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TIME

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Extended Time in the Digital Environment

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Abstract
Several aspects of human life have been extended through the digital environment: programs and apps help to expand cognitive capacity of human brain, drives and memories of ICT devices as well as cloud services provide an external memory storage for human remembrance, portable devices serve as multiple communication supply including text, voice, and video channels, social networking sites offer extensions for social life—and this development is in continual expanse. Nevertheless, time is also involved in this process. On the one hand, the relativity of time is obvious since the technological development transformed not only the sense of time but the culturally or traditionally determined frames of time itself. On the other hand, extended parts of human life can have an independent existence: regardless of time and human life, they can subsist long after a person's death. In other words, digital environment provides the possibility to extend the time for humanity. Is this extension a device for eternal life, or at least for a longer lifespan? Will this extension transform our thinking about time—or about our life?

Keywords: digital environment, extension of human capacities, web 2.0, brain emulation, electronic civilization

If someone takes a walk in Halberstadt, Germany, and walks past the old St. Burchardi church, they will hear a quiet but persistent voice. There is an almost new yet unfinished organ built for one purpose only, namely, to perform John Cage's unique masterpiece "As Slow as Possible" (ASLSP). Cage composed this piece for piano in 1985 and later, in 1987, adapted it for organ. The duration of the original piece was about one hour, depending on the interpretation by the pianist. The question arises as to what the authentic interpretation of the tempo, suggested in the title of the piece, is. Ideally, "As Slow as Possible" means indefinite time; therefore, the slowest interpretation of the music piece would last forever. However, performers need to think more practically.

Traditionally, tempo in music is measured in the context of average human heart rate: faster and slower pieces mean a tempo faster or slower than the heart rate. In other words, the basis of comparison is human, and in this way, some extreme possibilities are excluded. The physiological characteristics of man will determine the possible duration of a music piece because these characteristics—how long one is able to play the piano or how long the audience can listen to music—are strongly limited. In case we want to get rid of these constraints, the performance of the music piece can extend to a multi-generational time (Byrd & Fritch, 2012). We live in a world where technology can improve and extend human capabilities and help to exceed previous limits. Physiological characteristics are not decisive anymore for creation or interpretation—the definitive factor is the technology used in the presentation of works—in the case of John Cage's ASLSP, it is the organ chosen because of the ability to sound indefinitely long.

After a conference in 1997, the John Cage Organ Foundation Halberstadt decided to perform the piece for 639 years. It started playing on September 5, 2001; the proposed finish will be on September 5, 2640.[1] Sandbags are placed on pedals to play the organ, which are changed every few years, according to the score. Audience can follow the performance personally in the church, but the project also has a website where anyone can listen to the music. However, the interesting question is what the audience can hear. They are listening to a sound, but can they hear the music? The temporality of a 639-year-long music piece is completely different from humans' temporality. The latter is limited by their heart rate, daily or annual rhythm of life, and it is beyond the time frames of human sensory system. The tune of ASLSP unfolds only in decades, not in seconds. For example, in 2022, there is only one voice change, on February 5, and the next one will be two years later, on February 5, 2024.

Nevertheless, Cage's work gives the listener a new sense of time beyond their usual days and years, and this sense—extended by the technology—can offer a deeper understanding of the nature of time. In this case, perception of time was extended by a musical instrument with mechanical compressor, tubes, and valves—the same can happen when it is extended by digital devices and applications.

In a psychological sense, time is perceived by change. Physical bodies and material entities are in continuous change, that can modify their attributions, and the human sensory system is keen on change. Cage almost completely cuts off the listener from the possibility to observe the change in his music piece, therefore the listener gets no clues

[1] Website of the Halberstadt project: https://www.aslsp.org (11/12/2021)

about the temporality of the sound they hear: a two-year-lasting sound seems to be eternal to the audience. Lack of ordinary clues for temporality is also a problem in a digital environment, although in a different sense, since the technology creates its own temporality with mechanical, electronic, or digital processes.

Time Sense and Technology

Naturally, the extension of senses and cognitive abilities by means of technology is not a brand-new phenomenon, but it appeared immediately when the use of devices evolved. As far as time is concerned, the use of devices that speed up work processes or the application of technological innovations that facilitate movement and transport are characterized by different perceptions of time. Technology helped not only perform a task more easily, with less effort, but also faster, consuming less time. As the amount of time required for a task decreased, human perception of time adapted to smaller and smaller time units, despite the days (or part of the day), weeks or years; in other words, natural time units were replaced by technologically created units. Gibson's (1979) ecological theory serves as a good starting point for understanding the perceptual processes that take place in an environment full of technology. The environment provides various kinds of information—visual, auditive, tactile, spatial, or temporal—to the sensing organism. This information constantly changes as the organism moves: each piece is only available at a particular point in space and time. Thus, in addition to the objects and events of the environment, perception provides information about the living being as well because it determines its position in the environment. Ecological information plays a significant role in perception by making the properties of the environment available to living things. In this sense, perception is nothing more than the detection of the properties of the environment, and the sense organs of a living organism and the cognitive structures that process incoming information are adapted to the available information.

In this sense, digital environment is a special case. Digital technology provides a multimodal sensory information for users based on the natural abilities of sensory systems. At the same time, human sensory system slightly adapts to the attributions of applied technology, and the access to information will be determined by new sensory and cognitive skills required in this environment.

There is another interesting phenomenon related to all this. The user in digital environment tends to treat a digital device as a kind of agent (Light & Wakeman, 2001); this is less obvious for other technical devices. There is no doubt that Dennett's intentional stance (Dennett, 1987) is preferred by the user to several technical devices, such as cars

or even simple thermostats, as this greatly simplifies their handling. However, in the case of digital devices, and especially those connected to a network or with an Internet connection, the connection of user and device, as a technological object, is almost in the background: he interprets their operation in a social framework instead of a simple one, and he controls his own behavior within the same framework. In other words, working with a computer is more of a form of interaction for the user rather than a simple "machine operation" like, for example, driving a car or making a drink with a blender. This interaction has its own frame for perception of time.

One can mention that human sensory system adapted to its natural environment through millions of years, but digital environment has existed only for a few decades. The phenomenon of neural plasticity provides an explanation to this because it is the key to keeping an organism alive in an extremely rapidly changing environment. The synaptic structure of the nervous system, which forms the basis of cognitive processes, is shaped by a combination of genes and experience (cf. LeDoux, 2002). The structures required to navigate the physical environment are partly hardwired; that is, their processing mechanisms follow patterns that have been established and fixed through evolutionary history in the genes. On the other hand, the reliable operation of the entire processing mechanism requires a wide range of postnatal experience. These experiences gradually shape the synaptic structure, creating the mechanisms that fit well with the particular environment humans live in—the synaptic structure of the nervous system actually changes over the entire lifespan, albeit to varying degrees. This neural basis does not only facilitate learning but is also the basis of the above mentioned phenomenon—upon using a device, the given device is imaged as extensions of the body or as parts of them. The same is true for cognitive processes and perception of space and time. In other words, through neural plasticity, information from the environment shapes the synaptic structures of a given sensory or cognitive area—and, thus, it can also shape the area that performs task-related processing or motor tasks.

Neural plasticity helps to accommodate new attributions of the environment. In terms of time, it supposes that several processes in digital devices define the frames of perception of time: duration of starting an application, up- or downloading a file, making a search process, or contacting a friend. Rapid data transmission led to a decrease in attention time and the expectation of an immediate answer, to intolerance of waiting time (Jackson, 2008). However, this perception of time is related to the methods used in interactions with digital devices.

According to a research by Small and Vorgan (2009), Internet search fundamentally modifies strategies and time frames for accessing information and modifies the neural mechanisms that allow it. In experienced seekers, an increased activity can be detected in a part of the cerebral cortex, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. For example, a Google search triggers a special brain activity that builds up relatively quickly as an effect of internet use. The area whose activity was observed was involved in performing functions such as integrating stimuli, previous knowledge, complex information, making decisions, and managing working memory.

A similar change is observed in attentional processes: on the one hand, multitasking, the simultaneous execution of multiple tasks—which means tasks divided into short sequences and frequent switching between them, not real simultaneity—and the phenomenon of partial attention. Both suggest that the time frame of processing comprises short temporal units, and this defines how the user perceives the flow of time: in shorter periods and fragmented pieces. Due to the digital environment, a new dynamic of time appears that affects how people perceive the present, past, and future (Hui, 2021). Furthermore, shorter time scales are harder and harder to observe and comprehend without technical assistance and thus, the dependence of everyday life on technology is increasing.

This effect of technology does not remain in the digital realm; on the contrary, it also affects everyday life and social behavior. The shortening of human attention span is not limited to Internet use but affects social relations, conversations, or cooperative activities.

As discussed above, time is extended towards smaller units, finer resolution, and faster pace. However, technology can extend it towards larges scales, longer periods, just like Cage's ASLSP in music.

Time, Death, and Digital Environment

When speaking of the longest period of human life, finality is the farthest boundary. Biological death means the end of the existence. However, this is not absolutely true for today's people, for whom the use of the Internet is a common, everyday practice. Biological death means only the disappearance of the biological body, but the network preserves the information regarding the person. According to Giaxoglou (2015), users' digital afterlife can participate in the everyday lives of their peers. An account on one of the social networking sites outlasts the users life, and—although the users themselves will not post anymore on the site—relatives and friends can use it as a memorial site where every important life event can be commemorated. Some social networking sites offer special services for the relatives of deceased users.

It is much more than a simple memorial site in the cemetery because it involves the continuous activity of the acquaintances: posted messages can be seen on timeline, and the former followers will get a notification of every post (Varis & Spotti, 2011; Klastrup, 2014). This way, socially determined frames of mourning are extended into digital environment where past and present are not strictly divided. A networked memorial site is not static—like a traditional grave—but dynamic, in the sense that the posts will always modify the site and connect it to the present, to everyday life.

Nevertheless, social networking sites are only one aspect of extending time. After the rise of web 2.0, the concept of 'user' included both the creator and the consumer of content. Users started to upload various contents to several places on the internet, and these uploads provide an extended time frame, connected to the lifespan of servers and companies. As Carroll and Romano (2011) pointed out, digital contents pose new problems for inheritance. Naturally, there is an ownership problem: new laws to regulate the legal frames for inheriting various digital contents are just forming, the examined areas range from copyright issues to personal data ones. These laws can prescribe the inheritance of created contents similarly to tangible properties. Users can take care of the digital estates in advance by including them in their final will and can use the services of a digital afterlife agency. However, users' everyday life triggers another issue in a web 2.0 environment. The pieces of information left in a variety of places can hardly be handled by legal prescriptions. Users make personal profiles on several sites, deliberately or unintentionally—for example, certain sites make this profile automatically, as Google produces a profile to every user based on search habits or history of activities and visited sites.

In terms of time, this latter presents an interesting situation because the information a personal profile contains is not just "about" the person but is a fragment of the personality. As users create more and more profiles throughout the internet, these sites will contain more and more pieces of the same user's personality (cf. Turkle, 1995); in other words, an increasing proportion of the personality will exist in the digital environment. This aspect transcends the question of ownership or copyright and is connected to personality.

As Ropolyi (2006) argues convincingly, due to the advent of the Internet, human life —determined by biological and social circumstances—extended to the digital realm: net existence appeared, which entails a continuous presence of the user in the digital environment. What is more, net existence is not only an extension or a doubling of physical being but a new way of existence. Certain facets of their personality have their places on the network, and users need, almost, constant online connection for a successful and satisfying existence. Particular activities shape the digital personality in real life, too.

For example, a selfie contributes to self-determination, or a tweet can provide an opportunity for reflection. As the possibilities provided by digital technology are widening, more and more aspects of human life and personality can transfer to the digital environment, and a greater number of special components of personality can be developed for digital life. The time frame for these components differs from the time frame of human life: just like the performance of John Cage’s ASLSP in Halberstadt, not the biological constraints are definitive for them, but the constraints of the technology used. As Bowker notes:

> It is a fundamentally new fact about human existence that our human temporality is now that of the sociotechnical world we have created. (…) We have both constructed physically and constituted socially new temporalities and new understandings of objects that just do not work at the rate of human perception. (2021, pp. 136–137)

As the time frames changes, so alters historical time, too—even if a user activity occurred in the past, it remains present, or at least arouses the illusion of eternal present. The relation to the past—socially constructed so far—becomes difficult in the present tense of technology. Reflection and self-reflection need a temporal perspective for arranging events and activities; however, this perspective is difficult to access in digital environment, and, as noted earlier, death and finality, as well as mourning, started to lose their temporal base. This change resulted in a new concept of time, based not on natural human perception but on the activities into which people immerse in through digital technology.

The web 3.0 that is unfolding now can strengthen this process. As several tech-companies have announced recently, they are working on a metaverse project that melts into itself every aspect of human life, including social, business, personal, public, and other spheres, with the help of virtual and augmented reality. It is still unclear how various platforms and applications would be homogenized, but the idea—or vision—is creating a complete and all-encompassing digital environment. Facebook has already changed its company name to Meta, indicating the direction of development. The next generation of social networking sites is a metaverse where users are represented by avatars, acting in all areas of everyday life (Damar, 2021). Just an example of a well-known area: online meetings on different platforms. In the past two years, we all used to participate at meetings on Zoom, Teams, or other platforms using webcams and microphones, and watching each other in our personal space. In a metaverse, there will be virtual rooms where participants can meet just like in real life: all avatars are present in a virtual room, can use functional parts of the room—for example, use a projector, sit on this or another chair, retract the curtain, and so forth—direct their gaze on a chosen participant, or show nonverbal cues.

However, metaverse is not just virtual space; it results in temporal parallelism due to the virtuality which will be part of everyday life. Users have a 'real' temporality based on their physical presence and a 'virtual' one based on their presence in the digital environment despite these being tangled and mixed in the users' experience. The ideas of metaverse suggest that users will always be online in a digital environment while acting in real life, which means that time will be extended by a new layer of existence, a new layer of personal time.

Electronic Civilization and Temporal Infinity

As Burden and Savin-Baden (2019) suggests, transferring of several parts of personality is only a starting stage in a development where human existence transforms into digital information. More and more personal data, memories, assets, different kinds of legacy are converted to digital form, and can exist without temporal limits in a virtual space. However, this space is not virtual in all respects: information in this space participates in people's everyday life and actively shapes and structures human social behavior. What is interesting in this respect is the way people handle this information, whether itis inseparably bounded to the real-life person or has some form of independence. In terms of time, the close bond between person and digital information means that actual existence, simultaneity, or, at least, a representative relationship is to be identified here—in other words, past and present are indicated. When information is independent of the person, however, the relevant tense is the future.

Profiles on social networking sites contain representations of users. They are not agents for other users because these representations only serve as a display for social behavior —to take action and communicate through them and build social connections with other users, groups of users, or organizations—in this sense, profiles are not independent of the users. Uploading more and more personal data means that the representations will become more complex, contain more details, and participate to a greater extent in diverse social interactions. Yet, the real breakthrough will happen when other users attribute agency to representations. The situation is similar to the one described by Giaxoglou (2015), where profiles can survive their owners and, in a limited way, act as an agent, just like an avatar in a computer game or virtual reality application. An interactive grave, or as a more subtle version, an avatar of a deceased user in virtual reality, seems like an independent agent—and in this way, can extend the lifetime of the user (cf. Hutchings, 2017).

Thus, the digital afterlife does not mean that funeral and mourning moves to the digital environment, just like the other parts, events, and activities of human life, simply creating potentially everlasting memorials; it is about the extension of human life. Interactive graves contain several pieces of the personal life, and personality, of the deceased user that can actively exist further and take an active part in others' lives to some extent.

This activity is the basis when Savin-Baden (2019) makes a difference between digital and postdigital afterlife. Uploading more and more data, details of personal life, but leaving them in a framework like one of the social networking sites, can build a passive artifact, a collection of digitized pieces of human life. Active digital immortals need a different and more complex solution, like an entire brain emulation or a software environment based on neuron-like entities and network-like functional operation. However, what Savin-Baden calls postdigital, can be realized in a digital environment that simulates the operation of a brain-like structure.

It is exactly this process that Bolonkin (2012) describes, supposing that it can be realized in the near future. Bolonkin's starting point is the potential danger he sees approaching: artificial intelligence and advanced technology can destroy human hegemony, and lead to the downfall of humankind. A possible solution is to build an electronic civilization where human brains are uploaded to digital devices and function as agents. At the same time, it is the solution to the problem of mortality: in an electronic society, brains can live forever as programs. If hardware is damaged or outdated, it can be replaced by a new one—brains can be limitlessly copied or restored from a backup. It sounds like science-fiction, but there are companies that already do research in this field and offer services for people to upload and preserve their brain structure, hoping that soon it will be possible to build an operating emulator.[2]

Bolonkin goes further in his theory, describing the advantages of an electronic civilization. Like any other biological organism, the human body is especially vulnerable and needs certain circumstances to survive: its existence is limited by temperature, food source, and water supply, and the general circumstances, like radiation and temperature in the universe, are lethal to it. Therefore, an electric civilization can be more successful than a biological one. According to Bolonkin's theory, the universe is full of electronic civilizations; when a biological civilization reaches a high level of development, it necessarily transforms into an electronic one so that its member would survive.

[2] For example, Nectome offers long-term memory preservation (https://nectome.com), Neuralink (founded by Elon Musk) is building neural interfaces (https://neuralink.com), and Carboncopies promotes research for building a successful whole brain emulator (https://carboncopies.com).

To answer the question of what time is for the emulated brain and electronic civilizations seems that the concept of time needs to be revised, and biological constraints should be forgotten. The first steps towards a new time concept are already done through the networked digital environment. Extension of time in an electronic civilization or the computer-supported virtual life is not a simple version of the realization of man’s old dream, eternal life. It is a rearrangement of time structures and reshaping of the concept of time, a creation of a time frame that was beyond the reach of the users’ ordinary, everyday life (cf. Walter, 2017).

Conclusion

Culture and technology defined the way people experienced time. In this paper, time was interpreted as a socially and technologically constructed concept with biological roots. Neural plasticity provides the ability for human cognitive system to adapt to changing social and technological environment. Several technological devices can help extend human senses and abilities and also shape the concepts necessary to interpret sense data. The situation is the same in terms of time. Humans’ capacity to sense time has been extended to both a smaller and longer duration, and this process did not leave cognitive abilities untouched. Due to the digital environment, information processing methods gained a faster pace and, at the same time, provided an opportunity for retaining the information itself. As long as human remains mortal, human lifetime remains finite, and the concept of time remains connected to finality. However, when technology helps to extend time beyond finality, the concept of time changes into the direction of timelessness. As a personal experience, time is linked to perception, to the senses. Technology can modify perception, creating different timespans, parallelisms, new modes and aspects of personal sense of time until this fully technologized life destroys the boundaries of personal time. Time will flow slowly, almost unnoticed, just like the voices of Cage’s ASLSP sound slow and long, as long as possible.

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Atemporal Temporality of the Transcendental Subject: Ambiguous Connection Between Subjectivity and Time in the Kantian–Schellingian Transcendental Philosophy[1]

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Abstract

Perhaps one of the main attributes of the subjectivity is temporality in the metaphysical tradition. Subject cannot be found in space, it only exists in time, so the substantial concept of mind originates in the notion of time. On the other side the subject perceives time as such; as Saint Augustine writes in *Confessions*, "It is in thee, my mind, that I measure times" (Augustine, 2005, p. 217). Temporality and subjectivity were closely related notions before the transcendental turn. In his explicit argumentation Immanuel Kant considers the subject as a temporal principle; as he writes in *The End of All Things*, "*thinking* contains a reflecting, which can occur only in time" (Kant, 2001, p. 227). However, Kant does not affirm that the apperception of "ego cogito" can lead to the substantial existence of subject or mind. He regards this deduction as a paralogism. The Kantian disaffirmation of substantial mind enabled the timeless concept of subjectivity in the Early German Idealism.

The subjectivity notion of Kant and the transcendental philosophy has a special, ambiguous character: in their explicit theories they argue that the subject is mainly a temporal entity, but some special forms of the general subject (transcendental subject, self, Gemüt etc.) are placed out of time in several texts. In the paper I analyse the temporal aspects of the idealist subject concept. The main thesis of the paper is that the subject of the transcendental philosophy is characterised by *atemporal temporality*.

Keywords: Kant, Schelling, subjectivity, atemporal temporality, Gemüt

[1] Supported by the ÚNKP-21-4 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

In search of a contradiction: what does the atemporality of the subject mean?

A closer look at transcendental philosophy's understanding of time reveals a particularly interesting and worrying contradiction. On the one hand, we find numerous passages in the works of Kant, Fichte or even Schelling that assert the fundamental temporality of the subject, while on the other hand, these authors argue more than once for the very transcendental subject's being beyond time. At first sight, it is not easy to decide how transcendental philosophy judges the relationship between time and subjectivity.

One of the best examples of the inherent temporality of the subject is Immanuel Kant's essay *The End of All Things*. This late essay is relevant for us because it focuses on the possibility of eternity and thus provides important contributions to our understanding of Kant's conception of time. On the other hand, it is also important for Kant's life in general, since in this text the philosopher from Königsberg ironically criticises the religious regulations of the Prussian state, in response to which the royal letter ordering Kant to take orders is written (Cassirer, 1981, p. 393–394). Only one seemingly incidental remark is relevant to the present discussion:

> But that at some point a time will arrive in which all alteration (and with it, time itself) ceases—this is a representation which outrages the imagination. For then the whole of nature will be rigid and as it were petrified: the last thought, the last feeling in the thinking subject will then stop and remain forever the same without any change. For a being which can become conscious of its existence and the magnitude of this existence (as duration) only in time, such a life—if it can even be called a life—appears equivalent to annihilation, because in order to think itself into such a state it still has to think something in general, but *thinking* contains a reflecting, which can occur only in time. (Kant, 2001, p. 227; AA 8, p. 334.)

According to Kant, we simply cannot imagine a total absence of time. The human mind is bound to time because, as the most emancipatory property of thought, it necessarily presupposes change. Kant adds that even the finite rational being can conceive of the eternal existence of pure reason only through repetition. The timelessness of angels, for example, is imagined by their singing the same song forever, repeating it cyclically. The subject is unable to adequately represent the timeless to itself—it cannot assign a perspective to the idea, but only, as it does in its *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, gives it a symbolic hypotyposis—because it is itself a temporal being (Kant, 2002, p. 225–226; AA 5, p. 351–353). The idea also appears, among other places, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

where Kant argues that "I am unable to grasp my soul through cognition (whether by speculative reason or by the process of empirical observation), since I should regard it as not temporally determined" (Kant, 1998, p. 116; AA 3, p. 18).

Accordingly, the subject is inherent in its temporality, the subject itself is a temporal entity. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, the idea of the atemporality of the subject also appears in the transcendental philosophical tradition. Friedrich Schelling, in his 1800 book *The System of Transcendental Idealism*, admittedly wanted to create a system of transcendental philosophy that was only in a form of critique in the works of Kant (Kant, 1998, p. 150–151; AA 3, p. 44–45). The text outlines a position that precisely asserts the atemporal nature of essential subjectivity.

Schelling seeks the unity of being and imagination, subject and object, which he finds in consciousness (Schelling, 2001, p. 23–25). The act of consciousness is a completely free act which creates the concept of the self. The self cannot be understood disregarding this act, it is itself an act of consciousness and thus exists solely in this act. This self is "infinitely non-objective"; he says that "the self is pure act, a pure doing, which simply has to be non-objective in knowledge" (Schelling, 2001, p. 27). In this pure, substantial subject there is no room for any empirical trait; the transcendental subject is different from empirical consciousness, which is commonly called consciousness. This inherently non-objective self, which therefore cannot be said to be anything, not even to exist, is nevertheless made object by the self for itself. This is possible because the self itself is nothing other than an intellectual intuition, by which the self becomes both creator and created (Schelling, 2001, p. 27). Because the transcendental self, the pure subject, is devoid of any empirical reference, time in the ordinary sense of the word does not play a role for it either.

Schelling raises the question of how the philosopher is able to grasp the completely free act of self-consciousness, which is nevertheless absolutely necessary in the nature of the self, since it is this very act that creates the self. According to Schelling, philosophy is in fact a free imitation of the act of self-consciousness (Schelling, 2001, p. 48–49). The question arises: how is the philosopher able to recognise the original act of self-consciousness?

> For if it is through self-consciousness that all limitation originates, and thus all time as well, this original act cannot itself occur in time; hence, of the rational being as such, one can no more say that it has begun to exist, than that it has existed for all time; the self as self is absolutely eternal, that is, outside time altogether. But now our secondary act necessarily occurs at a particular moment in time, and so how does the philosopher know this act, occurring in the middle of the time-series, to be coincident with that wholly extratemporal act whereby all time is first constituted? (Schelling, 2001, p. 48)

The most basic form of the subject, consciousness, is timeless in the sense that it is through it that time itself is created. The original self is eternal, and the repetition of the act of self-consciousness in every moment allows me to be constantly created for myself (Schelling, 2001, p. 48). The infinite contradictions of self-consciousness then create time, or the epochs of self-consciousness (Schelling, 2001, p. 49–50).

> Anyone who perceives at all that the self arises only through its own acting, will also perceive that, through the arbitrary action in midst of the time-series whereby alone the self arises, nothing else can arise for me save what comes about for me originally and beyond all time. (Schelling, 2001, p. 48)

Consciousness therefore precedes time; time is created by its action. This trans-temporality seems to contradict the fundamental temporality of the subject as previously postulated. One might even think that this is only a difference between the positions of the two philosophers. There is no doubt that Schelling's concept, briefly presented here, was fundamentally determined by Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, which, although it carries forward the Kantian transcendental philosophical project, nevertheless shows marked differences in its approach (Valastyán, 2011, p. 40–43).

Fichte finds the first, absolutely unconditioned principle of the science of knowledge in the proposition I = I, from which he wants to derive the whole structure of knowledge (Fichte, 1982, p. 93–99). Already in his conception, the idea appears that this absolute self is devoid of all contingent, empirical elements—it is the pure subject itself. Time as such only comes into being through the self-limiting activity of the self that posits itself realistically. The self also experiences in the resistance of the not-self that makes it temporal. Perhaps the most important of these factors is the emergence of causality, which limits the self through the assumption of the not-self. Without the causality created by the not-self, the self would be absurdly infinite.

> The I is to be posited as an actual I, but solely in contrast with or in opposition to a Not-I. But there is a Not-I for the I only under the condition that the I acts efficaciously and feels resistance in its effective operation, which, however, is overcome, since otherwise the I would not be acting efficaciously. Only by means of such resistance does the activity of the I become something that can be sensed and that endures over a period of time, since without such resistance the I's activity would be outside of time, which is something we are not even able to think. (Fichte, 2005, p. 89)

For the purposes of the present discussion, it is no longer relevant how the causal effect determines duration, or what concept of time Fichte develops (Acosta, 2014, p. 73–77).

It is clear from the above quotation that the Fichtean approach also reflects the paradoxical relationship between the self and time. The subject is something very much a temporal being, yet in some way it is the result of his/her activity that time itself is the result.

Despite the apparent contradiction, it seems clear that the subject in this philosophical paradigm can in no way be entirely atemporal; rather, the question is whether the subject itself in its most elementary form is outside time (whether it precedes time) or whether it has a fundamentally temporal character. Our task will be to interpret this ambiguity, this timeless temporality of the subject, the self. My aim is to interpret the relation between time and subjectivity within the framework of Kantian-based transcendental thought from historical perspective. In this paper, I seek the answer for one question: what is the relation of the transcendental subject, which has no ontological characteristic, to temporality? More precisely, what is the difference between the concept of infinite soul posited in finitude (idealist metaphysics) and the atemporal temporality of the mind (transcendental idealism); what are the consequences of the lack of ontological horizon for the temporality of the subject?

The subjectivity of the Kantian concept of time

In this paper I do not wish to comment on the role of time in transcendental philosophy in general. Nor is it my aim to analyse the already diverse and in many respects contradictory Kantian conception of time in general.[2] I do not attempt a phenomenological analysis of the Kantian conception of time (e.g. Heidegger or Ricoeur), since my aim here is not to reconstruct and analyse the concept of time in transcendental philosophy in detail, nor to undertake a phenomenological analysis of temporality,[3] but to shed light on the difference between metaphysical timelessness and transcendental atemporality from a philosophical-historical point of view. Nor would it be uninteresting to analyse the Kantian notion of the historical beginning (Kant, 2007b, p. 163–164; AA 8, p. 109–111), or, for example, to examine schemata as a priori definitions of time (Kant, 1998, p. 275–276; AA 3, p. 138). Kant, writing about the schematism of pure concepts of the understanding, describes time as “the pure image (…) for all objects of the senses in general” (Kant, 1998, p. 274; AA 3, p. 137). Among the a priori determinations of time, he distinguishes the time-series, the content of time, the order of time and the sum total of time

[2] The multi-layered nature of the Kantian conception of time, which cannot be organized under a single narrative, has been examined in detail in Hungarian by Ottó Hévizi (2020).

[3] In particular, the paper does not claim to account for the connection between self and time in contemporary phenomenology. Lajos Horváth (2018), for example, has written a thorough study on the relation between the minimal self and retroactivity.

(Kant, 1998, p. 276; AA 3, p. 138). While their a priori character, which determines our view, may help us to interpret the temporality of the subject in general terms, they would not contribute in any meaningful way to unravel the paradox that is our subject.

Instead, we need to clarify what the subjectivity of the Kantian conception of time means, since it is from this that we can reconstruct the relationship between time and the subject. Immanuel Kant (1992) came up with his subjective understanding of time in his professorial lecture in 1770. In the treatise *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World*, Kant conceives of time and space as a subjective principle of form of the mind, but by this he means a law of the soul that appears as a necessity (Kant, 1992, p. 391; AA 2, p. 398).

> *The time is not something objective and real*, nor it is a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation. Time is rather the subjective condition which is necessary, in virtue of the nature of the human mind, for the coordinating of all sensible things in accordance with a fix law. It is a *pure intuition*. (Kant 1992, p. 393.; AA 2, p. 400)

It will be of great significance that Kant understands time as a necessary subjective condition of the mind. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he also emphasizes that the subjectivity of space and time should not be confused with the subjectivity of empirical, contingent phenomena (e.g. the taste of wine), since the concept of space and time can still be considered a priori objective (Kant, 1998, p. 161; AA 4, p. 34–35). Although Kant does not make any further distinction between forms of subjectivity at this point, he goes on to write about the transpersonal nature of subjectivity in the case of beauty in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*: the generality of beauty is not based on comparative but on universal rules (Kant, 2002, p. 97–98; AA 5, p. 212–213). It follows that the subjectivity of time is more inherent than that of pleasure, since time is an a priori form of sensory perception.

