ukrainian essence and condemned those who were traitors to the land. The narrator's mother lost her father in 1930, when she was eighteen. He was arrested in the middle of the night, "charged with secretly training Ukrainian Nationalist combatants. Was it true?" (65) After a short time he was executed, and his family was lucky to survive. Ludmilla Ocheretko living in Poltava in 1932-1933 faced collectivization and starvation. The eldest daughter recalls her horrible stories about Holodomor

(Great Hunger), the younger sister may understand well her mother's food ideology: she knew what famine was "and this knowledge never left her throughout her fifty years of life in England [...] she knew for certain that behind the piled-high shelves and abundantly stocked counters of Tesco and the Co-op, hunger still prowls with his skeletal frame and gaping eyes, waiting to grab you the moment you are off your guard" (19). She also knew that the only way to outwit hunger is to save and accumulate, and she did so. She was an excellent housekeeper, a gardener and a truck farmer in England. In her young years their mother wanted to study to become a veterinary surgeon, but her position in the class structure, her biography closed the door to soviet education. She left khutor for Luhansk, where she met her first husband. In Russified Poltava and Luhansk she, supposedly, partly lost her beautiful and clear, local Poltava dialect of Ukrainian. They married in 1936. Nikolai, an engineer, worked on tractor production before and during WWII. After the war they headed towards the West. Their younger daughter, Vera, similar to Marina Lewycka, the author, was born in a refugee camp in Germany in 1946 and moved to England with her father, mother and older sister. The Mayevskyjs' history is a dramatic history of their land.

Their daughters are English. They have very poor contact with the diaspora (they know local Ukrainians thanks to their mother). Both of them have married Englishmen, follow English traditions (five o'clock tea, lunch, a chat about the weather, a neutral tone with distance, etc.), but they remember well the poor, fearful and sad beginning of their immigrant life and their parents' motherland (historical/collective and subjective memories taken together). That is why the younger one, the above-mentioned narrator, has her own vision of Ukraine and presents it in her English-and-hybrid way, full of "narrative struggle" (Bhabha 1990:295) and repressing her cultural unconscious nar-

ration (in-between the English and Ukrainian perspectives, the result of the influence of Daddy's romantic spirit, sentimental reminiscences and real and half-real media-information).

The narrator, Nadezhda, a middle-aged woman, an English academic teacher and writer, looking very much like Marina Lewycka herself, has fairly strong Ukrainian roots. Perhaps the narrator felt the nature of Ukraine mostly by intuition (the "archaic emerges" from her deeper consciousness). Her knowledge and her conscious reasoning complement her instinctive feeling. She is aware of the fact that Ukraine is still divided into two countries, each with its own religion, language, history, culture, mode of thinking and behaviour – Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine. Her parents were from the east, where the Russian influence was very powerful (a result of enduring Russian oppression<sup>25</sup> and close borders). That is why their everyday vocabulary has absolutely essential Russian elements (the odd and funny English-Russian "Pappa", for example, instead of the Ukrainian "Tato", Daddy); their family proper names evidently manifest the Russification of the Ukrainian language (Nadezhda instead of Nadiya, Vera instead of Vira, Kolya, Nikolai instead of Mykolka, Mykola etc.). Even Nikolai Mayevskij continues this using of proper names. In spite of the fact that in his student years in Kiev he "belonged to a secret circle of Ukrainian poets", fighting for the Ukrainian language in Ukraine, he retains the impact of the previous historical context, which leads to the hybrid of Ukrainian and Russian narration (so-called "surzhyk") in his family language. At

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<sup>25</sup> Russian colonialism of Ukraine is believed to have started in 1477 and its end was believed to be 1991, with the political independence of Ukraine, but in practice Russian influence still dominates this territory. See for details: Vitaly Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine", *Ulbandus Review* Vol. 7, Empire, Union, Center, Satellite: The Place of Post-Colonial Theory in Slavic/Central and Eastern European/(Post-) Soviet Studies (2003), pp. 32-62.

her English home Ludmilla Mayevskyj's Ukrainian is very mixed. The narrator notices: "She talked in her own DIY language – Ukrainian sprinkled with words like handheldblendera, suspenderbeltu, greenfingerdski" (Lewycka 2006,7-8) But it was still Ukrainian, which always helped to retain her and her husband's national distinction. *A language does not make a nation*, neither is it the *main distinctive determinant of the nation* (Antonovych 1932,196), but on the other hand, nothing but language unites one with a spirit of one's nation. What is interesting is that Mayevskyj, this English engineer with a Ukrainian heart and a poetic soul, with real Ukrainian emotionalism<sup>26</sup>, realizes the great power of the native language – entirely in harmony with Humboldt's and Sapir-Whorf's ((neo-)Humboldtian linguistics) concepts of the relation "language-thought-reality", according to which a human being is always captured within the boundaries of his own language and has his linguistic national "worldview" (German philosophical term "Weltanschauung" and Humboldt's key concept "Weltansicht").<sup>27</sup> This can be traced in the following dialogue with his younger

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<sup>26</sup> For Dmytro Chyzhevskyj *emotionalism* and *sentimentalism*, *sensitiveness* and *lyricism* were the absolute, unconditional features of the mental construction of the Ukrainian. See in: Дмитро Чижевський, *Філософські твори у чотирьох томах* – Том 1, Київ: Смолоскип 2005, с. 15.

<sup>27</sup> (...)language is connected with the shaping of the 'nation's mental power' (Humboldt 1999,21); *Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.* (Sapir 1958, 69); On Humboldt's *Weltansicht* see for details in: James Underhill, *Humboldt. Worldview and Language*, Edinburgh University Press 2009, pp. 16-18.

daughter/narrator, when he grumbles to his daughter about the aggressiveness, barbarity and foul language of his new wife:

(...)'In Russian. [Valentina] Said all in Russian.'

'Pappa, the language doesn't matter...'

'No, on contrary, language is supremely important. In language are encapsulated not only thoughts but cultural values...' (139)

Although Valentina came to Peterborough from Ternopil, which is situated in Western Ukraine with its strong Ukrainian identity, in her language, mentality and manners she appears Russian. Mayevskyj's Ukrainianness makes the Russian strange and with a tincture of imperial plundering<sup>28</sup>. He compares Ukrainian and Russian types of woman:

This Valentina, she is beautiful like Milla [his late wife], and like Milla she has strong spirit, but also with an element of cruelty in her nature unknown to Ludmilla, which by the way is characteristic of the Russian type. (170)

Having measured the length of Valentina's foot he generalizes her features to the Russian type: "True, this is the defect of character which is typical, by the way, of the Russian psyche, in which there is always the tendency to believe in violence as first rather than last resort" (204).

The narrator, being more English than her Pappa and much more distant from Ukraine, spots these ethnic differences within the Ukrainian nation. She underlines several times that Valentina who has come from the Ukrainian Ternopil is Russian (96, 139,106) and Valentina's brother is Russian (95). What does this mean in the space of her hybrid, heterogeneous mind, which is full of "double consciousness" (Du Bois's term, see Gouridine 2002,2)? Characterizing Valentina as Russian, does she mean her

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<sup>28</sup> Volodymyr Antonovych trying to characterize and compare three national types, noticed that Russians "regarded that which was strong as ethical" (Антонович 1932, 209- 210).

Russian ethnicity in a literal sense, or Russian mentality as a result of prolonged imperial power, when the Ukrainians were the subordinate group and the Russians the dominant group, and when it ran to *dissemiNATION* of Ukrainian identity? Or it is the generally accepted Western perception (in the traditional English narration of the narrator) of everybody from Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia etc.) as Russian?<sup>29</sup> In spite of Marina Lewycka's reported comment in Ukraine, that she oriented her book to an English reader (Western perception)<sup>30</sup> I am prone to think, that she tries to locate her mind under Western stereotypes and imagines present Ukraine as a non-holistic nation, where heterogeneous processes were and still are taking place<sup>31</sup>.

Valentina's family history (her western Ukrainian (?), Catholic (Greek- or Roman-?) and "peasant" mother) has been assimilated with external Russian/soviet elements. In such a manner that the reader perceives the results of the post-war Russification of the Western Ukrainians, their powerful and dynamic assimilation (whether voluntarily or not) in favour of Russian language, behavior and culture and the creation of hybrid national and cultural individuals. With intrinsic humour, the narrator opposes Daddy's sentimental and charming Ukraine in the past (the lost homeland) with the contemporary East European country on the initial stage of its independence. "Ukraina: he sighs, breathing in the remembered scent of mown hay and cherry blossom. But

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<sup>29</sup> I asked Marina Lewycka about this, but she preferred not to answer this question, as is her right, of course. Maybe, both interpretations would make sense. We, critics, must read and make up our own mind. The author leaves her work open to interpretation.

<sup>30</sup> Марина Левицька, «Коли Україна більше повірить у себе, вона не буде боїтися сміятися з себе». Interviews Alla Lazareva, „Український тиждень” - 26.05.13. <http://vsiknygy.net.ua/neformat/23730/>

<sup>31</sup> The present Ukraine is divided into three language communities: Ukrainian-speaking, Russian-speaking and Surzhyk-speaking. In such a way in Ukraine the feeling of language unity and solidarity does not apply at all.

I catch the distinct synthetic whiff of New Russia" (1). The same is true with their perception of Valentina: whereas a sentimental Mayevskyj, familiar with dramatic Ukrainian history expresses his understanding of the new-comer from his poor and lovely motherland, his sympathy with her:

Clearly this Valentina, she is of quite different generation. She knows nothing of history, even less about recent past. She is a daughter of the Brezhnev era. In times of Brezhnev, everyone's idea was to bury all gone-by things and to become like in the West. To build this economy, people must be buying something new all the time. New desires must be implanted as fast as old ideas must be buried. That is why she is always wanting to buy something modern. It is not her fault; it is the post-war mentality. (170)

His clever western daughters do not compromise and are sharp in their evaluation of the present facts.

With the help of her characters, the author gives us some reasons why we should see the post-Soviet satellite states as suffering from the postcolonial syndrome, for example the compensatory behaviour in the form of fondness for the Western lifestyle. Undoubtedly, Nadezhda's narration is more objective than her father's one. Her needle-sharp eyesight notes a new type of people in Ukraine (irrespective of their ethnicity): those who live and act in accordance with the 'code' of the newly rich business class in post-Soviet Russia. Perceived as a stereotypical caricature, many New Russians achieved rapid wealth by using criminal methods during the transition of post-soviet Ukraine into a market economy. Valentina Dubova (a Russian last name: it looks like she has chosen a Russian husband) entirely reflects this.

Unfortunately, the Ukrainians in 2005 (when the book was published), being on the wave of the democratic Orange revolution, had forgotten those early years, full of economic struggle and social stratification and – what is even worse – did not understand her English

humour with comic elements, which was perceived by them as “caricature and sarcasm, black humour and satire”<sup>32</sup>. Several years later, their views have changed a bit, as the novel was presented as “satirical, with dark humour”. The fusion of Ukrainian newcomers with conventional English life on Coronation Street is sharply comic. Comic moments alternate with dramatic, perfect English - with colourful, juicy, untranslatable Ukrainian; Middle England past and present - with communist and post-communist regimes in Eastern Europe. I understand the great patriotism of “the Orange” Ukrainians well: for the first time in the history of twentieth-century Ukraine the idea of revolutionary changes interested people of all ages and increased the overall unity of Ukrainians. The time/space needed heroes, not antiheroes or fillisters, such as Valentina. Regardless of this objective fact I am not prone to agree with Andrey Kurkov’s (à propos, Kurkov is a Russian language writer from Ukraine) negative opinion of Lewycka’s image of a Ukraine full of caricatures and negative stereotypes (“Just about everyone portrayed in it inspires the sympathy of the reader except the Ukrainians, legal and illegal. What we see is caricatures”).<sup>33</sup> The crux of her comedy is the fact that the narrator’s stepmother (younger than her stepdaughter) from “Ukraina” is not Ukrainian at all!

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<sup>32</sup> Марина Левицька - Матеріал з Вікіпедії. [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Марина\\_Левицька](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Марина_Левицька), accessed 25.03.2013; also accessed 10.03.23.

<sup>33</sup> Andrey Kurkov, *Review: A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* by Marina Lewycka, “The Guardian”, Saturday, 19 March 2005; <http://www.Guardian.co.uk/books/2005/mar/19/featuresreviews.guardianreview> - accessed 15.03.2023.

Marina Lewycka mentioned this fact two years later: *Some Ukrainians were sniffy about the book, including the one who reviewed it in the Guardian back in March 2005 and found it a "banal tale" that crossed a "school textbook on Ukrainian history with ... an episode of Coronation Street."* [in:] Stephen Moss, *Better Later than Never*, “The Guardian”, Thursday, 31 May, 2007; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/may/31/hay2007authors.guardianhayfestival> - accessed October, 25, 2013.

The novel pioneers the characteristic subject-matter of the post-communist European time: a young woman with a communist burden making her way into a capitalist world. While jokes and sketches, intended to make readers laugh frequently rise to high English comedy, the novel is also an absorbing family story, and never loses its grip on the painful and complex realities of human relationships. It would be appropriate also to underline that Marina Lewycka knows these subjects and the realities of migration very well since she herself is a daughter of Ukrainian immigrants; it was her who – in the early years of her childhood (after having moved to Sussex, England) – fed the ducks and started to acquire an interest in the welfare of poultry, and it was her parents who moved to the United Kingdom in search of work. Marina Lewycka impresses with a unique sense of humour based on cultural varieties.

To summarize: two waves of Ukrainian émigré in England illustrate a complicated and dynamic process of transformation of identities. The analysis of plot, narration and language has shown the unstable location in post-WWII Europe, which leads to vague identification. The interpretation of Lewycka's *Tractors* needs a very careful imagological reading, which would take into consideration different points of view and historical perspectives.

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## Abstract

This essay deals with the problem of Ukrainian identity in Marina Lewycka's novel: *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005). The paper suggests a twofold imagological analysis in order to answer how the second generation of Ukrainian immigrants in Great Britain (children of the post - WWII political migration) perceives the Ukrainian newcomers, the economic immigrants from a post-communist state, and how the reader perceives the Ukrainianness of the first. It also underlines that Marina Lewycka infuses the Ukrainian history (past and modern) with a unique sense of humour based on cultural varieties. Her English-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-English characters are observed from different perspectives.

**Key words:** imagological analysis, Ukrainian migration in Great Britain, Ukrainian history, post-communism, assimilation<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This article was published in: *STUDIA ANGLICA RESOVIENSIA*, Vol. 13, 2016, pp. 36-53.

## **My Dog and Literary “Translation” Criticism (the subjectivity of the Dog in *Flush* by Virginia Woolf and *Two Caravans* by Marina Lewycka)**

My dog Grizzly lies beside me on the rug near the desk; he accompanies me on my academic work. He is relaxed, pleased with my immediate proximity, patiently awaiting our playtime – his eyes and mouth will all laugh, saying “Yes!”, and he will reject Descartes’ claim that animals use no language and man is the only animal that is able to laugh. My canine friend helps me to take a critical look at the “translation” of dog speech into verbal signs, into the symbolic language of a literary text, after all, the dog-subject narration in literature occurs via language.

The objects of my critical interpretation are two novels: the well-known *Flush* by Virginia Woolf, a classic, and *Two Caravans* by Marina Lewycka, a contemporary English writer with Ukrainian roots. With her *Flush* Virginia Woolf, like *White Fang* by Jack London, *Beautiful Joe* by Marshall Saunders, *Fire, Bed, and Bone* by Henrietta Branford, *Timbuktu* by Paul Auster, and several other famous fictions, presents adult English-language canine prose focusing on canine matters, with a dog as a character. It is unfortunate that this kind of fiction is incomparably less numerous than that for children, which in fact enhances its value even more. *Two Caravans*, a novel published in 2007 by Marina Lewycka, is not equal to this pantheon of adult canine literature, because the author has made the dog a secondary personage, but not a pro-

tagonist or hero. For all that it may be compared with Virginia Woolf's classic, since the Dog (Dog is his name) is a separate character and plays its peculiar role in the textual world of the novel, this canine role may serve as *tertium comparationis* for both of the texts. Analyzing these two literary works, which represent two different epochs, I will examine narration, language and dog's speech. I will analyse the narration of the speaking subject to study how the change of the narration strategy and grammatical form of an utterance influences the subjectivity of a dog-character and to what extent Woolf and Lewycka anthropomorphise it (or whether it is the human narrator that theriomorphises themselves).

Animals played a key role in Woolf's life and writing and the problem of Virginia Woolf's animal characters is well studied. It is worth mentioning here at least: *Virginia Woolf and Her Works* (1976) by Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* by Derek Ryan (Edinburgh University Press 2013), *Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's "Flush"* (2002) by Craig Smith, the papers presented at the conference "Virginia Woolf Miscellany: Woolf and Animals" organized by Vara Neverov and Kristin Czarnecki (The University of Pennsylvania) in 2013.

"Woolf gave animal aliases to all her friends, and grew up with a menagerie of creatures, including a squirrel, a marmoset and a mouse called Jacobi. Her first published essay was an obituary to the family's dog. Little wonder, then, that she chose to pen a dog biography", Justine Hankins notes (2001). She also presents the history of *Flush*. While reading the love letters of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, Woolf found that "the figure of their dog made her laugh" so she "couldn't resist making him a Life".

A literary animal story was written by Virginia Woolf in the form of the spaniel's biography and presents an account of *Flush's* life recorded by someone acquainted with his life events,

who constantly observed him (his mistress Miss Barrett or the author?). This someone is invisible, just the voice that recounts the story of Flush in third-person narrative, making comments and very often taking Flush's point of view, relating mostly the thoughts and feelings of the dog. Sometimes the narrator is human, sometimes she/he is canine. This oscillation between two spheres makes the narrator naïve (dog) and intrusive (human) as well. The whole narration directs its focus to canine matters.

The most doggish (a narration from the dog's point of view) is his story about his feelings at the beginning of his experience of captivity (London domestication), when the spaniel, a jumpy gun dog used to hunting in open fields, woodlands and farm lands, full of youthful energy, was confined within the four walls of his new mistress' room:

Flush's life was also changed. His outdoor education was supplemented by that of the bed-room, and this, to a dog of Flush's temperament, was the most drastic that could have been invented. His only airings, and these were brief and perfunctory, were taken in the company of Wilson, Miss Barrett's maid. For the rest of the day he kept his station on the sofa at Miss Barrett's feet. All his natural instincts were thwarted and contradicted.<sup>35</sup>

At first the strain was too great to be borne. He could not help dancing round the room on a windy autumn day when the partridges must be scattering over the stubble.

He longed for air and exercise; his limbs were cramped with lying on the sofa. He had never grown altogether used to the smell of eau de cologne. But no — though the door stood open, he would not leave Miss Barrett.

The third fragment shows the dilemma of the dog, who after the inner duel between his suffering in "prison" and his desire to escape to freedom chooses the former as the result of his fidelity

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<sup>35</sup> This and all subsequent quotations are from: Virginia Woolf, *Flush: a Biography*, The University of Adelaide, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91f/>, on line 23.04.14.

and sense of duty, strengthened by the voice of his race. It is well known that spaniels possess considerable reserves of intelligence, affection, and obedience, the qualities which make them highly prized as devoted companions. In European culture a spaniel is also used as a symbol of devotion, and so is Flush in his actions, feelings and narration. His feelings in the first period of captivity are depicted mostly from his point of view and not that of Barrett Browning. Nell Pach named this process “the thinging of Flush”. She noticed that as a result of “his increasing domestication, his pettification, he bec[ame] not just part of the family but part of the household as well in the most concrete sense, level with the furniture and curios that fill it”<sup>36</sup>. Being suspended between living and nonliving Flush faithfully serves his owner.

Like the dog’s point of view, the narrator’s descriptions of smell are equally canine: here and there he confides the power of his olfactory sense, which leave behind all the other forms of perception of the surroundings:

the smell of eau de cologne still lacerated his nostrils; A million airs from China, from Arabia, wafted their frail incense into the remotest fibres of his senses; He had never grown altogether used to the smell of eau de cologne; He smelt the swooning smells that lie in the gutters (...)

At the end of the story the human narrator (Barrett Browning) concludes that the dog’s perception of the world is hardly comprehensible, as it is very difficult to “identify, distinguish and call by their right names all the different articles he saw”, since language gives way to the sense of smell:

(...) there are no more than two words and perhaps one-half for what we smell. The human nose is practically non-existent. The greatest poets in the world have smelt nothing but roses on the one hand, and dung

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<sup>36</sup> Nell Pach, *Serving Tables: Reification, Domestication, and Hybridity in Flush*. Posted on December 29, 2011 <http://thephilosophicalanimal.com/category/virginia-woolf/>

on the other. The infinite gradations that lie between are unrecorded. Yet it was in the world of smell that Flush mostly lived.

But even describing the dog's sense of smell the narrator keeps her human features and resents her human knowledge. Flush – like a human being – is able to distinguish and identify every detail of London streets and the names of many streets as well; very often he knows the origin and nature of smells:

For the first time he heard his nails click upon the hard paving-stones of London. For the first time the whole battery of a London street on a hot summer's day assaulted his nostrils. He smelt the swooning smells that lie in the gutters; the bitter smells that corrode iron railings; the fuming, heady smells that rise from basements – smells more complex, corrupt, violently contrasted and compounded than any he had smelt in the fields near Reading; smells that lay far beyond the range of the human nose; so that while the chair went on, he stopped, amazed; smelling, savouring (...)

Taking the option of human narrator does not decrease Flush's abilities. In the most traumatic situations, however, the narrator takes the canine view. In new conditions Woolf's canine puts forth his intelligence. His jealousy, his rivalry with mister Browning, the beloved man and previous husband of his mistress, step by step, give way to friendship and love. As the human narrator observes, "Flush was not an ordinary dog. He was high-spirited, yet reflective; canine, but highly sensitive to human emotions also". His highly intuitive and perceptive mind was able to observe at a stroke the amorous changes with Miss Barrett and he could foresee his rival much ahead, with the first of Mr Browning's letters:

Now Flush paid the full price of long years of accumulated sensibility lying couched on cushions at Miss Barrett's feet. He could read signs that nobody else could even see. He could tell by the touch of Miss Barrett's fingers that she was waiting for one thing only – for the post-man's knock, for the letter on the tray. She would be stroking him per-

haps with a light, regular movement; suddenly – there was the rap – her fingers constricted; he would be held in a vice while Wilson came upstairs. Then she took the letter and he was loosed and forgotten.

Of course, Flush could not read what she was writing an inch or two above his head in her answer, “but he knew just as well as if he could read every word, how strangely his mistress was agitated”, how occupied with this unknown somebody she was. When the subject of her adoration appeared in their room and Flush became invisible due to their love, his jealousy was inflamed and he determined to make two violent attempts “to regain her favour, and perhaps to oust the newcomer” – twice his teeth met in the immaculate cloth of Mr Browning’s trousers. – But his intelligence told him, how to transform jealousy into friendship and love.

Sometimes Flush’s mental abilities rise to human self-criticism and searching for identity (when he stands in front of the looking-glass he tries to answer: “Was not the little brown dog opposite himself? But what is “oneself”?”). Similarly to people, he makes a social analysis of London canine society:

(...) dogs are not equal, but different. At Three Mile Cross Flush had mixed impartially with tap-room dogs and the Squire’s greyhounds; he had known no difference between the tinker’s dog and himself. (...) But the dogs of London, Flush soon discovered, are strictly divided into different classes. Some are chained dogs; some run wild. Some take their airings in carriages and drink from purple jars; others are unkempt and uncollared and pick up a living in the gutter. Dogs therefore, Flush began to suspect, differ; some are high, others low; and his suspicions were confirmed by snatches of talk held in passing with the dogs of Wimpole Street. “See that scallywag? A mere mongrel! . . . By gad, that’s a fine Spaniel. One of the best blood in Britain!

Replacing a canine point of view with a human one, narrator Virginia Woolf – undoubtedly – anthropomorphizes the subject

of the biography or even it seems that it is a human narrator that theriomorphises herself. That is why critics very often do not take Flush the dog seriously. Derek Ryan recalls when he, Flush, was “just a little joke” in their eyes, when Susan Squier considered Flush as a “stand-in for the woman writer”; for Michael Rosenthal in turn he was a “satiric device” “to illuminate Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s escape from familial and class oppression”; for Jean Guignet Flush was “a mirror reflecting his owner’s life, where his own experiences are of little importance” (2013,132).

Evidently, Flush’s mind and sensibility could be viewed as anthropomorphic and his animalness, as Ryan notices, is very human (135). By means of anthropomorphization Virginia Woolf wished to “translate” the feelings and thoughts of the dog into human language, to stress his subjectivity; however, my own dog, a German shepherd, disproves many such attempts. Indeed he confirms the author’s understanding of canine psychology, canine emotions and language. Yet, is the border between human and animal so sharp? “Humans *are* animals, after all: an ‘animal’ is fundamentally simply ‘a living creature’ (*OED*, sense 1a), a word deriving from the Latin *anima*, ‘breath’”, Bennett and Royle noted (2009,152).

Flush understood human language in his canine way. He understood the low voice of his mistress “syllabbling innumerable sounds (...) that had such mysterious meaning”. Moreover, he spoke his own language, in which he was able to express his love and jealousy, doubt and despair, his sympathy with his owner, “human sympathy to either: Flush solemnly repeated, in his own language, the words she had used – he swore to love Mr Browning and not bite him for the future”. Such a speech was defined by Walter Benjamin as “the unspoken word” (2010, 68). In this language the dog expressed his moral (faithfulness) or his emotional nature and could call into question Descartes’ categorical statement that “(t)he animal is without a soul” and his defining

“man as a laughing animal (animal risible)”, used by Cartesians to clear the distinction between “the soul and the body”, between human and animal (Benjamin 2010, 25, 32).

Lewycka has chosen another way of presenting nonhuman subjectivity. The human-canine border in her novel is definite. The Dog – in comparison with Woolf’s round canine protagonist – is a minor, flat figure; presented in a short period of his life and remaining unchanged throughout the story. But he possesses his own narrative with first-person point of view. His own story is situated against the background of the main text with different third-person points of view and has another graphic and syntactic form (capital letters only, no punctuation, a different font). From time to time the basic, human narration and the dog’s narration intersect: Dog observes and reports on the strawberry pickers and those they meet; human characters observe the dog and talk about him – in this way both parallel stories become richer, more perfect and more detailed. The author presents Dog’s short-spoken, very simple and abridged narration, consisting mainly of verbs and nouns, with dog’s sound effects. Properly speaking, with such narration the dog appeared firstly:

I AM DOG I RUN FROM BAD MAN CAGE I HEAR DOGS BARK  
ANGRY DOGS GROWL ANGRY DOGS BARK THEY WILL FIGHT  
THEY WILL KILL I SMELL DOG-SWEAT MAN-RAGE MAN OPENS  
CAGE MAN PULLS COLLAR MEN SIT SMOKE TALK DOGS (...) BIG  
ANGRY DOG SNARLS SHOW TEETH HAIR BRISTLE ON HIS BACK  
HE WILL KILL I AM NOT FIGHTING DOG I AM RUNNING DOG  
I JUMP I RUN I RUN TWO DAYS I EAT NO MEAT HUNGER PAINS  
IN BELLY MAKE ME MAD I FEEL HUNGER I FEEL FEAR I RUN  
I RUN I AM DOG. (Lewycka 2008, 18)

Dog is a naïve narrator, “who narrates the story without realizing its true implications” (I used classification of Morner and Rausch 1998,143). Formally, his narration is similar to the mentally handicapped Benjy, who narrates the first part of William

Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, where in the next parts of the novel different points of view of other characters will complete it, each in its own way. Even though Dog's story is scant, it is not devoid of logic, displaying a very doggish logic. Near the end of the novel Dog's previous story was completed with the help of human dialogue. A typical British Londoner McKenzie in a dialogue with Dog's new owner informed him about Dog's race and disclosed some facts of his past, presenting his story in accordance with the mainstream perception of the animal issue in England: "Labrador collie (...), with a bit of German shepherd in there too. Excellent cross. Best dogs you can get" (186).

Dog is glorying in the attention, wagging his tail, turning his head and lifting his paw. The man takes the paw in his very clean businessman hand and shakes it.

'How do you do.' (...) 'Hm. Not a young dog. You say he arrived in the middle of the night?'

'Yes. (...) We think he is long time running, because feet is bleeding and he has scratchings on body. (...) He is all time with us.' [I quote the original language of the foreign characters]

'Hm, Remarkable creatures, dogs. Faithful to the end. May be he was kidnapped. Dog-napped. Kent, did you say? Yes, they still go in for a bit of dog fighting down there. Sadly, in this day and age. They catch pet dogs and throw them to the fighters. Get their aggression up. Barbaric, really. Should be shot. (187)

It must be stressed here that Dog also takes part in this dialog. He communicates with both men. He understands the human language and answers in his own tongue, mainly in sign language. Walter Benjamin investigated speech (communication) with regard to what connects us to animals rather than separates us from them. Benjamin - evidently un-Hegelian - "does not distinguish between the human and the animal in terms of a simple opposition between the presence and the absence of language" -

Andrew Benjamin notes and defined their language as 'the unspoken word' (2010, 68).

Both - Woolf's *Flush* and Lewycka's *Dog* - answer affirmatively Stanley Coren's principal questions: "Do dogs really think or are they simply biological machines that respond to what goes on around them? If dogs do think, are they conscious in the same way that humans are? - Do dogs have memories of things past and images or anticipations of things to come? Do dogs have feelings such as guilt, loyalty, and protectiveness or even simple emotions such as joy and sorrow? (2006,4). Especially *Dog's* authentic narration presents the canine level of consciousness. Lewycka's stray Dog felt relief and tasted the cup of happiness finding his new masters, and joy spurts from his scant and very natural canine narration:

I AM DOG I AM HAPPY DOG I RUN I PISS I SNIFF I HAVE MY MEN  
THEY GO TO PISS IN THE WOOD MAN PISS HAS GOOD SMELL THIS  
MAN'S PISS SMELLS OF MOSS AND MEAT(...) I WILL MAKE MY DOG  
SMELL HERE I RUN I PISS I AM HAPPY DOG I AM DOG (63).

Still more joyous emotions can be observed in the very high spirits of his mating with lovely Mary Jane:

I AM DOG I RUN I RUN WITH MARY JANE I AM IN LOVE SHE IS  
A BROWN DOG FAST AND SLIM SHE HAS GOOD SMELL FEMALE  
DOG LOVE-HORMONES I SNIFF SHE SNIFFS ALL DOGS RUN  
AFTER HER BUT SHE RUNS WITH (...) I GIVE HER MY PUPPIES  
I AM IN LOVE I RUN I RUN ...(293)

When he lost again his new men, his speech was sad and disturbing, he experienced his real tragedy and gave the estimative relation on his situation:

I AM DOG ALONE TWO MEN COME TO TAKE AWAY OUR  
WHEELIE-HOME I BARK I SNARL I JUMP ON THEM I BITE BAD DOG  
SAYS MAN HE IS BAD MAN I AM BAD DOG I AM SAD DOG I AM  
DOG ALONE (...) (233)

He realizes that his future is in the closed shelter for stray dogs. His canine memory and his experience told him how to escape from “(the) BACK OF WHEELIE CAGE WITH MANY SAD DOGS”, where “SAD DOGS CRY THEY HAVE NO MAN” (233) and he acts on his own. The dog’s situation, his understanding of this situation and his life-saving actions lead us to the problem of stray dogs. Even the high level shelter, with good food and fine cages is a bad prison for such sociable dogs as Dog is. A dog who is designed to accompany his man is not able to live without this function. The next point is that Dog presented his intelligence in this difficult situation.

Talking over the varieties of dog intelligence, in subchapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 of *The Intelligence of Dogs...* Coren lays out the three aspects of a dog’s intelligence that matter to us: instinctive intelligence, the innate skills for retrieving, fighting, guarding, pointing, hunting, herding and hauling that vary wildly from breed to breed; adaptive intelligence, a dog’s ability to cope with its environment; and working intelligence, or trainability, working or obedience intelligence, in another words. – Both, Flush and Dog, have feelings and instinctive and working intelligence. – Moreover, Lewycka’s Dog shows in full that dogs not only have feelings such as guilt, loyalty, protectiveness, and obedience intelligence, but they also have the ability of creative action. Coren, using an example with hot milk and the “clever” dog of his friend, concludes that “such behavior is not part of the fixed-action patterns of most dogs but rather shows memory, anticipation of possible consequences, and an adaptive response to a situation” (2006,65). In denying animals these higher mental abilities, Descartes also denied them feeling and emotion. It seems that Dog’s narration says “NO” to such a conception of a dog machine without soul and mind.

Marina Lewycka was criticized for such an odd form of canine narration (see Moss, 2007). I am of the opinion that – inversely – this form of narrative helps to get rid of superfluous, unne-

essary anthropomorphization of the canine and proposes another way of subjecting animals in literature, in contrast to the anthropomorphization which has dominated in fiction. Dog's narration is poor but more doggish; the "translation" of his language into target human verbal signs is more adequate. Such a kind of subjectivity of the dog makes the reader doubtful about Heidegger's philosophical project, in which "human and dog could not be 'authentically bound together' (...) Dasein could not be with the dog" (Benjamin 2010, 47). My dog confirms this. Yes, "animals are good to think with" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 89).

Both of them – Dog and Flush died at the end of the novels. Flush had an easy natural death near his lively Mistress in free and warm Italy. Dog perished defending his new mistress, fulfilling the duty of a defensive dog in England.

Both stories in different ways relate about clever dogs, try to translate their canine language. In the stream of a poetic volume with the suggestive title *Translation from the Natural World* (Les A. Murray *Translation from the Natural World*, 1993), which speaks through the voices of various living beings and things, including plants, fish, birds, and mammals, Murray describes how remarkable and cheerful life is in its various forms. "Each poem is not only *about* an animal, but also aspires to be a sort of animal", Bennett and Royle observe. "Each *would be* an 'animal poem'. In a certain imaginative register (*as if*), the poem inscribes itself in the world of the creature described" (Bennett and Royle 2009, 154). *Flush* and the canine fragments of *Two Caravans* – translating a dog's speech (with or without access to an original) – bring the reader to the canine world.

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## Summary

The article deals with the problem of literary translation of canine speech into human language. Walter Benjamin's approach to animal-human communication ("Benjamin does not distinguish between the human and the animal in terms of a simple opposition between the presence and the absence of language") plays the role of the methodological basis of this study. Canine speech is analysed with the example of two literary works (*Flush* by Virginia Woolf and *Two Caravans* by Marina Lewycka) representing two different epochs. This comparative analysis shows that the change of the narration strategy and grammatical form of an utterance influences the subjectivity of the dog-protagonist. The article also examines to what extent the authors anthropomorphise the dog character (or whether it is the human narrator that theriomorphises himself/ herself?).

**Key words:** canine speech, translation, narration, anthropomorphisation, theriomorphisation, dogs' intelligence, nonhuman subjectivity<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This essay was published in *Animals and Their People: Connecting East and West in Cultural Animal Studies*. Series: Human-Animal Studies, vol. 21, eds. Anna Barcz and Dorota Łagodzka, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018.

## **II. Irish Accents**



The Famine Memorial in Dublin. Installed as a tribute to the victims of the Great Famine of 1845-1849, this group of sculptures depicts starving Irish people. Photos by Oksana Weretiuk, Dublin, 27 August, 2015.

# Postcolonial Ireland in *McCarthy's Bar* by Pete McCarthy

## Ireland in the context of post-colonial studies

Before considering Ireland as a post-colonial country it is necessary to perceive it as a colonial country. Ireland did not immediately become a subject of colonial studies. Armin Mohler, a Swiss-born far right political writer and philosopher, in 1989, directly called Ireland “the first British colony,” “the ‘white’ colony.” Based on Ken Livingston’s televised address in Dublin in 1983 he wrote indignantly:

Today it is allowed to believe that the admirable world of English castles and gardens, the opulence of English architecture and magnificent museums is a fruit of the British colonial empire. However, it is still “shocking” to consider the “white” colony of Ireland a part of that empire; a colony which until the nineteenth century was being exploited economically and which, in the twentieth century, achieved independence through gory uprisings. (Mohler 1995)<sup>38</sup>

A dozen or so years later, identifying Ireland among the British colonies was not astonishing, but more balanced and well-

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<sup>38</sup> I used the Polish version of Armin Mohler’s German original *Der Nasenring. Im Dickicht der Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Verlag Heitz und Höffkes, Essen 1989. *Kółko w nozdrzach. W gąszczu przewycięzania przeszłości* (1995), translation from German by Mariusz Krzyszkowski. Translation from Polish into English is mine. The English title is: *The Nose Ring: In the Thicket of Mastering the Past*.

thought-out. As Eoin Flannery, a specialist in Irish cultural criticism, historiography and postcolonial theory at Oxford Brookes University,<sup>39</sup> pointed out at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “The depth and protraction of Ireland’s colonial experience, together with the vanguard initiative of its anti-colonial agitation, are judged as both instrumental and informative of subsequent “Third-World” anti-colonial movements” (2009,19). He also confirmed that Irish studies were a peculiar form of continuation of Said’s postcolonial criticism: “Deane’s critiques [Raymond Deane and his adherents] are trained on the politics of representation within a manifestly colonial Irish history. They aim to represent the multifarious historical and literary narratives that have arisen within, and/or sought to represent, Ireland” (22). It is difficult to consider the relations between the British and Irish as simply those of colonizer and colonized, as the situation is complicated by the duration of the conquest, their close geographical positions and their long penetration of each other, along with many other factors.

From the first Anglo-Norman *Intervention in Ireland*, which came in 1167, the English conquest of the neighboring island had for almost 800 years been a constant element of the English ruling policy. “The year 1169 is regarded by most Irish people as the nation’s year of destiny ‘when the Normans came’” (Richter 2005). In fact, according to *Expugnatio Hibernica* (“Conquest of Ireland”, 1189) by Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), one of the medieval chroniclers of the English intervention in Ireland, “those who intervened in Ireland from the 1160s onwards will be

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<sup>39</sup> Eoin Flannery is the author of *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies: Theory, Discourse, Utopia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009, a pioneering study of the development of one of the key critical discourses in contemporary Irish studies; this book covers all the major figures, publications and debates within Irish postcolonial criticism and positions Irish postcolonial criticism within the wider postcolonial field.

called English or Anglo-Welsh, not Normans, Anglo-Normans or Cambro-Normans” (Cambrensis 2001). From the first barbaric attacks at the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries and Henry II’s intervention in medieval Ireland (Otway-Ruthven 1968, 35-49) to The Statutes of Kilkenny (1366), aiming to curb the decline of the Hiberno-Norman Lordship of Ireland; the brutal English Parliamentary reconquest of Ireland by Cromwell during “the Commonwealth” with Irish blood and forced settling of the Irish outside of the Green Isle, including Jamaica (*Plantations, Settlements*), in 1649-1660 (Ellis 1975,141-249); to the Great Famine of 1845-1851, which is perceived as genocide of the Irish nation, and late Victorian racism—the permanent colonization of Ireland by the British empire continued. Ireland had to be British—in the face of the empire’s sea rivals, by virtue of the Protestant and Anglican Church, Victorian racism and sword law. Naturally, a “range of internal factors complicates readings of Ireland’s colonial history, in which all notions of language, ethnicity, faith, class, and gender were drastically affected – factors that expand and challenge the mandate of postcolonial studies” (Flannery 2007).

The classic Eastern post-colonial theory often finds the Irish case too strange because of – as Declan Kiberd considers – the “‘mixed’ nature of the colonial experience of the Irish people, as both exponents and victims of British imperialism”. In his view, “because the Irish were the first modern people to decolonize in the twentieth century, it has seemed useful to make comparisons with other, subsequent movements”, moreover, the colonial and postcolonial experience of Ireland “will complicate, extend and in some cases expose the limits of current models of postcoloniality” (Kiberd 2002, 5).

It seems to me that Pete McCarthy’s *McCarthy’s Bar. A Journey of Discovery in Ireland* is a good example of a confrontation between Ireland’s new colonial history and postcolonial present in the context of general postcolonial criticism.

## Postcolonial reading of *McCarthy's Bar*. A Journey of Discovery in Ireland

Pete McCarthy (Peter Charles McCarthy Robinson, 1951–2004) was an English comedian, radio and television presenter and travel writer. He was noted for his bestselling travel books: *McCarthy's Bar* (1998) in which he explored Ireland, and *The Road to McCarthy* (2002) in which he explored the Irish diaspora around the world. Born in Warrington, Lancashire, in the north-west of England, to an English father and an Irish mother, McCarthy spent much of his early life in his mother's homeland, Irish West Cork, developing a love for the country. His education was English and Roman Catholic (McCarthy was educated by the Christian Brothers), he is from mixed background in several ways, but, as he said in his travelogue, "[...] inside I feel Irish. I know where I belong" (McCarthy 2000, 5). *McCarthy's Bar* is a "wonderfully funny journey" ("Express on Sunday") across his mother's homeland, continually obeying the rule "never pass a bar that has your name on it," and at the same time, a journey to his Irish roots, searching for his Irish identity, a journey to colonial and post-colonial Ireland.

During his journey, the author reconstructs colonial Irish history based on the places of memory, ruins of the past which he observed, and on historical sources as well. In Castletownbere he noticed a large grey Celtic cross in the market square opposite McCarthy's bar erected in memory of the men of the Berehaven battalion who fought for the Irish Republic (McCarthy 2000, 115); in County Kerry he witnesses "a rugged walled church by a lake" which seemed to him "suffered from nothing but fresh air and Cromwell's soldiers for 500 years"; in his ironic view it serves as evidence "of an act of English vandalism". In many places he recognized the memories of the Great Famine. In Leenane, a beautiful village at the end of Killary

Harbour, McCarthy looked at the Famine monument with a short inscription: “To commemorate the Hungry Poor who walked here in 1849 and walk the Third World today” (272); on his road to Beara he found a place where famine-stricken houses were abandoned in the 1840s. The subject of the most detailed description is the Skibbereen Famine monument (Cork):

There’s a white painted wrought-iron monument, all ornate flowers and petals, incorporating a harp and a Celtic cross. It was erected in 1887 to the memory of the victims of the famine. ... The significance of the patch of thick grassed lawn begins to dawn on me. It’s a famine pit – an unmarked grave of victims of the potato famine. I find an inscription on stones nearby [on the forth stone].

TO THE NAMELESS DEAD WHO LIE HERE AND IN WAYSIDE GRAVES.

Nerve and muscle and heart and brain,  
Lost to Ireland, lost in vain,  
Pause and you can almost hear  
The sounds echo down the ages,  
The creak of the burial cart.  
Here in humiliation and sorrow,  
Not mixed with indignation

One is driven to exclaim  
Oh god, that bread should be so dear  
And human flesh so cheap. (111-112)

The narrator quotes in memoriam a fragment of a popular song *The Coffin Ships*, by The Pogues, a Celtic punk band from London, formed in 1982 (music from YouTube) and in such a way he unites the colonial past and postcolonial present.

His “book is not a shamrocks and fiddles view of Ireland” (“Irish News”, front cover), the author reconstructs colonial Irish history in a witty and humoristic manner, very often with the help of funny anecdotes and comic situations.

It seems Ireland has always had the ability to render incomers harmless by making them Irish. When the English, or Normans as they were at the time, first invaded in 1171, they were clean-shaven and close-cropped, as they liked to fight, and didn't want nasty tweaks from hair getting caught in chain and helmets. But within a couple of generations those Normans left behind to be in charge had adopted the long hair and wild beards of the native Irish. It wasn't long before they were speaking the language, singing the songs, and presumably showing a reckless disregard for the licencing laws. ... Anyway, by Edward III's time the situation had got so out of hand that the English introduced the Statutes of Kilkenny, observing that 'many English of the land of Ireland forsaking the English language, fashion, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion and language of the Irish enemies'.

So this new law forbade the English from marrying the Irish or listening to their storytellers and musicians who, long before James Joyce or the Chieftains, already had quite a reputation. They weren't allowed to sell horses to them, or ride bareback like the locals, or speak Irish; and they were told to get a bloody good haircut and generally smarten their ideas up. These statutes remained law for 200 years, and had no effect whatsoever. 'They were in essence an admission of the failure of the English conquest of Ireland and acknowledgement of the Irish conquest of the English by absorption,' as Leonard Patrick O'Connor Wibberley has written. (103-104)

The quotation of Leonard Patrick O'Connor Wibberley's<sup>40</sup> dictum becomes a punchline, the final phrase of this postcolonial joke, adding humour to the dramatic historical situation and confirming the complicated relations between the colonizer and colonized. It also reflects the following perspective of post-colonial criticism: "the idea of colonization significantly shapes the view of reality presented to the reader by imperial writers as well as authors representing subdued nations and communities" (see: Skórczewski, 2006, 101).

