



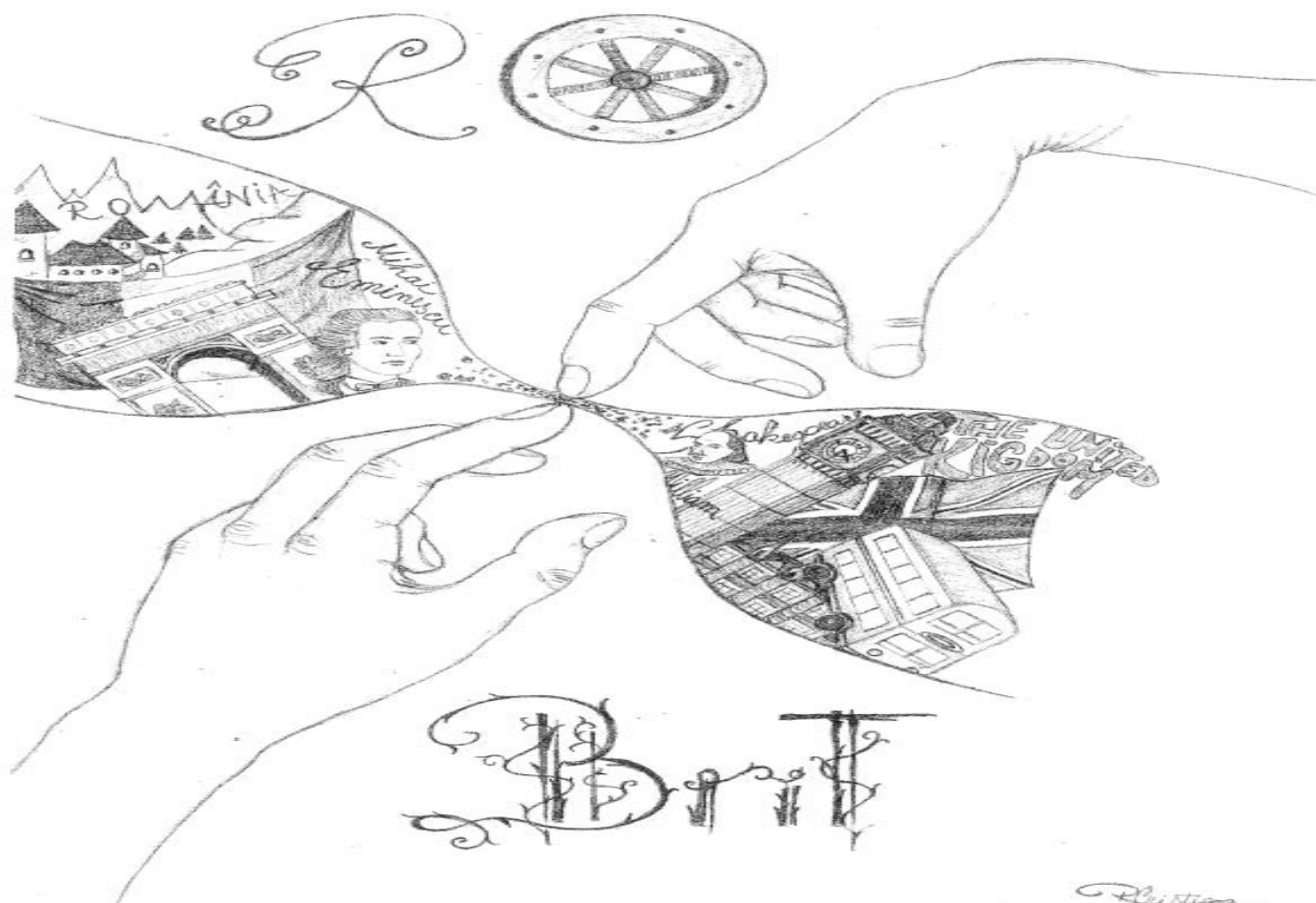
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RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL is an annual English journal dedicated to publishing papers written by students in the Faculty of Letters (and not only), under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures from "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău. This journal intends to encourage students to take more initiative in engaging in the English studies, providing at the same time the opportunity for them to have their research and creative writing published. Thus, RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL invites English-speaking students to contribute to the journal through submitting original articles. The journal welcomes submissions on English language, literature and culture, its purpose being to provide a channel for the publication of original work by Romanian students who love the English language. This is an excellent opportunity for students to allow their research to be seen by their colleagues and to participate in a promising endeavour.

RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL este o revistă anuală în limba engleză dedicată publicării lucrărilor scrise de către studenții din cadrul Facultății de Litere (și nu numai), sub auspiciile Departamentului de Limbi și Literaturi Străine de la Universitatea "Vasile Alecsandri" din Bacău. RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL intenționează să încurajeze studenții vorbitori de limba engleză să scrie și să publice în limba engleză articole cu privire la limbă, literatură și cultură, scopul principal al revistei fiind acela de a oferi un canal pentru publicarea de lucrări originale de către studenții români care iubesc limba engleză. Aceasta este o oportunitate excelentă pentru studenți de a permite ca cercetarea lor să fie văzută de colegii lor și de a participa la un efort promițător.

THE WILD/ MADWOMAN IN *JANE EYRE* BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Larisa Dascălu, RE, III

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

I. Introduction

During the Victorian period, the instability of the mind was a very debated upon topic for humanity because of the social set of beliefs, restrictions and expectations, even if people considered themselves modern and advanced from all perspectives.

The fragile line between sanity and insanity could be broken or shattered at any time especially by females, countless prejudices being at work when they were taken in focus of an analytical eye. A female had to be submissive, dutiful, passive and obedient to a man, and women that exceeded the limits were castaway and despised as wild, savage and even mad.



Through Bertha Mason, Rochester's creole wife, Charlotte Brontë brought into discussion the gender issue, insanity and slavery oppression. In precise terms, Bertha has the stain of the dark race over which white people have supremacy. Likewise, throughout the novel, she is placed in antinomy with the main character – Jane – for the sake of underlining some aspects of the plot, or focusing the reader's attention on physiological features and transformations. As Sally Shuttleworth asserts "Jane Eyre focuses on two of the classic images of excess in Victorian psychiatry: the passionate child and the hysterical, insane woman" ¹.

II. The skeletons in the closet – the mad woman in the attic

At the beginning, Bertha was part of a West Indian family, and she was, as Gayatri Spivak said, a "white Jamaican Creole". Her father, was a planter and merchant and her mother was closed in an asylum having an abnormal psychological state. In her youth, Bertha was a fine and beautiful woman, admired by all the men that knew her and over all this, she had a lot of money. This was the outstanding reason for which Rochester's family made their union possible. They met at parties and had little private conversations, she acted like a lady and he used his charms upon her. He discovered after the wedding that he was lied to and that his wife had an incipient state of insanity.

Insanity or madness is a state of mind defined as having a very thin line of delimitation and being a potentiality to anyone if the stress is not removed otherwise the passion is not controlled by that particular person.

After Rochester accepted the situation he chose to return to Europe and continue his life there. Because of his wife's fierce temper and destructive actions, he locked her on the third floor of Thornfield, with Grace Poole, the woman paid to take care of her.

Her origins are not clearly established – "creole"² in the nineteenth century fitted for both whites and blacks born in West Indies. Also, in that period women were regularly correlated with nonwhite races to illustrate their position of inferiority to white men.



¹Sally Shuttleworth, Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 12.

²Harold Bloom, Modern Critical Interpretations: 'Jane Eyre', Updated Edition, InfoBase Publishing, 2007, p. 49.

It can be identified from Rochester's words that in the Victorian Society there prevailed stereotypes that combine madness with drunkenness and associated this combination with the black people as an effect of racism.

Bertha's lunacy is inherited from her maternal line and functions as a central theme of Charlotte Brontë's revolt. The author gave freedom to her creativity and conceived this character to express the female instincts, sexuality, excesses and irregularities and to establish how to take control over one's energy, impulses and even destiny. The necessity of self-control which is present in all the characters' lives was a main preoccupation in those times and since they were young, people were taught how to redirect their impulses and transform them into positive actions. They had to manage their inner flow of energy and restrain their desires and feelings, to stave off their fiendish pleasure and to reach nourishment.

Feminists compared the woman with nature emphasizing her aim in life-becoming a mother and highlighting her changing personality. Charles Turner Thackrah (apud Shuttleworth), a medical practitioner in Leeds, stated that:

"Civilization has changed our character of mind as well as of body. We live in a state of unnatural excitement; – unnatural, because it is partial, irregular, and excessive. Our muscles waste for want of action: our nervous system is worn out by excess of action."³



Therefore, women that could not detain their spirit, because of their reproductive energy which was seen as an excess, were denominated as psychotic and were made a negative image of womanhood being regarded as sexually sinful females.

The first emergence of the mad woman in Charlotte Brontë's novel is when Bertha slipped into Rochester's room and burned his bed. She is not described through her physical presence, her entrance is announced through auditory images making the episode even more tenebrous. The event is narrated by Jane, the main character, the story being written from a subjective perspective. Bertha's voice is perceived as "a vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious" (p. 129) which sounded somewhere in the hall. After a few moments of hesitation and doubt, Jane discovered what Bertha left behind her: a heavy air and smoke coming from her master's room. The fire stands as a symbol for passion and femininity, but the breed dispute is also implied. It was thus illustrated how slaves used fire to crush property and signal that an insurgency was happening. In the present case, the property was represented by Rochester which was still a married man and the revolt was against his lies, against his efforts to rebuild his personal life, without including his legitimate wife. In Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations*, Warren Edminster formulated his opinion that depicted Bertha Mason as Rochester's doom condemning his greedy behaviour.

The second outbreak is emphasized by her brother's injury. She acted like a savage animal, having an outburst of temper and wounding her brother. She still remained a secret, Rochester's secret, even if just a door separated her from Jane. Bertha is here compared with a vampire by her male sibling "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (p. 187) and with a wolf by her husband, being in antithesis with Jane – the unguarded lamb.

³Sally Shuttleworth, op. cit., p. 42.

Bertha's physical appearance is depicted in two steps. At first sight, Jane sees just a shape standing before her, it was just a contour in the mirror: "It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair". (p. 250) The silhouette took Jane's veil and threw it over her own head. At the second sight the contour gets animal countenance having "red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!" (p. 250). The symbolic gesture in which Bertha rends the veil connects the vulnerability of female sexuality and mental disorder: "Jane is saved from casting her hymenal veil aside, and only returns to Rochester once she is veiled from his sight."⁴

Both, the hysterical woman and the passionate child are designed in opposition, but they also have something in common: they are influenced by the processes of the body.

At the age of ten, Jane was insubordinate and became rebellious, exactly like Bertha break revolutionary after ten years on the third floor. Critics often described Bertha as Jane's double, mirroring through madness Jane's failure to suppress her feelings, her animosity and fury.

Bertha's room was named by Rochester "a goblin's cell" (p. 273), but it was also compared with the tent of Achan. Rochester kept Bertha as his secret into a stone hell, metaphorically speaking he stole the accursed thing so he had to be punished by destroying his house and his guiltless wife.

At the end of the novel, Thornfield becomes a ruin like in Jane's previous dream, and Bertha dies even if Rochester tries to save her. Her extinction stands for the last cleaning action; more precisely the dark race stain which embodies oppression and racism is brushed off from the novel, living behind a neater world.

In addition to this interpretation, in Biblical references, Rochester detects Jane as Esther in relation to him as King Ahasuerus, a union which formerly aligns Bertha, the despised wife, with the disregardful character of Vashti. As the parable says, Bertha's wide dissent is opposed by Jane's strategic elasticity. Esther was a heroine in Christian religion like Jane Eyre is for the feminist criticism. At the end, Bertha, the symbol of oppression and degradation, is sacrificed in order for Jane to attain her longing.



Conclusions

Finally, the mad woman can be analysed from many perspectives and aspects. Too strong emotions together with a passionate temper and biological heritage lead the woman to insanity. She will always embody an exception from the rule, a person that cannot fit into a specific society, more precisely an insurgent.

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⁴Sally Shuttleworth, op. cit., p. 165.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Anca Platon Frăsinescu, LEPC, I
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

I. Building discourse/building an image

In our work, we intend to analyze one of Barack Obama's speeches in terms of discourse markers and tools he uses so as to build a persuasive discourse. Such an analysis is very important for a correct decoding and understanding of a political discourse. The speech¹ was held in 2009 when Barack Obama became the 44th president of America in front of 1,8 million people, which was considered a record of attendance at the National Mall. The inaugural address of president Barack Obama can be divided into six parts: thanking his predecessor (paragraphs 1-2); acknowledging the economic crisis (paragraphs 3-7); pointing out to crisis of the past (paragraphs 8-17); addressing the cynics (paragraphs 18-20); Obama's foreign policy (paragraphs 21-26); proposing solutions to various problems (paragraphs 27-35).



When analyzing deictics for the category of person, we can observe that the entire discourse is based on the first person plural: "we", emphasizing on the idea of unity and power of the people and integration of the speaker within the people. The president insists on the importance of building together and overcoming all problems easier as a nation and he fights for values such as unity and greatness. In fact he uses the second person to address the haters and the cynics.

As for the categories of time and place, Obama's speech has a cyclical address, as he begins by remembering his ancestors, continuing with the actual global context and finishing with the importance of America's history and even praising the strength of the first people who inhabited the land called now the United States.

The rhythm and intonation are very important in the political discourse as it can either emphasize or destroy the message that the person wants to transmit. Moreover, here we have the case of an oral discourse in which these two aspects are key factors to the success of such an utterance. The entire speech has a pleasant tone, it is fluent and coherent. In fact, the president knew very well how to rise his tone when talking about acute matters and especially when proposing solutions so as to emphasize these matters, he knew how to pause when the crowd wanted to applaud and. The emphatic tone of the speaker also created a strong impression of patriotism and pride of being an American.

II. Markers and functions of the political discourse

As for vocabulary, the pronoun "we" is the absolute champion when it comes to its occurrences, being the key word of the entire speech. In fact, when making a statistics of the keywords, one can see Obama's attempt to concentrate on the domestic issues, "nation", "our nation", these being the most prominent words and collocations, together with the adjective "new", which characterize the strategy and ideas of the newly sworn president and his administration.

Another characteristic in terms of increasing emotion is the frequent use of the rule of triplets – similar, triple structures/constructions: "Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered." (5); "Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and the ways in which we use energy [...] threaten our planet." (5); "all are equal, all are free, and all

¹ The transcript can be found at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/20/obama.politics/index.html> accessed 06th of February 2019.

deserve [...] pursue [...] happiness.” (10); “struggled and sacrificed and worked” (15); “birth or wealth or faction” (15); “we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America” (16); “to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day” (19); “the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.” (22); and contrast: “rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace” versus “gathering clouds and raging storms” (paragraph 3); “know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.” (25); “we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist” (25); “a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.” (32).

In terms of correctness and clarity, it can be observed that the discourse respects all the accepted standards of language, the speech having an impressive impact when it is listened to orally as well as in writing. I have to confess that I listened to and also read this inaugural speech and I was more impressed by the impact given by it in its oral form. Its pace, rhythm and clarity for sure catches the audience and even though the oath is quite long the viewer/reader does not lose interest or patience.

The speech clearly displays the features and markers of the political discourse. We can easily identify the persuasive strategies used in order to make the receiver believe and agree with the message sent



by the sender. President Obama definitely appeals to various emotional aspects (ETHOS) of the receiver, starting with the language used: the great frequency of the pronoun “we”, the president also draws a parallel between American civilians and American soldiers, both embodying the American spirit of service. This parallel is topped by a Revolutionary War story metaphor, and the permanently present emotional language sending to the past. In fact the overall theme for this inauguration speech can be summarized as “strength from our heroic past“, which is manifested by examples from the American past and urges the American people to go back to the good, old American values. Values are old and timeless – tolerance, curiosity, loyalty and patriotism – and using them gives strength to one’s speech. Examples of past references: “mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors” (paragraph 2); “Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath” (3); “faithful to the ideals of our forebearers, and true to our

founding documents” (3); “So it has been. In the year of America’s birth...” (33).

In order to achieve his goals the president uses in his discourse different techniques (appealing to one’s LOGOS) such as rhetorical questions: “is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill”; attacks: “That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many”; proofs when talking about the solutions needed to escape the crises; clichés when talking about the greatness of its country and people; a lot of analogies with the past; irony, especially when referring to him being the first African American (black) president of the U.S.A.

Being an oral discourse, the tone (resorting to PATHOS) is a very important part – it can be described as grateful and humble in the first lines, calm and polite when he addresses his predecessor (President Bush) and grows to a passionate, enthusiastic and exuberant tone.

Conclusions

The overall aim of this discourse is to shape opinions and beliefs on matters that have a deep social character, in the same time preparing people for change. The typical functions of a political discourse are all met by this speech written in a well-balanced proportion of subjectivity and objectivity, of reason and emotion, of moderation and passion.



APPEARANCE VS. REALITY IN *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

Olga Ciortan, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

“The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought and sold and bartered away.” (Oscar Wilde)

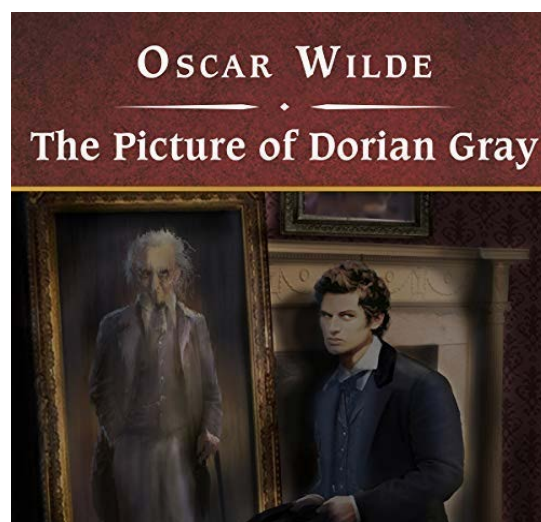
This work shows how fatal the degradation of the human soul can be that is constantly searching for perfection. For some people, Dorian represents a ‘fascinating person’, for others he demonstrates that he has an immoral soul. One thing is clear: Oscar Wilde built an amazing and deep character. His way of behaving and thinking leaves a trace on each character of the novel. For example, Basil Hallward, the painter, said when he met Dorian for the first time that he had a strange feeling that “his fate is enchanted with delightful joy and delightful distress” (p. 13). This phrase was like a prophecy. From the beginning, Dorian was Basil’s dearest friend. This boy was “delightfully beautiful; with his splendidly drawn and red lips as blood; with blue eyes and with golden and curly hair” (. 24). Basil idolatrizes Dorian. He did not want to ruin this beauty and purity, that is why he did not want Dorian to meet Lord Henry. The encounter of the two (Lord Henry and Dorian) was the crucial event that would ruin Dorian’s life.

Lord Henry Wotton was a puppeteer. He manipulated young Dorian with his ‘poisonous’ theories. He urges Dorian to live his life to its fullest and spend his time “always searching for new sensations” (p. 28). Lord Henry believed that “one of the great mysteries of life is to heal the soul with the senses and the senses with the soul” (p. 29). This policy led by Lord Henry transformed Dorian from an innocent and pure boy into a ruined and immoral man, into a puppet in Lord Henry’s hands. As Lord Henry suggests: “We always decay until we become disgusting puppets haunted by the memory of the passions we frightened and temptations we didn’t have the courage to obey” (p. 32). These words were the beginning of Dorian’s ending. He sold his soul for the eternal youth and beauty, meanwhile the portrait assumes the ability to absorb the ugliness of his life.

When Dorian falls in love with Sibyl Vane, he claims his love proves Lord Henry’s theories about selfishness. She loves her ‘Prince Charming’ so much, hence her love compromises her ability to act. Dorian abandons her when he realizes that he was attracted to her because of her acting. That proves that Dorian was not able to have real and pure feelings or compassion.