Nevertheless, the subjectivity formulated in the inaugural lecture was interpreted by the critics of the thesis (Mendelssohn and Lambert) as psychological subjectivism; Kant’s idea was misunderstood as psychological idealism (Cassirer, 1981, p. 123–124). Mendelssohn, in a letter to Kant dated 25th of December 1770, argues precisely that time cannot be something purely subjective, but some kind of objectivity must play a role in the operation of succession (Kant, 1999, p. 124; AA 10, p. 115–116). In *Critique of Pure Reason*, published 11 years later, Kant himself indicates that his theory could easily be misunderstood. He did not dispute the empirical reality of time, but merely questioned its objectivity in the transcendental sense (Kant, 1998, p. 164–165; AA 3, p. 61). Time is real in the empirical sense, but ideal in the transcendental sense, for nothing remains of it if we abstract it from “the subjective conditions of sensible intuition” (Kant, 1998, p. 164; AA 3, p. 61).

Kant is quite clear in his dissociation from psychological idealism, and defines his own transcendental idealism as empirical realism (Kant, 1998, p. 121–122, 426; AA 3, p. 23; AA 4, p. 232). The transcendental realist (who is also a psychological or empirical idealist) questions the knowability of the external world, since I can only have direct knowledge of what is going on inside me.[4] "Yet I am conscious through inner *experience* of *my existence in time* (and consequently also of its determinability in time), and this is more than merely being conscious of my representation; yet it is identical with the *empirical consciousness of my existence*, which is only determinable through a relation to something that, while being bound up with my existence, *is outside me*." (Kant, 1998, p. 121; AA 3, p. 23) Kant thus gives the concept of time a major role when he argues for the existence and knowability of the external world. The temporal existence of the subject underpins the existence of the world outside me, for without it I could not know my temporality.

According to Kant, then, space and time are a priori forms of perceptive vision, and in this sense they have a subjective character; moreover, time is the main representative of transcendental subjectivity (Kant, 1998, p. 115; AA 3, p. 17; Vető, 2019, p. 131). It is important to note, however, that although no knowledge of time precedes experience (Kant, 1998, p. 127; AA 3, p. 27), our purely a priori concepts (e.g. the general notion of causality) no longer presuppose the unconditional primacy of experience (Kant, 1998, p. 142–143; AA 3, p. 335). Kant, of course, ascribes to pure reason understood in this way essentially only a negative function, regarding the philosophy of pure reason as a discipline, as a dissipator of delusions (Kant, 1998, p. 672; AA 3, p. 517). At the same time, man has a spiritual need to see himself as something timeless:

> as regards the first point, on that remarkable predisposition of our nature, noticeable to every human being, never to be capable of being satisfied by what is temporal (since the temporal is always insufficient for the predispositions of our whole vocation) leading to the hope of a future life. (Kant, 1998, p. 118, AA 3, p. 20)[5]

This remark is of great significance for our topic, since Kant here exposes the motivation of the traditional (what he calls dogmatic) metaphysical conception of time. We are not able to accept our pure temporality, since that would presuppose our own contingency, our exclusive mortal nature. Dogmatic thinking is therefore forced to elaborate the timelessness of man in detail, distinguishing it from actual eternity.

[4] In contrast, Kant shows in his anthropological writings that we do not have direct access to our own anima either. It is precisely through time as a formal condition for the internal contemplation of the subject that Kant shows that we do not have direct access to the content of the soul (Kant 2007a, p. 255; AA, 7, p. 142–143).

[5] Tamás Valastyán (2013) analyzes the connection between the Kantian subject and the concept of hope.

I will give only one example of the old metaphysical thinking. Kant’s aforementioned colleague and friend, Moses Mendelssohn, also distinguishes the timelessness of the human soul from divine eternity: “at bottom, man will never partake of eternity; his eternality is merely an *incessant temporality*. His temporality never ends; it is, therefore, an essential part of his permanency and inseparable from it” (Mendelssohn, 1983, p. 39).

Time and subject in traditional metaphysics

It would be beyond the scope of this essay to review, even with relative thoroughness, the characteristics of the pre-Kantian metaphysical conception of time. The problem of time is already present in the very beginnings of metaphysical thought, since without it change and movement are unthinkable. As Aristotle notes, all his predecessors, asserted the uncreation of time, except Plato, who believed that time was created simultaneously with the heavens (Aristotle, 1999, 252b10). In *Timaeus*, Plato (2008, 37d) defines time as a moving image of eternity.

For us, however, it is more relevant to outline how subject and time were related in pre-Kantian metaphysical thought. First and foremost, we must emphasise the importance of Augustine, who, in addition to being a major contributor to the preparation of the modern concept of the subject, was also the most important precursor of the Cartesian notion of the cogito, which is the cornerstone of modern subject philosophies.[6] From this point of view, we should be interested not so much in the question of certainty, but rather in the nature of the subject who, through his errors (his thinking), can arrive at this recognition of unquestionable validity, and who thus maintains a privileged relationship with time.

It is very important that Augustine also wants to reach the ultimate truth by the practice of introspection, by turning the soul towards itself—the metaphysical guarantee of the success of this procedure is that God created the soul in his own image (Augustine, 2007, p. 5–7). This means that the knowledge of self leads to the knowledge of God. As he writes in his dialogue *Soliloquies*, “God, always the same, let me know myself, let me know Thee” (Augustine, 1910, p. 51). An important aspect of the dialogue is that it is in fact a kind of logical inquiry: Augustine is talking to the personified Reason (Ratio), questioning it in order to arrive at the right insight. He also arrives at an understanding of the concept of time by analysing the relationship with God.

[6] Here I refer primarily to the passage in Augustine’s (2000) *The City of God* (Book XI, Chapter 26) that emphasizes the connection between error and existence.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine (2005, p. 205–206) tries to answer the question of what God had done before he created the world. With some irony, he first answers that he had made hell for those who ask such questions. His final answer, of course, is that God himself had created time, all time being his creation. He then begins to wonder what time actually is. At this point he writes the famous lines: “if no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not” (Augustine, 2005, p. 207).

Without wishing to reconstruct the whole train of thought, I would just like to record that Augustine ultimately finds in the soul the inner bearer of the continuity of time, as it is the soul that is able to measure time:

> It is in thee, my mind, that I measure times. Interrupt me not, that is, interrupt not thyself with the tumults of thy impressions. In thee I measure times; the impression, which things as they pass by cause in thee, remains even when they are gone; this it is which still present, I measure, not the things which pass by to make this impression. This I measure, when I measure times. Either then this is time, or I do not measure times. (Augustine, 2005, p. 217)

Time, then, becomes understandable in terms of the anima, the concept of the substantive soul: the soul and time are intimately connected. Only the soul can measure and experience time, and the perception of time testifies to the presence of the soul. It is perhaps seemingly unjustified that I have given Augustine such a prominent role in the train of thought, but hopefully it is possible to see how strongly the interconnectedness of the substance soul and time appears in his oeuvres. In metaphysical thought, even long after Kant, the close association of self and time is still dominant; suffice it to mention Bergson (2001), for whom the deep self is essentially a temporal rather than a spatial phenomenon. This connection is significant despite Bergson’s critical attitude towards the metaphysical tradition, and, moreover, his refusal to measure time, unlike Augustine. The notion of time is also crucial in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy, although he does not connect it with the substantive notion of the soul (Derrida, 1987, p. 78–79). What is important for us now is a remark he made about Kant:

> The ostensibly new beginning of philosophizing betrays the imposition of a fatal prejudice. On the basis of this prejudice later times neglect a thematic ontological analysis of ‘the mind’ [Gemüt] which would be guided by the question of being; likewise they neglect a critical confrontation with the inherited ancient ontology. (Heidegger, 1996, p. 22)

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that Kant has adopted Descartes' dogmatic, ontological position, and in this context points to the essentially scholastic nature of the Cartesian concept of *ens*. At the same time, he indicates that an analysis of the Gemüt (mind), which has never been carried out, could finally help to clarify the ontological status of the subject. But what is this Gemüt, and what is its role with regard to the concept of time in transcendental philosophy?

The mind and time

One of Immanuel Kant's important innovations is that he does not link the experience of time to the concept of the soul as understood in the substantive sense, but to the mind. The Kantian mind is a relatively mysterious concept with no ontological background.

Kant defines the Gemüt as a capacity that coordinates the three higher faculties of knowledge, which has no substantive reference whatsoever (Caygill, 2009, p. 210–211). In a letter to the author of Soemmerring's *On the Organ of the Soul*, Kant (2007c, p. 223; AA 12, p. 32) indicates that Gemüt is to be understood as animus (faculty) and not as anima (substance). Mind or disposition is thus an a priori faculty by which the subject brings together the higher faculties of reason, power of judgment and understanding, and forms its most elementary relation to its own existence without any empirical involvement (Kant, 2002, p. 89–90; AA 5, p. 203–204). The Gemüt is therefore not materially localizable: when we presume to locate the centre of the mind in something, we are in fact falling into the error of subreption: we presume to identify something that is exclusively intellectual in a sensuous way (Kant, 2007c, p. 90; AA 12, p. 32; Sng, 2010, p. 79–80). The nature of the mind is simply not something that can be physiologically registered; just as it has an intrinsic existence, it has no material extension. At the same time, mind (by virtue of its faculty-coordinating nature) is at all times extremely open to the sensory world.

It is the Gemüt which, for Kant, makes possible the universal validity of subjectivity. Even in his critical period, the Königsberg master's attitude to subjectivity underwent significant transformations, so that, for example, the status of the concept in his inaugural lecture is quite different from that in *Critique of Power of Judgment*. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1998, p. 685–686; AA 3, p. 532–533), he still considers the concurrence of the judgments of subjects to be objective and clearly assumes a common object behind identical judgments (which only subjectively rests on sufficient conditions, he calls it *believing*), but in the third critical work he allows for the possibility of subjective universality (not based on concepts). Here (Kant, 2002, p. 96–98; AA 5, p. 212–213), subjectivity is no longer identical with a pathological personhood based on private feelings, but allows for universal rules,

not comparative, which oblige each finite rational being to be equally pleasing. Kant establishes a concept of subjective generality that derives from the Gemüt, which can serve as a model for any concept of the subject conceived as a principled, universally valid concept. Even in this work, Kant still describes the logical generality as objectively valid (reserving the subjective adjective exclusively for aesthetics), but the two are really separated by an "as if" (Kant, 2002, p. 99–100; AA 5. p. 214–215). In other works published later, he emphasises the subjective character of the logical self (e. g. Kant, 2007a, p. 246; AA 7, p. 135).

It is legitimate to ask what the Kantian mind has to do with time. For Kant, it is the mind that perceives the world in time. He does not find the foundation of temporal existence in the metaphysical concept of the soul, but understands it as an a priori endowment of the mind. This does not mean that the traditional concept of the soul has nothing to do with time.

> Inner sense, by means of which the mind intuits itself, or its inner state, gives, to be sure, no intuition of the soul itself, as an object; yet it is still a determinate form, under which the intuition of its inner state is alone possible, so that everything that belongs to the inner determinations is represented in relations of time. Time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us. (Kant, 1998, p. 157; AA 3, p. 51–52)

Although we cannot theorize the soul as an object, Kant does not deny the existence of the soul.[7] We form an idea of our inner being through time, but it remains an idea, we do not know the soul as a thing in itself.

The belief that we can justify our inaudible soul by the experience of time is debunked by Kant as paralogism. Kant calls the fallacy transcendental paralogism, in the process of which the subject makes a logical formal error that has a transcendental basis (Kant, 1998, p. 411–412; AA 3, p. 262–263). Perhaps the best example is Descartes' (and rational psychology's) fallacy of inferring from the apperception of "I think" a soul —anima—that exists substantively. In our case, we are dealing with the paralogism of personality: from my temporal identity I infer the existence of my soul (Kant, 1998, p. 422–423; AA 4, p. 228). From the identity of the consciousness of myself, however, I can legitimately infer only the formal conditions of my thoughts, the logical identity of the self, but the identity of the substance soul does not follow.

We have seen that in Kant (and in the transcendental philosophical tradition in general) the subject and time are closely but ambivalently related. In light of the above, how can this apparent contradiction or paradox be resolved? According to Kant, it is an a priori

[7] Kirill Chepurin (2010) argues convincingly that Kant introduces a metaphysical model of the intensity of the soul as opposed to Mendelssohn's traditional conception of substantial soul.

endowment of the mind to perceive in space and time the things around it; this can in fact be understood, as Schelling does, as the inherent subject creating time. This does not mean, of course, that the subject is outside time, but that by its presence it automatically posits time. The subject is both atemporal and temporal—this ambiguity can be called the antagonism of atemporal temporality, along the lines of Kantian unsociable sociability (Kant, 2007d, p. 111; AA 8, p. 20–21).

If we want to shed more light on this atemporal temporality, we can describe the relationship between the old metaphysical tradition and Kant in terms of the Copernican turn. Just as in Kant's works, in the process of cognition, not the intuition conforms to the constitution of the objects, but the object "conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition" (Kant 1998, p. 110; AA 3, p. 12); so in the transcendental philosophical tradition it is not time that creates the subject, but the subject that creates time.[8] Whereas the characteristic of dogmatic thought was to posit the subject in time, in Kantian philosophy time is the most elementary manifestation and product of the subject. The antinomy of atemporal temporality is unresolvable because Kant does not go beyond the theorem of the mind to the theoretic presupposition of the soul. To resolve this dichotomy, he would have to engage in illegitimate metaphysical speculations about the nature of the soul.

Finally, it is worth noting that German idealism did not insist on the antagonism of atemporal temporality. Schelling's thought took an ontological turn a year after the publication of *The System of Transcendental Idealism*, as a result of which he gradually moved away from transcendental philosophy in the critical sense. In his dialogue *Bruno*, for example, he describes the highest unity of thought and contemplation as having no relation to time (Schelling, 1984, 146). At the same time, the relation between time and the self is increasingly reminiscent of the relation postulated by dogmatic idealism rather than transcendentalism; Schelling stresses the metaphysical significance of the irreversibility of time (Vető, 2019, p. 897). The German Idealists and Romanticists, moving away from the transcendental turn, sought again metaphysical guarantees for the subject instead of mind with a non-ontological status. The ideal subject as soul lost its transcendental ambiguity, its atemporal temporality, and became a timeless being in finitude (Novalis, 2003, p. 66). The Romantics' approximative desire for Absolute revived the concept of the immortal soul and created a tendency towards timelessness out of the antinomy of atemporal temporality (Frank, 2008, p. 179).

[8] However, the mind is also what it is through time. As Heidegger writes in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: "as the basis of the possibility of selfhood, time is already included in pure apperception and first enables the mind to be what it is" (Heidegger, 1965, p. 197).

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The Concentration and Sublimation of Time as Memory in Louise Glück's Poetry

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Abstract

The preoccupation with the mythical time of humanity, and of each individual's life constitutes one of the most powerful poetic tools in Louise Glück's poems. From evoking the foundational times of the Garden of Eden, or the 'immutable' hard nut represented by Greek mythology, the poet concentrates whatever may suggest an evolution in time in those initial 'moments.' Her reading of the history of the human soul seems to suggest that everything stopped with the first page, or the first words. This study argues that Glück's use of memory or anamnesis (ἀνάμνησις) as the only path to understanding humanity is present in many of her poems; such vision is more than just mythological literary reference, it supports the idea that childhood memories, relationships, poetic quests, and spiritual journeys are nothing but an expression of such vision. The poems chosen for this paper are not in a chronological order in terms of their time of publication. Nevertheless, we have tried to put them in a chronological order in terms of how they illustrate the idea of time as a sequence of memories accompanying the poet throughout her literary career. We will also argue that this way of treating memory and time, together with the references to mythology, to a decayed Garden, to the precarious condition of man, and to the role of the poet can support the idea that Louise Glück has a Romantic–Classical profile.

Keywords: mythical time, memory, poetic function, Greek mythology, foundational stories

Louise Glück was born in New York City, in 1943, and started her career as a teacher of literature soon after graduating from Columbia University. Ever since that time she has shown real talent in writing poetry, which sounded very fresh, new, and startlingly colloquial, even though the themes and obsessions she followed mostly came from ancient Greek mythology. As a child, her parents would tell her mythological stories,

instead of the ones normally told to children that age, and such early instruction influenced her very much. She interprets everything—biographical instances, love stories, stories of time and loss, of horror and tragedy, of natural and man-made beauty—through a lens that is based on ancient philosophy and myth. In a way, most of her poetry is about the Fall from the Garden of Eden, but the ones who are responsible for the Garden are the Greek gods, besides the Judeo-Christian God. In a kind of revival of classical poetry—somehow reminding the reader of John Keats' embracing classical forms towards the end of Romanticism—Glück sings the song of nature, as a permanent comparing element to man's life: nature is cyclical, what perishes today will be revived tomorrow in the ever-moving seasonal circle. The human being just lives through the seasons, getting closer to the end with each day passing.

Her first volumes of poetry were published as early as 1973, but she started making a mark in American literature with *The House on Marchland* (1975), and with *The Garden* (1976). Some of her most well-known volumes came very soon after: *Descending Figures* (1980), and *Triumph of Achilles* (1985). Most of her volumes, though, were published in the 90's: *Ararat* (1990), *The Wild Iris* (1992), *Meadowlands* (1996), and *Vita Nova* (1999). She received many prizes (the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1985, and the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 among them). Since the 2000s, she has continued her career both as a poet and critic, and as a creative writing professor at Yale and at Boston University. Some of her volumes published in this period comprise: *The Seven Ages* (2001), *Averno* (2006), *Faithful and Virtuous Night* (2017), etc. In 2012 she published the volume *Poems 1962–2012* consisting of poems from many of the previous volumes. These poems she wrote in a period of 50 years, and therefore they are illustrative for her entire work, especially as she chose them herself in this representative volume. In 2020 Louise Glück received the Nobel Prize for literature, for her contribution to world poetry. The present study is mainly based on these fifty years of poetry, i.e. on the volume published in 2012.

Glück sees *life as a kind of suspended moment in time* even from the beginning. Birth, childhood, memories of teenage and youth, family relationships, love, or cultural and spiritual journeys, are just part of a chronology of memories. She writes about the *running time* that the human being *runs out of* very soon, contained between the moment of birth and that of death. The beginning, though, is nothing but the rupture of the living cells from their state of immortality. The poetic conscience can go back to this initial moment and can capture time only as memory. This travel in time may reveal *some* truth, *some* knowledge. This is the Platonic process of *anamnesis* (ἀνάμνησις), of finding knowledge by taking the path of memory. In order to find truth about the world,

about oneself, to get knowledge, one has to just go deeper and deeper in one's conscience and sub-conscious world. Here they will find not only their own memories, but those of mankind. The relationship between memory and time is, in fact, a kind of journey that draws an arch from birth to death. This virtual arch makes time meaningful and gives memory the status of a time-travel-machine that can make life and death somehow bearable and meaningful. This is the unbearable human condition, which urges us to find meaning in life, while we are destined to die. To give life meaning under such predicament is something that the poet tries to do in her identifying time as memory. She proposes an intensification of memory, which can give time meaning.

The most important moments that make up this chronology of memory are present in many poems present in the collection mentioned. We will refer in this study to just a few, which we consider representative: "A Fantasy," "Retreating Wind," "Vespers," "The Golden Lily," "A Myth of Devotion," "Hyacinth," "A Summer Garden," "An Adventure," "Nostos," "October," "Odysseus' Decision," "The Silver Lily," and "The White Lilies." These poems reflect how memory preserved the most important coordinates of life: birth, childhood, womanhood, motherhood, and death. They are placed on a road that takes us from birth to death, which is life, and which needs to be given some meaning. Glück tries to go back to mythology, to Homeric stories, to the tradition of literature to find her own poetic voice, and also to define the role of the poet as she sees it. The constant references to a garden also come from her long-lasting love for gardening; it is by watching her flowers and trees that she understands the close correlation between the passing of the seasons and the quick passing of time.

Childhood is a time of bliss, discovered in memories, in dreams, in photographs; it is always present. The childhood of the poet, herself, was marked by the fear of loss of her twin sister, then her father, and then by the presence of a weak–powerful mother. The mother in the family photograph seems so powerful, as if she has tamed time, as if she does remember everything and can explain the meaning of everything. At the same time, she is frozen in time, the knowledge is only virtual because she, herself, has become only memory. In "A Summer Garden," girlhood is seen by the subjective poetic voice as the time before acknowledgment of suffering and death. Photographs of dead loved ones bring forth a kind of stillness, a feeling that time is *sleeping*:

> Several weeks ago I discovered a photograph of my mother
> sitting in the sun, her face flushed as with achievement or triumph.
> The sun was shining. The dogs
> were sleeping at her feet where time was also sleeping
> calm and unmoving as in all photographs. (Glück)

Death is contained in life, even in the most fragile and merely born form of life. Dust on memories—on a photograph, for instance—sometimes covers the shadows, preserves the past in a sort of immortal moment. Once removed, though, the image of an idyllic past also reveals all the signs of time passing, and the imminence of death:

> I wiped the dust from my mother's face.
> Indeed, dust covered everything; it seemed to me the persistent
> haze of nostalgia that protects all relics of childhood.
> In the background, an assortment of park furniture, trees and shrubbery.
>
> The sun moved lower in the sky, the shadows lengthened and darkened.
> The more dust I removed, the more these shadows grew. (Glück)

Thus, the image of the mother is both powerful—as if she knows everything, as many children perceive their mothers—and fragile and weak, surrounded by the shadows of which she does not seem to be aware.

The young mother is another episode in this chronology. Intensification of feeling can sometimes lead to a *suspension of time*. In "A Summer Garden," many of Glück's visions on the passing of time are present: the young woman in a park, watching over her two children, happy that the war is over and enjoying a lovely summer day, represents that sublimation, that suspension of time, which can be brought about by a shower of intense feelings:

> The children held hands leaning
> to smell the roses.
> They were five and seven.
>
> Infinite, infinite, —that
> was her perception of time." (Glück)

Roses in her verse, though, signify death most of the time. So do shadows, which somehow precede the loss of innocence and the realization of mortality: "The sky was pink and orange, older because the day was over./ There was no wind. The summer day/ cast oak shaped shadows on the green grass"; and then "Summer arrived. The children/ leaned over the rose border, their shadows/ merging with the shadows of the roses" (Glück). Such imagery comes to balance the sheer happiness of a young mother in a summer day. It does not come to annihilate the feeling itself, though. The intense feeling of happiness, of profound joy, of fulfilled maternity are not false, are not instances

of a willful denial of death and the passing of time. They are just moments that are so intense that they give meaning to whatever would happen afterwards—loss of innocence, loss of youth, decay, the changing of seasons, death...

The widow, trying to understand death is a powerful image in "A Fantasy." The woman who comes from the cemetery where she buried her husband, surrounded by people who try to give her comfort, is overwhelmed by memories. She cannot face the moment:

> In her heart, she wants them to go away.
> She wants to be back in the cemetery,
> back in the sickroom, the hospital. She knows
> it isn't possible. But it's her only hope
> the wish to move backwards. And just a little,
> not so far as the marriage, the first kiss. (Glück)

Most of what memory concentrates on is related to the beginning, when time just began, when there was *enough time*. She is petrified by the realization that she did not grasp the moment when things started to change.

There are several perspectives on life and time: God's perspective, Hades' perspective (or the perspective of a personalized death), and a natural perspective (relative to nature). Written from *God's perspective*, "Retreating Wind" gives another dimension to time: time that is taken back from people because they did not know how to use it properly. Humans allowed their souls to become "small talking things." In the beginning everything was perfect, the garden had fresh air, a "bed of earth, blanket of blue air," and what is more, "time you didn't know how to use." The consequence of man's greed to have the one thing he could not handle "the one gift/ reserved for another creation" is mortality. Man is denied the gift of a "circular" life, like that of plants in the garden. On the contrary, he is destined to live a short life like a bird's flight:

> your lives are the bird's flight
> which begins and ends in stillness—
> which begins and ends, in form echoing
> this arc from the white birch
> to the apple tree. (Glück)

The conversation with God is permanent: He made the Garden, we plant the seeds, but growing them, making them live and ripe is very difficult. In "Vespers," the poetic "I" reproaches God the harshness of the conditions for growing:

> I think I should not be encouraged to grow
> tomatoes. Or, if I am, you should withhold
> the heavy rains, the cold nights that come
> so often [...] (Glück)

Another reproach refers to the imminence of death, which makes any crops, any effort rather absurd: time is too short, we live under permanent "foreshadowing":

> you who do not discriminate
> between the dead and the living, who are [...]
> immune to foreshadowing, you may not know
> how much terror we bear [...]
> [...] I am responsible
> for these vines. (Glück)

Glück uses the image of the garden very often as she is a gardener, herself. There are many dialogues between the lyrical voice and God, between nature and God, like the flower in "The Gold Lily." The symbol of the garden, though, refers to God's creation, but also to the creation of chaos (Hades), of man (misunderstanding the meaning of their lives), the main problem being that if the Garden was a timeless project, its decay is mostly suffered by the human soul.

Hades' perspective comes from mythology, and is present in many of her poems. Hades and Persephone are the main characters in poems about life and death, about innocence and the passing of time. In "A Myth of Devotion," the God of death, of the under-world, built a "replica of earth" for Persephone, an earth of mortality, of which she had no previous knowledge. But he could see how she approached the moment of loss of innocence, how she started to feel the immortality of death in comparison to the mortality of life: "He waited many years,/ building a world, watching,/ Persephone in the meadow" (Glück). From Hades' perspective, death comes to rescue Persephone from pain, terror, guilt, from everything she is supposed to experience in The Garden he has created for her—a copy of the *real* Garden. Everything in this garden is subjected to decay and withering. Death is not the end of time, in his understanding of life, but the beginning; he considers that the only thing she needs to hear him say is "you're dead, nothing can hurt you/ which seems to him/ a more promising beginning, more true" (Glück).

The shadows of the underworld are present in the garden, be they just merely felt by the girl. As Hades builds the Garden-replica for Persephone, he little by little instills a feeling of mortality, he *introduces death* to her by getting the garden darker and darker through the shadows: “Gradually, he thought, he'd introduce the night,/ first as the shadows of fluttering leaves” (Glück).

Antiquity is present in Glück's poems in the most unexpected forms: sometimes ancient gods are just humans in disguise—like Circe—sometimes they are witnesses of life on earth. The source of life and beauty—embodied by Apollo—is balanced by withering and death at the end, represented and sourced by Hades. But there is a kind, empathic attitude that Hades has, allowing Persephone to enjoy life, creating a garden for her, where she can think she is immortal. And in “Hyacinth,” Apollo's song, though, is impregnated with sadness, because he knows life and beauty are based on sorrow:

> There were no flowers in antiquity
> but boy's bodies, pale, perfectly imagined
> [...]
> In the field, in the willow grove,
> Apollo sent the courtiers away
>
> (3)
> And from the blood of the wound
> a flower sprang, lilylike, more brilliant
> than the purples of Tyre.
> Then the god wept: his vital grief
> flooded the earth. (Glück)

Such creational vital grief is, in fact, the foundational story that life on earth is based on. *Nature's perspective*—or a more natural understanding of the passing of time—is mostly related with seasonal changes in gardens and parks, in the natural world generally. Thus, time that passes is perceived through the changing of seasons, through the incomprehensible haste in which nature comes out of winter, blossoms, matures and then withers. It is the hauling sound of the wind that both deafens and silences the human voice as the mind cannot understand this rushed travel in time. As in “October,” life is but the quick changing of seasons, we try to put seeds in the ground, to grow the vines, and then all ends with a series of questions:

> I can't hear your voice
> for the wind's cries, whistling over the bare ground

> [...]
> when was I silenced, when did it first seem
> pointless to describe that sound
> [...]
> didn't the night end, wasn't the earth
> safe when it was planted
>
> didn't we plant the seeds,
> weren't we necessary to the earth,
>
> the vines were they harvested? (Glück)

The poet's experience with gardening is imbued in this vision on nature and how nature is subject to the cycles of life. Besides the biographical coordinates of each human being, which are subject to and are part of the passing of time, Louise Glück also meditates on other general themes like life, love, and the role of the poet.

Life is seen as a pathway measuring an infinite road, which starts from grandparents and parents and takes the traveler in the world of endless silence, populated with those on the other side. Moreover, this road can lead to a sudden precipice, for which we are completely un-prepared. The only momentary escape is *love*, which somehow suspends both the travel on the infinite path, and the fall into the precipice. In "An Adventure," the imagined "kingdom of death" is defined as a place of remembrance, where "the heart was still":

> I was, you will understand, entering the kingdom of death,
> [...] Here, too, the days were very long
> while the years were very short. The sun sank over the far mountain.
> The stars shone, the moon waxed and waned. Soon
> faces from the past appeared to me:
> my mother and father, my infant sister; they had not, it seemed,
> finished what they had to say, though now
> I could hear them because my heart was still. (Glück)

Past and present are intertwined not in a cyclical manner, though, but in a continuum that cannot be fathomed. It is dependent on very concrete and real landmarks, on a natural scenery, on the human presence, and on a cosmic order.

Love itself is all the time accompanied by the feeling that it is seasonal; it begins in great promise, it grows and blooms, but only for one season. After that, there is only autumn and winter and a long journey towards inexorable death. In "The Silver Lily," for instance,

[...] We're
alone now; we have no reason for silence.

Can you see, over the garden—the full moon rises.
I won't see the next full moon.

In spring, when the moon rose, it meant
time was endless. [...] (Glück)

Sometimes, the one summer that the lovers are allowed to live together is enough. It is the most they can ask for. God created a Garden representing the powerful creative urge; Hades created a copy of the garden to trick man into believing he is free to enjoy eternity while death awaits around the corner. The same happens in "The White Lilies" with the two lovers, since they create a garden, their own lives, but they can only enjoy it for one summer, one suspended moment in time.