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<sup>40</sup> Leonard Patrick O'Connor Wibberley (1915-1983) is a prolific and versatile Ireland-born American author.

With the same clever jibe humour, McCarthy recalls the behaviour of the Irish burdened with their colonial experience in the places of his childhood, which he observed once again during his journey. Of course, the colonial experience of the British was different.

From Cobh, the *Glengariff* would head up the River Lee into Cork. I recall fields on either side, and people waving to us as we wiped the carrot from our chins. They always lay on welcome, the Irish, but you can't help noticing they don't seem to keep on waving a Union Jack<sup>41</sup>. A lot of English people still can't understand that. (McCarthy 2000, 51)

The author did not hide the disadvantages of the Irish, but he sides with the Irish and those English newcomers who had assimilated with Ireland, the integrated Anglo-Irish who remained essentially alien to the English. "To them Ireland was an appendage of England, the Irish themselves slightly inferior Englishmen; comic simpletons or dangerous traitors according to taste and to how they were behaving" (McCarthy 2000, 286).<sup>42</sup>

Past (colonial) and present (post-colonial) have mixed in *McCarthy's Bar*. English hippies, travellers (paves) and builders in the 1980s have come to Ireland and feel at home there ("They are good people, the Irish" (77)). "The way I see it, we're repopulating a place that lost its people to famine and emigration" (65), Dominic, Peter McCarthy's class-mate from West Park Grammar

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<sup>41</sup> The national flag of the United Kingdom, formed by combining the red and white crosses of St George, St Andrew, and St Patrick and retaining the blue ground of the flag of St Andrew. Also called the Union flag.

<sup>42</sup> It seems to me interesting to mention in this place *Apes and Angels, an Irishmen in Victorian Caricature* (Curtis 1997), where images of the Irish in political cartoons are presented. These images underwent a gradual change between the 1840s and the turn of the century. Depicted at first as harmless, whisky-drinking peasants (p. xxiii, Caption to "Irish Hot"), Irishmen were increasingly represented – especially after the rise of the Fenian movement – as apelike monsters menacing law and order (p. 43,168 and so on).

School in St Helens (Merseyside, *England*) run by the Christian Brothers, explains the situation. He himself, with other English hippies fifteen years ago started renting plots to the new English arrivals and in the 1990s presents a "community within community" (77). Their kids were born in Ireland. "They all seem to have English accents, but when I ask them are they English or Irish, the answer's always the same. 'Irish, of course'" (67-68).

The narrator paid particular attention to the linguistic question. It is well known that the state of the present post-colonial Irish language in Ireland is the result of durable colonization of the Irish. The imperial English has dominated. Irish, also referred to as Gaelic or Irish Gaelic, was historically spoken by the Irish people. The fate of the language was influenced by the increasing power of the English state in Ireland. Forbidden, persecuted and punished (as being a threat to all things English in Ireland), it was forced out by English (See for more detail: Hindley 1990).

By the end of the British rule, the Irish language was spoken by less than 15% of the national population. A paradoxical socio-linguistic situation has come into being: the language which has the function of symbolic identification is not the main *means* of inter-group communication. "Tír gan teanga tír gan anam" (A country without a language is a country without a soul), the Irish proverb says. "While the Irish language is the official 'first language' of the Republic, and an invaluable resource to the nation, it is not the first tongue spoken by the majority of the population. Nor is it the tongue responsible for making Irish writing one of the world's great modern literatures", Richard Kearney claims. But "because Ireland had a unique and ancient language it had a natural right to separate political status" (Kearney 1990,6). McCarthy observed a dual postcolonial relationship and co-existence of Irish and English in Ireland. The constitutional status of Irish as the national and first official language made it possible for him to enjoy watching part of a TV discussion programme,

and a weather forecast in Irish. Once he saw “a trendy-looking young woman in trainers” who kept “punctuating her elegant-sounding Irish with ‘like’ and ‘y’ know’” (McCarthy 2000, 70). The narrator noticed with delight how in Connemara the local people spoke beautiful Irish (222) and with pleasure and sadness the next: “Dingle and Dunquin were the first places I ever heard Irish spoken as the first language. ... Change was in the air, but this still felt like an outpost of the old Ireland” (192). Accidentally in Bunnahinny’s castle he himself became a participant of the realization of Foras na Gaeilge (Irish Institute) program which was responsible for the promotion of the language throughout the island of Ireland.

(...) a severe-looking sixty-year-old teacher is pointing to Irish words, chalked on a board. (...) He spots me, and is on to me quicker than a Christian Brother’s blackboard duster.

‘You, boy. Where have you been? ... What’s your name?’(...)

‘McCarthy? A Cork man, is it? The rebel country, eh? We’ll see about that. Well, McCarthy, stand up straight. That’s better. Now, repeat after me...’

He enunciates some Irish words and I do my best to copy him.

‘Cà... bhfuil...an...pub.’ [It means “Where is the pub?”] (215)

With peculiar humour and scepticism McCarthy responds to – effective and ineffective – official attempts at making the Irish an Irish-speaking nation. At the same time with humour and satisfaction he ascertains a fact of great influence of the English-speaking Irish on British culture: “It’s no coincidence that the style of writing known as stream of consciousness was pioneered by Irish authors. (...) For many Irish people, the avant-garde monologue is the most commonplace form of everyday speech” ... (McCarthy 2000, 218).

Certainly, “English has proved a very powerful and hegemonic force for the West and on the other, its rapid spread has provided a potential, unifying, force which can give a voice to

third world communities allowing them to air their protests in the language of the first world" (Murray 2006). The Irish were the West (historically and geographically) and the East (colonized). They fought for their independence mainly in English. Because the Irish were the first modern people to decolonize in the twentieth century, they became an example for other decolonized nations in their building of a postcolonial reality. As an example: in the same way that Ireland negotiated the hegemony of English by developing Hiberno-English many other hybrid forms are emerging among peripheral communities, such as the Caribbean Creoles (Murray 2006). McCarthy in Irish present-day post-colonial reality saw the impact of colonialism on the colonized and the colonizer and he advised the latter not to forget about their own fault in the signs of colonization in the post-colonial present of the former:

But before sneering at Irish bad taste, smug outsiders who live in twee English villages, like me, should bear in mind that the bungalow blight is simply the logical outcome of Ireland's history of poverty; a poverty for which English landlords living across the sea in their carefully preserved villages must shoulder their share of the blame. (McCarthy 2000, 116) (...) It's a very Irish paradox that modern houses and bungalows can speak so eloquently of the nation's past. (117)

Not passing in silence by the dramatic facts of Irish-British history (see Wibberley 1956), McCarthy tries to present the contemporary postcolonial Irish reality from his twofold (English/Irish) point of view. He addresses the book *The Trouble with the Irish (or the English Depending on Your Point of View)* by Leonard Wibberley who had a similar heritage, was raised both in Ireland and in England, and wrote a light-hearted look at Irish history, told from the point of view of such a man. The English-Irish, or more precisely-Irish-English author is far from believing that all hardships are behind; with his unflinching slight irony and entirely seriously he makes a peace-oriented appeal to the Irish: "So it would seem that the

North and South will finally be united. But the Irish must surely have learned that union brought about at the point of a gun is not a union but suppression" (...) (McCarthy 2000, 105). The postcolonial history had to be mixed, colourful and peaceful. In conclusion I would like to quote once again Armin Mohler:

World history consists of many pasts that have not been 'overcome'. The Germans must live with their victims just as the Americans must live with their exterminated Indians, and the English must live with their ravished Irish, not to mention the Russians, the Turks, the Serbs, the Iranians and the Cambodians. (cited by Mark Weber, 1994)

The postcolonial Irish people must "overcome" their British colonization, *McCarthy's Bar* seems to say, and the Irish are good in this overcoming.

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### Abstract

The following essay examines how *McCarthy's Bar. A Journey of Discovery in Ireland* (1998) by Pete McCarthy might be located in a paradigm of post-colonial studies. In the first place I shall address the question of presenting Ireland in the context of post-colonial studies. Then I shall try to carry out a postcolonial interpretation of Pete McCarthy's perception of Ireland, Irishness, and Irish history during his two journeys from the south to the north-west of the Green Isle.

**Key words:** Pete McCarthy, Ireland, Irishness, post-colonial reading<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This essay was published under the same title in: *New Developments in Postcolonial Studies*, eds. M. Martynuska, E. Rokosz-Piejko, Peter Lang Edition 2017, pp. 45-54.

# The world of words, or double-portrait of Wittgenstein in *Shamrock Tea* by Ciaran Carson

I will start with the beautiful poem by Peter Bakowski (1954),  
an Australian poet of Polish and German roots, the poem titled  
*Where Words Take Us*.

I write poetry –  
because it puts windows where there were walls

because today is a mountain  
I'd like to reduce to a few stanzas

because now is the time to write it.

I write poetry, hoping to astound myself.

I write poetry because I enjoy  
coaxing words  
out of the corral of my ribs,  
letting them graze  
upon the blank page  
under the shade of an adverb.

I try to write poetry clearly, use words sparingly,  
each word, a small cog or spring needed;  
spring - to make the poem tick.

Don't want to fog or flood  
any readers proceeding to the end of my poem,  
where they may rest  
in the quiet clearing

just beyond  
the last full stop<sup>44</sup>.

The writing style of this poet is characterized by an extraordinary economy of words and a simplified construction of sentences (Wittgenstein would often call it “simple language”). The lyrical subject of the cited poem discusses the targeted transfer of words to its reader, but first, in his opinion, the words need to work as a team, cooperating together, as pieces of a device, a mechanism working to give the words life (“make the poem tick”). That is how language is created and how it works (language becomes language), and – as Wittgenstein said in *Blue Book* – words acquire the meaning we give them:

The topic of studying and analyzing the meaning of words is very common among philosophers. We should remember, however, that a word does not have the meaning given to it by, so to say, an independent force, which would make it possible to conduct research about what the word *truly* means. A word has a meaning that somebody has given to it (98,58).

The question “what makes language a language, what is the nature of language?” often makes its appearance in the novel of the Irishman from Belfast, Ciaran Carson (1948-2019), *Shamrock Tea* (2001) (Polish translation *Irlandzka herbatka*, 2008), which I will try to read from the aforementioned perspective, in the context of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language.

*Shamrock Tea*, literally *Tea made of shamrock*<sup>45</sup> was nominated for The Man Booker Prize. It is a colourful mosaic, and a Chinese-

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<sup>44</sup> <http://sharingpoetry.tumblr.com/post/5985539460/peter-bakowski-where-words-take-us> Accessed 20.06.24

<sup>45</sup> The Polish translator, wanting to introduce the Polish reader to the nationally independent character of the eponymous metaphor, translated it as “Irish” (a leaf of the green shamrock is the symbol of Ireland and its struggle towards liberation).

box-structured story about the power of imagination, the magic of art and words, the fuzzy boundaries between the worlds of “fiction” and “fact”, and about the multitude and variety of verbal senses. Maciej Świerkocki, a Polish translator of the novel, thinks that “from the aesthetical perspective it is better to get lost in the translation and [its] infinity of meanings than to continue the idle inquiries, never leading to absolute truth, but rather always to some poor substitute of it” (2008,330).

In my interpretation I will include three philosophical-literary threads: 1) Ludwig Wittgenstein as a fictional character of Shamrock Tea (a “paper” man, made by the means of language, emerging from “quasi judgement”<sup>46</sup>); 2) Wittgenstein’s philosophical world – the fictional world of the novel (an attempt to “identify” the intentional state of affairs with reality); 3) “linguistic games” in the novel (the contextual meaning of words used to create the text).

The fictional quasi-biography of Wittgenstein, fragmentarily presented by Carson, can be juxtaposed only with the chosen components of his philosophical views, because such a “selective” strategy of the writer does not give a holistic understanding of his life (authentic, not fictitious) and the entirety of his views, as it is done, among other things, in Ray Monk’s *Ludwig Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius*, one the best fictional biographies, where the historical and fictional Wittgenstein walked side by side, and which convinced that in many cases understanding those views

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<sup>46</sup> The term introduced by Roman Ingarden in order to name the sentences “creating objects adapted to the “general type” of the possible ones in given spacetime of real objects” (Ingarden 1960, 237-240). To the latter belong sentences dedicated to e.g. known historical personages”. (...) “Quasi-judgements have the *habitus* of judgment, but they lack the moment of stating anything for certain, because they lack the “identification” of the intentional state of affairs with reality” (Nowak and Sosnowski 2001, 46). For details see Kardela et al. 2023, 40-41).

would not be possible without knowing the biography of the philosopher, including the half-fictional biography. I will now try to present the life and thoughts of the Austrian philosopher through the prism of Carson's colorful and magical postmodern imagination.

Bound permanently to the Green Isle towards the end of his life, the Austrian philosopher appears in the novel – as a fictional character and narrator – repeatedly. For the first time, in the chapter *Forget-me-not*, Ludwig Wittgenstein is a subject of a probable anecdote deriving from times of his brief acquaintance with one of the narrators of the novel, when the philosopher was working at Loyola House in Ireland, during spring, as the gardener's assistant. We know for certain, that the historical, real Ludwig Joseph Johann Wittgenstein (1889–1951), the most gifted student of Bertrand Russell in Cambridge in the years 1911–1912, worked as a gardener's assistant in a monastery not far from Vienna, in 1925<sup>47</sup>, which the narrator mentions when inventing the geographical name (“He had first done gardening in 1920, with the monks at Hütteldorf in Vienna” (82)). The real Wittgenstein settled in Ireland after retiring from Cambridge University in 1947 – that was when he moved from Cambridge to an uninhabited town located on the east coast of Ireland, where he lived modestly for the rest of his life, marked by severe, incurable disease and suffering, and this space is presently regarded the Wittgenstein's corner, a historical place visited by tourists and pilgrims from various countries. Similarly, in his literary imagination Carlson has “mistaken” the places and the times, but what stays real and significant is the meaning conveyed to the reader. And so, the fictional Wittgenstein works as a gardener's assistant

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<sup>47</sup> See: J. J. O'Connor and E. F. Robertson, 2003, *Ludwig Joseph Johann Wittgenstein*, <https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Wittgenstein/> Accessed 21.06.24.

in a fictitious Jesuit monastery in the Loyola House *with The Ancient Order of Hibernians* during spring 1949. The narrator notices that “his position as a gardener was purely honorary, for he did not receive payment for his services” (82). It is quite possible that the impoverished (and once, after his father’s death in 1913, one of the wealthiest men in Europe, a generous patron of literature and art<sup>48</sup>), lonely philosopher, exhausted by illness, found shelter here. By the means of quasi-judgments – the fictional narrator mentions a special day, 26th April 1949, the day of the philosopher’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and his feast (wine was served with dinner) with the respectable fathers. That evening Wittgenstein, who normally took his meals with servants, was present at the table and the narrator “took the opportunity to examine his person carefully”.

He was slightly built, but very neat and compact, about five feet six inches in height, with tanned, aquiline features, piercing blue eyes, and a shock of curly brown hair going grey at the temples. One would have taken him for a sprightly fifty. He wore a pair of flannel trousers, a flannel shirt (...) He was very clean, and his brown shoes had been recently polished. Although he appeared somewhat taciturn, he had a singular presence. When eating, he kept his head down, approaching only one component of his meal at a time (...) he didn’t touch the meat, nor did he take any wine, but drank copious amounts of water. (80)

It is not by accident that highlights the colour of his eyes: “His forget-me-not blue eyes turned towards me”. This title colour (in this fiction, each of 101 chapters was named with a special, painting colour with additional symbolic meaning) carries a significant meaning: it symbolizes infinity, light, harmony, truth, moral law, purity (compare Kopalinski 2001, 250). Different shades of the colour blue will make appearance in the novel re-

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<sup>48</sup> He gave very generous financial support to a group of poets and artists in need. These included George Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke and the architect Adolf Loos.

peatedly – always connected to the character of the great philosopher. Just after dinner a spontaneous conversation began, about Saint Cletus, the third pope, who governed the Roman Church, (the Wittgenstein-character used here a Greek version of his name, Anacletus). The philosopher presents history in the form of a logical and moral riddle, based on the creation of the basic ethical law of “you ought to...”, “you should be” simultaneously undermining this very law in a jokingly-ironic way “What if I won’t?” (all quite accurately to the real Wittgenstein’s behaviour) (Wittgenstein 1995, 64) and his linguistic investigations in the form of games:

You know (...) that the existence of Anacletus has been called into question, since the name is a Greek adjective meaning “blameless”; and St Paul, in his epistle to Titus, stipulated that a bishop should be *blameless – not given to wine, not given to filthy lucre; holding fast to the faithful word*. So his doubters think Anacletus to be a verbal construct. (...)

For language is full of traps (...) and *there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers*. (80-81)

The Saint of the Catholic Church could have been a bishop/pope for the estimated period between the years 79 to 91, the third after Saint Peter and Linus, or the second between Linus and Clement – bishop of Rome (for details see Wace 2001, 314-315). His name – due to its dual-source origin and ambiguity – is controversial<sup>49</sup> : it is not exactly certain whether the second name

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<sup>49</sup> The name Cletus (z grec. κλητός, ἢ, ὄν od καλέω (Liddell and Scott 1968, 960) “to call, summon, invite” (Jurewicz 2000, 485) means “called”, “summoned”, “invited”, “chosen” (Abramowiczówna 1958, 674), while Anacletus (z grec. Ἀνάκλητος od ἀνακαλέω (Liddell and Scott 1968, 108) “to call, beseech, summon”) would mean “called to military service again” (Jurewicz 2000, 47); another name of the same etymology - Anencletus (z grec. ἀνέγκλητος (Liddell and Scott 1968, 129-130)) is translated as “impeccable”, “innocent” and “incontestable” (Jurewicz 2000, 57; Abramowiczówna 1958,172). Wherein the term “called to military service again” is

ascribed to him – Clet – is, in fact, his second name, or whether it represents a different person of the Catholic Church. Hence quasi-judgments of fictitious Wittgenstein about an individual empty name, with a contradictory connotation (“is there a P?”), having no referents, because the relationship between the name and what is named may “among many other things, consist in the fact that hearing the name evokes the eye of our soul the image of the named object “(...)”, and the distant image of one of the first bishops is blurry, foggy” (Wittgenstein 2000, 30). Moreover, the fictional Wittgenstein, in a way, creates the position of the author of *Ethical lecture* “which puts into our heads” that “some distinctive incorrect usage of our language appears in every ethical and religious expressions” (Wittgenstein 1995, 82). Because ethic emerges from desire it is unable to manage the difficulties of language. “All my tendencies – I conclude – and, as I think, the tendencies of every human, who ever attempted to write or speak of Ethics or Religion, come down to the struggle with the boundaries of language” (84). So the plot of the fictional Anacletus is left open by the fictional philosopher.

In the next chapter, titled *Vermilion* (a brilliant red colour and a brilliant red pigment made from cinnabar), the already befriended interlocutors in the monastery converse about the “red”, “vermilion” dreams of Wittgenstein. The fictional gardener Wittgenstein talks about the healing properties of nature that activate human creative potential: “To work with growing things is good

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probably not very precise. Polish dictionaries do not explain this, only Liddle and Scott mention the Latin term –“evocatus” describing a soldier who, upon his commander’s request agrees to come back to the army despite his service being finished (the Polish language makes it seem as if he did not have a choice). Concerning the translation of Anenkletus, the last meaning – “incontestable” according to the suggestion in Liddle and Scott relates to writing. Here I would like to thank Barbara Ludwiczak for her help with the translation of Old Greek.

for the soul, he said in his faultless English. It enables one to dream" (82). We should notice that he understands dreams as a display of creative activity, creation having a symbolic meaning, and he suggests that the narrator, his Irish friend, should try to interpret the snakes preventing him from reaching the beautiful prayer rag seen by the philosopher in his surreal dreams in the winter in 1919, maybe in early November, when he was still imprisoned near Monte Cassino. In the Catholic interpretation of the Irish narrator, the prayer "oriental carpet" (81) symbolises the inner sanctuary, the feast day on 3 November of the Spanish bishop, St Pirmin who was invoked against snakes. And St Pirmin is the philosopher himself, "fleeing from war, and finding refuge in the camp below the walls of Monte Cassino. Later on Wittgenstein dreamt he was a priest in early December of 1920, once again he saw a red prayer carpet, "a grand stairway, carpeted in Venetian Red, the red of St John's Blood" (84). It was no coincidence that these dreams were seen in those days. The real Wittgenstein, as a result of the defeat of the Austrian army, was freed by Allied forces on 3 November in Trentino - it was a time of his great physical and mental release. He returned to his family in Vienna in the autumn of 1919, by all accounts physically and mentally spent. Before his return a series of events around this time left him deeply upset: his brother Kurt killed himself, the third of his brothers to commit suicide (two of them had done so even earlier). The philosopher apparently talked incessantly about his suicide, his family saw him as ill and acquiesced. No wonder the fictional Wittgenstein sees in such critical moments in his life such "red" dreams. Here we see an explanation of the dream in the context of the traditional understanding of the colour red as sin, hellfire, but also purification, suffering, sacrifice, the Passion of Christ; then the snakes that blocked the philosopher's way to the prayer carpet were interpreted as "offspring of the devil (...), or they are Moorish swords" (83).

In the next chapter, *Firmament*, Wittgenstein develops the story of his previous dream about the prayer rag, indicating the striking contrast of colours of the carpet: "It was of the blue tint known to colourists as firmament, and made a striking contrast with the beautiful vermilion center" (85). Firmament means the vault or arch of the sky, heavens. This fresh colour lets the Irish interlocutor think of the existence of new meanings of philosopher's dream: the carpet "as an emblem of the garden, a cane as that of a pilgrim (Wittgenstein - a refugee, stateless person). The real Wittgenstein - with his typical precision and attention to words - told us to distinguish between the words "dream" and "tell a dream". He wondered whether the verb "dream" has a present tense form, and what the relationship between truth and falsehood is in a dream. He was convinced that the words relating a dream belong to one or another language game (Wittgenstein 1999, 124; 96) that determines their meaning in it. The rules of a language game involving guessing a riddle (the meaning of a dream) in a story taking place in the garden of the Jesuit Loyola House impose symbolic meanings on the fictional thinker, i.e. they force him to switch to a different kind of game: to translate from one language to another.<sup>50</sup>

The red of the vermilion and the blue of the firmament, like magical tools, they transport a philosopher, who was close to

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<sup>50</sup> In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein, after the definition of linguistic games ("Term "linguistic game" highlights that speaking is a part of some activity"), gives different examples of the games, e.g.: to command and act according to command; to describe an object according to its looks or measurements; to create an object according to its description (drawing); to come up with a thesis and confirm it; to make up a story and read it; to play something as in a theatre; to solve riddles; to tell a joke; to tell; to translate from one language to another; to ask, thank, curse, welcome, pray (2000, 20-21). Each of these "games" is an example of a situation in which we use language in a specific way, according to some rules.

madness after his war experiences, to Gheel<sup>51</sup>, where he sought mental balance among mentally ill newcomers and local people who treated the former with specially grown herbs. In the story of Gheel, Wittgenstein, now like a narrator, starts the thread of a unique therapeutic “Gheelois method of cultivating herbs, which form an important part of their mental patients’ regimen”. He was particularly eager “to study a system of government which places little or no physical restraint on those under its care, but trusts instead to the invisible bonds of society” (86). The real Wittgenstein would, quite possibly, call it “the psychological ‘aura’ of the phenomenon” (Wittgenstein 2000, 123), the power of faith.

In the following chapter, *Coffee*, which refers to the story of the fictitious/or historical(?) health resort, Wittgenstein mentions a deciding influence of the “mild, and equably disposed” (89) inhabitants of Gheel in the treatment of the ill newcomers searching for an asylum.

They take people as they come, for they have witnessed all kinds of behaviour and their tolerance towards everybody. They appreciate story-telling and music-making, and enter willingly into games of make-believe; many of their charges are gifted exponents of these arts. (89)

In the wonderful Gheel, the philosopher experiences the influence of the eponymous shamrock for the first time. A tea mix containing shamrock, “a much underestimated restorative, for it

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<sup>51</sup> The name of the fictional town refers to the Belgian city of Geel and Gheel Autism Services in Dublin, which was founded in 1971; its name also originates from the region of Geel in Belgium, where since the 7<sup>th</sup> century people with disabilities were supported to live in the community and not in institutions. Saint Dymphna, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, fled to Geel from Ireland and is credited with initiating this type of community. The fictitious Wittgenstein talks about it, and it seems that with the help of magic he travelled to these times.

cleanses the doors of perception, and wards off lightning” (93), triggered the character’s (and at the same time narrator Wittgenstein) hallucinogenic dreams: he saw himself on the tomb of St Dymphna (the patron of this asylum), then he was back in the war, in spring 1916, being shot at several times; the wind of the bullet fanned his cheek and he was present at the battle of Vittoria, in Spain, in 1813 – quite in accordance with the way the real Wittgenstein treated dreams (“In a dream it sometimes happens that, first, we read a story, then we participate in it. And after waking up, it may seem as if we withdrew from the dream, seeing it as a strange image before our eyes” (1999, 60)). The blue colour of the philosopher’s pure spirit (firmament blue) contrasts with the “military red”, redcoat red of his war experiences (*Redcoat Red* is the title of the analysed chapter, named by Carlson after the colour of the uniform of British soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War, often called “redcoats”), but both are reconciled by the soothing green of nature and shamrock tea.

The attributive feature of fictitious Wittgenstein (the blue colour, forget me not) gains new meaning in the linguistic game of the text and it will be used to name this new meaning. As the real philosopher has put it, a nameplate – in our situation, the name “Wittgenstein blue” (not “Wittgenstein’s blue”) – has been firmly attached to the thing (2000, 15), after all: “The game is that certain things are moved on a given plane according to certain rules.” (2000, 9). The attributive feature has become a name. The new meaning will also be transferred to the chapter’s title *Wittgenstein blue* where we find out about his philosophical consideration on the subject of time and infinity, and about his deep religiousness – quite in line with the considerations of the historical Wittgenstein<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Wittgenstein had a lifelong interest in religion and claimed to see every problem from a religious point of view, but never committed himself to any formal religion.

Before Christ, people experienced God – or Gods – as something outside themselves. But since Christ, people – not all, but those who have learned to see through him – see God as something in themselves. (150)

I wonder if Wittgenstein's blue can be defined ostensively? Can I “indicate this colour” in the text? Only in the mastered metaphorical game, the game of “a made-up story” and its telling. So, Wittgenstein's blue is what is called this heavenly, spiritual blue heading towards truth. Similarly Ciaran Carson was a perceptive reader of the works of Russel's brilliant student. Is it not under the influence of Wittgenstein's consideration of the different shades of blue in the context of naming and linguistic games<sup>53</sup>, that the fictional blue appeared in *Shamrock Tea*?

*Rhinoceros Black* and *Unicorn White* are the most biographical chapters, referring to the philosopher's pre-war life, his – beginning in his childhood – interest in the idea of “truth and falsehood” which makes a surprisingly active appearance in the fictional world of the novel during the war of words of the Austrian philosopher with his mentor Bertrand Russel. For the “verbal” (fictional) Wittgenstein, equipped with a remarkably developed skill of visualisation, seeing a rhino or unicorn with his imagination was not a problem – not without humour the Irish narrator notes – while “verbal” Russel could not fathom the existence of a “verbal” rhino under the chair in his academic office. In *Philo-*

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<sup>53</sup> “But do you always do the same, when you think about shades?” – asks the philosopher and gives examples of different ways to think about an object:

“Is this blue the same as the other one? Do you see any difference? – You mix some paint and say: “This blue of the sky is hard to get right”.  
“It's getting pretty, I can see the blue sky!”  
“Look how different those two blues seem!”  
“Do you see that blue book there? Bring it over.  
“This blue light signal means...”  
“What is this blue called?” – is it ‘indigo’?” (2000, 27-28).

*sophical Investigations* the issue has a more complicated feature and the real Wittgenstein does not find an unambiguous answer ("There is vagueness in the role which *imagination* pays in our contemplations. Namely, to what extent, if at all, does it guarantee the sense of a sentence" (2000, 395)). In *Letters* he tries to explain it by using linguistic games: "The difference between linguistic games: "Look closely at this figure!" and "Imagine this figure!" (1999, 149).

The extremely rich and diverse palette of the novel's colours (every one out of 101 chapters has been entitled after a different shade of colour, each carrying a hidden symbolic meaning) became an excellent basis for the "colourful" linguistic games. It is known that the opinions of the Austrian philosopher had evolved and his ponderings over colours went through a few phases. The first phase finds its reflection in "Tractatus", while the third one is articulated in "Investigations". Wittgenstein mentions the troubling issue of colours in "Remarks on Colour" where he claims that using names of colours is about mastering certain linguistic games. In this case, Wittgenstein is interested in the nature of a colour's meaning (whether we speak of a logical-linguistic, or natural issue, as Ramsey suggests), the logic of phrases about colours (because despite the answer to the first question we speak in a certain language), and also the basis of the rules of the "colourful" linguistic game. One of the linguistic games is about showing a certain colour and, what follows, reflecting upon it in order to differentiate particular colours and their shades. The "green" novel of Ciaran Carson, strongly marked with the idea of independence, the Irish idea of patriotism (green shamrock - *The Green Little Shamrock of Ireland* - patriotic symbol of Ireland and the first part of the Irish national flag, Ireland - The Green Isle) is open to many other colours, and read from the philosophical perspective can play two roles: it illustrates and interprets some of Wittgenstein's opinions, but

on the other hand it becomes a subject of philosophical contemplation about the boundaries of language and the world<sup>54</sup>; it uses philosophical language and talks about the philosophy of language.

Wittgenstein's analytical way of thinking did not exclude the metaphorical, pictorial understanding of language. In *Philosophical Investigations* he wrote: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses". Such is the colourful, densely developed area presented by Ciaran Carson. By using language, the Irish writer invoked in the consciousness of the reader lively, vivid images of objects, people, situations, based on previously conducted observations of the author, his various predecessors, his own and their fantasy, brought to life colourful pictures of history and life. Carson imagined a language and "to imagine a language is to imagine a way of living" (Wittgenstein 2000, 16). He also remembered perfectly the philosophers words: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" and by his book he has expanded the boundaries of his own world and ours.

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<sup>54</sup> Here I refer to the wonderful aphorism of Wittgenstein from his notebooks 1914-1916: "The boundaries of my language set the boundaries of my world" (1995,58).

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## Summary

This interpretation of Ciaran Carson's *Shamrock Tea* includes three philosophical-literary threads: 1) Ludwig Wittgenstein as a fictional character of *Shamrock Tea* (a "paper" man, made by means of a language, emerging from "quasi-judgement"); 2) Wittgenstein's philosophical world - the fic-

tional world of a novel (an attempt to “identify” the intentional state of affairs with reality); 3) “linguistic games” in the novel (contextual meaning of used words, creating the text). Carson’s fragmentarily composed fictional quasi-biography strategy does not give a holistic understanding of the life and entirety of the thinker’s opinions, still it presents the life and thought of the Austrian philosopher through the colourful, magical, postmodern imagination of the author.

**Key words:** Ciaran Carson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, fiction, historical figure, language, colour, linguistic game

## **Irish and Ukrainian Famines: literary images, historical memory and aesthetic emotions**

Famine, the extreme scarcity of food and the long-lasting feeling of the physical need to eat something and eating nothing, a condition which generally leads to starvation and, consequently, to death, has been experienced in full by the people of Ukraine and Ireland. In the context of Ireland, this most destructive historical event took place between 1845 and 1852. The main causes for the Irish Potato Famine, also known as the Great Famine or Great Hunger (in Irish, “An Gorta Mór” or “An Drochshaol”), were a fungal infection in the potato crops and extreme government regulations. During this period, as estimated, about one million people died and a million more, escaping the famine, emigrated from the country, usually to America aboard boats known as coffin ships because they were overcrowded and disease-ridden, with poor access to food and water, resulting in the deaths of many people as they crossed the Atlantic. The great Ukrainian famine (in Ukrainian, “Голодомор,” i.e. “Holodomor” which means “death by forced starvation” or “hungerextermination”),<sup>55</sup> which took place between 1932 and 1933, was a man-made famine in the Ukrainian SSR, which had been the most productive agricultural area of the Soviet Union. During

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<sup>55</sup> It is believed that Vasyl Barka was the first to use this term in his preface to *The Yellow Prince* in 1963. From the middle of the 1960s, we can find it in several Ukrainian dictionaries.

this famine-genocide, between 7 and 10 million Ukrainians died of starvation in a peacetime catastrophe, unprecedented in the history of Europe. It was the result of Joseph Stalin's policy of forced collectivization aimed to consolidate individual landholdings and labour into collective farms, mainly kolkhozes and sovkhozes. Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union blamed the prosperous peasants, known as kulaks (*kulaks* in Russian, *kurkuls* in Ukrainian)<sup>56</sup> who had organized a resistance movement against collectivization, and resolved to eliminate them as a class. Many peasant families were forcibly resettled in Siberia and Kazakhstan into exile settlements, and most of them died on the way. The Soviet government responded to further acts of peasants' resistance by cutting off food rations meant for them. Stalin and the CPSU sharply increased Ukraine's production quotas, ensuring that they could not be met. Starvation became widespread and the ensuing deaths, also caused by disease due to malnutrition, reached catastrophic levels.

Literature can provide insight into the way specific historical events shape a society, and the attitudes, morals and behaviour of its members. It does so by interpreting important events (whether positive or negative), questioning perceptions and meaning-making devices, showing how these events affected the community in question and its people. Images of famines appear mainly in fictional works which explore historical instances of tragedy provoked by the deprivation and extreme poverty of large numbers of people. Such literature also presents the recorded memories of the traumatic events by portraying witnesses' emotions in the context of psychological trauma. The narratives constructed

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<sup>56</sup> The word "kulak" means a comparatively wealthy peasant who employed hired labor or possessed farm machinery and who was characterized by the Communists as having excessive wealth. "Kulak" is from the Russian word "kulak" literally, fist; "kurkul" is derived from Turkish *kürklü* (someone who wears fur, furred).

to express great famines usually serve the concepts of memory, identity, and representation.

Through five contemporary Ukrainian, Irish-American and Ukrainian-American novels, this essay will examine how the literary images of famines transmit the historical memories and aesthetic emotions of the people of both Ukraine and Ireland. The texts selected for comparison are: Ulas Samchuk's *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life*, written in exile and first published in Lwów in 1934; Vasyly Barka's *The Yellow Prince*, also written in exile and published in New York in 1963; Yevhen Hutsalo's *Holodomor*, Kyiv, 1990; Mary Pat Kelly's *Galway Bay*, published in the US in 2009; and Alexander J. Motyl's *Sweet Snow: A Novel of the Ukrainian Famine of 1933*, also published in the US, 2013. The comparative method of this study will be supported by Maurice Halbwachs' and Jan Assman's respective theories on social (collective) and individual memory.

In the first two Ukrainian novels, created when the effect of the tragic events was still strongly felt, the narrators' individual memory dominates. It is worth noting that in Soviet literature, until relatively recently, *Holodomor* was a forbidden theme.<sup>57</sup> However, some witnesses of the tragedy managed to write about it, concealing it under an artistic disguise. The first post-famine fictions were published mainly abroad. Among their authors was Ulas Samchuk (1905-1987). Born to a peasant family, he told the world about the unprecedented tragedy that had taken place in

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<sup>57</sup> Vasily Grossman (1905-1964), for example, a Soviet Russian writer and journalist, born in Berdichev, who was an eyewitness of this Ukrainian tragedy, but could not relate what he had seen in writing during Stalin's regime. He did it in his *Forever Flowing* written after Stalin's death, but the novel was censored by Nikita Khushchev's ideologists as anti-Soviet fiction. Fortunately, a copy was eventually smuggled out of the Soviet Union by dissidents and first published in the West, before appearing in the Soviet Union in 1988.

Soviet Ukraine, when he published his novel *Марія* (*Maria*) in Polish Lwów, in 1934. Samchuk composed his book, having immigrated to Prague in 1933, soon after the events. His novel was arguably the first factual book about the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933. Written in the form of a chronicle (similar to Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Margaret Brew's *Chronicles of Castle Cloyne*) of the life of an ordinary Ukrainian peasant-woman, his novel makes the title character, Maria, an emblematic figure of long-suffering Ukraine.<sup>58</sup> Samchuk dedicates his novel to the mothers who died of hunger in Ukraine in 1932-33. Yet, the story covers more than the famine as it describes Ukraine before the tragedy took place, taking the reader through three stages, entitled: "A Book about the Birth of Maria," "A Book of Maria's Days," and "A Book about Bread." Each is important in its own way, as Maria grows, matures, loves, gives birth to several children, suffers and dies - all 26,258 days of her peasant life, as highlighted by the author. Maria is a reflection of the Virgin Mary (referring to "belief" and "faith"), and Maria's daughter is named Nadia ("hope"). The tragic end of the novel is in stark contrast to its light and sunny beginning: peasant weekdays and rich, colourful feasts in the most bountiful zone of Ukraine with its fertile soil are replaced by the tragedy of starvation. All the characters die. For thirty days, Maria progressively declines - lonely, in the throes of a slow famine death, without anybody to help her. With bitter grief and pain, one of the characters sums up the results of this great tragedy: "Mothers do perish. Honest, kind women who carried out work and brought to life happiness, joy and young laughter, vanish from the face of the earth" (Самчук 1991,155).

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<sup>58</sup> See more detail in Оксана Веретюк. "Художній образ Землі як оберегу екзистенції українства в творі У. Самчука „Марія“." *Улас Самчук – видатний український письменник ХХ ст.* Тернопіль-Кременець: ТДП, 1994, pp. 46-50.

Samchuk succeeded in describing this tragedy with the precise documentary evidence of an eyewitness of the Great Ukrainian Famine. He thus allowed the truth about the great Ukrainian tragedy to be known, first in Germany and Canada, where he lived.<sup>59</sup> In Canada, an English translation of the novel was edited by Paul Cipywnyk in 2011. Cipywnyk started his introduction with the words of William Blake, "To see a world in a grain of sand [...]," and wrote: "*Maria* gives the modern reader a sense of how that love of land, combined with a lack of it, led to the conditions in which hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians left their native villages" (Cipiwnyk 6). In this, it resembles Mary Pat Kelly's *Galway Bay* whose narrative is also built around the stark contrast of how life was before and after the famine,<sup>60</sup> in this case, in Ireland.

Author and filmmaker Mary Pat Kelly was born in 1944 and raised in Chicago. She has perpetuated her family's oral stories on famine, told by five generations since her great-great grandmother, Honora Keeley Kelly who was born in 1822 near Galway Bay, lived in Bearna (Connemara), managed to survive the Great Famine, and saved herself and her children by immigrating to Chicago. Honora is the heroine of Kelly's long family saga. The novel thus draws on family history, but also, as the author underlines in her "Afterword," on "the stories of all other groups [...] forced to leave their homes" (Kelly, *Galway* 553), escaping starva-

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<sup>59</sup> In Germany, in 1944, he founded and headed the literary-artistic organization MUR until 1948. In 1948, Samchuk immigrated to Canada and became the leader of the "Slovo" Association of Ukrainian Writers in Exile. He died in Canada. For more on Samchuk's biography in English see Oksana Brzyzhun-Sokolyk's 'Author Biography in Ulas. *Maria: A Chronicle of a Life*. Trans. Roma Z. Franko. Ed. P. Cipywnyk. Toronto: Language Lanterns, Inc., 2011. 7-13.

<sup>60</sup> A new Kelly novel, *Of Irish Blood*, the sequel to *Galway Bay*, was published by Forge/Macmillan in 2015.

tion. It draws, moreover, on the author's research which benefited greatly from the participation of Mary Qualter of the Galway County Library, who "helped solve many mysteries and introduced [Kelly] to excellent local stories, especially the works on Bearna by Pdraig Faherty and artist Geraldine Folan" (554). Now then "In a hidden Ireland, where fishermen and tenant farmers find solace in their ancient faith, songs, stories, and communal celebrations, young Honora Keeley and Michael Kelly wed and start a family" (front cover). Because they and their countrymen must sell both their catches and their crops to pay exorbitant rents, potatoes have become their only staple food. All should be well, nevertheless, as they are in love, brave, hard-working, and quick-witted. However, they face starvation after the potato blight destroys all their plants. As all grain harvests are shipped to England, they are left with nothing to eat.

The first hunger winter is "mild": they "ate once a day - in the evening, so children could sleep through the night - oatmeal, mostly with two potatoes from the pit" (Kelly 2009,150). They have to sell their clothes, nets, pots, cups, and blankets. The following year, the Great Famine strikes. The narrator (Honora) remembers: "November the eve of Samhain. Ghosts walked the roads - not the souls of the dead, but real people dying. [...] No help of any kind from the government. Our three gold coins were gone, with the guts of the winter ahead of us" (181). They eat now poorer meals or sip nettle tea mixed with blood drawn from their horse. They are lucky to have a horse and they manage to survive. But famine fever now comes. Crowds of starving people wander the streets of Galway, many dead bodies appear in the streets; there is typhus in Clarenbridge and cholera in Bushy Park: "A new year was coming, 1847. A black old year it will be. Black '47" (195). The Irish people would help each other, if they only could, but no support comes from the British government. Moreover, when blight destroys the potatoes for the third time in

four years, and a callous government and uncaring landlords do nothing to prevent the unfolding tragedy, a natural disaster turns into The Great Famine that kills one million Irish people.

All of Honora's statements and notes concerning British politics match Cecil Woodham-Smith's, Michael L. Redmond's, and Cormac Ó Gráda's findings, i.e. famine historians of the revisionist and post-revisionist generations<sup>61</sup>. According to these historians, the disaster was largely caused by the British Government's decisions. In his vivid and disturbing book, Woodham-Smith provides a damning account:

The treatment of the Irish people by the British Government during the famine has been described as genocide – race murder. The British Government has been accused, and not only by the Irish, of wishing to exterminate the Irish people, as Cromwell wished to “extirpate” them, and as Hitler wished to exterminate the Jews. (1975, 407)

Redmond carefully analyses the conditions in Ireland prior to the Great Famine. Like Woodham-Smith before him, he calls Gustave de Beaumont, a French magistrate to witness. De Beaumont, while travelling to Ireland in 1835 and 1837, had observed that the Irish were treated worse than slaves in chains. Redmond also quotes from Kohl, the German traveller, who had said that

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<sup>61</sup> The meaning of the Great Famine has been contested by historians from the 1850s to the present day. Three main positions are put forward: nationalistic (from the very beginning till the 1940s, e.g. John Mitchel with his book *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, 1860); revisionist (began in the 1940s and continued into the 1980s, vividly presented by Cecil Woodham-Smith); post-revisionist (since the late 1980s - Cormac Ó Gráda, Peter Gray, James Donnelly). Margaret Kelleher characterizes revisionist generation as that which “largely avoided eyewitness sources and testimonies, considering them to be unduly emotive” (92), and the post-revisionist as “continuing to challenge the excesses and simplifications of earlier nationalistic interpretations” (90). One of the first historians who classified these three generations was Peter Gray with his book *The Irish Famine* (New Horizons), London: Thames and Hudson, 1995.

“the poor in Europe had a life of comfort compared to the poverty and misery of the Irish” (1994, 25). Redmond accusingly declares: “The outcome of the British Government’s famine policy in Ireland in December 1846, with particular reference to Charles Trevelyan’s letter of 8<sup>th</sup> December to Sir Randolph, was to let the Irish starve” (32). Ó Gráda, with the help of strong economic facts, concurs with Redmond. Interestingly for the present comparison, Ó Gráda parallels the Great Irish Famine with the Ukrainian Holodomor:

History provides many examples of famines that cost more human lives than the Great Irish Famine. Reliable evidence on famine casualties tends to be skimpy, but fine comparisons are not called for: enough to note that in northern China in 1877-8 a famine accounted for 9 to 13 million deaths, and in 1932-33 in the Ukraine another for probably at least 3 million . . . . In this league of doom the cost of Ireland’s misfortune—about one million lives—may seem small. Measured in proportionate terms, however, the Irish famine’s toll exceeded these others. (1995,vi)

In *Galway Bay*, Honora and Michael fight bravely, but the fever takes Michael’s life and the hunger takes the life of their newly-born son. The orphaned family then joins two million other Irish refugees in their emigration from Ireland. From a distant “Amerikay,” Michael’s brother serves the revolutionary cause (Young Ireland) and compares Irish people with the local Indian tribes, persecuted and starved by the democratic American government (as the Ukrainian peasants were by the Soviet regime). This family saga is also a patriotic hymn to Ireland, portraying the fight for the Irish cause and presenting communal celebrations, ancient faith, songs, stories, myths, legends about strong, invincible and united Celts and their Green Land. It is also a hymn to Irish moral strength, as formulated by Honora: “But remember, boys, glory comes from living for Ireland, not from

dying for Ireland” (256). This unusual vitality surpasses the emotional image of famine – a feeling of being brought to bay, vision of breath of death, a sense of irretrievable loss.