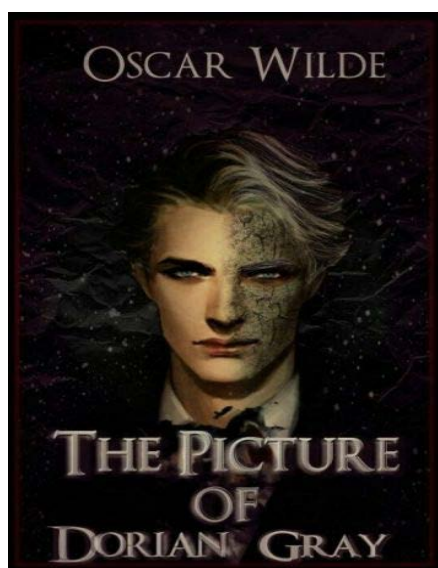
The most awful thing that a human being can do is to kill someone and Dorian did it. He killed Basil Hallward and this killing turns him into a horrible person able to commit the most dangerous deeds on earth. At this moment, Dorian’s portrait deforms just like his soul.

One of the most prominent symbols in the novel is ‘the yellow book’ – the book that Lord Henry gives to Dorian. This book represents the influence that art can have over the artist. The decadents symbolically called Joris-Karl Huysmans’ *Against Nature* – the Bible for Decadence – as ‘the yellow book’ which should have been read by any young man who wanted to look, behave and act like a decadent dandy. Huysmans’ protagonist was considered the ultimate role model for any young decadent man. Another symbol is the Opium Den – the place where Dorian goes to forget that he killed his best friend. He thought that drugs can relieve the pain. This place is the peak of Dorian’s degradation, a place where he can no longer detach himself from his decays and sins.



Still, the most important motif in the novel is Dorian Gray's picture. This portrait represents Dorian's soul. No matter what actions Dorian commits, he remains a young man of rare beauty. But not his portrait. This is gradually becoming ugly, deformed and no trace of Dorian's physical beauty is reflected in it. The portrait reflects his cruel, immoral, degraded soul. For this reason, Dorian hides the painting in the attic – a room that has caused him fear until now, the room where he lived the most awful moments of his life, especially his childhood.

In this novel the narrator knows everything about the characters. Dorian Gray is the main character, the subject (according to Greimas' theory). His object of desire is beauty and youth. The false helper is Lord Henry. Dorian is also the receiver, but at the end of the novel he destroys what he receives. He admits that he was wearing "the mask of goodness because of the hypocrisy" (p. 267). He was impressed by the "curiosity" he had tested "from self-denial" (p. 267).



In spite of its decadent traits, the novel was written towards the end of the Victorian Age, hence the apparition of Victorian principles and themes: respectability (Dorian, being a member of the upper class, enjoyed the respect required by his status), domesticity (he possessed a house, but not a wife or a family), stability (due to his inheritance, he led a stable life from a financial point of view). In the beginning of the novel Dorian was a respected man, 'possessed' a social position and enjoyed the financial stability, but, gradually, towards the end of the novel, Dorian is becoming an unrespected, degraded man.

Victorian society was based on appearances, sort of 'trompe l'oeil'. The Victorians were accustomed to a perfect society, hence the mentioning of the elegance of manners, the immanent extravagance of decorations, the regular walks in the garden (to display someone's wealth through clothes and jewels). In addition, Oscar Wilde revealed the Victorians' immoral past. A character who sells his soul for eternal youth, who tastes all the pleasures of life, who takes

drugs, kills his best friend, all these deeds are not worthy for being called a Victorian hero, that is the reason why the book was, at first, so criticised.

At the end of the novel Oscar Wilde decides to reveal the readers another Dorian: the one with morals and principles. The character decides that by killing his past, he will regain his freedom. He tears the painting with a dagger; he killed his soul and with it Dorian himself dies, too.

Through this book, Oscar Wilde changed the course of matters specific to the Victorian Age. The obsession of absolute beauty cannot bring anything else, but degradation. What the reader is attracted by this novel, is that it comes out of the natural pattern and it presents some things that are hidden in each of us. Apparently, the novel is immoral, in reality it is much more complex and it should not be viewed only from the point of view of morality/immorality. In reality it shows the human beings' fragility when faced with temptations and hidden desires.

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GUILT IN *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

Adina Prisacariu, RE, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

Great Expectations is a novel that follows the evolution in time of a identity. Regarding Pip, Charles Dickens places him in a guilty environment from the start and describes the effect that it has upon him throughout the novel.

He lives with his sister and her husband, Joe, who is the blacksmith. Mrs Joe Gargery constantly makes Pip feel guilty for his very existence, as if it were a crime: "I was always treated as if I had insisted on being born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality, and against the disnading arguments of my best friends." (p. 4) His sister tells the Christmas dinner's guests about "the acts of sleeplessness I had committed and all the high places I had tumbled from, and all the low places I had tumbled into, and all the injuries I had done myself and all the times she had wished me in my grave, and I had contumaciously refused to go there." (p. 23) In the first chapters it is repeated the fact that Pip is lucky that Mrs. Joe Gargery has

taken on the task of bringing him up "by hand". When Pip asks what a convict is, Mrs Joe loses her patience and says that criminals who murder and rob, which Pip intends to do, always start by asking questions, which Pip has been doing. Therefore, she places more guilt on Pip.

When stealing the food and the file for the convict, whom he first met in the churchyard, Pip knows for a fact that is a crime and feels guilty about it. Charles Dickens describes this guilt by displaying the place in which Pip has to run through as being dark, misty, shady and mysterious: "the mist was heavier yet when I got upon the marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me" (p. 34).

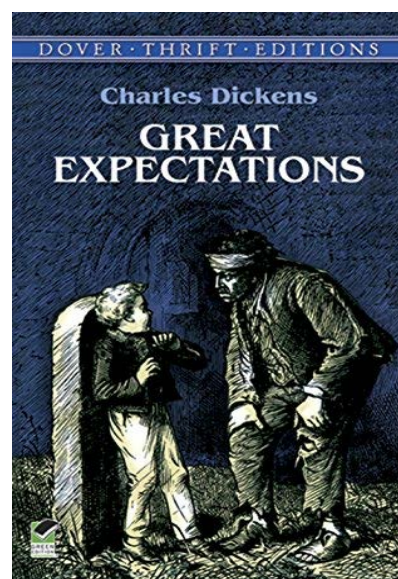
Though he does not confess the theft to Joe because he is afraid of losing Joe's love and trust, he knows that it was wrong: "in a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, and I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong." (p. 48)

In the next phase of the novel, Pip moves to London to begin a new life. Jaggers, the lawyer, is the one who brings Pip from one guilty environment to another. Instead of the Hulks, it is Newgate Prison which looms over Little Britain just like the Hulks loom over the marshes. Jaggers is connected with guilt as well, working with guilty criminals and he is a man who "dominates by the strength of his knowledge the world of guilt and sin – called

Little Britain – of which his office is center." (p. 102) At the end of a day, Jaggers obsessively washes his hands, suggesting the attempt to wash the stains of his clients' guilt off his hands

. When in London, Pip works on fulfilling his great expectations, he tries to forget his past and leave his guilty childhood behind. Whenever he does return, he stays at the inn, visits Miss Havisham, but he does not ever visit the forge or any of the people connected with his past. However, Joe goes to London to visit Pip, a fact which Pip did not see coming. When Joe arrives, Pip is cruel to him, treating Joe only as a representative of lower classes. Joe is not greedy, he

did not come to get money or other benefits from Pip, he just missed Pip. In his turn, Pip feels as if he were in a place where there is no room for his old friend. Soon after, he feels guilty for sending Joe away and for being rather quick to forget how this man has always cared for him.



Pip's feelings of guilt reach the zenith when Magwitch enters his life for the second time. He is then forced to open his eyes to the fact that Magwitch was the hidden benefactor and not Miss Havisham, as he thought. It was difficult for Pip to understand why Magwitch would work so hard to make him a gentleman. In the end, Pip realizes that, even though Magwitch had committed so many crimes, he was a kind-hearted man, too.

When Pip is invalid and recovering from his burn injuries which he obtained when he tried to save Miss Havisham from being burnt alive, he finds himself in debt, consequence of an extravagant life style. Joe pays for all Pip's debts and nurses him through his illness. Pip is ashamed of himself and full of remorse, tells Joe: "O Joe, you break my heart! Look angry at me, Joe. Strike me, Joe. Tell me of my ingratitude. Don't be so good to me!" (p. 218). When Joe explains Pip that it was Biddy who asked him to go to London and look after him, Pip immediately feels guilty about the way he had been acting to her. He decides to return home as a prodigal son.

I think Pip is now looking back to all of what has been great regret and tries to repay his bad by humbling himself and opening his eyes to his own behaviour and expectations. I myself remain with the idea that guilt finds its origin in one particular day and the idea of thinking or wondering "how different its course would have been". (p. 241).

In conclusion I chose this topic because I believe I understand Pip on a personal level. I think once you do something bad enough to make you feel guilty about, it is really hard to reach for help, remaining with the idea that something will chase you for a long time.

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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE OPPOSITE FORCES OVER THE MIND AND HEART IN *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

Alexandru Roman, RE, II

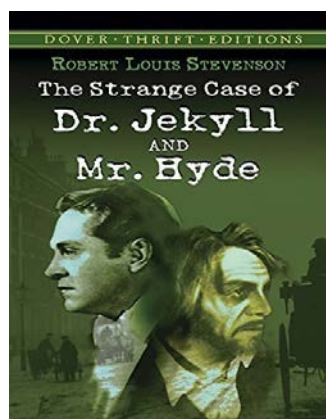
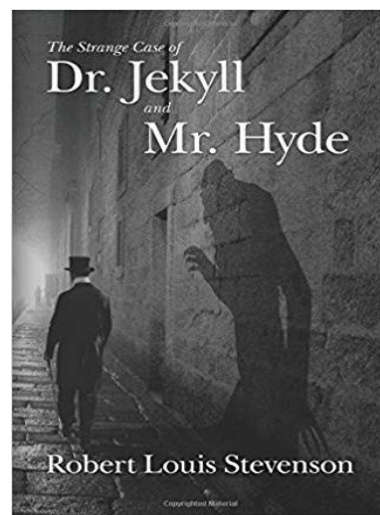
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

As I am taking the opportunity to analyse *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, I also assume the responsibility to settle in a way or another the idea of 'sovereignty' of the opposite forces over the mind and heart, over every dimension of our existence in order to decide whether the world around us embodies a grim executioner entitled with the mission to witness the human succumbed in the dark shadows or redeemed by the light of judgement.

At first, we can define this text as being a portrayal of the universal human being with 'bad seeds that die hard', evil roots with green leaves, beautiful flowers and stalks bathed in blood. Nevertheless, the human being evolves and perishes, leaving his/her disgraceful tendencies as a legacy to the followers, yet unaware of what they might encounter in front or behind 'the curtain' of our mind.

The reader faces the clash between conscience and the bewildering darkness, where the savage thoughts dwell and bloom, the author invites the reader to the incursion between the spiritual enlightenment and the damnation of the material element represented by an instinct-driven amalgam, all these commence as the clock tower strikes the midnight hour. Time guides the individual as he engages in the skirmish between his mental state and the emotional side. A sole resolution, only a simple act decides the upheaval or the rise of the individual's condition, whether this will be sufficient to save his soul from the momentum which tends to drive him into the underworld, and his allegiance would be his only ally in this struggle.

As universe endowed human beings with the free will of our deeds, people cannot be simple labelled as being either 'bad' or 'good' in any of their moments, since these concepts are utterly futile to describe us beyond the surface. On the one hand, life is not an axiom or a linear manifestation, therefore, the idea of 'good' and 'bad' can be perceived in a different manner from one person to another. On the other hand, these concepts illustrate just some borders meant to keep the valencies of the world at a certain level, they are not meant to show the path for our spirit. This takes us further to the reason of our trial meant to carry us beyond our strong cognition. We feel pure, untainted and without troublesome burdens when our conscience is clear, but at the same time, it is thrilling to hold a drop of blood in our hands, the sign of betrayal towards our own dignity, and the price paid in order to pass on the territory of an unholy realm. In other words, it feels good to be bad, and viceversa, since everytime our being is caught trying to take a stand and desert the fight started inside, the urge and the enthrallment of our aspiration to see what happens from a different perspective surpasses the judgement, giving the human being the opportunity to move unhindered between the two worlds. Of course, there are consequences, but the main point is that there are no actual physical limitation, and just a limit designated by the individuals in order to turn earth into a settlement governed by the artificial patterns of our experience, as a result from the contact with the universe. I can say that we are basically 'good' as long as we manage to claim our victory over the demands lurking and whispering around us, and 'bad' if we fail to bear our torments.



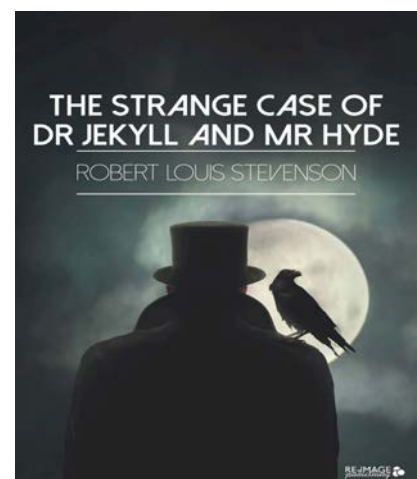
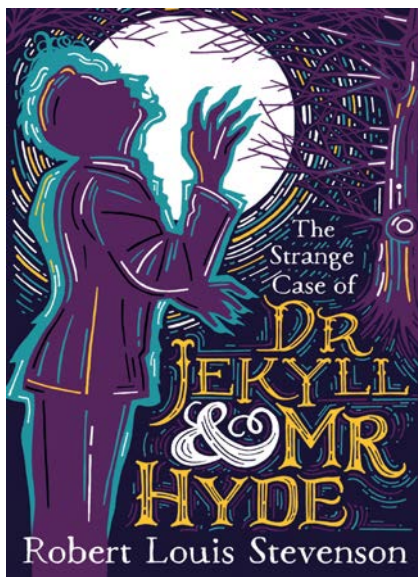
To begin in an orderly fashion, I would like to highlight the title along with some psychological and religious perspectives.

From the perspective of the psychological values, we can mention several key aspects. Firstly, it is relatively common to get away from our body, to evade, to push the limits and see how far we can go in our quest to ‘taste’ the forbidden life. It represents a way to balance the things out and keep us sane, and at the

same time, it may be a fierce trial which tests our will, our resilience, and of course, it may decide our fate. The id, the ego and the super-ego are the rulers of our personality, and this takes us to the second point in the analysis. In this case, that of Dr. Jekyll’s unfortunate existence and way of thinking, the ego is submitted to the id, and because of the super-ego’s short intervention, the id is eliminated, along with its interdependent elements just to purge the danger from society. This leads to a religious manifestation in terms of the moral conduct as a strong pillar and even to the society, as a manifestation of the super-ego, holding forever the image of the ideal human as a limitation and as a sign to follow at the crossroads. The id is a tormentor for our spirit which is constantly redeemed by the super-ego in order to constrain the ego. Thirdly, the appearance of Mr. Hyde, every assault commenced by him against the children, the only entrance into Dr. Jekyll’s laboratory through a back-door and Utterson’s nightmares show the ill state of the Victorian society and its flaws, being double faced: rotten underneath and shining at the surface.

The religious perspective is quite scarce and subjective, but this is how I perceive Jekyll’s dwelling. Jekyll ‘halves’ himself in order to continuously feel as a respectable person and at the same time to be able to experience the reckless life and give free reign to his hidden self. Even the name of his counterpart, Mister Hyde, implies the fact that the other person is a savage decay in the courtesy of the dominant side, a cloak for that part of the psyche which wants to dissimulate and quench its thirst for an immersive experience in life without any constraints. Every human feels at some point that society proves to be claustrophobic, that society proves to imprison his/her tendencies and every human feels the need to taste from the forbidden fruit. It is clear that the story is built based on a slightly altered Christian perspective because of the vision regarding the human duality and the free will over our possibilities of thinking and acting.

There are strong distinctions between Jekyll and Hyde, which clearly mark the border between good and evil, suggesting the idea of transition between those stances of personality. Jekyll’s transformation is triggered by his own will, by his own inner voice which is calling him from within, for redemption, on behalf of his counterpart that was trapped. In other beliefs, these two forces have intertwined fates, coexisting from the beginning and influencing one another, being the source of existence for each other, while Christianity sees the evil as the capital enemy, as a flaw of the Creation.

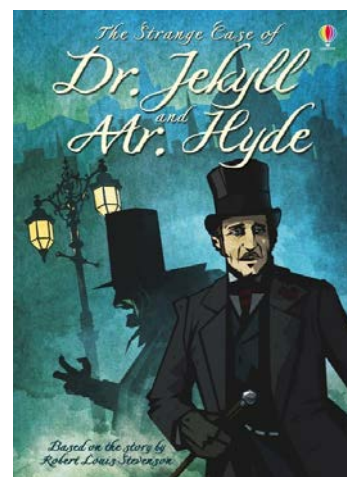
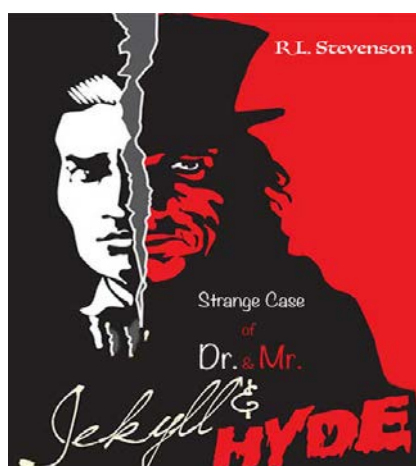
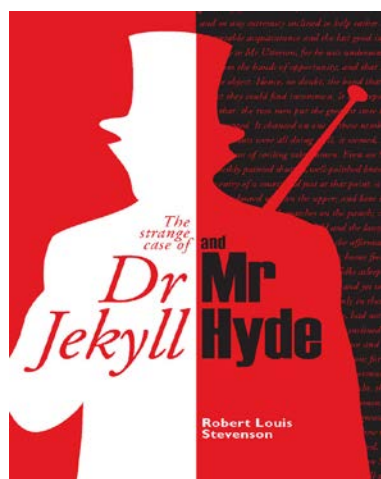


Stevenson's perspective on human nature blends in with the Christian view. Yes, indeed, we are dominated by two forces and there are two personas, but the sphere containing both of them has to break down these forces and to plunge into oblivion. Briefly, one has to perish dragging the other one after itself. There we can notice that Jekyll's method of stepping over the unwritten laws of the universe seemed to be useless, since his hidden desires and deeds cannot be isolated from the other force and thus, the whole entity is punished for breaking the boundaries. This point in the plot resembles in a way or another the Final Judgement from the Bible, and Jekyll himself commences his journey to the eternal damnation with his decision to draw the line. Even if he split his psyche trying to make a clear cut distinction between his elements, to be untainted, life pursues the normal path and punishes both actants at the call of the good side, the summoner and the executioner of his evil essence.

In my opinion, this story is not just a far-fetched adaptation being regarded as outlandish and remote because of the prism through which anguish and pain blend in our hearts. On the contrary, it simply launches a tremendous quest for finding our true self which is without form, but which can be corrupted or enchanted fairly easy, through a simple deed which can be responsible for a chain of events that makes Pandora's box be perceived as being non-violent.