As a man and woman make
a garden between them like
a bed of stars, here
they linger in the summer evening
and the evening turns
cold with their terror [...]
[...]
Hush, beloved. It doesn't matter to me
how many summers I live to return:
this one summer we have entered eternity.
I felt your two hands
bury me to release its splendor. (Glück)

The role of the poet is to try and understand the meaning of birth(days), of the relationship between earth, seasons, and life. Nevertheless, the only true and non-perverted look the poet can take is the first look, the fresh, uncompromised childish look. As in "Nostos," "The rest is memory" (Glück). When it comes to time, all notions of *before and after* are related to the ineffable moment when we are born, and it is impossible to pinpoint that moment, to link it with the meaning of life, as the earth is relentless and there is only a short image that we have to substitute for that relentlessness:

Substitution of the image
for relentless earth. What
do I know of this place,
the role of the tree for decades
taken by a bonsai, voices
rising from the tennis courts—
Fields. Smell of the tall grass, new cut.
As one expects of a lyric poet.
We look at the world once, in childhood.
The rest is memory. (Glück)

The role of the poet is also to re-tell the story of life and to give meaning to this story. When the story starts, time also starts to unfold. The state of grace is before everything is related and relatable—and this is the story of "Odysseus' Decision." Once he decides to leave Circe and her island—where time was suspended as there was no adventure, no story to tell—time begins again:

[...] Time
begins now, in which he hears again
that pulse which is the narrative
sea, at dawn, when its pull is strongest. (Glück)

The "narrative sea," his life-story, is like any life story; embarked on a ship that is sailing the seas, deciding both the direction and the speed of the journey, since "what has brought us here/ will lead us away; our ship/ sways in the tinted harbor water" (Glück). Nevertheless, the journey now cannot stop, cannot get suspended, cannot go in any other direction but forward in time, away from the moments of grace, and towards the expected end. The price Odysseus pays for getting his life back is death; he 're-gains' his mortality as he is carried away by the sea "that can only move forward" (Glück). Odysseus is also the voice of the poet's husband, harsh and challenging her capacity to see and appreciate the beauty of the world. Or, if she does see, the words she chooses are not penetrating enough. But it is the empire of time, still, that does not allow her to go into too much detail, to get completely lost in the world around and then crawl out of it victoriously, with the most appropriate images and words. Penelope—the poet—tries to defend her inability by showing that language itself is not complex enough, not evocative enough, overused and incapable of retaining such detail.

> ...given the very nature of poetic language, the task is difficult. [...] Glück is tired of reading the world as if it were an emblematic tapestry, yet she finds it difficult to be sustained by natural things alone. (Longebach, 2005, p. 140)

In a way, the poet suggests that she is not allowed the luxury of telling the story, which might have given her the right to live on. She is not the Ancient Mariner, nor is she Ishmael whose lives were saved only to be able to tell the story. She is not a mythological figure, either, like Oedipus, who is a blind witness to the story, but still allowed the propriety of his words. The status of the poet in this time-related memory track is as stable and trustworthy as her words. Words, though, are not enough, they do not satisfy her need to pinpoint her images in time. Words escape her.

The above mentioned themes that are present in her volumes are rooted in mythology, in the depth of human suffering, in the quest for meaning, or in the quest for family happiness. Such deep and philosophical themes, though, are rendered by Glück in a language that seems to be rather un-pretentious, straightforward, suggesting that the 'subject matter' is not very important.

> The directness of Glück's language suggests a kind of 'self-centeredness,' the authorial persona is as much a composition as are the monologues of Circe and Penelope in *Meadowlands*. However intimate, the lyric speaker remains detached from her desire to refrain from thinking. (Morris, 2006, p. 30)

In fact, it is clear from many of the poems that the poet tries to intertwine subtle literary and religious references with a vision on nature and the human nature, which is then pigmented with and oriented towards understanding the turns and turmoil of her own biography, compared to the biographies of those before her. The lyrical self both concentrates the feelings she has regarding her husband, her mother and father, her sibling, her son, with her experience of a gardener, in a permanent conversation with her own thought and with the oldest stories of humanity. She tries to re-write, in a sense, a natural philosophy, coming from the most important ancient and modern texts, but denies it at the same time, as if such philosophy is of no consequence, of no real importance—it rests between flower-beds, birch-trees, and shrubbery. Her critics and commentators point out this melting together of myth, sacred images, secular interests, and natural reflections. As Morris points out, though, such learned references very often do nothing but disguise the poet's vulnerability:

> [her language enables] her [...] to shift the stage upon which her personal, even auto-biographical, expressions can take place as a series of masked performances.

> Allusiveness enables her to be elusive; to at once reveal and hide the speaker's vulnerabilities through the distance afforded by referring to myths and sources. (2006, p. 31)

Her references, though, sometimes interfere with the confessional tone that might be expected with such themes. Biography and loss, refuge and self-loathing, a hunger mixed with horror to live and the overwhelming terror that everything is finite and apparently meaningless, could (or even should, as some might consider) be transmitted by using a more personal tone. Glück was sometimes accused of being rather unfeeling (Greg Kuzma, qtd. by Laurie George, 1990), or of being too detached from her own themes, of treating them with a less-than-enforcing tone. The only victory the poetic voice has is represented by this very control she can master. A control that allows her not to shout out her despair, her feeling of loneliness and her fear of loss:

> Pressured by nearly overwhelming fears and longings, the poet as metaphorical anorexic triumphs by controlling the urge to cry out, by forcing herself to speak calmly: 'You see, they have no judgment./ So it is natural that they should drown.' (*Descending 3*) (Keller, 1990, p. 125)

In a study referring to Sylvia Plath, Louise Glück and Tracy Thompson, authors Suzanne England, Carol Ganzer, and Carol Tosone argue that all three poets were seriously inclined towards anxiety and depression, and that influenced their poetic voice very much. From this perspective, the women who suffer from depression use poetic self-expression to try to formulate their thinking in a coherent manner, to communicate at least in this way what seems to be impossible to communicate. They fight isolation with imagination as if to address the complexity of feeling by putting together a complexity of imagery, and to identify around them those elements that can come together in their poems and reflect at least part of their inner turmoil.

> This sense of incommunicability—that others cannot understand what one is experiencing—fosters feelings of profound isolation and compounds the suffering. In attempting to explain to herself the causes of the suffering and to find relief, the woman with serious depression grasps desperately for some way to think coherently about the experience—to make sense of it all in order to plan an escape from the pain. (2008, p. 83)

Later on in the same study, the authors consider that Glück's use of natural imagery is placing her 'narratives' in a timeless, placeless realm, and that the sense of loss is doubled by a sense of hope.

All these critical views are supported by Glück’s poems. The language is strange and non-canonical, but rich with canonical references. There appears to be an ongoing conversation with God, with herself, with nature, with family members and this is the preferred manner in which she asks all the questions. She is obsessed by myth, and re-creates the story of the couple using the matrix of Odysseus and Penelope. Moreover, she obviously has the tormented soul of a very intelligent and perceptive woman, a Jew living in the aftermath of the Holocaust, depressed by her incapacity to adapt.

Nevertheless, we think that Glück’s poetry is mostly a mirror that she holds up to a humanity that is trying to make sense of all its endeavors, while confronted with finitude, with the approaching implacable end, and with the incomprehensible urge to live a life that is governed by the irrepressible passing of time. Time governs, time is senseless, time limits all effort and makes any hope and any kind of wish to communicate futile and meaningless. The poet’s destiny is not only to mirror such decay, but also to challenge the human response to this reality and give humans a vision of their own role on earth. The role of Persephone is not only that of the innocent being who is followed, watched and tricked by Hades, but that of giving meaning to Hades’ garden-replica. Without her, neither life, nor death has meaning. We are here to justify the very existence of a garden. We are unique, irreplaceable, and capable to sing our own mortality. What is more, we are able to appreciate beauty and create beauty: the poet refers to many such instances of man-created beauty, as well as to natural beauty.

With such references to mythology, with an acute sense of nature (both man-made and natural), and with her inclination to poetic maieutics, we think that Glück is a Romantic–Classical poet, in a sense. She seems to be walking into the footsteps of John Keats, trying to find in antiquity answers for the tormented soul who is faced with postmodernity. By describing this arch that goes back to ancient times, to the times of creation, and comes to the seasonal reality of the natural world, the poet reveals the value of humanity as the ‘excuse’ for creation, as the witness of creation, and the victim of its finitude. The only weapon that modern sensitivity has is memory, the going back in our own lives, in the life of those around us, as well as in the collective memory of mankind. Such memory is capable of defeating time in a way, of sublimating and concentrating it, keeping it ‘at bay’, and making sense of the passage.

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The Poet as Activist: Chronotopes of San Francisco in the Poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti

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Abstract

The impact of one's economic, cultural and political contributions is vital to a city's welfare. Activism, however, is a crucial component of community life, which has determined the real meaning of individual freedom through the efforts of the social actors of the last century. In this respect, the literary texts of the Beat Generation thoroughly portray the relation between time and space and the way in which it is connected to social action. From a geocritical approach, the choronotopes found in the poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti offer the reader an authentic taste of San Francisco during the second half of the twentieth century as well as the Beats' perspective on one's emergence and evolution in the metropolis during the post-war era. Space and time foster the evolution of group identity and, in the same time, they shape the development of social and political endeavours. This research focuses on the intersections between time, people, and creative places and seeks to portray the city as a sociocultural construct from the point of view of a poet and an activist.

Keywords: time, chronotope, city, activist, San Francisco

Introduction

The Beat Generation writings often portray the city through the lens of the activist. San Francisco, being a Beat hub itself, is described in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poems through the use of chronotopes that define the second half of the twentieth century and the youth movements at the time. Descriptions of time-space, which depict the socio-cultural dimension of communities in different eras and locations, can be understood through Mikhail Bakhtin's "chronotope", coined in his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975). As Bakhtin notes, "we will give the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic

connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). An analysis of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's works reveals that the aesthetics of time-space used may offer new understandings of temporality and the corresponding social reactions of the post-war era in the metropolis. The social and cultural challenges of the city of San Francisco at mid-century are recurrent in Ferlinghetti's works and they position the poet in the shoes of the activist.

Manuel Castells asks a series of questions in his book, *The City and the Grassroots* (1983), when thinking about the relation between time, places and subcultures: "What are the cultural themes of the community, the forms of its social organization, the waving flags of its political battles?" (Castells, 1983, p. 139). Time and space foster the development of group identity and, at the same time, they are shaped by social, cultural, and political endeavours. As Bakhtin further notes, "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). Time is viewed as the fourth dimension of space, as space modifies and transforms throughout time. The symbolic meaning of certain places may become emblematic for a time period. In this regard, San Francisco remains emblematic for the liberation movements that started post-war and serves as an image of freedom at a time of conformity.

Beat poetry aims at offering the society a different way of life and an alternative mindset. In this respect, one can interpret such poetry as an example of activism and perceive the poet as an activist. Ferlinghetti's work reflects on his own personal experiences and offers the readers an honest representation of his life and of the world that surrounds him. The main theme in Beat poetry is the decay of the world due to shallowness, hate, urban development, corruption, unfairness, discrimination, and pollution. These motifs appear in Ferlinghetti's poetry and, thus, translate as desperate "howls" for a better change. It is the requests expressed by the young generation of the 1950s that attempted to explain, through their poetry, that people are different and that they cannot fit into the same social system. The analysis of Ferlinghetti's work portrays San Francisco as the place that fostered his creativity and offered him a sense of belonging by hosting his City Lights Bookstore, which contributed greatly to the Beat Generation's visibility as both a literary and activist movement. San Francisco's chronotope, as seen in Ferlinghetti's poems, is one of multicultural diversity, of various communities that reshape the metropolis, such as having both an Italian church and a China town in the same city. Ferlinghetti wishes to preserve the San Francisco's cultural environment and to encourage other young Beats into writing and creating art.

Environmental Activism, Animal Rights and Ferlinghetti's 'Frisco'

Social protest in large cities is usually a consequence of the dysfunctionalities of the city management. Class is one factor that installs tension among citizens, and lack of support and integration of the lower classes is many times what lies as the root cause of why people try to disobey the system. While New York, another important Beat Generation hub, has a long history of multicultural and economic tensions, which is portrayed in the work of Allen Ginsberg, a Beat poet himself, San Francisco in the 1950s was seen as a possibility to a better lifestyle and a more inclusive way of thinking. Lawrence Ferlinghetti makes public his concerns about the future of the city in his Inaugural Address as San Francisco Poet Laureate and makes reference to that week's *San Francisco Bay Guardian* newspaper, which showed the results of a survey about the city's atmosphere: "it reveals a city undergoing a radical transformation—from a diverse metropolis that welcomed immigrants and refugees from around the world to a homogeneous, wealthy enclave" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 9). Ferlinghetti's concerns about the city he had been living in for seventy years until his death in 2021 reinforced the Beat thought, which aimed at facilitating an alternative lifestyle and the peaceful inclusion of people with fewer opportunities, who are usually marginalized in large cities. While technological development made the city richer and an exciting touristic destination, the middle- and lower-class citizens suffered of being alienated by the rise of capitalism. Ferlinghetti captures the city's environment and atmosphere through his poems as he observes the changes that happen and offers his perspective as a citizen, artist, entrepreneur, and Beat poet.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti is known as an environmentalist, and his eco-poetry did not seek to raise awareness only on issues related to nature, but also to animal protection. In his poem "DOG", the author maps the city from the point of view of a stray dog, which comes across different spaces and people:

> The dog trots freely in the street
> and sees reality
> and the things he sees
> are bigger than himself
> and the things he sees
> are his reality
> Drunks in doorways
> Moons on trees
> The dog trots freely thru the street (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 37)

Just like the Beat writings, the dog's journey in Ferlinghetti's poem creates a cartography that shows the authentic San Francisco. The use of chronotopes such as "the street" offers the reader "his reality," which is the way in which the dog encounters it. In the poem, we follow the dog through the city and imagine the built-in environment, which maps the city and creates the chronotope of San Francisco: Chinatown, the San Francisco Meat Market, Romeo Ravioli Factory, and Coit's Tower.

While the dog takes us through its city route, it also takes us through a cultural and political journey. The poem could also reflect the author's own thoughts, while the dog may represent Ferlinghetti himself, as he was an underdog of the society, as all Beats were. Therefore, the use of chronotopes in the poem compels the reader to believe that the dog is a simple and innocent character and influences the audience to rediscover the city from the point of view of the dog. The use of "Drunks in doorways," or "cats and cigars," shows that the dog is strolling around a poor neighbourhood and the reader may empathize with the dog's precarious situation. The dog "doesn't hate cops," "he merely has no use for them," and "he's not afraid of Congressman Doyle," as he is "just another fire hydrant for him" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 38). The poetic voice expresses disappointment with the city's authority, as neither policemen nor authority seem to make a change in the city. The audience tends to rely on the dog's perspective on what is happening, as it is "a sad young dog," and "a serious dog":

> a real live democratic dog
> engaged in real
> free enterprise
> with something to say
> about ontology
> with something to say
> about reality
> and how to see it
> and how to hear it (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 39)

Through his choice of words, Ferlinghetti presents the political tensions of the 1950s in San Francisco and tries to convince the reader that the underdogs of the society are struggling for a better change.

Ferlinghetti's concern with animal protection is portrayed as well in his 1974 poem, "Rough Song of Animals Dying," which serves as a desperate cry for people to become aware of the existing animal cruelty everywhere in the world:

In a dream within a dream I saw
how seals are beaten on the ice fields
the soft white furry seals with eggshell skulls
the Great Green turtles beaten & eaten
exotic birds netted & caged & tethered
rare wild beasts & strange reptiles & weird woozoos
hunted down for zoos
by bearded blackmarketeers
who afterwards ride around Singapore
in German limousines (Ferlinghetti, 1988, p. 121)

Through the dark images of animals suffering and dying, the poetic voice urges people to empathize and invites them to militate for animal rights. Environmentalism started to take shape as a political movement in the 1960s, being encouraged by various parallel movements such as the Anti-War, the Civil Rights and the Second-Wave Feminism. However, the movement became popular at large scales in the 1970s, when Earth Day takes place for the first time (22 April 1970), coordinated by the environmental advocate Denis Hayes (Lewis, 1990, p. 13). The 1970s also mark an increase in the environmentalists' concern with toxicity and pollution, which pushed President Richard M. Nixon to sign the Water Quality Improvement Act among other amendments that followed the environmental political agenda at the time (Chow, 2020, p. 11). Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem does not focus only on the problem of animal cruelty but also on issues related to climate change and human-induced environmental hazards:

In a dream within a dream I dreamt a dream
of the earth heating up & drying out
in the famous Greenhouse Effect
under its canopy of carbon dioxide
breathed out by a billion
infernal combustion engines
mixed with the sweet smell of burning flesh (Ferlinghetti, 1988, p. 121)

The apocalyptic image of the Earth that Ferlinghetti details is not only applicable for the situation of the 1970s, but it is still very relevant for today's need for awareness. With the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), founded in 1970 by President Nixon, the organization shared brochures with the status and trends of air quality in the US from 1970 through 2019. The charts show an increase in air quality by 77 percent throughout the fifty years, although population, economy, energy use

and driven miles increased (EPA Celebrates 50 years!, 2020). The dystopian chronotopes created in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Rough Song of Animals Dying" feel as if the poetic voice is warning people about the horrific consequences of consumerism, where animals die for humans' unnecessary fastidiousness. The poem maps the Earth through the description of animal cruelty happening on different continents, from the "seals beaten on ice fields" to "exotic birds netted & caged & tethered":

> in shrinking rainforests
> in piney woods & high sierras
> on shrinking prairies & tumbleweed mesas
> captured beaten strapped starved & stunned cornered & traded. (Ferlinghetti, 1988, p. 121)

The cartography of animals dying that the poet creates emphasizes the fact that animal rights is a global problem and that globalization itself may be one of the factors that fuelled animal cruelty world-wide: "bearded blackmarketeers/ who afterwards ride around Singapore/ in German limousines" (Ferlinghetti, 1988, p. 121). Besides using animals as a resource for clothing, alimentation, drug testing, labour and entertainment, the pollution caused by industrial waste and the expansion of unsustainable infrastructures led to animal cruelty and extinction as well. This eco-poem is an example of activism sustained by the author as it aims to educate its readers about existing problems of the community, be it the city, the country, or the world.

Interculturality in San Francisco

Besides environmental awareness, another common theme in Ferlinghetti's poetry is the interculturality found in San Francisco. The city consists of a big Chinese community, and the poet portrays that in "The Great Chinese Dragon":

> And the great Chinese dragon passing thru the Golden Gate
> spouting streams of water like a string of fireboats then broke
> loose somewhere near China Camp gulped down a hundred
> Chinese seamen and forthwith ate all the shrimp in San Francisco Bay
> (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 49)

Ferlinghetti observes the Chinese New Year parade and imagines the journey of the inflatable dragon balloon through the city. He thinks about the creature being "forever after confined/ in a Chinatown basement and ever since allowed out only for/ Chinese New Year's parades and other Unamerican demonstrations" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 49).

Therefore, the dragon, the symbol of power, good luck and of the Chinese culture in general, became suppressed by America and only for one day is allowed free in the city. This can be interpreted as the author's allusion to the fact that the Chinese community has been oppressed by the dominant white society.

The author takes us on another journey in San Francisco, the dragon serving as the guide—just like the dog does in the poem "DOG." The readers can see the city through the eyes of the dragon, which goes through the Golden Gate, China Camp, Adler Alley and Grant Avenue. These chronotopes inspired Ferlinghetti to write about the Chinese parade and compelled him to offer an authentic look at San Francisco's Chinese heritage and its status in the city. The Golden gate park, Chinatown and the streets of the city are presented as representations of ethnic patrimony and spaces of tradition, seen through the writers' view and reimagined by the readers. These markers of heritage, present in San Francisco, are celebrated by both poems "The Great Chinese Dragon" and "The Old Italians Dying" and raise awareness about the importance of social inclusiveness and identity rights and also serve as actions of protest in favour of social diversity and interculturality.

In "A North Beach Scene," Ferlinghetti offers the reader a view of the neighbourhood that hosted and helped the Beats to develop as counterculture:

> Away above a harborful
> of caulkless houses
> among the charley noble chimneypots
> of a rooftop rigged with clotheslines
> a woman pastes up sails
> upon the wind
> hanging out her morning sheets
> with wooden pins
> (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 11)

Ferlinghetti contemplates at the North Beach environment and associates it with a Mediterranean-like space, similar to a village, in which people are modest and live a simple way of life. The Bay, as a chronotope, depicts a sense of freedom and simplicity at a time when technological development is increasingly more present, when World War Two is part of the recent memory and the tensions of the Cold War instil the country with a sense of confusion and insecurity over the country.

In "The Old Italians Dying", the poet dedicates his lines to his ethnic roots and emphasizes the big Italian community of the city he lives in:

> You have seen them
> every day in Washington Square San Francisco
> the slow bell
> tolls in the morning
> in the Church of Peter & Paul
> in the marzipan church on the plaza
> (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 44)

They are the old Italians, the immigrants who left their homeland for America. Ferlinghetti portrays a similar picture of the city in his "They Were Putting Up the Statue…", describing a "flâneur-like" perspective on the San Francisco of the 1950s:

> They were putting up the statue
> of Saint Francis
> in front of the church
> of Saint Francis
> in the city of San Francisco
> in a little side street
> just off the Avenue
> (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 34)

The church of Saint Francis, which dates as early as the 1800s, is part of the architectural and cultural heritage of San Francisco and, thus, a symbol of the city, whose name was inspired by the same saint. Ferlinghetti's use of temporal and spatial aesthetics depicts the multicultural sphere of the city, as the church is a legacy for its Italian community.

San Francisco's multicultural background is also depicted in "Great American Waterfront Poem," where the readers are exposed to several minorities living in San Francisco: "Filipino fishermen," "Hawaiians in baseball caps," "Puerto Ricans with pile-worms in tincans," "Old capital N Negroes with catfish," "An Arab on the bridge his turban flying," "thick Norwegian accent," and "The Last of the Mohicans" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 55–57). In the poem, Ferlinghetti observes the passers-by and recalls memories from his past that are linked to the city: "The first poem I ever wrote in San Francisco twenty years ago," "married on a rooftop in North Beach." The poem's chronotopes convey a state of melancholy and nostalgia as the poetic voice describes the surroundings in a stream-of-consciousness manner.

The choice of words portrays Ferlinghetti's attempt to influence the image of San Francisco that the readers may perceive: "asleep in the sun," "fog lifting the sun the sun burning through," "bright steamers," "this waterfront of existence," "A great view," "opposite Alcatraz by the thousand fishing boats nested in green thick water," "The sea a green god," "morning October sun," "the tracks embedded in asphalt," and "the Bank of America towering over" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 55–58). The repeated use of words related to sun, sea, and green makes one imagine a relaxing atmosphere and a place of prosperity and well-being. Moreover, the poetic voice describes his encounters with various people of various ethnicities, which makes the city look very cosmopolitan, dynamic and inclusive. As the author lures the reader to fancy the city, he also begins and ends the poem with his disappointment about the city's imperfections and leaves an open ending to the poem in order to install a sense of hope for the future of the city. The poet enumerates various locations where he spent most of his "divorce of civilization in and out waterfront hangouts" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 55). The Beats used to attend this kind of public spaces as an attempt to escape the social pressure of the society at the time. The fact that the poetic voice mentions that he "wouldn't be back until they tore down the Embarcadero Freeway along with the rest of petroleum civilization" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 55) proves the author's involvement in environmental issues and his opinion on the destructive effects of technology and development over nature and cultural heritage. The author predicts this tension between nature and the "sky-highway," Embarcadero Freeway, as thirteen years after writing the poem, the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake destroys it.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti rebuilds the city of San Francisco in his poems, from his Beat point of view, through the use of chronotopes that refer to the outcasts of the city and their daily experiences. He resonates with these outsiders and feels as part of a minority himself, expressing a sense of love for the city that serves as his home as well as frustration with its shortcomings. Inequality, lack of social inclusion, and pollution are three issues that Ferlinghetti fought for through his work and, therefore, he gave a voice to those silenced by the authority and by the capitalist trends. In order to influence the reader to understand and sympathize with these causes and to see the city at mid-century the way he does, the author builds the chronotope of San Francisco seen as the city of social pariahs, in a world where they seem to be powerless in the face of industrial and corporative progression. Ferlinghetti seems to blame politics and technology as the evil forces that degrade the city. The poetic voice wishes to escape social pressure, norms, and restraint by retreating to public spaces where there is a sense of belonging. Such places are either in nature or bars and cafés, where one can engage in peer-group relations or spiritual experiences.

Conclusion

By analysing the city of San Francisco at mid-twentieth century, through spatial and temporal aesthetics, as depicted by the work of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, this study proves that the author, together with the Beat Generation group, faced various challenges during the Golden Age in order to affirm themselves and to resist the social pressure of traditionalist values.

Ferlinghetti can be considered an activist who fights, through his works, against the governmental and capitalist forces. His poems have a sense of both hope and decay: the writer emphasizes the flaws of society, such as unintegrated minorities and pollution, but also alludes that there is hope for a better fate for America. The poetic voice is conveyed as the voice of the social underdog; that way, the reader is offered an image of the outcasts' side of the city, which shows the margins of rich urban spaces and a life that aims at surviving more than enjoying.

San Francisco is often presented through images of nature, hills and water. The Beat poems also have the role of immortalizing social realities just the way they are. Ferlinghetti takes the reader on a tour of the city, as seen by a dog that "is just about to have his picture taken" (Ferlinghetti, 2003, p. 37). He resonates with this stray urban animal that walks freely through the city, being beaten from one street to another, seen by the society as unimportant and as dangerous for the wellbeing of the collective. Therefore, Ferlinghetti can be considered a contemporary underground "flâneur" who documents the city from the perspective of those marginalized.

His poetry, as well as the literary works of other authors that he published through City Lights, follow a political agenda which fosters non-violent protest, pacifism and ecology: "in addition to a political commitment that blended anarchism and ecology—he loathed the motor car, calling it 'the infernal combustion engine'" (Campbell, 2021, p. 1). Ferlinghetti also protested for social cohesion and believed in the importance of a strong, united community. He was enrolled in the Second World War and saw Hiroshima a few weeks after the bomb, which determined him to become a pacifist: "there was just three square miles of mulch with human hair and bones sticking out … blackened unrecognisable shapes sticking up on the horizon, teacups full of flesh" (Saunders, 2019, p. 13). The horrors of the war witnessed by Ferlinghetti encouraged him to dedicate his artistic and literary work to fighting authority, conventions, animal cruelty, war and pollution. His City Lights Book Store has been a place of inspiration and encouragement for the literary scene and stands as a political statement which keeps Ferlinghetti's philosophy about the world still present and influential in San Francisco.

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Time and Metaphor in Emily Dickinson and Ana Blandiana

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Abstract

For so many years on end my job of teaching some of the best American poets has rendered me nostalgic for my own memories of Romanian poetry, whether classic or contemporary. Especially whenever I have had a chance to teach students Emily Dickinson, I fell under the spell of an affinity between her short striking poems and those of Ana Blandiana, whom I have devotedly admired as an amateur reader ever since my adolescence. They both have enchanted me by the same playful tone and, seeming, simplicity of poetic expression while conveying metaphysical messages by means of the most unexpected imagery, which all correspond to Paul Ricoeur's concept of the "living metaphor." This is why my paper title alludes to Ricoeur's celebrated volumes about *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative*, in which I have always found reliable support for approaching the best lively books of poetry and narrative of the entire world literature. I hope I will not fail either my guidance or my purpose here.

Keywords: time, poetry, passing, grass, death

Poems of Grass

Although, at first sight, a parallel between Emily Dickinson and Ana Blandiana may seem farfetched, it is mainly sustained by the gift they both share of telling "all the truth and tell it slant," as Dickinson would say (2009, p. 506). This particular gift of conveying the essential truth(s) about life, and death, in an unassuming, even lighthearted tone, which, in Paul Ricoeur's terms translates as the "living metaphor":

> With metaphor, the innovation lies in the producing of *a new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution*: "Nature is a temple where living pillars …" *The metaphor is alive* as long as we can perceive, through *the new semantic pertinence* —and so to speak in its denseness—the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence.

> The displacement in meaning the words undergo in the metaphorical utterance, a displacement to which ancient rhetoric reduced metaphor, is *not* the whole of metaphor. It is just one means serving the process that takes place on the level of the entire sentence, whose function it is *to save the new pertinence of the odd predication* threatened by the literal incongruity of the attribution. (Ricoeur, 1984, p. ix; [emphases added])

Like Dickinson's, much of Blandiana's metaphysical poetry relies on outdoor settings and symbols from the world of plants. The poem I have in mind here is "Întâlnire"[1]

> Nu te speria.
> Va fi atât de simplu totul
> Că nici nu vei înțelege
> Decât mult mai târziu.
> Vei aștepta la început
> Și numai când
>
> Vei începe să crezi
> Că nu te mai iubesc
> Îți va fi greu,
> Dar atunci voi pune
> Un fir de iarbă să crească
> În colțul știut al grădinii,
> Să ajungă la tine
> Și să-ți șoptească:
> Nu vă speriați,
> Ea este bine
> Și vă așteaptă
> La celălalt capăt al meu. (Blandiana, 1978, p. 96)

The feminine first-person lyrical voice teaches her partner how to survive the shock of her, merely *temporary*, disappearance and then also how to ultimately die. She offers him a date in an afterlife as natural and full of promise as the only kind of life so far known. There is so much more to it than what we usually call a declaration of love.

The playful tone, the delicacy of this intimate dialogue, and the surprising metaphysical meaning of this poem may as well ascribe it to Emily Dickinson. The fact that it actually

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[1] Don't you worry now./ It will be all so easy,/ That you won't even understand/ Until very much later./ You'll wait at first/ And only when/ You start thinking/ I love you no more/ You'll find it hard,/ But then I'll have/ A leaf of grass grow/ In the secret corner of our garden,/ And whisper to you:/ Don't you worry now,/ She's just fine/ And waiting for you/ At the other end of/ Myself. (Blandiana, "Dating," my translation)

belongs to Ana Blandiana may puzzle many readers. Because Blandiana's verse is unmistakably Romanian in its imagery and suggestiveness, it always shows her affinity with Lucian Blaga's own source of living metaphor. The likenesses can only deepen this astonishing sense of kinship between these two lady poets: on the one hand, Emily Dickinson—an American poet who, judging by her mid-nineteenth century lifespan, should have been a romantic, which she was actually not at all. On the other hand, Ana Blandiana—a Romanian poet who, judging by her own lifetime, should have been no more than a postmodern writer, and yet she is so much more, not only as a poet. Although, for more than the last three decades, Ana Blandiana has also been an exemplary civic conscience in Romania, in this paper, I shall focus on her poetry.

Just like Dickinson, Blandiana, with all her sensuousness of metaphor, remains for me a *poet of the mind*—and one whose gift of metaphor works as an argument for Ricoeur's notion of living metaphor. On the other hand, just like Whitman, Blandiana is a *poet of the city*, in other words, *poeta vates*, too. Just like both American poets, she conveys a certain sense of religiousness, yet so remote from conventional limitations and obscure mysticism, that it remains unmistakably one of her trademarks. In addition to these, in all these particularities of her metaphor, Ana Blandiana is a direct follower of Lucian Blaga, as we have already established. Thus, pagan/pantheistic "nature" imagery also works as "time" imagery with both Romanian poets, related to each other by their deeply spiritual belonging to the Transylvanian poetic (sense of) "space."

Dickinson is too skeptical in her poetry to be associated with Transcendentalism. However, her entire universe relates her to Emerson and Thoreau due to notions of *selfhood* and *nature*. Moreover, if only in virtue of *the miraculous perception*, we can still discern the bond between the witty "recluse of Amherst" and her contemporary company of serene thinkers. Although Emily Dickinson rather abhorred Walt Whitman, her understated lyricism often communicates with his exuberant or despondent cantos. It is precisely here that *the leaf of grass* metaphor has a central part.