Vasyl Barka (Ocheret), with *Жовтий князь* (*The Yellow Prince*), published in 1962-63, adopts the same genre as the previous two authors, i.e. the chronicle of a family dying from hunger. The novel has been translated into French, German, and Russian and has served as the basis for Oles' Yanchuk's Ukrainian feature film (1993) *Holod-33* (Famine-33).<sup>62</sup> During the famine, Barka worked as an assistant professor of medieval literature in Ukraine. Living with his brother in the Poltava region, he personally experienced great hunger and was even close to dying. However, after surviving this ordeal, for almost 25 years, he collected material from direct witnesses of the Ukrainian holocaust and integrated their memories into his novel on the Holodomor. The narration involves the voices of characters participating in the event, giving the text captivating and humanistic qualities, which arouse emotions in the reader. *The Yellow Prince* offers its own perspective on the time of the terrible hunger and the deaths that resulted from it. It emphasizes the immensely hard struggle of starving people against death and the failure of some due to unequal opportunities. The Katrannyk family is at the centre of these events. Everything has been eaten: rotten beets and potatoes, a dead horse dug up from the frozen ground, little sparrows, gophers, plant rootlets, cats, and dogs. More than once, acts of cannibalism take place. Those who have lost their senses eat those who are weaker:

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<sup>62</sup> Olga Papash has analyzed this work in her article “Collective Trauma in a Feature film: *Holod-33* as One-of-a-Kind” which is a part of edited by Noack, Christian, Lindsay Janssen, and Vincent Comerford *Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine, Anthem Series on Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies*. London: Anthem, 2012.

They trooped the passage and opened the door, noticing a man near an oven who was dressed in shirt rags and was looking insanely, with his upper eyelids raised high and piercing glare at the newcomers. There was blood everywhere—on the bench was a killed child terribly mutilated.—The man lit a fire on the very fore part of an oven and in a smoke-filled house is cooking food on a pan chewing something and holding a knife in his hand.—One of the men who entered after the first one shrieked:— He has killed his child and is frying it! He's gone mad. (Барка 140)<sup>63</sup>

Such things really did happen. That anthropophagic behaviours became possible was the result of the desperation of the Ukrainian peasants facing the Soviet power's ruthless removal of all consumables. The title of the novel translates Barka's use of the ambiguity perceived in the colour yellow, here symbolically associated with the prince of evil and also with hunger – representing the totalitarian ruler bringing desolation. Barka's narration resembles that of a biblical parable of an apocalyptical, unimaginable hell on Earth.

The colour of Alexander Motyl's image of famine is white as the Holodomor takes the form of the title's snow, a cold and overwhelming whiteness. Ukrainian villages are thus lifeless, as one of the protagonists notices:

"[...] [T]hey appear to be empty. No smoke, no people, no life, *nichts*. Absolutely nothing. Just this accursed white."

"Animals?"

"No, nothing. There is nothing but snow—nothing but white snow—*nichts ausser diesem verdammten Schnee*. And white sky." (Motyl 2013, 48)

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<sup>63</sup>„Перейшли гурбою через сіни і відчинили двері: побачили біля печі чоловіка, що мав на собі стріп'я від сорочки і дивився шалено; верхні повіки підняті високо і погляд врізається на прибулих. Скрізь по хаті кров: на лаві зарізана дитина і жаско спотворена. Чоловік розвів огонь на самому припічку: диму повна хата! – і готує їжу на сковорідці; щось жує, тримаючи в руці ніж. Один з дядьків, які ввійшли слідом за першим, скрикнув: – Він дитину зарізав і смажить! Збожеволів.”.

*Sweet Snow* is set in the winter of 1933 in Ukraine. A terrible famine is raging in the countryside, while the Soviet secret police is arresting suspected spies in the cities. Among them are: a German nobleman from Berlin working as a diplomat in the USSR (von Mecklenburg), a Jewish, fanatic communist from New York, who was born and spent his childhood in Ukraine (Golub), a Polish professor from Lwów, attaché and spy in Ukraine (Pieracki), and a young Ukrainian poet and nationalist from Vienna (Kortschenko). These men, from different countries and political views, find themselves gathered in a cell in some unknown prison, locked up by the KGB to be destroyed – and where indeed they suffer physical and mental abuse. One day, as they are being transported to another prison, their van overturns, their drunk driver and the guard that accompanies them die, and thus they find themselves free–only to wander amidst devastated and snowbound villages, desolate landscapes, and frozen corpses. The two who are foreign diplomats in the Ukrainian SSR are well cognizant of the tragic situation. Pieracki remembers when he saw his “first corpse, lying half on the sidewalk, half in the gutter” (35), not far from the Polish consulate in Kharkiv. The cruellest part for him was that no one paid attention to the dead body lying there:

They walked around it, over it, as if it wasn't there. I stopped–I felt I had to stop–and people scowled and told me to get out of their way, to keep moving, that they'd be late for work. I couldn't understand their coldness, their indifference, their inhumanity. (35)

The ongoing situation in Ukraine in 1932-1933 was monitored by the officials of the diplomatic legation, and the most convenient observation points were the Polish consulate general in Kharkiv (the capital of the Ukrainian SSR at that time) and the consulate in Kiev. Jan Jacek Bruski, a researcher from Krakow, mentions their double function:

These missions carried out typical consulate functions but they also acted as undercover agencies for Polish intelligence services. Their employees gathered invaluable information during their numerous journeys across Ukraine. The exchange of information with foreign diplomats, especially those representing Italy and Germany, added to the picture. Information collected through various channels reached the Polish authorities in the form of reports. Polish elites' perception of events in the USSR was also affected by [the bulletin] *Biuletyn Wschodni* (till 1932), which was a bit more widely distributed. (Bruski 2012, 217)

Polish reports indeed informed about the ongoing mass starvation and gave "a very vivid picture of the worsening - week by week, month by month - of the famine disaster in Ukraine" (Bruski 220). The diplomats in Motyl's novel are not spared, and neither do the American, communist journalist or the young Ukrainian poet and nationalist survive the collective ordeal. The horror of their last journey across Ukraine is depicted in vividly realistic terms. Their situation is as ghastly as it was for all at the time. *Sweet Snow*, being a historical novel, "attempts to re-create an historically significant personage or series of events" (Morner and Rausch 1998, 99) and conveys the spirit, manners, and social conditions of the Ukrainian Holodomor in realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact.

Paradoxically, Motyl's characters are in the breadbasket of Europe, but they have nothing to eat. Only snow, qualified as 'sweet' by the author, which is ironical as this snow does not have a pleasant taste. Soon enough, the four intellectuals observe evidence of rampant cannibalism around them. The description of one incident offers a naturalistic portrayal of the damaged corpse of a young woman:

They espied, half covered in a snowdrift, a battered head attached to a disemboweled torso. The head had once belonged to a young woman, a blonde, with long eyelashes—which might have fluttered in the breeze if they had not been sprinkled with blood—and a long thin nose and tight mouth. The arms, legs, breasts, and buttocks were missing and the

abdominal cavity lay open and mangled before them. Two crows were pulling at sinews and picking excitedly at the blue intestines. . . .

"Cannibals," Golub said, so quietly as to be almost inaudible. "They're not scavengers. They're *cannibals*." He surveyed what remained of the woman's body with glassy eyes. "I think she was still alive. I think they tore her to pieces while she was still alive. I thought I heard groans." He placed one hand on his forehead. (76)

Everywhere, there were shocking, dreadful sights: the dead and the half-dead, lying together in huge piles of corpses on the roads, and in a "House of Horror," a destroyed church.<sup>64</sup> The four men ask: "how could they [the Ukrainians] all just *accept* death?" They draw the conclusion that "They knew there was no alternative. [...] They knew their destruction had been planned and that there was no escape" (134). Similarly, there will be no escape from famine and cold snow for the four protagonists.

In Irish fiction, from the first post-famine generation onward, starved people are generally presented as a monolithic, ethnic, and social community, made up of Irish peasants opposed to landowners and British authorities. In such novels, the farmers help one another and display unflagging concern for their native language, customs, and traditions. Representations of An Gorta Mór mostly do not include betrayers of the nation, informers, profiteers, et al., people who manage to survive quite comfortably at the detriment of others. On the other hand, where such people are present in Holodomor fiction, as in Yevhen Hutsalo's *Голодомор* (*Holodomor*) or Motyl's *Sweet Snow*,<sup>65</sup> they are described as expropriating the food belonging to their countrymen, very often their own neighbours, but also they are shown not to survive in the long run. Hungry villagers, driven to famine despair

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<sup>64</sup> Similar naturalistic images are found in Mrs Hoare's horrific stories.

<sup>65</sup> The English version of Hutsalo's Holodomor prose was published in *Hunger Most Cruel: Selected Prose Fiction by Anatoliy A. Dimarov, Yevhen Hutsalo, Olena Zvy chayna*. Winnipeg: Language Lanterns, 2002.

by the local Bolsheviks, feel no compulsion to help them when it is their turn to die. In Hutsalo's micro novel (story), the main protagonist, formerly a prosperous peasant, Pavlo Muzyka, father, husband and devout Christian, has been bled dry by his neighbour, Bolshevik Harkusha. When famine reaches its most acute manifestation, Muzyka's hatred towards his neighbour grows to such a degree that he even hates Harkusha's children. Not only does he not save them from starvation, he rejoices at their misfortune and suffering:

And you do not want him to survive so that Harkusha's seeds remain. Leave no trace. You see, it has eaten its fill—snorting, and blinking its sleepy eyes, it will certainly get some sleep now, eternal sleep on you. . . . It isn't falling asleep, but grabbing hold of the belly and squirming instead! What, have you overeaten, have you choked? Well, you will shrink with pain a bit, you'll learn how to steal, God sees everything. And maybe God in heaven is hungry and has fainted so that he doesn't punish the Gaudens for injustice? You will suffer, you will suffer. (Гуцало 1996, 396)<sup>66</sup>

The representation of the Holodomor, in this novel, is formed as a poignant image of hell, related to a moral fall, in the extreme conditions of a desperate wish for survival. One's attitude during the famine thus becomes the criterion measuring a person's moral integrity. Transferring historical memory to his novel, Hutsalo succeeded in recreating the emotional atmosphere of the situation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> „А не хочеться, щоб вижив, щоб насіння Гаркушине залишилося, хай би й сліду не залилося... . Бач, найлося— й сопе, й кліпає очима сонними, тепер поспить, звісно, щоб ти заснуло вічним сном. . . . Але ж не засинає, а руками за живіт хапається, а корчиться! Що, об'ївся, не туди пішло? Ну, покорчя трохи, будеш знати, як красти, господь бог усе бачить. А може, й господь бог на небі так зголоднів та знемігся, що не годен покарати за несправедливість? . . . Помучся, помучся.”

<sup>67</sup> An expert on Ukrainian literature, Mykola Zhulynsky, stated that “creation of the emotional atmosphere of the situation” was a distinguishing feature of Hutsalo's fiction (Жулинський 1987, 30).

Expressing the reality of famine, Ukrainian and Irish fictitious narratives transmit their respective collective memories that parallel individual memories. Maurice Halbwachs,<sup>68</sup> who was the first sociologist to use the term “collective memory” and whose work *On Collective Memory* (published after his death) is considered the foundational framework for the study of societal remembrance, has shown the interconnection of collective and individual memories, emphasizing the role of the latter: “While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (Halbwachs 1992, 48). Lewis A. Coser, editor and translator of *On Collective Memory* explicates Halbwachs’s thought in the following way: “It is, of course individuals, who remember, not groups or institutions, but those individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past” (Coser 1992, 22). Politicians and those in positions of authority can manipulate memories to tell a story differently or encourage people to think in a certain way, as opposed to collective memory that reflects the experience of specific groups that are delineated in space and time. According to Halbwachs, “individuals always use social frameworks when they remember” (40). The history of the perpetrators of the famines examined here, Britain and the USSR, show how powerful groups can promote versions of events that reflect their ideological needs. For instance, Soviet Ukrainians, on the whole, had to erase their remembrances of the Holodomor. However, the collective memory constructed by this powerful group clashes with the collective memory of Ukrainian farmers and families. Furthermore, as a bilateral relation between individual memory and collective memory, the memory (“contemporized past”) of oppressed, colonized groups has its continuation (“transition”) in the sphere of objectivized culture -

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<sup>68</sup> Maurice Halbwachs was a student of Durkheim.

whether in texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, or even landscapes (Assman and Czaplicka 1995,128).

The selected novels show that Irish and Ukrainian individual memories take part in the composition of historical and cultural knowledge, as they build collective memories which represent the past of their respective nations. "*Mémoire*" is thus transformed into "*histoire*" (Assman and Czaplicka 128), but if, as Jan Assman claims, "objective culture [also] has the structure of memory" (128), we can then speak about cultural and historical memory.

Cultural memory has its fixed points. "These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments)", called "figures of memory" (Assman and Czaplicka 129). The Holodomor and the Great Famine have become the common points that help Ukrainian and Irish people to feel that they are a nation (as opposed to their previous oppressors, colonizers). Even in faraway America, the Ukrainians and the Irish similarly preserve their ethnicity: they are the children of nations that survived. National identity can be most pronounced when a nation communally confronts its enemy or a natural disaster. The artistic portrayal of tragic historic events, in its turn, accomplishes the transmission of collective memories, which "work much the same way - they foster and define group identities, telling a group of people where they have come from, who they are and how they should act in the present and future" (Gillis 1994,7). Famine/Holodomor fiction ("figure of memory") may actually be an instrument of memorialization and identity-building (or saving).

Our selected novels all describe similar emotional reactions to famine situations, the emotional states in extreme conditions of survival and agony before death, and most of all, the longing of the starved people, their prolonged and unfulfilled desire of food, and their strong feeling of wanting to eat and survive. Through

their remarkable depictions of the events that caused physical and psychological traumas, changed knowledge, psyche, bodily condition and behavior of those who survived,<sup>69</sup> Samchuk, Barka, Hutsalo, Kelly and Motyl make *readers* empathize with their characters' feelings – an approach that brings a moral and emotional dimension to the texts.

Irish Famine and Ukrainian Holodomor fictions both fulfil the purpose of catharsis as purification and purgation, and intellectual clarification.<sup>70</sup> Nadiya Stepula's view of the catharsis and moral function of Ukrainian famine fiction could apply to its Irish counterpart: "The power of pain contained in this fiction changes into a healing medicine, which completely cures our souls from indifference, disremembering and oblivion" (Степула). Then, a reader receives the greatest pleasure from the "stylized union" of pity and terror, which are usually "painfully and utterly irrecconcilable in real life."<sup>71</sup>

As the Great Famine lasted much longer than the Holodomor, its memorialization process has been more intensive, and the history of literary figures of memory is richer in Irish culture. Indeed, from the very beginning of famine episodes, Irish literature was deeply preoccupied with famine remembrance and commemoration, while it was only after the political changes of its post-communist period that Ukrainian culture started to pay respect to the long-silenced

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<sup>69</sup> Carthy Caruth presented compelling analysis of the traumatic events and trauma, noticing in particular that "The trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge..." (Caruth 153).

<sup>70</sup> See "Catharsis" in Preminger, Alex, et al., eds. *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*.

Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. See also Donald W. Lucas's appendix dedicated to "Pity, Fear, and Catharsis" in *Poetics by Aristotle*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.

<sup>71</sup> Elisabeth Schneider's definition (1939) in Preminger et. al. 30.

voices of those who had suffered the Holodomor horrors.<sup>72</sup> At last, as the political climate changed, the story of the terrible Ukrainian famine emerged fully. The fact that in 2005 Natalia Tymoshchuk presented her thesis on Holodomor fiction illustrates this situation. She underlined that the better part of the Ukrainian famine fiction “was a peculiar synthesis of the deep national sensation of the world and mastering of the modern European aesthetic ideas” (Тимошук 2005,162). Increasingly, academic studies are coming out. In 2015, Galyna Dranenko, a Ukrainian researcher at the University of Chernivtsi, published a study on the “Famine Literature” genre, and on the basis of eleven poetic and prose works on the Holodomor, she identified the factors that “place it in the representative scale of this genre” (Драненко 2015, 270). Comparative reflections on the Holodomor and An Gorta Mór are also beginning to emerge, and a historical book, *Histories, Memories and Representations of Famine*, edited by Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen and Vincent Comerford, was published in 2012 (Noack, Janssen and Comerford 286). Such fiction as we examined here, which articulates the harrowing past of two European, oppressed nations, is now receiving full recognition and is fostering an interest among readers beyond their borders. Indeed, they represent more than a historical and human need to find out about the plight of one’s ancestors; they are meaningful to all as they unearth and give voice to mankind’s painful memories of traumatic events.

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<sup>72</sup> In 1995, for the first time in history, the highest and most prestigious state prize in Ukraine, the Shevchenko Prize, was given to Vasyl Zakharchenko for his Holodomor story, *Прибутні люди*, published a year before in the magazine *Вітчизна*. Later, the author changed the title to *Пришлі люди* (*Newcomers*).

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### Abstract

The following essay examines how literary images can transmit the historical memories and aesthetic emotions related to the famine experience of the people of both Ukraine and Ireland, as illustrated in five contemporary novels: Ulas Samchuk's *Maria. A Chronicle of a Life*, 1934; Vasyl Barka's *The Yellow Prince*, 1963; Yevhen Hutsalo's *Holodomor*, 1990; Mary Pat Kelly's *Galway Bay*, 2009; and Alexander J. Motyl's *Sweet Snow. A Novel of the Ukrainian Famine of 1933*, 2013. The selected novels show that famine fiction may be an instrument contributing to the memorialization of national identity, for these literary works describe similar emotional reactions to state-induced famines, and all have powerful moral and emotional functions. The famine fiction here discussed, relating to the Irish An Gorta Mór and the Ukrainian Holodomor, fulfils the purpose of catharsis.

**Key words:** An Gorta Mór, Holodomor, literary image, contemporary famine fiction, historical memory, aesthetic emotions<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> The first version of this article was published in "Wenshan Review of Literature & Culture" (Taipei-Dublin), Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 2017), pp. 51-68.



Starving children.

Source: <https://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine/hunger.htm>



A depiction of a mother and children at Skibbereen during the famine.

Source: [https://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine/ruin.htm#google\\_vignette](https://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/famine/ruin.htm#google_vignette)



Pictures by Alexander Wienerberger. "The corpses of persons who died of hunger on the street" Center of Kharkiv and surroundings, 1933. Samara Pearce Archive.

Source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/zaboroneni-photo-holodomoru-henotsydu/31159689.html>

# Irish and Ukrainian fictional treatments of the Famines: the first Famine/Holodomor generation

## Introduction

By the concept of “famine” we understand the extreme shortage of food in a region, the long lasting feeling of physical need to eat something. Such condition generally leads to mass starvation of living beings and, consequently, to death. Collins understands famine as “a situation in which large numbers of people have little or no food, and many of them die” (Collins 1989, 251). The social nature of famine is also highlighted: “It is something experienced by society, whereas starvation is something that affects individuals” (*The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. by S.J. Connolly, Oxford University Press 1998, p. 184). Both Irish and Ukrainian people have experienced this situation in full. Discussing the subject of famine in the context of Ireland, it seems to be indispensable to mention that over a period of six centuries from 1300 to 1900 there were up to 30 episodes of severe famine, but the most destructive was a historical event that took place between 1845 and 1849 and was called the Great Famine or Irish Potato Famine (in Irish language *an Gorta Mór* or *Drochshaol*). Its main causes were fungal infection in the potato crop and extreme government regulations<sup>74</sup>. Ukraine, beginning from the Middle

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<sup>74</sup> The meaning of the Great Famine has been contested by historians from the 1850s to the present day. Three main positions are put forward: 1) nationalistic; 2) revisionist; 3) post-revisionist.

Ages, also experienced many hungry years, famines, related to extremely unfavorable climatic conditions or disruptions caused by military conflicts. But the famines in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – famines of 1921-1923, 1932-1933, 1928-1929 and 1946-1948 – were politically motivated. The most famous and internationally recognized famine is the Great Ukrainian Famine (in Ukrainian, “Голодомор,” i.e. “Holodomor” which means “death by forced starvation” or “hunger-extermination”),<sup>75</sup> which was a man-made famine of 1932-1933 in the Ukrainian SSR, which had been the most productive agricultural area of the Soviet Union. Both the Ukrainian and Irish Great Hunger were times of mass starvation and disease with deep political, cultural, demographic, social, and psychological consequences, which were manifested in works of Ukrainian and Irish literature, including prose (this article will focus on fiction). The volume of this literature, its duration and its characteristic focus on the problems of Great Hunger allowed it to be classified as a separate genre – “famine fiction”/ “література про голодомор”. Despite the longer duration and much larger volume of Irish Famine fiction it seems reasonable to compare Ukrainian and Irish Famine fiction on some conditionally suitable chronological periods. 1. Period of the first Famine generation: Irish 1845-1900, Ukrainian 1932-1990 (“stage of consecration of the event” (after Dranenکو 2015, 270) in Ukrainian literature). 2. Period of the next post-Famine generations, significantly elongated in Irish literature (it includes several, fewer or more active, literary Famine generations and is associated with such key historical events as the end of Irish Revival (1910s), Easter Rising (1916), Irish War of Independence, Civil War (1919-21, 1922-1923), WWII, and others, up to the period of Celtic Tiger (starts in 1995) and *present* day), and much shorter in Ukrainian

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<sup>75</sup> It is believed that Vasyl Barka was the first to use this term in his preface to *The Yellow Prince* in 1963. From the middle of the 1960s, we can find it in several Ukrainian dictionaries.

Famine literature, associated with the historic transition from totalitarianism to the Independence of Ukraine (1991-2019). In Ukrainian literature these are works written and printed when the censorship was abolished and writing literature on previously forbidden topics was even encouraged (Dranenko named metaphorically this stage “the pollinisation phase of the testimony (from fr. pollinisation, “pollination of a flower”). This article compares Irish and Ukrainian Famine fiction of the first Famine generation, in terms of the place of its origin (native country, emigration), it also compares the dynamics and intensity of the literary treatments of the Great Famine/Holodomor, a few complexes of motifs presented in the selected famine fiction. The comparative approach – to some extent – intersects with post-colonial criticism, trauma studies, politics of memory.

### **“Literary silence” or “a load roaring”? Entering into the textual world of Famine Ireland**

The large time distance from the Irish Great Famine (over 170 years) caused the formation of a famine tradition in Irish literature, with a duration of this theme in literary works of almost ten literary generations (the first famine generation includes at least two literary generations, beginning from those who were adult in 1843-1848). These writings varied in their artistic value, by genre, by style, by the scale of representativeness of the Famine theme, beginning from realistic chronicles of 1840-50s and ending with contemporary historical novel and other genres of fiction in which Famine provides excellent material.

It is worth noticing that many prominent Irish writers long before the Great Famine were carefully observing the situation of a peasantry exclusively dependent on potato crops. They were able to make some predictions of the catastrophe that was about

to happen. Authors were depicting the Famine when it was still taking place and described it shortly after the disaster. In the fifty years that followed this period several writers who experienced the tragedy at first hand relived the whole truth about it in their works (see: Fegan, 2010, 444-459; Wright, 2010, 2) and formed the first Famine literature generation, in Ireland and in emigration. They were, for instance, an anonymous author who hides behind "An Irishman", Mrs Mary Anne Hoare, Asenath Nicholson, David Power Conyngham, Jane Francesca Elgee, Samuel Ferguson, Aubrey de Vere and William Carleton (for a full list, see *Famine fiction, 1846-1921* (compiled by Margu rite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Lindsay Janssen); see also Fegan, 2002, 73-237; etc.). Even such a shortened list, presented above, questioning Terry Eagleton's position of "the silent" generation (see Fegan 2010, 444), proves that writers including female writers wrote about the Great Hunger. After careful analysis of the famine prose of this period, Melissa Fegan concludes: "The first generation of Famine writers may have been horrified, infuriated, shamed, or disillusioned by the Famine, but they were not silent about it, and nor were the writers who followed (Fegan 2010, 455).

Irish emigration literature was a strong support for the national corpus of this genre. In the context of Ireland it was a mass emigration. As Margu rite Corporaal states, "The corpus of Famine fiction (...) includes fiction written in Ireland, as well as in the three most prominent diasporic areas where Famine emigration settled, namely, Britain, the Canadas, and the United States" (Corporaal, 2017, 13). When British-Irish Famine authors concentrated on the vivid description of tragic event (such hunger motifs as: descriptions of starvation, causes of starvation, the strategies for survival, widow with her dead children, the terrible effects of the Famine, power actions, social and political context of the event), for the American emigration, the Famine was a starting point ("painful eviction from the old home", Fanning,

2000,76) in their narration about their farewells to the beloved but colonized Ireland, crossing to America in “coffin ships” and painful rooting at a new home (e.g. Charles Cannon, *Bickerton; or, the Immigrant’s Daughter. A Tale*, New York: P. O’Shea, 1855). The American-Irish Famine generation appeared in late 1850, when Irish writers “came between 1850 and 1875 [to America]”, these traumatized refugees “produced didactic, utilitarian novels” in order to help troubled people survive in the New World (Fanning, 2000, 1-2; 76).

The earliest examples of Irish famine fiction were written in Ireland: [Anonymous author, pseud. Ireland] *A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847. Founded On Fact* (Reigate: William Allingham, 1847), William Carleton’s *The Black Prophet: A Tale Of Irish Famine* (London and Belfast: Simms and M’Intyre, 1847), *Shamrock Leaves, or Tales and Sketches of Ireland*, a collection of short stories written at the end of the Famine by Mrs Hoare and published in 1851<sup>76</sup>. This fiction was written by witnesses to the tragedy. Apart from a vivid and terrifying description (portrayal) of single victims (“individuation of famine”- Fegan 2010, 449), it posed the question: what (who) caused the Great Famine and why?

*A Sketch of Famine* (1847) from Mrs Hoare’s volume (1851) “is a harrowing account of the contemporary events, including the 1846 arrival of the potato blight, the strategies for survival adopted by some particularly vulnerable victims of famine – widows and children – and the breakdown in the ‘proverbial kindness of the peasantry’” (Kelleher 2002, 924). A mother, faint with hunger,

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<sup>76</sup> For more information see Fegan, Melissa. *Literature and the Irish Famine, 1845-1919*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Fegan’s study presents a useful overview of Famine fiction written between 1845 and 1919; Klein, Bernhard. *On the Uses of History in Recent Irish Writing*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007; The chapter “Fact into Fiction: Novels of the Irish Famine” (pp. 40-83) covers seminal 19th- and early-20th-century Famine novels by William Carleton, Anthony Trollope, David Power Conyngham, Louise Field, and others.

and her dead children are the central figures of this horrific story. A narrator, the eyewitness of the famine, starts her story with a bitter exclamation of one of the sufferers:

Ireland – the Green Isle – our poor famine-stricken country! – it would be difficult to give an idea of her sorrows to those who do not witness them; but amply are they realized by those whose lot it is to sojourn in the midst of the perishing people. The peasantry, once so gay, so full of native fun and humour, that the phrase ‘a light-hearted Irishmen’, has become proverbial, now bowed down by famine and nakedness, gaunt and haggard, faint and spirit-worn, are but shadows of their former selves. (Hoare 2002, 948)

The most horrifying is a view of a fainting mother, bending her steps towards the churchyard, and bearing in her arms two infants, one dead, the other scarcely alive. Then she buried her dead child and sat waiting to bury them both in one grave. Her pain was deep, her sorrow was boundless and calm. The voice of the narrator is restrained and severe:

She uttered no cry, no word of sorrow, but calmly seated herself before the open hollow (...) and taking the last remaining child on her knees, waited helpless and hopeless of succour till the moment when the gasping breath should cease, the convulsive sob be stilled, and Death, in his now kindly visiting, should come for ever to assuage the fierce pangs of hunger. ‘I waited’, she said, ‘to bury them both in one grave; I had nothing to give my darling... - better to stop and put him alongside his brother in the holy ground, than lay him down in the field for the rats to devour’. (Hoare 2002, 948)

This vivid and horrific description of hunger looks very like the Ukrainian one, in Ukrainian Holodomor fiction<sup>77</sup>, and as in the Ukrainian one, it raises the issue of colonial enslavement by the imperial authorities. According to Kelleher, Hoare’s “horrific

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<sup>77</sup> For details see Oksana Weretiuk, *Temat Wielkiego Głodu w irlandzkiej i ukraińskiej literaturze okresu następującego bezpośrednio po klęsce głodowej*, in Oksana Weretiuk, *Podobieństwa i różnice*, Rzeszów 2014, pp. 122-140.

depiction of famine deaths, of bodies eaten by rats and other 'deaths from starvation', together with her interpretation of the role of 'our English brethren' and 'God's chastisement', anticipates some of the key motifs and central ideological debates in Irish famine narratives" (Kelleher 2002, 924) and introduces us to postcolonial criticism.

It seems that the first prominent famine novel was written by Margaret Brew (1850-?). She was a child at the end of the famine period. Biographical information about this authoress is very poor. For example, Stephen Brown states: "A Co. Clare lady, who wrote much for the *Irish Monthly* and other Irish periodicals (1919,41). Probably the daughter of a landowner (or a daughter of an Irish clergyman), she published *The Burtons of Dunroe* (1880) and *Chronicles of Castle Cloyne* (1886), both reflecting her pro-Catholic bias, and both Catholic in tone. In *The Chronicles of Castle Cloyne*, wholly devoted to the Irish famine tragedy, she presents two different stories, each having slight connection with the other. The critic underlines that in this fiction "Miss Brew understands well the Irish heart and language" (Brown 1919,41). In the 'Preface' of the first edition of this book from 1885 she highlights, how painful the famine experience was:

This was to show, how universal was the action of the famine, and how impartial in its effects. Peer and peasant, landlord and tenant, the home of the great and the cabin of the lowly, all were alike brought under its terrible influence, and all alike were compelled to bend beneath the storm. Some had vitality enough to survive it (...) but more – and these last were the great majority – went down beneath the waves of utter and hopeless ruin, never to rise again. (Brew 1885, 1, viii)

The story is long, as Victorian chronicle dictated, very detailed and not easy in reading. But the characters are vivid and expressive enough. The novel regards the passing of the old Irish gentry. The title 'Castle Cloyne' (a residence of the Irish gentry) is preparing for election. This Irish gentry hopes that they will win.

Mr Dillon is the leader of the family. The narrator, full of sympathy for the people of good social position, has a very high opinion of him: "Mr Dillon was a good resident landlord, a warm friend and a genial host" (Brew 1885, 1,232). The shattering of Irish illusions were metaphorically and ironically showed in "geese" episode, which took place on the day of election:

Unable either to stop or recede, the driver of the car, with a lofty air of contemptuous indifference, drove right down on the geese. Though geese saved the Capitol and city of Rome, they could not save themselves in this instance, but, fluttering their wings, raised such an outcry as even to drown the discordant sounds of the band. (...) The poor old woman who was their owner came out of the lane just in time to behold the catastrophe, and her lamentations over their destruction were loud and long-continued. She had good reason to remember "Dillon's election", for those wretched geese made all her worldly wealth. The Irish geese, less wise and fortunate than their Roman predecessors, instead of being honoured as the saviours of a great nation, were the sport of a mob, and were crushed to death under the wheels of a travelling caravan. (1885, 1, 324)

Brew, like the above-mentioned Mrs Hoare, concludes that this Irish suffering is not possible to understand for those for whom the famine and pre-famine events are not a memory. The memory of Great Hunger stimulated Irish women to write prose. According to a researcher of women's fiction of 1845-1900, the Great Famine formed the subject of women's fictional writings of this period (Kelleher, 2002, 924).

A similar point of view is presented by William Carleton (1794-1869), an Irish writer and novelist, who clearly describes the nature and the way of thinking of Irish farmers. Carleton's father was a Co. Tyron Roman Catholic tenant farmer, and in fact, a poor peasant who supported fourteen children. The future writer passed his early life among scenes similar to those he later described in his books. Carleton was an acute observer of poor peasantry. His Irish-speaking parents instilled Irish culture into

their children, and Carleton was steeped in folklore from an early age. His father had an extraordinary memory and as a native Irish speaker he reproduced Irish folklore. "He wrote many stories of Irish peasant life, both melancholy and humour" (Drabble 1995,172). The subject of famine is present in his three novels: *The Black Prophet* (1847), *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* (1848), *The Tithe Proctor* (1849), and several stories. His best known novel, *The Black Prophet*, was characterized as "a black story of the potato famine" (Drabble 1995, 172). The English word 'prophet' comes from the Greek word (profétés) meaning advocate. In Carleton's novel a prophet (or seer) has a Christian meaning: one inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to deliver a message for a specific purpose. Donnel Dhu, the Prophet of the title, strongly built man, "whose complexion and features were such that no one could look on with indifference, so strongly were they indicative of a twofold character (Carleton 1919,18)", is one of the main characters and he is able to predict dramatic future events for the Irish. The author gives a very realistic description of this tragic event, laying the stress on the typical features of his characters, positive and negative as well. Thanks to his typical dimension, the truth of the likeness the author gave of him, Darby Skinadre could be at once recognized by the readers "as that of the roguish hypocrite, whose rapacity is the standing curse of half the villages of the country, especially during seasons of distress, or failure of crops (Carleton 1999, 186). This negative person makes a crying opposition to the extreme poverty of his countrymen:

There stood Skinadre, like the very Genius of Famine, surrounded by distress, raggedness, feeble hunger, and tottering disease, in all the various aspects of pitiable suffering, hopeless desolation, and that agony of the heart which impresses wildness upon the pale cheek, makes the eye at once dull and eager, parches the mouth, and gives to the voice of misery tones that are hoarse and hollow. There he stood, striving to blend consolation with deceit (...). Around him was misery, multiplied

into all her most appalling shapes. Fathers of families were there, who could read in each other's faces, too truly, the gloom and anguish that darkened the brow and wrung the heart. The strong man, who had been not long before a comfortable farmer, now stood dejected and apparently broken-down, shorn of his strength without a trace of either hope or spirit; so woefully shrunk away, too, from his superfluous apparel, that the spectators actually wondered to think that this was the large man, of such powerful frame, whose feats of strength had so often heretofore filled them with amazement. But, alas! What will not sickness and hunger do? (187)

We must remember that in the conditions of colonized Ireland writing about the Great Famine was neither prestigious nor profitable. This situation sometimes forced the authors to camouflage the matter of hunger, making it either in the background of their fiction or a hidden metaphor. Carleton was among such authors. Fegan notes:

The task of representing the Famine was an onerous one, a duty performed with no expectation of reward. Publishers and readers could be hostile. Carleton was careful to assure his readers that "the principal interest" of *The Black Prophet* was not "so gloomy a topic as famine" (Carleton 1847:iv), and built his plot around a murder mystery and love triangle to prove it. (Fegan 445)

At the same time Carleton, as another researcher of the Irish Famine fiction states, "offers a textual 'reality' which answers the need, so urgent in the 1840s, for authentic, 'truthful' representations of 'Country Life' which the Irish Famine was transforming out of all recognition" (Morash 1995,155). Despite the fact that he does not bring the Great Hunger to the foreground and does not focus on portraying the victims of the tragedy in his fiction, the presence of this topic is noticeable. Carleton's *Fair Gurtha; or the Hungry Grass. A Legend of the Dumb Hill*, published in "The Dublin University Magazine" (1856), a story, where reality intertwines with the magic of Irish folklore, referring to tragic events of 1845-1849, is the best example of this theme, open-and-hidden

in the legend. The author informs about the didactic purpose of his work, which is to teach compassion for the poor hungry, he tries to give the reader “the od Irish superstition, including its beautiful moral, of the Fair Gurtha, or the Hungry Grass” (Carleton 1856, 435). In this story a ghost walks the Irish land. The origin of “Féar Gortha (fear gur-tha) or Hungry Grass” can be traced back to the Great Irish famine. The narrator (the author) explains the meaning of both title names: “Our superstition has a double meaning, one signifying *Fair Gurtha*, or the Hungry Grass, the other *Far Gurtha*, or the Man of Hunger” (Carleton 1856, 434). The first is a patch of cursed grass that makes a person hungry once they cross it. Oral traditions say that these patches of ground were created when a famine victim died on that spot. The second is an apparition of a starving man, an embodiment of hunger. It was a calm and beautiful post-Famine evening with little boys and girls driving home the cows, when the characters of the story, a young couple, met the apparition in the place of Hungry Grass, and their behavior towards the Hungry Man would affect their later life together. Another character of the story, a poor Mat Maggenis, in the same place, a little earlier was “startled by the apparition of an aged man, who appeared to him as the very genius of famine” (419). The Hungry Man was real and at the same time was not real:

It is indeed almost impossible for human language to describe him. He was above the middle size, but so emaciated, whether by great age or protracted hunger it was difficult to say, that Magennis could scarcely believe him to be possessed of fleshly substance. (...) Mat would have looked upon him as something not far removed from the very shadow of a skeleton. (419)

*Fair Gurtha* proves that the first Famine generation - using various ways of literary treatment of the theme - was not silent about the Great Famine. According to Cris Morash, this fiction brings one to the paradox which is at the heart of Famine litera-

ture (what is by definition absent, becomes a textual presence). "William Carleton's 'Far Gurtha' can stand as an icon for the whole body of 19th-century literature on the Irish Famine, the haunting projection of the absent Famine dead (Morash 1995,180).

It is worth mentioning that Irish writers of the first Famine generation formed a very different group due to their social origin, religion, ideological beliefs, and political commitment - all of them were affected by the tragic events and each reacted in their own way in writing. At the turn of the century one can observe some reduction in the textual presentation of the Great Famine in fiction (in the final stage of the Irish Revival of 1880s-1910s) - compared to the previous period - but Famine still was felt and treated by the authors. The Irish writers of the first Famine generation were horrified, infuriated, frightened by the tragic events, but were not silent about it in the Victorian Age.

### **Moaning gagged: Ukrainian Holodomor Fiction**

On account of the severe censorship (it is worth noting that in Soviet literature, until relatively recently, Holodomor was a forbidden theme) and also because of the physical destruction of the Ukrainian writers of the 1920-1930s ("Executed Renaissance") and their works in the Stalinist USSR, the first Ukrainian Holodomor fiction was published abroad by those who managed to escape from the totalitarian regime. Ukrainian political (not always famine) emigration settled mostly in Western Germany, United States and Canada (it is quite possible that they may have been in touch in America with descendants of the Irish Famine generation). Holodomor fiction was written by both - eyewitness to the tragic event and witnesses of testimony. A short story *Kocmpyza* Kostryga (1933) by Arkadiy Lyubchenko (eyewitnesses) and *Maria. A Chronicle of a Life*, composed by Ulas Samchuk (eye-

witness of the sufferers and witness of their testimony) in 1933 in Prague and first published in Polish Lwów in 1935 were the first. Despite the fact that chronologically the first prose work about the famine was Lyubchenko's short story, Ukrainian literary critics believe that Ulas Samchuk was the first prose writer to address the Holodomor in his novel *Maria*. The latter was all completely permeated with this theme and did not contain ambiguity in its interpretation. The former was written in the Soviet Ukraine (Kharkiv) and published ten years later, in Lviv, occupied by the German army. It is "imbued with the "duality" and vocabulary of totalitarianism" (Piznyuk 2007, 65). The Ukrainian critic clearly noted the author's creative dichotomy in *Kostruga*:

(...) despite the relevance and compliance with the mandatory components of socialist-realist work - "ideology" and "class character" (collectivization, dekulakization<sup>78</sup>), condemnation of property, exposure of the hostile element and as if the author expressed an assessment - there is also a hidden sympathy, a kind of sympathy for these stubborn, stubborn village uncles, who do not obey violent collectivization. (Piznyuk 2007, 51)

But in another essay, intitled *Його таємниця (His Secret)*, written shortly before his death in exile, Lubchenko expressed unequivocally his assessment of the famine imposed on the Ukrainian people by the ruling totalitarian-terrorist Stalinist clique. The author, a close friend of Mykola Khvyly'ovy, describes in this essay their trip to starving Poltava villages in 1932-1933.

The image of Holodomor was created by diaspora authors in 1950-1970s. Todos' Osmachka wrote novels about Holodomor: *План до двору (Plan do dvoru, Toronto, 1951)* and *Ромонда*

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<sup>78</sup> *Dekulakization* was the Soviet terrorist action aimed at intimidating those middle peasants and the poor who did not want to become collective farmers. It ended in political repressions, including arrests, deportations, and executions of millions of kulaks (prosperous peasants) and their families in the 1929-1932.

дуюоуыбуѳ (Rotonda dushohubtsiv, 1956, Munich). In his *Preface* to the first of them he referred to the Bolshevik formula “plan to the court”, with which they terrorized Ukraine in the same way as once people in Spain were terrorized during the Inquisition with the phrase “autodafe”. He explained well the essence of this plan:

the owner and his family were evicted from the house in the same shirts and all that was left was taken away by the village council. The expelled people either died of starvation or fled to the Donbass or Kryvyi Rih to the mines, and even to the Moscow region to the industrial areas. When someone hid exiled people, they did the same to the merciful as to the punished. But most robbers were arrested and taken north to cut down forests or dig canals. (Os'machka, <https://www.ukrlib.com.ua/books/printit.php?tid=3516>)

The novel shows the dominant worldview of the heroes just before the start of Stalin's collectivization project: the fear of persecution (which was also the author's own fear), a sense of doomed sacrifice. The second novel, *Rotonda dushohubtsiv*<sup>79</sup> depicts the deep tragedy of the fate of the Ukrainian people on the eve of the Great Famine of 1932-33. Starting with Stalin's designation on the map of Ukraine's regions for forced collectivization (where “the most opponents” of his intentions lived) and his personal meeting with the most cruel, “already proven executioners” (Osmachka 2008, 8; 10-20), up to the very procedure for the execution (inhuman atrocities of the NKVD), the novel presents an artistic and psychological analysis of the organization of this artificial famine by the soviet authorities. The author created a caricature, grotesque image of the “leader of the nations”, executor of the Ukrainian peasantry.

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<sup>79</sup> There is also an English version of this book: Theodosy Oshmachka, *Red Assassins*, Minneapolis: T.S. Denison, 1959. 375 pages. Translation of the novel *Rotonda dushohubtsiv* with a two-page introduction by the author and a brief publisher's preface. Translator's name is not indicated.

Ihor Kachuriv's'ki, in turn, described the reality after Holodomor in his *Zaliznyi kurkul* (Munich, 1959), presenting the family of a dispossessed (rozkurkulenyi) peasant who returned from Donbass to their native village during the German occupation, and those who remained in place and survived. All of them remembered the days when they "were all chubby then. Only activists did not swell" (Kachuriv's'ki 1959, 8).

Vasyl Barka (*The Yellow Prince*, 1963), Mykola Ponedilok (short stories), Olha Mak (a short story *Столиця голодного жаху*, a novel *Каміння під косою*, 1973) continue the lengthy list of the first famine generation of the Ukrainian émigré writers. Two of the Holodomor novels from this list - Ulas Samchuk's *Maria* and Vasyl Barka's *The Yellow Prince* - have become canonical examples of the narrativization of this national trauma. In these two Ukrainian novels, created when the effect of the tragic events was still strongly felt, the narrators' individual memory dominates.

Born to a peasant Ukrainian family, Ulas Samchuk (1905-1987), a witness of witnesses, fleeing starvation to the western part of Ukraine, told the world about the unprecedented tragedy that had taken place in Soviet Ukraine, when he published his novel in Polish Lwów, in 1934. The young author composed his book, having immigrated to Prague in 1933, soon after the events. *Maria*, the first factual novel about the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933, was written in the form of a chronicle of the life of an ordinary Ukrainian peasant-woman, and so the life of peasants is seen through the eyes of a woman. This fiction makes the title character, Maria, an emblematic figure of long-suffering Ukraine. Maria is a reflection of the Virgin Mary (referring to "belief" and "faith"), and Maria's daughter is named Nadia ("hope"). The whole story covers more than the famine as it describes Ukraine before the tragedy took place. The tragic end of the novel is in stark contrast to its light and sunny beginning: peasant weekdays and rich, colourful feasts in the most bountiful zone of Ukraine

with its fertile soil are replaced by the tragedy of starvation. All the characters die. For thirty days, Maria progressively declines – lonely, in the throes of a slow famine death, without anybody to help her. Maria's tragedy is compounded by the fact that her son Maksym returns home from WWI as a re-born Bolshevik with ideas of those who “need power, they want to find ways to dominate, they have plans to take over the world [...]”. The Ukrainian people stood in the way of those plans and this precipitated the famine-genocide of 1932-1933. With bitter grief and pain, one of the characters sums up the results of this great tragedy: “Mothers do perish. Honest, kind women who carried out work and brought to life happiness, joy and young laughter, vanish from the face of the earth” (Самчук 1991,155).