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TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES-BETWEEN A "ZENITHAL PARADISE AND A NADIRAL HELL"

Denisia Pleșcău, RE, II

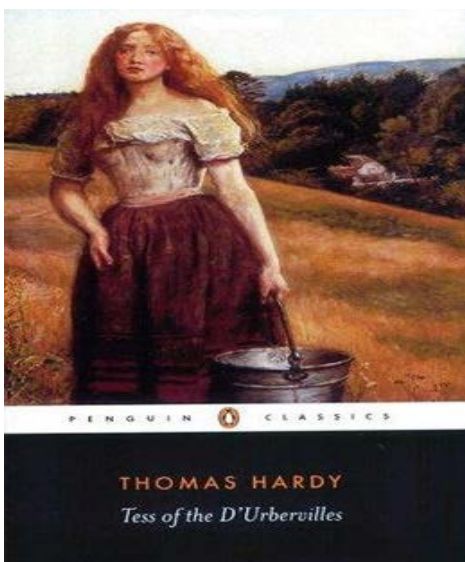
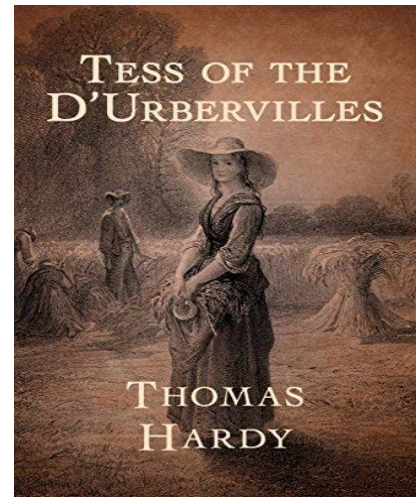
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

Tess d'Urberville, Thomas Hardy's heroine, emphasizes a character very well individualized, who lives her sorrows, her pains, her love, her redemption, all at their strongest intensity, outlining both the beauty and the hardship of Victorian existence.

The novel starts in an energetic manner. Tess's father, Jack Durbeyfield, finds out from a parson that he descends from the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles. The name of his ancestor was Pagan d'Urberville. It is an interesting fact that his name was "*Pagan*", because this might be a starting point regarding Tess's struggles – it might be that Tess had to pay for her ancestors' mistakes through her hardship; the echoes of her ancestors' mistakes were to be felt by Tess at their strongest intensity by one who belongs to this, apparently, respectable family.

Tess appears in the novel, from the beginning, with the image of a pure, innocent child, whose feeble steps want to march victoriously on the path of existence, by herself. She's at the age when she thinks that everything is possible, that everything can be achieved, she holds the power to do anything. While dancing, she meets her true love, Angel Clare. She doesn't succeed in dancing with him, because he left exactly when he could have danced with her. Their hearts beat in the same rhythm when their eyes met, which emphasizes the fact that they touched each other in spirit, but not physically, through dance.

"She was so modest, so expressive, she had looked so soft in her thin white gown that he felt he had acted stupidly." (p. 20)



Angel acted stupidly from the start. In a white gown, Tess represented the image of purity, simplicity, innocence, he had the chance to touch her, but he remained only with her "upset look" in his heart, and with the vibrations of her existence.

A sequence where Tess's courage and strong will are outlined is that where she chooses to help her parents in delivering the beehives to the retailers, in Casterbridge, outside the protective mundi center, where she lived happily, safe and sound. She could have asked for help from one of the boys with whom she had danced, but she considered herself strong enough to go by herself (with her little brother who kept her company), this being her first step to maturity. But the journey is a failure. She had fallen asleep and had been awakened by the horse's groans. Here it is met the motif of sleep, which marks a state of vulnerability; it removed her rationality and made her unaware of the activities of the waking world. In that moment, she was a prey for the outside world.

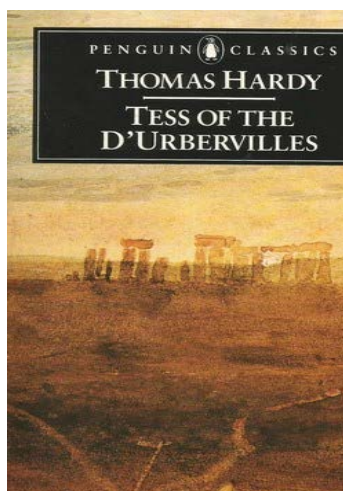
Unfortunately, Tess assists at her horse's death, here being scratch the first image of blood from the novel.

"...she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops." (p. 41)

The crimson blood, this intense picture, might be considered a sign that Tess, at some point in life, will suffer so much that she will touch her own destruction (she will receive such an intense and sick love that she will not be able to protect herself against the amalgam of struggles).

"Heu-heu-heu! Out of the frying-pan into the fire!" (p. 98)

Feeling guilty because of the loss of Prince, Tess accepts to ask for help from her “supposed” relative, from Mrs. d’Urberville. She has the mischance to meet Alec d’Urberville, her “cousin”. He is so attracted to her that, in the end, he chooses to harm her, through his passion. Tess, still innocent, trusting him, had chosen to go home by his side; one night, when the moon chose to hide its delightful light, Tess lost her most precious thing, her chastity. On that night, the Divinity’s eyes had chosen to sleep profoundly. *“But, might some say, where was Tess’s guardian angel?... Why it was that upon this feminine tissue...?”* (p. 107)



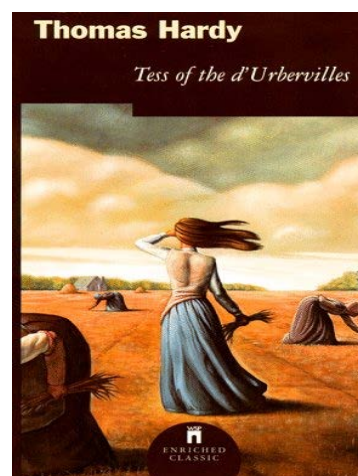
Here, the editorial omniscience is identified. With a God’s like authority, because he knows everything, the narrator asks for the reader’s opinion regarding the event, he wants to make the reader feel the entire agony of the character or, at least, to notice the characters’ mistakes and analyse the mesh of details through the eyes of his own experience.

After she chose to stay away from Alec, Tess gave birth to a feeble child-who dies after a little while. When Tess asks her father to bring the parson, for the child’s Christianization, he refuses (because he considered himself a “respectable” man, who did not need the parson’s help; he was really proud of the fact that he has “great” ancestors). Tess is forced again to assist at a terrible event, the death of her child-whom she Christianized and gave the name of Sorrow. Maybe she named him like this because, indeed, he brought her memories of the past, which terrified her life, her daily existence.

Why was Tess living in such an agony? Even though her parents accepted her, Tess’s soul was wretched-she was torturing herself with the thought that she had not respected the Christian standards, that her soul was lost forever and it will never be saved, the thought she would never be forgiven by God, by society or by her parents. Feeling the tension from her home, a tension which was determined because of the fact that she did not manage to find a home of her own and a husband (the main roles of the woman who lived in the Victorian times), Tess chooses to leave to work at a dairy, to the Valley of the Great Dairies, to Talbothays. Here, Tess lives the most wonderful part of her life. She is reunited with Angel and develops, with little steps, but in a concrete way, a really beautiful love story.

The description of their first meeting, when they get to talk to each other freely, being only the two of them in the middle of nature, outlines a romantic manner of presenting the atmosphere; the narrator wanted (maybe) to forget, for a little, about the coldness of the Victorian period by introducing a little warmth from the Romantic period.

It was a summer evening and Tess was enjoying the silence-which was suddenly *“broken by the strumming of strings... the juicy grass sent up mists of pollen at a touch...blooming weeds emitting offensive smells...”* (p. 180). An amalgam of sensations is outlined (auditory/tactile/olfactory/kinaesthetic imagery)-the technique of synesthesia being used; it is the description of a piece of paradise which intensifies the feelings of the two protagonists. The evolution of their love is supported by nature-which secures a propitious setting.



Angel was touching the strings of a harp. In old times, the harp was used for healing and creating a state of control: “it soothes the mind”. The vibrations of this instrument were meant to bring to light the true sensitive parts of the two souls which touched in that moment of silence and harmony, through their enchanted presence. The cruel Victorian world was forgotten and a new paradise was created-the paradise of the two souls.

Unfortunately, Angel marries Tess, confesses his sin, Tess chooses to tell him the truth about her life (although her mother told her to keep it a secret). Even though their confessions were equally grave, Angel (whose father was a pastor and the religious principles were still rooted in his heart) leaves Tess again, doing the same mistake like he had done a few years ago.

Tess faces a prolonged agony at Flintcomb Ash-even the name of this place, ash, outlines the fact that, from now on, Tess’s soul is destined to burn because of suffering until it turns into ashes. She wants to meet Angel’s parents, but she has the misfortune to meet his brothers and hear them badmouthing her, and she loses her courage. Instead of this, she meets Alec-who was a preacher now, but when he sees her, the passion for her awakens again. He asks her to swear on an old stone that she will not exert her charms upon him. Tess swears on that stone, but when she asks about the legend of that place, she’s terrified: the stone was not a Holy Cross, but it marked the place where a man had been hanged (again, a sign of ill-omen). Alec gives up on his mission as a preacher and tries again to seduce Tess.

“Alec tried to take her hand, but the buff-glove was on it, and he seized only the rough leather fingers which didn’t express the life or shape of those within.” (p. 464) This sequence outlines the fact that Alec had access to Tess’s body, but he did not succeed in touching her soul and mind. Through antithesis, Angel managed to touch her heart, but lost her forever because he realized, too late, that the values of those Victorian times were a cruel punishment regarding their lives and that he should not have left. Another detail is outlined in when Alec tells Tess about the d’Urberville Coach-legend.

“...a non-existent coach can only be heard by one of d’Urberville blood, and it is held to be of ill-omen to the one who hears it. It has to do with a murder, committed by one of the family centuries ago.” (p. 519) The irony of life is that history repeats itself. Tess ends up killing Alec.

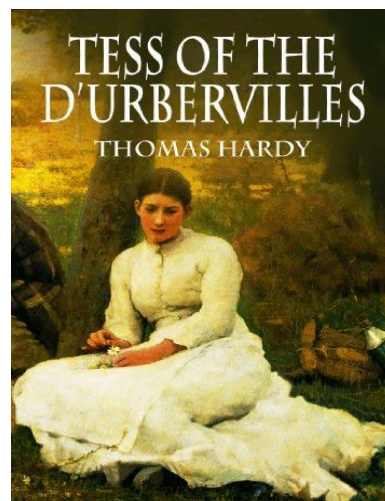
We meet again the image of sleep at Stonehenge. If Tess could have had the force to run faster, not dozing off so often, maybe she could have had the chance to save herself. But it was the punishment of Fate, which always does her job regarding Justice on earth.

Finally, Tess of the D’Urbervilles recreates, in a vivid manner, the effects of those Victorian principles, which led a soul to destruction, but also the fact that a poor soul had to be sacrificed in order to redeem the mistakes of her ancestors. Tess touched a shred of the zenithal paradise, but ended her life in a nadiral hell.

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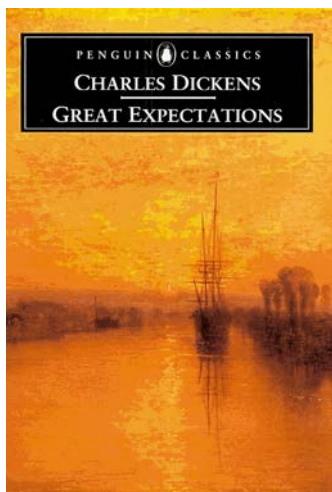


THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

Cătălin Bărbunță, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

During the Victorian era, both men and women wanted to accumulate a social position – the highest, the best. Even if women's most important interest should have been marriage and they should have obeyed their husbands, there are in Charles Dickens' novel some female characters who prefer not to listen to the moral laws of the period, but who are later punished for their disobedience. This 'accumulation' represents one of the Victorian functions, among other two which are 'violation' and 'punishment'. Almost every



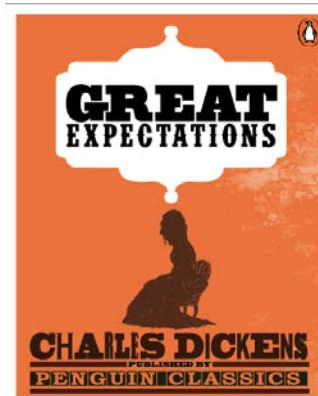
character tries to accumulate something, more often social position, money, fortune, and sometimes love, but in order to do that, they have to transgress the boundaries of their social class trying to reach the highest possible position. Though they often succeed in achieving what they desire, the function of 'violation' makes them pay for their audacity.

There are in *Great Expectations* three important female characters that are emblematic for the already presented Victorian functions. The first one is Mrs. Joe Gargery, Philip Pirrip's sister, who tries and succeeds, throughout the first part of the novel, in controlling her husband and brother by embodying the leader in the house. Her boldness to accumulate such control and power upon her husband, who from the Victorians' moral point of view, is superior to her, violates the limits of her role. Her only preoccupations should be represented by the aspects of housekeeping such as cooking and cleaning, knitting and sewing, and children's education. For breaking the unwritten laws, Mrs. Joe Gargery is punished. If, at first, she had wanted to

control the others, after the 'punishment', she could not even control herself; she could not speak, walk, take care of herself, and she eventually suffers from a painful death.

Another female character who embodies a Victorian woman unwilling to respect the borders of her position is Miss Havisham, the spinster who was jilted by her lover on her wedding day. She represents the most intriguing and interesting character in the novel; she refuses to take off her wedding dress which she has been wearing since the wedding day. After she 'accumulates' a daughter and a certain amount of money from her father, she ignores her limits by considering superior to men and by trying to get revenge on them. She adopts a child, Estella, raises her on such principles in order to transform her in a heartbreaker of men's hearts. For the violation of the natural order in the Victorian society in which men are superior and women must only submit and feel flattered if they were given attention by a man, Miss Havisham refuses to accept a lower position and she is one responsible of many broken hearts and mental pains. As a result, she is the one who suffers a physical pain, she is physically mutilated the way she mutilated Estella's soul. Her dress catches fire and causes its owner horrible suffering and, eventually, death.

The third and the last female character that represents together with the other two the types of 'castrating' women is Estella, Miss Havisham's adoptive daughter. She is "femme fatale" who, instead of being very flattered of men's attention, plays with their feelings and abuses them psychologically in order to revenge her adoptive mother. She defies the Victorian "angel in the house" typology in her desire of achieving revenge on men and in her violation of the limits of inferiority. In the men's world, "la femme fatale" seduces her victims and plays with them as if they were puppets. However, her courage is not left unpenalized because her actions have physical consequences: her husband, Bentley Drummle, uses his authority on her in a physical manner in order to provoke her pain.



Nevertheless, there are female characters that cannot be included in the category of the domineering women. These women are called “anfels in the house” and their only desire is to find a good match – a good husband, and build themselves a home in which they can exert their influence, but without disobeying their husbands. Such characters are Biddy and Clara who eventually become the wives of Joe Gargery, Pip’s former brother-in-law, and Herbert Pocket, Pip’s best friend in London. They do not intend to break the moral values, yet they create a great contrast with the women whose exclusive desire is to destroy men’s masculinity.

In conclusion, the Victorian female characters can be generally divided in two important categories. The first one is represented by the domineering women who are nonconformist and rebellious, and who fight for their cause. They usually want to prove that women are worthier than men, that they are capable of so much more. The second category is the one of the obedient wives. They are the ones who listen to what their husbands have to say, they do not cross the borders imposed by their positions in society, whose interests are only related to the familial aspects.

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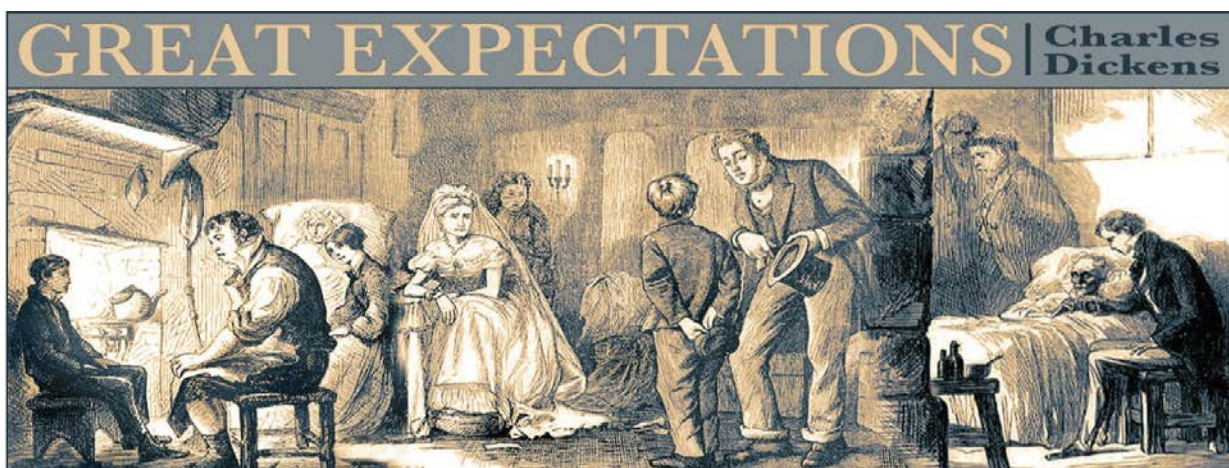
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ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CHARACTERS IN *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

Rosana-Andreia Botezatu, RE, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

The Picture of Dorian Gray is the most important work written by Oscar Wilde. Due to its controversial story, the book was edited and published several times. The novel was firstly published in 1980, in the July issue of "Lipincott's Monthly Magazine", where, before publication, the magazine's editor deleted approximately five hundred word, because he found the story to be too indecent (McCrum, 2014).

The title of the novel is extremely relevant and not randomly chosen, the picture of Dorian Gray being the key element of the whole book, because along with the words of the dandy Lord Henry Wotton, the portrait influences the naïve Dorian Gray to start his quest for eternal youth and to live a life dominated by dark temptations and desires.

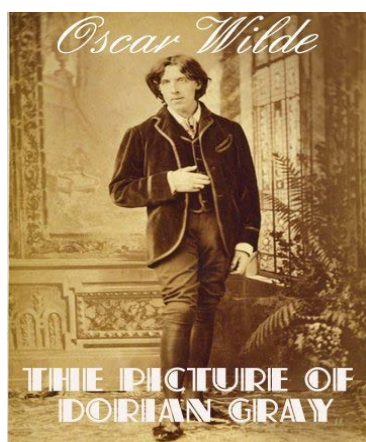
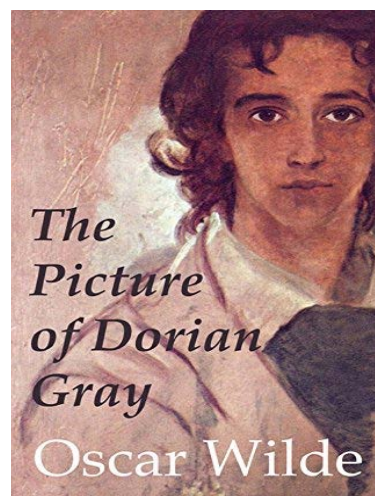
The novel uses a third person, omniscient (editorial) point of view, in which the narrator is not a character, so he does not partake in the action narrated, but he has full access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters, exposing them to the reader (example: "He was dazed with horror" p. 198; "He felt that the time had really come for making his choice" p. 56).

The story takes place in England, in the Victorian era (around the end of 1800 and the start of 1900). The first scene of the novel takes place in Basil Hallward's house, this is also where Dorian Gray appears in the story for the first time. The scenery is quite fitting, the author describing an aesthetically pleasing house, a beautiful garden filled with a variety of mesmerizing flowers, the place seems to reflect Dorian's angelical beauty. As time passes, Dorian's beauty remains, but the places where he spends his time change, Basil's stunning garden now replaced with grimy streets, grassless squares, third rate theaters and so on (these miserable places reflect his soul filling with dark, filthy thoughts and the aging of the picture painted by Basil Hallward).