From 1855 on, *the leaf of grass* has been identified with Whitman's signature as a poet of all human mortal conditions, therefore as *a poet of the time*, besides his being *a poet of reality* and a poet with a social conscience, in other words, *poeta vates*. Dickinson, on the other hand, is primarily a poet of the mind, besides her being *a poet of reality* and hence also one *of time*, like Whitman. Moreover, surprising though as this may seem, in Dickinson's homely garden, *the leaf of grass* is also typical—not only as a *messenger* between the living and the dead—as a metaphorical *sign of the time*, as we may see in her poem 333, "The Grass so little has to do":

The Grass so little has to do—
A Sphere of simple Green—
With only Butterflies to brood
And bees to entertain—

And stir all day to pretty Tunes
The Breezes fetch along—
And hold the Sunshine in its lap
And bow to everything—

And thread the Dews, all night, like Pearls—
And make itself so fine
A Dutchess were too common
For such a noticing—

And even when it dies—to pass
In Odors so divine—
Like Lowly spices, lain to sleep—
Or Spikenards, perishing—

And then, in Sovereign Barns to dwell—
And dream the Days away,
The Grass so little has to do
I wish I were a Hay— (Dickinson, 2009, p.157)

In Dickinson's view, *the Grass* is much more dignified, despite its unassuming existence, than even "a Duchess." "The Grass" can afford to stay elegant even after it passes away: its "perishing" merely enhances its fragrance. Also, its carefree leisure is the utmost luxury envied by this first-person lyrical voice, which surprises the reader with an ambiguous utterance in the final line that remains characteristically open.

The "Duchess" of poem 333 prompts us to the "Queen" of poem 285, "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune":

The Robin's my Criterion for Tune—
Because I grow—where Robins do—
But, were I Cuckoo born—
I'd swear by him—
The ode familiar—rules the Noon—
The Buttercup's, my Whim for Bloom—

Because, we're Orchard sprung—
But, were I Britain born,
I'd Daisies spurn—
None but the Nut—October fit—
Because, through dropping it,
The Seasons flit—I'm taught—
Without the Snow's Tableau
Winter, were lie—to me—
Because I see—New Englandly—
The Queen discerns like me—
Provincially— (Dickinson, 1997, p. 131)

The question arises who Queen Victoria was to the sharp mind of Emily Dickinson, who watched her from the other side of the Atlantic, from her cheerful New England garden, which she tended with her loving green fingers. The Queen is just a "provincial," another country cousin, no better than herself to the queen. It all depended on the point of view, despite the English language they both shared.

In the same line of thought, following Emily Dickinson's familiar *robin*, Wallace Stevens's symbolical imagistic blackbird—in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (Stevens, 1972, pp. 20–22)—may counterbalance the splendid nightingale, the romantic prima donna of John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." Stevens's blackbird has a true poetic precursor in Dickinson's "Robin."

Instead of British royal roses and lilies, Emily Dickinson turns flowers like "Buttercup" and "Daisies" into her lyrical American coat of arms. There is a stronger sense of kinship between these modest flowers and any poetic instance of grass imagery.

However, this secret intimate garden shared by the couple of "friend and dear friend" —as Wallace Stevens puts it in his poem "The World as Meditation" (Stevens, 1972, p. 381)—can also be the graveyard in Emily Dickinson's as well as in Ana Blandiana's, and for that matter in Lucian Blaga's lyrical land. In Dickinson's poem 449 "I died for Beauty," the grass is replaced by moss. In Blaga's poem, "Gorunul,"[2] the oak tree is replaced by a tree that soon may yield the planks for the poet persona's coffin. Dickinson's poem 449, "I died for Beauty," is characteristically brief:

[2] "The Evergreen Oak-Tree"

I died for Beauty—but was scarce
Adjusted in the Tomb
When One who died for Truth, was lain
In the adjoining Room—

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?
"For Beauty", I replied—
"And I—for Truth—Themselves are One—
We Brethern are", He said—

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night—
We talked between the Rooms—
Until the Moss had reached our lips—
And covered up—our names— (Dickinson, 1997, p. 216)

This poem comes even closer in its message to the one by Ana Blandiana, quoted above. Moss stands for night's darkest hour, for the North, too. It may be the nocturnal counterpart to daylight *grass*. If in Blandiana's poem, *a* leaf of grass establishes a never-ending dialogue between a bereaved lover and his dead sweetheart, in this particular Dickinson poem, moss stemming from somewhere deeper than their mouths, deletes their names inscribed upon neighboring tombstones, thus receiving them back into the dust. Moss alone has the power to help quiet down two restless believers in the classic secular ideals of Truth and Beauty.

However, Dickinson's famous poem 712 "Because I could not stop for Death" is best echoed in Blandiana's funny "Dating" poem. Although not employing any grass imagery, apart from "the Fields of Gazing Grains," that is, the rather homely alliterative name for the classic Elysian fields:

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For his Civility—

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—

> Or rather—He passed Us—
> The Dews drew quivering and chill—
> For only Gossamer, my Gown—
> My Tippet—only Tule—
>
> We paused before a House that seemed
> A Swelling of the Ground—
> The Roof was scarcely visible—
> The Cornice—in the Ground—
>
> Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
> Feels shorter than the Day
> I first surmised the Horses' Heads
> Were toward Eternity— (Dickinson, 1997, p. 350)

What the two lady poets have in common in these representative lines is a rhetoric of lightheartedness, imposed by their exquisite stylistic elegance. Both poems are serene and simple, but only on the surface. It is even frivolous the way in which each speaks about the expectation of death. The first-person lyrical personae are obviously feminine in both cases. Thus, they are both quite busy with their life, which gives them *no time* to wait for Mr. Death. Ergo, they *would not* be afraid of His ineluctable arrival sooner or later.

If in Blandiana's poem, *a date* is being promised to the bereaved lover, even from yonder, in Dickinson's poem, the defying/daring lyrical persona is dating Mr. Death himself. What is more, He had better not delude Himself that what they are eventually having is any more than a date.

"Denn alles Fleisch . . ."

In the spirit of Paul Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor*, Whitman's living metaphor of the leaf of grass is best rendered in section 6 of "Song of Myself":

> A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands,
> How could I answer the child? *I do not know what it is anymore than he.*
> I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven. [. . .]
> *Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation*. (Whitman, 2013, p.27; [emphases added])

Not only is Whitman's metaphorical definition of the grass inspired by Emerson's notion of the *miraculous perception* in his essay "Nature":

> To speak truly, *few adult persons can see nature*. Most people do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. *The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood*. (Emerson, 1990, p. 18; [emphases added])

But it also reconfirms Emerson's belief that "the poet" and "the child" are privileged by their insight into the mysteries of nature.

Nonetheless, like Whitman's poet-persona in the above quoted lines, Saint Augustine's metaphorical definition of time, in his *Confessions*, Book XI, as quoted and discussed by Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative*, amounts to little more than just his own acknowledging the fact that "he did not know" what time it actually was. Very much like that of the child, it is the poet's/philosopher's privilege to admit/confess he still has so much more to learn before answering so many essential dilemmas, among which there are *the paradoxes of temporality*:

> Were it not for this hesitation, we would not understand why, after the apparently victorious argument against identifying time with movement, Augustine once again falls back into a confession of his utter ignorance: *I know that my discourse on time is in time*; so I know that time exists and that it is measured. *But I know neither what time is nor how it is measured*. "I am in a sorry state, for *I do not even know what I do not know!*" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 15; [emphases added])

In 1865, one decade after Walt Whitman's first edition of his *Leaves of Grass*, including the very first version of his "Song of Myself," the Romantic German composer Johannes Brahms wrote "A German Requiem" ("Ein deutsches Requiem"). This ample work is named as such to emphasize the vernacular German language of the lyrics stemming from *The Holy Scriptures*, that is, *the Lutheran Bible*. This version corresponds to King James's Bible. Brahms himself confessed he was "an agnostic and a humanist" (Swafford, 1999, p. 317). Therefore, though sacred, his "A German Requiem" represents much more than just religious music: "I confess that I would gladly omit even the word German and instead use Human" (San Francisco Choral Society 2021).

The second movement of this rather "human Requiem" ("Ein Menschliches Requiem") develops upon lyrics taken from *The Holy Scriptures*, Peter: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The/ grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away"[3] (Oxford Lieder, 2021).

As Transylvanian poets, both Blaga and Blandiana are quite responsive to German culture. Yet, perhaps due to a certain protestant cast of mind, American poets Whitman and Dickinson also resort to the same symbols from the natural world, particularly to the humble yet enigmatic *leaf of grass*. In all his numerous studies devoted to Whitman, Harold Bloom contended that "Song of Myself" actually reads as Whitman's bold/ secular/humanistic reply to the biblical "Canticle of Canticles"/ "Song of All Songs."

As a good friend to Whitman and a devoted disciple to Emerson, Thoreau urged his contemporaries to rediscover "nature," in order to rediscover the value of "time":

> Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. [. . .] *Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in*. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. (Thoreau, 2004, p. 187; [emphases added])

For our Romanian poets, though modern and postmodern, such as Blaga and Blandiana, this Romantic view of an essential link between *nature* and *time* remains predominant. In such poems as Blaga's "Pamântul"[4], "Gorunul"[5], "Mugurii"[6], "Stalactita,"[7] and, last but not least, "Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii"[8] the two themes complete each other.

Likewise, in Blandiana's poetry, her poems still keep reminding me of Emily Dickinson, as far as style, size, and deliberate simplicity of tone are concerned. Perhaps Sylvia Plath, as a contemporary poet, is even closer to Ana Blandiana. However, Plath herself once confessed in a letter to her mother that "any similarities between her poems and those of Dickinson were purely intentional" (McNeil, 1997, p. xxv).

[3] Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras, und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie / die Gras Blumen. Das Gras ist verdorret und die Blume abgefallen. (Oxford Lieder, 2021)

[4] "The Earth"

[5] "The Evergreen Oak-Tree"

[6] "The Buds"

[7] "The Stalactite"

[8] "I will not crush the world's wonders' corolla"

Let us consider here another one of Blandiana's poems, "Condiție":

> Sunt
> asemenea
> nisipului clepsidrei
> care
> poate fi timp
> numai
> în
> cădere. (Blandiana, 1978, p. 83)[9]

It may read as a belated tribute to Ezra Pound's Imagism; or as a haiku. It is a synechdochal/metonymic/self-reflexive poem of Time and Loss. Since the hourglass, an archaic timekeeper, reflects the allegorical meaning of the poem, it is just by returning to the first line that the reader discovers the price of being concentrated in this frail image. The glass of the hourglass is itself made of sand. It also contains sand to measure up the duration of Time. Furthermore, the lyrical first-person persona reflects itself in this infinite *mise en abyme*, reminding the anonymous reader of Jorge Luis Borges and his "Book of Sand"—the symbol of the most desirable book, inexhaustible, always new, always surprising. In this case, it is a mysterious, unique book, with leaves of sand if not of grass.

Another poem by Ana Blandiana is "Trebuie numai să aștept"[10]:

> Boala este mai aproape de mine
> Decât am fost eu vreodată.
> Așa cum putrezirea
> E mai aproape de fruct
> Decât sâmburele lui.
> Așa cum sâmburele așteaptă.
> Numai trecerea verii
> Să se desfacă din fruct,
> Eu trebuie numai s-aștept
> Viața să treacă (Blandiana, p. 135)

[9] I am/ like/ the hourglass sand/ that/ can be time/ only/ by/ falling. (Blandiana, "Condition," my translation)

[10] Sickness is closer to me/ Than I have ever been./ Just like rotting/ Is closer to the fruit/ Than its seed./ Just like the seed waits for/ Only the summer to pass,/ That it should part from the fruit,/ I only have to wait/ For life to pass… (Blandiana, "I only have to wait," my translation)

The previous self-reflexive *time-poem* of the hourglass is continued in this elegy, another *waiting poem* taking its readers back in the open, in the poet's old garden/ orchard/graveyard. See also Blaga's poem "O toamnă va veni"[11] (Blaga, 1974, p. 72). Just as death remains the absolute reliable certainty, so do aging and decay. It is just a matter of time, as the cliché goes. Yet poets have better ways to say this. To prove this, let us remember Blandiana's poem, "Eu nu cânt frunza"[12]

> Eu
> Nu cânt frunza,
> Când numai frageda moarte
> Pe care-o ascunde,
> Ca pe-o țară îmbătătoare
> Și fără sfârșit
> În care cine pătrunde
> Uită să se mai întoarcă și moare,
> Ca să poată merge mereu
> Mai departe
> Și mai fericit
> Plantele doar,
> Pentru că nu sunt în stare
> Să povestească
> Ce văd,
> Sunt lăsate să se întoarcă mereu
> Din țara aceea copilărească
> De care
> Un misterios prăpăd
> Ne desparte
> În van.
> Eu
> Nu cânt frunza,
> Când numai frageda moarte
> În care
> Visează o dată pe an. (Blandiana, 1978, p. 211)

[11] "A Fall Will Come"

[12] I/ Won't sing the leaf, / Only sing the soft death/ It conceals/ As some enchanting country/ And never ending/ In which whoever may come/ Forgets the way back and dies/ To be able to go further on/ Further always/ And ever happier./ Plants only/ As they are unable / To tell/ What they see/ Are always allowed to come back/ From that childish land/ Separated from us by/ Some mysterious disaster/ In vain./ I / Won't sing the leaf/ Only sing the soft death/ In which/ It dreams once a year. (Blandiana, "I won't sing the leaf," my translation)

The separation of Blandiana's confessional "I" in a line of its own twice in the above-quoted poem, bringing it full circle, establishes a safe bridge within her innermost lyrical mood yielding this repressed elegy.

Perhaps this is the poem that best illustrates my argument here, that is the fortunate connection/communication between Blandiana's verse and, on the one hand, Lucian Blaga's (especially in such poems as "Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii" and "Vei plânge mult sau vei zâmbi?"[13], Blaga, 1974, pp. 2–3 and 66–67) and, on the other hand, Emily Dickinson's and Walt Whitman's. Here is perhaps the best known and beloved poem by Lucian Blaga, "Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii"[14]:

> Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii
> și nu ucid
> cu mintea tainele, ce le-ntâlnesc
> în calea mea
> în flori, în ochi, pe buze ori morminte.
> Lumina altora
> sugrumă vraja nepătrunsului ascuns
> în adâncimi de întuneric,
> dar eu,
> eu cu lumina mea sporesc a lumii taină—
> și-ntocmai cum cu razele ei albe luna
> nu micșorează, ci tremurătoare
> mărește și mai tare taina nopții,
> așa îmbogățesc și eu întunecata zare
> cu largi fiori de sfânt mister
> și tot ce-i neînțeles
> se schimbă-n neînțelesuri și mai mari
> sub ochii mei-
> căci eu iubesc
> și flori și ochi și buze și morminte. (Blaga, 1974, pp. 2–3)

[13] "Will you cry much or will you smile?"

[14] I will not crush the world's wonders' corolla/ and will not kill/in mind the mysteries I meet/ in my way/ in flowers, eyes, on lips or sepulchers./ Some others' light/ may stifle the enchantment of all that's recondite and hidden/ in depths of darkness,/ whereas I,/ I with my light enhance the mystery of world—/ and just as the moon with its white beams/ won't shrink, but shivering / for ever more enhances night's mysteriousness,/ so will I, too, enrich the darkened vista/ with wondrous thrills of sacred awe/ and all that's recondite/ will turn into some ever ampler secret/ under my eyes—/ for I love/ flowers, too, and eyes and lips and sepulchers. (Blaga, "I will not crush the world's wonders' corolla," my translation)

From this point of view, Blaga's poem reads like a modern manifesto of the miraculous perception, carried further on by postmodern Blandiana. It is the same notion of miraculous perception that Romantics such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and, last but not least, Dickinson had also formerly believed. A metaphorical vision of time also insinuates itself into this poem once the lyrical persona mentions "graves": again, coming through from "flowers" to "eyes" and "lips," finally, to "graves" just like in a poem by Dickinson. Even Whitman, in the final lines of his "Song of Myself," closes the poem with a similar idea:

> I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
> If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.
>
> You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
> But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
> And filter and fiber your blood.
>
> Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
> Missing me one place search another,
> I stop somewhere waiting for you. (Whitman, 2013, p. 78)

As a true poet of reality, anticipating Wallace Stevens, Walt Whitman replaces *the priest* with *the poet*, whose responsibility is now to help people go on with their lives. Good survivors can always count on their poets.

A Sense of Belatedness

In my view, Emily Dickinson and Ana Blandiana speak the same metaphorical language in which there are no terms for cheap sentimentalism. Metaphysical meanings are suggested gracefully, even with a smile between the lines of both poets. Even in their somehow fateful *sense of belatedness*, the two lady poets communicate above/beyond words, if one may say so.

As we know it today, Emily Dickinson's astounding heritage of 1,775 poems first got published in a compact edition as late as 1955 due to the committed research of an eminent scholar, Thomas H. Johnson, who brought them all together in chronological order. In her life, merely one percent of her poetry was reluctantly published in various literary magazines. In addition to publishing, she used to send poems instead of messages to friends and family members. Because Dickinson's poetry was unlike most of the fashionable/conventional poets' works of her own time, she was seldom welcome

in the pages of 19th-century literary reviews. Yet, as she happened to be a poet with a proper debut *postponed* until 1955, Dickinson strangely became Blandiana's contemporary, in terms of profession, almost seventy years after her own mortal life had ended.

On the other hand, in the terrible communist Romania of that mid-20th century decade, on account of her father's being a priest, Ana Blandiana was several times rejected as a young candidate for academic philological studies. Fortunately, she did not give up; however, this harsh, early life experience must have taken its toll upon her metaphorical vision and way of writing poetry for the rest of her life.

As a true contemporary reader, I feel grateful to them both.

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The Perception of Time in Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920) in the Context of Her War-Related Nonfiction

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Abstract

Edith Wharton published her *The Age of Innocence* just after the Great War, but the focus on the past and on social change in the text has usually not been connected to concerns in the novel's immediate war context for a long time. However, as part of the general critical interest in the literature of war, the issue of the war context for *The Age of Innocence* was examined by Julie Olin-Ammentorp's *Edith Wharton's Writings from the Great War* in 2004. Hermione Lee's subsequent biography of Wharton in 2008 also claimed that *The Age* was not only motivated by escapism but by Wharton's experience of war as well. This paper looks into how the perception of time is represented in Wharton's nonfiction war text *Fighting France* (1915) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920) by comparing their representations of the contrast between the past and the present. Both *Fighting France* and *The Age of Innocence* contain spatial descriptions that employ Wharton's rhetoric of what the article proposes to call *the presence of the past*, in which past moments reappear in the present, problematizing what is seen as real and unreal by the characters. The rhetoric of the presence of the past links the war text to the novel in that both share a basic interest in problematic processes of cultural continuity.

Keywords: Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, war literature, representation of time, rhetoric

Introduction

Edith Wharton is usually considered to be a nostalgic chronicler of historical change in her novels of manners. Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* investigates how the mores and ways of the traditional New York City cultural and social elite of the 1870s are slowly replaced by those of a new elite class of pragmatic industrialists by the turn of the century.

The novel maps out the costs of the struggle for social power from the perspective of upper class NYC genteel society, *the innocents*, who lose out to the new moneyed class of modern industrialists, *the experienced* by implication. We all know that Newland Archer, the seemingly progressive protagonist of the novel, regresses into accepting traditional ways of *innocent* behavior eventually. Wharton projects a famously ambiguous representation of social change in the novel. It is never clear if one should feel sorry and sad for the losses the change for experience cost or be happy for the change because it was for good; or both at the same time.

Published in 1920, *The Age of Innocence* belongs to the heterogeneous group of Wharton's wartime texts. Wharton published extensively during the war, but only part of her output was strictly *literary*, as her engagement in war relief work from 1914 on reduced her literary output considerably. She published a collection of short stories titled *Xingu* in 1915, but it contained texts from before the war mostly, as Wharton only added "Coming Home" as a new one to it. In 1918 she published a war story *The Marne*, and in 1920 *The Age of Innocence* about the 1870s of her childhood. Instead of fiction, she published war journalism and collected these articles under the title *Fighting France* (1915), then she edited *The Book of the Homeless* (1916) for charity purposes. Her essays on French culture, which originated in the speeches she delivered for American soldiers about France after the US joined the war, appeared as *French Ways and their Meaning* (1918). Wharton's last travel book *In Morocco* (1920) reported about her 1917 trip to the then French protectorate and was published right after the war along with *The Age of Innocence*.

Although Wharton published her *The Age of Innocence* just after the Great War, the focus on the past and on social change in the text has usually not been connected to concerns in the novel's immediate war context for a long time. As a case in point, in the Norton critical edition from 2003 the editor Candace Waid focuses on the novel's criticism of the innocent American child-woman and the leisure and business cultures of the 1870s as its major cultural contexts (Waid, 2003b, p. 275; 2003c, p. 311). In her "Introduction," however, Waid states that the novel "draws a great deal of its emotional force from the sense of loss associated with the Great War" (Waid, 2003a, p. xiii), but without providing further explanation. Carol Singley also sidesteps the issue of the war context when she considers Archer's adventure in the context of American individualism to conclude that, surprisingly, it is Ellen's actions that fit that masculine framework (Singley, 2020, p. 23). It was Alan Price's groundbreaking *The End of the Age of Innocence: Edith Wharton and the Great War* (1996) that initiated a rising interest in Wharton's activities during the war as part of the emerging critical attention to war literature.

Price's mostly biographical book provides a detailed account of Wharton's wartime activities, most importantly her work for her various charities. And it gave rise to an outpouring of war-related readings of Wharton's work.

The issue of the war context for *The Age of Innocence* has been examined as part of the general critical interest in the literature of war by Julie Olin-Ammentorp's *Edith Wharton's Writings from the Great War* (2004). It not only recognized the importance of the war context but also integrated into it the detailed study of both *literary* and *nonfiction* texts, explicating *The Age of Innocence* as well. Olin-Ammentorp made two claims about *The Age* and its context. She maintained that the novel is historical fiction about Wharton's youth in the US in the 1870s and Wharton's turn to the past serves to escape the anxieties of the immediate war context, in a complex tone that reflects an ambivalence about the past (Olin-Ammentorp, 2004, p. 161). She also argued that the "*Age* is subtly but profoundly shaped by the war years" (p. 167), mainly in links to ideas of "experience" that American innocence is supposed to give way to in the novel. Olin-Ammentorp noted that Archer's insecurities and sense of "protean reality" resemble Wharton's feelings during the war (p. 174). Along similar lines, Hermione Lee's 2008 exquisite Wharton biography also argued that although Wharton herself states she "had to get away from the present altogether" (Lee, 2008, p. 561; Wharton, 1990, p. 1056) though "escapism is not the whole narrative behind *The Age of Innocence*. […] it replays, in historical guise, her current feelings about America and Europe" (Lee, 2008, p. 562) and the "title refers to a lost pre-war world" (p. 561). Similarly, Lee's introduction to the centenary thematic issue on *The Age* in *The Edith Wharton Review* revisits her earlier view of *The Age* "as a French novel" (Lee, 2020, p. 91), as Lee states that *The Age of Innocence* is "interwoven with idealized images of France before the war," as one finds it in Wharton's *French Ways* published just before the novel (2020, p. 91).

This paper investigates Ammentorp's reference to the sense of "protean reality" in *The Age* through the representations of time in the novel. Taking Lee's cue also, it links the sense of this protean reality to Wharton's related nonfiction, in the context of which the novel was published. More specifically, the study looks into how the perception of time is represented in Wharton's *Fighting France* (1915) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920) by comparing their representations of the contrast between the past and the present.

In her nonfiction before and during the Great War, Wharton contemplates on the continuity of artistic styles in watching architecture (Kovács, 2021). In her *A Motor-Flight Through France* from 1908, Wharton contends that in special moments of aesthetic experience, the viewer of architecture can experience a continuity with the past *in* the present.

As Wharton writes: "reverence is the most precious emotion that such a building inspires: reverence for the accumulated experiences of the past, readiness to puzzle out their meaning, unwillingness to disturb rashly" (Wharton, 1991, p. 11). In *Fighting France*, bombarded monuments produce the opposite effect, as they invoke the experience of the loss of historical continuity in the viewer (Kovács, 2017, p. 548) as war destruction seems to freeze the experience of everyday time. In her tourist book on Morocco, Wharton's project is to report on the presence of the past in the protectorate before tourists and modernization flood in. Her entries illustrate the presence of a magic Oriental past in special scenes, including harems (Kovács, 2014, pp. 66–67). Similarly, observations of space that are linked to a special experience of time occur in *The Age of Innocence* as well. The question arises how the representation of space relates to that of historical change and time in the novel. The paper claims that Wharton's rhetoric of the presence of the past has a key role in producing an ambiguous representation of time and social change in *The Age of Innocence* generally.

A set of general questions related to the literature of war will not be touched upon here. The Great War is usually seen as a watershed in cultural representations because of the experience of disappointment, pointlessness, and feelings of loss triggered by the material and cultural destruction of the war effort. Histories of war literature often identify two oppositional reactions to the war experience: disillusionment and nostalgia. The powerful sense of disillusionment is to have elicited experimental Modernist works in the post war period, while conservative authors are said to have preferred to look back at the time before the war and maintain their traditional ways of expression as well. Wharton's reception has been struggling to reformulate the terms of this discussion ever since the rising interest in her war texts, trying to accommodate a view of Wharton who is less of a conservative than a binary typology could tell. Investigations into Wharton and gender form part of this effort.[1]

This paper expands on Olin-Ammentorp's and Hermione Lee's accounts of *The Age* as a novel deeply immersed in the war context. It surveys the themes of historical change, loss, and the presence of the past in Wharton's *Fighting France* (1915) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), eventually focusing on Archer's final renunciation scene in Paris, in order to compare perceptions of time represented in them.

[1] For further discussions of the relations among the Great War, literature, and modernism see Fussell, 1975; Campbell, 1999; Heathorn, 2005; and Hutchinson, 2015.

The perception of time in *Fighting France* (1915)

Wharton's *Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort* describes the French war zone from the perspective of a woman in the early stage of the war. Five chapters document Wharton's experience of war in the book: the essays portray a powerful sense of destruction and a more and more palpable sense of resilience to the actual war experience. The text is scattered with comments on the "sense of unreality" amidst the reality war that refer to fleeting moments when the new and terrible reality of war seems to pause momentarily and Wharton has the illusion of revisiting times from before the war. Let us have a closer look at this experience and its representation in the chapters.

Fighting France contains five articles about Wharton's travels behind the front lines in 1914–15 and one extra essay on the tone of France. Four of the articles had been published in *Scribner's Magazine* and one in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Wharton made five trips to the war zone with French military approval in the company of her lifelong friend Walter Berry, riding her own Mercedes, driven by her own chauffeur. The primary aim of her trips was to assess the state of military hospitals and carry supplies, but she realized that what she saw gave her the chance to report the US audience on the state of France and ask for monetary help. Mary Suzanne Schriber has placed the book among Wharton's other travel texts, stating that it marked the end of the romance of travel (Schriber, 1999, p. 143) and initiated "travel writing in the grotesque" because it showed the nightmarish destruction the war brought to familiar French travel sites (1999, p. 143). The latest edition, by Alice Kelly, reinstalled the photos of the original journal publications into the text and includes a concise introduction to its position in Wharton's whole oeuvre (Kelly, 2018).

In *Fighting France* the descriptive passages convey the shock of destruction the early phase of the war brought and these scenes focus especially on the damage to architecture. Villages, towns, streets, houses, churches are shown in various states of ruin, often personified as sick or dead. Laimont looks "as if a cyclone had beheaded it" (Wharton, 1915, p. 82), Ypres resembles a "disemboweled corpse" (1915, p. 152), the new part of Nieuport looks as if it had "died of colic" (p. 167). A façade of a house in Ypres has been sliced off, exposing the intimate inside space for scrutiny (p. 153). For Wharton, these ruins indicate the possibility that a whole way of life has been destroyed.

The most iconic architectural symbol of cultural value and destruction in the text is that of the medieval cathedral. In her Introduction, Wharton describes the colourful stones of the cathedral of Chartres as the image of beauty and continuity that she identifies with a tranquillizing effect on the soul.

> As the shadows gradually thinned and gathered themselves into pier and vault and ribbing, there burst out of them great sheets and showers of colour. […] Some [windows] were cataracts of sapphires, others roses dropped from a saint's tunic, others great carven platter strewn with heavenly regalia. […] All that a great cathedral can be, all the meanings it can express, all the tranquillizing power it can breathe upon the soul, all the richness of detail it can fuse into a large utterance of strength and beauty, the cathedral of Chartres gave us in that perfect hour. (1915, pp. 4–5)

By way of contrast to Chartres as the image of perfection, later in the book Wharton is especially moved by the image of the cathedral of Rheims burning:

> The interweaving of colour over the whole blunted bruised surface recalls the metallic tints, the peacock-and-pigeon iridescences, the incredible mingling of red, blue, umber and yellow of the rocks along the Gulf of Aegina. And the wonder of the impression is increased by the sense of its evanescence; the knowledge that this is the beauty of disease and death, that every one of the transfigured statues must crumble under the autumn rains, that every one of the pink or golden stones is already eaten away to the core, that the Cathedral of Rheims is glowing and dying before us like a sunset. (1915, p. 186)

The cathedral built of stone had represented the heritage of past generations across centuries, thought to be reliably resistant to time. The burning cathedral represents not only the image of a burning monument but a passing of a trace of the past as well. The impression made on the observer contains both the feeling of beauty and sorrow for the passing of that beauty.[2]

In *Fighting France*, the images of ruined houses and churches are associated with death and the arrest of the normal flow of time. Life is suspended in Paris (Wharton, 1915, p. 24) at the beginning of the war already, and there is a general paralysis of activities at wartime (1915, p. 157). The bombarded towns recede into paralysis as well (p. 184). The descriptions imply a basic opposition between old ways, a secure way of life with knowable rules and continuities and images of present destruction, death, and the stopping of normal time.

Another example for the destruction of temporal continuity comes from her first trip to Argonne, where Wharton sees ruined and empty villages that for her indicate the uprooting of communities. In the village of Auve, instead of a promising autumn harvest,

[2] The general French reaction to the burning of the Notre Dame in Paris in April 2019 is best understood from the perspective Wharton identified here.

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rubble and cinders fill the yards (1915, pp. 57–58). They saw ruined houses with scattered bits of the past that indicated the loss of a meaningful link between the past and the present:

> The photographs on the walls, the twigs of withered box above the crucifixes, the old wedding-dresses in brass-clamped trunks, the bundles of letters laboriously written and as painfully deciphered, all the thousand and one bits of the past that give meaning and continuity to the present—of all that accumulated warmth nothing was left but a brick-heap and some twisted stove-pipes! (1915, p. 58).