Samchuk succeeded in describing this tragedy with the precise documentary evidence of an eyewitness of the Great Ukrainian Famine. He thus allowed the truth about the great Ukrainian tragedy to be known, first in Poland and Czechoslovakia, then in Germany and Canada, where he lived. In Canada, an English translation of the novel was edited with a preface by Paul Cipywnyk in 2011<sup>80</sup>.

Vasyl Barka (Ocheret), with *Жовтий князь* (*The Yellow Prince*), published in 1962-63, adopts the same genre as the previous two authors, i.e. the chronicle of a family dying from hunger. The novel has been translated into French, German, and Russian and has served as the basis for Oles Yanchuk's Ukrainian feature film (1993) *Holod-33* (Famine-33).<sup>81</sup> During the famine, Barka worked as an assistant professor of medieval literature in Ukraine. Living with his brother in the Poltava region, he personally experienced great hunger and was even close to dying. How-

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<sup>80</sup> Samchuk, Ulas. *Maria. A Chronicle of a Life*. Trans. Roma Z. Franko. Ed. P. Cipywnyk. Toronto: Language Lanterns, Inc., 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Olga Papash has analyzed this work in her article “Collective Trauma in a Feature film: *Holod-33* as One-of-a-Kind.”

ever, after surviving this ordeal, for almost 25 years, he collected material from direct witnesses of the Ukrainian holocaust and integrated their memories into his novel on the Holodomor. The narration involves the voices of characters participating in the event, giving the text captivating and humanistic qualities, which arouse emotions in the reader. *The Yellow Prince* offers its own perspective on the time of the terrible hunger and the deaths that resulted from it. It emphasizes the immensely hard struggle of starving people against death and the failure of some due to unequal opportunities. The Katrannyk family is at the centre of these events. Everything has been eaten: rotten beets and potatoes, a dead horse dug up from the frozen ground, little sparrows, gophers, plant rootlets, cats, and dogs. More than once, acts of cannibalism take place. Those who have lost their senses eat those who are weaker:

They trooped the passage and opened the door, noticing a man near an oven who was dressed in shirt rags and was looking insanelly, with his upper eyelids raised high and piercing glare at the newcomers. There was blood everywhere—on the bench was a killed child terribly mutilated.—The man lit a fire on the very fore part of an oven and in a smoke-filled house is cooking food on a pan chewing something and holding a knife in his hand. — One of the men who entered after the first one shrieked: — He has killed his child and is frying it! He's gone mad. (Барка 140)<sup>82</sup>

Such things really did happen. That anthropophagic behaviours became possible was the result of the desperation of the

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<sup>82</sup> „Перейшли гурбою через сіни і відчинили двері: побачили біля печі чоловіка, що мав на собі стріп'я від сорочки і дивився шалено; верхні повіки підняті високо і погляд врізається на прибулих. Скрізь по хаті кров: на лаві зарізана дитина і жаско спотворена. Чоловік розвів огонь на самому припічку: диму повна хата! — і готує їжу на сковорідці; щось жує, тримаючи в руці ніж. Один з дядьків, які ввійшли слідом за першим, скрикнув: — Він дитину зарізав і смажить! Збожеволів.”

Ukrainian peasants facing the Soviet power's ruthless removal of all consumables. The title of the novel translates Barka's use of the ambiguity perceived in the colour yellow, here symbolically associated with the prince of evil and also with hunger – representing the totalitarian ruler bringing desolation. Barka's narration resembles that of a biblical parable of an apocalyptic, unimaginable hell on Earth.

### Conclusions

Comparing Irish and Ukrainian Famine fiction, I have noticed the following similarities and differences:

1. Both literatures – Irish and Ukrainian – tell the truth about their national tragedy, about the genocide of their peoples, developed in opposition to imperial power. Both promoted nationalistic ideology, a will of their peoples to struggle for their independence.

2. The plot of famine fiction usually focuses on earth, land, soil, basic nutrition. Land has been a dominant theme in modern Irish and Ukrainian history, extending to political and cultural issues; soil is a motive that scrolls in famine fiction, just like wheat or potatoes, the everyday “life-giving bread” it produces. The earth was just life for small farmers, tenants. Their life revolved around and depended on the cycle of sowing and harvesting grain, vegetables and fruit. The ethos of hard work to support the family grew out of this bond with the earth. This is particularly evident in Ukrainian fiction. In Samchuk's novel, the earth has a symbolic meaning: it is a declaration of the existence of the Ukrainian nation.

3. Both – Irish and Ukrainian famine literature – have their emigrant dimension. In the earliest Ukrainian famine literature, the share of emigrant literary works was overwhelming, of course, because these works could only be written and published

outside of the Soviet Ukraine. After Ukraine gained its independence, the number of national novels increased strongly - freshly written and reedited old ones, with open or hidden hunger motifs. The first prose devoted to Irish hunger was written "at home". Irish famine émigré literature would appear later, created by the emigrant generations, and, despite its significant representativeness, famine literature created in the home country would dominate in all periods of time.

4. In the Famine/ Holodomor fiction of the first famine generation, created when the effect of the tragic events was still strongly felt, the narrators' individual memory dominates. Famine as a narrative subject is related with the national idea of the Ukrainian and Irish people in the days of destruction of the village and its inhabitants. Although the artist was a living witness to those events, social cataclysms, it was this circumstance that gave the stories the features of autobiography.

5. Famine fiction of the first Famine/Holodomor generation was written mainly in a realistic manner, very often with documented reliability (the chronicle genre dominates). Irish Victorian prose is less symbolic, more descriptive and one-dimensional. Ukrainian Famine literature, which appeared 90 years later and could use the artistic achievements of the era, is multidimensional from its very beginning. Modernism and postmodernism gave new interesting forms of Famine prose but the realistic historical novel still definitely dominates in both literatures.

6. Both literatures experienced periods of popularity and decline. The flourishing theme of Great Hunger in Irish literature is mainly observed in the period immediately after the Great Famine, the weakening of this theme occurs during the period of the Irish Renaissance, in modernism, during WWII and afterwards. In Ukraine, the real flourishing of hunger prose began with Ukrainian independence and the legalization of the history of the Great Famine in Ukraine. The large number of edited new Famine books

(especially enchanted by the round dates) give grounds to think about the revival of this species in recent years in both literatures.

7. Unlike Ukrainian famine literature, Irish famine literature was widely represented by female writers.

8. Irish Famine and Ukrainian Holodomor fictions both fulfil the purpose of catharsis as purification and purgation, and intellectual clarification. They are “figures of memory”.

9. The first Famine/Holodomor generation laid the foundation for the continuation of the literary treatment of Famine/Holodomor by the next generations. It is especially noticeable in Ukrainian literature. In the new conditions which appeared after the collapse of the USSR, Famine short stories and novels have already been published in Ukraine, including: freshly written fiction, stored for many years in a drawer or held in a closed secret archive, and some reedited in its complete form, with fragments once eliminated by soviet censorship, thus conditioning the rebirth of Ukrainian Famine fiction. So, in the 1990s appeared the stories of Anatoliy Dimarov (*Samosud*) and Yevhen Hutsal (*Holodomor*), Mykhaylo Potupeiko's novel *У лабетях смерті* [*In the Paws of Death*] (1994); later, in 2003 Pavlo Naniyev's biographical fiction *Лозинюва труна* [*Coffin of branches*](Kiev -New York) and in the early 2010's - a novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* by Oksana Zabuzhko with famine episodes. It is worth mentioning that *Sweet Snow. A Novel of the Ukrainian Famine of 1933* (Massachusetts: Červená Barva Press Somerville, 2013) was composed and edited by Alexander J. Motyl in the United States<sup>83</sup>. Perhaps the first text in Ukrainian in which an attempt to escape from the usual way of narration took place is a fantasy horror novel *Хліб із хрящами* (2011) [*Bread with Cartilage*] by Mikhaylo Brynykh.

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<sup>83</sup> I analyzed this work in Oksana Weretiuk, *Irish and Ukrainian Famines: Literary Images, Historical Memory, and Aesthetic Emotions*, Wenshan Review of Literature & Culture (Taipei-Dublin), Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 2017), pp. 51-68.

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## Abstract

The volume of the textual representation of Famine/Holodomor, its duration and focusing on the problems of the great tragedy allowed it to be classified as a separate genre - "famine fiction"/ "література про голодомор". The aim of the article is to compare literary treatments of famine in Irish and Ukrainian fiction written (more or less) in the first sixty years after the Great Famine/Holodomor. The comparative adequacy of such a time period is justified from the perspective of the historical conditions of the periodization of this literature. The article is also an attempt at a com-

parative periodization of Irish and Ukrainian Famine fiction. It attempts to compare Irish and Ukrainian Famine fiction in terms of the place of its origin (native country, emigration), scale of representation of the Famine/Holodomor fiction; it also compares a few complexes of motifs presented in selected texts of this<sup>84</sup> literature. The comparative approach is forced by the comparative-historical method, postcolonial criticism, trauma and memory studies. Comparative conclusions focus on the similarities and differences in fictional treatment of Famine/Holodomor.

**Key words:** An Gorta Mór, Holodomor, first famine generations, famine fiction, comparative analysis

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<sup>84</sup> A broader version of the article was published as a chapter of a collective monograph *Ireland and Ukraine. Studies in Comparative Imperial and National History*. Ed. by Stephen Velychenko, Joseph Ruane, and Ludmilla Hrynevych, Toronto: Ibidem Press 2022, pp. 359-382

## **Green Isle in the 21st century Polish writing (myths, stereotypes and their antidote)**

Poles' moving to Ireland takes a special place in the context of XXI century mobility. Their trips to the Green Isle have different motives: everyday curiosity, the need to develop their erudition, seeking new possibilities for making money or new career opportunities, connecting with families etc. The Poles travel because of business, as well as personal purposes. The last one, since ancient times, was of varied character: recreation and health (travels to spas, uncrowded ecological places), religion (to sacred places), or tourism (in order to satisfy one's curiosity, explore other places, cultures, cuisines, art or wonders of nature, including the beauty of seas and mountains) (Wielowiejski 1984, 7 and next; Winniczuk 2006, 105-110). They are often economic migrations (which serve to improve the living conditions of Polish people), which greatly increased after Poland joined the European Union. Together with the increase of migrations, the number of books about Ireland with memorable character (travel literature) on the Polish market became higher as well. Those books – varying in their genres, characters of writing and artistic level – deserve to be analyzed and interpreted, because they constitute a part of the whole, which is the modern Polish reception of Ireland and the Irish people.

Using examples from a few books about Ireland, written by authors staying on the Green Isle for various reasons: Ernest

Bryll, Małgorzata Goraj-Bryll, *Irlandia, Celtycki splot* (Ireland, Celtic weave), 2010 (diplomatic mission); Tomasz Borkowski, *Irlandia Jones poszukiwany. Wynurzenia ciała z bagien* (Ireland Jones wanted. The emergence of a body from the swamp), Wrocław 2010 (work related migration<sup>85</sup>); Wojciech Falarski, *Podróże po Irlandii monastycznej* (Travels through monastic Ireland), Poznań 2006 (similarly, the need for new career possibilities) – I will try to investigate the perception and reception of the new surroundings. Despite the differences between the main reasons for the trips, there is one mutual motivation for all of the authors: curiosity and the need to spread erudition.

The first book from all of the above-mentioned, written by Ernest Bryll, an expert in the area of Irish literature and culture, poet, writer, journalist, translator, and his wife – Małgorzata Goraj-Bryll – an English philologist and English literature translator – has a memorable and personal character, which is mentioned by the authors in the introduction: “Since our wanders across Ireland in the early 90’s, wanders in search of ourselves as well, many years have passed” (Ernest Bryll, Małgorzata Goraj-Bryll 2010, 7), “Our story is very personal” (8). This story includes the description of preparation (reading, work in a library etc.), the way of travelling, planned and unplanned meetings with Irish people, filled with historic, literature-specialist and geographic-natural explanations. The authors did not avoid conveying their opinions and emotions. The places of their wanders are Dublin and the far west coast of Ireland, regions of Blasket Island, basically the furthest Western point in Europe. The book is dominated by the memories of the Green Isle experienced by the authors

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<sup>85</sup> I do not analyze Polish immigrant work in Ireland – this was brilliantly presented by e.g. Joanna Kosmalska and Anna Kronenberg, the participants of the project *Polska literatura (e)migracyjna w Irlandii I Wielkiej Brytanii po roku 2004* (DEC-2011/01/B/HS2/05120).

between 1991-1995, when Ernest Bryll was the ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Ireland. Working in the philological field contributed to the writing couple's selection of the situations they encountered. The topics of their memorable stories, which could be placed between a diary, a journal and general thoughts about the past years, touch on branches of culture and literature, language and history. Małgorzata Bryll, reporting, once again wanders across Dublin "in Joyce's shoes", tries to "memorize Irish time" (8) and together with her dignified husband, admits her "weaknesses" - "And the poets are still on our minds" (380) - they follow William Butler Yeats, Seamus Heaney, Oscar Wilde, Patrick Kavanagh and writers less-known to Polish readers, such as: the last wandering Irish bard Anthony Raftery (Antoine Ó Raifteirí, 1779-1835); a bard, poet, nationalistic activist and one of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916, Patrick Pearse (Pádraig Anraí Mac Piarais, 1879-1916); a poet, novelist writing about simple, the everyday life of an Irish man, Patrick Cavanagh (1904-1967); an Irish poet, writer, playwright and the key figure in the Irish Rebirth, John Synge (1871-1909); one of the biggest writers on Blasket Island, writing in native Irish, the author of a well-known and appreciated book called *Ant-Oileánach* (1929, *Wyspiarz*), Tomas O'Crohan or Thomas O'Crohan (Thomas Ó Criomhthain, 1856-1937); the author of the famous memoirs *Fithe Blian ag Fás* (Twenty Years A-Growing'), Maurice O'Sullivan (Muiris Ó Súilleabháin, 1904-1950) which were translated by Ernest Bryll and Małgorzata Goraj in the late 70's<sup>86</sup>. With careful precision, the narrator depicts the history of "the biggest raconteur of that place" (456) Peig Sayers (1873-1958) from Blasket. She informs that her stories described in 1932 by Kenneth Jackson and published six years later under the name *Scéalta òn mBlascaod* (*Stories from Blasket*) included "Stories about ghosts,

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<sup>86</sup> Maurice O'Sullivan, *Dwadzieścia lat dorastania*, translation: M. Goraj and E. Bryll, Warsaw: LSW 1986.

adventures, world tales and parables with moral, stories about the saints and romances”, what is more, being convinced by the teacher, Mairia Ni Chinnneide, Peig let her son write stories about her own life, which were published in the original language in 1936 (English version *The Autobiography of Peig Sayers of the Great Blasket Island*) and for a couple of decades now, it has been on the list of mandatory books for Irish children, because by reading it they can learn about traditions of their country. In their book, the authors put a lot of focus on the collectors of Irish folklore, among whom Sean O’Sullivan can be found, with his *Folktales of Ireland* (1966) describing the National Folklore Theatre of Ireland (Siamsa Tire), which “has been passing on the Irish legacy since 1974, deriving from rich tradition of the island” (376). Although it is hard to believe in the simultaneous participation of Małgorzata Bryll in such an intense, various and spatially complex Bloomsday program, which is the celebration of Leopold Bloom/Joyce on 16<sup>th</sup> of June in Dublin, those modernist and at the same time mythical “shoes” of the author of *Ulysses* save the day and help in depicting the joyful atmosphere of the whole celebration to a Polish reader. And so, out of all of those lively, colorful stories from Irish literature – from the legendary Gerald the Poet to 21<sup>st</sup> century writers; and history, says the author: “The poets had a special place in Irish culture. They had and probably still have it.” (366); “A poet has always meant here more than a civil servant” (371).

The authors were interested in education in Ireland – old (mostly two orders: Jesuits and Christian Brothers) and modern, strongly connected with the problems of Irish language. Irish is still taught in schools and thanks to such education policy, a large number of Irish inhabitants have some idea about their native language, which they gained mostly in lessons at school. The authors shortly but clearly show the language situation in Joyce’s country:

Modern Ireland in a quite unusual way uses both languages, and even though the national and official language is Irish, English dominates. If we tried, we could hear Irish but only on the west coasts, so in the exact place where Dingle and Blasket, as well as in Connacht, Munster and Ulster. Having been damaged for centuries, prohibited and being treated as a language of the conquered country, it has been fading. Actually, it was not until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they tried to revive it and give back the dignity and position. And it was not an easy process, even though in 1876 the Society for the Protection of Irish Language was established and in 1880 the Gaelic Union, in quite a radical way, took care of it. (...) They started from simple handbooks, the first teachers of Irish started to spread across the country. And they faced problems everywhere. There was no point teaching English on the lands where Irish was non-existent and on the lands where Irish survived, it was existent only in speaking and dialects. (435-436).

Deep observation of the everyday life of another nation by foreigners, perception of their habits and traditions contribute to the creation of the hetero-picture of this nation (for more information about hetero-pictures, see for example Leerssen 1991, 129; Leerssen 2007, 343-344; Beller, Leerssen, red. 2007, XIV; Spiering 1992, 12, 18-19). The Poles staying in Ireland create their own picture of the Green Isle, the national picture of the Irish on the basis of their own national, Polish identity. The authors of the book put under the microscope Irish weather (of course, rain! – “In Ireland it rains almost every day. But these rains are periodical, and even though very intense – they do not last long.” (79), the traditions related to eating (“Irish tradition – they stand up for the prayer before a meal: Dear God, we ask you to bless this meal, which we are about to eat and make the wine we will be served the greatest quality wine). (... There is no eating without a spiritual element.” (274), visiting the deceased (“we don’t have to go to the cemetery to connect with the dead. We leave the body in the cemetery but the memory lives in us. It is always in our memories and prayers. And the cemetery... it is a fact, we don’t

come here too often..." (166) – so that is why there is a difference between All Saint's Day and Celtic Samhain, and then Halloween); entertainment (for example the pub is the most important thing in human contact, singing, playing, talking, drinking beer and making a special atmosphere)<sup>87</sup>, charity work of the Irish ("daffodil days", "coffee days", simple fundraising)<sup>88</sup>.

The narrator usually held a semi-serious, light-hearted attitude, created her image as a human with a desire for knowledge, resourceful, with good English and wide knowledge about Irish culture. The other narrator showed his thoughtfulness, precision, knowledge of the subject, topic. Describing the Irish reality, there was no doubt that they still identified themselves as Polish. Gradually, out of their narration, the literary representation of the image<sup>89</sup> of the Irish is coming out: good, sympathetic, cheerful,

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<sup>87</sup> "As we may see, the definition of standard and life quality is different here. (...) only here, in Ireland, people still understand that making time for your friends counts, they'll come to the pub, go for a walk by the seaside, go for ceili (Irish dances), they'll sing sometimes. Sun, weather and money are not everything. Life here has a special quality, which you cannot find anywhere else" (258). Comparison to socio-national meaning of the pub depicted in: Pete McCarthy, *McCarthy's Bar. A Journey of Discovery in Ireland*, London: Sceptre Hodder 2 Stoughton 2000 (first edition 1998).

<sup>88</sup> "In Ireland people are good. They've always been. Street fundraising for various goals are visible everyday. People support, even with small amounts, people suffering from asthma, cancer, heart and lungs diseases, children with dyslexia and those with cerebral palsy or autism etc. As a gift, they get red roses, yellow daffodils, chamomiles or sunflowers pinned to their clothes. The forms of help are various." (93)

<sup>89</sup> Joep Leerssen in *imagology* for marking literary representation of the image of another country, uses various synonymic phrases, such as: "images collectives", "image of the nation", "national image", "national character". See: Joep Leerssen, *Imagology: History and method*, pp.18-30, in: *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Character: a Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller, Joseph Theodoor Leerssen, Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi 2007.

with good mood and sense of humor, hospitality, religious (but not too religious), patriotic of their country and language, which they barely use. Shortly speaking, Ireland is a combination of contrasts. And the Poles frequently move in to this complicated, messy, cheerful and hospitable country.

Recently [in the cheap shops] Polish language dominates. Some time ago it would probably cause amusement among the Irish, now it is normal. It is good they cannot understand us, because the language you can hear there is often vulgar. (229)

The big myth goes on. Nothing is identical, time flies and still everything is the same. Dirty and beautiful Liffey, Floozy in [the] Jacuzzi<sup>90</sup>, lovers on the bench next to the drug addicts, tired women with shopping bags, an old man from the outskirts who came to buy tweed trousers at Clerys, me, him, the Poles after work, without work, this city, that O'Connell Street (236), Parnell Square. It is almost Polish. (...) even a Polish dancing school. (242)

Tomasz Borkowski, an archaeologist from Wroclaw, went to Ireland for money – and he does not hide it. He writes about the beginning of his Irish journey with a pinch of humour:

I found myself in Ireland because of an advert. They needed lots of people to quickly finish the digs in the place where the building of a new highway was about to get started soon. It was the second advert for an archaeologist that I have ever seen. The first one was as follows: "Oil platforms on the North Sea. All professions". (Borkowski 2010, 5)

The author almost immediately makes the reader familiar with the genealogical nuances of his work: "It is not a guide. It is not a journal. These are not memories. It is an attempt to describe my personal Irish experience, which I share with thousands of my compatriots and millions of the Irish." (10). The way he tells

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<sup>90</sup> Controversial sculpture of Anna Livia, the goddess of Liffey river (called by the inhabitants of Dublin "*the floozy in the jacuzzi*"); *floozy* as a word for a debauched wife.

the story differs from the authors of the previous book. Diplomatic spark, literary smoothness, sentimental coquetry and the feeling of perfection make way for coarse, funny humor, auto irony, skepticism and watching the country “not only with the pick in hand”.

The narrator sees Ireland in as a whole with its nakedness, from the inside, locating himself among the average people, still with daily cooperation with the Irish and resting with them after work. Actually, his relations are getting close to those of an emigrant, whose hetero-pictures (of an Irishman) and auto-pictures (of an Irishman) are not that far from each other, or even cross over. In creating a literary hetero-picture of the Green Isle, Borkowski takes a lot from literary auto-pictures created by the Irish. Yet still, he feels like a newcomer. He writes about his ambivalent approach to the Green Isle in such a way:

It has been three years, and I am still there. I still cannot speak English very well, still have small knowledge about Irish archeology and about Ireland in general. I have been learning a lot, reading a lot. I have talked to people, observed them. I have visited pubs, worked, made friends, argued. Sometimes I felt so lonely, sometimes I felt very happy. Sometimes I loved this country and sometimes I hated it. (7)

Stories about Irish digs are often accompanied with funny anecdotes and interesting stories about the history, geography, culture of the country, mythology, religion and the language of the Irish, based on scientific sources, popular scientific sources and literary works of other authors. With its humoristic tone, Borkowski's book reminds of the above-mentioned work *McCarthy's Bar* by Pete McCarthy, to which the author makes allusions and which he often mentions. Being able to see the brighter side of life, he depicts even the sides of Irish history that are too tragic. This approach is visible especially in the story about how “inhabitants of Ireland worked on their sense of humor” themselves (96) in a historic inflow of new people, including colonizers.

On this [Nordic] background, the famous English humor was imposed. It has been imposing intrusively for about eight hundred years, up until the Easter Rising in 1916. In Europe, the equally famous German humor was on top, or to be more exact – Prussian humor. The First World War was on.

Now English humor is appreciated in Ireland especially because of television (except from Ulster, where it is still alive, or sometimes – unfortunately – dead). (97)

In the same way the Polish author uncovers a mini-short history of the English-language Irish culture – from Swift to Wilde, Shaw, Joyce and Beckett – and their exceptional role in the development of English literature.

Besides, the influence worked there both ways. The Irish quickly learned English and used it to write funny stories. (...) Such wonderful literary achievements would not be possible without (...) the base. Without simple people who enjoy juicy sayings. Without those small talks by the bar or on the market where describing an avaricious man they say: “he would not even give you the steam from his pees” [...]. Without a sentence such as: “If you were in love with a heap of dung, you would find one dry straw” or “If dung was music, this guy would be a wind orchestra”. (97-98)

Still being funny, he depicts a complicated situation with language in today’s Ireland:

Ireland is theoretically bilingual. Bilingual writing can be found everywhere: in English and in Irish. Even on the trash bins we can find English *Litter* and Irish *Bruscair*. The names of places are bilingual [...], names of the rivers and mountains. Taking into consideration the fact that there are only just over two hundred thousand people speaking Irish these days, it looks like a big Irish course in the fresh air for the remaining millions. (33)

Such narration makes the depicted country more ‘alive’, gets rid of monotony from the average historical description, diversifies the templates functioning in the social consciousness and its purposeful

simplicity, not lacking fun, it stands in opposition to the simplified approach to reality. Humor and auto irony of the narrator become additional antidotes for the stereotypical perception of the Irishman.

The last elaborated position – *Podróże po Irlandii monastycznej* (Travels through monastic Ireland) by Wojciech Falarski, depicts the image of Catholic Ireland. Wojciech Falarski, born in Toruń, English philologist, the author of translations from Irish literature and articles about Ireland, after exploring the Green Isle, wrote a book about Irish monasticism (for more about monasticism see: Harmless 2009). His sketches included in the book – as was noted by the author in the introduction – are the result of his travels across Ireland, which have recently been taking place for over ten years (Falarski, 2006, 11). On the back cover, there is a map of the monastic communities and sacred places explored by the author: Glealough, Inis Cealtra, Clonmacnois, Inishmurray, Iona, High Island, Killabuonia, Kildreelig, Skellig Michael. After each chapter (sketch) short tourist information shows how to get to place seen and described, where Irish monks used to build their hermitage as a way to live their religious life incommunicado, basing it on prayers and contemplation. At the very end, Falarski included a rich bibliography of the source materials and literature.

Exploring the Celtic monastic temples, one after another, the author observes the unique symbiosis of the two cultures on the island: pagan and Christian, enabled by the fact that “New faith is coming very fast and is changing the mentality of the Celts” (186). This fusion of the cultures is seen even in the location of the monasteries and cloisters.

It is thought-provoking how many churches (in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland, a church was a synonym to a cloister) have been built in places not so far ago connected with pagan faith and traditions, so close to the sacred trees, wells and sources, and even in the places of burials and pagan temples. Irish saints adapted them according to their needs, turning them simultaneously into symbols of Christian faith. (40)

The pagan Celtic cult of nature is connected, according to Falarski, to the later Christian love of the Irish to non-human animals.

The admiration of the Irish hermits for nature might even seem similar to pantheism. Their pagan ancestors believed that gods live in the forests or on the peaks of the mountains, they thought that streams, rivers and wells are sacred, they worshipped trees – the symbols of fertility and immortality. Also animals were very much respected by the Celts (100). (...) This very respectful and loving relationship of the hermits and living nature created something of a brotherhood. In the Lives of Irish Saints, a lot of meaningful and beautiful descriptions of the friendly relationships between monks and our “smallest brothers” can be found.” (101)

As noted by the author (who was observant and familiar with the literature of the country he was visiting), this special description of nature, full of deep love and admiration “was an element of the Christian Irish culture, the best expression of which can be found in the lyric poetry created and written by Irish monks” (31).

Similarly to the previous authors, Falarski tells about the incredible position of the poet in Celtic society. He makes this reference a couple of times, talking about Loch Derg Dherc legend (The Lake of the Red Eye) (64), a legend about Colum Cille (later saint Columba), who stood up to defeat the poetry, tradition and poets (140-141), turning to the historic character of the Irish long-winded storyteller.

A specific institution in Ireland was the figure of a wandering storyteller, who was, to some extent, the successor of the ancient *fili* - that is, broadly speaking, poets and bards. Storytelling on the island date back to distant, pre-Christian times, when oral tradition was the only form of literary transmission. In Celtic society, poets, along with druids, played an extremely important role, that is why their position was privileged. They belonged to the royal courts. They lived in the houses of nobles, where they had a separate room at their disposal, where they composed paeans and songs. (106)

We also learn about the vitality of this ancient tradition in contemporary Ireland from the Brylls, who state briefly and clear-

ly: "It's good that banks in Ireland know that the country's history is its roots, and sponsoring art is a normal thing" (Ernest Bryll, Małgorzata Goraj-Bryll 2010, 298).

Wojciech Filarski had the ability to find the reinforcement of national identity in Irish monasteries and cloisters, Celtic crosses and stones, in the Irish taking care of the old monuments and traditions, in their faith, in their approach to nature, art and history.

The traits of coexistence and crossing of those two different cultures and religions can be found on Inishmurray. Almost every stone tells us about it. But these stones together take the form of another incredible story, the history of the beginning of identity and national consciousness of the Irish. In the pantheon of the large national figures, next to the heroes of epic poems, there are Christian saints, Patrick, the great Apostol of Ireland, Saint Columba and Saint Bridget. (186)

Each of these stories does not avoid talking about the earth-shattering events of Ireland (British invasion, Great Hunger, uprisings, republic, Celtic tiger or dynamic economic growth), all of them talk about it from their perspectives: experts in Irish culture (Bryll), ironic-humoristic, but with great knowledge as well (Borkowski), monastic (Falarski). It is impossible not to notice that the intelligence of the Polish authors corrects the images of their imagination. On the other hand, their contact with the inhabitants of Ireland has become a kind of curation liberating them from deeply rooted myths and stereotypes: of course, the rain, but with a beautiful rainbow from time to time, "the sun always comes up, even for a moment" (Bryll,79); of course, they drink, but they have fun drinking beer, and besides, they managed to make that country a "Celtic tiger" (Borkowski); yes, the country of prosperity, but "It is a myth that there is no unemployed here. They are paid their allowance on Wednesday and it is enough to stay alive till Sunday" (Bryll, 51); they have a great Irish patron, Saint Patrick, but his Irishness is a myth, because he

was born in England and as a 16 year old boy, he was abducted by Irish pirates (Falarski, 6-7). The discussed works have shown that Poles' trips to Ireland facilitate their examination of established myths and stereotypes about it, and become a specific means of overthrowing simplified views about the national characteristics of the Irish, established by tradition, and getting rid of strongly rooted prejudices, especially those formed and imposed by the colonizers of Ireland.<sup>91</sup> It must be said that all these books are highly successful collections of stories about Ireland. It's good that the authors avoided the style typical of memoirs or diaries. Fast-paced action, the lack of detailed descriptions and excessive historical analyses make them engaging literature that forces the reader to reflect. The authors do not hide their emotional attitudes towards this country with an extraordinary culture and history. They equally openly profess their love for its inhabitants.

The following statement by Borkowski can certainly be applied to the other three authors, because their perception of the Green Isle shapes a similar image of the Irish:

The Irish often asked me what I think about Ireland. What I like about it. What I do not like. After a few years long consideration, I can say that the best in Ireland are their landscapes, the Irish people and their sense of humor. These are landscapes that went through a lot: glaciers, deforestation, sheep invasion and almost daily bombardment with rain drops. These are people who went through a lot - eight hundred years of English oppression, hunger in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, deportation to Australia, failed uprisings, depopulation of the country and mass emigration to America in coffin ships. And also, almost daily bombardment with rain drops.

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<sup>91</sup> "The British who conquered Ireland, created a stereotype of an Irish man, lasting to this day - a person who likes to get drunk, and then starts bloody fights" To read a broader description of English stereotypes of the Irish, see e.g. chapter *Irish* by Joep Leerssen (Beller, Leerssen, ed. 2007, 191-193), monographs of Richard N. Lebow (Lebow, 1976) and Declan Kiberd (Kiberd, 2002).

What pisses me off the most is the chaos. And if it pisses off even me – it has to be a hell of a chaos. But still you can find in it great spaces of freedom and when I think about it – it pisses me off a bit less. (Borkowski 2010, 8)

The three quoted stories about Ireland and the Irish confirm the observations and conclusions of the Russian researcher of the Irish culture in the “great tiger” period, that “in the 1990’s we saw the destruction of the settled negative stereotypical perception about the Irish in the world. Other nations’ attitudes towards the Irish, full of prejudice, contempt, mockery and caution, step aside to leave some space for treating them with friendship, respect and interest” (Кузнецова 2010, 9).

The comparison of the three elaborated narrations about Ireland shows a gradual disappearance of the boundaries between the hetero-image and the self-image of the Irish. A similar process was noticed by Sumarlidi Isleifsson while examining a painting of an Icelandic man: “With increasing tourism in the recent decades, the distinction between self-image and hetero-image is becoming blurred (Isleifsson 2007, 179).

The three stories about the Green Isle prove that the Irish managed to overcome the complex of national sacrifice and the complex of national inadequacy, so characteristic of post-traumatic nations that experienced colonization, famine, defeats in the struggle for freedom and civil war. Today's Irish are characterized by a great sense of national identity, a sense of personal dignity and national pride, and this certainly challenges the negative stereotypes of the Irish, created in the first place by their colonizer.

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### Abstract

In the context of international mobility of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Poles' moving to Ireland takes special place. Their trips to the Green Isle have different motives: everyday curiosity, the need to develop their erudition, seeking

new possibilities for making money or new career opportunities, connecting with families etc. But most frequently they do it for economic reasons (which serve to improve the living condition of Polish people), which greatly increased after Poland joined the European Union. Together with the increase of migrations, the number of books about Ireland with memorable character and travel literature on the Polish market became higher as well. Those books – varying with their genres, characters of the writing and artistic level – deserve to be analyzed and interpreted, because they constitute a part of the whole, which is the modern Polish perception of Ireland and the Irish people.

**Key words:** Ireland, imagology, travel literature, national stereotype, colonization.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The article is a translation of my chapter in Polish: *Zielona wyspa w XXI –wiecznym piarstwie polskim (mity, stereotypy i ich antidotum) w: Literatura (i kultura) polska w świecie*, t. 2, cz. 1-3. Red. nauk. Romuald Cudak, Karolina Pospiszil, Katowice 2018, s. 306-319.

### **III. Canadian Pages**

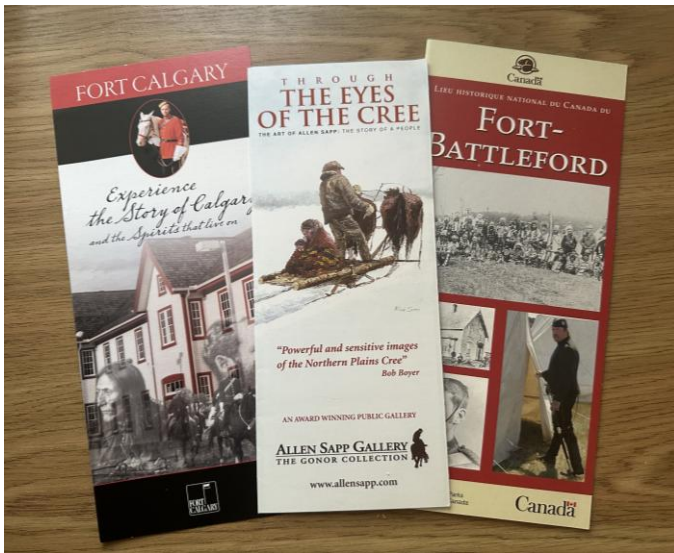


Photo by O.W. From a Private collection of the author after visiting Canadiam museums.

## **Literary and intellectual expression of the British Canadian of the period of the first settlers, travellers and explorers**

Discussing the topic of the first British settlers and explorers in future Canada I will search for the most characteristic and recurring features of their existence, those which are of attributive traits of the average Englishman in North America of a particular historical period, focusing on the Englishman in the days before the development of capitalism and imperialism. In terms of socio-philosophical anthropology, this man will be analysed as a member of a larger community (colony, country, geographic or linguistic area? In conjunction with his relations with: his developed urban areas, national institutions, other inhabitants of this territory (including representatives of the First Nations) and nature; there will be analysis of his economic and artistic activities, as well as his mental and spiritual condition. Literary and semi-literary texts will serve as exemplification of these deliberations.

The interest of the English in the North American continent dates from the last decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and grew in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1497, King Henry VII while forming the foundations of the future empire, sent the Italian Jean Cabot on a marine expedition to Asia, through the Atlantic, during which he reached the east coast of future Canada; about 70 years later Queen Elizabeth I expressed interest in conquering the

overseas territories of North America, by both financing and blessing the sponsorship of English corsairs and pirates<sup>93</sup>. In 1583 Newfoundland, thanks to the sailor Humphrey Gilbert (who has been reputed to be the creator of a past brutal and colonial system of government in Ireland)<sup>94</sup>, became the first settlement of the English Crown (of Queen Elizabeth I's reign) in North America and one of the earliest permanent colonies in the New World. Active colonisation of the future Canadian territory began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and served as the genesis of politics of the forthcoming British Empire. The youthful imperium appointed its own leaders based on the rules of mercantilism, the employment of joint-stock companies for the purpose of controlling the colonies and their maritime trade. In 1670 the English Hudson's Bay Company was created, gaining royal prerogative, pursuant to which the association received the ownership of territories around Hudson's Bay and an overall monopoly over trade with India. The leader of the Hudson's Bay Company was a royal cousin, Prince Rupert. According to Jan Grabowski, "[w]ithin several years the first factories and forts were created on the coast of the bay and

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<sup>93</sup> About the claim regarding the Queen's imperial interests in the form of encouraging privateering expeditions and rewarding, among others, English sea wolves ("sea-dogs") Francis Drake and John Hawkins, sailor Humphrey Gilbert, representing the political grouping The West Country Men, active defenders and implementers of British colonial policy, see in detail in: *Historical Dictionary of European Imperialism*, eds. James Stuart Olson, Robert Shadle, et al., New York - Westport - London 1991, pp. 236, 252-253, 275, 436, 499, 692. It is also worth recalling that around this time, influential English writers Richard Hakluyt and John Dee called for the creation of an empire (Dee first used the term "British Empire").

<sup>94</sup> That year, on his way back to Europe, Gilbert died. The disaster of the *Delight*, one of the ships of his expedition, which resulted in the death of 85 crew members, is considered the first maritime disaster during the English colonization of North America. See *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, ed. James H. Marsh, Toronto, Ontario 2000, p. 670.

the company's capital rose to as much as 100 thousand pounds" (2001, 67). The area reaching nearly 4 million square kilometres came to be called Rupert's Land, and encompassed nearly 50% of what has become modern Canada and of the present day USA. The achievements of the British in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were incomparably greater than the results obtained by the French colonies. In the North, the British, through the Hudson's Bay Company, managed to seize vast tracts of northern and western Canada, substantially more dynamically, in comparison to New France (the French colony in North America, also called Canada), British colonies also evolved on the east coast. As stated by Jan Grabowski, from 1713 to 1744 the population increased from 300 thousand to over half a million (while the population of New France reached only 50 thousand inhabitants) (ibid., 93). Among other imperial countries with ambitions for creating colonies in North America only England provided its citizens with a permanent and hereditary right to land, which encouraged them to migrate and settle in the future Canadian territory. Next to the native English, the British immigrant environment began to be filled by Scots, Welsh and Irish, fleeing from the hunger and misery of the old world. As researchers of European imperialism claim, "[f]rom the 1760s through the 1780 [the period of George III's rule, and after unification of the two countries in 1801 until his death in 1820, the king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland - OW], the American colonial rebellion dominated British colonial politics" (Olson and Shadle, et al. 1991, 246), resulting in a great shift from commercial into territorial empire, which "required fresh imperial thinking and new responses for the 1760s." (ibid., 13). The long reign of King George, who endeavoured to maintain the Crown's grip on the American colonies and preserve the position of hegemony over France, ultimately was forced to relinquish the British position in America

due to General Washington and the rebels, who brought to a close that early stage of the British Empire. The politics of Great Britain, especially in the 1760's and 1770's, along with the notion of Enlightenment contributed to a deep change in the society of the North American colonists. They understood the empire not as unitary but as federal and preserving the independence of its units. They ceased to be British subjects and began to openly campaign for independence. Under the influence of the Enlightenment concepts among the colonists, the idea of declaring complete independence proliferated, and on the 4th of March 1776 the Declaration of Independence was signed, heralding the dawn of a new country, independent of the British empire; the United States Of America was born. This Declaration resulted in the fact that for the first time the concepts of enlightenment were put into practice. The Declaration claimed that all people are born equal and are bestowed with inviolable rights - to live, to be free and to seek happiness. These events impeded active invasive actions of empire for a brief period. Moreover, this action affected the awareness of those who remained faithful to the empire i.e. the future Canadians. The historical period between 1583-1783 encompassed the loss of the Thirteen Colonies after the war of independence against the United States, which was later called by some historians the "first British Empire" (ibid., 13,83). The second British Empire, despite retaining the monarchy system, moving with the times followed the path of liberalism, which led to the industrial revolution and great economic and political changes in the colonies. After the declaring of independence by the United States between 40 and 100 thousand defeated loyalists migrated north, which greatly increased the number of English migrating to New Scotland (Acadia). In 1867 New Scotland, not without inner disputes of its own, joined the Confederation of Canada. For the purpose of decreasing tension between the Eng-

lish-speaking and French-speaking communities, and also with the intent to strengthen relations with Great Britain, the *Canada Act from 1791* divided New France (Canada) into two provinces: Upper Canada and Lower Canada. The industrial region was dominated by Upper Canada. As noticed by Kenneth McNaught, the author of *The Penguin History of Canada*, English-speaking businessmen with old capital gained from the fur trade controlled the trade of both Canada's (1988, 63); intensifying the economic and political status of British migration, which continued increasing every year. As stated by the researcher of Canadian migration, Elizabeth Hopkins, between 1790 and 1860, especially from 1815, about one million immigrants came from the British Isles to various provinces of British North America (Hopkins 1993, 340). As the result of constitutional conferences that were held, the *British North America Act from 1867* established a confederacy, forming the union of four British colonies in North America, from that point called the Dominion of Canada, or Canada. It was the first British dominion. In the first draft of the Canadian act the name of the new country was the "Kingdom of Canada". Later on it was changed into "Dominion of Canada" (see McNaught, 1988,130). This historical event delineates the first stage of the formation of a man with a new national identity - Canadian. The preceding century - with its discovery and taming of new areas (the future Canada) prepared a strong foundation for this great event.

British travellers, explorers and the first settlers not only tamed new lands, but they also laid the foundations of Canadian literature. As noticed by William John Keith, the author of *Canadian Literature in English*,

Paradoxically but appropriately, we detect the first clear signs of literary activity in English Canada in the work of travellers and explorers - paradoxically because they would not have considered themselves contributors to literature, appropriately because their efforts at surveying the terrain, describing both physical features and native inhabitants, very

necessary first steps towards coming to terms, imaginatively as well as practically, with a country as a whole. (2006, 31)

Historical conditions of a particular epoch significantly determine the basic traits of a man, his way of living, rules and patterns of behaviour. The age of enlightenment brought explorations of seas, examination of new continents, new communities and cultures; it laid the foundations for an encyclopaedic knowledge of the world. "The ambition of cognition and faith in usefulness of knowledge, imprinted its stamp on the epoch, which was compelled to unite trade, science and progress" (Bourgue 2001, 269). Explorers, the people, who discover something by going somewhere unfamiliar, who travel in search of new geographical or scientific information, placed great importance on this era. The first known use of *explorer* was in 1577<sup>95</sup>; in the Enlightenment this word already existed in dictionaries. According to Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Enlightenment researchers note that in 1718, the new word "discoverer" entered the *European Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (269). "The explorer sets out on behalf of Europe to the antipodes of this continent, in the name of intellectual conquest whose kingdom slowly spreads over the entire planet" (273).