In Oscar Wilde's novel, the characters are quite complex and, using the classification made by Algirdas Greimas, they can be categorized as: subjects, objects (of desire), senders, receivers, helpers and opponents (although a character can be put in multiple categories, it all depends on the perspective in which a character is analyzed).

In this case, Dorian Gray is considered to be the subject (the person around which the whole books takes place), his object of desire is, undoubtedly, eternal youth. He does not want to grow old, and considers elders to be disgusting creatures. His desire for eternal youth sparks in the moment when Lord Henry talks to him about living life at its fullest and the regret he will feel once he grows old. Lord Wotton becomes the sender, the character that pushes the subject (Dorian Gray) to start his quest. Gray's once dear friend, Basil Hallward, can be viewed as a helper, because with his painting, he unknowingly helps Dorian in his journey towards eternal boyhood. Once he expressed his intention to marry the innocent actress Sibyl Vane, Gray gains an opponent (Sibyl's brother, James Vane). Even if James leaves for Australia, once Sibyl 'accidentally' dies, he comes back to England and swears to himself that he will find this "Prince Charming" that killed his

sisters, and will murder him, but, in the end, he suffers the same fate as his sister.



As a true Victorian novel, women are somehow inferior to men, described as an object of sole pleasure. Lord Henry Wotton views women as a fascinating thing to study: “My dear boy, no woman is a genius: women are decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. They represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as we men represent the triumph of mind over morals” (p. 78). This statement made by Lord Wotton perfectly reflects how women were seen in the Victorian era, an object of decoration, pleasing to the eye, that didn’t have much to say.

The main theme, the centre of the novel is youth, and the way in which it rapidly vanishes. Lord Henry Wotton persuades Dorian with his cunning words and makes him realise just how fast life and the joy brought by youth pass. By wishing, praying with such ardor to remain forever young, Dorian Gray fulfills his wish, at the age of thirty eight he still had a child-like, innocent beauty, but, his life was led by temptation and sin. In the end, his only object of desire seems to become fatal.

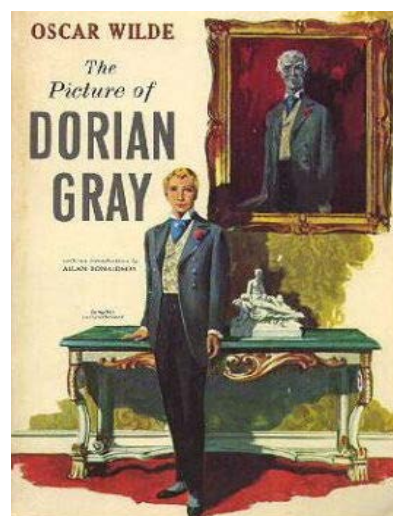
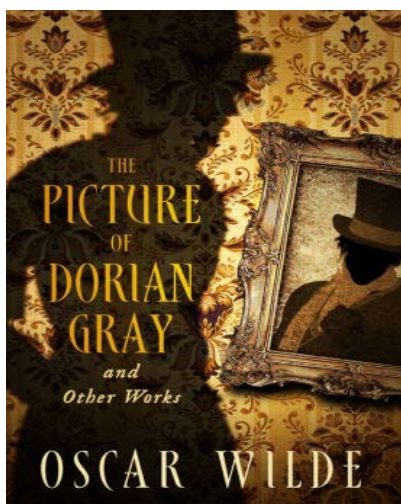
In conclusion, Oscar Wilde’s novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can be categorized as a philosophical, decadent novel, not a Victorian one, because it exposes the life and fate of a young boy who lets his life be dominated by sin, dark desires, and the idea that it is better to live and die young, as opposite of growing old.

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The present story was a project in which we were asked to create a story in which we both used and explained the use of some tenses. I chose to make tenses actual characters in my story and I hope to both charm and teach you

I want to tell you a story of old days. Once upon a time there used to be no rules, and no time, everything lived in harmony and it seemed like no one would dare to disturb the beauty of life. The protectors of happiness as they were called, five in number, were equally powerful except for one who would not exercise too much. However,

Eden was faced with a great problem. The sneaky and selfish Grammar wanted to be the most cherished and most loved by people, to stand out above all protectors, to overdo what he lacked in strength in the most shifty way. He arrived in front of the other protectors one day and said:

“People talked to me yesterday and asked me to tell you this: we have been given names and they have chosen me as your leader. I am Grammar, above you all, untouchable and not to be questioned.”

He looked at the first guardian and said:

“You shall be named **Past Simple**, you were done yesterday, and you will forever have lived and finished things a month ago, never to approach the present day again.”

He looked at the second guardian who had fear in his eyes.

“As soon as I spoke with humans, they already decided to call you **Past Perfect**. You had been banished before and hadn’t had a chance to defend yourself. You will be placed further in the past than Past Simple.”

The second guardian had hoped that Grammar was not serious, but Grammar already talked to the third guardian and said to him:

“YOU! Your rank is even more com...”

“STOP the first guardian”, Past Simple shouted. “Nobody would agree with this madness”, but slowly he began to vanish, like an echo in a fixed past, and there was nothing for him to say in order to impact upon the present.

Grammar continued: “Your rank is even more complicated. Your name is bound to be **Present Perfect** and I will never be finished with you. Your defending will have no end. As...”

At the sight of all these, the fourth guardian shouted so loudly that his scream is still going on around the world even today. He was named **Present Perfect Continuous**.

Finally, the last guardian named now **Present Simple** couldn’t bear to hear any more so he turned into stone. He is still in the same place, and, regularly, birds come and sing near him. He is forever true, doomed to be just an unmovable stone, he never moves, but sometimes he weeps in silence.

I have told you this story that puts sadness in every heart to know that life used to be happy and we would live in harmony, if it were not for Grammar, the destroyer of life.



BOX OFFICE SUCCESS IN 2018: WHAT FILLED THE THEATERS?

George-Cosmin Cristea, CRP, II
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

Every movie theater has about 200 seats, but how often do so many tickets get sold for just one film? Well, I can tell you that I've seen a theater overfill with people only a few times, and this happened at the premiere of two movies that got released this year: *Avengers: Infinity War* and *The Nun*. Before I go further into talking about each one, let me preface by saying that they were both highly-anticipated movies and both part of bigger cinematic universes which have attracted a lot of viewers throughout the years.

The first one, *Avengers - Infinity War* is the third movie of the *Avengers* trilogy, as well as the eighteenth installment in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* (or *MCU* for short). This movie reunites most of the superheroes and characters of the previous installments in the fiercest clash they've had yet : they have to face *Thanos*, the Mad Titan – a fearsome alien whose goal is wiping out half of all living beings so the universe can get a sense of balance – as well as his army of highly trained acolytes. This is one of, if not the biggest movie of the whole year in terms of production costs, cast diversity and story hype-building. This enormous piece of cinematography needed about 350 million \$ in order to be produced, a price which seems as if it didn't even exist after the movie had earned more than 2 billion \$ from box office sales.



The cast counts more than 100 actors, out of which 25 were only playing the heroes and the antagonist, *Thanos*. The most renowned names that made the list for *Infinity War* include *Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man)*, *Chris Evans (Captain America)*, *Benedict Cumberbatch (Doctor Strange)*, *Tom Holland (Spider-Man)*, *Sebastian Stan (Bucky Barnes)* or *Josh Brolin (Thanos)*. The overcrowding of the theater caught me by surprise at first, but it makes sense when I look back at it because the movie is a rollercoaster ride of emotions for those who grew up with the comic books of these heroes, as well as for those who grew up with the previous movies that appeared in the past 10 years. The film is well worth a watch, no matter what genre you're usually rooting for.



Next up is *The Nun*, the fifth installment of the *Conjuring Universe*, so basically yet another gothic supernatural horror film. The action is centered on *Father Burke* and *Sister Irene*, who were sent to the isolated church of *St. Cartha* from *Romania* to investigate the mysterious death of a nun which used to live there. We find out that the church is actually cursed, that a demonic force inhabits the place and that it developed a passion for killing people. *Father Burke*, *Sister Irene* and a local, *Frenchie*, now have to trap and exorcise the demon - which takes up on the form of a nun – so no more people would die.

This movie wasn't meant to compete with the other one, thing which can be reflected in the big differences in terms of production and cast: this film only needed 22 million \$ to make, and the distribution doesn't include too many big names. The *Conjuring Universe* has quite a few fans too and therefore the hype for this movie was pretty high – hence why the movie

theater was crammed with people at this one's premiere as well.

As for how good this film turned out to be, I'd say it wasn't as good as the previous titles from the Conjuring Universe because the terror was built on a few poorly executed jump-scares and not much else besides that. The movie was basically telling you when you should get scared and this didn't work out too great in my opinion since it ruined the tension of those scary scenes. Character acting was on point though, and the CGI (computer generated imagery) was quite good for a movie with such a low budget. The movie was pretty much made just for fan service and I'd say it satisfied longtime fans since it earned more than 300 million \$ from box office sales. If you're a supernatural horror movie amateur, this movie is definitely for you, but it can also be praised for the actors' satisfactory work and for good cinematographical effects.

In the end, when looking back at these two movies we can notice two common denominators: they are both part of a bigger whole – the MCU and the Conjuring Universe, respectively – and they've both attracted a lot of viewers to the theater. Based on this, we can say that being part of a big cinematic universe seems to be the key of success these days because the movie will sell anyway just because it's part of that universe.



Adrian-Valentin Ionicel, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

This student is different. He said the first sentence, all right, he looks healthy, his eyes go back to the page and suddenly the disappointment: “Erm...” A sort of verbal virus that seems to have infected all students. We still do not know the causes of its occurrence, but the unprecedented gravity of the situation is terrifying.

“Erm...” is the perfect virus, very contagious and subtle. Is there any treatment? The effects of this “Erm...” is to make the ears bleed, it is the noise between the verbal breaks of the mind, but it is not silence. Silence, my dear silence, now you have disappeared. Maybe we have to give up and acknowledge its importance in the English language.



Leaving aside the funny aspect of the “Erm...” situation, we can observe that it has infected all students, a painful 100% who do not even realize that they are sick, hence the

gravity of the viral spread. The auditory level of the discomfort that “Erm...” causes is obviously higher than ever, so teachers tend, maybe subconsciously, to score poorly the students who exceed the average of thirty “Erm...” per minute. Staying on the verge of para-verbal tics, discreet but fast-paced, forgotten but always present, destroying without mercy the already massacred English language, the emitter is probably involuntarily trying to transmit the idea that he is thinking. Therefore, we could replace “Cogito ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”) with “Erm..., there I am.”



Usually, when visiting a website, a window pop up appears and asks users to enter some data or perform certain actions. You then confirm it by passing a CAPTCHA test. The term stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart. CAPTCHA is a very popular program designed in the early 2000s, to prevent software robots (commonly referred as “bots”) from spamming websites. Spam bots are computer programs that automatically fill in forms, create accounts or buy products. Its final goal is either to abuse a service faster than a human or to overload the servers with requests that cannot be processed in time.

CAPTCHA makes the distinction between humans and robots by relying on specific traits that only humans possess. For example, if the IP address which requests an image is different from the IP address that requests the page, then this indicates an attack, case in which you will be asked to select images which, most of the times, are too complicated for current bots to do. Computers send hundreds of requests every second but CAPTCHA identifies this unusual behaviour, blocks it and offers safety and security by saving your time, money and identity. These twisted words which enable or block entries into websites may seem unnecessary or annoying but CAPTCHA secures the integrity of the online presence and renders the best possible service. This programme brings the following important advantages:

- it protects registration forms in a number of websites such as Gmail, Hotmail, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, etc., and offers free registration to the users. It is useful to set up Captchas to be sure that all registrations are done by humans and not programmes or bots;
- it prevents spam comments on search engines as Yahoo, Google or Bing;
- it blocks fake or spam orders in the case of online shopping making it more secure;
- it protects email accounts against malicious people or hackers.

The program presents an image with distorted text into a box, and invites the user to reproduce the computer-generated characters given as in the image bellow:



CAPTCHAs can be easily solved by a large majority of web users but proves inaccessible for blind, death, or dyslexic users as it keeps them logged out of a site, as if they were bots.

The fact that it uses the Latin alphabet is a disadvantage because, with the use of intelligent software, CAPTCHAs can be cracked.

If you are among the people who do not like the CAPTCHA concept, you can opt for other alternatives such as:

- **the math puzzle** in which you offer the solution to a simple mathematical problem;
- **the interactive games** which calls for the user to undertake completion of an interactive game prior to submitting a form;
- **the timing trap** in which you take a few minutes to fill in the different fields present in a web form.

Another great method of keeping spammers at bay without causing any kind of annoyance to users is to replace CAPTCHA with a plain and simple checkbox (with the help of a client-side Java Script) and spambots will not be capable of ticking the box. There are numerous advantages for incorporating CAPTCHA technologies within a website which offer powerful solutions to complex problems.

In 2008, the creator of CAPTCHA, Luis von Ahn (the co-founder of the popular language-learning platform Duolingo), founded another cyber-security system programme, reCAPTCHA, a machine learning programme that scanned numbers and letters from books and newspapers that couldn't be read by computers. ReCAPTCHA allowed for the entire New York Times' archives together with the Google Books' catalogue to be digitalised. At one point, Google has also used reCAPTCHA to improve its Maps service by using pictures of street signs and house numbers allowing users to type in what they see.



Von Ahn observed that millions of CAPTCHAs are solved every year and hinted that this processing power might be used for something useful, that is where reCAPTCHA came in, and brought new things to the table. Over 950 million people have contributed to the digitalisation of the archival texts through reCAPTCHA.

As artificial intelligence has been continually evolving, in 2014, the Age of Intelligence got a way to crack even the most complex CAPTCHA and reCAPTCHA images with 99.9 percent accuracy which made the programmes useless as security devices. In their place, Google developed the “No CAPTCHA reCAPTCHA” system which relies on the online users' behaviour prior to the security checkpoint. All you have to do is simply check the box which asks you to confirm with a single statement: “I am not a robot” and continue with your work.

If you are suspected of spambot tendencies, checking the box will open up a new challenge, like identifying the content in a photo array.

Only time will say how the race between internet security experts and spambots will evolve; it mostly depends on how the bots and hackers will adapt it, and there is no question about it, they will find a way and when that happens, pay attention!

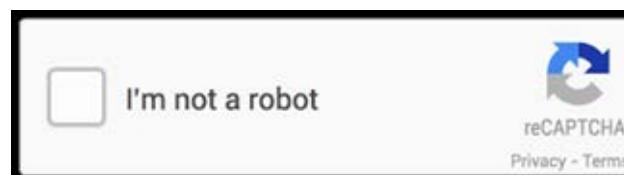
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The Sweet-Bread Students

Why sweet bread? Because if we search for information about them, about the “stuffing”, that’s what we’ll find – a sweet bread recipe. They are here and they are not, a divine anti-presence. Overlooked, never catching the eye, they seem to be more of a challenge for the teachers when trying to remember their names.

The Great-Wall-of-China Students

Always with sharp senses and frowning eyebrows, they are so defensive that they seem ready to quarrel with anyone who dares to question their “height” and “length” of their knowledge. Their only purpose is to protect their own state (of ignorance). This type of students can cause migraines. Approach them with care.

The UK Students

Enjoyable at first glance, with a particular and attractive personality, they consider themselves above all and everything, always prepared to break away from the rest in an unmotivated arrogance – typical stiff upper lip.

The Casanova Students

Generally, we can spot them in the same place and time daily. The most common “hunting places” are the hallways or the entrances, where you may find them seated in a nonchalant position with their legs slightly sprawled, investigating the prey and waiting for the right moment. Results may vary.

The Mom-and-Dad’s-Offspring Students

Best defined as the lack of one’s own will, they’re here because their parents have to be proud a couple times a year, and brag how their lovely children are in college, purposeless, and among us only for the world to see, they could be compared to the engineering branches of the library.

The Big-Foot Students

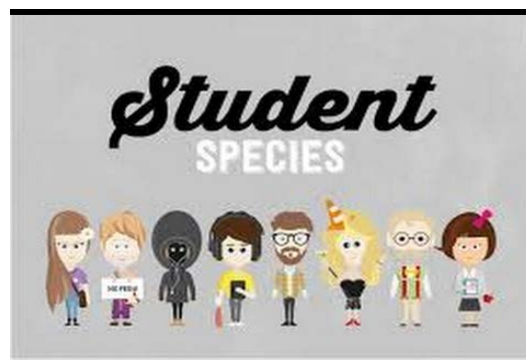
A mystical and unrealistic occurrence, we can’t be even sure of their existence, as there is little evidence, but there are some who share stories that later become myths. The chances of spotting one in classes are similar to those of winning the lottery.

The Nadia Comăneci Student

There can be only one, and only the session can say if the record will be reached again.

The Sportsman Students

They will run wholeheartedly to ask questions, dig out the primordial existential bases and causes of anything. The teacher will be struck by terribly unnecessary questions; such students lay many hurdles for teachers in their didactic undertaking.



WHY WRITE A BUSINESS PLAN?

Cristina Elena Stratulat, Business Management, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

Being a student of Business Management at “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău I am really taking into consideration starting up a business. I have at least twenty five ideas but as we already know we first need to write a business plan. So, I thought that I can share with you a few tips that will help you understand better the idea of creating this plan.

Then, I will reveal some of those brilliant business ideas I have been telling you about, but not all of them, in case you might be tempted to steal them...

Research shows that start-up businesses which have prepared a BUSINESS PLAN are more likely to survive than the ones which have not. The business plan is a plan of how the business will develop over a period of time, like one or two years.

Writing a business plan is important for a potential start-up business for **three main reasons**:



1. Writing the plan forces the would-be entrepreneur to look at every key aspect of the future business. It is easy to concentrate on some aspects of running a business, for instance the product to be sold or its location. Most start-ups have some idea about what might give the business a competitive advantage against other businesses. But other aspects are often not thought of well, such as finance or tax.

2. If the business is to borrow money from a bank, it will expect the existence of a business plan. It uses the business plan to judge and assess whether the business is likely to be creditworthy.

3. The plan is useful once the business has started to trade. The actual operation of the business can be compared to the forecasts contained in the plans. This will highlight problems that might occur. The business owner can then take steps to overcome the problems.

This being said, the contents of a business plan can be obtained from any of the major banks in leaflets they produce on starting up a business. They give a very detailed list of points which must be addressed in the plan. These include the following: an executive summary, the business and its objectives, the business opportunity, the market, personnel, buying and production, premises and equipment and financial forecast (a variety of financial forecasts need to be included).

Future entrepreneurs (like you, dear student fellows) setting up a business can turn to a wide variety of sources of help, including friends, family and work colleagues, bank managers, accountants, small business advisors, business contacts and local enterprise agencies.

There is actually a governmental programme in Romania called Start-up Nation Romania. It is a programme that encourages and stimulates the creation and development of small and medium enterprises, implemented by the Ministry for Business, Trade and Entrepreneurship. The main objective of the programme is to stimulate the creation and development of small and medium enterprises and to improve their economic performance, creating new jobs on the labour market for disadvantaged people, unemployed people and graduates, increasing investment in innovative technologies.¹

Romanian entrepreneurs who want to enrol in Start-Up Nation 2019 can receive 200,000 lei (approximately 43,000 Euros) for eligible expenses such as: equipment and workspaces, vans and cars, but only one per company, equipment for obtaining energy, IT equipment, office furniture etc. Goods purchased under the programme must be new, not used.

¹More details can be found here: <https://start-upnation.ro/>, accessed January 25, 2019.

Now, coming back to some of those business ideas I have about starting up a business. It is easy to think up a business idea that is already common in the marketplace, but creating a unique brand takes courage and patience. You do not want to be just another small business with nothing unique to offer, so it also needs to be new. I have been thinking for a long time of opening my own interior design agency but I would like to create an application that will help customers create their own house or room following the rules of design and colours. A second business idea would be represented by paper bags, because in 2019 the European Union no longer allows the use of plastic bags, instead they encourage paper bags because it is the most environmentally friendly option. Another business idea I have been thinking about is an online shop for professional make-up and skin care products, because the cosmetics market is estimated to grow significantly in the next 10 years so there is a big opportunity in this area.