The house as the locus of the family and its objects is ruined and the former meaningful organization of space and objects becomes a meaningless heap of useless fragments as the result of war destruction.

In addition to impressions of loss, *Fighting France* also chronicles stories of special moments when a clear sense of time divided into past and present planes becomes distorted. You can find accounts of impressions in which a *sense of unreality* is referred to. These are scenes where the sense of past security seems to return, only to disappear again. For instance, gardens continue to bloom against all odds (Wharton, 1915, p. 107). There is a misleading silence and peace in the Vosges despite the closeness of the enemy lines that seems to belong to the time before the war:

> As we sat there in the grass, swept by a great mountain breeze full of the scent of thyme and myrtle, while the flutter of birds, the hum of insects, the still and busy life of the hills went on all about us in the sunshine, the pressure of the encircling line of death grew more intolerably real. It is not in the mud and jokes and every-day activities of the trenches that one most feels the damnable insanity of war; it is where it lurks like a mythical monster in scenes to which the mind has always turned to rest. (1915, p. 200)

William Blazek called this the "ambiguity of a hidden reality and a more accessible unreality" characterizing Wharton's account of the Western front (Blazek, 2008, pp. 12–13).

Similarly, at Châlons, at a checkpoint when a young officer helps the travelers find lodgings, Wharton is suddenly experiencing the past:

> I stood there in the pitch-black night, suddenly unable to believe that I was I, or Châlons Châlons, or that a young man who in Paris drops in to dine with me and talk over new books and plays, had been whispering a password in my ear to carry me unchallenged to a house a few streets away! The *sense of unreality* produced by that one word was so overwhelming that for a blissful moment the whole fabric of what I had been experiencing, the whole huge and oppressive and unescapable fact of the war, slipped away

> like a torn cobweb, and I seemed to see behind it the reassuring face of things as they used to be. The next morning dispelled that vision (1915, 88–89, emphasis mine)

In this image, an ideal France of good conversation before the war[3] is set against the present of the war and its threats of death and lack of connection. The past reappears for a short time of reassurance only, to disappear soon. The sense of unreality is connected to the awareness of the impossibility of the experience of the past, yet at the same time the acknowledgement of the experience.

The fluctuation between the sense of the past and the present happens at deceitfully peaceful moments. These all prove to be illusion eventually, of the presence of the past in the present, and these *mistakes* of identifying a point in time create the "protean" sense of reality Julie Ammentorp referred to. Also, these moments are always highlighted as valuable and reflected upon with a sense of loss.[4]

The sense of unreality in *The Age of Innocence*

The Age of Innocence presents a powerful meditation on how one cultural elite is replaced by a new set from the perspective of the old elite reluctant to follow the change. The story of pretentious social mores and crushing personal effacements from the 1870s focuses on Newland Archer's thwarted romance with Ellen Olenska. In this analysis, the focus is on Archer's visions of the "reality" of his life as a young and as an older man. I would like to show that his understanding of what seems real and unreal for him as a young man shifts and so does his position on the question of how to act out his love for Ellen.

[3] The ideal France of the pre-war period also appears in Wharton's *French Ways and Their Meanings* (1918) as an entity that had lessons to teach about the past: "France has a lesson to teach and a warning to give. It was our English forbears who taught us to flout tradition and break away from their own great inheritance; France may teach us that, side by side with the qualities of enterprise and innovation that English blood has put in us, we should cultivate the sense of continuity, that "sense of the past" which enriches the present and binds us up with the world's great stabilising traditions of art and poetry and knowledge" (Wharton, 1918, p. 97). For further discussions of the French connection, see Virginia Ricard's articles, e.g. (2019, 2020).

[4] Wharton's *In Morocco* reconstructs the presence of a medieval sense of time in the French protectorate of Morocco during the Great War. *In Morocco* is the first tourist book about the country in English. In the introduction, Wharton specifies her aim to describe perceivable sense of the past before tourists flock in when the country is opened up for travel. Her account is interwoven with descriptions of Eastern scenes and dreamlike occurrences of a Medieval past in special scenes, the representations of which are remarkably similar to the occurrence of the pre-war past in *Fighting France*. (For details see Kovács, 2014.) Wharton and Walter Berry toured Morocco in the fall of 1917. They received a military motor and guidance, as they had been invited by the resident general of the country, General Hubert Lyautey. Wharton celebrates the achievements of French colonial administration in the country and opposes its actual modern presence to the simultaneous presence of a medieval Moroccan past in buildings, in art, and also in the life of the harems she peeps into and reports about. For limitations of size, a discussion of *In Morocco* cannot be included in the comparison in this paper, but it is important to indicate the relevance of the text to the subject.

At Newport in the 1870s, Ellen in the near past seems like an unattainable dream which then again appears attainable with a sudden turn of Archer’s mood. As an older man in Paris, his vision manifests a similar duality between the senses of the real and unreal, and Ellen in the past is again seen as a dream. However, when his mood changes, Archer eventually sees that it is the present with Ellen that is unreal.

In *The Age of Innocence*, Newland Archer sees himself as a person internally divided between public expectation and private imagination. His external public self marks him as a member of the old New York elite four hundred who can fit into Mrs. Astor’s ballroom. Archer presents the group as an ancient tribe performing prehistoric customs and rites (Wharton, 2003, pp. 109–110) whose lives move in prearranged ritual steps from christening through marriage to funeral that Archer accepts until he meets Ellen (Bentley, 2003, p. 453). The group has a commonly shared manner of behavior not to talk of anything unpleasant, to communicate in code (like flower language), consume the same objects and share interests. As opposed to his public self, Archer also professes to possess an internal deep self that is able to reflect on his communal side. He is reading Romantic poetry and romances in the safety of his library, he orders the latest books on scientific thought and also devours volumes about history. Thus he is aware of and sensitive to European cultural influences, and shows himself to be more open minded and cosmopolitan than the place in which his parochial NYC “tribal” community would put him.

An opposition between the senses of the real and the unreal is also implied in the contrast between Archer’s external public and internal private selves. As he presents his set, he thinks of them as not *real* people with real lives. His view of his own Grace church marriage is tinged by the comment that the ceremony of his marriage was a repetition of many others of the kind (Wharton, 2003, p. 110), with familiar faces, clothes, and countenances which seemed “like a nursery parody of life” (2003, p. 111), or even downright childish (p. 111). So whilst he performed the rite of getting married, he thought that “real people were living elsewhere and real things happening to them” (p. 111). His thoughts wander away twice, both times anticipating the appearance of the Countess Olenska.

In contrast, Archer’s real life is at the library (Wharton, 2003, p. 206; Orlando, 2008, p. 174). From this vantage point, he sees his wife as a traditional person, an innocent victim of tribal customs who can never fathom the existence of different customs and manners or of his inner self (2003, p. 6, p. 52, pp. 93–94). Also, he sees his love interest, Ellen, as a worldly sensuous Europeanized woman in line with his internal side (pp. 44–46, p. 126).

Archer’s idea to escape with Mme Olenska away from NYC society is based on this presupposition on Archer’s part of the opposition of unreal public life versus real internal life, as old Mrs Manson Mingott’s father Bob Spicer managed to disappear from society with the love of his life. Yet when he proposes the idea to get away with Ellen to a country where social relations do not matter, she asks him “Where is that country?” (p. 174) of escape, and he is baffled to realize that Ellen does not share his idea of *real* life beyond the world of unreal normal life and neither does she share his presupposition about the possibility to secure an inner self isolated from external social circumstances.

Archer’s oppositional thinking about his own life leads him to basic misrepresentations about the two women of his life as well. Ellen is not so much the voluptuous Parisienne he sees in her but rather a socially experienced woman who is better used to social formalities and is even more reflective than Archer himself. For instance, she knows there is no country without social relations for divorcees in the 1870s to escape to and is unhappy about NYC focus on proper things and feelings, about not being allowed to complain. Similarly, Archer’s simple virginal wife May has a scheming and manipulative side that remains invisible to Archer. May agrees to the early announcement of her engagement with Newland to line up for Ellen’s social status first. When she senses the dangerous influence on her fiancée from Ellen, she agrees to hasten the marriage, too. Eventually, she announces her pregnancy just a bit too early but in time to prevent Ellen from consummating her affair with Archer.

Throughout the story, Archer’s special individualism is crumbling down to the point where he acts out nothing else than what is expected of him socially. With this, his idea of his deep self is being questioned as an illusion. Yet at the end of the story, after 26 years, he still behaves as if the idea of the internal life, which he knows was an illusion, was still intact.

Visions of the past and the present in Newport and Paris

Echoing the passage about Grace Church, many scenes of the novel employ the language of in/outside and maintain an ambivalence about what seems real or unreal for Archer in them. In particular, Archer’s near-meetings of Ellen at Newport and Paris appear as lengthy descriptions of Archer’s lack of action and self-assertion. There is an *unreal* (Wharton, 2003, p. 133) visionary quality described in these two passages that need to be considered: eventually, the question is how the vocabulary and rhetoric of these scenes about the *unreal* in the novel can be related to the *sense of unreality* and the past that was specified in *Fighting France*.

In the Newport scene, Archer’s impression about which part of his life is unreal/real shifts. Visiting old Mrs. Mingott Archer learns that Ellen Olenska is in the house and is sent to fetch her. The mention of Ellen’s name induces a dreamlike stance in Archer like seeing ancient cave “images” fresh with color (Wharton, 2003, p. 131) as he goes in search of the woman in the garden to find her in the pagoda at the end of the pier overlooking the bay. He is to speak to Ellen after a one and a half year gap, and their whole relationship feels like history. When he actually glimpses Ellen who stands facing the sea, he is unwilling to go to her, because he feels “he had waked from sleep,” from the dream-like state he felt hearing the name (2003, p. 132). Suddenly, he seems to realize that: “[t]hat vision of the past was a *dream*, and the *reality* was what awaited him in the house on the bank overhead” (p. 132, emphases mine). He waits for Ellen to turn and come to him, whilst he supposes she is not aware of his presence, so without really expecting her to act. In this passage the summer-house and Ellen are associated with the past and dreams and the unreal, whilst the Welland house is associated with “reality” (p. 132).

However, the passage continues and takes a surprising turn. As Archer and May arrive at the actual Welland house right after the scene on the shore, Archer’s mood changes. The usual effect of the Welland house on him is mesmerizing because of the well-oiled regularity and propriety of the household arrangements and habits in it. The spaces and the expensive furniture exhale this spirit of prestige and immediate presence for Archer as well. Yet now he feels it is the house that is unreal:

> The whole chain of tyrannical trifles binding one hour to the next, and each member of the household to all the others, made any less systematized and affluent existence seem *unreal* and precarious. But now it was the Welland house, and the life he was expected to lead in it, that had become *unreal* and irrelevant, and the brief scene on the shore, when he had stood irresolute, halfway down the bank, was as close to him as the blood in his veins. (Wharton, 2003, p. 133, emphases mine)

Archer’s mood turns as he is back in the safety of the house, and he spends the night pining for Ellen Olenska on the shore from the unreality of his own bedroom (p. 133). It would seem that when Archer is somewhere he wants to be somewhere else or what he actually is not: when he is outside he wants the inside, when he is inside he wants the outside, when he is hesitant he wants secure routine, when he is safe he wants the alluring challenge. The unreal usually is close at hand, whilst the real is far away. His lack of action and resolution is related to his *mood changes* about what is real and unreal for him.

Archer's mood about what he feels to be "real" and "unreal" turns in a similar manner in Paris. This happens twenty-six years after Newport, when May is already dead. As a prelude to the actual scene, the widowed Archer has just reconsidered his life as a married man from his old vantage point in the library. His thoughts have been prompted by a visit to the new galleries of the Metropolitan Museum: what used to be the old Cesnola rooms (Wharton, 2003, p. 206), where he had met Ellen. From this vantage point, Archer's whole relation to Ellen seems like an analogy to the story of the Cesnola collection. The Cesnola Collection of classical antiquities from Cyprus was acquired by the Met in 1872 (The Cesnola, 2021), and as Lee remarks "its collection of tomb objects from Cyprus, in what is now the medieval sculpture hall of the Met, was in fact a great draw when the museum opened" (Lee, 2008, p. 578). As Macaulay-Lewis explains further, "within decades of the Met's purchase of the Cesnola Collection, subsequent curators, trustees, and directors saw it as a disappointment" (2021, p. 322; Roffmann, 2010, p. 27) because it was not comprised of classical Greek objects and the collection was "relegated to the second floor where they remain today, far from the Greek and Roman galleries, which occupy prime real estate on the ground floor" (2021, p. 322).

In *The Age*, the Cesnola rooms have been repurposed, as have Archer's life and library (Wharton, 2003, p. 208) but he still seems complacent. His library used to be the space of his books and imaginative life, but now he thinks of it as a space where the most "real" things of his life happened (2003, p. 206) in relation to his family: May told him of her pregnancy here, this was the place for the first steps of his son, subsequent major family discussions took place in it. Although he feels he had missed "the flower of life" (p. 208), he seems not to mind this fact any more: "but he thought of it [the flower of life] now as a thing so unattainable and improbable that to have repined would have been like despairing because one had not drawn the first prize in a lottery" (p. 208). The stakes were against him having the flower of life, and Ellen "had become the composite vision of what he had missed." (p. 208). The image of Ellen in the Met in the Cesnola rooms together with his attachment to her have all become part of a vision, a vision of the happier past he had missed and the memory of which had been relegated to some rarely visited recess of his mind.

When Archer attempts to visit Ellen with his son, the debilitating vacillation between what is real or unreal returns one last time. He spends his two days in Paris thinking about Ellen and processing "the packed regrets and stifled memories of an inarticulate lifetime" (Wharton, 2003, p. 214). A visit to the Louvre makes him think of his old passion for Ellen and he fears its toned down version he would experience decades later (2003, p. 215).

Also, the contrast between his lack of life and Ellen's social life in the rich Parisian atmosphere strikes him. The golden light of the afternoon symbolizes to him a life of conversation and "immemorial manners" (p. 215) Ellen had and he missed. It is after all these associations that he declines to climb the steps to Ellen's apartment and meet her. Instead, he watches her balcony (like Strether watched Chad's balcony in *The Ambassadors*) while the sun sets because it is more real to him to stay: "'It is more *real* to me here than if I went up' he suddenly heard himself say; and the fear lest that last shadow of *reality* should lose its edge kept him rooted to his seat as the minutes succeeded each other" (p. 217, emphases mine). The real now is associated with the past image of Ellen he secures in his memory, and reality refers to his sense of that memory rather than his immediate situation in the present. It is the vision of the past with Ellen the sense of the real is assigned to.

The last two scenes employ references to Archer's sense of the real and the unreal in a similar way. At Newport, Ellen is seen as a dream from the past, then as an illusion, then again as more real than everyday life. The oscillation between these positions allows for these positions almost simultaneously. In Paris twenty-six years later, a dream vision of Ellen that had been evoked in the Met and was balanced by Archer's new sense of the real in his library reappears and stands in the way of the actual Ellen and her life in the present. Preventing any more oscillation about the sense of the unreal, Archer accepts his sense of the past as more real than the actual flow of life around him. He has eventually chosen the past in the face of the actual, knowing it is an illusion.

Conclusion

Both *Fighting France* and *The Age of Innocence* contain spatial descriptions that employ Wharton's rhetoric of what I would like to call the presence of the past. These scenes take place at the golden hour of the afternoon or at twilight and the experience described in them passes as the light passes. The descriptive strategy makes use of basic oppositions like the "real" and the "unreal," the "past" and the "present," sometimes even "dream" and "awake." Once the opposition is set up, one part of it is highlighted and described as the actual one being experienced in the present. Then there is a reversal of the terms and the other part of the opposition is highlighted as being present. This technique was used in *Fighting France* to refer to a sense of the past in the present as the "sense of unreality" that visited Wharton for short lapses whilst she travelled behind the front lines in 1915. In *The Age*, there is constant reference to what feels "real" or "unreal" for Archer as he tries to come to terms with his feelings and obligations in the 1870s: Ellen Olenska seems both real and unreal for him in quick succession as his mood oscillates between identifications.

Twenty-six years later he re-experiences the real–unreal opposition when he is to choose between Ellen Olenska in the present and his vision of Ellen in the past. In the final scene, Arches chooses the vision of Ellen in the past instead the one in the present, putting an end to his turning of moods.

As far as the actual rhetorical patterns of the presence of the past are concerned, *The Age of Innocence* can indeed be compared to the representation of the reappearing sense of the past in *Fighting France*. In the war articles the pre-war past seems present for sweet if dazzled moments that pass quickly and one cannot choose to stick to the past. In the novel, the first contrast between May as old New York life and Ellen as Europeanized life is replaced by the second contrast between Ellen in the past as Europeanized and Ellen in the present as also Europeanized and self-sufficient. For sweet if dazzled moments the past seems more real than the present for Archer, so he chooses to accept the past as real. The elderly Archer finds himself in a situation similar to that of Wharton watching the war from behind the front lines. They both know that it is illusory to stick to the past as real, but are also both unwilling to accept the present as real, and feel stuck in between.

The rhetoric of the presence of the past appears in other nonfiction pieces Wharton wrote during and after the Great War and it would be challenging to integrate them into a broader discussion. *In Morocco* relies on the interplay of the reality or unreality of the presence of a Medieval past in the country, while *French Ways* presents an ideal view of France before the war in which the past prevails through continuity present in material tradition and manners. The main concern in these four texts is the interplay of cultural and historical continuity and change. The manners of old New York were replaced, so are the ways of France before the war, and so will be the medieval features of Morocco. The big challenge in every case is transmission, the practices of continuity. And as the fate of the Cesnola Collection in the Met indicates, the process of ensuring continuity lies not only in collecting objects from different cultural eras (of Cyprus or of New York or even of Paris)—as the status and the value of the objects will be determined by the culture that chooses to purchase and display them.

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Time for Grief and Remembrance after 9/11 in David Foster Wallace's "The View from Mrs. Thompson's"

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Abstract

When discussing the events of 9/11, time is a key factor. How much time passed between the two hits? How long did it take for the towers to fall? How long should we wait to share criticism about America when talking about 9/11? The phrase *too soon* is used often to shut down any negative opinions or controversial jokes about the terror attack, which also stifles discussion about the topic. While 9/11 is the most photographed terror attack yet, it is also surprisingly censored. As Joan Didion puts it, "the entire event has been seized," and critical voices were silenced or ostracized. The earliest works of literature about the terrorist attacks were essays. In these works of nonfiction, the authors question the official narrative set by the government, and focus on the experiences and attitudes of the people who witnessed the tragedy in some capacity. In my paper, I aim to investigate the way American writers process the events of September 11 in these essays, with a focus on the motifs of time and memory. While official reporting allowed no time to think about the events and incentivized people to retaliate, these texts question the way the United States grieved, provided space to mourn, and blamed strictly outside sources for the attacks. The goal of this paper is to analyze the ways in which David Foster Wallace explores time and memory on the day of and after 9/11, when the world stopped in its tracks for a day.

Keywords: American essay, 9/11 terror attacks, David Foster Wallace, trauma, memory

Introduction

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a massive event shook the United States and the world. As two planes hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the whole world watched live on television, suspended in disbelief. Part of it felt similar, not unlike the disaster movies of the time, such as *Independence Day* (1996)

or *Armageddon* (1998), seen on big and small screens before. However, this was real, as evidenced by the confusion followed by the horror of realization: this was no mere accident, it was a deliberate attack, purposeful and planned. As the attacks unfolded, one of the most common topics of discussion became time: how much time would it take to evacuate the buildings? How long would it take for the towers to fall? What will happen next? The other question—"Why?"—was even more difficult to answer.

While 9/11 and its follow-up memorials, policy changes, and even wars are politically charged and largely defined by the US government, the literature, media, and art that followed these events showcase different ways for the country (and the world) to grieve, to cope, and to possibly move on from what happened on that day. Richard Gray claims that directly after the events, "[n]othing to say became a refrain" (2011, p. 15) because there were no words to capture the magnitude and sheer shock of what was unfolding around them. The words *nothing to say* are a nod to Toni Morrison's poem, *The Dead of September 11*, in which she claims that there are no words she could share with the people who lost their lives in this attack.

> To speak to you, the dead of September 11, I must not claim
> false intimacy or summon an overheated heart glazed
> just in time for a camera. I must be steady and I must be clear,
> knowing all the time that I have nothing to say—no words
> stronger than the steel that pressed you into itself; no scripture
> older or more elegant than the ancient atoms you
> have become. (Morrison, 2001, pp. 48–49)

Morrison's poem was one of the first pieces of literature which followed the 9/11 terror attacks, encapsulating the shock and horror of the situation. It was written a couple of days after the tragedy and published in a special November issue of *Vanity Fair*, which stood to commemorate the dead and the efforts of the people who were still working at Ground Zero, trying to clean up the remains, identify bodies, or search for possible miracle survivors. The special issue has a photo of firefighters on the cover, articles and photos about the tragedy, and Morrison's poem which is referenced as a eulogy on the cover of the magazine.

The earliest works of literature about 9/11 were short-form texts: many authors shared their thoughts in magazines, special commemorative issues, or in interviews; the longer novels came a few years later. Noteworthy are *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) by Jonathan Safran Foer, *Falling Man* (2007) by Don DeLillo, *The Emperor's Children*

by Claire Messud, etc. However, there is considerable criticism levied against these works because they keep 9/11 itself in the background of their respective narratives and rely on populist ideals and platitudes. For example, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* follows Oskar, a 9-year-old boy who lost his father in the terror attacks. Much of the story is about him coming to terms with the loss of his father, which leads him to reinterpret regular, everyday objects to find meaning and understanding in a place that is surreal and seemingly meaningless. The absurdity of his father's passing is showcased during his funeral where Oskar is keenly aware of the fact that the coffin is empty and the grave will be as well. The reader follows Oskar through his journey of mourning, sees his thoughts about "the worst day" (Foer, 2012, p. 68), which is his euphemism for 9/11. He draws a parallel between his father's passing and the fall of the Twin Towers, wondering whether skyscrapers were built down, "[t]hey could be underneath the skyscrapers for living people that are built up" (2012, p. 3). Oskar creates a mirror image between the living and the dead, the surface, the mass grave at Ground Zero signals that there is a shift, a difference in the mirrored images. As Alexandru Oravițan observes, "[l]ife in the aftermath of 9/11 is permanently relatable to those who have been lost" (2019, p. 166).

In the simplest terms, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is a bildungsroman, a coming-of-age story that features an overly mature and anxious boy who went through a terribly traumatic event and lost a parent, and who is trying to find meaning in the madness of such tragedy. But it is also a rather simple and well-known literary genre. As Gray points out, "[t]he 'worst day' becomes […] the occasion for rehearsing and replaying a deeply traditional narrative, in this case a sly but slight variation on the classic form of the initiation novel" (2011, p. 53).

9/11 is only represented as individual trauma for a child narrator who does not truly understand the complicated geopolitical environment, so the author reduces the main character's perceivable environment to that of the domestic and the personal. Furthermore, the only direct representation of the suffering during September 11 are the fifteen photos of a falling body placed at the end of the novel. These photos show the same person falling but the image is edited so with every turn of the page, the person is placed higher up on the same background. This way, as the reader flips through the pages, it appears as though the person is not falling, but ascending towards the sky in what Richard Gray calls a "redemptive gesture" (2011, p. 52). This ending not only further mystifies the tragedy but also offers a solution to Oskar's problem.

The boy is transfixed on the falling people's images, he is set on finding his father among these photos to finally be able to have closure after burying an empty casket, so he invents a solution. As Laura Frost explains,

> Oskar's flip-book substitutes a photograph for narrative explanation, a fantasy of wish fulfillment for coming to terms with the falling people. This act of 'invention' is a fiction-making that not only ultimately steers around the trauma at its center but also reinstates the trauma in the novel's conclusion. (2008, p. 194)

The idea of collective trauma is wholly ignored by Foer even though he creates parallels between other traumatic events in history as well, such as Oskar's grandparents' trauma during World War II, and an excerpt from a Hiroshima survivor's interview. While there seem to be textual references to such topics, Foer's protagonist only focuses on his own individual, personal account and the images of the falling people are merely illustrative, and "what they illustrate is a deeply conventional if occasionally touching account of a young man growing up, coming to terms with and perhaps even transcending, ascending above loss" (Gray, 2011, pp. 52–53).

A similar tendency can be observed in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* as well. The story begins moments after the terror attack when Keith Neudecker, who works in the World Trade Center, is aimlessly walking down the destroyed and dusty road after narrowly making it out of the tower. He is barely responsive to his environment, "[t]hings inside him were distant and still, where he was supposed to be" (DeLillo, 2011, p. 4). Without really considering his decisions, Keith ends up going to his estranged wife's home instead of a hospital. After the first chapter, the reader gains insight into the lives of Keith's family members: Lianne, his estranged wife, their son, Justin, Lianne's mother and her German art dealer boyfriend. The basic premise of *Falling Man* is similar to *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the reader watches a family deal with the aftermath of 9/11 and the way it disrupted their lives.

While Jonathan Safran Foer utilizes an image of a falling person to create the conclusion to his novel, DeLillo's inspiration for his novel's title is a photo taken by Richard Drew, titled *The Falling Man*. This image is part of a sequence in which Drew's camera follows a falling male figure, showing him helplessly flailing, rolling, and tumbling through the air, but *The Falling Man* freezes him in a moment where his body is perfectly parallel with the tower in the background, he is facing down towards the ground, his arms are pressed to his sides and one of his legs is bent. Without the context of the other images in this sequence, the falling man's pose seems deliberate

and purposeful, as though he is in control of the way he will undoubtedly die once the camera is unable to follow him further. Drew's photo inspired many people, even though the photos of those who fell or jumped out of the towers on 9/11 were at first hidden from the public as they were considered too graphic (cf. Junod, 2003).

The cultural output in the years after the attacks (e.g. Eric Fischl's *Tumbling Woman* statues, similar imagery of people falling from skyscrapers in TV shows such as *Mad Men*, etc.) proves that for most onlookers these images are representative of the tragedy. DeLillo does not use a visual representation in *Falling Man*, he creates a character, a performance artist called David Janiak, who is known as the Falling Man in New York City. The artist jumps from various places around the city, recreating the pose captured by Richard Drew, "one leg bent up, arms at his sides" (DeLillo, 2011, p. 33) and hangs in this position for a while, which elicits a reaction from those who watch him. Lianne meets Janiak on multiple occasions and her reactions vary from shock and surprise to panic, which chases her out of the area where the artist is suspended. Lianne has her own trauma about suicide, separate from the trauma caused by 9/11. Her father took his life not long after finding out that he had Alzheimer's disease. Seeing Janiak's performance helps Lianne come to terms with her father's decision.

DeLillo's artist and the reactions to his performance showcase "the gap between the artistically mediated response to trauma and the individual reception of such a work of art" (Duvall, 2012, p. 186). Lianne's reaction underlines that the collective trauma cannot be discussed because there is a temporal shift between what happened that caused the trauma and what one might take in from viewing a piece of art or media relevant to their trauma. While Foer uses photos and artwork to illustrate Oskar's trauma, DeLillo's focus moves to the role of the artist and the viewer or reader who experiences the art not only as something they can behold, but as a witness too. For Lianne, "Falling Man's performance is not a representation of the horror of 9/11, it is the horror of 9/11 itself" (Duvall, 2012, p. 186).

Richard Gray claims that while the text is structured well, it is also "too clearly foregrounded, the style excessively mannered; and the characters fall into postures of survival after 9/11 that are too familiar to invite much more than a gesture of recognition from the reader" (2011, p. 27). The polish the writer inadvertently applies over his work turns Keith and Lianne's trauma and coping into familiar and cliché moments, which in turn "adds next to nothing to our understanding of the trauma at the heart of the action. In fact, it evades that trauma, it suppresses its urgency and disguises its difference by inserting it in a series of familiar tropes" (Gray, 2011, p. 28).

Post-9/11 novels are often critiqued this way. Gray claims that instead of more imaginative ways of confronting such tragedy, a large portion of 9/11 fiction "betrays a response to crisis that is eerily analogous to the reaction of many politicians and the mainstream American media after 9/11: a desperate retreat into the old sureties" (2011, p. 16). Pankaj Mishra views post-9/11 novels this way as well, criticizing the writers for using imagery such as domestic discord "as a metaphor for post-9/11 America" (2007). He notes that there are plenty of more successful genres and forms of writing that discuss the terror attack in a way that offers more insight and reflection if the reader chooses to seek that out. One of his examples is nonfiction: "Writers of narrative nonfiction continue to illuminate how the country's ruling class took the country into a suicidal war in Iraq" (Mishra, 2007).

Nonfiction, namely essays about 9/11 appeared closer to the attacks than long-form fiction, and, by the genre's definition, they usually offer a more introspective, analytical approach, discussing the terror attack for what it is. By its nature, nonfiction is supposed to be embedded into reality, therefore more realistic and less fictionalized accounts can be found in an essay than in a novel. However, one must tread carefully when reading these texts because while they are considered nonfiction, they are works of literature, not barebones reports. So, the reader interacts with a stylized, polished, and edited text whose aim is not necessarily to offer correct details, but to analyze, discuss, and offer a more introspective account about what the author witnessed. More truthfulness is expected from a work of nonfiction than a fictitious text, as Lee Gutkind defines such texts as *true stories, told well*. However, 9/11 is rooted in our experienced reality, so even fiction about the topic stems from the real.

> It raises the question of whether this transposition of the author of fiction into the realm of non-fiction is an attempt to bring fiction closer to reality, or whether it hints at the reversal of their roles through fiction's coming into the domain of the real. (Gheorghiu, 2018, p. 12)

This is not to say that fiction about 9/11 is not good literature, but the difference between the above-mentioned novels and the essays discussed in this paper is in their approach to the topic. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn note that

> literary works reframe and focus the meaning of 9/11 by employing representational strategies that emphasize the desire for (and construction of) meaning, and that dramatize the continuing resonance of 9/11 in the collective life of the United States and beyond. (2008, p. 2)

In the book edited by Keniston and Quinn, *Literature after 9/11*, the various writers mostly focus on fiction, poetry, and theater, and some articles discuss visual media, comics, and graphic novels. Nonfiction is only mentioned, even though there is an abundance of essays, opinion pieces, and what are called *responses* as early as the first few weeks after September 11. This paper aims to examine one of the neglected essays about 9/11, focusing on the author's descriptions of time and memory. Nonfiction about 9/11 is incredibly extensive, but under-researched. Authors known mostly for their fiction such as Don DeLillo and David Foster Wallace, writers of creative nonfiction like Joan Didion, and journalists, namely Tom Junod, contributed essays, but they are not canonized or even discussed in books about post-9/11 literature. This paper will focus only on one representative text, "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" by David Foster Wallace.