Until the English crown refrained from actively invasive imperial plans, the Englishman in Canada was a pioneer, an explorer, a researcher, a trader, a negotiator, and his sea expeditions to the grounds of future Canada were "partly research and scientific (...), partly strategic", although only in the context of careful anticipation of danger, lurking from the side of foreigners, to the British sea trade" (Bosher 2010, 25)<sup>96</sup>. Reports of the first travellers differ de-

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<sup>95</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/explorer>

<sup>96</sup> I used Bosher's description of the Royal Navy's activities in Latin America here because of its similarity to the first Canadian expeditions. "They were partly exploratory and scientific, like the earlier voyages of captains James Cook and George Vancouver, and partly strategic, but only in the sense of being wary anticipations of foreign threats to British merchant shipping".

pending on the moral attitude, ideological views of the authors, as much as their intentions and tasks performed in the new lands. The anthology *Canadian Exploration Literature* by Oxford University Press, published for the first time in 1993, presents an innovative set of literature inspired by the discovery of the continent. The editor of this volume, Germaine Warkentin, introduces the readers to the range of narrative stories of British people from their encounters with the First Nations and the surroundings: from the perspective of one deprived of a European superiority narration, from the perceptive naturalist James Isham (1716-1761) to the typical imperial commentary of George Vancouver (1757-1798) and finally the entrepreneurial-imperial narration of Alexander MacKenzie (1764-1820). In the Introduction Warkentin points to the “sheer imperial authority” of the British Royal Fleet Officer's [Vancouver's] Introduction to his diary, on the other hand, in the chapter “Prelude to Settlement” he ambiguously concludes: “George Vancouver presents the archetype of the imperialist scientist, MacKenzie is its commercial twin” (Warkentin 2006, 33; 350).

One of the first literary testimonies of the taming of the new continent is the biographical poem of Henry Kelsey (c. 1667-1724), eminent English sailor, explorer and fur trader, who played a key role in particularly difficult times for the Hudson's Bay Company during the period of armed clashes with the rival French. In the first decade of the Company's existence (1670-1680) its representatives concluded further agreements with the Native Americans, creating a chain of forts and factories on the shores and maintaining regular sea connections with their English base. The capital invested in the company resulted in a huge profit. However, from 1683 the hunting and trade activities of the English company and its French rival brought about a period of fierce rivalry which nearly led to the downfall of the organization.

Kelsey reached the fort in 1684, fulfilling the mission appointed to him by the governor and the masters of the company,

and that is where he spent most of his life. With the accuracy of a chronicler he describes in a journal his personal experiences, his extended exploration of the Churchill River in 1689-1690; he formulates his purpose and vocation precisely and in obedience with the contemporary artistic convention:

In sixteen hundred and ninety'th year  
I set forth as plainly may appear  
Through Gods assistance for to understand  
The natives language and to see their land.  
And for my masters interest I did soon... (Kelsey 2006, 67)

Kelsey was the first European who reached the territories of the present day province of Saskatchewan and lived there among the Native Americans; he was the first explorer who examined and described the Great Plains and their aborigines. The author of this versified report does nothing to hide his experienced fears, stress, a nervous breakdown caused by loneliness, threats and both difficult weather and hunger.

Now Reader Read, for I am well assur'd  
Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd  
In the same desert where Ever that I have been,  
Nor wilt thou me believe without that thou had seen  
The Emynent Dangers that did often me attend,  
But still I lived in hopes that once it would amend  
And makes me free from hunger and from Cold,  
Likewise many other things which I cannot here unfold;  
For many times I have often been oppresst  
With fears and Cares that I could not take my rest  
Because I was along and no friend could find;  
And once that in my travels I was left behind  
Which struck fear and terror into me,  
But still I was resolved this same Country for to see. (ibid.)

After the short, yet expressive versified description of the life of the Native Americans in the Great Plains and Prairies, who

hadn't been seen by the English yet ("Indians but by English yet not seen", p. 68), Kelsey changes the narration - he starts to recount using memoir prose reminiscent of a report. Nevertheless, this report includes digressions describing local customs, the ways of hunting, traditions, beliefs, songs and their authors. It is impossible to overlook the friendly tone of the utterances and the peaceful mood it conveys: "neither was I sent there for to kill any Indians but to make peace with as many as I could" (73). Kelsey's exceptional skills in negotiations made him a very prosperous trader.

Kelsey's homier, James Isham (1716-1761) arrived at Hudson's Bay in 1732 and lived there for the rest of his life (he died in the fur factory in York). He may be considered as the first settler due to the fact that he put down roots there, had an illegitimate aborigine wife and a son; he did not miss the life he left behind in London. During breaks when he wasn't working hard, he wrote his *Observations*, describing the biota of the north-western territories as well as the customs, religion and language of the northern Native American tribes he encountered. At the same time, he suggested to his British compatriots and direct superiors more convenient and safe grounds for future settlements. Today we would say that his observations of the language of Native Americans are characteristic of cognitive research methods. Isham noticed that this language does not have any names for the days of the week except 'tomorrow': "they have no names for the Days of week, more than tomorrow, Day after tomorrow, or 3 Day's to come, or 3 Days past, and as to Years they go by months (alias moons) which moons they style according to the times and Seasons of the year, as goose moon, frog moon etc." (Isham, 2006,102). In the spirit of entrepreneurship, the author writes about differing flows of language, merging together especially during times of trade - British and local language - with mutual

benefit: "It's to be observ'd that those Indians that hunts at Seasons for the forts, cannot do without the assistance of the English, any more than the English without them, for the Chief of our Living is this Country's product" (102). The observant Englishman scrutinized the life of the Native Americans' family, compared the relations between parents and children in Aboriginal and English culture and noticed much more warmth, love and responsibility for the offspring among the first of them.

Yet a closer bond with the local population was formed by David Tompson (1770-1857), who at first worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, and later on for its rival - the North West Company. The eminent astronomer, geographer and cartographer exposed himself to danger, death; he even travelled for thousands of miles by boat or on foot just to document and create a map of the future Canada; he desired to see the land of winter, cold and forests. Thanks to his happy marriage with the daughter of an English fur trader and Indian, he didn't feel as alone in these new conditions as his compatriots. In his explorative narrations (*Narrative of His Explorations in Western North America, 1784-1812*) he described with careful imagological portraiture the French Canadians (citizens of Canada province) and the Natives. Special analysis was given to the psycho-mental traits of the Cree tribe (Nahataways), in which he lived (their eminent spatial orientation despite the lack of astronomical and geographical knowledge, talent for storytelling, hunting skills, unity with nature, cannibalism caused by great famine which was the effect of European corporations shooting available game ) (see Thompson 1990, 28-25). The attachment to First Nations and family roots in the new country don't deprive Tompson of his Britishness. He is a researcher of a new, strange country, a connoisseur of this new land and its population, a British trader full of respect for the region and a loyal subject of the empire. In our times, William Keith highly

appreciated Thompson's scientific and literary achievements which bore fruit in future generations:

(...) of all the explorers of North America (...) the greatest was probably David Thompson. Not only did he investigate and map vast stretches of hitherto unknown territories, but he brought an intellectually disciplined and scientifically inquisitive approach to the whole process of exploration and discovery. (2006, 33)

The embodiment of pro-Britishness and a spokesman of imperialism was the officer of the Royal Navy, traveller and explorer, Samuel Hearne (1745-1792); he was a freethinker, a Voltairean, the author of the narration entitled *A Journey from the Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*<sup>97</sup> which wrote "in quest of a North West Passage, Copper Mines, or any other thing that may be serviceable to the British Nation in general, or the Hudson's Bay Company in particular" (Hearne 2007, 54). Hearne told "the story of his three-year odyssey [1770-1772 – OW] in the subarctic Barrens, and of how he became the first European to travel overland to the Arctic coast of Northern America" (McGoogan 2007, x). Giving an interesting anthropological comparative characterization of the Southern and Northern Indians (their customs, cuisines, dishes, hunting practices, traditions of marriage and family life, men-women relations, etc.), he also included a practical (imperial) description of the First Nations.

Experience has convinced me, that by keeping a Northern Indian at a distance, he may be made serviceable both to himself and the Company; but by giving him at least indulgence at the Factory, he will grow indolent, inactive, and troublesome, and only contrive methods to tax the generosity of an European. (...)

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<sup>97</sup> Contemporary edition: *A Journey to the Northern Ocean: The Adventures of Samuel Hearne* by Samuel Hearne. Foreword by Ken McGoogan. Published by TouchWood Editions, 2007.

The greatest part of these people never fail to defraud whenever it is in their power, and take every method to over-reach them in the way of trade. (Hearne 2007, 206)

In contrast to the explorers-diarists presented above, he is more characterised by his imperial pride in his relations with the aborigines (servants of a white man). Hearne described a grim event he witnessed in 1771 – a brutal attack on a group of unsuspecting Inuit by his own Chipewyan guides; he called this place “Bloody Falls”<sup>98</sup>. “The Indians begin the massacre while the poor Esquimaux are asleep, and slay them all” (107). In his characterization of Indians he clearly emphasised the lust for bloody vengeance (“they rushed forth from their ambuscade, and fell on their poor unsuspecting creatures, unperceived till close at the very eves of their tents, when they soon began the bloody massacre” (112); “the horrible scene commenced; it was shocking beyond description” (ibid.)). Hearne lived with the Cree, the Chipewyan Dene and the Inuit, he contacted many other Indian tribes. In 1776 he became governor of the Prince of Wales Fort and as an official, he defended the interests of the empire against the natives even more strongly, revealing the racism of the times in his life's deeds and narration. Nevertheless, he wanted to get to know the Indians and appreciated their advantages<sup>99</sup>. Later, in our times, a Canadian critic related Hearne's narratives to the literary canon of his time: “*Journey to the Northern Ocean* had become the eighteenth-century prose norm” (Keith 2006, 31).

George Vancouver (1757-1798), the aforementioned great traveller and explorer, despite his generally peaceful relations

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<sup>98</sup> Ken McGoogen defines this event as “one of the most controversial moments in Canadian history” (2007, xi).

<sup>99</sup> He even married a beloved country woman of mixed race, a daughter of a British governor and an Indian mother.

with the aborigines, fulfilled and supported the colonial practices of the empire by precise studies of new lands for extension of the British territory – in his reporting narrations he was evidently giving information about places requiring intervention. Not by accident Germaine Warkentin defined the introduction to *The Voyage of Captain Vancouver* as “a powerful and unquestioning statement of the right – and obligation – of the British to rule the world commercially and culturally” (2006, 397). Vancouver, the British officer of the Royal Navy was best known for his 1791–95 expedition which laid a formal British claim to start colonization of North America's north-western Pacific Coast. Stephen R. Bown describes Vancouver's imperial mission in similar terms “the discovery of a northwest passage, an imperial dream of Britain since Francis Drake's discoveries in the sixteenth century, was one of the goals of Vancouver's voyage” (2008, 122), which he carried out with pride and satisfaction. That's why he is known as an agent of imperial ambition, “agent of empire, leaving the stamp of British culture and politics wherever he travelled” (229). Vancouver's narrative is full of imperial ambitions.

Some discover, and others settle, new areas, and it is in the settler community that the female narrative appears, as Carole Gerson points out.

In the terrain that would eventually become the Dominion of Canada, it is not surprising that the literature of exploration was written almost entirely by men. By contrast, canonical narratives of settlement were largely penned by women. (2010, 87)

The two sisters, Susanna Moodie (1803 – 1885) and Catharine Parr Traill (1802 – 1899), née Strickland, English-born Canadian authors who wrote about their experiences as settlers in Canada, are an apt example of the words above. Both sisters settled in Upper Canada with their husbands, British Army officers, in 1832. The Moodie's family settled on a farm near Lakefield.

Moodie continued to write in Canada, and her letters and journals contain valuable information about life in the colony. She observed life in what was then the backwoods of Ontario, including native customs, the climate, the wildlife. According to New, "Moodie's best-known settle narrative was *Roughing it in the Bush: or, Forest Life in Canada* (1852) based on her experiences of the 1830s when (with the sense of duty more than anticipation) she accompanied her husband" (2003, 54) on the farm. In 1853, she published her second memoir, *Life in the Clearings Versus the Bush*, about her time in Belleville. There is evidence that *Roughing it in the Bush* was her greatest literary success, a success recognized both in Canada and in England. Her London editor was of the opinion that she had written an "emigrant's guide" for British people looking to move to Canada. Due to the large scale of emigration to Canada ("The infection became general. A Canada mania pervaded the middle ranks of British society; thousands and tens of thousands, for the space of three or four years landed upon those shores" (Moodie 1988, 6)), the author wanted to bring this unknown country closer to her British compatriots and strongly refutes the encouraging information about the uninhabited land, which is spread by interested circles.

They told of lands yielding forty bushels to the acre, but with the most careful cultivation, would barely return fifteen; when rust and smut, engendered by the vicinity of damp over-hanging woods, would blast the fruits of the poor emigrant's labour, and almost deprive him of bread. They talked of log houses to be raised in a single day, by the generous exertions of friends and neighbours, but they never ventured upon a picture of the disgusting scenes of riot and low debauchery exhibited during the raising, or upon a description of the dwellings when raised - dens of dirt and misery, which would, in many instances, be shamed by an English pig-sty. The necessaries of life were described as inestimably cheap; but they forgot to add that in remote bush settlements, often twenty miles from a market town, and some of them even that distance from the nearest dwelling, the necessaries of life,

which would be deemed indispensable to the European, could not be procured at all, or if obtained, could only be so by sending a man and team through a blazed forest road (...) (4-5)

Despite these issues that undermine the idyllic life of a settler, Moodie does not hide her love for the new country, she believes in its bright and great future under the care of the great British mother. She expressed these feelings in a poem glorifying her new home. The poem in the memoir was like an ode to Canada.

CANADA, the blest -the free!  
With prophetic glance, I see  
Visions of thy future glory,  
Giving to the world's great story  
A page, with mighty meaning fraught,  
That asks a wider range of thought.  
Even now thy sons inherit  
All thy British mother's spirit. (...)  
Home of the homeless! - friend of all  
Who suffer on this earthly ball!  
On thy bosom sickly care  
Quite forgets her squalid lair;  
Gaunt famine, ghastly poverty  
Before thy gracious aspect fly,  
And hopes long crush'd, grow bright again,  
And, smiling, point to hill and plain. (8)

Her sister, Catharine Parr Traill, wrote over twenty books covering topics ranging from her life as a settler in Ontario to natural history, especially botany. She was one of the first Canadian naturalists. Traill is considered a pioneer of Canada's natural history. Through her writing, she related the colonial experience and described the natural environment of Upper Canada for English readers. Her work as a naturalist bore fruit in *Canadian Wild Flowers* (1868) and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* (1885). Her most famous work was *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) consisting of

letters to her mother portraying the hardships of the pioneer life. In this work Traill reliably and fascinatingly describes how beautifully - next to the islands tamed by settlers - Nature (she often uses "N") still "revels in her wilderness of forest trees" (1997, 48), how the beautiful and powerful waters of Ontario "in the course of years (...) should be made navigable for boats and larger craft than Indian canoes" (233) and swamps skirting the lakes the marshes surrounding the lakes would reveal the secrets of their fauna and flora. She talks about divine Nature with delight: "Nature is open, and eloquently marked by the finger of God; and from its pages I can extract a thousand sources of amusement and interest whenever I take my walks in the forest or by the borders of the lakes" (112), which does not prevent her from warning her compatriots about dangers and appealing for caution in wild places. Of course, Traill was primarily an amateur naturalist, while Moodie was a writer, but it was the former who revealed the spirit of the region in these private letters. The researcher gives reasons and consequences of the difference in their styles:

Of the two sisters, however, Mrs Moodie was the more constrained by the *literary form* she admired, hence more divided from the colonial vernacular, hence more estranged by language from the place she made her home. It is for this predicament that she became a paradigm of the Canadian frontier mentality. (New 2006, 55-56)

The policy of London was clear: from the beginning, the aim was to create conditions in the future Canada for dense British settlements, which would simplify the organizing of the cultural life of the colonists, their systematic contacts with the Empire, control of their loyalty, trade/exchange, efficient exploitation of goods from conquered lands and cheap Indian labour.

In times of fierce and uninterrupted competition with the French for influence in the future Canada, the ambiance of pro-Britishness intensified among settlers of the British Empire. They

became even more active after the uprising in America and The American Revolutionary War.

Colourful Canadian pictures were created by Anna Brownell Jameson (1794-1860), a famous English writer who - unlike sisters Moodie and Traill - eventually gave up on sharing the fate with her husband in a "country with no culture and no civilisation", despite spending two years there (1836-1838); while trying to get to know her new homeland, which she observed in Upper Canada (among large groups of loyalists) "professing (...) boundless loyalty to the mother country" (Jameson 1990, 52). In Toronto, "the young capital city of young province", with impenetrable forest half a mile away from the centre, almost on the other side of it, "a city which forty years ago, was just a desert swamp, and came into being only twenty years ago" (ibid.), the author of *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) highlights the colonial status of then Canada as well as the imperial status and temporary - for the purpose of enrichment - presence of newcomers:

Canada is a colony, not a *country*, it is not identified with the dearest affections and associations, remembrances, and hopes of its inhabitants: it is to them an adopted, not real mother. Their love, their pride, are not for poor Canada, but for high and happy England. (Ibid.)

Nevertheless, the author does not negate the future identity changes connected with future generations. Her attitude toward Canadian nature is ambivalent. Taking the risk of travelling inland without a husband, the author fears the unknown, the hostile environment; on the other hand, the wonderful landscapes untouched by the hand of men arouse admiration in her. Many times she observes the attitude of humans towards the forests, which is different from that of Englishmen. Mass destruction of the forests by settlers, reckless and not ecological (using present terminology) removal of tress for the clearing and possession of the land, often

by the employment of large devastating fires, leads Brownell Jameson toward the conclusion that “a Canadian settler *hates* a tree, regards it as his natural enemy, as something to be destroyed, eradicated, annihilated by all and any means” (51).

What bound the first settlers together – regardless of their ideological and moral beliefs – was their shared perception of the new territory as a hostile and wild colony, their mutual feeling of loneliness and alienation, the inherent fear of their surroundings and nonetheless a great passion for domesticating the new and acquired overseas lands for settlements. Margaret Atwood, a writer and the author of one of the first stories of Canadian literature, believes that:

The central symbol for Canada – and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature – is undoubtedly Survival, la Survivance. (...) For early explorers and settlers, it meant bare survival in face of “hostile” elements and/or natives: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive. (...) the main idea is the first one: hanging on, staying alive. (32-33.)

These first narrations are evidence, hitherto unknown, of inscrutable territories, of the appearance of a man possessing unfamiliar traits, with new experiences, an aborigine representing the Empire. On the basis of relations between the first colonists, an awareness of identity among Canadians was forming, along with their literature and intellectual life.

For the children of the first settlers, their offspring born in the rigorous conditions connected with accustoming oneself to the new colony, the North American territory becomes their little homeland. In the famous response to the melancholic poem of his great-uncle and namesake *The Deserted Village* (1770), in which the Irish-English poet observes with sadness the depopulation of the village where farmers leave to seek new opportunities in industrial cities and newly discovered countries in America, Oliver Goldsmith

junior (1794-1861), born in Canadian Saint Andrews, glorifies the beauty and grandiosity of those lands conquered and settled by British people. The title of this poem-response is optimistic - *The Rising Village* (1825). The poet does not hide the difficulties and dangers which arose for the pioneers during their excruciating loneliness:

When, looking round, the lonely settler sees  
His home amid a wilderness of trees;  
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,  
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;  
Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,  
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades.

Goldsmith with pride describes the heroic removal of obstacles preventing the development of agriculture and permanent settlement (this is how the English were different from the French, who didn't have the habit of establishing themselves on new ground) i.e. the clearing and burning of beautiful tall pines in order to create farms:

(...) from their heights the lofty pines descend,  
And crackling, own their pond'rous lengths extend.  
Soon from their boughs the curling flames arise,  
And where the forest once its foliage spread,  
The golden corn triumphant waves its head.

The poet praises the victory over the rebellious hosts of these mountains and plains

And now, behold! His bold aggressors fly,  
To seek their prey beneath some other sky; (1990, 37-38)

Goldsmith enthusiastically glorifies the successful results of the operations of settlers and the development of his native Acadia (New Scotland) in the shape of a symbolic portrait showing culture evolving "(...) the Rising Village of the land.

How chaste and splendid are the scenes that lie/ Beneath the circle of Britannia's sky!" (35)<sup>100</sup>

It would be the second generation immigrants who would create a historical, satirical, moral novel, romance and sentimental story. The names Richardson, Haliburton would appear. The first one, a Canadian officer in the British Army, John Richardson (1796-1852), became the first Canadian-born novelist to achieve international recognition with his historical novel *Wacousta* (1932)<sup>101</sup>, the second one, Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865), an immigrant of the second generation, a New Scottish writer and lawyer, became the author of the first work which gained the most publicity thanks his attachment to local realities, a desire for describing them in regional voice. It was *The Clockmaker* (a volume from 1837-1840 and later). Witty letters from the experiences of his compatriots, initially directed to the weekly newspaper "Nova Scotia" (published in Halifax, the centre of cultural and intellectual life in New Scotland), were later published as a series of short stories. Published as a whole, they resembled a novel. This prose gives evidence of the "development of Canadian independent literary imagination". The Nova Scotia literary community wanted to oppose the culture of its home country [the British Empire], "and had to mark its distinction from this culture if it wanted to be recognized as autonomous as it began to create the national literature of its new home".<sup>102</sup> Despite

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<sup>100</sup> It is worth pointing out that contemporary English interpreters of this work notice a veiled, hidden defiance towards the empire (mother-stepmother), which was consistent with the change in the author's ideology - from imperial to colonial and nationalist.

<sup>101</sup> Although the writer himself had the blood of an Indian woman, his depiction of Indigenous characters typically affirms a European settler perspective that envisions Indigenous people as pre-modern, irrational, and innately warlike.

<sup>102</sup> For details see Klára Kolinská, *The Development of the Independent English-Canadian Literary Imaginary*, pp.141; 147. <https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/124043.pdf> accessed 31.05.24.

the fact that Haliburton remains a faithful son of the Empire, his regional literary awareness reflects the progressive development of a new national identity, which will be fully revealed in just three years after the writer's death, in political and intellectual actions taken by the creators of the Confederacy, as well as the literary works of writers from the new historical period.

Waste, wild and raw colony, a new nation based on agriculture and a rapidly growing urban culture, not long before Confederation began to speak its own new language about itself, also referring to the formation of a new man, Canadian. Who was this man and what are his characteristics?

1. The relations of the first settlers in British North America, in which they confronted their Englishness and Britishness with new experiences of distinctness that were written in journals, diaries, travel notes etc., as well as the literary works of indigenous Anglophone writers, born in the new country, indicate that it was a man derived from the English Enlightenment, who wished to independently seek the path of evolution, travel, continually educate, be interested in science and art but also in very trivial topics of everyday life. He had to survive and prevail.

2. Besides his thirst for knowledge and discovery, he was accustomed to long journeys, settlement and work in the future Canada and by a powerful desire for enrichment, which was intensified during the epoch of industrial capitalism and imperialism, particularly exposing itself collectively in a British willingness for political and economic domination over the world. Politically-economic notions of metropolis had an influence on the entire intellectual life of people living in the North American colony. Each purpose of actions, each institution, each manner of the first Canadian was more or less formed and 'coloured' by the basic rule of ancestral capitalism, i.e. the maximal personal economic benefit.

3. The British settler was a faithful subject and defender of the interests of his Empire. Even while writing in admiration concerning the outstanding personality traits and skills of the aborigines, he usually preserves a distance, looking down on them with the imperial superiority of a white man, whereas the colony is perceived as a mission to civilize, building a new world for Britain. As accustoming oneself to the new homeland progresses, colonised and consecutively civilised by the first newcomers, a second generation British settler feels indigenious, his mentality changes from imperial to colonial, which he will possess until the end of the 1950s – the moment of great political, de-colonial changes and the domination of postcolonial thinking.

4. In extremely difficult existential conditions, entirely new psycho-mental lineaments formed in human beings, identified by Northrope Frye as “the garrison mentality” and described firstly in *Conclusion of Literary History of Canada* (1965), later on in the preface to *The Bush Garden* (1971), as an idiosyncratic type of mentality or introverted personalities, barricaded within the walls of its small civilisation establishment, exposed to a permanent sense of threat from the aborigines, as well as wild nature, created personalities imperceptible of their existence outside the group.

Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological “frontier”, separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting – such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. In the earliest maps of the country the only inhabited centres are forts, and that remains true of the cultural maps for a much later time. (Frye 2006, 351)

“The garrison mentality” was accompanied by a particular emotional state, which influenced the creation of a specific model

of culture (values, rules of behaviour, customs, myths, language – all forming in situations of danger and abiding in stronghold). Robert D. Denham and Jean O'Grady state that “The garrison emerges as a central feature of Frye’s portrait of the struggling literary voice” (2006). Branko Gorjup, in turn, summarizes the importance of this concept by calling Frye the first theorist who established a de-colonised nationally-cultural area and determined a unique Canadian “garrison mentality” as one of the fundamental traces of the enslaved mind and projected it on the example of the creativeness of the first Canadians (2009, 3).

5. The first Canadians perceived nature as an obstinate enemy. In *Conclusion of Literary History of Canada*, Frye notes that for a long time he was impressed by the appropriate (for Canadian poetry) tone of a deep and unsettling fear of nature. He indicates

a tone of deep terror in regard to nature (...) not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values”. (350)

This fear was especially visible in the poetry of the later, romantic period and was the natural continuation of the hostile attitude of the lands first settlers toward a perceived dangerous, chaotic and unpredictable nature and their literary expression of this relationship. Even though the naturalist Traill is delighted with the unspoilt nature of Canada, she tells compatriots to be careful because danger lurks everywhere and states the fact that a new man in this place “wages war against the forest with fire and steel” (1997,144). Margaret Atwood considered such an attitude toward nature as an attributive characteristic of the entirety of Canadian literature:

Nature seen as dead, or alive but indifferent, or alive and actively hostile towards a man is a common image in Canadian literature. The

result of dead or indifferent Nature is an isolated or “alienated” man; the result of an actively hostile Nature is usually a dead man, and certainly a threatened one. (1991, 54)

During expansion, a new man of the future Canada was overcoming fear and defeating his ‘obstinate’ enemy. The feeling of alienation toward nature, hostility even, differentiated a British settler from indigenous inhabitants, with whom nature formed a unity. On the other hand, obsessive thinking about natural surroundings, treating this fight as the main purpose of life, defeating forests, prairies and lakes as the evolution of their own personality, separated settlers from European communities which at the same time contributed to the formation of new national identity.

Literary narratives of the first settlers and their children variously reflect the process of engendering a man with a new mentality, a new attitude toward his surroundings and a new national (colonial) identity. Conversely, they expedite the process of identity maturation of this new man, the Canadian.

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## Summary

The essay discusses how literary narratives of the first British settlers, travellers, explorers and emigrants variously reflect the process of engendering a man with a new mentality, a new attitude toward his surroundings and a new colonial identity. Conversely, they expedite the process of national identity maturation of this new man, the Canadian.

**Key words:** Canada, first British settlers, travellers, explorers and emigrants, narratives, the Canadian

## Re-imagining Newfoundland's past in fiction (*Galore* by Michael Crummey)

The present work is an attempt to study the fictitious re-imagining of the life of the first British settlers and their next generations in two remote coastal villages (Paradise Deep and Gut) by Michael Crummey (1965), an acclaimed Canadian writer from Newfoundland. Although *Galore* (2009), "Crummey's sprawling, mythic family saga of Newfoundland" (Carrière, Gillespie and Purcell 2016, 38), tells about people and events spanning over two centuries (from the eighteenth to the first two decades of the twentieth), it is not a typical historical novel for re-imagining the past. The characters are placed in a historical context, they speak their local language, in general, they behave and act according to their times but many of them are unusual, just like the events are amazing. The characters and events all the time oscillate between almost documentary truth and unusual fiction. Let's get closer to this world.

### Between document and fiction

*Michael Crummey* is a lyrical poet, expert on Newfoundland and a writer of historical fiction. His writing often draws on the history and landscape of his country, which was specified by the critic as "geo-historical determinism", "invocation of the mystique of geographical and historical determinism" which has a long history in discourse about Newfoundland (Sugars 2010, 9). In *Galore* Crummey re-imagines the past using the realistic histor-

ical view that combines documentary facts, topographical realities with fictitious ones. He is well versed in the history and landscape of his native country, as evidenced by his non-fiction and sightseeing works: *Newfoundland: Journey into a Lost Nation* (2004, memoir, edited in co-authorship with photographer Greg Locke), 'A Time and Place Apart' (2001, essay), 'Where I Belongs' (article in *Canadian Geographic* 2016), 'Across the Tickle' (article in *Canadian Geographic* 2021), etc. In *Galore* the writer artistically represents the key moments of the history of his land: the arrival of the Church, the first school, first doctor, elections, the war.

After the first European settlers, the Norsemen (Vikings), who lived at L'Anse aux Meadows (present Newfoundland) for a short time about 1000 ED<sup>103</sup>, after the late 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries European (England: John Cabot, Humphrey Gilbert; Portugal, France, Holland and Spain) exploration of these lands, which were named by them the "newfoundelände," or New Found Land (with the accent on this word), the first small permanent settlements appeared around 1610-1630. Fishing families from France and England founded the first small villages typically located at the edge of the sea. At this new place, the most easterly part of North America,<sup>104</sup> they "needed suitable harbour and access to wood, fresh water, some land to grow vegetables, and fishing grounds"<sup>105</sup>. They divided the fishing areas into two competing zones: English and French. The English fished along the "English Shore," which ran from Bonavista Bay to Tre-

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<sup>103</sup> Historical and archeological evidence indicates that the Bethouks were already living in Newfoundland at the time that Viking explorers arrived.

<sup>104</sup> Its capital city, St. Johns (on Newfoundland), for instance, is closer to the coast of Ireland than it is to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>105</sup> Leslie Harris, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Brief History*. <https://www.britannica.com/contributor/Leslie-Harris/1243>, accessed 31.05.24

passey; “by the mid-17th century, there were between 1,000 and 2,000 planters on the English Shore who had some sort of permanent attachment to Newfoundland. These planters worked cooperatively with the migratory fishermen”<sup>106</sup>. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) marked the end of the fighting between England and France, and claimed British sovereignty over the island of Newfoundland. The French fishermen had to leave French Zone, Placentia.

The action of *Galore* starts after these events. The inhabitants of fictitious Paradise Deep and Gut are newcomers from the possessions of the British Crown (“the Irish and West Country English”) and “their offspring, children, born in Newfoundland, local. A small presence of “the bushborns<sup>107</sup> of uncertain provenance” (Crummey 2014,1) coloured the population. The Irish and English - both nationalities, fished for a local merchant, King-me Sellers, and “tried their hand at any entrepre’neurial opportunity the country afforded, spinning wool and churning their own butter, fur trapping and fishing the local rivers for salmon” (166). The settlers lived in extremely harsh conditions, they simply vegetated. Rocks, forests, swamps, land were not suitable for cultivation at all. High winds, snow, rain, and fog - the weather was unpredictable there and extreme. They took care of every pound of fertile soil, watched over it as if it were gold. Here is an example of the stealing land:

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> bush-born: resident of Newfoundland born and bred on the island; COUNTRY BORN, NATIVE n. The *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* quotes a 1937 definition of *bushborn* from P.K. Devine's *Folk Lore of Newfoundland*: "A term of contempt for one born in Newfoundland used when the majority of the population was Irish- and English-born. When the 'bush-borns' became the majority they silenced the immigrants and made them respect the new name, Native" (distinct from native Indians) <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/dictionary/a-z-index.php#642>, accessed 31.03.24.

They caught Bride [who got raised up by her mother's people in the Gut] trying to sneak off with a bagful of their garden soil last spring...  
- She was stealing a bag of dirt?  
- People holds a bit of soil very dear in these parts, Doctor. Years turning in capelin and seaweed to make earth enough to grow a few spuds. There's been blood spilled over half of an acre of garden." (178)

Paradise Deep is, similarly, located somewhere in between such geographical and historical realities as Harbour Grace, Mount Pearl, St. John's, Bonavista, because its inhabitants are well versed in the matters taking place in them, some of them, from time to time, visit these settlements in the bays and witness their development and gradual transformation into towns<sup>108</sup> (for example, one of the characters insists on setting up a school in the settlement, arguing that in Harbour Grace, St. John's, Bonavista there are already schools (133)). What is interesting, today there is a real town of Paradise, which is located just a few minutes from the capital city, St. John's. The real town of Paradise grew in 1830-1870, at the time of the second generation of the novel characters.

At the beginning of the novel, ecumenism prevails in the religious practice of the Irish and English population of Paradise Deep. Religious meetings were greatly appreciated by the locals. In addition to connecting with God, in common prayer they embellished and diversified their life on the island, so primitive and full of danger. All together they prayed for survival, for enduring the long and hungry winter months, for good catches of fish and safe return of fishermen to their homes. Because Father Phelan, a Roman Catholic priest, was all the time wandering around "his ghost parishes on the island" (50) and once a year on average for a short time he stayed in Paradise. They all gathered in holyday

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<sup>108</sup> Harbour Grace by that time was already a town, its roots dating back to the 1517. It is located about 45 km northwest of St. John's.

and Sunday services with Jabez Trim, who belonged to the Church of England.

There was no church on the shore. An itinerant Dominican friar named Phelan said Mass when he passed through on his endless ecclesiastical rounds. And Jabez Trim held a weekly Protestant service at one of Seller's stores (...). Tim had no credentials other than the ability to read an incomplete copy of the Bible but every soul on the shore crowded the storeroom to soak awhile in the scripture's balm. (5)

Together with English Protestants, Irish Catholics, headed by their father, made attempts to erect a Roman church. Moreover, the Irish created their own local communal outdoor ritual, which took place around the Irish Tree, a kind of pagan magic symbol. This spiritual practice as aimed at creating positive change in an individual health condition (especially of a newborn baby) through their prayer and physical actions. They believed that the native tree was sacred and they were a part of nature.

The apple tree was marked with a rock fence, the bare branches hanging low and reaching nearly to the circumference of stones. Sarah Kerrivan brought the sapling from Ireland a hundred years before but it had never produced more than crabappels too sour [sauve] to eat. (...) The tree would long ago have been cut down but for the fact that Sarah Kerrivan and her husband William were never sick a day in their lives, sailing unafflicted through the outbreaks of cholera and measles and diphtheria that burned through the shore. Their transcendental health conferred an aura of blessedness on everything in their possession, including the tree Sarah had carted across the ocean. Every infant born in the Gut and many born in Paradise Deep during the last half century had been passed through its branches to ward off the worst of what the world could do to a child (...) (15)

Therefore, in the spiritual life of the Irish settlers, we find an echo of the Celtic pagan traditions (the Celtic wish trees ritual). After the service a more secular sacrament was celebrated on the

Commons above Kerrivan's Tree with jugs of spruce beer and black rum and shine passed around.

After the arrival of the envoys of the three churches - Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist - religious disputes, quarrels and conflicts began. At first, Reverend Dodge, a Church of England minister, finally settled in Paradise Deep. He was the first cleric who was officially sent to them and would live in their settlement, which is why everyone welcomed him. "An archway of var branches decorated with wildflowers was built for the Reverend Eldred Dodge to walk beneath as he came ashore and the entire population turned out to welcome him, Protestant and Catholic alike" (57-58). He had already begun to restore the inhabitants to religious order. Father Cunico, who arrived on the shore a little later, continued these actions even more firmly and sharply. He carried letters of appointment from the prefect vicar apostolic in St. John's naming him priest of Paradise parish. "Cunico was sent with instructions to reverse the ecumenism that threatened the extinction of Catholicism on the shore and his first official act was to forbid his parishioners attending a wedding at the Episcopal church" (134). Much later, Violet, a Methodist minister appeared on the coast, in order to convert the Catholics and Protestants to Methodism, especially those of the lower classes, fishermen and planters. As we can see, each of them provoked their followers to religious conflicts which - inevitably - arise when followers of one religion take to the extreme and impose their religious beliefs on those with different religions. These fictional names and events correspond to the historical figures. Let's say, in 1766, the real Laurence Coughlan arrived in Newfoundland for the Propagation of the Gospel and introduction of Methodism, to which some of the Catholics and Protestants converted as a result. As Patrick O'Flaherty states, "Laurence Coughlan had begun a movement that was to transform religious and social life

in Conception Bay. (...) and the Methodist denomination which he established in the populous district of Conception Bay has flourished to this day"<sup>109</sup>. Mostly the ordinary people joined his movement. Catholic-Protestant religious tensions were high but mellowed after 1860.

Apart from imaginary characters, referring to real people, there are historical figures. The novel tells about the exploitative fishing industry in Newfoundland of the 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries, describes in some detail the political, social, and religious debates surrounding the premise of the first Fishermen's Protective Union, which William Ford Coaker (1871-1938) formed in 1908 at Herring Neck, Notre Dame Bay, to lobby the Newfoundland Government for legislative changes favourable to the country's fishing population. Sociologists call it "a populist movement/party of the 1910s and 1920s.", suggesting "that fishermen were engaged in different forms of labor organization in different parts of Newfoundland; that the type of labor organization which they were involved in determined their propensity to engage in collective political action" (Brym and Neis 1978, 391). The union grew fast; from the initial founding group of 19 members at Herring Neck, by 1914 it had 206 councils with a membership of 21,060 mainly on Newfoundland's northeast coast and in Conception Bay<sup>110</sup>. Formed in 1908, the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland "saw eight of its nine candidates win seats in the 1913 Newfoundland election: almost 24 percent of the total. And

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<sup>109</sup> Patrick O'Flaherty, "COUGHLAN, LAURENCE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed June 3, 2024, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/coughlan\\_laurence\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/coughlan_laurence_4E.html) Accessed 23.05.24.

<sup>110</sup> The Fishermen's Protective Union, waves of history dating back to 1908. Posted on June 10, 2022 | By Alexander Chafe <https://atlanticbusinessmagazine.ca/web-exclusives/the-fishermens-protective-union-waves-of-history-dating-back-to-1908/> Accessed 3.06.2024.

in 1919 more persons voted for the FPU than for any other party in the colony” (Brym and Neis 1978, 392). The increased popularity of the movement was influenced, among others, by the fact that in 1911 it established the Fishermen's Union Trading Company to provide cheaper fishery supplies and provisions to members. Previously, merchants had not paid cash for fish but advanced fisherman commodities at an inflated price on credit and then took the fishermen’s cured fish at the end of the season, at a rate determined by the merchant – a system which kept most fishermen in perpetual debt making them dependent on the seller. Crummey in his historical fiction, in detail, from the point of view of specific human characters of various classes and different faiths, their families and loved ones, describes clashes, conflicts, wins and losses in connection with the foundation and activities of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland. He also vividly describes the founder of the union from the point of view of simple fishermen - as is the case of their first, sceptical and unfriendly perception of the politician.

In the middle of August word of a visitor passed along the shore. (...) A fellow named Crocker or Croker was calling a meeting of fishermen at the old Episcopalian church. Out of Notre Dame Bay, some said, though others claimed he was born and bred in St. John’s, the son of a carpenter. Lost a merchant store in the bank crash and spent most of the years since running a farm on some island near Herring Neck.(...) The man had to be some sort of lunatic to persevere at the venture so long. He was supposed to have beaten his wife often enough to drive her away to St. John’s with their only child in tow. A union he’d come to speak to them about, that and his plans to reform the country’s fishery. From all reports Mr Crocker or Cooker or Creaker – closet townie, failed merchant, crackpot farmer – had never caught a fish in his life. He’d worn the leather off his shoes gathering men in stores and church halls and kitchens across the northeast of the island. – Son of a carpenter (...) and fancies himself the fishmen’s messiah. (290-291)

The author does not omit a description of Coaker's oratorical skills and the gift of persuasion, thanks to which he was able to convince a large number of fishermen to awaken their awareness, open their eyes to where their fish was sold and the price it sells for, and to the cost of provisions they were paid with. A reader of the *Galore* also gets to know his dark (and still controversial) sides, and wonder at this "fascinating figure from Newfoundland history"<sup>111</sup>.

The next important historical fact is the characters' participation in WWI. Newfoundland – as a dominion of the British Empire which declared war on Germany in August 1914 – was also at war. In support of Great Britain it formed the Patriotic Association to manage its contributions to the British war effort. The Newfoundland Regiment was quickly assembled and hastily trained, with the first recruits sent overseas in October 1914 to become a unit of the British Army. They would become known as the "Blue Puttees" because of the colour of the uniform leggings they wore on their lower legs. The regiment was sent to the Western Front in France in the spring of 1916. Newfoundlanders participated in many attacks on the front line in the Somme Offensive, including the 1 July 1916 battle at Beaumont-Hamel, the opening day of the Offensive, the bloodiest day in the history of WWI. Newfoundland commemorates this event as Memorial Day on 1 July each year. In this distant 1916, the tragedy of these events directly affected the characters of the novel.

In July of 1916 the name of a town in France arrived on the shore. Beaumont-Hamel. The desolate numbers whispered back and forth – eight hundred and two members of the Newfoundland Regiment ordered out of their trenches into the muck and wire and relentless machine-gun fire. A morning of blue sky and calm. It took all of half an

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<sup>111</sup> Terry Goldie, *Is Galore "Our" Story?* *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 2012 Spring, p. 91.

hour to cut them down as they stuttered to the German line, chins tucked into their shoulders against the hellish weather. Only sixty-eight men standing to answer roll call next morning. There were three local boys among the lost and every family on the shore could claim a brother-in-law or nephew or second cousin dead or wounded or missing. (323)

Among those missing was a grandson of the main character, Judah. As the sources testify, without convening the Legislature, the Morris government decided that the colony would raise and equip a regiment for service in Europe. Of the 6,241 men who fought, 1,305 were killed, 2,314 were wounded, and 180 became prisoners of war.<sup>112</sup>

By attaching the narrator to the characters the author also gives voice to the Regiment soldiers, direct participants of these bloody events. One of them, unknown, but resembling Abel, the character, while he still remembers, reports every detail after an explosion the like of which he had never heard before.

Still light when he came to himself but the sun was almost below the trees, which meant he'd been out for hours. (...) A hand gripped his shoulder to turn him on his back and the German soldier pulled away in disgust, cursing under his breath. – Dead a long time this one, he told the others. (...) He spent the full of the night alone there, paralyzed and bored and terrified. He tried to choke back a suspicion the German soldier was right, that he was dead where he lay in the bushes. That death

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<sup>112</sup> Heritage. New Foundland and Labrador in The First World War <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/first-world-war/articles/end-of-the-war.php> Accessed 3.06.2024. Another source gives the total number of participants in the war: "The people of Newfoundland responded with a great outpouring of patriotism and many rushed to enlist. From a total population of about 240,000, more than 12,000 Newfoundlanders would join up during the war. <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/wars-and-conflicts/first-world-war/battle-of-beaumont-hamel><https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/wars-and-conflicts/first-world-war/battle-of-beaumont-hamel> Accessed 3.06.2024.

wasn't sudden and complete but took a man out of the world piece-meal, a little at a time. (350-352)

When the Allies finally found him, he never regained his memory, they could not get a word out of him, he didn't know who he was. "He opened his mouth to answer and then shook his head helplessly" (352).

At the end of the novel, the Paradise Deep recruits are heading home by steamer - they are young but physically and mentally crippled by the war. In one of them the narrator and the reader (but not the disabled soldier himself and the people surrounding him now) recognize Abel, Judah's grandson. Wounded in the bushes and shell-shocked from the reality of the Great War, he commits suicide by going over the side of the steamer, apparently intending to be swallowed by the whale that appears alongside.

The characters of the novel told us a history of Newfoundland. Terry Goldie's apt phrase, "The Newfoundlander is not just a person of the land, but a person of Newfoundland - and perhaps a person with a story of the land" - confirms the naturalness of this relationship<sup>113</sup>.

### *A realistic view with magical elements*

*Galore* opens with a mysterious man found in the belly of a whale off the coast of Newfoundland.

The white underbelly was exposed where the carcass keeled to one side, the stomach's membrane floating free in the shallows. (...) and then the head appeared, the boys screaming and falling away at the sight. It was a human head, the hair bleached white. One pale arm flopped through the ragged incision and dangled into the water.

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<sup>113</sup> Terry Goldie, *Is Galore "Our" Story?* *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2 2012 Spring, p. 87.