So, do not forget to create your own business plan before setting up a (good and promising) business. It will help you a lot!

Webography:

<https://start-upnation.ro/>, accessed January 25, 2019.



1. The Renaissance period

In history, the Renaissance period is associated with the cultural and artistic principles of the movement called Humanism¹. This period marked the end of the Middle Ages and also the beginning of the modern times. It started between the 14th and the 15th centuries in Italy, and then spread around Europe, taking the form of the Mannerist style at the end of the 16th century.

As in ideology or science, this concept made changes in art as well, so the Italian artists, in the middle of the 14th century began to rediscover and reinterpret the style adopted by the Greek and Roman Antiquity. The artistic Italian Renaissance began with the painter Giotto² (1266-1337), who had an important influence on the subsequent artists of the 15th century. While rediscovering the Roman art, people became fascinated by this civilization, culture and even by its ruins.

On the other hand, even though the literature of Antiquity had been studied earlier (in the Late Middle Ages, between 1300-1485), the works of ancient writers quickly spread their knowledge in all Europe, also with the help of the newly invented printing press³.

The doctrine of the humanist trend centred on the human being instead of God, and answered questions related to humans, the world around us or life itself. The followers of this movement were the Humanists, linguists skilled in philosophy, in the writing and decoding of different languages. Also, intrigued by all fields of Antiquity, they could accurately translate the ancient texts, for a better understanding of the old ideas, as they “wanted to change the position of man in society”⁴.

Another view upon the Renaissance is that many thinkers of different nations criticized the abuses of the Church, although they believed in God, as well as in the idea that “man is free and responsible”⁵. Erasmus (1467–1536) and the monk Luther (1483–1546) believed that not money, but faith is the one that saves the soul of man. This is why the latter created the Protestant Church, to be separated from the Papacy and its influence.



2. The Vitruvian Man: origins

The Vitruvian Man is the famous work of Leonardo da Vinci⁶, made in 1487, which was inspired from the sketches of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio⁷ and accompanied by important

¹In Philosophy, Humanism is “a variety of ethical theory and practice that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world and often rejects the importance of belief in God”, according to <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/humanism?s=t>, accessed November 17, 2018.

²Italian painter, he is also known as “the Father of the European painting”, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Giotto di Bondone, by Peter J. Murray, accessed November 17, 2018.

³Machine by which pictures and texts are transferred to paper by means of ink. It was invented in Strasbourg, 1439, by Johannes Guttenberg, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Printing press, by the editors, accessed November 17, 2018.

⁴<https://www.grandpalais.fr/en/article/renaissance/>, accessed November 17, 2018.

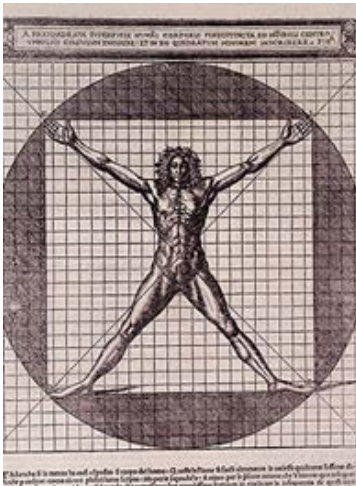
⁵Ibid.

⁶Also known as Leonardo from Vinci (1452-1519), a famous Italian painter, draftsman, sculptor, architect and engineer, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Leonardo da Vinci, by Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich accessed November 17, 2018.

⁷Vitruvius, in full Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (75 BC–15 BC), Roman architect, engineer, and author of the treatise *De architectura*, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vitruvius, by the editors, accessed November 17, 2018.

notes of the latter.⁸ This masterpiece has many titles, such as “The proportions of the human body according to Vitruvius” and describes the symmetry and the perfection of the human body, the ‘medical’ equilibrium that gives our body a stable position. The notes made by Vitruvius and the drawing itself are called “the Canon of proportions”⁹ and are used in calculating the perfect dimensions (or measures) of any phenomenon (buildings, distances, etc.), in reflecting the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm (literature or philosophy), and also in creation (art, architecture and literature).

Based on the treatise “De Architectura”, the Vitruvian Man is accompanied by references that form the proportions of the ideal body. First, the measuring units are: the finger, the palm, and the cubit. Then, the artist manages to create distances by means of these units: e.g. four fingers equals one palm; twenty-four palms equals one man, etc. With these representations, and with the two geometric forms that frame the man¹⁰ (the circle and the square), scientists from all fields reconstruct the meanings and the uses of this syncretic manifestation of different “arts”. The two drawings can be seen below, Vitruvius Pollio’s and da Vinci’s.



As previously said, the Vitruvian Man’s doctrine is applied in many sciences, for different research purposes.

3. Its application and influence in science and art forms

a. Mathematics

First, let us know who Leonardo Pisano (alias Fibonacci) was. This Italian mathematician elaborated a sequence of numbers named “the Fibonacci spiral”, a sequence obtained by summing the previous two numbers preceding the third:

0 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 56 89 144... a, b, c, d, \dots , where $c = a + b$; etc.

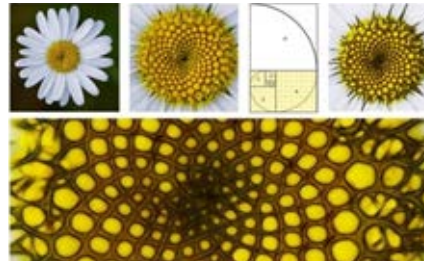
This equation is usually used to show the symmetry of nature. Two relevant examples are: the structure of the pine cones and the different types of daisies.

⁸Nardini, Bruno (2004), *Vita di Leonardo*, Giunti Editore, Firenze, Italy.

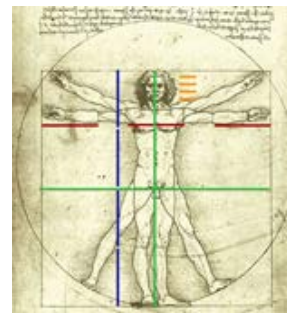
⁹According to “The Vitruvian Man - by Leonardo da Vinci”, <https://www.leonardodavinci.net/the-vitruvian-man.jsp>, accessed January 20, 2019.

¹⁰According to Prette, Maria Carla (2008), *Capire l'arte. Storia, linguaggi, epoche, stili Atlanti illustrati*, Giunti Editore, Firenze, Italy.

¹¹Fibonacci (1170-1240), also called Leonardo Pisano, was an Italian mathematician from medieval times.



This way, the Fibonacci sequence applied to The Vitruvian Man confirmed the existence of the so-called “Golden Ratio”¹², known as well as the number Phi. Similar to the number Pi¹³, the Golden ratio is composed of a sequence of numbers, which is used in calculating different human proportions. Very useful in finding every person’s proportions, nowadays, this equation helps the police detect different faces (outlaws, missing persons, etc.). Why? The police use this model in facial recognition.



b. Religion

Many specialists consider the Vitruvian Man of Leonardo da Vinci a bond, a bridge between science and religion, because the model generated by da Vinci is very similar to the ones preserved by different religions around the world: the Yin/Yang model (Taoism, Buddhism), the Star of David (the Jewish people), the Kabbalah (Hinduism), and last but not least, the Christian Cross (Christianity).

In his notes, Leonardo da Vinci explains why he made this bond between man and the Divine: “The outstretched arms and legs of a man form a square and a circle: the square symbolizes the solid physical world and the circle the spiritual and eternal. Man bridges the gap between these two worlds.¹⁴”

He believed, as many believe today, that spiritual balance is reflected in bodily proportions: whether the figure is masculine or feminine, the two geometric forms reflect the union of the human being with the Divine power (Divine entity) and also, they show the integration of the energy generated by the microcosm (the human being) in the abundant macrocosm (the Universe/ the Divine). As a conclusion for this application in science, the human being, in order to become a part of the magical power of the Universe, needs to love, and to be loved, because God is love.

¹² $\phi(\text{phi}) = 1.61803398874989484820...$

¹³ $\pi(\text{pi}) = 3.14159265358979323846...$

¹⁴According to Allen Rubin, *Da Vinci The Vitruvian Man*, <https://www.streetdirectory.com/etoday/da-vinci-the-vitruvian-man-jcowp.html/>, accessed November 17, 2018.

c. Philosophy

From a philosophical point of the view, the Vitruvian Man connects to an important doctrine that is used to reveal the characteristics of the Universe. Many philosophers were influenced by it, and, moreover, they adopted the ideology given by da Vinci's piece of art. For example, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola¹⁵ negated the fact that the humans are at the centre of the hierarchical structure of the Universe, part of a chain, an idea influenced by Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy from the 4th century. Pico's vision lead to the enlargement of the Neoplatonic philosophy: "humans have the unique ability to take any position they want¹⁶", so his position is not predetermined and fixed, he can place himself where he wants. The Vitruvian Man reflected this concept very well because the simple representation of the human being tells us that men do not resemble very much the gods, and they do not look like animals either. Without being part of a fixed chain, they are placed somewhere in the middle of the universe and they have to choose where their behaviour leads them. We can be like animals, by behaving like them (violence, psychological disorders, sins, brutality, etc.), or, we can tend to copy the behaviour or the "personality" of the gods (love, mercy, altruism, friendship, honest work, etc.).



d. Literature

The idea that man is (at) the centre of the Universe is present even in literary works, or influenced them, as it is the case of plays (Antony and Cleopatra by William Shakespeare) or novels (The Portrait of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde, Journey to the Centre of the Earth by Jules Verne).

Let us take, for example, William Shakespeare's tragedy Antony and Cleopatra. In this play, the action takes place in Egypt, Cleopatra's home. Shakespeare's play contains a strong message: the microcosm reunites with the energy of the macrocosm, the Universe¹⁷. In other words, there are significant correspondences between the Universe and man, especially in the case of great men. Their greatness encapsulates the greatness of God's creation.

Also resembling the myth of the Colossus of Rhodes, in the following lines from Shakespeare's play, Cleopatra has a posthumous dream of Anthony, which reveals best the bond between the two Universes, man and the Universe, the micro- and the macro-cosm:

"CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF EGYPT

*I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony.
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!*

¹⁵He (1463–1494) is, after Marsilio Ficino, the best known philosopher of the Renaissance, his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is better known than any other philosophical text of the fifteenth century, according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, article Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, accessed November 17, 2018.

¹⁶According to James Earle, TED-Ed Lesson, *Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man of math* - James Earle, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMsaFP3k-ggQ&t=1s>, accessed November 17, 2018.

¹⁷According to Dutton, Richard; Howard, Jean (2003), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume I: The Tragedies*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK.

DOLABELLA

If it might please ye—

CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF EGYPT

His face was as the heav'ns, and therein stuck

A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted

The little O, th' earth.

DOLABELLA

Most sovereign creature—

CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF EGYPT

His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm

Crested the world, his voice was propertied

As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;

But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,

He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,

There was no winter in't; an autumn it was

That grew the more by reaping. His delights

Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above

The element they liv'd in. In his livery

Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were

As plates dropp'd from his pocket...¹⁸

e. Art and Architecture

We can find the Vitruvian Man concept reinvented in or represented by numerous works of art, such as: drawings (some even producing caricatures), paintings, statues, and, of course, buildings. Remember the fact that, in the first place, the principles that helped Leonardo da Vinci create the Vitruvian Man where made for a different purpose than the ones enumerated, and this was the creation of perfect buildings. In his view, a perfect building was the result of respecting three central factors or components: *firmitas* (strength), *utilitas* (functionality), and *venustas* (beauty)¹⁹.



¹⁸William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, (V, 2, 76-92), source <https://www.playshakespeare.com/>, accessed January 23, 2019.

¹⁹<http://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/bodies/vitruvius/proportion.html>, accessed January 23, 2019.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Vitruvian man concept helps us in or has influenced:

1. facial recognition;
2. exploring and replicating the perfect symmetry of different natural structures and the beauty of perfect proportions;
3. the idea of loving each other as a supreme creature that is made for love;
4. the idea of choice: behaving either as an animal or like a God;
- 5 the belief that man is always in the centre of the Universe, the one that makes his life based his actions.
6. the human being and the Universe are interconnected.

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AN ERASMUS EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

Diana Pușcașu, CRP, II
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

Erasmus is a powerful experience that can change your life completely. Living abroad and studying something different or in a different way is something you will never ever forget.

At first you might regret leaving home a little bit. The distance from home and friends might be overwhelming. But trust me, you'll fall in love from the very first day. Being abroad as a tourist is completely different from being abroad as an exchange student, and once you get immersed in the local lifestyle, everything immediately becomes easier. Making young Europeans fall in love with each other's countries and people, day after day, is one of the Erasmus wonders.

I am one of the thousands of students who enjoyed this Erasmus experience. I studied for one semester at the "Charles-de-Gaulle" University in Lille, France. Here, I had the opportunity to improve my French language and I managed to better understand the French society and culture.

This experience, as the title says, is once in a lifetime: therefore, I took advantage as much as I could: I visited France but also a few other nearby countries like Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. At the end of the article you will find some pictures of the places and the specific dishes that fascinated me.

If you were worried before that you could not link your friends abroad, find out that it's easier than you think. Foreign students will come to you from the first few minutes of your arriving in the campus of the university.

Despite what others say about French people - that they are cold-hearted and arrogant people (which is mostly true) - I made some good friends with whom I laughed and walked in different places. This is what made my Erasmus experience more enjoyable. It is important to be open to any small opportunity that could bring you benefits.

Moreover, this experience gives you the chance to bring out the best version of you! Why? Because you take it from scratch and nobody knows you. You can make things slightly different, so you can enjoy all the little gestures.

Tips for future Erasmus students:

If you want to have the experience of your lifetime as an Erasmus student, try to immerse yourself in it from day one to get the most out of the country's culture. It may also be good to have the Google Translate app ready on your phone. Also, there is the ESN programme, which offers help, guidance and valuable information to both exchange students and students doing a full degree abroad.

Take advantage of student prices and discounts, then team up with friends and visit as much as possible in your new country! And of course, bring something special back at the end of your Erasmus programme. Memories, first of all. But also one or two bottles of that typical drink, a piece of local cheese and perhaps some sweets from a typical restaurant you and your new local friends visited some time ago.



MY ERASMUS EXPERIENCE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Elisabeta Ștefan, EF, III

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

“Ahoj!” was the first word I heard in Hlavní Nadraží (the train station) when I arrived in Pardubice, the Czech Republic, on February 10, 2018. It came from my buddy, the first friend I made during my mobility there. I am honest, so I will not lie, I was quite sceptical at the beginning whether I should take advantage of this opportunity or not, considering that I was going alone in a foreign country in which there was nobody I knew, nobody I could have shared my fears with.

Looking back, I can say that going was one of the best decisions I have ever made on my own. It was a Sunday evening when I arrived in Pardubice, quite cold and cloudy. My buddy was waiting for me in the train station and I was so nervous to meet him and so relieved to finally be there after a 21-hour train ride going from Braşov to Vienna and from Vienna to Pardubice. He helped me the entire time after I arrived there on that Sunday evening. I assume I was not the first Erasmus student he had to take care of as he advised me on certain things, for example he told me that it would be quite a challenge to communicate with the ladies from the dormitories' reception since the ladies did not speak English, and he was right. However, we both went to the reception, my buddy did all the talking, we managed to get the key for my room and there we were, on the 6th floor, block D. It was not the fanciest accommodation the university could have provided, but the blame falls entirely on me because I was not fast enough with paying the deposit. The room was very big, having 2 one-person beds, 3 closets and 2 desks, all of these for 2 students, the bathroom and the kitchen were shared on the hallway. I had difficulties with understanding the timetable, but my buddy was there for me to make me understand how it worked and after all the struggle I figured out it was not that difficult at all.



The canteen had its good and bad days, some days the food was amazing and some days it was not that good. All the Erasmus students were given student ID cards and we had to put money on the cards to be able to pay for the food in the canteen, to make copies in the library, so no actual money was involved. Also, we could not enter the library if we did not have these cards.



The town in general is not that big, but there are many things you can do. There is a student's bar inside the campus called Acko. It is open daily starting from 19:00 until no later than 00:30. It is a great place to make friends, exchange ideas, play foosball, pool, darts and to have a beer, which is cheap, they say, it is 22 czk, which is equivalent to 4 Romanian lei. I would say it is an affordable price. There are also lots of activities for Erasmus students and the one I liked the most is called International Evening Day, which involved students from one foreign country coming and giving a presentation of their country, cooking

some traditional dishes, singing or dancing, whatever crosses their minds and which is specific to their culture. For night birds there are clubs of which I could not say too much but the fact that they are very crowded and I do not like this.

Pardubice has an old town area: old houses, old streets and a castle. Right next to the castle there is a tree which would not be that special if it were not for a lot of peacocks living there, in that tree. The castle is not very big, but it is interesting. Inside there is a museum of coins, lots of coins and glass, old objects and some plastic figures of important people from around the area. The bad part is that not everything has a translation in English, most of them are in Czech and Slovak. The entry ticket costs around 15czk which



is not expensive at all, but my Polish friend and I entered for free because during Easter the entrance is free for everyone who wants to see what the castle has inside. The main road in Pardubice is called Trida Miru, it has absolutely everything you want, starting from clothes and souvenirs to ice-cream trucks and Chinese shops.

It would be a pity not to mention just how important ice hockey is for the Czechs. There is a rink in Pardubice and whenever there is a match taking place the town centre is full of cars, it is almost paralyzed, with people on the streets all dressed and painted in red and white, singing, and after the match is over, celebrating or quietly heading for their homes. The atmosphere is absolutely amazing, the only way you could understand it is by attending a match. I went to 5 matches and I was sad when the season ended. I was told that it was a very good season for Dynamo Pardubice.

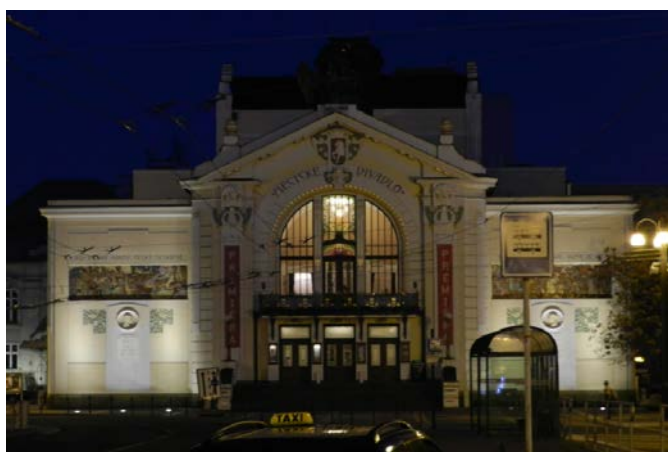
The stadium is right next to a big mall which is like a tiny city, perhaps like any other mall. What I recommend to do in this mall is to check the New Yorker store, it is pretty big, it has reasonable prices and nice clothes.

And now, last but not least, studying in Pardubice. The dormitories are right next to the faculties, so it takes 5 to 10 minutes to get there. The system in general is a bit different, for example you are entitled to take an exam 3 times and if you fail all these three times you will have to take the class again. I particularly liked most of my classes because the accent fell not necessarily on the amount of information you manage to acquire in class, but on the communication among students. Of course, when examined the teacher did not examine how much you smile and how much you want to talk, but what you know. It depends on how much you, as a student, want to know, not on the amount of times the teacher explained the same thing all over again. Skipping classes is definitely not a good thing. Some teachers might ask you to do some extra homework to compensate, but some simply will not accept you in the exam class. There are no such things as support courses, only some handouts to study as homework. The point is to go to classes and take notes, not to expect that the teacher will give you anything to study from.