Wallace's essay was first published in the press: the piece appeared in the October 24, 2001 issue of *Rolling Stone*, then he added it to *Consider the Lobster*, a volume of essays published in 2005. "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" is a hasty report about 11–13 September, 2001, in which Wallace seems to jut down his feelings and the events around him as a way to preserve his own memories about 9/11. The text will be analyzed with the tools of trauma theory and memory studies, particularly with reference to Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* and Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma as a double wound.

Trauma, Memory, and Grief

When discussing the events of 9/11, it is impossible to avoid the concept of trauma, be it personal, collective, national, or even international. The concept of trauma stems from medicine, as it used to refer to physical injury, but today the more widespread and colloquial use of the word is in reference to a psychological hurt.

> Rather than simply referring to a specific event, trauma cuts across two scenes, consisting of an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, followed by the delayed onslaught of repetitive symptoms that return the survivor to the initial traumatic event. (Pedersen, 2019, p. 26)

In the briefest terms, trauma can be defined as belated temporality and repetition, which were first introduced by Sigmund Freud whilst he was discussing the concept of hysteria (cf. Freud, 1991, p. 278). He coined the term *Nachträglichkeit* to explain this temporal shift. The word does not have an adequate English translation, but it has been translated as *afterwardsness*, *latency*, *retroactive temporality*, etc. It was also further developed by French psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan and Jean Laplanche.

Cathy Caruth uses a variation of *Nachträglichkeit* within her trauma theory to explain that a traumatic event "occurs too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth, 2016, p. 4). She calls this the double wound, as

> trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on. (2016, p. 4)

Trauma and memory are closely intertwined since a traumatic event is remembered, relived, and, in the case of 9/11 specifically, it becomes a monument and a defining moment within a nation's history. The September 11 terror attacks established a *lieu de mémoire* or a site of memory surprisingly fast, even though the attacks took place in multiple locations. Four planes were hijacked that day, two hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center, one hit the Pentagon, and one was deterred by the passengers and crashed into a field, instead of its intended target. The site of memory became New York City's missing skyscrapers, which crumbled in front of our eyes live on television.

Before I further reflect on this *lieu de mémoire*, I will briefly discuss Pierre Nora's concepts of memory. He defines *lieu de mémoire* as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora, 1996, p. xvii). It is important to note that a site of memory may be tangible or intangible, it does not have to be a physical space, and the only requirement is that it holds some symbolic meaning for a community. These *lieux de mémoire* act as placeholders in contemporary society because, in Nora's view, there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, "settings in which memory is a real part of everyday history" (1996, p. 1). He believes that the acceleration of life, globalization, and mass culture are behind this loss, so there is a need for *lieu de mémoire*. "[M]oments of history are plucked out of the flow of history, then returned to it—no longer quite alive but not yet entirely dead, like shells left on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (Nora, 1996, p. 7). Richard Stamelman points out that

> [u]sually it takes time for a milieu de mémoire (the very moment of the event itself in the historical here and now) to undergo the sea of change that makes it into a lieu de mémoire. Battlefields like Gettysburg, or Verdun, for example, became memory sites once the actual even had been 'replaced' and rearticulated through commemorative monuments that had literally occupied—if not symbolically taken over—the site.

> Statues, obelisks, cenotaphs, *arc de triomphes*, and memorial events add to the historical site their own history (of design, construction, political debate, public reaction, controversy) as motivated and shaped by the ideologies and symbols inherent to the act of commemoration itself. (Stamelman, 2003, p. 14)

But the World Trade Center’s ruin, called Ground Zero, became a site of memory very quickly because, in Stamelman’s opinion, there was a push from the very beginning to make something out of the nothing that was left in the place of the Twin Towers (2003, p. 15). And, while authors struggle to find words to grasp what happened, politicians, mass media, the 24-hour news cycle, and even advertising is hard at work to make a statement. People’s collective trauma is weaponized by the government to justify waging wars, notions of patriotism fill the television screens quickly. As Alan Gibbs observes, “trauma theory sets an ideal foundation for tendencies which, in these circumstances, enabled a sense of victimhood and false innocence to take root and deflect attention from America’s complicity in actions both before and after 9/11” (2014, p. 121). The visual grandness of the event also serves to mystify Ground Zero, while the constant replays of the events on news stations help crystallize the image as an icon, the billowing smoke, the fire, the rubble turns into the symbol of a nation wounded, the Western way of living attacked, the emblems of American capitalism shattered, etc. The constant, involuntary reliving of this traumatic event via news, the increasingly present internet, and the genuinely shocking nature of September 11 helped solidify Ground Zero as the *lieu de mémoire* it is even today, when the Pile is cleaned up, a new tower is built, there is a memorial monument in its place, and the disaster is no longer viewable in real time.

In the following section, I will analyze “The View from Mrs. Thompson’s” by David Foster Wallace with the theoretical concepts of trauma studies and memory studies.

“The View from Mrs. Thompson’s”—Tragedy through TV Screens

David Foster Wallace’s “The View from Mrs. Thompson’s” is featured in *Consider the Lobster*, a volume of essays which came out in 2005. The text was written much closer to the events, it first appeared in *Rolling Stone* over a month after September 11, 2001, and it captures Wallace’s accounts of 11–13 September, from Bloomington, Illinois. Its close proximity to the events of 9/11 places the essay in an interesting time period, in which Americans are uncertain about what just happened, the situation is ongoing, reports are constant, but sometimes wrong, sometimes simply uncertain, and people are seeing the second plane hit the South Tower, the towers fall after one another, rescue efforts, and the general mayhem on television.

The essay is sectioned into four different sections: “Synecdoche”, “Wednesday”, “Aerial & Ground Views”, and “Tuesday”, in a non-chronological order. Even though Wallace recounts events from Tuesday, September 11, and the following two days, he opts not to follow the order of events, instead he starts out with an interaction he overheard at a convenience store, after 9/11. Wallace gives some insight about Midwesterners and their resentment of chitchat, claiming that while they can offer a friendly smile, they are not looking for conversation in such a setting. He notes that this distant behavior changed since the “Horror” (Wallace, 2006, p. 128), as he overhears shoppers discussing the tragedy, a mother claiming that “[w]ith my boys they thought it was all some movie like that *Independence Day*, till they then started to notice how it was the same movie on all channels” (Wallace, 2006, pp. 128–29).

Wallace calls the events of 9/11 the Horror, while in the overheard conversation the woman just references it as “it,” but it is clear to the writer what the two people are talking about. The event is so grand and shocking that it is on everyone’s mind and impossible to avoid. Even though idioms and names such as Ground Zero and 9/11 did not become crystallized yet, Wallace offers a name to use for the situation, for the time being it is just called the Horror. He introduces the text by naming the time, location, and subject, and simply calls the subject obvious as the magnitude of such an attack does not necessitate further explanation, everyone is thinking about it, which is confirmed in the overheard conversation.

LOCATION: BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS
DATES: 11–13 SEPTEMBER 2001
SUBJECT: OBVIOUS (Wallace, 2006, p. 128)

He titles this short first part of the essay synecdoche, which is defined by the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* as “a figure of speech by which a more comprehensive term is used for a less comprehensive or vice versa, as whole for part or part for whole” (2006, p. 990). An example of synecdoche would be to say “England won the cup” but it is clear from context that we are talking about the English football team. In Wallace’s case the word *horror* is a placeholder for everything that happened on September 11, it is a simplified one-word reference to the trauma, shock, and utter chaos experienced by him and the people around him.

9/11, Ground Zero, and even September 11 act similarly today. Marc Redfield points out that these idioms started getting used mostly in the media and they stuck because they were repeated constantly; however, these names also put distance between

what happened and what is remembered. The name date especially is not descriptive at all,

> for on the one hand the formal emptiness of the phrase 'September 11' imposes knowledge and amnesia, knowledge as amnesia—a memory projected against the ground zero of hyperbolic forgetting—on the other hand this same formal emptiness registers and even loudly proclaims a trauma, a wound beyond words: an inability to say what this violence, this spectacle, this 'everything changing' means. (Redfield, 2007, p. 59)

Compared to this, Wallace's "Horror" expresses more emotion, it focuses not on just the date or place, it expresses a specific feeling that defined those few days he discusses in "The View from Mrs. Thompson's." There is a need to name such an event, to find a synecdoche or a placeholder that expresses the traumatic nature of the event.

The second part of the essay focuses on September 12, the day after 9/11, and Wallace notes that every single house in his area has displayed one or more American flags, seemingly overnight.

> Everyone has flags out. Homes, businesses. It's odd: you never see anybody putting out a flag, but by Wednesday morning there they all are. Big flags, small, regular flag-sized flags. A lot of homeowners here have those special angled flag-holders by their front door, the kind whose brace takes four Phillips screws. Plus thousands of the little hand-held flags-on-a-stick you normally see at parades—some yards have dozens of these stuck in the ground all over, as if they'd somehow all just sprouted overnight. Rural-road people attach the little flags to their mailboxes out by the street. A good number of vehicles have them wedged in their grille or attached to the antenna. Some upscale people have actual poles; their flags are at half-mast. More than a few large homes around Franklin Park or out on the east side even have enormous multistory flags hanging gonfalon-style down over their facades. It's a total mystery where people can buy flags this big or how they got them up there, or when. (Wallace, 2006, p. 129)

The flags represent a first response to the trauma of the day before, the Midwesterners—removed from New York City, but part of the same country which is under attack—react by finding reassuring gestures, common positive symbols, and sureties such as national pride, unity in the fact that everyone has these flags out, and reassurance that the United States has not crumbled. Wallace observes that

> on Wednesday here there's a weird accretive pressure to have a flag out. If the purpose of displaying a flag is to make a statement, it seems like at a certain point of density of flags you're making more of a statement if you *don't* have a flag out. (2006, p. 130)

Catharina Donn explains that collective trauma

> is not the permeation of the collective with elements of shared displacement that Freud envisaged, but a discursive phenomenon in which key features of trauma—premediated authenticity, its incommensurate impact, the impossibility of adequate response—transform from symptoms into discursive concepts (2017, p. 43)

thus symbols and placeholders appear immediately, "the cultural dimension of trauma is inherently mediated and dependent on symbolization" (p. 43). In the case of the citizens of Bloomington, the flags become a symbol, a placeholder for the already emerging *lieu de mémoire* they only see on television. Wallace asks his neighbor, "Say, Mr. N–––, suppose somebody like a foreign person or a TV reporter or something were to come by and ask you what the purpose of all these flags after what happened yesterday was, exactly—what do you think you'd say?" (2006, p, 130). Even the question is formulated carefully, to show that the asker is in agreement with his peers. Mr. N––– simply says "to show support towards what's going on, as Americans" (p. 130). The need to get a flag and show this supposed support transfers to Wallace as well, so he tries to find one in the small town, without much luck, but on his quest, he asks a few more people to explain why they think the flags are necessary, and they mostly express the same opinion:

> Plus: Selected other responses from various times during the day's flag-hunt whencir-cumstances permitted the question to be asked without one seeming like a smartass or loon:
>
> 'To show we're Americans and we're not going to bow down to nobody';
>
> 'It's a classic pseudo-archetype, a reflexive semion designed to preempt and negate the critical function' (grad student);
>
> 'For pride.'
>
> 'What they do is symbolize unity and that we're all together behind the victims in this war and they've fucked with the wrong people this time, amigo.' (Wallace, 2006, p. 130)

The answers range from simple to the almost incomprehensible, but they express similar feelings: it is a symbol, but it is not yet crystallized, it is a panicked response to something too large, too heavy, and too complicated to understand, but it is an eminent symbol, one known and easily recognized by everyone. Slavoj Žižek notes that the first few days to months between a traumatic event and its symbolic impact is an interesting time

because it is not clear yet "what would be symbolized, what their symbolic efficiency will be, what acts will be evoked to justify" (2002, p. 44). He remarks that many Americans rediscovered their national pride in the following days after the attacks, resorting to the simplest common denominator, "taking refuge in the innocence of firm ideological identification" (2002, p. 45). Žižek also recognizes that these first innocent steps do not remain so, "there is nothing 'innocent about this rediscovery of American innocence, about getting rid of historical guilt or irony which prevented many Americans from fully assuming their national identity" (p. 45).

When Wallace asks these questions, he is still looking at the more innocent, unifying gestures of Americans in distress, reaching towards each other. The official narrative and the us vs. them mentality has not set in yet, especially on Tuesday, when the events are still unfolding. In the third part, "Aerial & Ground Views," he characterizes the town, with not much community organization other than the many churches, a low-quality local newspaper, and the TV, which is omnipresent in the lives of the townsfolk, and which is their number one connection to the events of 9/11. In the last part of the essay, titled "Tuesday," Wallace finally recounts what he did on September 11: he watched the news live with people from his congregation, gathered in front of the TV at Mrs. Thompson's house. Mrs. Thompson is an elderly woman who is considered a community leader in Wallace's church, and the writer recalls that people just kept coming to her house to watch the TV there, seemingly seeking out community.

Bloomington is far from New York City, so there is some time difference:

> Time-wise, we're an hour behind the East Coast. By 8:00, everybody with a job is at it, and just about everybody else is home drinking coffee and blowing their nose and watching Today or one of the other network AM shows that all broadcast (it goes without saying) from New York. At 8:00 on Tuesday I personally was in the shower, trying to listen to a Bears post-mortem on WSCR Sports Radio in Chicago. (Wallace, 2006, p. 134)

He watches the events unfold with shampoo in his hair, in Mrs. Thompson's house, and absorbs what is happening in New York as a person who is familiar with the city and knows its layout. Shock envelops the entire community gathered in the house, which he recognizes by the fact that he entered Mrs. Thompson's house without knocking, the old lady did not offer to serve coffee to her guests but told them to just take some, and she did not rock in her chair as she normally would. He recounts that he came in the house

to find people already there, watching CBS, the preferred news network of the town, and as he approached the TV set, they zoomed in, which revealed

> actual people in coats and ties and skirts with their shoes falling off as they fell, some hanging onto ledges or girders and then letting go, upside-down or wriggling as they fell and one couple almost seeming (unverifiable) to be hugging each other as they fell several stories and shrank back to dots and the camera then all of a sudden pulled back to the long view—I have no idea how long the clip took—after which Dan Rather's mouth seemed to move for a second before the sound emerged, and everyone in the room sat back and looked at one another with expressions that seemed somehow both childlike and terribly old. (Wallace, 2006, p. 136)

Already with this small observation, Wallace is aware of the way the news cycle and media is in control of the memories that will be formed, a quick act of censorship takes place when the cameraperson realizes that the death of human beings is on full display and zooms out, so it would not be so obvious. In the center of the broadcast are the two towers, bleeding smoke and fire before they crumble, but this way, they neatly tuck in and hide the human suffering. It also became common practice in the US to hide the footage and images of the falling people, due to questions of sensitivity. Joan Didion observes that as time passed, she "found that what had happened was being processed, obscured, systematically leached of history and so of meaning, finally rendered less readable than it had seemed on the morning it happened" (2003, pp. 8–9).

Wallace recognized that he was traumatized in that moment:

> I'm not sure what else to say. It seems grotesque to talk about being traumatized by a piece of video when the people in the video were dying. Something about the shoes also falling made it worse. I think the older ladies took it better than I did. (2006, p. 136)

He also questions his ability to recall the events of that day:

> Is it normal not to remember things very well after only a couple days, or at any rate the order of things? I know at some point for a while there was the sound outside of some neighbor moving his lawn, which seemed totally bizarre, but I don't remember if anybody remarked on it. (p. 137)

Although they are not in the space where the tragedy is taking place, the spectators are still bearing witness to the event. It is filtered through the television, which offers its own agenda and displays censorship efforts, even though the broadcast is live.

Wallace even remarks that the "innocent" women who watch the live feed with him seem to not reflect on the fact that the newscaster's hair is mussed just perfectly, or that "it's maybe a little odd that *all three* network anchors are in shirtsleeves" (2006, p. 139), and that the same few clips of the towers getting hit are replayed constantly on TV, for no particular reason. Wallace stresses that the people watching the broadcast are mostly well educated, smart, and make some observations, but they lack the cynicism to critique the event, or to draw connections which might reflect negatively on the United States. "Instead, what they do is all sit together and feel really bad, and pray" (2006, p. 140). These women are not familiar with New York City, so Wallace explains to them where the World Trade Center is located compared to the Statue of Liberty and Broadway, giving them more context about the financial district and Manhattan's layout. It is a particular characteristic of the twenty-first century that a *lieu de mémoire* is formed and recognized by most of the world, but for those who have not visited New York before, the place of memory is suspended in the TV feed, instead of taking up material space. For this reason, a lesser-known consequence of 9/11 is that not only the towers were destroyed, but many buildings around it too. Without the spatial awareness and specific knowledge of the Towers' location, many viewers, including those who were watching with Wallace, are unaware of significant details and their *lieu de mémoire* is unreal. The TV's relentless repetition of the image of the towers being hit and collapsing already establishes Ground Zero as a *lieu de mémoire*, but the viewers know it through the filter of the television, they do not see it as two buildings within a neighborhood, they are not aware of the other buildings that were crushed by the falling towers. Their perception is dictated by the TV screen, so the towers, and later, their absence, is what they think of, in the air, as part of the New York City skyline.

"The View from Mrs. Thompson's" is an especially interesting text because it was published so close to the event; there is no real space for reflection from the author, he is still mostly suspended in the role of witness, of spectator. Henceforth, the text perfectly captures the moments when some people in Bloomington, Illinois experience trauma. Wallace is able to show what those ladies looked like and could feel, according to his own account, on the day of September 11, and he could capture the first few glimmers of retaliation, the feelings of patriotism arising, etc.

The text plays with time and illustrates the author's perception of it closely: the first parts about the days after are longer, more drawn out, but the reader can follow him along his journey to the store, then to multiple stores to try and find a flag to hang in his own yard.

On Tuesday, however, time is at a halt, people only watch the TV, and there is no movement, no interaction outside of Mrs. Thompson's house. Wallace is unable to recall when things happened specifically or what reactions the women and other guests had. His inability to recall underlines the temporal divide between witnessing a traumatic event and then recalling it, discussing it, and making it into a story. It feels unimportant to think about when the neighbor was mowing his lawn, or when someone left or arrived to the house.

Time is also distorted by the TV itself: "Then the hideous beauty of the rerun clip of the second plane hitting the tower, the blue and silver and black and spectacular orange of it, as more little moving dots fell" (Wallace, 2006, p. 136). The historically significant elements, the ones that become *lieux de mémoire*, and are selected as acceptable by news crews and politicians, would go on to be featured in museums and become part of monuments. Wallace's essay captures the beginning of this process, the making of Ground Zero, the *lieu de mémoire*, which is not yet filled with meaning, it is not yet "filled with words, stories, anecdotes, testimonies, biographies, images, photographs, documentaries, objects, mementos, and icons; that it becomes a site of memory and of remembrance, a place of disaster made meaningful by the representation" (Stamelman, p. 15).

Conclusion

Wallace's text may be defined as a personal essay, "a form particularly suited to testimony, witness, and stirring anecdote" (Roche & Stuckey-French, 1997, p. 44), as it offers insight into what it was like to experience 9/11 on a TV screen in a small town in Illinois. It is important to note that it is a text which was clearly edited and literary devices were used; aesthetic choices were made to create a good essay. For example, Michael W. Cox notes that there are few, minor alterations between the first draft and the typed text, he believes that the neighbor with the impressive flag post knew he was interviewed etc. (cf. Cox, 2018, p. 19). Even so, the text captures a very specific moment in time, suspended in timelessness. Wallace illustrates the very beginning of the mystification of 9/11, he recognizes the first building blocks of the *lieu de mémoire* that is Ground Zero, and reflects on the way even a spectator of the event can become traumatized by the magnitude and force of it. The essay stands as a witness statement to what happened that day, it serves a similar purpose to the countless images—the ones that were shown and then never shown again of the people jumping or falling out of the towers—the human suffering, and the trauma people experienced on site, and through their TV sets. "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" echoes feelings of trauma, confusion, and helplessness,

which are familiar topics in most post-9/11 texts, be it poetry, fiction, or drama. The essay captures the moments which would later define the discourse about 9/11: Wallace captures the sprouting symbols and topics of nationalism that overtook the country in the upcoming years, as evidenced by the sudden urge to post flags outside of houses. The text also gives insight into the formation of the place of memory not only for those who were present in New York on September 11, but those who were watching the events unfold on TV as well. While the *lieu de mémoire* remains Ground Zero, the disconnect between those who are familiar with New York City and those who are not is noteworthy. The women viewing the tragedy do not know where the World Trade Center exactly is, but it does not seem to affect their reactions and the traumatic experiences they all have (e.g., calling loved ones in New York). Wallace's text was drafted shortly after the attacks, so even with the editing and polishing process kept in mind, the essay captures a specific time and space during and right after the tragedy, a moment where ideologies and political angles were not yet developed. Even though "The View from Mrs. Thompson's" does not supply the reader with an in-depth analysis of 9/11 the way Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower* does, it also does not attempt to solve or equate the "Horror" to an artistic interpretation. Wallace's essay acts as a—stylized and edited—witness account, followed by timid introspective questions by an author who did not yet have enough time to truly understand the what and the why surrounding the events of 9/11.

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The Struggle with Irreverent Time in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*

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Abstract

Jamaica Kincaid's lacunary pseudo-autobiography presents the protagonist's first year in exile and dissects its stages to such an extent that the story takes the form of a photographic slideshow. The unnamed city (presumably New York) appears as a palimpsest locale, almost obliterated by Lucy's invasive and strikingly detailed memories. This incursion of "space past" and "time past" in the narrative present forecloses an accurate reading of the space and time of her exile. In the end, Lucy becomes well aware of this existential dilemma that suspends her between the past—an unhealed wound—and the present—an unknown territory. Almost the entire book depicts the narrator's struggle to reconcile the dichotomous cyclical and linear temporalities, each with their corresponding spatial referent: the native island and the city. The present paper analyzes Lucy's first year in exile as a time loop which closes with a creative reconciliation with the past and appropriation of the linear present.

Keywords: time, space, exile, memory, identity

> It is my present that is foreign, and […] the past is home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.
>
> —Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

> They's jus' some puny humans playin' round de toes uh Time.
>
> —Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Termed by critics a pseudo-autobiography, Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* (1990) charts the arrival of a young Antiguan in the United States and her one-year stay with an American family as an *au pair*. This first-person narrative told in the past tense presents Lucy's coming to terms not only with the new social and cultural environment that her exile brings but also with the native island which hauntingly echoes from her past.

Time is a time bomb for Lucy; past events explode in her everyday life with intensity and crystallize under the coagulating influence of mostly unrelated situations, people, or places until the overall feeling is that the protagonist dwells almost entirely in the past. This paper will explore the protagonist's negotiation with two different temporalities: one cyclical, uneventful, and static (belonging to her rural island), and the other one linear, corrosive, and alienating (which defines the metropolis). We contend that Lucy's first year in exile constitutes the unraveling of circular time, which closes with a creative reconciliation with the past and an appropriation of the linear present.

Lucy is a book that comes full circle as far as the plot and the time of narration are concerned. This coming-of-age story in exile is divided into five chapters, each bearing a significant title in the development of Lucy's persona. Each part unfolds over a season, with winter opening and closing the storyline. The narrated time encompasses Lucy's first year in the city, which is, as Lampel (2003) astutely suggests, only "a temporal loop from one winter to another" (p. 174). Lucy's real exile, one infers, starts when she can claim her name, her place, when she can break with the tormenting cycle of memory.[1] The closure of the book presents a protagonist who, from a naïve youthful tone, has found an articulate, even mordant voice[2] in exile, a protagonist who may eventually claim that "in the beginning was my word and my word became the world as I ordered it to be" (Kincaid, 2001, p. 45). Lucy's struggle is chronotopic, and our analysis, while focusing on the irreverence of time in the novel, cannot overlook the spatial coordinate that is intrinsic to movement, memory, and identity formation.

Time is the defining element for the protagonist's experience in the city. The access to urban cosmopolitanism might seem liberating but the metropolis is a universe in constant movement, a shifting, provisional place of exile which stands as the polar opposite of her native island, governed by an uneventful, cyclical time.[3] In *The Culture of Cities*, Mumford and Miller (1986)

[1] Soto-Crespo (2002) considers that, for Kincaid, memory is a creative force that actively makes the connection between cultures across time. For the protagonist, the act of remembering appears as a connecting line (therefore linear), between places and moments in time. Closely linked to memory, there are several themes of predilection in the novel that will only be touched upon briefly in this paper: personal and communal history, (post)colonialism, and the revolt against the mother.

[2] Related to identity-formation, Paravisini-Gebert (1999) invites a reading of *Lucy* as a sequel of Kincaid's *Annie John* (1990) and notes that the book accomplishes "the portrait of the artist as a young woman" (p. 177).

[3] Kincaid's entire work presents her native island, tainted by colonialism, as a space of hostility, associated with apocalyptic and violent images. On such a small island, the static nature of the temporal element borders on timelessness, with a negative connotation however, and is best described in *Mr. Potter* (2002): "And the months were August through September, December through February, and April to the end of July; and the years were the same and the weeks were the same as the years and then so too were the days and the minutes and Nathaniel [Potter] was trapped in all of that—years and months and weeks and days and hours and minutes—and then he died, the way all people do, he died" (p. 57).

contend that time is the very essence of the urban environment: "Cities are a product of time. […] In the city, time becomes visible: buildings and monuments and public ways […] leave an imprint on the minds even of the ignorant or the indifferent" (p. 105). Coming from the rural environment of her unnamed Caribbean island, Lucy's "temporal maladjustment" (Joseph, 2002, p. 80) is the most noticeable simply because she is "cyclical in a world of linear time" (Griffin, 1995, p. 73). This dysfunctional dynamic increases the predicament of the protagonist generated first by the separation from home and then, by the painful awareness of her alienation and insularity in exile.

Linear time, illustrated by the passage of the seasons, is a crucial factor for Lucy's exilic experience and a catalyst for her subsequent maturation. The protagonist mentions in the opening pages that she only knew about seasons from the books read as part of her colonial education. For her, the seasons were associated with places in which prosperous people lived:

> As a child in school, I had learned how the earth tilts away from the sun and how that causes the different seasons; even though I was quite young when I learned about this, I had noticed that all the prosperous (and so, certainly, happy) people in the world inhabited the parts of the earth where the year, all three hundred and sixty-five days of it, was divided into four distinct seasons. (Kincaid, 1990, p. 86)

And she immediately contrasts this preconceived perception of time and space in the "prosperous world" with life at home, on her tropical island, which is not regulated by the passage of the seasons:

> I was born and grew up in a place that did not seem influenced by the tilt of the earth at all; it had only one season—sunny, drought-ridden. And what was the effect on me of growing up in such a place? I did not have a sunny disposition, and, as for actual happiness, I had been experiencing a long drought. (Kincaid, 1990, p. 86)

In the city, the seasons with their identifiable attributes and unfaltering procession help the protagonist to forge a new and relevant past that can be easily traced and indexed. Time's passage, its existence for that matter, is registered with considerable detachment, which is emblematic of Lucy's coping strategies in exile: "in all the months that I had lived in this place, snowstorms had come and gone and *I never paid any attention*, except to feel that snow was *an annoyance* when I had to make my way through the mounds of it that lay on the sidewalk" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 22, emphasis added). Winter in a foreign environment is the most adverse to the one who comes from a tropical climate,

the cold season soon becoming the symbol of exile. As a first season experienced in the city, winter, and by extrapolation exile, constitutes the first real past that Lucy will take as a point of reference for her nascent future and life away from her mother(island): "I could now look back at the winter. It was my past, so to speak, my first real past—a past that was my own and over which I had the final word" (p. 23).

Spring, a new season to be experienced in exile, finds Lucy attempting to understand her immediate surroundings. Yet spring does not let itself be known easily, it is still "sort[ing] itself out in various degrees of coldness" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 20). Rarely will Lucy use second-rate sentimentalisms about the exile's implacable fate or a lost paradise. Although her story will at times resonate at the encounter with the new environment, this will be among the rare instances when Lucy leaves aside sarcasm and disdain. Even the despicable and so much hated snow has "a certain kind of beauty; not a beauty you would wish for every day of your life, but a beauty you could appreciate if you had an excess of beauty to begin with" (1990, p. 22). And from the dying winter, from the last throb of the cold season, she unexpectedly derives beauty and nourishment: "the days were longer now, the sun set later, the evening sky seemed lower than usual" (p. 23). In her struggle with the new landscape, a gentle light is conveyed by the use of the comparative in the quotation above, reinforced by the assertion that indeed, "the world seem[ed] soft and lovely and […] to me—nourishing" (p. 23). Having opposed the new setting for an entire season, she is compelled to utter in a conciliatory tone "there it was, and I could not do much about it" (p. 23). This statement could be regarded as Lucy's first acknowledgement of the time and space of her exile.

It is summer—a season she can relate to, especially as it is spent in the countryside and away from the city. Together with the recent past—the last six months away from home—summer brings along a feeling of genuine happiness and the firm realization that a return home, on the island, is no longer possible. The protagonist slowly comes to terms with the idea of movement and change, in short, with time, linear time for that matter: "I had also grown to love the idea of seasons: winter, spring, summer, and autumn. What wonderful names—and, as far as I could see, appropriate (Kincaid, 1990, p. 51). Simply the reverberation of the seasons' names is pleasant to the ear of somebody who was only used to a punishing sun that "was always overhead" and a heat "that made everything in its path long for shade […] that bore down on you, first as a warning, then as a punishment, for sins too numerous to count" (1990, p. 52). Irrespective of the season, Lucy's temporal dislocation continues to be reinforced by the constant incursion of time and space past.

A fourth season to be experienced away from home, autumn brings back the cold and with it, Lucy's sharp criticism. The leitmotif of the fourth chapter titled "Cold Heart" is the protagonist's perception of the home-place as a prison and the need to break away from it: "I understood finding the place you are born in as an unbearable prison and wanting something completely different from what you are familiar with, knowing it represents a haven" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 95). Feelings of anger seem to coagulate under the impact of the cold weather and are directed towards the mother(island), so dearly missed for the past four seasons. The weather, "bleak and cold" once more, only reflects the inner dimensions felt by the young exile, as it has since her arrival in the city.

It is winter again, and an entire section of the fifth chapter, evocatively titled "Lucy," is dedicated to reviewing the main points of her first year in exile. "That's how I spent the year just past" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 138) is presented in a long sentence *à la Kincaid* which starts with a chain of spatial identifiers: the street corner, the stoplight, the lakeshore, the kitchen, the window, almost like a lifeless slideshow. Lucy employs definite articles implying that her little world is known, compared to the very opening of the novel, which was punctuated by a plethora of indefinite articles: "*a* famous building, *an* important street, *a* park, *a* bridge that when built was thought to be *a* spectacle" (1990, p. 3, emphasis added). These sites are no longer invisible and silent, and the spatial knowledge accumulated over four seasons now helps Lucy to anchor her nascent past in exile. In the process, she gradually acquires a better perspective[4] on the self, and on her personal and communal history.