For a time no one moved or spoke, watching as if they expected the man to stand and walk ashore of his own accord. Devine's Widow waded over finally to finish the job, the body slipping into the water as she cut it free. The Catholics crossed themselves in concert and Jabez Trim said, Naked came I from my mother's womb. (3)

The body of the man was dragged out of the water by Devine's Widow and Mary Tryphena's father. They named the rescued man Judah, the book will end with a direct descendant of Judah – and, some of Judah's characteristics; the smell, the pale white skin, and all that sort of stuff was passed on. Starting from this enigmatic moment, the distinctive blend of fantasy and realism would take place in the subsequent events of the novel, forming the magical realist style. It is worth noting that at one point in time such an event was not something fictional-magical. In 1891, American newspapers were abuzz with the story of a singular event that was claimed to have happened in February of that year; they presented the story that during a whaling expedition off the Falkland Islands in 1891, James Bartley's boat was attacked by a whale and he landed inside the whale's mouth. He survived and was carved out of the stomach by the crew when they, not knowing he was inside, caught and began skinning the whale. It was said that Bartley was inside the whale for 36 hours; the whale's gastric juices had bleached Bartley's face and hands to a deathly white and wrinkled them. He died 18 years later<sup>114</sup>. In 1896, an article titled "A Modern Jonah Proves his Story", which was published in the New York World, repeated this story. Supernatural episodes and anecdotes, strange enigmas such as this and others, often "fill" the gaps in history. One of the main characters, Devine's Widow, had magical powers, or in other words was a diviner – she could save, humiliate or destroy somebody.

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<sup>114</sup> *Anomalies* <http://anomalyinfo.com/Stories/1891-february-james-bartley-modern-jonah> Accessed 4.06.2004.

The enigmatic ghost of Mr Gallery is frighteningly scary, as if from gothic novels. As in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings", with the arrival of a mysterious, magical creature, the inhabitants of the coast, struggling with poverty and disease, achieve prosperity, but quickly forget to whom they owe it. Crummey's enigmatic Judah was a prophet who helped the inhabitants of Paradise, struggling with poverty and disease, achieve prosperity. He remains mute until the day he dies and he also tests people's honesty. When Crummey was asked about similarities between his own writing in *Galore* and that of Gabriel Garcia Márquez, he answered: "There's Marquez and then there's me. But I think the thing that gave me the courage to try the book was the fact that I felt like Newfoundland and Newfoundland culture was every bit as rich and bizarre and otherworldly and maddening as the world that Marquez was writing about (...). And I trusted that to create its own uniqueness as I wrote the book"<sup>115</sup>. Therefore, the past of this corner of the earth is real and magical at the same time, and this truly magical past is carried over to the present. As Cynthia Sugars notes, "The "magic" of the past that Crummey invokes as an inherent attribute of Newfoundland reality, is none other than a confirmation of inheritance" (Sugars 12). The Newfoundlanders long had two primary sources of knowledge - the Bible and folklore connected with native mythology. Whale ingestion belongs to both orders. *Galore's* characters, while observing a man in the belly of a whale, quote the Bible, but on the other hand, the image of this creature has additionally mythological meaning. In West Coast native mythology the Native Orca Symbol or Killer Whale symbolizes family, romance, longevity, harmony, travel, commu-

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<sup>115</sup> *The Bat Segundo Show: Michael Crummey* (interview, Michael Crummey discusses *Galore*) <https://www.edrants.com/tag/newfoundland/> Accessed 3.06.2024

nity and protection. He is said to protect those who travel away from home, and to lead them back when the time comes. Perhaps, in the Newfoundland symbolic interpretation, the killer whale saved Judah, “sea orphan” (Crummey 19) and carried him out to the shore to the people. Another magical figure was the ghost of Mister Gallery who haunts many inhabitants of the fishing village and especially his wife. Ghosts are present in Newfoundland folklore, take for example the real and, the same time, supernatural tale *The Ghostly Voyage of Ellen Dower*, featuring an impossible trip Ellen, or rather, her spirit made to her husband’s ice-locked ship in 1872. This and many other magical events do not prevent the author from writing the history. So, Crummey’s magical realism - like Marquez’s one - is historical realism that looks not only towards the future, but towards the present and the future. Gillian Polack, Medievalist, writer and editor, who works with writers on history in fiction, emphasized how the presentation of history depends on the strategy chosen by the author - “The type of story is critical to how history is used in fiction, and the nature of the writer’s interest in story influences the type of story chosen” (Polack 2016,173). Crummey chose a mixed strategy in his world building and narrating: he connected historical fact with magical realism. Probably, the magical phenomena and events fill in the gaps in the historical document and allow us to play with history. Jennifer Bowering Delisle drew attention to an interesting fact of Crummey’s protagonist’s perception of history - maybe this character from *River Thieves* also shows us a certain strategy towards history in *Galore*?

One of Crummey’s main strategies in complicating the past is to highlight the flaws in the historical record. Late in the novel, the protagonist reflects, “two hundred years from now, he knew, some stranger could raise his bones from the earth and put whatever words they liked in his mouth” (2016,43)

Reading *Galore* once again we find out that history is not only the events that have happened in the past, but also the interpretation of these events, our understanding of the past, which may differ. Crummy is aware of this and consistently looks for his own interpretation of Newfoundland's past. *Galore* is an example of his historic fiction which answers an extremely important question: why is this what makes us who we are? Everything we do is rooted in the past. Language, religion, and customs have all been around for hundreds of years. The author himself says of his home province of Newfoundland, "the past is who we are."

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## Summary

The present essay is an attempt to study the fictitious re-imagining of the life of the first British settlers and their next generations in two remote coastal villages (Paradise Deep and Gut) by Michael Crummey (1965), an acclaimed Canadian writer from Newfoundland. Although *Galore* (2009) tells about people and events spanning over two centuries (from the eighteenth to the first two decades of the twentieth), it is not a typical historical novel for re-imagining the past. The characters are placed in a historical context, they speak their local language, in general, they behave and act according to their times but many of them are unusual, just as the events are amazing. The characters and events all the time oscillate between almost documentary truth and unusual fiction. This historical world coloured by magical realism is Crummey's way of world building using history.

**Key words:** Michael Crummey, Newfoundland, historical fiction, magical realism.

## Andrew Suknaski and his prairie world in *Wood Mountain Poems*

Andrew (Andy) Suknaski (1942-2012), a Canadian poet and visual artist, was born of a Polish mother (Julia Karasiński) and a Ukrainian father (Andrew Suknaski) on a small homestead just outside the village of Wood Mountain, in South West Saskatchewan. He left home at sixteen; he travelled, worked across Canada and wrote as he travelled. To develop his interest in visual arts, he studied at the Kootenay School of Art in Nelson, BC. and at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' School of Art and Design, receiving a diploma of Fine Arts from the Kootenay School in 1967. He also attended the University of Victoria, Notre Dame University in Nelson, the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University. In 1969, he founded the underground magazine *Elfin Plot* in Vancouver and created concrete poems, exhibiting at the Expo in Buenos Aires in 1971<sup>116</sup>. From 1977 to 1978, Suknaski was a writer-in-residence at St. John's College, University of Manitoba. His first full collection (he had previously published chapbooks, pamphlets, and Al Purdy's (Alfred Wellington Purdy) anthology *Storm Warning* (1971)), was *Wood Mountain Poems* (1976), encouraged and edited by a well-known Canadian free verse poet Al Purdy, followed by *The Ghosts Call You Poor* (1978) and *In The Name of Narid* (1981). Born in the prai-

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<sup>116</sup> See: Shelley Sweeney, Suknaski, Andrew, in: *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* [http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/suknaski\\_andrew\\_1942-.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/suknaski_andrew_1942-.html) Accessed 10.05.24.

rie, he still returned to it in his dreams during his long-lasting travels. He returned to the place of his birth for ever, when he was mature enough to create a beautiful, wise and sad song of the prairie, connecting First Nations' culture with that of the European newcomers. As Lindy Anne Ledohowski, a Canadian researcher of his writings, notes,

Andrew Suknaski has maintained a strong link to both the ethnic and Western Canadian identity in his poetry throughout his career. Often his works are oral and vernacular, following the rhythms of a regional dialect and an ethnic voice. His poetry recreates the liveliness of the spoken word in the prairie west as he grapples with the past of his own immigrant ancestors and the past of the Aboriginal communities that predated his forbearers on the landscape. His poetry is often both a celebration and a lament for the history and heritage of Western Canada.<sup>117</sup>

To understand a poet and his world in literary expression we must understand him through his land and history, what he experienced under the influence of time and events. Suknaski comes from the prairie world, Saskatchewan, Western Canada, with his private Wood Mountain at the center. In a geographical sense, his Prairie West is the south western interior of Canada, bounded roughly by Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains. It has a continental climate – hot and dry summers and very cold winters. It is a large open area of grassland, hence the name, from Old French *praerie*, Latin *pratium* “meadow”. High grass covers the rolling prairies in the east; short grasses, sage and cacti – the arid high plains to the west. Suknaski's Saskatchewan is in the

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<sup>117</sup> Lindy Ledohowski, Andrew Suknaski, in: *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/andrew-suknaski/> Accessed 10.05.24.

In this place I would like to express gratitude to Lindy Ledohowski, who directed me to her Ph.D. thesis and other important sources on Suknaski and also Weronika Suchacka for giving me *Wood Mountain Poems*.

middle. Tree growth on the high plains is restricted there to the valleys. Moving east, tall forests give way to plains, lowlands and grassy fields. The fertile land of this region, with its dark soil that lies beneath, is the best in Canada. Vast fields of wheat, barley and other crops for a long time have been the region's most iconic sights. Land, space and sky are the distinctive attributes of the region. In the southern part of the province, Wood Mountain Hills are located at a height of 1,013 metres above sea level. His home village, Wood Mountain, is located almost 400 km from Saskatoon. It is built on sedimentary rocks. Flat-topped hills, dissected by coulees, rise some 400 m above the surrounding prairie. David Sauchyn indicates the first inhabitants of this place - "Métis settled on the slopes of Montagne de bois in 1870, building houses from the plentiful poplar trees"<sup>118</sup>. Later the settlers appeared in the emigration of 1840s-90s, which consisted chiefly of Canadians of British heritage.

"Wood Mountain's first European settlers came in the 1870's, when about 35 Métis families moved here after the failure of the Red River Rebellion. Boundary Commission survey teams came through shortly after to mark the 49th parallel. They built the cabins that in 1874 became the first Wood Mountain North-West Mounted Police post (NWMP). Chasing out the whiskey traders didn't take long, and the post was closed the next year".<sup>119</sup>

But "the use of the area by whisky runners and horse thieves prompted the NWMP to purchase the depot in 1876 and maintain a post until 1918. Over 5000 Dakota Sioux and their leader, Sitting Bull, took refuge in this area after the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876"<sup>120</sup>. Suknaskis were the next waves of settlers, the largest,

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<sup>118</sup> David Sauchyn, Wood Mountain, in <https://www.thecanadianencyclopediaclopedia.ca/en/article/wood-mountain> Accessed 11.06.2024.

<sup>119</sup> *Wood Mountain, SK: Our History*, <http://www.woodmountain.ca/history/index.html> Accessed 11.06.2024.

<sup>120</sup> David Sauchyn, Wood Mountain, in <https://www.thecanadianencyclopediaclopedia.ca/en/article/wood-mountain> Accessed 11.06.2024.

which was drawn from many nations and occurred in the 1897-1929 period, with a hiatus associated with WWI; (“[mother] she remembers her Polish village (...) she remembers being 14/when world war one begins (...) all these things drift away from the ship carrying /her to the unknown/new land” (Suknaski 2006, 16); “[father] arrives in moose jaw fall of 1914” (Ibid.,17). By the 1950s the Prairies were far closer to a British Canadian model than to that of any other culture, but they also preserved the culture of Plains peoples. The term “Plains peoples” in Canada means Plains Indians or Indigenous peoples of Canadian Prairies, the Native North American tribes and First Nation band governments who have historically lived on the Interior Plains (Canadian Prairies). The Prairies are distinguished from the rest of Canada by cultural and political traits, in the first place, owing to the oldest influence on Prairie culture by the First Nations, who have lived in the area for millennia. The Prairie plain was conducive to creation of prairie literature. As Laurie Chomany puts it, Western Canadian literature is used interchangeably with the term prairie literature.

This is the literature of the farms, ranches, and bush industry; it is the literature of weather, sky, cycles of nature; it is the literature of struggle, isolation, space. It is also the literature of people whose social structures have changed radically and rapidly. It reflects the people of aboriginal origin, colonialism, pastoral myth, war evacuation camps and only more recently, rapid urban growth. (...) that tone, style, lyricism and regional identification are the criteria used to identify this particular regional literature.<sup>121</sup>

The author of *Voices from the prairie* (1972), in a time when the West was the subject of considerable academic debate, emphasizes

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<sup>121</sup> Laurie Chomany, *Voices from the Prairie : English Teacher’s Relationship to Prairie Literature*, BAsE, University of Lethbridge, 1972, p. 8. [https://www.uleth.ca/dspace/bitstream/handle/10133/1053/Chomany\\_Laurie.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.uleth.ca/dspace/bitstream/handle/10133/1053/Chomany_Laurie.pdf?sequence=1)

the questions of regional identity and regional self-worth in prairie literature and quotes Frye's view on the recognition of the literary element of Canadian culture: "scholarship (...) grows out of a specific environment and is in part a response to it" (Ibid., p. 37). Over the years the situation has changed. As Robert Wardhaugh notes, "by the late 1980s, interest in the Prairies, and in regionalism (...) had waned. Threats to the country's unity, posed by the spectre of Quebec separation and augmented by western grievances, led to a new wave of nationalistic sentiment among Canadian historians". He refers to Ramsay Cook, who "announced in 1983 that "as a tool of analysis, 'regionalism' is a concept whose time is gone" and the idea of the Prairies as a distinct unit worthy of study had, at the very least, diminished. The Editor of *Toward Defining the Prairies* points out the reasons for such changes: "The importance of place as a "defining" element had been so overshadowed by such transcending giants as gender, class, and ethnicity, and so deconstructed by post-structural, postmodern, and postcolonial critics (...)" (2001, 5), and at the same time notes differences in the approach of historians and literary critics. For historians, "Prairie" was no longer an applicable or useful concept for studies, but is still important for literary criticism, it only needs new methods of studying - "Prairies still exist, they assert, as much as any cultural formation "exists". It the Prairie West clearly threatens the "place" of Prairie writers, including the regional basis and consequence of their work" (7). Against the background of these debates of the late 1990s, I return to the poetry of Suknaski.

Andrew Suknaski is Canadian, West Canadian, a man of the prairie. His poems are full of the spirit of the flat land below the hills (mountains), so the first volume of his verses was titled *Wood Mountain Poems* (1976)<sup>122</sup>, and the last one was titled *There Is No*

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<sup>122</sup> The first version of *Wood Mountain Poems* was published in 1974, the next, after a very thorough editing by Al Purdy, one of Canada's best known

*Mountain* (2007).<sup>123</sup> His poetry is a vivid example of balanced proportions between geopoetics, ecocritical, regionalist and post-colonial approaches; rooted in the land, often in a specific place and time, it is qualified as “Canadian prairie literature, regional literature” (Lilburn 2006, 9-10). Although the landscape is not the central symbol of each of his individual poems and he rarely reveals sharp sensitivity to the natural world, the main subject of the poems, the geographical setting, identifies the persona (the human as unified object, which looks very like the real Suknaski), the characters of his poetic texts, and at the same time makes them an integral part of the prairie. The emotional and spiritual content of his poetry is entirely in harmony with the environment. Nancy Duvall Hargrove, an expert in Eliot's poetry, points out that Eliot's landscapes are based on personal significances as well as his own experiences (1978,26-27). Talking about his experiences and presenting how they define him as a person and poet. She pays attention to how Eliot in his essay *The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet* (1960) states this relationship: “ (...) my poetry, like that of other poets, shows traces of every environment in which I have lived”. The researchers of Cabral de Melo Neto, a Brazilian poet and diplomat, note that in his *poems of Landscapes with Figures* (1956) the geographical settings of the poems alternate between Pernambuco and Spain. “All landscapes are described as dry, empty and rough, and the characters that inhabit them are mostly dead or destitute”. In the homonymous poem *Education by Stones* Melo Neto describes “the influence of a dry and

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and most beloved poets, Suknaski's friend, was published two years later. Interesting information about this editorial work can be read in: Weingarther, J.A., “Stories in the Poems”: Al Purdy and the Editing of Andrew Suknaski's *Wood Mountain Poems*, *Canadian Poetry*, vol. 7/3 2013, pp. 68-75.

<sup>123</sup> Andrew Suknaski, *There Is No Mountain: Selected Poems of Andrew Suknaski*, edited with an introduction by Rob McLennan, Chaudiere Books 2007.

stony *landscape on its inhabitants'* survivor personalities and their concise use of language" (Namorato 2008, 82-83). Suknaski seems to exhibit a similar approach to presenting his characters: the vast, thinly populated, lonely plain, "green vast meadows with forests" (Suknaski 1967, 54) and green, yellow and red poplars win them over to silence. Even the rustle of crushed leaves and bird chirping disturb this overall silence.

Indian summer  
And poplars flare into the unimaginable  
Oranges reds and yellows  
In the nearby willows  
A pheasant's rusty cry rasps the silence (...) Poem to Sitting Bull (64)

The silence of the prairie environment makes its inhabitants taciturn, reserved in speech. The farmers usually work for a long time alone with nature, saying little, sometimes chatting in bars after their hard work. Mostly, their dialogues are short and concrete. Moreover, the persona's family is not closely bound, its members are not welcome interlocutors. Very often he has nothing to say to his father and brothers and withdraws into silence:

we have nothing to talk about  
any more  
and the silence  
as you thumb through another copy of *jughead*  
only confirms that we are strangers  
to one another... *Ode to the Oldest Brother* (117)

The social and cultural history of this region engendered this silence as well. The adaptability of the Plains Peoples to their natural environment have made them good hunters. For several thousand years, buffalo hunting was conducted primarily with the use of spears and atlatls, on the plains of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. In the new era they continued to rely primarily on nomadic buffalo hunting. Very often in *Wood Mountain Po-*

*ems* the Indian hunters are tracking - noiselessly, light and shrewdly, as in the following poem:

mishmish and hunter's sons  
crawling soundlessly through grass -  
only the sound of wind  
only the song of the cricket  
while mustahyah  
crushes crisp leaves and berries  
in his mouth (...) *Mishmish* (46)

On cold winter days the endless and white plain, formerly the prehistoric "Indian deserted house», uninhabited in present, not intruded upon by any sound, seems to whisper in the persona's imagination, expressing sympathy with the returning to their homes Sandia Man, one of the precursors of Plain Peoples<sup>124</sup>, and voicing the inevitability of the lost:

sandia man  
silent ancestor of a people who travelled over  
northern trails beaten by mammoths and later buffalo  
and then finally by one another henday  
sharing brazile tobacco with the blackfoot  
to write in his daily journal august 18/1754  
of a blackfoot man in central Saskatchewan (...)  
Sandia man (pale ancestral ghost across face  
Of shugmanitou laughing me out of an evening dream)  
November 1973 and wood mountain village moves into storm  
Two thirds of the people gone now  
and snow drifts into dunes over the tall grass reclaiming  
the place -

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<sup>124</sup> Sandia Man, a cave in the mountains has yielded artifacts of the so-called "Sandia Man," a prehistoric Indian group that is thought to date to 23,000 BCE . In Pueblo mythology the Sandia Mountains were sacred, marking the southern boundary of the Tiwa-speaking region.

Sandia Man, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/766964/Sandia-Man> Accessed 12.06.24.

something knuckles its cold way along eaves  
and seems to whisper: you are returning  
what kind of faith lures you here to build a home  
within the dying ?  
wind again along dry walls and wail of shugmanitou<sup>125</sup>  
near dimitru eruna's farm on the village edge (...). *Sandia Man* (71)

In the above fragment, the characteristics of the place are combined with time, or rather times - very distant past and obvious visually now present, both drawn into dramatic history. The Black Foot mentioned in the poem does not yet know the reserves and is only beginning to contact the first European settlers. By the early 18th century the North American Blackfoot tribe were pedestrian buffalo hunters living in the Saskatchewan valley about 400 miles east of the Rocky Mountains. They lived as nomads on the Plains, using wooden travois drawn by dogs to transport their goods, including their painted buffalo-hide tepees. They were known as one of the strongest and most aggressive military powers on the north-western Plains. The Blackfoot in Canada entered into agreements with the government, such as Treaty 7 in 1877, which created a reserve for each of the three bands.<sup>126</sup>

It is quite natural that silence is far better perceived as silence (the state or quality of being silent) against a sonorous, hollow background. Suknaski used this contrast: the overwhelming silence of majestic eternity (the silence that stretches into eternity) and a sudden, imposingly deep and full sound in his metaphorical vision of the past:

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<sup>125</sup> The author used polysemic meaning: 1. Aboriginal supernatural being that controls nature, a spirit, deity; 2. Manitou is a contemporary French heavy equipment manufacturer that makes forklifts, cherry pickers, telehandlers, and other heavy equipment. He himself gives another meaning in the comment: "shugmanitou: coyote in the dakota language" (Suknaski 2006, 22).

<sup>126</sup> See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Blackfoot-people> Accessed 11.06.2024.

and i try to imagine those who passed here so long ago  
possibly becoming this dust  
i breathe  
try to imagine how prairie could once become a brown sea  
following a sound greater than thunder  
a sea shaking the earth  
beneath an Indian's feet (...). *Indian Site on the Edge of Tonita Pasture* (77)

The wind seems to be a rival of prairie silence. "He" is the one of the characters of the poetical narration, and a storyteller as well. That is so, *Wood Mountain Poems* are narrated, they resemble oral speech: a chat, anecdote, small talk, chance talk, conversation, talking with myself, my dreams and memories: "only the wind knows for certain" (78) "who passed here so long ago" (77) and "who were the ancestors that camped here?" (78)

Today dimitru silently seated in the motionless rocking chair  
gazes east beyond the window far  
over the dying village - thoughts drifting far beyond  
the broken corner post and crude flat stone  
on the hordenchuk farm by twelve mile lake  
while something stirs through his distant thoughts -  
something of the homestead whispering in the language of wind  
along eaves to become  
listless murmurings within the late afternoon dream  
in the pool of memory (...) *Leila Hordenchuk* (32)

(...) passing this telegraph office here  
no messages arrive  
till wind rises (...) *Leaving home* (120)

In the above fragments - as in a kaleidoscope, the historical inhabitants of this land appear one after the other. Next to the names of prehistoric people and Indian tribes, there are names of newer settlers: Ukrainian, Polish, English, Irish, German, Romanian... The old inhabitants mainly hunt, the new ones - sow and gather, trying "the homestead to make a home" (35), dreaming about great crop in the "prairie empire", as Suknaski's Lovenzanna:

before i die i want to harvest the biggest crop  
that ever been seen in the south country. *Jim Lovenzanna* (28)

Prairie is a great source of imagery for a poem, Suknaski's Saskatoon green empire with its inhabitants also provides the powerful and nostalgic images of returning past memories in his poetic stories. Rob Mclennan comments on this topic:

Suknaski's poems continually return to that edge to acknowledge the stories around him that might otherwise have been lost, writing of his own family histories and those of friends and neighbours, to various of the other nations and nationalities around him, including the immediate Sioux (ever aware of his immigrant guilt), the Chinese, Polish and Ukrainian immigrants, and various others of the native peoples. It is important to note that the word "honour" is repeated throughout his poems, as is the word "remember." Suknaski does remember, including stories of Big Bear, Sitting Bull and Crowfoot, Gabriel Dumont and the Teton Sioux, much in the way other writers (...).<sup>127</sup>

Another Canadian critic emphasizes linguistic multiculturalism of *Wood Mountain Poems*, which he sees as "multiculturalism in action".

With dogged determination he packs his poems with Ukrainian and Dakota Indian words or with the broken English of accent-laden ethnics. In his own way, he is defending multiculturalism as part of the Canadian literary reality. His daily language is the dialect of prairie people shouted in beer halls, in fields, at church dinners.<sup>128</sup>

The poet's descriptions of the prairie, the place, absorb time and people to give voice to the conquered nations, and in this the poet was ahead of his time, taking up the matters of future post-colonial criticism which points out generalized, reductive narra-

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<sup>127</sup> Rob Mclennan, Andrew Suknaski, Poet of the Prairies, <https://www.mtls.ca/issue7/writings-essay-mclennan.php> Accessed 12.06.2024.

<sup>128</sup> George Melnyk, <http://www.enotes.com/topics/andrew-suknaski>, Accessed 23.10.2015.

tives of the Other and ask us to instead see the nuanced cultures, experiences, and peoples that colonization ignores. In the afterword to the first edition of *Wood Mountain Poems*, in many poems of this volume, the author underlines the presence of his great vaguely divided guilt: the guilt of a newcomer towards the first nation, the Cree (depriving the Indians of their ancestral homes and enclosing them on reservations, rooting them out), as well as the guilt of a traitor of his own Polish-Ukrainian ethnicity. From the other side, from this volume, decolonization of the Canadian prairies, ecocriticism and geopoetics begin. Saskatchewan's Wood Mountain is the "place where the soul goes/ to lie among buried bones/and ancestral dreams" (Suknaski 2006,53), and the local farmers "leave unfinished beer for the ghosts at trails end" (52), most often for the ghosts of Indian ancestors.

Suknaski's moral philosophy is in harmony with Nature and the Earth. With the help of his Indian characters who are knitted together with the land (very often real historical persons), the author contemplates the man-earth relationship. He expressively locates man in the subordinate position to the earth: "we came from the earth/ and our bodies must go back to the earth/ our mother" (53). Nevertheless, this majestic geocentricism of *Wood Mountain Poems* does not agree with imperial geopolitics or geoidology. A human being, knitted together with the land, forms an integrated whole with it. Suknaski's Indian Chief points out such prairie wisdom, judging those who destroyed this bond:

*the earth was created with the assistance of the sun, and  
it should be left as it was...the land was made without  
lines of demarcation, and it is no man's business to  
divide it...the earth and myself are of one mind. (56) 'MELVIN  
GREEN/ONEIDA INDIAN FIGHTING FOR A PLACE TO DIE'<sup>129</sup>*

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<sup>129</sup> The motto of the poem is *Chief Joseph of the nez percés's* citation. I keep the author's italics.

As long as the earth becomes a place of divisions, confrontations and extermination of one people by another, geography takes a historical shape, and the Indian hero, vested with a collective consciousness, fights for the right to a local time on his earth:

this my right  
to chronicle the meaning of these vast plains  
in a geography of blood  
and failure  
making them live. (76) *INDIAN SITE ON THE EDGE OF TONITA  
PASTURE*

Suknaski's prairie geopoetry and regional poetry has a very visible mark of ethnicity, historical turn, new regionalism, characterized by typical double-pole local narration. Elżbieta Rybicka understands a similar kind of narration as an "emancipation strategy and critical response to Great Ethnic Stories from one side, and as a reaction to the globalist atopy and non - places" (2006, 322).

Suknaski's *Wood Mountain Poems* are absolutely rooted in the prairie. They reflect the nature of life as it truly exists in Western Canada, a kind of marginalized life, which has long been silent on the prairies. They are also rooted in the immigrant culture, in oral and mythological tradition of First Nations. He was the first who wrote in the 1970s about his guilt, and European settlers' guilt, towards Aboriginal peoples. "The first publication of *Wood Mountain Poems* in 1976 marked a beginning in de-colonization of the Western Canadian literary imagination" (Lilburn 2006, 9). In the silence of the green grass and yellow-wheat prairie he heard and felt the painful cries of the First Nations. He broke the silence, as a thunder in his slow, quiet and silent verses.

Suknaski's poetry is rooted in their author's land, like the author himself. "For Suknaski, perpetually leaving and returning [to his homestead], the land itself is important to him, from his father and mother as well as the physicality of his home base of

Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan (elevation 1,013 metres), close to the Cypress Hills (the highest point between Labrador and the Rocky Mountains), site of the infamous Cypress Hills massacre<sup>130</sup>.

leaving home  
i am always leaving home  
leaving now the lot i thought was mine  
leaving wood mountain  
where wamblee [eagle in Dakota]and his mate return  
once a year from the badlands  
to circle high over the old post - the wamblee's shadow  
huge enough to span Indian graves (...)  
leaving now  
the lone hunter from the reserve  
his .303 often left on the village edge  
he often forgetting where he left it (...)  
leaving home having arrived (...)  
leaving home and shugmanitou  
the cry of the hounds  
drawing nearer *Leaving home* (120-121)

His pictures of his native land and home are very expressive and real, thanks to the details typical of this place - neighbors, animals, plants, voices and sounds. Suknaski's older friend Eli Mendel, a Canadian poet and editor, just like him, an emigrant's son, born and raised in the Saskatchewan prairies, movingly reports on the realism of *Wood Mountain Poems*, emphasizing "its terrible authenticity, its powerful directness, its voices and places echoing in its time and truth" (1977,69).

A portrait of the Indian chief Sitting Bull (1831-1890) became the cover of *Wood Mountain Poems*. Today Wood Mountain is a peaceful area, but during the days of Sitting Bull this was one of the most politically volatile spots in North America. This famous

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<sup>130</sup> Rob McLennan, Andrew Suknaski, Poet of the Prairies, <https://www.mtls.ca/issue7/writings-essay-mclennan.php> Accessed 12.06.2024.

Sioux medicine man was a chief, under whom the Sioux peoples united in their struggle against the encroachment of settlers on the northern Great Plains. Sitting Bull and as many as 5000 of his Sioux (Lakota) followers took refuge in Wood Mountain from the U.S. Army after the battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. Despite this and other his victories, famine eventually made Sitting Bull and his followers surrender to the law of the White Man. Suknaski still had the opportunity to listen to the stories of eye-witnesses of these events and those to whom they passed on their experiences. The presence of these bloody conflicts was obvious, therefore, it is no wonder that a poet with a sensitive soul and great moral responsibility often talks to the ghost of Sitting Bull, mixing stories, dreams and reality.

Sitting bull  
Who dreamed of the possible  
Union of Indians spanning the plains west to  
The shining mountains –  
i wonder if his dream floated like frosted helium  
before his eyes  
the day sun gleamed bright across waiting guns  
while men dragged him feet-first the tepee (...)  
he may not have had time to remember  
the words he left us with at wood mountain:  
*the great spirit provided for both white and red men  
but white man has grown powerful  
and defies the gods –  
is trying to undo all wakantanka has done*<sup>131</sup> (65-65) *Poem to Sitting Bull*

Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh, experts and researchers of prairie writing, include Suknaski among the “prominent authors who address similar themes [about prairie] in diverse ways” (2005,9). They point out that, “[u]p to the late 1990s, critics of Canadian prairie literature (...) seem to have constructed

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<sup>131</sup> I keep the author's italics.

a category of “Canadian prairie writing” in which landscape dominates culture, and geography effaces history. The creative writers themselves, however, have repeatedly brought history, geography and literature together” (8). Andrew Suknaski is a convincing example of this.

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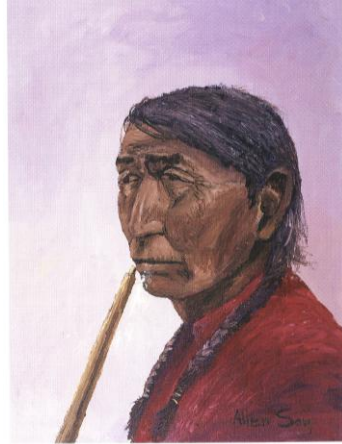
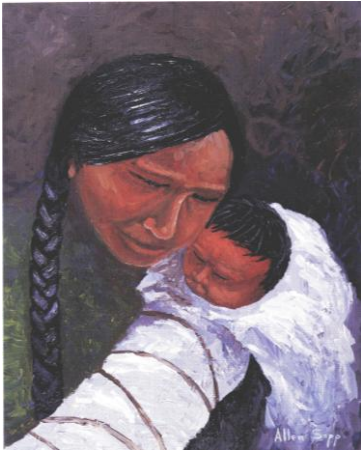
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## Summary

The essay analyses the artistic prairie world of *Wood Mountain Poems* by Andrew/Andy Suknaski. The study showed that his Saskatchewan prairie exist both in space and in time, and history, geography and literature are brought together; the present time effaces history and geopoetics is related with geopolitics. This poetic volume not only "marked a beginning in decolonization of the Western Canadian literary imagination" but also outlined paths for future postcolonial interpretations.

**Key words:** Andrew Suknaski, prairie writing, geography, history, imaginative world, First Nations' question.



Source: A. Sapp, *I Heard the Drums*, Toronto–Buffalo 1996.

## **Indian endurance in Andrew Suknaski's poems and Allen Sapp's painting**

The artistic meeting of two prominent and honourable Canadian men at the point of Indian endurance took place in Western Canada. Both of them – Allan Saposkum (later Allen Sapp) and Andrew (later Andy) Suknaski – were born in the prairies of Saskatchewan. Allen Sapp (1928-2015) was born to his Indian parents on Red Pheasant Reserve, a reserve of the Cree Nation that is located 33 km south of North Battleford (West Central Saskatchewan), in an area known as Eagle Hills; Andy Suknaski (1942-2012) – was born to his Polish mother and Ukrainian father on a small homestead just outside the village of Wood Mountain, in South West Saskatchewan, in the place where the European Second Nations deprived the Indians of their ancestral homes and built their new homesteads (incidentally, the newcomers were widely represented by the Ukrainian and Polish peasants). Only 450 km (a short distance in the vast territories of Canada) separated the places of their birth. Both of them: the eldest child of some of the first emigrants from Eastern Europe and the orphan at the reserve (Allen's mother died of tuberculosis when he was young and he was raised by his grandparents) – grew up in severe poverty. The biographical sources inform:

Allen Saposkum, who later shortened his last name to Sapp, was a sickly child who spent most of his childhood in bed as the result of spinal meningitis. As the result of his illness, Sapp's formal education was limited and he could barely read or write in English (Thompson 2004, 119).

Similarly, Andrew Suknaski, in the close homestead in which he grew up he experienced only Polish and Ukrainian, and fulfilling farming duties in his childhood, compounded by a hard domestic atmosphere, did not favour his education. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Saposkum had a happier and more appealing childhood. After all, the artist states this in his autobiographical book: "I was lucky: I was born into a loving family, whose roots gave me a strong sense of identity" (Sapp 1996, 4). He never learned to read or write but found refuge and satisfaction in drawing pictures. His Nokum (grandmother) was very warm and caring, moreover, she taught him to value his heritage and always encouraged him to continue his painting. She believed that one day he would become a real artist and imparted in him a faith in his talent. Being bound by illness to his bed at the reserve, Sapp received a more traditional education, and was taught his Cree language<sup>132</sup> and culture; he could speak very little English even when he became adult.

It was from his grandmother, Maggie Soonias, that Sapp developed his sense of self, his values, his spiritual guidance, and his respect to his Cree heritage. As a child, his favourite activity was drawing and sketching. Maggie Soonias made Sapp's small confined world a place of traditional storytelling that aided the development of his inherent love for drawing. (Thompson 2004, 119)

Traditionally, the Cree Indians don't name a child when he or she is born. Instead the community waits until that child does something unique or special, or the child is in exceptional circumstances, and then gives him or her a name to represent that habit or that event. The Red Pheasant Cree gave a real Indian

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<sup>132</sup> Cree language is the Algonquian language of the Cree, closely related to Montagnais. Many words in English have been adopted from Algonquian languages, e.g. moccasin, moose, and toboggan. Origin: from Canadian French *Cris*, abbreviation of *Cristinaux*, from Algonquian *kiristinō*. - *ABBYY Lingvo 3x. Electronic Dictionary*. Build: 14. 0.0. 715

name to Sapp when he was eight years old and suffering from a childhood illness. The future artist was given his Indian name through detailed information received during the spiritual experience of an old matriarch, his grandmother's sister Nootokaso/Nootoka – this name was Kiskayetum. In English the name is translated as “he perceives it”. Perhaps this name (to perceive - to become aware of (something) through the senses, especially the sight; recognize or observe) heralded his special powers of imagination and expression. Subsequently, the artistic way of the self-educated artist began at the reserve. As an adult, in 1960, seeking better living conditions for his wife and his son off-reserve, he moved to North Battleford, to pursue a career as a professional artist. As luck would have it, one day he met Dr A.B. Gonor. In 1966 the doctor arranged for him to be tutored by Wynona Mulcaster, an art professor at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Gonor continued to work with Sapp, encouraging him to paint reserve life as he knew it.

Andrew Suknaski left home when he was not yet seventeen in order to study the word and his own I. He travelled and worked across Canada and the whole world, from England to Australia, before returning home seventeen years later, to stay. All along he wrote as he travelled. He also acquired knowledge and skill at art institutions. To develop his interest in visual arts, he studied at the Kootenay School of Art in Nelson, BC. and at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' School of Art and Design, receiving a diploma of Fine Arts from the Kootenay School in 1967. Moreover, he attended the University of Victoria, Notre Dame University in Nelson, the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University<sup>133</sup>. His creative activity re-

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<sup>133</sup> See: *Shelley Sweeney, Suknaski, Andrew in: The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* [http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/suknaski\\_andrew\\_1942-.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/suknaski_andrew_1942-.html) accessed 10.11.14.

sulted in the production of original paintings, drawings and carvings, but the magical power of the word fascinated him more and more. As Kemeny Babineau, a Canadian poet, writer and essayist from Ontario noticed:

Beginning his career as a fine artist (painting, drawing, clay, wax sculpture) Suknaski soon found he was writing haiku and pressing them into clay pots. The writing started late but it had begun. There would be many more words to follow and, just like in grade one, when Suknaski heard English for the first time, he had some catching up to do.<sup>134</sup>

So we see: both began as visual painters, both possessed special powers of imagination and expression, both were looking up to the realistic pictures and events of their childhood and early years, but Suknaski was above all a poet and Sapp was above all a painter. Both were recipients of many prestigious Saskatchewan and national awards. Did they ever meet in real life? Probably not, but they met the First Nations remaining in existence in their creative works.

The life at the reserve was what Sapp knew best of all. It is no wonder that Dr Gonor recommended him to paint the things he knew and remembered from the reserve. These Indian realities were the basic nature of his identity. Dr Gonor noticed this earlier than Sapp himself did. The artist needed great success in his first show which Mulcaster and Dr Gonor arranged in 1968, and where he sold most of his paintings. The public response to Sapp's pictures extended his showings to other major Canadian and American cities as well as to England, even more strengthening his Cree's I. Sapp more and more returns to his prior Indian identity, which was partly "shortened" by him in Battleford - at any rate, in his outward appearance and customs. As Sapp's biographer recalls:

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<sup>134</sup> Kemeny Babineau, *A Bridge to Naridive: The Poetry of Andrew Suknaski* <http://www.ottawater.com/poetics/poetics06/06Babineau.html> accessed 15.10.15.

Moving to North Battleford, they [he and his wife] rented the upper story of a house, and Sapp re-created himself into an image he felt would be accepted in the white culture. He cut his hair short, and wore an ill-suited fill coat and horn-rimmed glasses. He began to paint. He painted simple scenes of mountains, streams, and animals and sold them for a few dollars apiece on the street (...). (Thompson 2004, 119)

A beginner in visual art, Sapp tried to satisfy the white culture in order to survive, in some way to the detriment of his Cree ancestry. But after his first successes Sapp

(...) reunited himself to his heritage, as not only the descendent of chiefs Red Pheasant and Poundmaker, but as the grandson of Maggi Soonias. He braided his hair and again wore boots and jeans, except when at powwows in his colourful beaded regalia. Dancing at powwows and participating in traditional ceremonies was Sapp's way to remain true to himself and his grandmother's teachings. (Thompson 2004, 120)

Sapp's paintings reconstruct his life at the reserve in a realistic way. Mostly made in acrylics, sometimes in oil, very colourful and bright, they center on family and community. A lot of his canvases form a Child Cycle. Among them are the following: *Native Child with Feather*, N.D., acrylic, 10x8 (Portrait of an aboriginal child with braids and a feather in her hair)<sup>135</sup>; *Nice Day to Play*, 1983, acrylic, 10x12 (Summer scene, blue sky, four kids playing ball. There is a well in the middle ground, and a house with three people and a dog in the background); *Kid Has Two Dogs*, 1981, acrylic, 24x36 (Winter, mostly grey color scene, house and horses and dogs in background; a dog is a habitué of Sapp's paintings); *Brother and Sister Playing*, 1976, acrylic, 16x20 (Winter scene. A boy and a girl, presumably siblings, are playing outside

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<sup>135</sup> This and the next photos of canvases with description were taken from: Allen Sapp, *I Heard the Drums*, Toronto, Buffalo: Stoddart 1996, as well as from [http://www.allensapp.com/about/the\\_life\\_and\\_art\\_of\\_allen\\_sapp.html](http://www.allensapp.com/about/the_life_and_art_of_allen_sapp.html) accessed 15.10.15.

of a house); *One Boy Climbing a Tree*, acrylic, 40.6 x 30.5; *Playing hockey*, acrylic, 60x78; *Lil' Fellow Watching His Dad*, 1994, acrylic, 55x85 (Winter scene, a man cutting wood, a little boy and a dog watching); *Playing Hockey at Sundown*, 1995, acrylic, 60.96x60.96 ("A little bit of ice behind the house would be all that was needed for a few children to play hockey" (Sapp 1996, 52). An amusing sundown, a cabin in the background, two dogs not far from the children); *Two Lil' Kids Sliding/Boys sledging*, 1993, acrylic, 40.6x50.8 (Beautiful carefree childhood! One boy is knee-deep in snow and holding his sleigh, the second is happily sliding); *Lil' Fellows Playing*, 1990, acrylic, 40x50 (A little Indian boy with a little sled and a dog). The last two were chosen by UNICEF to be a part of the 1996 card series, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary<sup>136</sup>. All of them are presented from the child's perspective.

The overwhelming majority of Sapp's paintings reflect Cree activities at Red Pheasant. First of all the author presents the people closest to him: Granny, mother, father, siblings, but also neighbours, acquaintances, friends or anybody he ever met. For example, *Springtime at Red Pheasant Reserve*, 1972, acrylic, 24 x 18, shows his beloved Granny, Maggie Soonias, feeding chickens in her yard. She is wearing a red shirt, with one black, one brown, and two white chickens at her feet. There is a forest in the background. *My Grandfather Stretching a Weasel Skin*, 1993, acrylic, 40.6 x 50.8 (Brown-grey scene. An old Indian man sitting and working in a cabin with a hammer, stretching the skin which could be used to make clothing and moccasins); *Father Bringing in Groceries*, 1970, acrylic, 20x16, apparently presents his father standing at

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<sup>136</sup> Allan Sapp's life-long love for children and his desire to help them was recognized by UNICEF (the only organization within the United Nation system dedicated exclusively to the welfare of children), when, after UNICEF's careful selection processes for greeting card designs four of his paintings were selected: *Puppis* (in 1986), *Nocum Coming to Visit*, *Lil' Fellows Playing*, *Two Lil' Kids Sliding* (all in 1996).

night-time in the doorway of a house. There is a sledge to the left of him. This is a typical winter scene at Red Pheasant.

A part of Sapp's paintings reflects the Cree's traditional activities: hunting, fishing, cutting wood, gathering roots, berries, and seeds, knitting, cooking etc. *Bringing Jumping Deer Home*, 1969, acrylic, 18x24, is one such canvas. It is a winter scene with a clouded sky. A man on a horse is dragging a deer with a rope attached to the horse towards a house on the horizon line. As the historical source informs:

Prior to signing the treaty [Treaty 6, between the Queen and bands of Cree in 1876] Chief Wuttunee (Porcupine) and his Cree band hunted and fished along the Battle River, and as settlers moved into the Battleford region where they conducted trade. (...) In 1878 the band settled on their reserve in the Eagle Hills, where the land was good and there was enough forest to enable them to hunt.<sup>137</sup>

*Nokum Making Bannock*, 1988, acrylic, 60x91 (Nokum is sitting near the fire and making round bannock; there are few versions of this motif)<sup>138</sup>; *Finished Cooking Bannock*, 1971, acrylic, 60.9 x 45.7 (An old woman, Sapp's Nokum is sitting near the fire and baking bannock); *Making Beadwork*, 1974, acrylic, 40.6 x 50.8 (A woman sitting and doing beadwork with native motifs) - all present traditional cooking.

A great number of paintings present new activities which were cultivated at the reserve by newcomers. It is worth mention-

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<sup>137</sup> Christian Thompson, *Red Pheasant First Nation*, in: *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, 2006. [http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/red\\_pheasant\\_first\\_nation.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/red_pheasant_first_nation.html) accessed 21.10.15.