My Erasmus+ came to an end on June 25th and I returned home, but yet another adventure was about to begin, this time in Prague, through the same program, Erasmus+ for training (student mobility for traineeship). This adventure started on 23rd of July and it lasted for a bit more than 2 months, until 28th of September to be more precise. I am glad I had the opportunity of taking part in it, it was a good lesson, however if I could go back there, working in the same place, I would think twice. The accommodation was offered by the receiving institution in Prague, this being one of the good things it offered. Apart from this, the schedule was not something I particularly liked, 13 shifts per month from which 9 were night shifts starting from 19:00 to 07:00 and 4-day shifts. The hostel I worked in had a lot of short-comings. For example, it did not have Wi-Fi in the rooms, only in the lobby. The best thing this hostel had to offer was its location, as it was close to every major attraction in Prague. In other words, the institution I worked for was not the best one, not to mention the manager's lack of professionalism, but the time spent in Prague was worth it overall. I was lucky enough to have left to Prague with a friend I made during Erasmus in Pardubice, so time flew. Being with her, we managed to see the glass as half full and not to concentrate on the bad things. We managed to see the famous Prague, not only what tourists see daily, its main attractions, but also less known places, amazing views, old beautiful paved streets.

Finally, some recommendations or Erasmus tips I could give you: go to as many trips as you can, trips organised by ESN (buddy system), try as much as possible to go to classes because other students are not that willing to give you their notes, make a budget for every month or even week and try to stick to it and do not run on the hallway when wanting to get from block A to block C, the reception ladies can get angry easily when it comes to this...



Emilia Avrămiea, LEPC, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

I embraced the Erasmus Experience in Greece from the very first appointment at the International Relations Office and I did not let it go until the end. If my first love, Oviedo, my first Erasmus experience in Spain turned to be a success, the second Erasmus was far brighter!!! I knew already what to expect and what it was expected of me and the results were happy ones.

But let me start with the beginning and tell you how such love came about. What did I appreciate in Greece that I do not think you will find anywhere else? Right after coming from Thessaloniki Airport I left my luggage and walked out on Nea Egnatia, the main road that crosses the whole city in order to find out a little bit more about the campus. Guess what? To my surprise, several Erasmus students were already heading to the Students' Restaurant and a French girl invited me to join and get my supper. That was special! At the Students' Restaurant I met very friendly people, accepting our Learning Agreement and the passport and letting you in FOR FREE! The Greeks are specialists in being nice hosts; they love to share food with you and did not stop doing so until the very end of my studies there! Another nice thing about being a student in Thessaloniki is the possibility to shop fresh fruit and vegetables from the street markets that move every day of the week in another location. Once you find them, you can count yourself the lucky one, because the prices there are less than half compared to the supermarkets. Have fun with fresh cherries, apricots and strawberries... You can start on Karaiskaki Street on Monday and then ask for the other places where the market will be held during the week, each day there will be a market on a different street.

The next surprise I got in Thessaloniki was the second day after my arrival at the International Relations Office. They were very friendly and helpful in guiding my steps through the unknown. There I met fellow students who were Erasmus and understood my challenges very well, made friends with former Greek Erasmus who showed me a step further in finding my way through the vast campus – 230,000 square meters.



The last and best surprise for me was to meet my classmates, an excellent group of friendly and helpful student fellows, all of them very motivated to finish their Master Degree in one year. In Thessaloniki a student can do his MA in one year – intense studies or in two years, depends on how much time one is willing to sacrifice for that purpose. We worked very nicely together in study groups; they showed me how to find my way in the library and shared the expectations of our professors with me. Guess what? The Greeks are born philosophers and if you want to study hard, go to Greece, they are serious about that!!! Besides the books you have to read you will get plenty of extra articles to study in order to properly understand the topic. At first, I felt that I am racing from behind my classmates, trying to catch some flying eagles, but soon I found myself soaring shoulder to shoulder and at times even going ahead. It is my habit to finish my projects well before the time has arrived; therefore, I found it very easy to be ready when the tasks required that. All in all, my academic experience in Greece was the most pleasant experience ever. If there was a place where I was happy, that was the University, with its classrooms, learning new things all the time! I think God provided for me the very best Professors from Aristotle University and an excellent coordinator who touched my heart through her devotion and friendliness. We were welcome twice a week at her office, during office hours, both for personal guidance and for academic purposes; therefore, I encourage the Erasmus students to be bold and perseverant in obtaining what they need in order to turn their experience into a brilliant success.

I guess that every person that thinks about going to Greece has in mind the fact that the Aegean Sea is all around and one can easily walk by the Sea Front, but what I did not know was the fact that Greece has plenty of mountains, too!!! From their peaks, the sun shines the nicest, I cannot say that I climbed them but I can tell that I fell in love with the scenery! I remember a day, as I was coming down from Ano Poli early in the morning, I glanced upon the Aegean Sea that can be seen even from the University's windows, and guess what, the sun was bathing the mountains in fresh rays... it was breathtaking! The sunsets were the most pleasant reward that I often enjoyed in Thessaloniki; they were my 'cake' after studying hard. The music of the sea, the touch of the sun and the gentle breeze were enough to make your body relax and get recharged for the next day.

My final word for those who wonder if they should try an encounter with the unknown is GO!!! It is worth the effort and you will LOVE all you have learned! It is not easy! Do not expect that! But it is an excellent experience for the hard-working students who put their mind to work and push through difficulties to be their best version!!!

Wishing you a SAFE TRIP and a WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!!!



At times, when the mind wants to tell a story, a student may write a book, yet in my case, the student who lived a wonderful story will tell it in a poem. Please read the story in between the lines of the Greek Rewards poem:

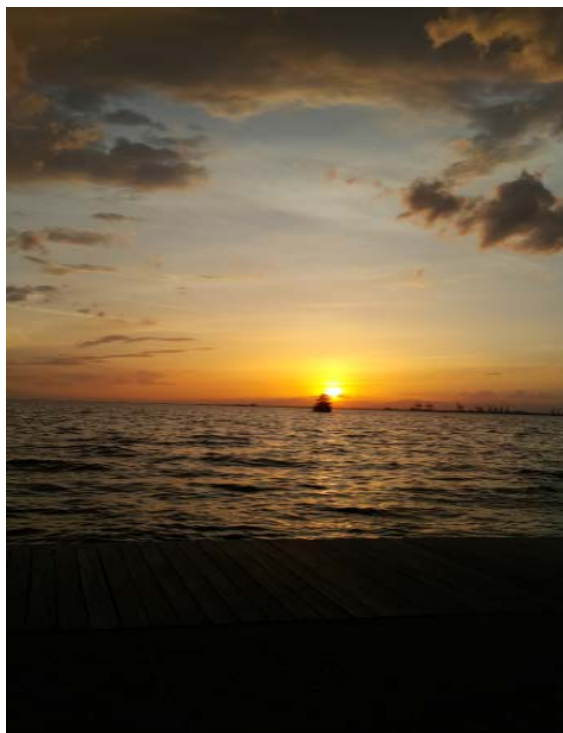
GREEK REWARDS

*A Greek Erasmus is a quest
To be a student and a guest,
In Aristotle – Plato's country
You've got to study without boundary...
Of all the knowledge as the sand,
Your searching - never has an end!*

*My fellow students keep on going...
You'll be rewarded just for knowing
You've done your best on every test!
Let go frustration, and the rest...
A "BRAVO" is waiting soon,
As your greatest, priceless boon!*

*No worry, fear or dismay
Will stay with you after the play,
You'll leave behind the interaction
The frozen face you've got in action.
Forget the past and walk on steady
You are alright and fully ready!*

*ENJOY Erasmus! Fly up high!
Your roots let go and wings bring nigh,
Renewal is the word of order
All falls in place after disorder!
Great men fall down but rise again
Erasmus brings to you much GAIN!*



Maria-Ramona Stoian, LEPC, I
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Mihaela Culea

1. Introduction

Racist Britain could be just an illusion. Every country has its racist and xenophobic citizens but this does not necessarily mean that the nation on the whole is racist. Stereotyping, generalisation and labelling are not the things to do when talking about a nation. The media play such a great part in setting a pattern of thinking. Can we always trust the news journals which present violent bloody incidents every day? Can we trust that this is the only piece of news worth broadcasting? Definitely not. The media present what the people want to see/ hear. And they 'educate' their public so as to ask for more and more violence and racism. It is a vicious circle.

For the present paper we chose to approach the problem of racism in Great Britain as exposed in John Oakland's *Contemporary Britain: A Survey with Texts*, Chapter 8 – *Social behaviour and 'moral panics'*¹, texts 4: '*Is Britain really a nation of racists?*', and 5: '*We should shut down the race industry*', with aspects regarding the 1990s. We also used the CNN article '*Racism is as British as a cup of tea*'² published in 2018 to see how things evolved, and we also cast a glance at other three texts and reportages we found on different internet sites.

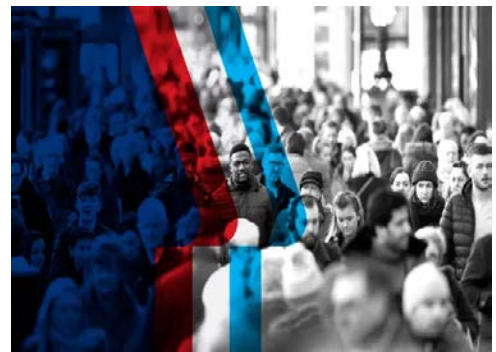
2. Just how racist is Britain?

2.1 Racism in Britain back in the 1990s

The first text proposed for discussion on the matter – '*Is Britain really a nation of racists?*'³ – was written by Stephen Bevan and Nicholas Rufford and appeared in *The Sunday Times* in February 1999. The authors report that many of the dark-skinned residents in the UK feel unsafe because of some racist incidents that have taken place in the past: physical assaults, verbal abuse, vandalism, stone throwing and even murders. Most of the abuses are not reported for two reasons: fear of the consequences and distrust of the police. Nevertheless some of the people belonging to ethnic minorities opine that things are exaggerated, and violent incidents are isolated but over-exposed in the media.

The police are seen as racist: blacks are more likely to be charged with different crimes than whites, more likely to be imprisoned, to be pulled over by the police, to be denied bail. The fact that the police are very superficial in solving cases of violent incidents against black people is much more than a blunder; it is seen as institutional racism.

In order to tackle the problem of racism reforms in education are needed by which ethnic awareness is supposed to be improved. Reports say that half of the racial abuses in schools are committed by students under 16, and 24 per cent by children between 6 and 10. Nevertheless violence is a worrying problem not only when it comes to interracial incidents but also to acts of aggression between pupils of the same colour and, even more problematic, violence against teachers. This means that racist incidents are by far exaggerated (sometimes) and we could assume that there is a great deal of manipulation in all the reports and reportages presented to the British. There are voices that cry out against this false – they say –



¹John Oakland, *Contemporary Britain: A Survey with Texts*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 228-259.

²<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/19/opinions/racism-as-british-as-a-cup-of-tea-opinion-intl/index.html>

³Stephen Bevan; Nicolas Rufford, "Is Britain really a nation of racists?", in John Oakland, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-243.

image of Britain and feel that the UK depicted in such pieces of news and statistics is not the country they know and the country they live in. More and more black and Asian people stay in school, go to university and have good jobs; they become nurses, doctors, civil servants, barristers, solicitors, they work in the media or the British Airways.

The second text to illustrate the matter of racism in Britain is Melanie Phillips' article '*We should shut down the race industry*⁴' published in December 1998. The author tells about a TV show about race relations during which the black audience was angry and convinced that all Britain was racist. They felt they had been wronged along the time by "the malevolent white society". They showed no responsibility for what happened to them and they only claimed their rights.

In addition to this, during the same show Sir Herman Ouseley, a member of the Commission for Racial Equality, stated that British society was racist and thus rejected the idea of black children being taught English culture, history, language and literature in schools. Unfortunately he ignores the fact that this lack of proper instruction would deprive black children of playing an equal part in the British society and would definitely lead to the further and deeper alienation of the black population.

Melanie Phillips states that Britain is fair and tolerant and the idea that only white people can be racist is all wrong; there is a great deal of dislike between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans. The tensions between different ethnic groups burst when the identity of one of them is threatened.

Some solutions are offered in order to diminish the phenomenon of racism. One would be removing the thugs who terrorise black people from the public housing. Another one would be building a fair education system in which people belonging to different ethnic groups are taught both their own (tribal) traditions, history, culture, language and the common culture of everyone else. Last but not least, and perhaps the most effective solution is that of people simply talking to each other in the attempt of finding the cause of the current tense situation and the answer to the problem.

2.2 Racism in 2018

Kehinde Andrews, the author of the CNN article we chose in order to address the problem of racism in present-day Britain, is a professor of sociology and black studies at the Birmingham City University. He is a British academic of Afro-Caribbean origin. The article '*Racism is as British as a cup of tea*' appeared online in April 2018 and describes the tragedy that British people of Afro-Caribbean descent face today.



Seventy years ago (in 1948) the steamship *Windrush* brought 500 people from the Caribbean to the UK. In 2018 some of those immigrants – who were children at the time of their arrival in Great Britain – are classified as illegal, are detained in immigration centres and very likely to be deported to countries they do not belong to anymore... They have dedicated all their lives and energy to the reconstruction of the UK after World War II and now face deportation.

⁴Melanie Phillips, "We should shut down the race industry", in John Oakland, op. cit., pp. 244-246.

When Brexit was campaigned for, one of the major vote winners was the promise to stop uncontrolled immigration. Severe measures have been taken meanwhile in order to stop the immigration process: deportations, strict periodical controls and even letting a group of Africans drown in the Mediterranean. All this is due to tighten migration rules and reassure the British that they have “taken back their borders”.

However this draconian immigration policy made the majority of Britain’s black population not vote for Brexit, although the government promised them that these harsh new rules will be applied solely to (Eastern) European immigrants. Which was not true.

Perhaps what hurts those people most is the fact that during the two world wars the colonies supported the (former) British Empire by providing both human, material and financial resources. Kehinde Andrews is very trenchant when he underlines the idea that “Britain has seen its colonial population not as citizens, but subjects to be used and abused as fits the will of the mother country.”⁵

Conclusions

Reading the texts from the 1990s the conclusion we can draw is that Britain was racist (or not) depending on whose opinion on the matter one asked... Even members of some minority groups asserted they were treated equally and fairly in the UK. Nevertheless racist attitudes in Britain are not to be denied.

Some of the authors of the articles seem to have found the solution to the problem of racism: education. But is education really the key for the problem? Is it the only one? Could religion and religious concepts such as tolerance, goodwill, acceptance and openness have a say? Where should education start? Almost everybody expects it to be done solely in school. Whose education are we talking about: the racists’, the minorities’, or maybe both parties’? Is there anything that the minorities can do to prove the racists wrong, to demonstrate they do not deserve the labels and accusations they receive? We have heard of so many cases of people belonging to minorities who refuse to be integrated in the (hostile) society in which they live.

We wonder if the problem is somehow deeply rooted in our DNA and maybe there is nothing we can do about it. Man has always wanted to defend his territory, his family and he felt no compassion whatsoever for those who invaded his space.

Maybe with Britain it is not racism after all, but a feeling of pride, superiority, egocentrism, selfishness and self-sufficiency that makes everybody else indignant. Along their history they used people from the colonies, used the goods they found there (cotton, sugar, tobacco, slaves) but when migrants become a burden the state – the ‘mother country’ – gives up on them.



⁵<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/19/opinions/racism-as-british-as-a-cup-of-tea-opinion-intl/index.html>, accessed December 29, 2018

The British have a problem with immigration on the whole, with all minorities. They welcomed East Europeans who came to the UK in an illusory ‘pursuit of happiness’ and agreed to work hard for lower wages. There is no doubt that some of those European immigrants are well trained and do their jobs with high professionalism but suddenly they are becoming a problem, they are too many, they are too much for the state to handle. One could think that the British seem to have accustomed themselves to using other people (Europeans as well as people from former colonies) and dropping them.

Still, in today’s need for accepting diversity, the UK should admit that all those minorities are part of the country. And with Prince Harry marrying a half-black American divorcee, there is definitely a chance that things are changing for the better in racist Britain.

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Teo Rusu, CRP, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

She's young and beautiful, with a casual look and carrying her big bag all the time her big bag carrying on all the time. You can say that she is one of the students at “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacau. However, something is different: she has Asian eyes and this specific feature is not a very common one in the heart of the Nord-East of Romania. Actually, she is not a student, but the Chinese teacher at this University.

Zhou Yang is less than 30 years old and she travelled thousands of kilometers to teach us some Chinese.

She was very kind to talk to me about the great Chinese culture and the exciting experience in Romania.

1. You're here, at thousands of kilometres from home. Why Romania and why Bacau?

I'm still in graduate school. My major is Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. So when I had the opportunity to truly teach Chinese abroad and contact more non-native Chinese speakers, I chose Romania among the countries that I could choose. As for the city, it was randomly assigned by the Hanban and the Confucius Institute. We have no right to choose, but I think this city is very lively, very convenient, I always meet people who are enthusiastic.

2. Here there is a very different culture from China. What are the most important differences and how do you manage those? What do you like in Romania and what don't you like here?

The biggest difference is the difference in language, this is also the greatest difficulty. I strive to learn some common language to communicate with people. For what I like here, one is people here are very self-disciplined. I found that buying bulk food in the supermarket is self-service, this is not feasible in China because we need the salesperson to seal the pocket with a price tag and guard against theft; then, I found out that no matter if there are traffic lights on the road, the car will always stop for pedestrians. In China, there are so many traffic lights on the road, people always have to watch out for speeding cars and wait for the green light to let the car go ahead to prevent them from being hit. However, the traffic in Romania is not very convenient, the trains are slow, for those who do not have cars, foreigners like me, it is not easy to travel between cities. And in China, we have Alipay and Wechat payment, you can pay by phones without cash. Which is more secure and more convenient. There are also few malls here, which is a shame for girls.



3. What do you already visited in Romania, except Bacau?

I have visited several cities, Bucharest, Sibiu, Brasov, Craiova, Cluj, Iasi. Sibiu is the most distinctive and my favorite cities are Iasi and Cluj.

4. Do you like our food or you just wait to go back home for 'real good food'? Do you have a Romanian dish that you like in particular?

I think that Romanian food is also very delicious. I have been to a Romanian restaurant in Brasov where I had the most delicious meal. I can't name the foods, a kind of thin pancake and bean paste is my favorite.

6. *It is said about Chinese people that they are very careful with nonverbal communication: it is important the tone of voice, the gestures, the clothes... everything has a meaning. Tell us something about these, about how people communicate in China with family, at school or at work.*

First of all, because Chinese is a tonal language, and there are a lot of modal words, different tones and words have different meanings, so you should pay attention when you speak and avoid implications. The Chinese are relatively calm and are not accustomed to using body language, but some specific gestures have specific meanings. For example, the index finger is placed in front of his mouth to indicate the interdiction to speak, the thumb upwards is very good and thumbs down is impolite. When you are with your family, you will be more casual, but in Chinese family relationships, parents have absolute authority and children usually need to follow their parents' opinions. In schools, primary and secondary school students wear school uniforms, and for students, intimate classmates often stay together, like small groups. In the workplace, you need to pay attention to the dress-code and observe the time, respect the elders and superiors, social etiquette is very important.

7. *What are the most important traditions in China and what do they mean?*

In China, the most important traditions are “ZongFa” and “Xiao”. These are based on kinship, that is, family relations. Many Chinese people believe that childbirth is a top priority. Parents have the obligation to raise children and children have the obligation to support their parents. And China is a society of interpersonal relationships and it will be easier to handle affairs if you have acquaintances.