Closely related to space in Lucy's case, memory plays a major part in shaping the protagonist's exilic experience. Kincaid demonstrates in this novel that memory is a pivotal paradigm provided it is "im-placed" (Casey, 1993) or linked to places; memory here is not a function of time as much as it is of place. Pondering on the intersections of exile and memory, Said (2000) considers that "since almost by definition exile and memory go together, it is what one remembers of the past and how one remembers it that determines how one sees the future" (p. xxxv). Italo Calvino's hero muses upon the same theme: "'You advance always with your head turned back?' or 'Is what you see always behind you?' or rather, 'Does your journey take place only in the past?'" (Calvino, 1978, p. 28).

[4] Decoding her past has become one of the protagonist's main objectives in exile: "I had realized that the origin of my presence on the island—my ancestral history—was the result of a foul deed" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 135). She also becomes aware of the deeper meanings of two notions which, at the moment of her arrival in the city, were still truncated: race in a multiracial city "my skin and my eyes were the same color, brown" (p. 149) and the implications of her name: "I felt like Lucifer, doomed to build wrong upon wrong" (p. 139).

Eliciting the image of Janus—the Roman God of Time, these rhetorical questions indicate that, at times, the only and most meaningful voyage may be back in time, through memory. Not unlike Calvino's Marco Polo, Lucy advances with her head turned back, a paradoxical stance that allows a better perspective on the past but frustrates all reading of the present.

In exile, Lucy's memories are invasive as much as they are potent. It is so because their evocative quality is derived from their fragmentary nature, Rushdie (1992) observes in *Imaginary Homelands*: "The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities" (p. 12). Indeed, certain images grow stronger with time, some even reach the status of myth. The doubly distanced homeland[5] (in time and space), generator of all memories, is not experienced in the course of narration; it is projected in imagination. This in-between stance can only intensify the temporal dislocation felt by the young protagonist, as evoked by Bachelard (1964): "our past is situated elsewhere, and both time and place are impregnated with a sense of unreality. It is as though we sojourned in a limbo of being" (p. 58). It should be noted at this point that Lucy does not face the city directly during this first year, since she has found a "safe-space" or a surrogate mother in exile—a family that plays the role of "a cocoon in which Lucy develops in confidence and strength" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999, p. 138). One infers that true exile begins once Lucy effects a new separation, this time from the surrogate mother, when she eventually comes to terms with the linear passage of time. Moreover, the narrator safely recounts the first year spent in the *elsewhere* of the city from an undisclosed spatial and temporal vantage point.

Despite a relative simplicity of expression and theme, the storyline becomes more complicated as the narrative 'I' meanders through unsorted memories from a past linked to home. Events and situations, stories and faces from her past invade Lucy in her new urban environment. In this fictional autobiography, the I/eye turns inward under the power of memory; yet Lucy's memories are far from being arranged in any order, least of all chronologically. It is only the experience of the place of exile that ensures the continuity of her narrative. It would almost be erroneous to call *Lucy* a story of discovery for so much of the book is a story of *re*-discovery and *re*-memory in a new setting.

[5] Borrowing from Rushdie's eponymous essay, Lima (2002) analyses Lucy's island as an imaginary place. A veritable site of memory, in Pierre Nora's terms, the multi-faceted mother-island comes to possess numerous attributes, among them colonial oppression and patriarchy—all forming the foundation of the protagonist's personal history, which she is so adamant about erasing. Lucy's memories present a crucial advantage for a subsequent definition of identity—they are "localized," even if the island may seem at times just a pretext for Lucy to situate her collections of memories.

The protagonist's invention of the self is a creative act, accomplished through intuition, "more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 134). Her tools are limited, "I had memory, I had anger, I had despair" (1990, p. 134), but they help Lucy to partially reconstruct a past which calls for its immediate destruction. Lucy's ultimate goal is to fill the void thus created by allowing the most recent past to be constructed in exile and to be used as a viable landmark for the future. Yet, despite her efforts to erase the past, she becomes aware that she is defined by it: "I could see the present take a shape—the shape of my past" (p. 90) which leads to a philosophical meditation on the passage of time and on the haunting loss of childhood "one day I was a child and then I was not" (p. 135). Committed to making exile her "first real past" (p. 23), she claims possession of the time segment linked to the urban experience using, ironically, two spatial tactics: photography and, not at all unrelated, the panoptic view imparted by the window.

The penchant for photography is part of the protagonist's act of mapping the city of her exile—a very personal and creative attempt to represent the texture of a city in constant movement.[6] In the latter part of the fourth chapter, instead of opening an urgent letter from home, Lucy decides to buy a camera which soon becomes an outlet for her artistic impulse, helping her to "captur[e] her own vision of the reality around her" (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999, p. 134). Photography, according to Barthes (1981), transforms the subject to be photographed into an object, a museum object, for that matter. Yet, despite her fascination with books and museums, Lucy is not a collector of objects but a collector of instants. One infers that behind each snapshot she takes, there is a point in time that is more important than both signifier and signified: the city and its photographic representation. She employs her camera mainly as a means of tracing time and sorting memories, or to paraphrase Bachelard (1932), in an effort to learn and re-learn her own chronology.

Through photography, the protagonist also seeks to identify and further objectify the urban referent, which so far was either ignored or eluded all reading. Only after she leaves her employer, does Lucy venture outside trying to capture the geography of the city with her camera. Broadening the referential field, she now takes "pictures of people walking on the street. […] not pictures of individuals, just scenes of people walking about, hurrying to somewhere" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 160). The camera becomes a new filter through which she reads the urban space; it is, in fact, an effective tool that can help Lucy

[6] In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) astutely reads New York as a city with a never-ending present, a present that invents itself day by day, a universe that is constantly exploding, linked to the rhetoric of excess.

to create a past: "for a reason that was not at all clear to me, the people and the things they were doing looked extraordinary—as if these people and these things had not existed before" (1990, p. 115). In the beginning, the protagonist's space of exile is limited to interiors in a foreign monochrome city (Paravisini-Gebert, 1999) which acquires color and light only at the end of her first year spent away from home.

The photographs are material support for Lucy, visually tracing the passage of time, or what is worth remembering of it, "a material reality that can be controlled" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 121). These veritable chronotopes serve in the re-creation of the self and in establishing a new past that will later be considered as a point of reference. For Barthes (1981), photography is an emanation of the real past, and its testimony bears not on the object but on time. This recent past soon becomes a reliable construction, ironically built under the pressure of the memory of home and projected on the surface of the city of exile. Aware that the only viable liberation is total denial, Lucy needs anchors and proofs in order to render the frail new past credible. While neither necessarily accurate nor chronological, these snapshots are a certificate of presence[7] (Barthes, 1981), of her presence away from her home and from her past.

Even if this visual support allows the protagonist to trace a recent past and carefully study it, the monochrome snapshots are at first as arid as the city itself. It is so, Barthes (1981) explains, because "a photograph may resemble of anything but the object of representation" (p. 160). Indeed, the photographs prove to be deceitful, and for a while, Lucy participates in this simulacrum, trying to "make more beautiful the thing I thought I had seen, that would reveal to me some of the things I had not seen" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 160). Through photography, the protagonist attempts to offset the unfriendly setting of her exile, in a compensatory effort which Said (2000) sums up as follows: "much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule […] the exile's new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction" (p. 181). At the close of her first year in the city, Lucy must acknowledge that her snapshots do not lead to an understanding of the object of representation simply because they only provide limited spatial knowledge and temporal anchoring.

A second spatial tactic, which Lucy paradoxically employs to tame time, is the act of reading her environment from a vantage point. As a threshold *par excellence*, the window simultaneously connotes the idea of escapism and the in-between—frail and unsuspected gate

[7] From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the photograph "the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation" (Barthes, 1981, p. 138).

to and from the city. The role of the urban vantage point is primarily to metamorphose the walker into a voyeur, to allow the gazer to escape the prison of the street or to place a safe distance between the voyeur and the texture of the city (De Certeau, 1984). It may equally serve as an intermediary site, a chronotope which mediates the public and the private spaces. For Lucy, however, the window invites a metronomic movement[8] under the aegis of memory between the usual dichotomous narrative settings (metropolis and native island) but most importantly, between separate moments in time (the narrative time and her individual and communal past).

Scrutinizing the street from her employers' apartment, Lucy seems at first confused by the simulacra of an urban prison: "all the windows […] had outside them iron bars twisted decoratively" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 85). From the window, she watches "the human comedy" in other apartments across the street. The first room that offers itself to Lucy's inquisitive eye is a way station, a room people "were always just passing through" (1990, p. 86), not unlike her first year away from home. The description of another interior, luxurious for having a wall of books and for being always empty, only plunges Lucy back in the past and prompts her to link this image with past assumptions about seasons and prosperity. However, she remains a distant observer whose only goal is to accumulate more memories for and of her nascent past in exile away from home. Lucy's panoptic view on the city has nothing to do with the urban locale which is just a reflecting surface for the developing self over one year.

Toward the end of the book, the protagonist becomes more eager to probe her own chronology. The very first morning in her new apartment, Lucy is at the window reading the street iconography. She has already been presented at windows many times before, only this time she succeeds in performing a panoramic reading of the urbanscape. Not surprisingly, with thoughts centered on herself as usual, she (re-)discovers the city's foreignness as well as her alienation:

> I went to stare out the front window. When I looked down, I could see people, not as many as on a weekday, bustling about. I could see the roofs of other buildings far away. I could not see any trees. Everything I could see looked unreal to me; everything I could see made me feel I would never be part of it, never penetrate to the inside, never be taken in. (Kincaid, 1990, p. 154)

[8] In an interview with Kincaid, Vorda (1996) underlines the author's somewhat "unusual writing style" (p. 25) in *Lucy*, that of digressing to a previous experience before having fully completed a paragraph. Kincaid's remark is equally articulate as she claims that for her, "writing is a revelation" (Vorda, 1996, p. 25).

The protagonist’s “skin-doesn’t-fit-ness” is an echo of her internal exile and foreshadows the prospect of remaining an outsider. Yet, for the first time, her gaze is neither hindered by iron bars nor limited to scrutinizing other apartments. Her attention is captured by a time symbol—a clock from the tower of a building across the street. The clock is broken, and this brings the realization that “my sense of time had changed, and I did not know if the day went by too quickly or too slowly” (1990, p. 154). For Chick (1996), the broken clock is an indicator of Lucy’s impaired sense of time, and a symbol of the inescapable past that must be integrated into her present. The constant perception of a disjointed time confirms that the protagonist has not yet adjusted her internal time to the chronological time of the urban world outside.

Lucy uses photography and window-gazing to chronicle her daily life, in an attempt to come to terms with the linear temporality of the city. However, the static vision the photographs convey only separates the gazer from reality.[9] They ultimately become a blocking screen between the gazer-photographer and the city. Simmons (1994) notes that “Lucy must confront a different kind of renunciation in acknowledging that photography is not necessarily the medium in which she will express the depth of her own creativity” (p. 137) or the appropriation of chronological time. The freedom and anonymity of being an outsider in the city and the price paid by the young exile are granted one last acknowledgement before she turns to writing:

> I was living a life I had always wanted to live. I was living apart from my family in a place where no one knew much about me; almost no one knew even my name, and I was free more or less to come and go as pleased me. The feeling of bliss, the feeling of happiness, the feeling of longing fulfilled that I had thought would come with this situation was nowhere to be found inside me. (Kincaid, 1990, p. 158)

Lucy eventually directs her creativity to the blank book received as a gift from her former employer. There is a feeling that “flourishing words and phrases” (p. 10) may be better suited to tame time than photography or the contemplation of the cityscape from windows. The blank pages invite the spelling out of her name, and this “statement of being” (Simmons, 1994, p. 137) is followed by a flood of tears. If a first blurred vision was elicited by the contact with the metropolis five seasons earlier, this time it is related to the encounter with the self. For Salman Rushdie (1992) “writing is as close as we get to keeping a hold on the thousand and one things—childhood, certainties, cities, doubts, dreams, instants, phrases, parents, loves—that we go on slipping, like sand through our fingers” (p. 277);

[9] Kafka’s words come to mind that people photograph things in order to drive them out of their mind (as cited in Barthes, 1981, p. 53).

it becomes Lucy's preferred means of expression in exile as well. The book itself is "the written proof that [Lucy] has noticed and repaired her broken clock" (Chick, 1996, p. 103), and the blue blur that the words create on the page might be considered the incipit of this seemingly angry and sour collection of remembrances and longing.

The past that so much haunted Lucy in exile has to be dealt with at the moment of her re-birth. Lucy assumes and demarcates it "as a line," sign that the protagonist has ultimately accepted the western urban perception of time as linear: "I had begun to see the past like this: there is a line; you can draw it yourself, or sometimes it gets drawn for you; either way, there it is" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 137). The past is now seen as "a collection of people you used to be and things you used to do" (1990, p. 137). It resembles the familiar set of pictures she has already amassed, indexing "the person you no longer are, the situations you are no longer in" (p. 137). Yet, the photographs, past moments frozen in black-and-white that she can arrange at will, are indicative of a self still bound to the charm of the past.

Lucy's first year in exile is intrinsically circular, best illustrated by the cyclical pattern of the seasons that structure her story. However, once the cycle is completed and temporality is assumed, time in its irreverence stops following its deceptive circular pattern; whether slow or fast, heavy or light, it gradually unravels and becomes 'heavily' linear: "the days went by too slowly and too quickly" (Kincaid, 1990, p. 140), the instant weighed a lot, it "felt like a ball of lead" (1990, p. 140) or "each day felt like a minute" (p. 140). The linear time has followed its unperturbed natural progression, but "it did not bring [her] along with it" (p. 24); the inner cold has become chronic as the closure of the book illustrates. For Lucy, the "beginning of time" (p. 24) is accompanied by a "heavy and hard" feeling, that started earlier in January with the statement: "It was my first day" (p. 3) of her personal history, written away from home.

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Temporal Intertwining in a Slovenian Narrative

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Abstract

This article, based on the assumption that narrativity and temporality are closely related, explores the chronotope of the Slovenian historical tale *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (1858) by Fran Levstik. It focuses on the narrative time, as presented by the epic story, and the time frame in which this narrative was published. Based on the assertion that literary time and place are intrinsically connected, the timeline of this epic text is viewed as a constituent part of the setting, which entails that the geographical location is also highlighted. The analysis of the storyline reveals that the tale presenting three different time frames separated by centuries, when viewed from a historical perspective, displays cohesion and credibility despite the intermingling of two temporal settings. Significantly, the story was published in the aftermath of the Spring of Nations (1848), in which Slovenians demonstrated an increasing awareness of their ethnic identity. Since scrutiny of the author’s biography reveals that this text was heavily influenced by time-related issues, my premise is that the narrative time, viewed in the network of connections, can best be elucidated by the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos*. They can foreground the relationship between the narrative period of this patriotic tale and the date of its publication and even highlight the specificity of the time when the protagonist of this became the best known Slovenian national hero.

Keywords: narrative, time, history, chronotope, Kairos, chronos

Introduction

Time has been traditionally considered a primary component of any narrative since any narration and activity in life requires time. Accordingly, the subject of time has been one of the most researched and analyzed concepts in narrative theory. In the 20th century in particular, time has become an increasingly prominent issue in the field of literary critics.

Paul Ricoeur thus stressed in his research that narrative time elucidates "a deeper experience of time" (1980, p. 169). Nowadays narrative time has been seen as being "in many ways truer to human experience than what is conventionally thought of as real time" (Nelson & Spence, 2020, Summary, para. 2). Therefore, the intertwining of timelines in historical fiction appears particularly interesting. The narrative concept of time additionally deserves special attention because it has been, as a rule, viewed in its interplay with the place of the action. The two concepts have even been traditionally defined as the setting. The link between the time and the location of the narrative has remained one of the foci of philosophy and literary criticism until the present day. Among the literary theorists, Mikhail Bakhtin, a scholar who also worked on the philosophy of language, discovered that "'an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships'" (Nikolajeva, 1996, p. 32) exists between the parameters of the setting to which he gave the term chronotope.

This paper will explore the experience of narrative time that can be uncovered in the chronotope of the historical narrative *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (1858), written by a Slovenian writer Fran Levstik. My aim is thus to highlight the network of temporal connections established within the narrative itself and foreground the links between this epic and its specific historical context. I will, therefore, resort to the concepts of *chronos* and *kairos* to elucidate the significance of the timelines, presented in the story about the eponymous main protagonist Martin Krpan. Chronos is the invincible ubiquitous present, as it is claimed by François Hartog, a historian whose research deals also with the notion of temporality, in the book *Chronos: l'Occident aux prises avec le temps* (2020). Very similar to its role in the physical world, chronos is the time in which life goes on, the time that can neither be grasped nor mastered, the time in which seemingly nothing can really change. Kairos is the time when opportunities for changes appear and when people can or even have to choose between options, between the ways to take and the values to defend and fight for. Kairos is the precious gift for those who are able to read the signs of times; in other words, it is the time for those who dare change the world. Since kairos is the time of heroes, strong individuals, and inspired communities, folk literature and patriotic narrative tend to highlight it.

From the perspective of the first targeted readers, the imaginary time of *Martin Krpan* was created through the fictional interconnectedness of two historical periods: the centuries marked by the invasions of the Ottoman Empire in Central Europe and the long-lasting period of salt trafficking. However, the present analysis of the temporal dynamics of this prose reveals that the text, besides insight into two fused historical times, also offers insight into the epoch in which it was published. Since it is supposed that these three timelines are interconnected because of their significance in the Slovenian cultural history,

the Kairos of the original[1] narrative temporal context of the book, as well as the time of the publication of this book, will be put into the limelight. Given that Martin Krpan became the best-known national hero in the last decades of the 20th century, the notions of chronos and kairos will be furthermore applied to the spirit of the time that heralded the birth of the independent Republic of Slovenia.

The 1990s witnessed the revival of nationalism, the cultural phenomenon that is constantly shaped by the "material and political development on the one hand and the intellectual and political reflection and articulation on the other hand," as Joep Leerssen claims in his *National Thought in Europe* (2006, p. 14). Since the word nationalism can refer to a whole set of meanings, it needs to be underlined that in the context of the period discussed, the term denotes exclusively "the devotion to one's nation" (Joep, p. 14), the national aspiration and a policy of national independence that "is built on the belief that a nation has its specific character and that it must be as independent as possible" (Joep, p. 15). In accordance with such a view of nationalism, also called patriotism, recollecting the heroic past was fostered in order to consolidate the national community of the modern Slovenian state. The need to help Slovenians see themselves "as sharing a similar sense of time" (Peters, 2014, p. 111) was encouraged by stressing the importance of cultural repository—including the patriotic literature of previous literary periods. This way, 'presentism,' the term used by Hartog to denote the state of despair that arises from the hopeless walk in the darkness, was avoided. History was regarded as *magistra vitae*, illuminating the path to the future. In such a framework, patriotic historical fiction was considered a source for stimulating curiosity about the ancestral past, for rethinking where the nation stood vis-a-vis its cultural memory and the historical facts and events that paved the way for sovereignty and independence. Patriotic narratives were seen not only as works of literature glorifying the moments of chronos that carried the seeds of Kairos coming to blossom in the unforeseeable future but also as repositories inviting mindfulness and vigilance, as well as gratitude for the present moment.

Martin Krpan: A Narrative Transcending Boundaries

The Slovenian historical narrative *Martin Krpan z Vrha* was published in 1858 as a book for adults, but has crossed the boundaries between a competent adult reading audience and texts addressing children[2] and less demanding readers. Today it has the status of a dual readership text because it functions as a text that can answer the expectations of readers of all ages.

[1] The first targeted readers, Levstik was primarily aiming at his 19th-century compatriots whose mother tongue was Slovenian.

[2] In accordance with UNICEF guidelines, in literary criticism the term 'child' is generally used to denote a minor who is younger than 18.

As a picturebook, the narrative has been read by children and studied at school. The literary text crossed genres in 1917 when it was first published with illustrations, created by Hinko Smrekar.[3] The artist's distinctive contribution added essential information to the understanding of the verbal text because it provided answers to a few seemingly missing textual clues.[4] With this illustration, the invincible foreign knight became a Turk. Smrekar's enrichment of the verbal text was highly appreciated by the professional and lay public, and accordingly, the following editions aiming at the general public, as a rule, were illustrated. Regardless of their variety in style, they all keep to the interpretations offered by the first illustrator. Thus, they consolidate the traditional understanding of the text that has become canonical due to its literary qualities and cultural and social significance. Today this book about Martin Krpan, who came from Vrh in Inner Carniola, ranks among the most frequently illustrated Slovenian books.[5]

It also needs underlining that *Martin Krpan z Vrha* is one of those 19th-century books that have repeatedly been translated. Even though the text can be read only in nineteen languages, the number of translations has become much larger as it has been retranslated several times into various languages.[6] Among these languages, rank English and the languages of neighboring countries. *Martin Krpan*, however, crosses not only language and cultural frontiers but, with its theme, plot and chronotope traverses across periods and regions.

Crossing linguistic and cultural frontiers was also a recurrent feature of Fran Levstik (1831–1887). Born to Slovenian parents not far from Ljubljana, he studied in Olomouc (Moravia) and Vienna/Dunaj.[7] He was a poet and playwright and also a literary critic and a linguist. In all the locations where he spent his working life, from Dunaj/Vienna, Celovec/Klagenfurt to Trst/Triest, he was heavily engaged in the cultural life of Slovenians within the Habsburg Monarchy. At the same time, he was actively involved in the political movement, fostering what we call today 'national political and cultural rights,' aspiring to raise national awareness among his compatriots. A fighter for the new ways and ideas, Levstik was, however, also able to envisage the marriage between the period that was forthcoming and the cultural tradition based on the collective memory of Slovenians. One of his aims was to encourage the expression of national identity through literature,

[3] Hinko Smrekar (1883–1942), a renowned Slovenian caricaturist who worked also as a graphic artist and illustrator.

[4] This picturebook ranks among those where the word and the image complement each other (Nikolajeva & Scott 2006).

[5] In this context it is worth mentioning the illustrations of Tone Kralj (1900–1975) because they have been chosen for several translations of *Martin Krpan*.

[6] The most recent retranslation into Spanish was published in 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

[7] Names of places related to Slovenian cultural history are given in the Slovenian traditional form as well.

which was also the goal of many 19th-century authors in Central European countries. At the same time, he intended to offer contemporary Slovenian writers a model of an original tale based on national folklore and tradition to help them stop using foreign literary models, displaying foreign customs and unfamiliar ways of life. Not only do these two aims echo the ambitions of Slovenian intellectuals—who, filled with new and positive views regarding national issues within the Austrian Monarchy, understood the spirit of the age—but also mirror the expectations of the growing numbers of Slovenians from all walks of life who were increasingly conscious of the potential of their culture and national lore. This narrative was thus a response to the socio-political changes of the time. Today it is generally referred to as *Martin Krpan*, and the short form of the title will be used also in the current context.

The narrative was first published in a Slovenian journal in Celovec/Klagenfurt in 1858. The narrative exploits the traditional theme of a fight between a brave and intelligent stalwart from among the ordinary people and a violent intruder or at least a hostile figure of foreign origin. Martin Krpan defeats a Turk, threatening the Habsburg Court. Complying with the spirit of the era, the winner is loyal to the crown and demonstrates fairness and diplomacy but also self-confidence and pride in his tradition and Slovenian values (Jazbec, 2014, pp. 110–118). Cultural history proves that in the transition period of the mid 19th century, such attitudes were considered appropriate among the political leaders and the intellectual elite of the 'awakened' nations within the Monarchy (Štih et al., 2016) as well as among the general public. The story thus reflects the patriotic feelings of targeted Slovenian readers.

However, early translations confirm that this narrative also fulfilled the expectations of readers of other European cultures and traditions that were facing great social changes. The transpositions in other languages are a clear recognition of the way in which the author captured the spirit of the time, since Slovenian literature has often been seen as non-central,[8] and has traditionally been considered for translation less frequently than some other literatures.

Chronotope from the Perspective of the Plot

The configuration in place and time of the narrative plays a significant role in *Martin Krpan*. Not only does it frame the story but also provides its *raison d'être*. Therefore, in order to highlight the relationship between the plot of this historical tale and its setting,

[8] Division of languages according to the taxonomy of Johan Heilbron and Pascale Casanova is explained in Mona Baker's (Ed.) *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (2010).

it seems reasonable to resort to the notion of the Chronotope, introduced in the literary theory by Mikhail Bakhtin. He not only confirmed that the temporal dynamics and the realities of the locations are connected, but he claimed that the connectedness between the temporal and spatial relationships is intrinsic in all literary texts (Bemong et al., 2010, p. 3). Therefore, he coined a new literary term which reflects this connectedness. This new literary concept thus refers to the invisible unity of time (chronos) and space (topos).

In *Martin Krpan* the interdependence between temporal and spatial relations is created by the interplay between the broad geographical location extending from the Adriatic Sea to Vienna and between three temporal frames—a contemporary one for the then targeted readers—and two time-lines related to the past also for the 19th century reading audience. The story highlights the locality of Inner Carniola—then part of Inner Austria—with its Karstic region, and it is not easy to tell if any of the three timelines is given greater emphasis or not.

The intertwining of the temporal and spatial determinants of the action is indicated from the beginning of the narrative. The fictional narrator promises the author to tell a story about the life of his countryman Krpan who lived in his region, in Notranjska/Inner Carniola.

Martin Krpan, being of extraordinary strength and exceptional wit, made his living by smuggling English salt. As this was strictly prohibited, he became an object of suspicion to the authorities. On one occasion, he accidentally met the imperial carriage and, with his strength, impressed the Emperor so much that when a brutal warrior threatened the Court, the Monarch summoned him to come to Vienna. Krpan was expected to behead the killer. He accepted the challenge, applied an unexpected fighting strategy, and was successful. Vienna was liberated and the whole Court with it. The Slovenian hero who saved the entire country was hailed by the citizens of the Imperial capital and honored by the Monarch. However, he had to face the opposition of the Empress and the minister who kept the keys to the Emperor's treasury. They have both tried to diminish the importance of his heroic act, so Martin Krpan, aware of his status, addresses the Emperor, saying:

> I've heard in church that every labourer is worthy of his hire. If you so will it, then give me a letter that will be valid before every church and land authority, and set your seal upon it, saying that I'm free to peddle English salt. (Levstik, 2004)

The Monarch was willing to fulfill the hero's wish. Krpan, a Slovenian hero from Vrh in Notranjska, won another battle: he obtained the official permit to peddle salt without restrictions from Trst/Triest, to Vrhnika, Ljubljana, or Reka/Rijeka and further to the north and the south.

The temporal context of the author has thus made a simple man of the people a victor. Krpan is the winner at the Court, at the very heart of the Empire. From now on he will no more be obliged to be on guard to outwit the gendarmes pursuing him on his trading routes between Trst, Koper, Reka, and Ljubljana. He will be able to trade freely in a region stretching from the coast to the rest of the Slovenian Lands and even elsewhere in Inner Austria because he has become 'an absolute winner' in two battles. In the first, force and intelligence won over brutality and cruelty; he protected his Emperor, his homeland, and his culture from the Osman invader. In the second, wit and the skill of communication are celebrated instead of arrogance and overwhelming superiority. In the spirit of the post-1848 times, he has become much more self-confident, and does not hesitate to tell and show that he is aware of who needs whom. When it comes to proving his right, he does not spare the sharing of ethical truths or proverbs, well-known among Slovenians. He even dares to indulge in criticism and negative remarks while remaining loyal to his Emperor. Martin Krpan has thus become a herald of new times.

Accordingly, the impact of the times when this narrative was written and published becomes particularly evident at the end of this historical tale. The author introduced a narrator applying a well-known narrative pattern with which he announced the complexity of the chronotope and, supposedly, its focus on the past. Thus, he managed not to marginalize his period, the 19th-century, not even when Martin Krpan—who is said to have lived long, long ago—steps into the limelight. Still more, while the story is evolving, the targeted reader's own time is increasingly noticeable. It becomes salient on two levels. The first is related to the picture of the urbanization of Vienna/Dunaj, a city with high buildings and innumerable streets, where the protagonist feels entirely lost. The second is to the atmosphere of the narrative distinctly marked by the 19th-century *Zeitgeist* manifested through the attitudes of the central character toward his national identity, his cultural background, and his compatriots, as well as towards the Monarch and the gentlemen of the Court. The text, written in the post-revolutionary period, thus vividly conveys the spirit of the author's own society that found itself at the threshold of an era announcing the spirit of a newly evolving social paradigm.

The other two time-lines are also powerfully rendered through a successful fictionalization of the theme. They represent the temporal framework due to which *Martin Krpan* has been ranked historical fiction from the date of publication onwards. Since both of them had to be set in a past that had been anchored into the national collective memory, Levstik resorted to the epoch of the invasions of the Ottoman Empire on European soil and to the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

> For the 19th-century-Slovenian target readers, the raids of the Turks on the Habsburg Empire were part of history stored in the cultural memory, and trafficking in salt was a tradition that was still alive in some parts of Slovenian lands. (Kurlansky, 2003, p. 232)

Something completely different, though, must have been the attitude to the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) and the establishment of the Illyrian Provinces. They would certainly be well remembered by the older section of the population. Despite the two historical periods being divided by centuries, Levstik blended the two timelines through an intense fictionalization of all literary elements. The imaginary time thus created does not compromise the cohesion of the story. Based on historical facts and cultural memory and, obviously, on the author's ingenuity, the narrative displays its own logic and thus gains credibility.

The Chronotope in the Light of Chronos and Kairos

The presentation of the relationship between chronotope and plot has uncovered that the dynamics between these two constituent literary elements of the narrative derive from the interplay between the storyline and the setting, represented by three temporal layers and several places of action. Since this correlation is pivotal for the understanding of *Martin Krpan*, it needs to be underlined that the chronotope displays a balanced structure even though the temporal framework is in focus. To prove this both constituents of the chronotope are analyzed prior to highlighting the aspects of kairos that can be uncovered in the time frames discussed in this narrative.

A distinctive feature of the narrative place of action is that it is based on the geographical reality easily detected on the map. The territory in question is delimited by Vienna, situated at the north-east, and Triest at its south-western part. The two cities[9] once had a special status in the Habsburg Monarchy: Triest, as what was then the only Austrian Mediteranean port, and Vienna as the centre of the Empire. However, even though Triest was a Habsburg port, debate is ongoing whether this was really the port from which smugglers carried English salt. According to sociologist and social anthropologist Bojan Baskar (2008), it is difficult to decide whether Krpan's salt came from the Venetian coast—today's port of Koper in the Republic of Slovenia—or from the Habsburg port of Triest—today in the Republic of Italy. Since Venice is not mentioned in the text, the supposition that the port was Triest will prevail in this present context. The narrative brings more information about Vienna, where the story has its climax and denoument.