<sup>138</sup> Bannock, native Cree bread, made from flour and baked on a camp fire or in an oven. In Northern America, the dish was quickly adopted by indigenous peoples after it was introduced by fur traders. In order to free up cooking equipment for other jobs, the Cree and other First Nations utilized the less common technique of cooking their bannock skewered on a stick.

ing that an Indian Reserve was (and remains) a tract of land set aside under the treaty agreements for the exclusive use of an Indian band. Band members possessed the right to live on reserve lands, but the European colonizers tried to “civilize” Aboriginal peoples by introducing them to agriculture, Christianity and a sedentary way of life. The reserve system was, in fact, a government-sanctioned displacement of the First Nations. At the time of Sapp’s childhood these changes were stable. That is why we see Sapp’s fellow tribesmen harvesting, cutting and drying hay, threshing, milking cows etc. *Getting the Cows a Cold Drink*, 1968, Acrylic, 16x20 (Winter scene. A man holding an axe near a small pool of water. Multiple cows surround the man); *Loading Hay*, 1991, Acrylic, 12x16 (Winter scene, a man is loading hay into a hayrack with a pitchfork); *Taking Water Home*, 1975, Acrylic, 24x36 (Winter scene, a man on a sleigh with two horses and a water barrel on the back. The man is wearing a traditional red shirt); *Milking a Cow*, 1968, Acrylic, 20x16 (Indoor scene. A man crouched down milking a cow. There is a lantern hanging from the ceiling – a sign of civilization); *Men Threshing*, 1970, Acrylic, 24x36 (Summer scene, blue clouded sky. Golden field, with a hay rack and thresher. A man is standing on top of the hay rack feeding hay into the thresher); *Planting Potatoes*, 1986, acrylic, 45x60 (A man working with a hand plow pulled by a horse, an old woman (Nokum) and a child (Allen as a child) have buckets in their hands; beautiful spring sky with clouds, Sapp is the master in painting the sky); *Paintings of Red Pheasant Reserve*. Collage, 1971, acrylic, 18x24 (A compound of small paintings surrounding a slightly larger painting, reflecting everyday life at Red Pheasant).

The Indian painter preserved in colours the traditional entertainment at the reserve. *Dance Hall at Stoney Reserve*, 1969, Acrylic, 30x48 (Winter scene, Indian people entering a dance hall) reflects the traditional Indian inclination for dancing, even on snow or in

a primitive log cabin; *Getting Ready to Sing*, 1990, acrylic, 18x24 (Summer scene with summer dance, line of tents and tipis (Indian tents), with four dancers standing nearby. Next to them there is a man holding a drum. In the immediate foreground there is a woman with a blue scarf sitting next to a pot hanging over the fire); *Pow Wow at the Battlefords*, 1971, Acrylic, 30x48 (Summer scene, cloudy sky with light green forest background; tipis set up from the foreground to the background with people milling around; a woman cooking by a fire in the foreground. A man dressed in ceremonial feathers in middle ground). It must be mentioned that Allen Sapp himself for a very long time (as long as his feet allowed) continued to dance at powwows<sup>139</sup>. *The Round Dance*, 1987, acrylic, 101.6x152.4 (Three men with hand drums in the foreground, dancers with joined hands in a circle in a log cabin in the background). The Round dance is usually held indoors in different homes. *Sun Dance on the reserve*, 1992, acrylic, 121.9x182.8 (People are praying, a tall centre pole (sacred) in the foreground). Sun Dances are sacred to the Cree. As Sapp notes, "At Sun Dance, prayers are said for all people and vows to Manito, the Great Spirit. Those participating will fast for two days and nights, and there is also singing and dancing" (Sapp 1996, 3).

Allen Sapp's paintings give us an intimate portrait of his own people and their determination to survive. The artist strives to capture and preserve these forgotten scenes of the Saskatchewan First Nations's heritage for us and subsequent generations. Moreover, Sapp himself has become a testimony to Indian endurance, showing a great ability to continue with an unpleasant and difficult situation.

A white man, Suknaski, in a similar way, with the help of art, preserved the Indian endurance in a good many of his poems; but

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<sup>139</sup> Powwow - a North American Indian ceremony involving feasting and dancing.

his volume *Wood Mountain Poems* (1976), with a portrait of an Indian on the cover, has changed the way of approaching the Aboriginal people in white Canadian literature. For a long time there have been two traditional ways of literary presentation of Indians, or a dual pattern of their image, named by Margaret Atwood "Victor/Victim" (Atwood 1991, 91). The *Indian-as-victim of white men* (e.g. George Ryga's play, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, 1967) and the *Indian-as-victor of white men* (e.g. E.J. Pratt's long narrative poem, *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, 1940), both were *straight and monochrome* and eliminated the mixing of different qualities, a rich palette of colours. A new settler, Suknaski could perceive Indian predestination, suffering and weakening, but at the same time their great will for life, and to fight for their existence. His concern for the First Nations and their place in Wood Mountain feature strongly in his literary works. Like Sapp's painting, Suknaski's poetry is realistic, regional.

*Wood Mountain Poems* are based on the cultural history of this prairie region. The adaptability of the Aboriginal People to their natural environment made them good hunters. For several thousand years, buffalo hunting was conducted primarily with the use of spears and atlatls, on the plains of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. In the new era they continued to rely primarily on nomadic buffalo hunting. When almost all the buffaloes were killed as the result of uncontrolled hunting by newcomers, the First Nations hunted other game. "Traditionally, the Woodland Cree, also called Swampy Cree or Maskegon, relied for subsistence on hunting, fowling, fishing, and collecting wild plant foods. They preferred hunting larger game such as caribou (reindeer), moose, bear, and beaver (...)." <sup>140</sup> At the reserves deer (as Sapp showed), elk (a large deer), wolves, coyotes, lynx (a wild cat), rabbits, gophers, ducks and prairie chickens (as Sapp showed)

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<sup>140</sup> Cree <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Cree> accessed 21.10.15.

were hunted for food. They continue the traditional way of life, based on hunting, fishing and trapping. Very often in *Wood Mountain Poems* the Indian hunters are tracking – noiselessly, light and shrewdly, as in the following poem:

mishmish and hunter's sons  
Crawling soundlessly through grass –  
Only the sound of wind  
Only the song of the cricket  
While mustahyah  
Crushes crisp leaves and berries (...). *Mishmish* (Suknaski 2006, 46)

In another poem, on cold winter days the endless and white plain, formerly the prehistoric “Indian deserted house”, uninhabited at present, not intruded upon by any sound, seems to whisper in the persona’s imagination, expressing sympathy with the returning to their homes of the Sandia Man, one of the precursors of Plains People<sup>141</sup>, and voicing the inevitability of the loss:

**Sandia man**

Silent ancestor of a people who travelled over  
Northern trails beaten by mammoths and later buffalo  
And then finally by one another henday  
Sharing brazile tobacco with the blackfoot<sup>142</sup> (...). *Sandia Man* (Suknaski 2006, 70)

Both of them – Suknaski and Sapp are the documentarians of their own past. While the native artist is concentrated on his private “territory” and “time”, and recreates the intimate facts of living at the Cree reserve, the regional poet combines intimate space-time with historical deepness and latitude, which goes be-

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<sup>141</sup> Sandia Man, a prehistoric Indian group that is thought to date to 23,000 BCE.

<sup>142</sup> The Blackfeet were the closest neighbours, rivals and enemy of the Cree. The Blackfoot nation is made up of four tribes. They include the Piegan, Siksika, Northern Piegan, and Kainai or Blood Indians.

yond his private Woodmountain. He painted realistic portraits of his multicultural community, with the Indian past and present. Dakota (Sioux), Blackfoot, Cree, Assiniboine, Nez Percé and many other Indian tribes and people take up residence on the pages of Suknaski's volume. Well-known historical figures are the heroes of his poems. The history of Sitting Bull<sup>143</sup> and his Sioux tribe has become a recurrent motif in such poems as: *The Teton Sioux and 1879 Prairie Fire*, *The Sun Dance at Wood Mountain*, *Poem to Sitting Bull and His Son Crowfoot*, *The Bitter Word*. These lyric pieces of writing talk about the great chief – confined to the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, Sitting Bull remained a symbol of The First Nations opposition to the whites.

Sapp's canvases are calm and peaceful: even in poverty his childhood was bright and beautiful; rituals and traditions emitted the power of the eternal Cree spirit. Suknaski's poems blame point-blank white newcomers for the fact that local Cree, Dakota – widely First Nations – peoples were cruelly displaced from their land and forced to give up their traditional way of life. The poet speaks on this in colloquial language, mostly in the form of

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<sup>143</sup> "Sitting Bull (c. 1834?- 90), was a chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux, whose success as a medicine man and as a fighter against the white men made him a great leader of his people. Sitting Bull (in Indian Tatanka Yotanka), bore the same name as his father, a subchief. (...) Sitting Bull's refusal to go to a reservation in 1876 resulted in the sending of military force against his camp on the Little Bighorn River in Montana. Thousands of warriors in the Sioux confederacy joined in the defense against the white troops. Before the battle, Sitting Bull reported a vision of soldiers falling into the Indian camp. It was interpreted as a portent of victory over the Army and was an inspiration to the Indians" (*The Encyclopedia Americana* 1993, vol. 24, 852). Sitting Bull led the Sioux in the fight to retain their lands; this resulted in the massacre of Lt. Col. Custer and his men at Little Bighorn. He went to Canada with a band of followers. In 1881 he returned to the United States. Sitting Bull was killed by reservation police during the Ghost Dance turmoil.

an oral story, related by the descendants of the witnesses and participants of these events, very often of Indian origin, as in the following example:

In 1871 the father dies  
and chieftainship passes to young son Joseph  
who shares his father's hospitality  
toward white men –  
white man later lust for gold in nearby mountains  
and finally rustle Nez Percés' cattle and ponies  
(white bird's unheeded warning  
Becoming a bitter reality)

gold seekers and politicians twist truth  
turning Nez Percés' honour and name into a jingle –  
the truth being  
that the gold seekers are the rustlers  
and of course  
the great father of America gives Nez Percés  
the usual ultimatum:  
*move to Lapwai reserve or suffer the ensuing fate –  
the bloodthirsty bluecoats (original emphasis), Nez Percés<sup>144</sup> at Wood Mountain* (Suknaski 2006, 54)

Giving the voice to Aboriginal People, Suknaski, a white man, rewrote the history written by the newcomers (colonizers). It is not surprising, that Tim Lilburn defined Suknaski's volume as "an act of courage". He wrote:

The first publication of *Wood Mountain Poems* in 1976 marked a beginning in the de-colonization of the West Canadian literary imagination (...). A few people hope for some sort of alliance with a revived Cree nation; Suknaski himself in the '70s might have gone along with something like this (Lilburn 2006, 9-10).

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<sup>144</sup> Nez Percés [ˈpɜːsɪz; French *perse*] (or Nez Percé) a member of a North American Indian people of the Pacific coast, a tribe of the Sahaptin.

Like Sapp, the poet created a work with the Sun Dance motif, the sacred custom and ritual for local Indian tribes. *The Sun Dance at Wood Mountain (1879)* reflects not only the history, culture and the language of the Dakota and Cree, but it also bares the soul of the Indian. This narrative poetry, written – as usual – in a free verse, tells a story about the tragic Sun Dance of 1879, the last dance of the starving tribe. Just at the beginning, the entity telling the story introduces us to the events with a sarcastic comment:

the plains cree called it *the thirst dance*  
but the teton<sup>145</sup> might have renamed it  
*the hunger dance* (both original emphasis)  
as they began to eat their starving ponies –  
they must be praised for rebuilding... (Suknaski 2008, 62)

Then picturing the sacred ritual, he conveys experiences, ideas and emotions of the participants of the Sun Dance in a vivid and imaginative way, more and more becoming one of them. He not only “lives inside” the poem, but he lives inside the dance circle, deeply imbued with the irreversibility of Indian fate:

(...) and wakatanka rightfully honoured  
By the dance  
Was still powerless in the tide of  
White man’s greed  
(and unable to save the sacred tatanka<sup>146</sup>). *The Sun Dance at Wood Mountain (1879)* (Suknaski 2008, 63)

Such a transformation could not be observed by Canadian literary critics. Liza Grekul, a researcher of Suknaski’s poetry, was one of the first who took note of this process:

As he explores First Nations history and mythology, Suknaski implicitly situates himself as more than a sympathetic outsider – he presents himself as

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<sup>145</sup> Teton [ˈti:t(ə)n] (also Teton Sioux) another term for Lakota Origin: the name in Dakota, literally ‘dwellers on the prairie’.

<sup>146</sup> tatanka: buffalo in Dakota (author’s comment and spelling).

someone who understands the Sioux people intimately enough to be a member of their community.

By claiming Sioux culture and language as his own, Suknaski makes a transition from the poet as historian to the poet as shaman, a transition illustrated emphatically by "*The First People*" (Grekul 2005, 100).

In the afterword to the first edition of *Wood Mountain Poems*, and in many poems of this volume, the author underlined the presence of his great "vaguely divided guilt": the feeling of a newcomer who has committed wrong towards the First Nation (depriving the Indians of their ancestral homes and enclosing them on reservations, rooting them out), as well as of having failed in an obligation towards his own Polish-Ukrainian ethnicity. He was the first who wrote in the 1970s about European settlers' guilt towards Aboriginal peoples. In such a way Suknaski, like Sapp, reflected Indian endurance in Western Canada: one tries to capture the spirit of West Canadian Indians on canvas, the other, on the page.

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### Abstract

The present essay will show the artistic meeting of two prominent and honourable Canadian men at the point of Indian endurance. Both of them – Allan (later Allen) Sapp and Andrew (later Andy) Suknaski – were born in the prairies of Saskatchewan, both combined art with the spirit of their time and place, both reflected Indian endurance in Western Canada: one tries to capture the spirit of West Canadian Indians on canvas, the other, on the page.

**Key words:** Allan Sapp, Andrew Suknaski, Saskatchewan Indians, endurance<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> The essay was published with some changes in: *Revolution, Evolution and Endurance in Anglophone Literature and Culture*, ed. M. Martynuska, E. Rokosz-Piejko, Peter Lang Edition 2017, pp. 139-150.

## **IV. Comparative notes with literatures in English**



**“Lesson of a Dead Language”.**  
**World War I in Ernest Hemingway's**  
***Farewell to Arms*, Osyp Turiansky's**  
***Beyond the Pain* and Andrzej**  
**Kuśniewicz's *Lesson of a Dead Language***

*"Real war is never like paper war, nor do accounts of it read much the way it looks. But if you want to know how it was in an LCV (P) on D-Day when we took Fox Green beach and Easy Red beach on the sixth of June, 1944, then this is as near as I can come to it."*

Ernest Hemingway<sup>148</sup>

War has universal content and universal consequences, because of the universal attitudes that people adopt in the face of a threat in order to survive. Literature conveys these universal and timeless experiences, as exemplified by the three texts I have analyzed. All three title novels tell about the events of World War I, and in all three works the action takes place during the war, in its final stage, so we see the lost generation directly in the war. Each of them can be related to war stories, moreover, the novels of Hemingway and Turiansky - to a military story<sup>149</sup>. All are re-

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<sup>148</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *Voyage to Victory*, in: *Ernest Hemingway. Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades*, ed. by William White, New York 1998, p. 355.

<sup>149</sup> By war prose I understand narrative-fictional works on the subject of war, marked by the speaker's more or less private war experience. See "war

lated to the modernist transformations of the literature of their time. Each of them has the theme of the death of soldiers and the disappearance of civilization, each in its own way becomes a lesson of a dead language for us. They differ, however, in the degree of their authors' involvement in the reality of war, the language in which each wrote, style, way of presenting events, setting, time of writing and publication. They also present various perspectives and changing accents on the issue of war.

The autobiographical anti-war novel *Poza mezhamy boliu* (Beyond the Limits of Pain)<sup>150</sup> was written by the Ukrainian writer Osyp Turiansky (1880-1933) in 1917, in the prisoner of war camp on the island of Elba, before the end of the war (published in 1921). Based on the author's fresh war experiences and influenced by expressionist literary tradition, which was very strong in German-language literatures (before the war he first studied and

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story" (war-stories), a definition that appeared shortly after the US Civil War: "a story of a memorable personal experience typically involving an element of danger, hardship, or adventure" - <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wartory;%20s> Accessed 13.06.2024; "Any narrative of an event, involving either military or civilian characters, in wartime - <http://www.yourdictionary.com/war-story> Accessed 13.06.2024.

After the Great War, in Anglo-Saxon literary studies, synonymous concepts "war literature" and "war poets" appeared. - "A title ultimately bestowed on, primarily, a number of writers who 'soldiered' in various capacities during the First World War and who recorded very memorably their feelings about their experience. (...) A handful (e.g. Rupert Brooke and Julian Grenfell) expressed patriotic and quasi-romantic views. The majority expressed varying degree of disgust, disenchantment, cynicism, revulsion, anger and horror. It was often poetry of protest and it deglamorized war for ever. The strongest feelings were often leavened by a grim and laconic humour (Cudden, 1999, 979). A military story provides for the narrator's personal, direct participation in military operations, is an account concerning one's personal experiences, especially in military combat, during a war.

<sup>150</sup> The English translation of *Poza mezhamy boliu* was published as *Lost Shadows* in USA in 1935.

then obtained his doctorate at Vienna University), the novel was published in the German translation and “was enthusiastically received by German and Austrian literary critics as one of the most remarkable European antiwar novels”<sup>151</sup>. *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961) was published eight years later, in 1929<sup>152</sup>, when the author was able to observe the destructive, devastating effects of the war in the US and Western Europe. *Lekcja martwego Języka* (A Lesson of a Dead Language) by Andrzej Kuśniewicz (1904-1993) was not written and published in print until after World War II, in 1977 - 60 years after the time the Ukrainian novel was written, but this time distance does not prevent them from being related to prose representing the subject of the First World War and the Galician prose. It is interesting that all three novels were adapted to film in their countries of origin (*A Farewell to Arms* in 1932 by Frank Borzage, and in 1957 by Charles Vidor; *Lesson of a Dead Language* in 1979 by Janusz Majewski; *Poza mezhamy bolu* in 1989 by Jarosław Lupiy), which somehow proves the social and artistic resonance of the events, ideas and thoughts presented in them.

The first two works are based on the real military experiences of their masters, on personal experiences of combatants who engaged in offensive military actions during the war, but the authors mostly changed their names and those of others. Similarly, for Hemingway and the writers of the “lost generation”, Turiansky took part in World War I. The fate of the main character of the novel is actually the fate of its author. Turiansky, doctor of philosophy and professor at the gymnasium in Przemyśl, was

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<sup>151</sup> Marko Robert Stech, Turiansky, Osyp, [https://www.encyclopedia.ofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CT%5CU%5CTuriansky Osyp.htm](https://www.encyclopedia.ofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CT%5CU%5CTuriansky%20Osyp.htm) Accessed 13.06.2024.

<sup>152</sup> The first Polish edition was published two years later, in 1931, in a translation by Zbigniew Grabowski, which he had prepared on behalf of the author and published by the Rój publishing house, Warsaw.

taken into the Austrian army in the fall of 1914 and fought on the Austro-Italian front in Serbia. In the cold winter of 1915, the Serbs, withdrawing under fire from the German offensive, led 60,000 Austrian prisoners of war through the harsh and inaccessible Albanian mountains. Only 15,000 survived this journey. Turiansky was one of those prisoners who, barely-alive, exhausted from hunger and cold, walked very slowly along the “road of death” in the icy mountains. As his biographer notes, “Barely revived from a near-death state, Turiansky used this terrifying ordeal as a basis for his autobiographical antiwar novel”<sup>153</sup> The writer and his hero, Professor Ohladivsky, managed to escape the “road of death” together with six other Austrian prisoners of different nationalities. His companions at the stop froze to death by the extinguished fire. He was the only one of them who escaped with his life – Serbian doctors saved him by thawing his body – slowly and gradually – in icy water. So, Turiansky’s war novel is a document of the author's own dramatic experiences. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway presents familiar events from the Italian-Austrian front, where, as a volunteer for the American Red Cross medical transport units, in February 1917 he served as a sanitary truck driver. Only one month after his arrival, Hemingway was badly wounded in both legs by an Austrian mortar shell (maybe fired by surviving war brethren of Turiansky?) and immediately afterwards by machine-gun fire while carrying a wounded Italian soldier to safety. While in a military hospital, the writer experienced great love for nurse Agnesa von Kurovsky. This incident from his biography has been carried over into two of his works: *A Very Short Story* and *A Farewell to Arms*. No wonder then that his hero of the last novel and alter ego,

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<sup>153</sup> Marko Robert Stech, *Turiansky, Osyp*, <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CT%5CU%5CTurianskyOsyp.htm> Accessed 13.06.2024.

Frederick Henry, known by everyone as Tenente (Italian lieutenant), is an American volunteer serving in northern Italy on the fronts of World War I as the commander of a small division of sanitary trucks. Let's remember that it was a new military role - when America entered World War I, to deliver supplies to troops across the country, trucks were used and truck drivers were recruited. Frederick was a driver in the medical service. Even though under the laws of armed conflict military medics are deemed non-combatants, if a soldier was injured and lay wounded in a combat zone the medical service came to his aid, administered first aid to save his life (as Hemingway did). It happened that he exposed himself to danger and was in direct contact with the fighting soldiers, and once he was wounded on the battlefield. From the distance of ten intensely lived years, Hemingway - through the eyes of his characters - looked at the war with a mature eye, he used in his work everything he had learned during the war, what he saw and what he heard from his comrades in arms. The time distance helped him - here I will use the phrase - as Maria Olszewska put it, appropriately according to pacifist Romain Rolland, - "to judge the phenomenon of war, understood as a set of intellectual and ethical facts that can be analyzed in many ways, their meaning reconsidered and described in the poetics of reflective distance, allowing for objectivity, generalization and maintaining a universal perspective" (2004, 369). Born a few years later from Hemingway and a dozen or so from Turiański, Andrzej Kuśniewicz (1904-1993) could not experience the Great War in the ranks of the soldiers, but he described the authentic plundering of his family estate in Kowienice near Sambor by the military of the crumbling former tsarist Russian army and bandit peasants. The autobiographism of the works (and especially of the first two) proves the unique experience of the war in the self-recognition of the authors, the power of its influence on the whole world view of the masters of the word.

The writers and their heroes were of different nationalities, and in the war they represented two warring sides, that is, they were enemies. The American Hemingway / Frederick Henry defended the interests of the Entente (Great Britain, France, Russia, Serbia, Japan, Italy (from 1915) and the United States (from 1917)), a Ukrainian Turiansky / Ohladivsky and the hero of Polish Kuśniewicz, an Austrian (by the way, from the mother of a Slovenian) Alfred Kiekeritz, defended the interests of Austria-Hungary and Germany, supported by Turkey and Bulgaria. Turiansky, on the Serbian-Austrian front, and Hemingway, on the Austria-Italian front, were separated only by the sea and mountain ranges. Fighting against each other, intellectuals and officers (Ukrainian philosopher and Professor, an Austrian refined college-educated aesthete, and an American commander of modern war equipment with the imagination of a writer) express their opposition to a deadly, destructive war.

In all three works, the heroes do not participate directly in armed combat, their stories do not resemble a military journal, but are rather “documents of war awareness” (Olszewska’s term, Olszewska, 2004, 370), testimonies of thinking about war. Lieutenant Frederick constantly thinks about the end of the war, will he live to see that day? In his words and those of his companions one can hear reluctance toward war, fatigue, and the desire to live in peace.

British ambulance drivers were killed sometimes. Well, I knew I would be killed sometimes. It did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies. I wished to God it was over though. Maybe it would always cracked in other wars. What was the matter with this war? Everybody said the French were through. Rinaldi said that the French had mutinied and troops marched on Paris. (...) I asked him what happened and he said, “Oh, they stopped them.” I wanted to go to Austria without war. I wanted to go to the Black Forest, I wanted to go to the Hartz Mountains. (Hemingway 1997, 39-40)

On the opposite side we see Kiekeritz, a lieutenant of the Austro-Hungarian army, when, at the very end of World War I, he was transferred to the small town of Turka, in Galicia (lack of dialogues here, domination of internal monologues with numerous digressions and independent speech merging with the narrative). On a daily basis, he is the commander of the stage point, supervising Russian prisoners of war working at the sawmill, and carrying to the cemetery nameless exhumed bodies, mainly Russian soldiers killed in the "fourteenth into fifteenth campaign, called the Carpathian". There is no evil towards the prisoners, he offers them a cigarette, he jokes with them. In the face of imminent death and at the same time seeing the collapse of the world in which he grew up, i.e. the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, he also thinks a lot about death, including about inflicting it, which, however, does not prevent him from killing for a whole hour before his own death, while walking in the forest, an escaped prisoner of the Russian army, a Ukrainian, Mykhailo. In Turiański's expressionist novel-poem, World War I was presented by the suffering and death of prisoners of war and even their escorts, caused by extreme fatigue, coldness and hunger. Everyone lives beyond the limits of suffering and human endurance. We are witnesses of laxity and beastliness when a Serbian lieutenant, not finding anything to eat in the pockets of a deceased prisoner, releases a bullet into his body. Such extreme conditions of war will place characters in liminal situations: between life and death, between common sense and insanity, between wildness, inhuman and human. Unlike the previous two novels, in *A Farewell to Arms* in the conditions of war, there is space for erotic adventures and great love<sup>154</sup>. Trapped in the deserted mountains, the hero of Turiański could only remember his faithful waiting wife, and it helped him to survive. Kuśniewicz's hero shows

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<sup>154</sup> One of the many versions of the title was "Love in War".

a noticeable disgust towards the female sex and a brief erotic, homosexual observation of the beautiful body of a young, healthy captive, at whom Kiekeritz aims and kills in a moment. Even a barely sketched love (as in Turiańsky's case) contrasts even more in the conditions of war with death, robbery, rape and killing. Freud, "a great theorist of war and of *agon*<sup>155</sup>" would explain it in terms of Eros, libido and Thanatos, contrasting the culture of life with the culture of death. In numerous episodes of the American novel, the true face of the war was presented: the torment of the wounded, the blood, and the extreme working conditions of the field medical service. Its author's destructive, dispassionate style - so different from both Kuśniewicz's and Turiańsky's, gives authenticity to the events presented, Hemingway's *Voice* can be read as a testimony to the truth and an objection to the senseless cruelty of war. "There is nothing worse than war" (Hemingway 1997, 51), one of the characters concludes. This brings the American author closer to Turiańsky and Kuśniewicz and differs from the writers who celebrate warfare, heroism, and promote thoughtless and uncritical observance of one's duty and dying. Thus, a deep ideological pathos - the disclosure and extreme disapproval of the war, which is seen as a global social catastrophe - connects the opposing heroes and their authors into a monolithic anti-war triad. Moreover, in the novels of Hemingway and Turiańsky there are strong pacifist accents.

The American writer and the Ukrainian writer took a critical stance towards the command which puts the realization of political goals over the lives of thousands of people. They are unani-

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<sup>155</sup> I used the terms Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, who also noted that "In fact, war haunts the works of Sigmund Freud. These are works that specifically focus on their meanings and psychological effects, such as: *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915), *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), *On Transience* (1916) and *Why War?* (1933). *Civilization and Its Discontents*" (Bennett and Royle, 2009, 307-308).

mous in their conviction that the hard times of war are a great crime against humanity. It cannot be acquitted either by the great state interests or by the necessity to settle the inter-state conflicts that caused the beginning of military operations. No concept, no state advantage, as their novels attest, can justify the great and terrible price the nations have paid. In Frederick's work, we see an evolution in this attitude: from a carefree war volunteer to a defector who does not see the point of fighting. At the very beginning of the novel, his more experienced Italian comrades-in-arms, subordinates from his unit, open his eyes to the true face of war:

There is nothing as bad as war. We in auto-the ambulance cannot even realize at all how bad it is. When people realize how bad it is they cannot do anything to stop it because they go crazy. There are some people who never realize. There are people who are afraid of their officers. It is with them that war is made. (51-52)

He also meets a straggler with a rupture, who wants to avoid returning to the front lines at all costs. They both describe the war with one word – “rotten” (37).

Ukrainian prisoner of war Ohliadivsky and his companions have a constant view of the war: a firm “no!” In the inhuman conditions of many days of cold and hunger in the Albanian mountains, seven exhausted fugitives are forced to choose the physically weakest of them in order to light a fire with his clothes and save their lives at the cost of the frozen condemned man’s death. The test of their perseverance is the ritual, wild dance of death (the author's expressionist creation). The weakest becomes the victim. Those who have warmed up a little at the cost of their companion’s life accuse the war of forcing them to make such a terrible choice.

What vision led us to this Albanian wilderness? 45,000 corpses of innocent fathers and sons on the way to death! What construct are our tortments and our death needed for? She is already watching us here. And

even today it will choke us all in an extremely fearful and ruthless way! We will not die a so-called heroic death, but we will only die like blind puppies, thrown into a smelly, freezing pool! (Turiansky 1989,80) -

says one of the older prisoners, Dobrowsky. What links the Ukrainian novel with the American one is that they not only condemn war, but also expose its culprits - great governments that sacrifice human lives to expand spheres of influence. Turiansky's artistic imagination creates a symbolic trial, during which Sabo, barely-alive from hunger, begins to eat and tear into pieces money bills with images of emperors, kings, tsars and presidents, symbolizing in his sick imagination the rulers who sentenced him to slavery and starvation. Dobrowsky speaks in unison with the deed of a companion in captivity:

May the gods, tsars and all the rulers who threw mankind into the abyss of world war endure this hell of torment in which people punish each other! May they themselves experience and know the bottomless depths of human suffering! (62)

Hemingway chose a different writing strategy. His pre-war journalistic work for the "Kansas City Star" made him write stylistically concisely, use simple, lively language, short, unadorned sentences, which influenced his prose technique. Richard Grey reflects on how subordinated Hemingway's writing style is to the harsh truth of life -

And what seals the compact, and confirms the starkness, is, always, the pellucid clarity of expression, the rigorous, simple economy of the terms in which Hemingway's lonely heroes are rendered to us. 'A writer's job is to tell the truth,' Hemingway observed. And he told that truth in what Hemingway called this verbal art, the art of omission. 'You could omit anything if you knew that you omitted, style that was a verbal equivalent of the grace under pressure shown by his finest protagonists: concrete, contained, cleaving to the hard facts of life, only disclosing its deeper urgencies in its repetitions and repressions - in what its rhythms implied and what it did not say. (2004, 444)

They also notice in this laconic, simple and clear style of the writer the influence of the aesthetic assumptions of Anglo-American imagism with the central function of the poetic image, concrete and objective, juxtaposition as the principle of combining individual images, short lines, concrete, the simplicity and clarity of their meanings. His hero, exposed to extreme tests, hears a laconic but well-deserved sentence for the perpetrators of the war from the mouth of his mechanics:

There is a class that controls a country that is stupid, and does not realize anything and never can. That is why we have this war." "Also they make money out of it. (52)

Turiansky wants to oppose the war with the brotherhood and friendship of nations drawn into the war. As one of the Ukrainian interpreters of the writer aptly noted: "Apparently, it is no coincidence that the seven participants in misery represent different nationalities. Two of them – the Ohlidivsky and Dobrovsky – are Ukrainians, Sabo – Hungarian, Stranzinger – Austrian, Przyłuski – Pole, Bojani and Nikoły – are Serbs" (Pinchuk 1989, 25). Not only Austrian prisoners of war, but also convoys from the enemy army flee the war. In the artistic consciousness of the Ukrainian writer, the fratricidal nature of the First World War proves its nonsense and absurdity, revealing its extremely criminal essence, leading to a great human tragedy.

The theme of fratricidal death is extremely clear in Kuśniewicz's novel. For five years in the war, lieutenant Kiekeritz has been watching the Galician Ukrainians' convoy of Ukrainian Tsarist and Soviet prisoners of war, and eastern and western Ukrainians who, due to historical circumstances, found themselves on different sides of the front, killing each other. One day he commanded a firing squad.

There were a dozen of them, including two in soldiers' caps with stars above the peak. (...) They talked to each other in Russian or Ukrainian.

(...) When the firing squad was lined up in the regular double row, the lieutenant, having stamped his cigarette butt, put on a monocle and slipped the scabbard from its scabbard, then lifted it up without haste. ... The master, a Galician Ukrainian, Dańko, went to check if any of them were dead by chance – this is what the regulations say. He nudged the lying people with his shoe one by one, leaned forward, keeping his revolver ready, wiping his shoe carefully on the grass, as the spilled blood smeared his nose. (76-77)<sup>156</sup>

It is worth paying attention to the precision with which soldiers of the Austrian army perform their military duties, they are indifferent to death, used to killing, as if they are doing everyday work. On the eve of the final defeat of Austria-Hungary and Germany, a local German woman from the Felizienthal colony, coming from a poor family with many children, starts her duties at the railway station knowing

(...) of the great importance of matters entrusted to her with full confidence in the era of war on such an exposed railway route, connecting Lviv with Budapest via Sambor – Turka – Sianki – Ungwar and further, ports on the Adriatic, especially with the naval port in Pola. She became, and she knew it, an instrument of state power, its representative on a low but not insignificant level of the service ladder. (89)<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Było ich kilkunastu, wśród nich dwu w żołnierskich czapkach z gwiazdami nad daszkiem. (...) Cos między sobą gadali po rosyjsku czy ukraińsku. (...) Gdy pluton egzekucyjny ustawił się regulaminowo w dwuszeręgu, porucznik, zdeptawszy niedopałek papierosa, włożył monokl i wysunął pałasz z pochwy, po czym bez pośpiechu uniośł go w górę. (...) wszyscy skazani potoczyli się w różne strony: jeden padł na twarz, inny na bok, któryś ugiął się w pasie do tyłu (...) Wachmistrz, galicyjski Ukraińiec Dańko, poszedł sprawdzić, czy któryś nie żyje przypadkiem – tak nakazuje regulamin. Trącał po kolei butem leżących, nachylał się trzymając w pogotowiu rewolwer, wycierał z uwagą but o trawę, gdyż nosek umazał się w rozlanej krwi.

<sup>157</sup> (...) wielkiej wagi spraw, jakie jej powierzono z pełnym zaufaniem w dobie wojny na tak eksponowanym szlaku kolejowym, łączącym Lwów z Budapesztem via Sambor – Turka – Sianki – Ungwar i dalej, porty nad

Kuśniewicz shows how much she was able to blind the idea of the military victory of a superpower of young, average and small people. If Lieutenant Kiekeritz, immersed in his thoughts, punctually and indifferently performs his duties ("to the lieutenant or in the head (...) any military and patriotic initiative" (10)), Liza, full of patriotic euphoria, felt "a small part of a big cause known as the World War, its small section, which was undoubtedly the railway station under the authority of the Imperial-Royal Army and its small crossing point number two" (91).

All three works consider war to be a great moral evil because it leads to the moral degradation of man, degradation of the whole society and the decline of civilization. The second half of the war, as a result of developing industrialization, changed its face, increased its deadly power and the nature of killing. Communing with brutality, death, and helplessness against it resulted in changes in the psyche and moral behaviour of combatants. The senselessness, the absurdity of fighting and giving one's life for it, the experience of extreme manifestations of evil and cruelty led to moral emptiness. The war marked the end of the era of ancient humanism, and the necessity to oppose the system of useless and senseless values in the face of physical and moral devastation. The painful experiences of the authors, two of them direct participants in this great tragedy, made them treat all soldiers as victims of the war - both those whom they killed and those who were killed on their side.

The theme of the disappearance of civilization echoes in Kuśniewicz's novel. An adept of art, lieutenant Kiekeritz reminisces all the time, observes the devastation of architectural structures, the destruction of valuable books, paintings and sculptures.

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Adriatykiem, a już szczególnie z portem wojennym w Poli. Stała się, i o tym wiedziała, instrumentem władzy państwowej, jej reprezentantem na niskim co prawda, lecz niebagatelny szczelbu drabiny służbowej.

He never ceases to be surprised in the dark Carpathian corner, "this strange, fascinating, exotic country", "What treasures these people have accumulated for generations!" With special care and knowledge of the subject, he collected icons and sent them to his mother in the Styrian city of Graz. He reflected on the ethical sense of his deed and convinced himself of the need to fulfil "a humanitarian duty in the name of saving works of art, civilization and higher culture in general in the depths of increasing chaos, fire, rape" (36), and also from – as he perceived from the height of a Styrian aesthete – ignorant local Ukrainians who did not realize the value of the icons they had. Turiansky's hero Dobrovsky lost faith in human society, in civilization after the cruel war. Shortly before his death, he confides to his companions: "It is hard to die amidst the thunder of a grenade, in hunger and cold, but it is even harder to live among the meanness and rudeness of modern people." (188)

All three pieces of prose are a denial, a condemnation of the war. It is true that Kiekeritz does not announce this verdict outright. Immersed in himself, his tuberculosis and works of art, he lives as if separate from the war, from the suffering of others, automatically fulfilling the duties he has become accustomed to, but the reader watching the death of a young intelligent soldier, destined to understand, interpret and conserve art, does it for him. The Austrian lieutenant with his love for art, the Ukrainian teacher in his ethical considerations, the American truck commander Henri in his behaviour towards his beloved woman (because he has already undergone changes in his cut, command and recording speech) - give us the last lesson of a dead language. Obviously, a dead language is a language that is no longer used as a means of interpersonal communication, no one uses it as their main language, it has lost the status of a widespread language. Perhaps that is why Kiekeritz and Ohladivsky speak it in their thoughts, to themselves. For a native Styrian, the language

of a fortune-teller – supposedly Hungarian women, supposedly Gypsy women, is dead, incomprehensible and strange, but he is unaware that his own pre-war language (the speech of a decent citizen, an art historian and a loving son), after the cruel war experiences of its language carrier, has lost its social function and become an archaic language, incomprehensible to the *lost*. Henry with his love, Ohladivsky with his high ideals, Kiekeritz with his sensitive aesthetic soul, like the last Mohicans still struggle to speak the old language, so contrasting with the communication tool acquired during the war. War writers began to use this new language. The existing language no longer corresponded to the dilemmas, doubts, and cruelty that characterized the world war. The attack on ideas and truths forced upon people also required a completely different language, a different form of expression. The new language in literature was zealously defended by French writer and soldier of the First World War, Louis-Ferdinand Séline. In 1932 he confided in a letter to Edmond Jaloux:

I want it to be felt. And this is impossible when we use a refined academic style and language. (...) I am no longer able to read novels in classical language. They are only IDEAS for a novel, but never novels. There is a lot to be done. There are no emotions in them. This is all that matters now. Literary language is dead, as is Latin. (...) Language is like everything else: DIE ALL THE TIME, LANGUAGE MUST DIE. (Hedemann, 2013, 553)<sup>158</sup>

The cosmopolitan Hemingway and the non-cosmopolitan Kuśniewicz and Turiansky created three national visions of the Great War, recreating the “mental world of soldiers in the trenches”. Paul Fussell, the author of a ground-breaking and still relevant book on the writings of former World War I soldiers, stated

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<sup>158</sup> It's quite possible that fascinated by new French literature, Kuśniewicz was able to know about this lesson of “dead language” from the creator of the “language of hate” (Séline) and use his term for the title of his book.

that “every nation that fought in World War I created its own war writings with its own image of war; each had its own ironic register and modulations, reflecting both the political and cultural effects of the conflict.” At the same time, he noticed something universal in this general military discourse, and his own soldier’s perception of war literature is marked by such universalism. This universalism is “the elegant nature of his relationship, his recreation of the mental world of soldiers in the trenches” (Gay Winter, 2013, xiii) The three officers of different nationalities, the intellectual power of their countries, civilians drawn into the fight for the interests of different political powers, is a common denial of war. All three novels testify to the absurdity of war, the pointlessness of heroic deed and bloodshed, telling about war in a new language, devoid of heroic pride, with an ironic relationship to old values. Gay Winter talks about these changes:

Instead of looking at war through the eyes of Homer as an epic act of Achilles, endowed with greater freedom of action than our own, or to make war a reality in the same way as Stendhal in the *Parma Hermitage*, or Tolstoy in his novel *War and Peace*, by revealing the same inner confusion and freedom of action in Fabrizio and Pierre’s creations, We [readers] forced the Writers of the Great War to change perspectives. They show us the irony of war, which is always worse than we believe, the ties of a soldier (no longer a hero) in the area of the overwhelming force of violence, in a place where his freedom of action is much more limited than ours, and where ubiquitous death becomes an arbitrary concept. (x)

In the post-war (December 1923) report for the newspaper “Star Weekly” entitled *War Medals for Sale*, Hemingway spoke simply and with undisguised irony about the futility of the war struggle. The reporter came to dozens of shops selling and buying coins, medals, and various second-hand shops throughout the area, offering to sell MM, DCM and MC<sup>159</sup>, his own star and crosses of courage for heroism. But no one wanted to buy medals

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<sup>159</sup> American decorations for heroism in the fight against an armed enemy.

from World War I, which cannot even be sold for pennies – the not so distant war was such a failure.

In front of the store, the journalist looked at the window. Apparently, it was possible to sell a broken alarm clock, but not a cross for heroism in the fight against an armed enemy.

It was possible to get rid of the used harmonica, but it was impossible to find a buyer for the 1914 Star.

Thus, the market price of combat heroism remained undetermined. (Hemingway, 2002,123)

It is regrettable that mankind has not yet assessed the devastating effects of any future war. War is never profitable, but always pain, suffering, destruction, misfortune and death. After the war, there are no winners, only victims, because the atrocities of war destroy the human psyche. These novels show that in society the military celebrations of nineteenth-century heroism have given way to “a more modern appreciation of the importance of private sorrow and resistance to the futility of war, to any war, to all wars” (Bennett and Royle, 303). The language of military heroism has died away.

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### Abstract

The article is an attempt at a comparative analysis of three war novels: *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, Osyp Turiansky's *Beyond the limits of Pain* and *Lesson of a Dead Language* by Andrzej Kuśniewicz. All three novels tell about the events of World War I, and in all three works the action takes place during the war, in its final stage, i.e. the *lost generation* is directly in the war. Each of them has the theme of the death of soldiers and the disappearance of civilization, each in its own way becomes a lesson of a dead language for us. They differ, however, in the degree of their authors' involvement in the reality of war, its language, style, way of presenting events, place, time of writing and publication. They also present various perspectives and changing accents on the issue of war. The writers and their heroes were of different nationalities, and in the war they represented two warring sides, that is, they were enemies. The cosmopolitan Hemingway and the non-cosmopolitan Kuśniewicz and Turiansky created three national visions of World War I, recreating the "mental world of soldiers in the trenches". All three novels testify to the absurdity of war, the pointlessness of heroic deeds and bloodshed, telling about war in a new language, devoid of heroic pride, with an ironic relationship to old values. The language used so far no longer corresponded to these dilemmas, doubts, this cruelty that characterized the world of war.

**Key words:** Ernest Hemingway, Osyp Turiansky, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, war story, World War I.

## **Geopoetics in Comparative Literature (from «pochveniks» to Andrew Suknaski)**

Our work in the Humanities brings us into contact with implicit and explicit bodies of knowledge, each of which has its own history, limitations and boundaries. In the following paper, I would like to elaborate on the disciplinary context of comparative literature enriched by geopoetics, and explore the limits, boundaries and possibilities of interdisciplinary, overlapping comparative research. Furthermore, my observations are based on different national models of geopoetics – from Canada to Poland, Russia and Ukraine, which enables the double comparative perspective: moving between disciplines and national literatures, as well as comparative theory and comparative practice.

Geopoetics was initiated by Kenneth White in the period 1978-1989; however, its meaning has since widened, and I propose a new classification into six basic meanings, namely:

- Theoretical reflection, careful analyses of intellectual and sensual Man-earth relations – initiated, developed and put into practice by Kenneth White in order to create «a harmonious cultural space» relating with science, philosophy and *poetica* (White 2010, 31;35), named by him «geopoetics» around 1978;
- the international, intellectual and artistic literary movement (France, Scotland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, Russia, Ukrainian Crimea, Serbia and other countries), the continuation of White's activity;
- a certain way of perception of the world and artistic creation (artistic technique, designed for the poetry of the earth and

- understanding of one's land), White's and post-White ideas and perspectives;
- works of literary art which were created with the help of such intellectual/ artistic conception and artistic technique (to be more precise, geopoetry, geotexts);
  - geocriticism (explorative and interpretative approaches, critical and interpretative practice, properly geocriticism in Bertrand Westphal's and Robert T. Tally's meaning);
  - teaching activity.<sup>160</sup>

Comparative studies generally deal with each of the above-mentioned forms of geopoetics. Moreover, as long as the delimitation boundaries of geopoetics are related with any of the following: ecology and ecocriticism, geography, geology, geopolitics, regional literature, urbanism, space semantic studies, cross-culture studies, globetrotterism, postcolonial studies etc., comparative research – indirectly – moves actively between these disciplines, knowledge and methods, widening its own boundaries and methods of research.