8. *If I want to visit China, what would you recommend to me?*

Various places in China have their own characteristics, historical cities such as Beijing, Nanjing and Xi'an; modern cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong; natural and scenic places such as Yunnan Province, Hainan Province, Tibet Autonomous Region, Suzhou City and Hangzhou City; Chinese cuisine such as Beijing Roast Duck, Chengdu Hotpot, Xi'an Snack. In short, there are so many things worth experiencing in China, depending on whether you like classical or modern, or whether you like to visit the scenery or enjoy the food, you can always find what you like.

9. *In Romania there are Chinese people in many cities. Have you met them, do they keep in touch with each other? Other citizens, like the Greeks, the French or the Germans, are organized in associations and keep in touch regularly, meet and spend most of their time at important national holidays.*

I have met Chinese people. I know that they will meet regularly and they will celebrate traditional festivals together. I also have Chinese friends in Bacau, sometimes we cook or eat together. I think people need a sense of cultural identity, which gives them peace of mind.

10. *Do you have a message for Romanian people who want to learn Chinese? What is the secret to learning more efficiently and faster?*

Language learning in general needs more accumulation and more practice, learning Chinese is even more so. As Chinese is a word-based language, the more words you know, the more sentences you can speak. Besides, there are four tones in Chinese, different Chinese characters with different tones have different meanings, so you need to practice more. At the same time, Chinese characters are the most distinctive elements, if you want to learn Chinese, you must learn to write Chinese characters.



THE “SHAME” OF BEING A STUDENT IN BACĂU

Adrian-Valentin Ionicel, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

I always arrive too early, and I clearly observed that the difference between the moment the corridors and classrooms of the faculty are empty and the moment when the building is caught in the middle of the courses is insignificant. I do not know when we became so deprived of life; the truth is I don't think that everyone should be like me, noisy, singing on the hallways, smiling without reason, always attracting strange looks from people's faces. But how can you not smile when we have such a modern entrance with touch-screen monitors and yet we wipe our thoughts with the most modest cloth.

But nothing makes you more religious than the alley arriving to college, your forehead pointed to the ground, your lips whispering prayers while you are at the mercy of the crows, flying over you, as they can make your day unpleasant. Strangers taught me that ... actually I can't remember anything that I learnt from a stranger; the closer you are to someone, the more you learn from that person. Acknowledge this and embrace the act. This also happens to be the case in our faculty – memory is so closely related to affection that a personally involved teacher manages to imprint important notions even through the simple fact of knowing the name of the student. Appreciation again is very beneficial – we feed ourselves in everyday life with it; the moment in which you have been appreciated for knowing something becomes unforgettable.

And then there are words that stick with you: “Smile!”, “Why are you smiling?”, “Be active, be present!”, “Why are you talking?” Everything is paradoxical; there are courses in which everything is new and others in which you curse the last two hours and their futility. But they are all part of our evolution and my assessment may well be subjective, as what I like may seem unpleasant or useless to some students and the other way round.

The first months of college are a marathon of many things, but the most tedious, quasi-general is “Why Bacău?”. Every day some are asked this with an air of superiority, the choice is poorly seen as if Bacău were the biggest failure in academic terms. Whenever I am asked, I am doubtful of the intelligence of the person who asked me. Moreover, their arrogance and defiance also denotes the pity from their perspective. The final result of the bachelor or master studies is a document (the degree) with the same features wherever it was acquired, but every time I try to explain this I feel like I'm fighting with the windmills.

Leaving aside the manners of writing, we are simple, we do not hide behind the bush, as we love to say. We try, however, not to be superficial, and more than this kindness, generosity, beauty are all present, unlike in many other universities. Sometimes teachers seem to have moments when they lose all their hope, when their eyes raise big and disillusioned in the room, but they must not forget that even if it seems very hard to ignite these thick, rudimentary, wet pieces of wood, with a bigger effort there can always be hope in creating the most brilliant flames. The shame of being a student in Bacău to me is non-existent. For me it is funny to be seen as a stupid young man when I say this – because, for me being a student in Bacău is a reason to be proud. I know that I'm just not enough to transform this prejudiced mentality of all towards a smaller University like this in Bacău.

But we can change everything... someone just has to go first.



George-Cosmin Cristea, CRP, II
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

Some would say it's art, others would say it's just timing that sounds right. For some, music is something they listen to from time to time, and for others it's what defines their lives. No matter what category you fall into, you've definitely been influenced by music at some point in life. Just like it was scientifically proven that classical music has a beneficial effect on babies and plants' growth, we can also talk about other effects of music on our minds.

Although sociologists say that people who prefer walking with headphones on are introvert people who are not up for talking, these persons may actually be people who need a change of state and therefore they're looking for it in music. Did you have a depressing day? An upbeat song should help! Are you on the heights of happiness? Your favourite tracks will make you feel even better!

Music does not necessarily have effects on one person only, though. It can also do wonders in strengthening relationships with others. For instance, a song with funny lyrics can connect two people and make them form a friendship. There is also the concept of couples of lovers who started their relationship because of a song that made the connection between them.

Another way music can help with one's state of mind is thematic music. A sad song will help a sad person as much as an inspiring one; a fearful person could use a motivational track and a happy man can emphasize his feelings by listening to positive music. Other people will also feel good when listening to seasonal music, such as carols during winter. This principle of matching music with feelings or moments is already used in movies so no scenes feel bland due to the lack of music in the background.

Therefore, music has the ability of making your day better, encouraging you to talk to that crush you have, giving you the courage to speak in front of a lot of people or motivating you to change your mind as a whole about something. People who listen to music often are usually happier and tend to go through hard moments with more ease.



Alexandra Diana Lazăr, CRP, II

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

"The Slight Edge" is a self-development book written by the entrepreneur, Jeff Olson, and initially published in 2005.

While the world currently has access to thousands of sources of information and there are maybe hundreds of inovative self-help books, Jeff Olson comes with some of the simplest ideas about turning our lives on the successful path.

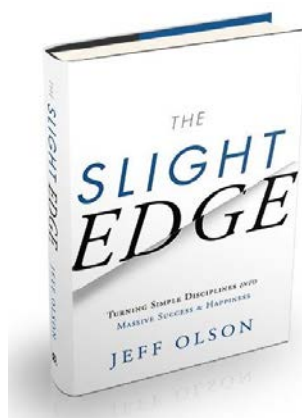
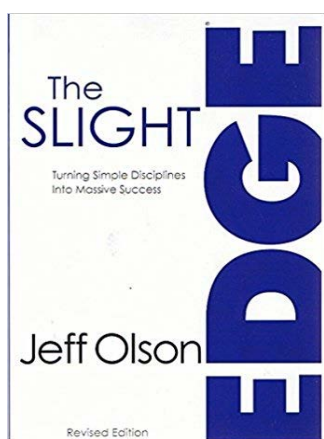
"The Slight Edge", as the author says, is the "Missing Ingredient" that everyone needs in order to apply all the other useful information that can be easily found in other books and yet it is hardly applied by people.

The revised edition of the book, published in 2011 by Succes Books, contains a lot of inspiring stories either of successful people from the world, either collected from the readers that transformed their lives by applying the Slight Edge, and it also includes Jeff Olson's own story about discovering the Slight Edge and using it in his journey of becoming a multi-millionaire entrepreneur.

So what is all this "Slight Edge" thing? Actually, it is the philosophy that we all have. That's the secret ingredient. Your philosophy is what you know, how you hold it, and how it affects what you do. It is what creates your attitude and your attitude creates your actions, which also are creating your results. And the results create our life. Slight Edge is something that exists even if you are conscious about it or not, and it can either help you, or destroy you. It is all about your daily simple actions that compounded in time make all the difference.

Olson teaches you that what you do everyday matters. Successful people just do the things that seem to make no difference in the act of doing them, and they do them over and over again until the compound effect kicks in. They are doing things that are easy to do, but the problem is that as they are easy to do, they are easy not to do too. So if you don't do them you won't suffer, fail or blow it – today. But that simple error in judgement compounded over time will ruin your chances for success.

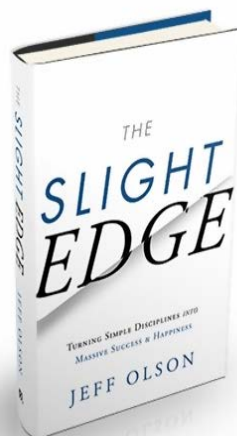
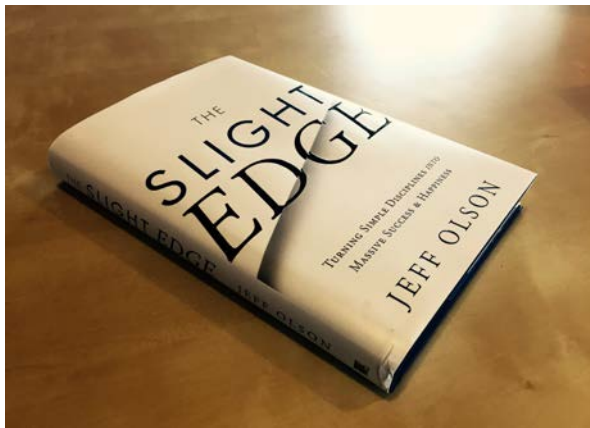
The author offers multiple examples for the readers in order to understand the magic of Slight Edge, and all of them are about extremely simple daily actions. If you read 10 pages of a powerful book today it won't make you smarter, but if you do it, let's say, for 350 days per year, that means 3650 pages - the equivalent of one or two dozen books of life-transforming material. If by eating a cheeseburger you would have immediately suffered almost a near-fatal heart-attack, you will surely don't touch it again. It may take twenty or thirty years, but when you add up the compounded interest on all that high-fat, artery-clogging dietary mayhem, eventually your poor overworked heart just stops. It has been said we dig our graves with our teeth. It's the same with your health, knowledge, financial habits, your exercise, your career or relationships.



In today's world, everyone wants to go directly from planting to harvest. The step we keep overlooking is the step of cultivating. And cultivating, unlike planting and harvesting, takes place only through the patient dimension of time. The right choices you make today, compounded in time, will take you higher up on the success curve.

After reading so many self-development books, I can honestly say that "Slight Edge" is on my top three favourite books. The inspiring relatable stories, the simple principles and the magic of this thing called "Slight Edge" that worked on my life without me even realizing, made me want to encourage as many people as I can to read and re-read this book over and over again. It is one of the most exciting and easiest to read self-help books that I personally know.

You must also discover the 7 Principles of the Slight Edge. The English version of the book has only 218 pages. **Will you make one simple daily action by reading from it?**



THE FAULT IN OUR STARS BY JOHN GREEN

Roxana Ojog, RE, III

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

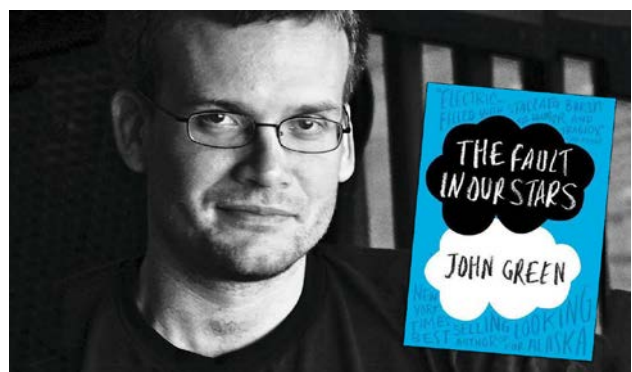
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

The American author John Green published in 2012 his sixth famous novel which became immediately a bestseller along with *Looking for Alaska* (2005) and *Paper Towns* (2008).

John Green's book *The Fault in Our Stars* presents the complex life story of Hazel, a teenage girl who discovers for the first time the beauty of love, and also a fighter because in childhood she was diagnosed with thyroid and pulmonary cancer. Because she became depressed, Hazel is sent by her mother to a cancer patient's support group, where she meets a charismatic boy named Augustus "Gus" Waters, a survivor of cancer. They learn a lot about each other and during the novel he becomes her source of motivation and hope. Hazel and Augustus share the same love for literature. The concept of true friendship is defined in Green's novel as a lifebelt. Hazel reveals her favorite book *An Imperial Affliction* which presents a story about Anna, a young girl with cancer. Hazel biggest dream is to know what happened to characters because the story ends in a confusing way with Anna's death. Knowing her wish, Augustus tries to find the author, Peter Van Houten, to clarify Hazel's dilemma. Augustus and Hazel support their mutual friend, Isaac, who is heartbroken. Isaac is going to become blind because he has eye cancer and after he discovered that, Monica, his lover, broke up with him.

When everything is lost and death is close the best cure lays in love, support and faith. The true healing is that of soul, and this is what Hazel learnt from her journey. Some people are like stars – in dark time they shine in our life, then they disappear, but their memory stays with us for eternity.

The Fault in Our Stars expresses a positive perspective for hard days and it regards the problem ill people struggle with. This is a story of true friendship which comes as a solution for everything, a love story wrapped in tears and strong feelings which will touch the reader's soul.



PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS: THE LIGHTNING THIEF

Denisa Popa, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suci

First of all, I want to say that I really love this book series and I enjoyed reading it a second time so my review could be as accurate as possible and even though the series as whole is formed of five books, my review will mostly concern the first of them: Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief, released between 2005 and 2009.

The author of the series is American author Rick Riordan who has written other book series based on a mythological setting such as The Kane Chronicles (which focus on the Egyptian Mythology) and Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard series (based on Norse mythology).

Now let us meet Percy a normal (or so he thinks) twelve year old, by his full name Perseus Jackson, son of Sally Jackson and the Olympian god, Poseidon. You would think that being a god's son, life is all fun and games. It is not. Not only that at the beginning of the series he doesn't know his father or that he is a demigod (half human, half god) but his life is far from perfect. He was brought up by his sweet loving mother and an abusive step-father, Gabe Ugliano. He has dyslexia and ADHD and if that wasn't difficult enough, he seems born under a dark star, trouble follows him everywhere and he has (somehow) been kicked out of every school he has been to. Even the first line of the first book seems like half an apology: "Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood".



You'd think that once he finds out his real identity his luck would begin to change. Wrong again. As a demigod's life can only go from bad to worse. From vaporizing his pre-algebra teacher, to his mother disappearing and fighting ancient monsters, Camp Half-Blood (the only place demigods can be safe from monsters) is the only good thing to happen to Percy. As if that was not enough on the poor kid's plate, Zeus' lightning bolt was stolen and he has to go on a trip to the Underworld to retrieve it, otherwise, the gods would start a war among themselves and wreak havoc in the mortal world as well. At least he's not going alone. His companions are his best friend, Grover Underwood (who turned out to actually be a satyr) and gorgeous and smart blonde (not brunette, as portrayed in the film) Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena.

Now, I'm not going to tell the rest of the story as I've already given out enough spoilers so I'll refer to the setting, which I absolutely love. For a person passionate about Greek Mythology (like me), anything would be fine I guess, as long as it offers the needed information on the subject, but I think that the cheeky, flippant manner in which the Greek myths are retold in these books would suit pretty much anybody's taste. The Greek pantheon is reimagined but still stays true to their nature, and Rick Riordan doesn't miss any chance to be snarky towards them:

"Annabeth nodded. 'Your father isn't dead, Percy. He's one of the Olympians.'

'That's... crazy.'

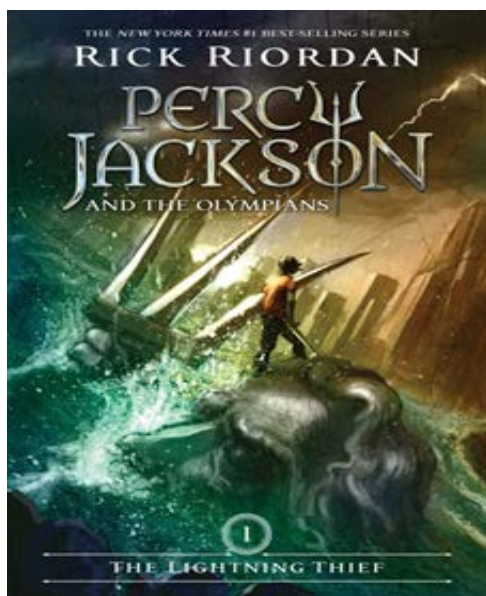
'Is it? What's the most common thing gods did in the old stories? They ran around falling in love with humans and having kids with them. Do you think they've changed their habits in the last few millennia?'"

I have two big reasons why I think these books should be on any child's reading list. Firstly, because they contain at least the bare minimum on the Greek (and Roman) mythology, which, in my opinion, should be common knowledge, not only for the reason that numerous canonical authors make references to it, but also because there are also figures of speech and sayings that make more sense and can be used more correctly if you know a tiny bit of mythology.

Second, because of the fact that it has a very good message for kids, especially those with ADHD, dyslexia or those who simply feel that they do not fit in. More exactly, the message that everything that made them be labelled as 'weird' or negative has, in fact, an awesome cause.

I feel that I have to make the mention that, even though children are the target audience for the book series, it can be an enjoyable pass-time for adults as well. I would warmly recommend it to anyone who is ready to launch in a pentalogy which has two sequels, because Percy's adventures cannot end that easily. The first sequel is entitled *The Heroes of Olympus* (2010–2014), in which the focus moves from Percy's point of view to a team of seven heroes (one of which is Percy, of course) who must save the world. The other is *The Trials of Apollo* (2016–2018) which is still on-going – only three parts of the series were released, the last will be launched in October 2019. This series takes the point of view of the god Apollo during his punishment as a mortal.

Take whatever point and side you want, but read the series.



Ana-Maria Săvoi, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suciuc

Literary Stray Dogs (original title *Bungō Stray Dogs*) is a Japanese comic book series (manga) written by Kafka Asagiri and illustrated by Sango Harukawa. Its serialization began in 2012.

The action is based around the main character, Nakajima Atsushi, who was just kicked out of the orphanage he lived in and is on the brink of starvation until he rescues a man who was attempting suicide in the nearby river and who introduces himself as Osamu Dazai and saying he works for the Armed Detective Agency. He says the agency he works for is a very special one and that's because most of its members have supernatural abilities and deal with cases that are too dangerous for the police or the military. Both he and his partner are tracking a tiger that was seen in the area recently, around the same time the main character came to the area. The tiger seems to have a connection to Atsushi as he said the tiger has been following him around since he was kicked out and claims that it wants to eat him. By the time the case is solved, it's clear that Atsushi belongs in the agency.



One interesting thing about this comic book series is that all of its characters are named after and based on either real-life authors, poets or characters in their works. As mentioned above, there are people with supernatural abilities which also have names and are usually called after the author's most known work or in reference to it.

There are multiple organisations that have a certain objective, like, for instance, protecting the town in which the action takes place (Yokohama) or even a more selfish reason like finding a certain book which is said to hold immense power.

Atsushi Nakajima, the main protagonist of the series, is the type of character that changes, from an insecure, naive and weak person he becomes more confident in himself and stronger but still not the typical "perfect" main character.



Osamu Dazai is seemingly a slacker, as he finds different ways of not working. He is infamous for attempting suicide in very comical manners and failing every time (thus making him the comic relief in the series). Despite these facts, he actually is sharp-witted and a mysterious person because his true intentions are never revealed unless he personally reveals them. His many suicide attempts and the name of his ability ("No Longer Human") are inspired by his real-life counterpart. He is my favourite character in the whole series because of his cunningness and the fact that he is neither the "bad guy" nor the person who always does the right thing.

What I love the most about it is that there's no such thing as a character that's fully on the good side (even if they are, they still do things in their own way) or one that's fully on the bad side, all of them have their own reasons (even if those reasons might seem selfish or self-centred to many people).

This whole series is accessible as it can be easily found on the internet with a simple search. The reason I personally liked it so much was the action, the fact that it can be easily read (because it's mostly pictures with text on it) and the characters are likeable (you can't read it without liking at least one of them, really). So, I recommend it to anyone who likes this kind of thing and who doesn't want to read a whole novel in their spare time for a change.