[9] According to literary geography, Vienna and Triest are strongly associated with several other writers, not only with Fran Levstik.

The capital, with its architecture and nobility is presented in its splendour and luxury on the one hand; and in its vulnerability and despair on the other. The first images of the center of the Empire are gloomy: "the whole city is draped in black and the people are scuttling around like ants whose nest is on fire" (Levstik, 2004). However, when Krpan comes to the court, which is said to be "terribly grand and beautiful" and where guards stand "outside the doors night and day, summer and winter, however fierce the cold," he is taken to the upper quarters "which are finer even than a church." He can only "stare, struck by how grand" everything is. However, when he has a look at the armoury, he must realize that the arms there are useless. He has to make his own weapons, and he cannot use the horses from the Court stables as they are not strong enough. Consequently, he has to send for his own mare. Thus, the huge and splendid court is revealed to be unable to provide what is needed for the fight with the invader. Later in the story a deeper and more dangerous weakness is revealed: the Emperor's authority is not as firm as it might have been expected. His decisions are not accepted without questions; not only do his Treasurer and even his wife criticize them, but they also try to reverse them. Thus, Vienna, the symbol of the Empire, is shown as powerful and powerless at the same time, and the Court as a stage of clashes between the interests of different factions.

However, the Chronotope does not highlight only the capital of the Austrian Empire and the port where Martin Krpan used to buy English salt but also the region of Carniola, in particular, Inner Carniola that connects the litoral with the interior of Central Europe. Physical geography and geology reveal that due to the karstic features of the terrain, the southern part of Inner Carniola offers the lowest passage between the Southern and Central Europe,[10] which makes it a convenient place for transportation. Accordingly, this area has been known for commercial routes connecting Central Europe with the Adriatic. The specific configuration of the terrain is also one of the main reasons why the territory concerned used to be the place of encounters between nations and, even more, between the three great language groups: the Slavonic, Romance and Germanic. Therefore Martin Krpan must have been used to encountering people speaking Italian, Friulian, German and Croatian. Nevertheless, the story clearly relates that he considers this land of international encounters as *his* region, the people living there as *his* compatriots, and the Habsburg ruler *his* Monarch.

Given that the tale of *Martin Krpan* evolves in an area characterized by a variety of geographical and geological features, all of which support the story line, it turns out that the numerous localities within the place of action give the necessary anchors for the story to evolve in different time-lines. Thus, the place of action, as a literary category,

[10] Postojnska vrata/Postojna Gate, also called Adriatic Gate, is a major mountain pass that allows for the lowest crossing between Central Europe and the Mediterranean (609–612 m).

contributes considerably to the sense of unity of the narrative, as it also does to its credibility. In this respect, the toponyms mentioned in the text are of great importance as the names of places such as Vrhnika and Razdrto are not mere fictional inventions but denote real localites that can be found on the map. Thus, it could be speculated that the particular quality of the fictional place of action of this historical narrative is that it can speak not only to experts in geography, but also to a wide circle of readers.

Conversely, it is likely that a few instances related to the temporal aspects of the Chronotope that the book foregrounds may be relatively unknown to a considerable number of prospective 21st-century readers, even though these aspects have had a memorable impact on the larger Central European region. They are deeply embedded in the cultural history of the nations which had to experience similar historical contexts. Among these, in addition to the period around the year 1848, are the historical periods of the invasions of the Ottoman Empire, salt trafficking, and the Napoleonic Wars. These are echoed in *Martin Krpan* because from the point of view of Slovenian cultural history, each of these periods is marked with particular, opportune moments in which Slovenians' actions contributed to the positive changes that brought the whole nation new options.

This is true for the period between the 15th and 16th centuries when Turks were a real scourge for the territory inhabited by Slovenians. It was the time when the forces of the Ottoman Empire systematically raided and plundered the bordering regions of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. These regions presented a kind of shield against the invasions from the Ottoman Empire, protecting the regions closer to the center of the Empire and thus a considerable part of Central Europe. Another fact derived from history was that the regions of Karst and Inner Carniola were among the Slovenian areas that were particularly afflicted by the invasions of the Turks (Voje, 1996). The first raid on the Slovenian territory took place in 1408, and Turks had been present in that area for almost 200 years (Simoniti, 1990). They are remembered for plundering, arson, killing, and hostage-taking. If not massacred, Slovenians were either sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire or re-educated as janizaries, according to historical accounts. Thus, due to the Turkish invasions, a significant section of the Slovenian rural population was lost.[11] Also, the Slovenian chivalry suffered a severe blow and was considerably reduced during the wars waged against the Ottoman Empire. Not surprisingly, Slovenian lands were constantly deteriorating as a result of the effect on both the common people and the nobility. The raids on the Slovenian territory ceased only in 1593, after the Battle of Sisak,

[11] From Vasko Simoniti's *Turki so v deželi že* [The Turks are already in the country] and Ignacij Voje's, *Slovenci pod pritiskom turškega nasilja* [Slovenians under the pressure of Turkish terror].

fought between Ottoman Bosnian forces and a combined Christian army from the Holy Roman Empire. The majority of the Christian soldiers came from the Habsburg lands, mainly from the Kingdom of Croatia and Inner Austria, that also included the Duchy of Carniola. The battle resulted in a crushing defeat for the Bosnian Ottoman army. It was the great time of kairos, even though sporadic raids from the Ottoman Empire were still taking place on the territory inhabited by Slovenians until 1683, when the Turks suffered their final defeat in the battle of Vienna.

Also, along the centuries, long period of trafficking with salt is well documented by history, revealing that it was a period in which the people who wanted to engage in a risky activity had to recognize "the right time" to realize their plans. Therefore, when trying to establish facts related to the temporal framework of this tale, it needs to be highlighted that from the Middle Ages onwards, there was a struggle for primacy in this part of Europe (Granda, 2008, p. 142). After the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire in 1808 and the founding of the Habsburg Monarchy, Austria banned its citizens from trading in salt. This commerce was a monopoly of the Crown, and smuggling was one of the responses to this strict legal ban. Despite this, trafficking played a considerable role in the economy of the region that connected the Northern part of the Adriatic sea with Central Europe. Transporting and peddling various types of commodities became an integral part of trading activities, not without the knowledge of the authorities (Baskar, 2008). Therefore, the question may arise as to why, in *Martin Krpan*, the moment when the hero obtains the permit is considered so important. It may suggest that the author intended to call attention to the political context in which this text was published.

In 1858, ten years after the revolutionary events, there was still a pronounced dissatisfaction with the reactions of the Crown towards the attempts of individual nations to solve some of their ethnic ambitions. Therefore, the figure of the treasurer may represent the part of the governance of the Monarchy that was not ready to grant any, new, rights to Slovenians, despite their well-articulated demands. Such a political reality, fictionalized in this narrative, shows that in the middle of the 19th century Slovenians were not mere observers of social changes. Like Martin Krpan, they accepted the challenges of the time, faced the risks, and were often rejected regardless of their loyalty to the Empire. However, when they realized how to achieve their aims, chronos acquired the features of kairos.

Chronos and kairos alternated also in the third period, signified by the narrative timeline of salt trafficking. Its specificity is above all that it overlaps with the period of Turkish invasions and the period around 1848. Accordingly, the analysis of the interplay between chronos and kairos focuses on the threshold of the 19th century marked by the Napoleonic Wars.

It is also then when the French army occupied a significant part of Slovenian territory. In this area, the economic situation had been rapidly deteriorating due to the raised taxes and the growing needs of the occupying army, while trafficking in salt gained in importance (Baskar, 2008). However, it is a fact that Napoleonic rule embraced years of war and negative repercussions; however, this period was also a short time when a new political order existed. With the creation of the Illyrian provinces (1809–1814), where Ljubljana was the capital, the French administration introduced considerable changes in the area of law and administration. Some of them applied to commerce and trade, but the prohibition against the salt trade was not lifted. Smuggling remained a reality for the inhabitants of Carniola and the new authorities. It is to be noted that the French were overtly welcome by a few intellectuals, adherents of the enlightening movement, who promoted a new spirit of national pride that later fused with the atmosphere of the Spring of Nations.

The spirit that characterized the period around 1848 proclaimed new times and new ways of life in the multinational Habsburg Empire. From the point of view of chronos, it was simply another period, a transitional time that would relatively soon pass into another era.[12] However, considering the quality of life among Slovenians, this period was extremely important. Slovenians were part of a larger European movement in which each of the individual nations had specific expectations and ambitions. The most radical demand that Slovenians presented to the Crown was that of uniting all Slovenian regions into one administrative unit. This expectation was not fulfilled, but in 1849 Slovenian was recognized as one of the official languages of the Austrian Empire. The Slovenian language, thus, finally obtained the status intellectuals had been fighting for. However, history records that one of the most remarkable achievements of the Spring of Nations among Slovenians was that national pride came to the forefront. This pride pervades the literary figure of Martin Krpan. Such pride was instilled into people at great conventions organized all over the country by true patriots. People from all walks of life expressed their readiness to stand together and used every opportunity—very much like Krpan—to demonstrate that they were aware of their culture, and proud of their language. These conventions tended to be more than simply political meetings: they were a demonstration of the cultural life that characterized Slovenian professional and amateur circles. The conventions attracted people of all ages and gave an incentive for even more expansion of creativity in towns and the countryside. It was the time when Slovenian identity was strengthened on all levels of public life because the achievements of Slovenian spirit and culture were popularized. Therefore, the period in which *Martin Krpan* was published still had the features of kairos time and, as such, occupies an exceptional position in the cultural history of the Slovenian nation.

[12] In 1867, the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was founded.

The other two periods that constitute the narrative time frame of *Martin Krpan* have also made a specific and undeniable impact on Slovenian history. The period of Turkish invasions was exceptional in many respects. As chronos, it was a centuries-long period and, due to its duration, it embraced several generations. The awareness of the same arch-enemy marked not only the Slovenians who suffered during the times of direct clashes, but also the ones who did not have to endure the tribulations caused by the Ottoman army. Psychology proves that the memory of suffering inflicted on predecessors also leaves wounds on the newborn generations, and fear leaves scars in the psychological structure of the national psyche and thus on national character. Thus, it is not surprising that there was unanimous agreement on the origin of the intruder who carried out massacres in Vienna. The very word evoked similar associations in readers and even more in later viewers. However, despite the harsh times that seemed to have lasted an eternity, there were moments in which the vision of life was not only bleak. Such moments belonged to the knightly class, when they won in battles, and to the common people when they were told that their Christian army had defeated a much more numerous enemy. Churches—like the ones depicted by illustrators of *Martin Krpan*—were built on thanksgiving. Therefore, it corresponds to the spirit of the times that the winner, before beheading the bloodthirsty Brdavs, wants to give his rival time for prayer.

The experience of generations of Slovenians who had to endure the centuries-long invasions culminating in the siege of Vienna thus strengthened their national resilience, ingenuity, and empathy, the characteristics vital for the survival of a nation in adverse conditions. Thus, the kairos of this long–enduring struggle was made up of those crucial moments in which Slovenians were able to adopt various strategies of fight and self-defense so that they managed to protect their homes. Similarly, the crucial moment for Krpan is the one when he decides to make his own weapons and adopt original tactics to save the country.

The chronos and kairos times of the Illyrian provinces were so short-lived that they could be considered only an episode in the long story of salt trafficking were it not for the emergence of the enlightenment in literature. This philosophical movement was embraced by Slovenian authors who, at the end of the 18th century, strongly contributed to the changing atmosphere among intellectuals. The goal of writers, poets, and playwrights was to instill a positive spirit into all literary genres and foster national awareness by extolling the beauties of the Slovenian landscape and the qualities of the Slovenian character. Accordingly, the kairos reveals new optimism that encouraged everybody to be diligent and exploit the possibilities offered by the time and place they were born into. Thus, the titular protagonist of *Martin Krpan* can be seen as an embodiment of the kind of man the new spirit was calling for.

The Kairos of *Martin Krpan* and the Kairos of the Republic of Slovenia

As stated in the introduction, *Martin Krpan* is one of the Slovenian books that have entered into the Slovenian national repository while its titular protagonist has become a national hero. In the last decades of the 20th century, when it was increasingly clear that the national rights of the Slovenians as well as their aspirations for democracy and human rights could not be fulfilled, in the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Martin Krpan became a sort of national icon. This narrative has thus acquired a special status. My premise is that the main reasons of this phenomenon can be found in the way in which the verbal text and the visual representation depict the titular protagonist and in the complexity of the temporal intertwining that characterizes this narrative.

The intertwining of the epochs united in the storyline has foregrounded a few aspects of the chronos and kairos of the times that have, each in its own way, contributed to the cultural features of present Slovenia. *Martin Krpan*, the impact of which had been continuously growing during the last decades of post-1945 Yugoslavia, was therefore considered an inspiring source in the years between 1988 and 1991. In this period, Slovenians tried once more, as in 1848, to create a new political frame that would enable them to live their national identity fully. These were crucial times for Slovenians, who, after the movement for self-determination—called the Slovenian Spring[13]—and a referendum for an independent national state, had not only to face the opposition of the central government against proceeding towards a peaceful dissolution but also the military aggression of the Yugoslav army. It was a period in which the lessons that Slovenians had learned from their national culture and history had to be applied to resist the military invasion and the media war in order to defend their national state. Krpan's diplomacy, adaptability, and ability to fight gained a new significance for Slovenians fighting for their land, cultural patrimony, and future. Like the literary hero who, in spite of the complexity of the timelines, moves within a uniform time frame, the Slovenian nation managed to rediscover the unifying platform—their culture and their cultural memory that became one of the sources of inspiration, encouragement, and strength. The barriers between various epochs seemed to have disappeared. The deeper experience of time, "one that escapes the dichotomy between the chronology of sequence and the chronology of models" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 169), helped them grasp that it was not only *the right time* but *the best time* to act, to found the Republic of Slovenia. It was the Kairos time *par excellence* for Slovenians.

[13] A clear parallel with the year 1848.

In such temporal circumstances, Slovenians, who had a tradition of resorting to literature to express their aspirations, turned to patriotic books to find inspiration and encouragement. They adapted the lessons offered by fiction to their current situation and context. According to Paul Ricoeur, this was possible because the intrinsic power of the narrative and its representations of time lies in the fact that these narratives place "the narrated time within the hands" of readers (Holy et al., n.d., Paul Ricoeur). Therefore, in the case of *Martin Krpan*, readers who were experiencing the war for the independence of Slovenia were able to draw parallels between the temporal line of the story and their own time and realize that the Slovenian nation had already overcome all possible tribulations. In this way, they were encouraged to believe that their present trials could also be overcome. Thus, Martin Krpan became a sort of national icon because this titular character corresponded to the ideal of the reading community. His combativeness, diplomacy, ingenuity, and pride in his roots successfully addressed Slovenian readers at the threshold of the 21st century.

Martin Krpan was thus one of the books that fostered the revival of awareness of the importance of national identity as an essential and constituent part of personal identity. After decades of systematic communist brainwashing aiming at the rejection of patriotism and presenting it, together with the Christian religion, as the most dangerous ideology, the Slovenians fighting for an independent, sovereign state had to rediscover a proper sense of patriotism. After the periods of suppression of nationhood, national identity had to be rediscovered in Slovenian history and collective memory. Patriotism has to be considered a positive feature of collective identity because historical identity and patriotism are, as claimed by Roger Scruton, simply the expression of the "continuing allegiance that unites people" (2014, p. 32).

It seems that *Martin Krpan* is a literary example of this kind of patriotism, which is revealed to be a genuine sentiment that is neither an ideology nor a creed, one which, rather than being dangerous, is a source of strength for both the individual and the community. It is a patriotism that grows from the cultural history of a nation and is supported by independent and creative individuals who are able to act according to principles of solidarity and common sense. Thus, the intertwining of periods that cover a span of more than 500 years—half a millennium in which chronos and kairos alternated—reveals an important aspect of the reality that humans have to face, namely, that there are good and bad times and that there is never a time when vigilance and readiness to act or simply to resist are not needed. Such qualities have always, throughout human history, been essential for any kind of achievement. Thus, it has become apparent that each chronos contains the seeds of the coming kairos.

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Book Review. Time Travels in a Bilingual Lyrical Dialogue: Rodica Marian's and Michaela Mudure's Book of *Poems/Poeme*

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The classic title *Poeme/Poems* of the book may hardly give its reader any special clue about either its contents or its author. Yet this will soon enhance the reader's delight in an exquisite metaphorical discovery. The anthology contains twenty-eight poems by Rodica Marian, one for each day of a moon cycle, taking no more/no less than a month on a human/earthly calendar. The poems' selection belongs to Michaela Mudure, who also translated them into English. These belonged originally to Marian's numerous volumes of verse honored with well-deserved prestigious prizes and first rank cultural acknowledgements. The elegant graphic presentation also recommends this book as one special gift for booklovers, due to Călin Stegerean's refined works: he is the visual artist who signs the rare "seven drawings and cover design." Again, no more/no less than the days of a week down here, in our well-measured earthly life.

From this very first step towards our approach, *a sense of timing* will prevail over the bilingual lyrical journey. Ineffable yet *limited in time* is the poet's trip within her own (sub) conscience and memory; around the world she loves to visit on her own, to its most exotic places (from Machu Pichu to Shiraz, from Santorini to Petra, the ancient Jordanian citadel, and so on); then back home to her beloved Transylvania—that unique place on the Eastern-European crowded cultural map, whose native people are born polyglots.

The basis of the affinity shared by poet and translator is their *bookishness*. Both devoted philologists, with outstanding careers, Marian and Mudure both resort to the lenses of poetry in their double quest for an expression of (solitary) *selfhood* within the world. If we may say that Marian is a *poet of the mind*, no better translator than Mudure could have fulfilled this job. If we may say, on the other hand, that Marian is a *poet of reality*,

no better translator than Mudure could have answered this challenge. Both poet and translator are well acquainted with this small/wide world, both fond of brave travelling. Yet a shared propensity for frank *introspection* is what makes their dialogue ever deeper.

As a professor of American literature, Michaela Mudure must have meanwhile kept at the back of her mind that famous blunt warning from Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance": "*Travelling is a fool's paradise*. Our first journeys discover to us the *indifference of places*. […] I *affect to be intoxicated* with sights and suggestions, but I am *not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go*" (Emerson, 1990, p. 167; my emphasis).

Marian turns to metaphor complex instances of selfhood, under the spell of Hafez, the absolute Persian writer. Shiraz is often evoked in her poems, yet in a familiar context, as if "confessional." The first time Hafez and his tomb at Shiraz materialize metaphorically in this free verse volume is in a poem entitled just like that, "The Tomb of the Poet": "I had always known, it seems to me, that the pages of the book by Hafez/ Must not be called out when one needs to get some new teachings/ Nor because of the anxiety of destiny" (Marian, 2021, p. 27).

Nothing in this first person lyrical persona's voice, so straightforward and at such a safe distance from pompous dramatizing, can prepare the reader's expectation for the poem's shocking final image:

> From the top of the pole two disemboweled sheep, not yet shorn, were hanging,
> The living sheep, tied somewhere lower to the same pole, looked up at the bowels
> Of its ilk, with meek attention, reconciled and intensely curious,
> Calmly consenting to what may have seemed to it like another life. (2021, p. 29)

This closing savage picture is juxtaposed to the previous one, within the same poem, of the graceful calligraphic ghazels of Hafez "mirroring in the faience with superb patterns" (p. 27). It may suggest that life (and death) will remain inexhaustible for the eyes of a true poet. The ancient calligraphic ghazels encrusted in the poet's tombstone can still be traced back to the life vibrating all around it. What better tribute to a universal poet like Hafez, whose enigmatic spirit still bothers us, belated readers?

If the poetic self has any "story to tell," this could only convey a metaphorical *solipsism*, depending upon a strictly *subjective sense of time-passing*. For another illustration, here is a fragment from the poem "Rediscovery":

> This meeting takes place in the past a calendar heading
> of my mobile phone, not too sophisticated, nor
> too out-dated technologically,
> seriously and repeatedly warned me, whenever I would
> count how many days were still left to the end of a month
> and every time I rushed, with the zest of my common sense,
> as a grammarian, to correct
> the tense from the syntagm,
> but every time the innocent heading
> kept giving me food for thought and I no longer dared
> to challenge the error. (2021, p. 39)

To any scrupulous "grammarian", the gap between such concepts as *time* and *tense* must be serious. Yet to the poet with a keen eye on any metaphorical source, this apparent logical error may still "give food for thought." Not even today's so-called "artificial intelligence" can do anything about our *a-temporal* sense of some everlasting *presence* at the back of our minds:

> Only the mother's voice, clear, clear,
> more luminous than glass, more transparent than dew,
> its grave, crystalline tone,
> I may have heard, only in my childhood,
> that voice so intimately known, of course,
> [...],
> that voice is coming by itself,
> alone, without any trace of the being
> it has left behind,
> and now, right now, it is calling me
> in a very joyful tone, 'Mummy, mummy!' (2021, p. 41)

For a "grammarian"-poet, like Rodica Marian, there is no running away from her *mother tongue*. Hence, even in her lucidly acknowledged *absence*, due to "natural causes," the poet's mother can never be too far away, in either *space* or *time*.

In Marian's lyrical universe one may also encounter such incredible creatures as the "Transylvanian seagulls." Therefore, it is quite significant that these imaginary birds can fly from such a poem as "The Seagulls from Transylvania" (2021, pp. 60–63)

to the poem "Self-Portrait" (pp. 68–69). If they may exist at all, if it be only in her vivid metaphor, then these "The Seaguls from Transylvania" must belong to *the poet's own portrait of herself*:

> This Transylvania is
> Both the mountain shuddering with memory
> And the fairy tale of the eyes suggesting the morning,
> And especially *the mild anxiety of some seagulls*,
> By their generations' adage,
> Becoming smaller and more grey
> than their ancestors,
> Living signs of the millennia,
> *Of the seas fatally squeezed into rivers,*
> *In whose names there is a constant whisper:*
> *The Someș, the Mureș, the Criș, the Criș, the Criș . . .*
> How could I not have recognized,
> Even if I had not known what they were,
> *The thin quest of these Transylvanian seagulls*
> *Gravely questioning the waves of my Criș River*
> *And floating almost weightlessly,*
> As the poplar's seeds fall;
> *Who can know if the absolute*
> *Is not the forgotten song*
> *Of the Transylvanian seagull?* (my emphasis)

This beautiful poem reminds me inescapably of the twelfth imagist miniature-poem within Wallace Stevens's now classic "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird": "The river is moving./ The blackbird must be flying" (1972, p. 22).

The same silent dialogue between *the bird* and *the river* occurs in both poems. Each one of the poets seems to afford—by empathy—*a bird's eye-view* over their dear rivers ceaselessly floating on. Marian's river moreover renders one "of the seas fatally squeezed into rivers"—hence she may dream of some seagulls as *living fossils* of a lost seascape where today there are only hills. Perhaps only Bela Bartok's "Six Folk Romanian Dances" can still evoke this longing for a land so fluid, beyond any (didactic) explanation: indeed, the original country of "the absolute" squeezed itself within "the forgotten song/ Of the Transylvanian seagull"—as the poet said. Or, perhaps, as Emily Dickinson would put it in her poem 285:

> The Robin's my Criterion for Tune—
> Because I grow—where Robins do—
> [...]
> Because I see—New Englandly—
> The Queen discerns like me—
> Provincially— (1997, pp. 15–16)

The *Transylvanian tune* in Marian's poems may be just as "provincial" as Dickinson's "Queen" in her funny short-sighted view. Yet it is part of an archaic Romanian idiom, still miraculously in good everyday use.

There is much more to say about this book of *Poems* by Rodica Marian transposed in an impeccable English version by Michaela Mudure. But perhaps from now on it is the privilege of its further readers to discover so many more of its genuine metaphorical values and merits.

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Book Review. Fermor, Our Companion: Dan Horațiu Popescu's *Layers of the Text & Context*. *Patrick Leigh Fermor & Friends*

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What more can one say about Fermor's voyages than the very words he used, since they speak in such vivid images that they spring in time-bridging arches?!

Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915–2011) is the writer who managed to turn travelogues into a genre deserving to be called an art form. The contrast between Fermor's travelogue and the new configurations and shapes undertaken by travel writing nowadays becomes comforting through the intrinsic qualities of his *écriture*: the transformative encounters with known and unknown people, the preference for the adventurous less travelled paths (even on foot) of Central and Eastern Europe before WWII (1933–1939), the assessment of historical events through his own feelings and personal history. Fermor raised the stakes by making his real and reflective voyages grow into the very matter of literature (rather than be a mere setting or an annex of it) because of his erudition and because of his genuine capacity to create authentic connections between himself and the people he met, between past and present, between inter-war years and the post-WWII world, between Western and Eastern cultures in the cold-war era.

Dan Horațiu Popescu's book on Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor had the challenge to deal with a target in perpetual movement, since travel literature captures us also through placing the unknown, the unexpected, as the absolute stake. Overcoming the pressure of such high stakes, the book unravels as a fascinating journey into all the glares and opening passages to other invisible contexts and understandings of Fermor's books and written legacy. *Layers of the Text and Context: Patrick Leigh Fermor and Friends*, published in 2020/2021, benefits, on the back cover, from the appreciation of Alec Russell, the reputed journalist and editor of *Financial Times Weekend*, and of Adam Sisman,

the reputed biographer and editor of the two volumes from Fermor's correspondence. The book amplifies what has been known about Fermor with new documents recently retrieved from the writer's correspondence. But the focus, as the title suggests, is to fetch the palimpsest of meanings. A symbolical fountain is at the centre of this palimpsest, as this book of metacriticism cannot follow voyages, but their recollection, filtered through decades of time lapse between the moment of travel and its preservation in words for posterity. Each layer of the palimpsest is receiving thorough attention and understanding. It is not erased to make room for the previous layer, on the contrary, it is revealed. The book contains notes, pictures, facsimiles en première and epitext samples. The vicinity of all these text layers is astonishing. By reading more about Fermor's *people and places*, we get a pensive journey into the interaction of layers of meaning and their perfect place in a web of contexts. This web of contexts suits the dynamism of travel literature and, at the same time, keeps all the interactions open. The free interaction of contexts enriches the volume, whilst its openness prevents the dangers of excessive interpretation.

Dan Horațiu Popescu masters the art of raising the right questions. They are always surprising. As a palimpsest, his book is not only the carrier of multilayered strata of meaning, but also the depositary of emotions and this makes it unique. It draws and unravels a palimpsest carefully retrieving the emotional world of the erudite traveller. It is through *Layers of the Text and Context* that we are connected to Fermor himself, as we feel his emotions intact. They can be captured through the written traces he left, through understanding his reactions, his humbleness in front of life with all its mysteries. Fermor was a genuine hero in his fight against Nazi on Greek realms, where he accomplished successfully his mission of abducting a German general. The challenges brought by his century did not cancel out Fermor's zest for beauty. But through the act of our reading, of following his traces, we witness him not only as *our contemporary*, to paraphrase Jan Kott's famous title on Shakespeare, but as our companion as well. He is our fountain of erudition but also our fellow traveller conscience. We, the nowadays readers, need a writer of his calibre because travel literature in our marketable globalized age in the travelogue virtual sphere tends to be indistinguishable from non-literary purposes.

The author resorts to a formula invented by him in the process of touching all layers of palimpsest and grasping, through interpretation, even the seemingly evanescent ones. The subchapter "When Larry met Paddy" develops the encounters with the famous writer Lawrence Durrell and their friendship in and out Greek lands. With the writer Sacheverell Sitwell, Fermor shared not only a reliable friendship with some darker moments, but also the

love for travel literature. The Budapestan Rudolf Fischer and the exiled Matila Ghyka, along with Chatwin Bruce are dear friends present in this book. Paddy (Patrick) had, for instance, letters exchanged with Michel Alexis Bishi Catargi, a correspondence traced for the very first time. We see Paddy also in his ultimate underground being. This intimate being of the writer as a man who falls in love is revealed not only in the pages dedicated to his life chapters that include princess Balasha Cantacuzène, but also, surprisingly, in the chapter about monastic spaces as 'silent university' (Fermor), and in the very last one, where it is discussed the overarching Byzantium influences and attractions (*Walking to Byzantium* was one of the projected titles for the third volume of Paddy's intended trilogy). This last chapter catches a glimpse of 'the beyond' approximated in the contingency of the religious spaces visited, which had begun in the first chapter with St. Wandrille Abbey in France, this time within the monastic environment in Mount Athos.

The visual imagery accompanying the text of criticism has the role of keeping the emotions alive. We can be in the traces of the traveller Fermor by sharing his feelings, even if we are not his contemporary. Dan Horațiu Popescu has succeeded in highlighting this unbeaten path and in turning the writer into our companion. Even the first picture is startling, as it is the facsimile of Fermor's signature on Homer's *Odyssey* dated Băleni, 1939, and retrieved from the Galați County library. The journey continues, after the introductory part, with Fermor's inner struggle to become a writer. The author imagines this chapter as Fermor's surprising connection with Huysmans's writings, as underlined by the aspiring writer's necessity to escape from the world:

> At. St. Wandrille I was inhabiting at last a tower of solid ivory, and I, not the monks, was the escapist. For my hosts, the Abbey was a springboard into eternity; for me a retiring place to write a book and spring more effectively back into the maelstrom. (Fermor 2007, quoted by Popescu, 2020, p. 20)

The most spectacular layer *Layers of the Text and Context* is the section dedicated to Fermor's "Writing the Woods and the Water." Here the author surprises us through finding solutions to the definition of problematic stereotypes of otherness. He creates an *aporia* approach, analysing *displacement*, bringing in the awareness of a postcolonial world rich in theories, and also by analysing postmodern theories and identity tropes. Together with Dan Horațiu Popescu, we can even witness how Fermor himself came to shatter some prejudices. Our act of re-discovery, provided by the author, is the hermeneutic circle. We understand that Central and Eastern Europe, as compared to Great Britain, was more invaded by stereotypical representations of the nomads, of the Jews, of the Turks. The author follows some of the Hungarians and Romanians heated debates about their

apprehensions of the same topics, brought into discussion by Fermor. We understand how Fermor held in higher regard people, not prejudices. The aliveness of a genuine interaction between people can always dispel artificially-pumped myths.

The question lingering after the reading of this book is how and why people and places constitute our very tangible interaction with history. Why particularly these people, our contemporaries, and not others? On Fermor’s literary footsteps, Dan Horațiu Popescu retrieves what matters most in the itinerant destiny of a unique personality: the emotions of genuine human interactions.

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