I shall look for similar methods of scientific research and comparative literature studies. Moreover, I will try to show the comparative perspective of the interference of literature and non-literature scientific knowledge illustrated with an example of geopoetry, including geographical/geological poetry of high artistic value, oriented on the earth-human being relation and poetry of the earth, and, from the geopoetics perspective, reflecting the connections between literature and so-called *natural, earth sciences*. Finally I shall compare the ontology of geopoetics (as a whole, in all of its meanings) with geopolitics. Geo-critical reading of such texts will help me to create a comparative perspective.

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<sup>160</sup> See for details: Oksana Weretiuk, Próba określenia i uporządkowania znaczeń związanych z geopoetyką, „Porównania”, XII, 2013, pp. 25-42.

The problem of the influence of ecological, geological, urbanistic, geographical and geopolitical studies (in any way connected with earth studies) on literature is of great importance for comparative studies, as well as answering the question of why the connection of literature and earth sciences varies in different national literatures.

The most stable alliance between science and literature can be observed in texts written by researchers. Scientists have written poetry while both science and literature have existed. Men of science – and geologists and geographers among them – create geopoetry. The object of interest of the latter is the same: the earth («geo» – combining the form of Greek origin, relating to the earth), but each of them perceives the earth from its own perspective, frequently moving forward one meaning of the earth from its ambiguous sense. When professional geoscientists create an artistic image of the earth, using Suzanne Mériaux's metaphoric qualification, "[the Earth] is also written with the words of men" (Mériaux 2009, 169), not seldom they create examples of geopoetry.

Geopoetry as geological poetry, written by geologists, is quite naturally related with geology, «the scientific study of the origin, history, structure, and composition of the earth» (Collins). Geology gives insight into the history of the Earth, the age of which is estimated to be over four thousand million years. At the same time with the advent of space exploration in the twentieth century, geologists have developed planetary geology in which geological principles are applied to other bodies of the solar system, therefore, widening the spatial boundaries of the science. In spite of this space evolution of geology, geological poetry is mostly focussed on the solid Earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and... on the soil. The following is a very characteristic geological poem, song of "the written Earth" by Vladimir Britishsky (1933-2015), a Russian poet and geophysicist with Polish roots, who has translated literature from Polish and English into Russian:

Indeed, a mineral's alive. Once as a brine or gas  
it boiled as raging magma in the earth interior.  
But carbon turned to diamond as the centuries passed,  
and now it is before me, safe under my stare.  
So don't you tell me that the stone has no soul,  
that most of them aren't interesting to ponder,  
I won't believe you, rocks and stones are swell,  
and I will write dozens of songs about them.  
And don't you tell me that the mineral's got no life,  
and to be cold and dead is in the mineral's nature.  
I won't believe you, and my words will be upheld  
by the example of the Urals Range.  
I'll gaze at jasper or a cubic pyrite crystal,  
the reddish limonite or garnet, breathing fire,  
and wonder how much was really witnessed  
by stones that here before me lie (*Rocks*, 1999).<sup>161</sup>

The above-mentioned poem-song successfully combines geological knowledge with poetic glorification of the earth. Their connection is in a balanced state. The millennial history of the processes in which *carbon turned to diamond* is presented by the poet in a very condensed form<sup>162</sup>, and it finishes with an animation of the stones and rocks – they are in the state of being alive, they have a soul. The «soil» themes played an especially important role in the poetry of the above-mentioned poet-geologist and his colleagues – Aleksandr Gorodnitsky, Gleb Gorbovsky, Oleg Tarutin and others, the so-called geological school and, as

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<sup>161</sup> Originally, the poem *Камни* (*Rocks*) was firstly published in Leningrad's magazine *Космёр* (*Fire*) in 1946, and a year later in his volume *Первые смуху* (*The First Poems*) also edited in Leningrad. I used Paule Belasky's translation from Russian to English in: Paule Belasky, «Pochveniks» – «The Poets of The Soil»: The Geological School of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry in Leningrad, USSR (Belasky 2009, pp. 173-204).

<sup>162</sup> It gives an allusion to Robert Burns' ballad *John Barleycorn*, where in a bright metaphorical and lyrical form the Scottish author makes the reader acquainted with brewing technology.

Paule Belasky relates: “[T]his is all the more surprising in view of the fact that most founding members were geologists rather than soil scientists [...]” (Belasky 2009,174). That is why the Russian school of poets-geologists was nicknamed «pochveniks» (from the Russian «почва»), «the poets of the soil».

This school united geologist-poets, specifically a group of students of the Leningrad Mining Institute (now St. Petersburg Mining Institute) who, in the 1950’s, started a romantic earth-movement in contemporary Russian poetry. Paule Belasky, an American geologist and palaeontologist of Russian origin, studied and translated into English the poems of the «pochveniks». He finds the roots of this phenomenon possibly unique to Russia, in a particularly strong Russian earth science-poetry tradition – going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (Belasky, 173) – in the first instance, Mikhail Lomonosov, the great 18<sup>th</sup> century polymath, poet, and one of the founding fathers of modern Russian literary language who was also a practicing mining geologist and engineer. The strong Russian scientific tradition in poetry was strengthened in the Soviet era. The giant territories of Soviet Russia, their rich resources, and their charming, primordial and majestic beauty attracted both researchers of the earth and poets of the earth. Moreover, their large distance from the controlling centre (the Kremlin) makes it possible to think about Man and Earth, and talk frankly about their relation without any political load, in other words, it creates the conditions for geopoetry. The idea of the poetry of the soil was “searching”, the form of such searching was named by Iosif/Joseph Brodsky – rightly or not – “casuistry” (in its philosophical sense, as the resolution of general moral rules by careful distinction of the cases to which these rules apply). “It is casuistry: geological searching and simply searching – the searching for the sense of life and the universe, and everything”, – as he noticed in Britanishsky’s volume of poems entitled *Поиски* (*Searchings*) (1958) (Brodsky 2000, 141).

The Earth with its various faces is creative material for geographers as well, since they study natural features of the earth's surface. The earth's surface, in the first instance land, but seas, rivers, and oceans as well, are the themes of geographical poetry and fiction, and in a wider context, geographical literary works. The literal translation of the word "geography" would be "to describe or write about the Earth".<sup>163</sup> The geo/geographical poetry, in a metaphorical way, writes about the Earth, interprets the action of Man and the environmental dynamics of the globe's surface and – being in accordance with the norms of geopoetics – it presents geopoetry. Such a kind of poetry is well represented in every national literature, not to mention the fact that it enriches and diversifies the subject of literature. Once again, the wide geographical territories of Russia and the presence of majestic primordial lands are fully favourable to the creation of geo/geographical poetry, as the following, strange metaphorical poem in prose by father Sergiy Kruglov entitled *Антарктида* (Antarctica) suggests:

Every spring, when penguins, innerly honking their eternal, tender, waddling from one side to the other on the ice and gathering speed, dart one by one upward, make farewell circle, flock in a wedge and fly towards homeland – I follow them with my eyes into azure polar heaven, with a desperate mortal cry: «and me, why can't I fly?»

Because such were you, Life-Antarctic, when I saw you for the first time, nestling close to you with my large inflamed wet fresh open heart I didn't kiss you, however, seriously!.. simply licked greedily – and froze to you immediately and firmly (Kruglov 2010, 479-480).<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> «The science that describes the surface of the earth and its associated physical, biological, economic, political and demographical characteristics (...)»(Smith, 1996, 528).

<sup>164</sup> Каждую весну, когда пингвины, чревно курлыкая свое вечное, нежное, вперевалочку по льду набирая скорость, срываются один за другим ввысь, делают прощальный круг, собираются в клин и летят на

The geographical name of the continent on the Earth, geonym, in this fairy poem became a metaphor for life (*Antarctica-life*) – similarly as soil (the earth) in its various states becomes a metaphor for birth, life, death, motherland, native people, or ethnic identity, and forms a variety of the earth-science imaginative constructions. As Mériaux notes:

[t]he Earth with its various faces is a book for geographers: it is written through shapes, interpreting the action of Man and the environmental dynamics of the globe surface. The Earth is on the one hand an everyday place, a scientific object, and on the other hand the surreal place of the spirit, the dream place. (Mériaux, 169)

Geopoetics, as a concept, has many similarities with the cultural geography branch and geosophy (a concept introduced to geography by John Kirtland Wright in 1947)<sup>165</sup>. It crosses countries, zones and continents; it searches for man's sense of terrestrial space. In each of its meanings – and in the first place, in the meaning of geopoetry – geopoetics, like geology and geography with the whole range of their subdisciplines, understands the Earth as 1) the only planet on which life is known to exist, the planet on which we live; 2) soil which consists of three geological zones and presents rocks, sand, clay, decaying plants etc.; 3) a surface with many aspects represented by landscapes (natural lands, and inhabited, humanized lands). The point of the mat-

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родину, - я провожаю их туда, в лазоревые полярные небеса, с отчаянным, смертным плачем: я-то, я почему не лечу?

Потому что такой, такой увидел я тебя когда-то впервые, жизнь-антарктида, что приник к тебе всем огромным воспаленным влажным парным распахнутым сердцем, - толком-то и не поцеловал!.. только лизнул жадно – а примерз сразу и накрепко.

<sup>165</sup> Their relation needs a separate discussion. I only notice here, that geosophy deals with the nature and expression of geographical knowledge both past and present – with what Whittlesey has called “man's sense of [terrestrial] space”. This relation has been studied by Eric Prieto (Prieto 2011,13-28).

ter is that geopoetics tries to give a meaning to the complicated relationship between a human and the Earth, and to write about that with the help of metaphor and other artistic means.

Furthermore, modern geography is an all-encompassing discipline that foremost seeks to understand the Earth and all of its human and natural complexities, and tries to understand not only where the Earth's features are, but also how they have changed and come to be. Geography has been called «the world discipline» but one can also distinguish a regional geography (a branch), and both of these use a comparative method. In the comparative approach a geographer compares the climate conditions, physical conditions, formation of the surface, vegetation, etc. of different physical divisions of the world (See: Basha 2004, 194). It is the same with comparative literature: world literature refers to the circulation of works into the wider world beyond their country of origin and compares national literatures with each other, whilst the main aim of regional literature is to understand, or define, the uniqueness or the character of a particular region that consists of human as well as natural elements. Now geology and geography describe the Earth and the earth spacetime, whereas geopoetry forms new literal space, artistic substance which is able to communicate with us by words, of course with a dose of ambiguity and polysemy.

White's original geopoetics has a global and Universal perspective (White's cosmology), and, from the very beginning, it had to have a cosmopolitan dimension. At present, geopoetry is more often burdened with additional senses: historical, collective and subjective memories, physical condition etc. In this situation, professional Earth terms which are often used by poets who are not geologists or geographers, in artistic symbolic space of literature, obtain new meanings (Lotman's *secondary modeling systems*). The following poem entitled *Pamięci J.H.* (In Memory of J.H.) written by a contemporary Polish writer from the Bieszczad Moun-

tains, Janusz Szuber, sets a good example for comparing the scientific and metaphorical meanings:

How much longer this feeling of guilt.  
When they, similar, yet dissimilar,  
In the depths of minerals, barley roots,  
Covered with granite or black earth,  
Pull lash after lash off their eyelids?

The eon is ending and who will answer me:  
How much longer this feeling of guilt?  
Mountain meadows rich their backs to the sun,  
Bieszczady camels ready for the road,  
When I speak to you through a blackthorn branch. (Szuber 2001,35)

An aggregate of minerals (*rock*), a light coloured, coarse grained *granite*, different ancient *minerals* and recent *barley roots* form a context of the enormous time extent. *Eon*, which in geological time scale means the longest division of geological time, comprising two or more eras, in this poem, crowns the image of an extremely long period – the time of *this feeling of guilt*. It seems that *In Memory of J.H* is dedicated to Jerzy Herasymowicz, another Polish poet from the Bieszczady Mountains. Critics will analyze the hidden meaning of this guilt. Is this a poet's human guilt, or historical guilt of the post-WWII communist Polish and Soviet regimes concerning Ukrainians in Poland, their violent removal from their native Bieszczady Mountains, and the demolishing of their Church and culture? My present comparative perspective focuses on geopoetry-geology relations and illustrates how geological terms and geological methods of measuring time help in the creation of literature about Man and the Earth.

The process of ideologizing and politicization of geopoetics puts it closer to the boundaries of regionalism, post-colonialism and geopolitics. Such proximity enriches its own potential, from one side, and dilutes its deep philosophic sense, from the other.

The “duel” between poetics and politics is the most apparent in geopoetics texts, but it also provokes hot debates among the authors on geopoetics as a whole. I need to mention here that both the conception of geopoetics and geopoeetry, marked with patriotic, ethnic, postcolonial or emancipation attitudes are not identical with geopolitics (the study of the effects of geography on international politics and international relations) as, for example, Igor Sid (Igor Sidorenko), a Crimean Russian writer thinks, proposing a hybrid meaning of the subject - “[g]eopoetics is geopolitics’ continuation, conducted by means of a milder method.”<sup>166</sup> Many Ukrainian writers, Sid’s immediate geographical neighbours, continue White’s tradition: “geopolitics concerns State-State relations. But geopoetics concerns Man-Earth relations” (White 2010, 16). In his presentation on the Lviv Editors’ Forum (2010) Igor Bondar-Tereshchenko, the author of *Остмодерн: геопоетика, психологія, влада* (Ostmodern: geopoetics, psychology, power) (Бондар-Терещенко 2005, 143), compared Russian (Sid) and Ukrainian conceptions of geopoetics (Zhadan, Prokhaz’ko, Andrukhovych) with White’s “spiritual cartography” and - in consequence - he noticed with irony Sid’s “skid” towards the still unsolved question of the post-Soviet division of the Crimea. In

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<sup>166</sup> *Игор Сід: Конкуренція у справі любові*. Natalia Pasicznyk’s interview with Igor Sid [in:] ZAXID-NET, 16.07.10 [http://zaxid.net/home/showSingleNews.do?igor\\_sid\\_konkurenciya\\_u\\_spravi\\_lyubovi&objectId=1106908](http://zaxid.net/home/showSingleNews.do?igor_sid_konkurenciya_u_spravi_lyubovi&objectId=1106908) Accessed 02.05.14. See also: Игорь Сид - Андрей Битов - *Геопэтика - звучит заранее убедительно*. Фрагмент интервью в „Литературной газете” <http://liter.net/geopoetics/bitov.html> Accessed 02.05.14. Igor Sid (1963) has been the administrator of the international project called The Crimea Club in Moscow since 1995. It is a geopoetics association promoting geopoetic/political ideas. He organized two international conferences in geopoetics (in 1996 and 2009 in Moscow). He is an ichthyologist by education, a painter-naturalist in Afro-Asian and Antarctic travels, a writer-geopoet with geopolitical orientation.

other words, he condemned the Russian model of geopoetics for changing its orientation "From Green to Scarlet".<sup>167</sup> In the same place, the well-known Ukrainian writers presented their various geopoetics conceptions based on their own and their colleague's literary works, with the domination of poetics on politics. Serhiy Zhadan especially stressed the imaginative and verbal character of text-geography relations. This seems to be in accordance with Bertran Westphal's (Westphal 2010, xii; for details see Westphal 2011, 111-147) conception of text reference: the "relationship between the so-called objective referent and its artistic representation, between the real world and fictitious worlds", "space of the world - space of the text" as following: "The existence of a place receives its final shape entirely as a result of it being described in a written form, i.e. when it establishes its existence not just on a map, but also in a text, particularly an artistic one".

Yuriy Andrukhovych (1960) concentrated on the subjective<sup>168</sup> and creative character of geopoetics. In his opinion, each author has his/her own geopoetics, as Andrzej Stasiuk (1960), for example, who has delimited the space of his own (literary and also geographical) on the map with the help of compasses (Stasiuk 2007, 85-86). Stasiuk's geopoetics space is situated inside a circle, marked by two real places: the place of his birth (Warsaw) and the place of his present residence (Wołowiec, Czarne in the Beszczad Mountains). It is the space where his books arise. But Prokhazko's geopoetics space is Jalivets, a village created by his artistic imagination.

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<sup>167</sup> I paraphrased here Jonathan Bate's metaphoric description «From 'Red' to 'Green'», which he used as the title for his article in the collective volume on ecocriticism. See: J. Bate, "From 'Red' to 'Green' (Bate 2000, 167).

<sup>168</sup> His conception does not agree with Westphal's, who claims: «one may undertake a geocritical study of a city, a region, a territory, and so on, rather than studying a given author's treatment of that place» (Westphal, 2010, xiv).

This divergence of opinions of Russian and Ukrainian writers on geopoetics does not interfere with their cooperation. Zhadan was the co-author of a bilingual Sid-Polakov Project titled *Kordon* (Border), finalized by the edition of their joint book. Andrukhovych spread information about the activity of The Crimean Geopoetics Club in Moscow in the intellectual circles of the West (among the club members are: Igor Sid, Andrej Bitov, Dmitrij Progov and Jurij Andrukhovych himself), resulting in a geopoetics symposium *Last & Lost*, organized by the authors of *Geopoetiken* in Berlin in 2006 with the assistance of Andrukhovych and Zhadan (see Marszałek and Sasse 2009; Marszałek, 2007, 540-541). In his own artistic practice, Andrukhovych presents a historical and cultural model of geopoetics, so-called «geo-palimpsests» (earth-space as cultural and historical palimpsests). In his eye, the geopoetics of Central-Eastern Europe is marked by the additional layers of the recent totalitarian and postcolonial past (Jarzębski 2008, II). His novels *Московіада* (Moskoviada) (1993) and *Таємниця. Замість роману* (A Secret. Instead of the Novel) (2008), along with his essays reflect this idea to the full. In Andrukhovych's texts, the territories of geopoetics very often overlap with the territories of urbanism and imagology, since the imaginative action mainly takes place in different cities, outside of Ukraine. In *Лексикон інтимних міст. Довільний посібник з геопоетики та космополітики* (A Lexicon of the Intimate Places. A Free Textbook on Geopoetics and Cosmopolitics) (2012), the author in alphabetical order and in a form of personal encyclopaedia describes 111 cities of his own. The alphabet (structure), as the author comments in the *Foreword in a Form of Instruction*, "mixed the spaces and in some places openly mocked the boundaries. By its will and whim, Aarau neighbors Alupka, Balaklava with Barcelona, Haysyn squeezed between Heidelberg and Hamburg, Detroit joined Dnipropetrovsk, Riga with Rome,

Ternopil with Toronto, and Chicago with Chernivtsi" (2012, 9). The Ukrainian writer is fascinated with the city, urban life – for all that urbanism, and the geography ("map character") of the novel were to be pushed aside in favour of private confession and geopoetics in White's meaning with bio-geo-geography narrative as the result. This private, intimate "geo" becomes the "antidotum of geopolitics" (7).

An example of balanced proportions between geopoetics, ecocritical, regionalistic and post-colonial approaches can be observed in the poetry of a Canadian writer with Polish and Ukrainian heritage, Andrew Suknaski (1942-2012), born in a homestead near Wood Mountain, a village in the south-eastern Saskatchewan prairies. His poetry was qualified by Canadian critics (George Woodcock, Heather Pycrz) as "geopoetry, poetry rooted in the land, often in a specific place"<sup>169</sup>, and at the same time as "Canadian prairie literature, regional literature" (Lilburn 2006, 9-10)". In the afterword to the first edition of his volume, named *Wood Mountain Poems* (1976), in many poems of this volume, the author underlines the presence of his great "vaguely divided guilt" (sic! similar to Szuber - towards the displaced Lemkos): the guilt of a newcomer towards the first nation, the Crees (depriving the Indians of their ancestral homes and enclosing them on reservations, rooting them out), as well as the guilt of a traitor of his

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<sup>169</sup> Heather Pycrz, *A Digital History of Canadian Poetry*, [http://www.robthiessen.com/youngpoets/current\\_site/?q=geo\\_poets](http://www.robthiessen.com/youngpoets/current_site/?q=geo_poets) on line 02.05.14. Heather Pycrz in her critical need, interpreting Andrew Suknaski's, Douglas Lochhead's and Peter Sanger's poetry has slightly modified the usual Canadian meaning of geopoetics (by Woodcock): "I'm using geopoetry to mean not just those poets who write about a specific place and our human attachment to it, but also those who praise, lament, elegize and respect the land itself. To some extent, many poets do this. These three poets are distinguished by the depth of their commitment to a geographic, physical place and the metaphors it engenders, to the revelation of topography, and the way we, as human beings, are engraved upon the land".

own Polish-Ukrainian ethnicity. From this volume, decolonization of the Canadian prairies, ecocriticism and geopoetics begin. Suknaski's moral philosophy is in the harmony with Nature and the Earth. With the help of his Indian characters who are knitted together with the land (very often real persons), the author contemplates the man-earth relation. He expressively locates man in the subordinate position to the earth: "we came from the earth/ and our bodies must go back to the earth/ our mother" (Suknaski 2006, 53). Nevertheless, this majestic geocentricism of *Wood Mountain Poems* does not agree with geopolitics or geoideology: a human being, knitted together with the land, forms an integrated whole with it. Suknaski's Indian Chief points out such prairie wisdom:

*the earth was created with the assistance of the sun, and  
it should be left as it was...the land was made without  
lines of demarcation, and it is no man's business to  
divide it...the earth and myself are of one mind. (57)*

As long as the earth becomes a place of divisions, confrontations and extermination of one people by another, geography takes a historical shape, and the Indian hero, vested with a collective consciousness, fights for the right to a local time on his earth:

this my right  
to chronicle the meaning of these vast plains  
in a geography of blood  
and failure  
making them live. (76)

Suknaski's *Wood Mountain Poems* poetry reflects the artistic practice begun in the 1950s and continued in the 1970s by Patrice Kathleen Page, Earle Birney, Al Purdy (the editor of *Wood Mountain Poems*), Gwendolyn MacEwen, and Andrew/Andy Suknaski, and marked with particular attention to properties of the earth and historical reminiscences as well.

Having been created in different parts of the world – in Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Canada – geopoetics (its ontology and texts) shows a similar process of oscillation between science and literature, politics and text. Geopoetics in White’s meaning, as “a field of the potential convergence of science, philosophy and poetics” (White 2010,68), becomes a rich object for comparative literature studies. The latter has not only a cognitive dimension, but also an ethical one, which is connected with such values as beauty, democracy, and equality. With the help of a comparative method, one may compare the artistic text with geographic, geological, ecological competence etc., and search for its new artistic meaning in the new contexts. The contemporary comparative literature studies relations between the written forms of art and non-artistic forms. Geopoetics has changed the way in which comparative literature is understood and discussed, and, *ex altera parte*, comparative literature, disclosing the relation of literature with geo-sciences enriches our interpretation of geopoetry, and, consequently, amplifies the foundation of geocriticism.

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### Abstract

In the following paper, I would like to elaborate on the disciplinary context of comparative literature enriched by geopoetics, and explore the limits, boundaries and possibilities of interdisciplinary, overlapping comparative research. Furthermore, my observations are based on different national models of geopoetics – from Canada to Poland, Russia and Ukraine, which enables the double comparative perspective: moving between disciplines and national literatures, as well as comparative theory and comparative practice. Having been created in different parts of the world – in Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Canada – geopoetics (its ontology and texts) shows a similar process of oscillation between science and literature, politics and text.

**Key words:** comparative literature, geopoetics, geocriticism, geopolitics, science and literature, Kenneth White, post-White ideas.<sup>170</sup>

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## **Towards environmental research: a new mission of comparative studies**

For centuries, anthropocentrism (ontological, epistemological, axiological, religious) dominated the style of philosophizing in the West, assuming that man is the centre and purpose of the world, and everything in nature happens because of man, because he is of absolute and superior value. This perspective led to the interpretation of the world only from the point of view of human experience and focusing primarily on human issues. This way of thinking spread throughout all of the humanities, including comparative studies of literature and culture. Since the dawn of time, the first comparative trials have focused on comparing human achievements. Beginning from the “first contacts between ancient civilizations, from the need to confront own forms of cultural existence, familiar and native, with foreign, different culture” (Janaszek-Ivaničková 1989, 13), over the centuries, a construct of comparative studies developed, extending new research areas, embracing new forms of human-created discourses. Gradually, comparative studies became a dynamic and internally diverse field, seeking in the differences a “possible community” (E. Kasperski’s definition, see: Kasperski 1998, 331) on the level of language, imagery, structures and culture. The widest, boundary comparative, categories have become nothing else but culture/civilization circles, created by people and embedded in a given culture and epoch. We compare Gertrude Stein's cubist prose with Picasso's painting, and the neo-impressionist prose of Virginia Woolf with French pointillism

and tachism; we compare Erich Segal's novel of *Oliver Story* with its film adaptation by John Korty, we compare Sara Kane's drama with its stage performance, and in a hypertext poem by Neil Hennessy<sup>171</sup> we look for the postmodern connectivity of the old Dadaistic materials; that is, we compare one human achievement with others, leaving comparandum and comparans in the limits of civilization and human optics.

The great technical progress of the twentieth century shook man's faith in the universality of such a perspective and outlined the contours of the dusk of the anthropocentric paradigm. Biocentric ethics, environmental history, ecocriticism, environmental philosophy, geopoetics, animal studies and other environmentally oriented disciplines, more broadly – ecological humanistics in the paradigm of posthumanism – question the assumptions of anthropocentrism. The dynamics of these changes, as Monika Bakke notes, “leads to extremely important transfigurations, one of which is that we do not stop being human but stop being what we have been so far, the measure and centre of omniscience” (Bakke 2010, 7). This new thinking makes us expand the areas of comparative research and, partly, change their character. In this perspective, comparative studies are located in the interdisciplinary paradigm.

The tendency toward interdisciplinarity has been dominating in thinking about man and culture for a long time, prompting researchers to go beyond the divisions of individual disciplines of the humanities and to include and, therefore build, a description of the examined reality from many perspectives. The present environmental humanities have captured already existing conjunctions across environmental philosophy, environmental history,

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<sup>171</sup> Neil Hennessy, a pataphysician, who graduated from the University of Waterloo with a specialization in Computer Science and English Literature, a famed Canadian digital poet and new media artist, the author of *JABBER: The Jabberwocky Engine*, a Java program.

ecocriticism, environmental literature, environmental anthropology, cultural geography etc. Comparative studies (comparative studies of literature and culture) may function as a bridge connecting environmentally oriented humanistic disciplines with literature, searching for common areas and their relations. In this way they help to develop interdisciplinarity within the humanities. It may be said that the second task of comparative studies is to strengthen the collaboration of literature/culture with natural science (including atmospheric sciences) in a paradigm of environmental humanities. On the other hand, the humanities involved in environmental protection give comparative studies a new dimension, favouring the shaping of its own comparative ecological perspectives (including comparative research on how to express environmental themes, genetic differences in the implementation of the topic, specifics of narration, national tradition etc.).

Applying the broader theoretical foundations of environmental humanities, contemporary comparative analysis should use the knowledge of representatives of not only so closely related disciplines (such as literary history, cultural studies, anthropology) but also various fields of knowledge, and above all, sciences dealing with the world of nature (biology, biophysics, animal psychology, geology, ecology, urban planning, ecological law, meteorology, etc.). Such a combination of knowledge (inter- and possibly trans-disciplinary) will help to take into account a different point of view of the issue and ultimately lead to a reformulation of questions that naturally appear within the scope of comparative studies.

In the context of the studies of the 21st century, the foundation for eco-comparative science (i.e. comparative studies dealing with human-nature relations in works of art, literature, travel discourse, journalism, etc.) is to combine – in the paradigm of ecological humanities – a certain humanistic knowledge with social, natural and hard sciences, and the subject of research – the

world of people and non-people in their comparison. Let us look into selected relationships of comparative studies with nature, natural science and environmentally oriented disciplines detailing the status and role of the first member of the relation.

**Comparative studies – nature.** Literature has always reflected different perspectives of looking at the world, presenting, among others, relations between man and earth, man and plants, man and animals. The task of present and future comparative studies is as follows: moving freely between different disciplines, realizing the interference of discursive practices used to compare the world of nature and the world of man, real and fictional. Such research orientation is not a novelty, it was clearly presented in Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett's pioneer<sup>172</sup> work *Comparative Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886)<sup>173</sup>, which is considered the beginning of the field of scientific comparative studies. Based on the evolutionary theories of Spencer and Darwin (sic! it was published in the "International Scientific Series"), and especially on the philosophical theory of evolution of the former, it postulated that evolution proceeded on all levels of reality: inorganic, organic and super organic (society), and products of super-organic life (culture) – according to identical rules. The book contained a large fragment about the relations of man and nature and the reflection of these relations in literature. The third subsection of the final chapter of the book discussing the issues of national literature is entitled 'Nature in national literature'. It traces the roles of nature in each of the major European literatures and the literary ways of presenting mutual relationships between people and the world of nature, from the very beginning of history,

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<sup>172</sup> He used the word 'Comparative Literature' for the first time in the English form.

<sup>173</sup> Ten years later it was translated into Polish: Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, *Literatura porównawcza*, przekł. z ang. Zofii Daszyńskiej, Warszawa: K. Kowalewski, 1896.

that is, from the common foundation of Western culture, to the end of the 19th century. His reasoning is clearly social. Already in the epic, *Beowulf*, Posnett notices the common cause of the inability to feel the beauty of nature by writing:

In the earliest poetry of Europe, poetry which reflects the stormy local life (...) man is too busy with his tribal wars and his conflict with rugged Nature to sing of the mountains or the forests with any sense of pleasure. (Posnett 1886, 374)

The Irish-New Zealand scholar lays the blame for the conscious destruction of the initial man-nature relation in literature on Christianity, which:

while absorbing the folk-lore of its converts, humanised and, so to speak, denaturalised it. Combating the sentiments of clan life - Blood-revenge and the like - Christianity was also compelled to combat pagan worships of Nature and the songs in which they were voiced. (345)

In his opinion, this faith destroyed even the original manifestations of the mythology of nature from ancient epic poetry and Celtic poetry. Posnett also noticed the lack of cohesion between human life and nature in poetry of feudal times, and that the human relations with nature in the *Divine Comedy* by Dante were rather poorly marked. Scarcely between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries he noticed "three great influences at work in creating new ideas of Nature in Europe - the rise of the towns, the progress in geographical discovery, and the renaissance" (379). The scholar found a real turn to nature in the works of the great Romantics from the era of democratic revolutions and new individualism. His highest mark was addressed to Whitman, for whom "the ideal individual of America - America's ideal man - is to absorb into his soul an almost boundless range of social life - all the sights and sounds of Nature and animals" (389). The contemporary comparative studies do not stop at man's absorbing of nature for the good of man's spirit and body, they compare in

literature/culture the two related parts of the whole unity in the interests of both: human nature and non-human nature. In this regard they coincide partly with ecocriticism, which has a more recent beginning and a much shorter history.

**Comparative studies - ecocriticism.** Eco-criticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view. The following working definition by Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader*: "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996, xviii), is very similar to the ecologically oriented comparative studies (the same research subject, the same research goal). In both disciplines the literature scholars analyse texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways in which literature treats the subject of nature. According to Thomas K. Dean, ecocriticism emerged for a "humanistic understanding of our relationships in an age of environmental destruction". The American writer and scientist recognizes that:

In large part, environmental crises are a result of humanity's disconnection from the natural world, brought about not only by increasing technology but also by particularization; that is, a mentality of specialization that fails to recognize the interconnectedness of all things. (Dean 1994, 5)

Both disciplines are interdisciplinary and – in Dean's words used for ecocriticism – try to "reattach scholars to each other and scholarship to the real concerns of the world" (5). Both of them have broadened their boundaries to culture and cultural products (art works, architecture, film, TV, etc.), both studies are eco-oriented. Both use the comparative method which they borrowed from the natural sciences, which use comparisons across species. The differences are as follows: while the eco- approach is basic and dominates in ecocriticism, it is one of a multitude of approaches in comparative studies, and conversely: while the comparative approach is basic and dominates in comparative studies,

it is one of a multitude of approaches in ecocriticism. Moreover, the ideology of comparative studies is not so public and is less utilitarian than in ecocriticism. Eventually, comparative studies focus more on comparison than on eco- analyses. Furthermore, at the interface between ecocriticism and literary comparative studies, a hybrid discipline is created, mentioned by Ursula K. Heise, “comparative ecocritics” (and I think that a new form of comparative studies may also be created, that is ecological comparative studies). The American scholar<sup>174</sup> studied the issue of transdisciplinary development of comparative studies in the paradigm of environmental literary studies (ecological literary studies or literary studies involved in environmental protection) and vice versa – environmental literary studies in the paradigm of comparative studies. Heise, being engaged in environmental protection, presents her apt observations on the evolutionary transdisciplinary changes of both disciplines as follows:

Environmental literary studies have become increasingly international and comparatist over the last decade. (...) There are more interesting stories to tell about the encounter of comparative literature with ecocriticism – stories that challenge literary studies in their usual form: most importantly, the challenge of nonfiction, the challenge of the environmental humanities as a transdisciplinary matrix, and the challenge of the Anthropocene in its tension with posthumanism<sup>175</sup>.

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<sup>174</sup> Ursula K. Heise is a professor of Environmental Humanities in the Department of English and at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). She served as President of ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment) in 2011.

<sup>175</sup> Heise, Ursula K., 2014, *Comparative Literature and the Environmental Humanities*, in: *The 2014-2015 Report on the State of the Discipline of Comparative Literature. Paradigms*. March 09, 2014. [https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/list-view/paradigms?sort\\_by=created&sort\\_order=ASChttp://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/comparative-literature-and-environmental-humanities#sthash.b2Pr0AZE.dpuf](https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/list-view/paradigms?sort_by=created&sort_order=ASChttp://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/comparative-literature-and-environmental-humanities#sthash.b2Pr0AZE.dpuf) Accessed 28.02. 2018.

The contemporary interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity made it difficult to delimitate the boundaries of similar studies; however, one thing is clear: both of them are located in the scope of environmental humanities.

**Comparative studies - biology.** The ties between biology and philology are sometimes strange but unbreakable. Rachel Carson, an American biologist who significantly contributed to the emergence of a global ecological movement and ecocriticism, chose to study English philology but after some time she changed her mind and switched to biology. Later on, she went back to studying literature and as an author of popular science books about protection of the environment, the author of *Silent Spring*, she drew the attention of society towards ecological issues. Carson revolutionised our thinking about ecology. The same can be said about Simona Kossak, an outstanding Polish biologist. She started studying Polish literature but made a name for herself as a biologist and an expert on the behavioural ecology of mammals and forests. Thanks to her popular science articles, movies and books, such as *Opowiadania o ziołach i zwierzętach: zgodnie z naturą swojego gatunku*, *Wilk - zabójca zwierząt gospodarskich?*, *Saga Puszczy Białowieskiej* - she made a change in the ecological awareness of Polish people and others. Ecological issues are largely determined by the genre form of literature oriented toward nature and environmental protection. In the last two decades, we have seen a significant advantage of eco-oriented non-fiction (travel notes, documentaries, journalistic novels, etc.) over the traditional literary form. Many of them are narrations about the interactions among organisms and their environment, about plants and animals, life and living organisms, which may be rich material for comparison (from the classic *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell (1820-1878) to Garth Stein's novel *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (2009) with its wise, genuine, kind dog Enzo, and Ursula Kroeber Le Guin's (1929 - 2018) fantasy and sci-fi novels, including

the forest world of Athshe in the Earthsea series). Comparing fictitious creations (partly fictitious even in documentary prose) with their real equivalents, a comparatist enters the area not only of biology and its numerous subdisciplines (ecology, cognitive biology and ethology in the first turn) but also environmental philosophy, which is concerned with the natural environment and humans' place within it, and environmental ethics, extending the traditional human boundaries of ethics to the non-human world. He or she asks crucial philosophical questions about human-environmental relations such as "What do we mean when we talk about nature?", "How should we respond to environmental challenges such as environmental degradation, pollution and climate change?" and "What is our place in the natural world?".

**Comparative studies – meteorology.** According to Caren Irr,

In the 21st century, a new genre of Anglophone fiction has emerged – the climate change novel, often abbreviated as "cli-fi." Many successful authors of literary fiction, such as Margaret Atwood, Paolo Bacigalupi, T. C. Boyle, Michael Crichton, Ian McEwan, Amitav Ghosh, Barbara Kingsolver, Ursula Le Guin, Lydia Millet, David Mitchell, Ruth Ozeki, Nathaniel Rich, Kim Stanley Robinson, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Marcel Theroux, have contributed to this new genre's efforts to imagine the causes, effects, and feeling of global warming.<sup>176</sup>

It would be worth mentioning that in recent years there has been a real environmental sci-fi explosion with intensively developing cli-fi which, next to meteorology, deals with man-made climate changes and what the future could hold for us. This atmospheric science gives to literature different methods of observation of weather and climate, prediction of weather, meteorological terms and phenomena. The *MaddAddam* trilogy (2013) by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood (1939), *The Broken Earth* trilo-

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<sup>176</sup> Irr, Caren, 2017, *Climate Fiction in English*, in: *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*. Online Publication Date: February, 2017. [https://www.academia.edu/35288142/Climate\\_Fiction\\_in\\_English](https://www.academia.edu/35288142/Climate_Fiction_in_English) Accessed 12.09.24.

gy (2015-2018) by American writer Nora K. Jemisin (1972), *California* (2014), a novel by a young American penwoman Edan Lepucki (described as “post-apocalyptic dystopian fiction”), *NEW YORK 2140* (2017) by American sci-fi writer Kim Stanley Robinson (1952) present cli-fi, which deals with the effects of climate change on human society and are strongly connected with meteorology. Therefore, relations between literature and atmospheric sciences as well as genetic comparisons and changes in ways of presenting the environment conditioned by the species form and national culture/literature tradition also belong to the competences and tasks of present comparative studies in the paradigm of environmental humanities.

**Comparative studies - animal studies.** Animal studies is a growing interdisciplinary field within the humanities and humanistic social sciences concerned with the political, ethical, social, and cultural status of animals. According to Paul Waldau, the author of the first academic introductory text in this field, *Animal Studies. An Introduction* (2013),

Animal Studies goes under a variety of other names today, including human-animal studies, animal humanities, animality studies, the human-animal bond, companion animal studies, anthrozoology, posthumanism, critical animal studies, species critique, biopolitics, and more. While the diversity of names signals that the field is so new that it has not reached any consensus (...) in general ways all of these approaches share certain features. All reflect the inevitability of interactions between humans and some nonhumans, just as each of these approaches in one way or another signals the impossibility of exploring all aspects of all nonhuman animals. (Waldau 2013, 13)

Animal Studies itself uses methods and ways of comparative studies. Correctly, the above-mentioned author made comparative studies an equal part of Animal Studies. Chapter 7, titled “Comparative Studies: Legal Systems, Religions and Cultures”, as noticed by Waldau, “turns to important comparative endeavors that look at

legal systems, religious traditions, and our many human cultures” (XIV). What connects the two disciplines is that both of them examine similarities and differences between animals and the humans who depict them. Moreover, examining the animality of the human, both try to reflect on our inevitable anthropocentrism. Mario Ortiz-Robles, who leads a seminar titled ‘Comparative Literature and Animal Studies’ for his students at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, tried to define the crucial points of this interdisciplinary relation. He states that “(t)he comparative study of literature is intertwined at its origins with the comparative study of animals by virtue of the methodology used to compare members of otherwise very different sets of objects”; that “(t)he comparison between animals and humans can thus be said to be the condition of possibility of literature itself insofar as literature is the giving of wing to metaphor”; he generalizes that comparative literature, “can be said to be complicit in maintaining and reaffirming the human/animal divide by acting as a cog in the ‘anthropological machine’ ”<sup>177</sup>. Moreover, he presents and discusses the ways of human representation of animals in literature.

I want to point out that in the last two decades the new post-humanist perspective has undermined anthropomorphism, the traditional and the most common way of literary representation of animals. For instance, Marina Lewycka in her *Two Caravans* (first published in 2007) chose a different way of representing nonhuman subjectivity. She does not anthropomorphise the dog, named Dog, but gives him the rank of a character identical with other characters, he possesses his own narrative with first-person point of view. His own story is situated against a background of the main text with different third-person points of view and has another graphic and

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<sup>177</sup> Ortiz-Robles, Mario, 2015, Comparative Literature and Animal Studies, in: *The 2014-2015 Report on the State of the Discipline of Comparative Literature. Paradigms*, February, 11, 2015. <https://stateofthedisdiscipline.acla.org/entry/comparative-literature-and-animal-studies>. Accessed 4.04. 2018.

syntactic form (capital letters only, no punctuation, a different font). The author presents a short-spoken, very simple and abridged narration by Dog, consisting mainly of verbs and nouns. Properly speaking, with such narration the dog first appeared:

I AM DOG I RUN FROM BAD MAN CAGE I HEAR DOGS BARK ANGRY DOGS GROWL ANGRY DOGS BARK THEY WILL FIGHT THEY WILL KILL I SMELL DOG-SWEAT MAN-RAGE MAN OPENS CAGE MAN PULLS COLLAR MEN SIT SMOKE TALK DOGS (...) BIG ANGRY DOG SNARLS SHOW TEETH HAIR BRISTLE ON HIS BACK HE WILL KILL I AM NOT FIGHTING DOG I AM RUNNING DOG I JUMP I RUN I RUN TWO DAYS I EAT NO MEAT HUNGER PAINS IN BELLY MAKE ME MAD I FEEL HUNGER I FEEL FEAR I RUN I RUN I AM DOG. (Lewycka 2008, 18)

Therefore, the changes in our thinking, our understanding of the environment and our role in the world, the evolutions and transformations in literary creativity provoke new forms of the artistic presentation of human-animal relations.

To sum up, examining human-nature relations as they become processed in textual form, on the one hand, comparative studies enrich themselves with the scientific apparatus of natural sciences and environmental disciplines, which connect them with literature and culture; on the other hand, this approach partially restrains its character. It is quite possible that the growing interrelation of comparative studies with natural sciences and different environmental disciplines may lead to crises in the first: they may use it (its methods, categorial apparatus, ways to analyse etc.) and eventually displace or absorb it. Most clearly this situation is observed in the comparative studies – ecocriticism relation. Without a doubt, ecocriticism more and more uses a comparative method worked out by comparative studies for analysing the literary works belonging to different national literatures/cultures. With the development of different national forms of ecocriticism, the need to compare them arises. As was noted by Yuki Masami, “other regional

and national variants [of ecocriticism] take shape, comparing and contrasting themselves with the ecocritical theory and practice developed in the United States ecocriticism” (Masami 2018, 1). The fundamental edition of *Ecocriticism in Japan* (2017) was supported by both organizations: the American Comparative Literature Association and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (see Acknowledgments). Among the contributors of this edition are comparative studies experts and socio-environmental studies experts as well. Will comparatists be able to publish their version of comparative ecocriticism with the help of eco-scientists? If so, there is no need to be afraid of a crisis.

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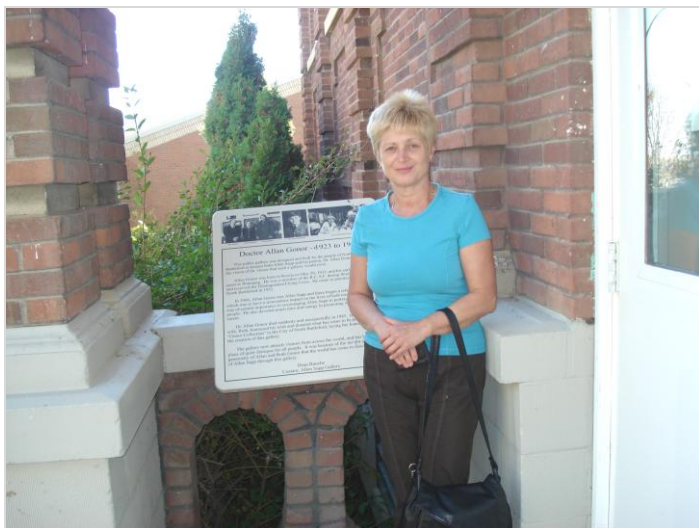
## Summary

The essay focuses on the function of comparative studies in an age of rapid environmental and social change, in a period of rethinking the ontological exceptionality of the human. The author discusses the special mission of comparative studies in the paradigm of environmental humanities (also ecological humanities), an interdisciplinary area of research, drawing on the many environmental sub-disciplines that have emerged in the humanities over the past several decades<sup>178</sup>.

**Key words:** comparative studies, environmental literary studies, transdisciplinary changes

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*After visiting The Allen Sapp Gallery - The Gonor Collection, Battleford, 2010. Photo by Mariane Timothy Harroun. From private collection of the author, O.W.*