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

Cătălin Bărbunță, EF, II

Coordinator: PhD lecturer Andreia-Irina Suciu

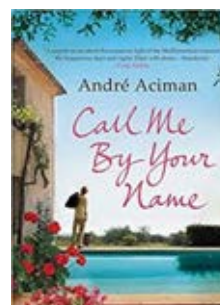
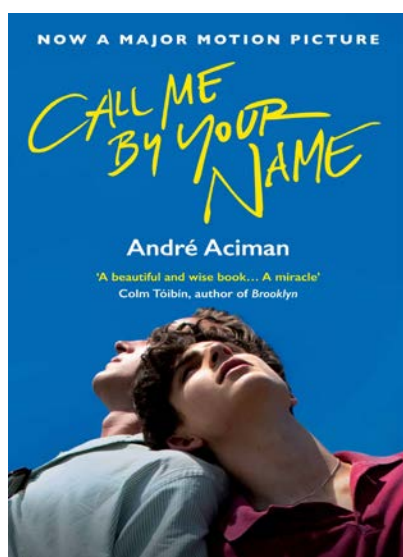
Have you ever thought which is the best channel to express your feelings? What language do you use when you want to pronounce those special words for your inseparable one? *Call Me by Your Name* presents three different languages which are the basis for three main relationships. Luca Guadagnino's film (2017), adapted for screen after André Aciman's novel (2007), is a marvellous tale of first love, based on the admired novel by André Aiman. As main characters, Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and Oliver (Armie Hammer) are establishing, throughout the film's plot, a special relationship which is mostly introduced to the viewers by means of the English language. Both Jewish, Elio is the son of a university professor who spends almost all of his vacations in the north of Italy with his family, whereas Oliver is a student who comes to Elio's family during a summer to be the professor's assistant.

The other two languages are French, which is mostly used by Elio and his friend Marzia (Esther Garrel) who is madly in love with him, and Italian which perfectly expresses the love-story of Elio's father, an eminent professor specializing in Greco-Roman culture (Michael Stuhlbarg), and mother Annella, a translator (Amira Casar).

Even if, at the beginning of the summer of 1983, there are some misunderstandings between these two young men, later they start falling in love. Therefore, they cross the limits imposed by a society in which such a relationship is impossible and, although they had some affairs with women, eventually they will express their feelings and live an amazing story. United by their intellectual interests, the two lovers discover their partner's features and delights, and the taste of first love.

This spectacular film creates a world which is destined to be lived by intellectuals. It connects history, music, art, and language in order to show that the most different persons are generally special, and the most artistic ones.

If you want to watch a modern love-story which breaks the society's patterns regarding relationships, and presents some remarkable characters, you should definitely put *Call Me by Your Name* on your "to watch"-list.



SIXTO RODRIGUEZ: HIS WORK AND ITS IDEOLOGICAL IMPACT ON THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

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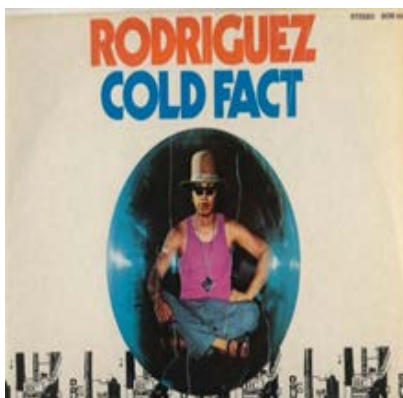
Coordinator: PhD Assoc. Prof. Marija Krivokapić

Sixto Rodriguez is a guitarist and songwriter who is yet to be acknowledged as a pioneer and legend of American folk-rock music. Born in Detroit, Michigan, in a working-class immigrant family, Rodriguez became a self-taught guitarist and poured his life into poetry. He made two albums in the 70s, but failed to achieve fame in America. However, he did not know that he was a star in South Africa – even more popular than Elvis. So what was it that connected Sixto Rodriguez to a country an ocean away from him?



South Africa was going through the apartheid when Rodriguez rose to stardom. Apartheid years were a dark period in South African history and the consequences of the racist apartheid regime are still prominent. Many lives were lost because of the brutal racial segregation policy. People of South Africa were living in fear – the fear of being watched, spied on and incarcerated. Only the brave were able to speak out, to write poems or sing. Writing music represented a way to rebel, and performing that music was the first step to revolution. Out of the resistance emerged a group of African singers, artists and writers. The most famous musicians were Koos Kombuis, Willem Möller and Johannes Kerkorell. They were the icons of the music revolution in Africa and called themselves “The Voelvry Movement”. Their aim was to send their message to young people and make them stand up for the rights of all Africans and rebel against the oppressive and racist apartheid government.

There was one man who was an inspiration to all of the anti-apartheid musicians of that time in South Africa. His music had an immense impact on the music scene, but also, on the people fighting for equal rights and a free country. But, the life of this musician was completely obscure, even though his two albums, *Cold Fact* and *Coming From Reality*, were the most popular albums in the whole country. All that was known was that his name is Sixto Rodriguez and that he lived somewhere in America. There was a picture of him on the cover of his album *Cold Fact*, depicting a young native man with his hat and sunglasses on, dressed in a hippie manner, but other than that, South Africans knew nothing. There was an air of mystery about him, including rumors and grotesque legends about him committing a suicide on stage. And that is all they knew about the most popular artist in their country.



“The album was exceptionally popular. To many of us South Africans he was the soundtrack to our lives. In the mid 70s, if you walked into a random white, liberal, middle-class household that had a turntable and a pile of pop record, and if you flipped through the records you would always see Abbey Road by The Beatles, you would always see Bridge Over Troubled Water by Simon and Garfunkel and you would always see Cold fact by Rodriguez. To us, it was one of the most famous records of all times. The message it had was: ‘Be anti-establishment!’ One song is called Establishment Blues. We didn’t know what the word anti-establishment was until it cropped up on a Rodriguez song, and then we found out – it is OK to protest against your society, to be angry with your society.”¹

¹ Malik, Bendjelloul et al, Searching for Sugar Man, New York, Sony Pictures Classics, 2013

Many of Rodriguez's songs were forbidden in South Africa because of the "inappropriate content". This was not the case with his work only. Many tracks from other artists were banned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation, who ran the whole broadcasting industry in the country. This corporation was under complete control of the apartheid government. There was no free media in South Africa. Rodriguez's songs were problematic in many ways. He wrote openly about social problems like oppression, poverty, corrupted government, crime rates, drugs ... The fact that his lyrics were censored could only make them more ideologically potent. It made people want to sing them out loud and turn the words into actions so that the system could indeed fall "to an angry young tune." Establishment Blues was a song of an immense importance. South Africans indeed perceived it as one of the anthems of the resistance. It was one of those songs that exposed all that was wrong with their government and their country ("Garbage ain't collected/ Women ain't protected/Politicians using, people they're abusing/The mafia's getting bigger, like pollution in the river/And you tell me that this is where it's at). Social themes are prevalent in his songs. He manages to touch upon many problems in just one verse. The best example of that is his song called Cause. In this song Rodriguez writes about political absurd and dissatisfaction ("Cause how many times can you wake up in this comic book and plant flowers?"²), about poverty ("Cause I lost my job two weeks before Christmas / And I talked to Jesus at the sewer"³).



Rodriguez did not know anything about his fame and golden records in South Africa, and consequently did not get any financial gain from the album sales. He was more popular than Elvis Presley, but lived half a world away in quiet anonymity, trying to make ends meet. Soon after Rodriguez rose out of anonymity, thanks to South African music devotees, Stephen Segerman and Craig Bartholomew, two concerts were organized in Cape Town and this represented a historic moment. It was a kind of reunion with his fans who got to listen to him live for the first time. Many people were skeptical about Rodriguez coming to South Africa. After years of listening to invented myths about his suicide, it was hard to believe that he was still alive. However, South African fans were convinced otherwise as soon as Rodriguez stepped out onto the scene and started playing fist chords of one of his biggest hits called *I Wonder*.

Although he lived in obscurity for a major part of his career, Rodriguez is finally taking his place among great poets, revolutionaries, artists. His music was one of the torches against the apartheid regime. Words are a powerful weapon, and his words carry an idea that people can change their countries – that every dictator must fall. George Orwell once said how he wanted to make political writing into art. In his essay *Why I Write*, Orwell mentions a political purpose of a writer, it being a "desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after."⁴ Sixto Rodriguez manages to turn a political narrative into poetry.

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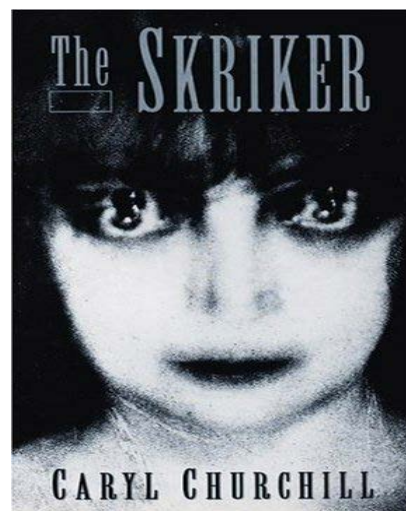
³Ibid.

⁴Orwell, George, *Why I Write*, http://orwell.ru/library/essays/wiw/english/e_wiw, accessed at 2 December 2018, at 1:20.

SPECTRE AND PHANTOM: THE PORTRAYAL OF A SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER IN *THE SKRIKER* BY CARYL CHURCHILL

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The term “hauntology”, undoubtedly present in contemporary literary and cultural studies, has derived from two different sources. The term *hauntologie* was introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres de Marx* (1993). Derrida perceives hauntology as a part of deconstructive theory and sees the ghost, or the spectre, as a specific figure that exists between life and death and challenges established certainties (Davis 2005, 376). As Davis (2005, 379) indicates, the spectre hides a secret that cannot be expressed in any human language; in that sense, the ghost exceeds our perception of thinking and language. The studies made by psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok at the beginning of the 20th century provided another aspect of hauntological theory. Abraham and Torok introduced the figure of phantom defined as “the presence of a dead ancestor in the living Ego” (Davis 2005, 374). The phantom emerges in descendants’ lives in order to keep its shameful or prohibited secrets from revealing.



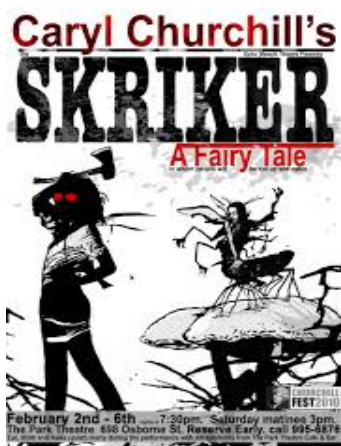
Although some critics, among others mentioned earlier Colin Davis (2005), use a strict division between the motives of Derrida’s spectres and Abraham’s and Torok’s phantoms, the current analyses of dramatic texts suggests that these categories often intersperse with each other in the practical interpretative context (Lorek-Jezińska 2013, 21). Such an intertwining of two different concepts of hauntology can be noticed in *The Skriker* (1994), a play by Caryl Churchill – the contemporary British woman playwright.

In *The Skriker* Churchill uses experimental language to express the central character - a spirit which is able to change its shape immediately and personify different figures. The Skriker comes from the underworld to haunt two young women – Josie, who is in mental hospital after killing her baby and Lily, her friend, who is pregnant. Josie accompanies the Skriker in the underworld and comes back after a while but it seems to her like years to be there. Lily, worried about her baby’s safety, also comes with the Skriker to the underworld, hoping that it will be just a moment, but she is trapped in a dark place for years.

At the beginning of the play, the Skriker is described as ‘a shapeshifter and death portent, ancient and damaged’ (243); she takes different forms to achieve her own goals and to obtain specific results on the people she is haunting. By this lack of corporal form, the Skriker crosses the boundaries of human perception; she can assume any form, either a living organism (woman) or a thing (sofa).

In Derridean way, the Skriker tries to express her secret – the mystery of her origin and existence - verbally. It seems to be damaged, distorted, with a conglomeration of words which do not match each other. It is also full of alliterations and words connected by some similarities in their sounds, for example:

Shriek! shrink! shuck off to a shack, sick, soak, seek a sleep slope
slap of the dark to shelter skelter away, a wail a whirl a world away (243).



Another feature associated with the Skriker's spectre is the place she comes from – the underworld. In the text of the play, when Josie accompanies Skriker, it is described as a wonderful, bright place of feast with music and dressed creatures; however, the dishes look a bit odd, as they consist of twigs, beetles and leaves. The underworld also changes; when Lily visits the underworld, it appears as a dark, desolate place. According to Aston (2003, 28), “the spirit world [...] frames our ‘own’ (...). The mimetic is disturbed and ‘taken in’ by the other world, spilling out of the margins to which it was previously confined. (...) Moreover, accessed through the Skriker’s underworld, the ‘real’, the mimetic, as we conventionally know it, is only a small, tiny part (...)” The underworld is in a different dimension, where the passage of time, the space and even mortality are distorted. It is the fairy, magical world which exceeds human perception and makes ‘real’ world small and claustrophobic.

The Skriker may also be analysed through the concept of Abraham's and Torok's phantom; however, the figure of the Skriker should be perceived as an ancestor of the whole mankind, whose role is to reveal



hidden fears, traumas and desires of people who need some attention. To realize this goal, she uses the method of shape-shifting when she haunts Lily and Josie. Her first presence as woman about 50” personifies Josie’s dark side – her guilt after having killed her baby and mental breakdown which Josie tries to repress. As the girl rejects the Skriker’s presence (and her own feelings which she cannot confront), she appears in front of Lily on the street. In other disguises – as a 40 years old drunk woman, a child and a man, the Skriker preys on Lily’s helpfulness, kindness and compassion. Both Josie and Lily visit underworld, but it signifies something different for each girl. For Josie, the travel to underworld with Skriker is an attempt to run away from the trauma after having killed her baby, but when she returns, it becomes clear that Josie cannot cope with the trauma.

Lily, however, visits the underworld for a slightly different reason as she is worried about both Josie’s and her own baby’s safety. She hopes that her visit will be as short as that of Josie’s; instead, she is “lost and gone for everybody was dead years and tears ago, it was another cemetery, a black whole hundred years”. In that dark place, she sees her granddaughter and her grand-granddaughter, both deformed and sad. This vision might be understood as Lily has to confront her fears concerning raising the baby as a single mother.

All these things considered, both Derrida’s concept of spectre and Abraham’s and Torok’s concept of phantom are intertwined in the analysis of the figure of the Skriker. In Derridean sense, it is a creature which exceeds human understanding with schizophrenic, distorted language. Moreover, the place the Skriker comes in, is a dimension where all ‘real’ factors, such as time, space and mortality are distorted. The Skriker also resembles the concept of phantom; as it has lived for hundreds or even thousands of years, it might be perceived as a figure of the ancestor of the whole mankind. In order to reveal hidden fears and desires of haunted girls – the trauma after killing a baby, the desire for having a lover, the anxiety of raising a baby and ensuring it is safe – the Skriker is shape-shifting and appears as an old woman, a small child and a man.

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RELUCTANT MIGRATION IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *MRS. DUTTA WRITES A LETTER*

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A master of traversing genres and spaces, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (Kolkata, 1956) has first-hand knowledge of the diasporic experience she has so perfectly captured in her oeuvre. Regarding short stories, for instance, *Arranged Marriage* (1995) broached the tribulations of first-generation migrants, whereas the later *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) broadened that vision by incorporating an intergenerational approach. *Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter* (1998) – featured in the second collection and formerly published in *The Atlantic* – is particularly interesting, since it presents one of the largely glossed-over stories of what Divakaruni has termed “reluctant immigrants” (Seaman 2005, 156), i.e. parents who relocate with the sole purpose of reuniting with their migrant children.

That is the case with the Bengali widow Prameela Dutta, whose son Sagar and daughter-in-law Shyamoli reside in California. Despite adopting “this is home now” (Divakaruni 1998) as her mantra, she suffers “unhomeliness — [...] the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (Bhabha [1994] 2004, 13). The mattress that is “too American-soft”, “a show filled with jokes that [she] does not understand” and “the TV voices, with their strange foreign accents” clash with her customs and prevent her from actually developing a sense of belonging (Divakaruni 1998). Additionally, Mrs. Dutta’s dark complexion contrasts with the “unusually fair skin” that enables her daughter-in-law to “pass for an American” (1998). Shyamoli’s cultural assimilation also encompasses her embrace of Western habits and is taken further by her children, whose “American voices” increase their grandmother’s dismay and make her question whether family can in fact be merely “blood of [one’s] blood” (1998).

Cultural backgrounds comprise beliefs, languages, patterns of behaviour (Jayaram 2004, 16), and even food. Hence, Mrs. Dutta taking refuge in the kitchen can hardly be a coincidence, for it is a traditionally feminized and “contested space where women [...] engage in emotional confrontations” (Assella 2015, 130). Prameela risks acculturation if she breaks with the past that “is always constructed through memory” (Hall 1990, 226). For Shyamoli, however, Indian food jeopardizes her assimilation. As she puts it: “[Mrs. Dutta]’s taken over the entire kitchen, cooking whatever she likes. [...] I feel like this isn’t my house anymore” (Divakaruni 1998). Likewise, Prameela refusing to use the dryer and hanging her washed clothes over a fence shared with their neighbour poses another threat that prompts Shyamoli to vent her anger:

I’d like to see how calm you’d be if she [the neighbour] came up to you [Sagar] and said, ‘Kindly tell the old lady not to hang her clothes over the fence into my yard.’ She said it twice, like I didn’t understand English, like I was a savage. All these years I’ve been so careful not to give these Americans a chance to say something like this [...]. (1998)

Not only does the fence as a symbol of insurmountable cultural frontiers prevent Mrs. Dutta from leading a “borderline existence” (Bhabha [1994] 2004, 19), but it also emphasizes an othering process from which Shyamoli is not exempt either. Although the American neighbour homogenizes Indian immigrants, both main characters differ even on gender issues. While for Mrs. Dutta women should never put themselves first, Shyamoli claims that “in America we don’t believe in men’s work and women’s work” (Divakaruni 1998). In fact, given that the daughter-in-law also provides for her relatives, “patriarchal authority is weakened, and family relationships altered” (Githens 2013, 152), something Mrs. Dutta tries but fails to accept.



It should be noted that “diasporic journeys are [...] lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: [...] gender, ‘race’, class, religion, language and generation” (Brah 1996, 183–184). Indeed, attitudes toward tradition depend on those categories and eventually influence the amount of concessions someone is willing to make in order to fit in. Furthermore, the pressure exerted by “avid relatives in India who’ve been waiting for something just like this to happen” had inadvertently forced Mrs. Dutta to repress her loneliness (Divakaruni 1998). Yet, when she receives a letter from a friend inquiring about her adjustment to America, she finally realizes that her “sense of loss” may not be as “illogical” as she had thought (1998). Thus, although she considers disguising “how alone she is in this land of young people” once again (1998), she ultimately resolves to return to India, disregarding a widow’s expected place with her son and replying:

All I know is that [happiness] isn’t [...] about being needed. It isn’t about being with family

either. It has something to do with love, I still think that, but in [...] a way I don’t have the words to explain. [...] If I’m lucky – and perhaps, in spite of all that has happened, I am – the happiness will be in the figuring out. (1998)

Rather than a journey, migration is overall a long-lasting process with unforeseen consequences. Irrespective of personal circumstances, Prameela and Shyamoli embody cultural identities which are “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall 1990, 225). Nevertheless, their lives are irredeemably shaped by a mostly unwelcoming society whose actions infiltrate their private sphere, especially for Mrs. Dutta. Far from idealizing the diasporic experience, Divakaruni’s reluctant immigrant shows that the achievement of happiness is closely linked to self-awareness and that failing to integrate may result in “the endless desire to return to ‘lost origins’” (1990, 236), even if that ‘home’ no longer exists and who you once were has faded in the process of becoming.

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