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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Žan Korošec  
PROOFREADER-IN-CHIEF: Matjaž Zgonc

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Janja Bevk  
PR MANAGER: Karin Petko

SECTION EDITORS: Ariela Herček, Zala Jambrovič Hatič, Luka Kržišnik, Veronika Mikec, Katarina Penko,  
Jure Pirtovšek, Nisja Naja Resinovič, Lara Zombra

DESIGN: Sara Stiplovšek  
ENgLIST LOGOTYPE: Ines Ana Jarc  
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the.english@gmail.com  
www.facebook.com/ENgLIST  
english.weebly.com



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From left to right: Veronika Mikec, Matjaž Zgonc, Nisja Naja Resinovič, Žan Korošec, Karin Petko, Katarina Penko, Zala Jambrovič Hatič

Absentees: Janja Bevk, Ariela Herček, Luka Kržišnik, Jure Pirtovšek, Lara Zombra

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## ditorial

Žan Korošec, editor-in-chief

The ardently awaited issue XVIII is now available for your appraisal and assessment. We have burnt the last remnant, the last scintilla of that midnight oil which otherwise sustains arduous, even somewhat inundating endeavours. The consequence is something that you will hopefully enjoy and cherish, but should you find ENgLIST lacking in quality, don't hesitate and voice your opinions by letting us know which segments could benefit from austere revision. Just keep in mind that the team and our contributors toiled and continue to do so on a voluntary basis, receive no remuneration or critical acclaim, so at least arm your opprobrium with unbiased and pertinent argumentation before daring us into a debate. The overall aim of this issue was to produce and publish material that would provoke, stimulate discussion, prompt a scholarly dialogue, hence we greet constructive criticism with glee, not trepidation (and we do not get easily offended, be assured).

We have evidently stripped ENgLIST of its former panache and pizzazz, simplified its appearance and rather focused on elaborating the content, or, at least we hope we have achieved

the advertised. Apropos of the last point about the reconditioned subject matter, we have made a fairly radical decision – either ENgLIST features exemplary works or it shall cease to exist; publishing for publishing's sake was thus at last abolished. And now we are here, spread open before you, disrobed of false pretences, primed for your inspection. Is the periodical now perfected? No, unequivocally no; however, it is our honest belief that we have refined it just enough to establish a firm groundwork for forthcoming improvements. The current editorial team is retiring, the ones still zealous shall assume our positions and resume with the production of this newspaper. Their peregrination will first resemble a farcical odyssey, yet, given half a chance, they shall astound even the acutely apathetic adversaries.

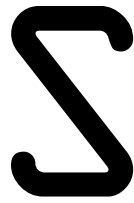
As you read this bile, don't be too discouraged. The editorial's main purpose, apart from being a vehicle for my cynicism, is to publically acknowledge every single participant. Authors, lecturers, professors, proof-readers, sponsors and you, fellow editors, ENgLIST is beholden to you. Were it not for your meritorious efforts, we would not be here now. And we like being here. We revel in the idea that the only student platform for a thought-exchange remains alive, pulsating, throbbing, not yielding to stagnation or external pressure. We are proud to have allocated an equal amount of attention to each text, engaged several opposing outlooks and never judged without first deliberated about the strengths and weaknesses. To disbelieve this is your prerogative, and we won't even attempt to persuade you; nevertheless, I cannot refrain from emphasising that ENgLIST is not a mere "afterschool project", not just a departmental magazine, not meagre means of getting a reward, ENgLIST is the brainchild of the last 13 generations of students. Don't take this as a Wordsworthian ode to the significance of academic writing or as a swansong enunciating the long-halted sensations; recognize the tradition, potential and the formative charge, identify the collective urge for advancement and be a part of it.

# Disclaimer

ENgLIST's Editorial Team is affiliated with neither right- nor left-wing doctrines, since we vigorously advocate the individual's right to support whichever policy on the spectrum they fancy. For that reason, we do not censor or omit material if it only contradicts with the prevailing ideology, but do intervene in cases of hate-speech, direct assault or sheer vilification. Having said that, nothing in this issue is to be understood as either our collective admission of concurrence or admission of liability. As stated in the *Editorial*, we do not reject the possibility of a debate, yet will refrain from choosing sides. In addition, by reading this, you consent that the Editorial Team's duty is not to explicate every single written statement, as this responsibility is in the authors' domain alongside guaranteeing that their works are not results of plagiarism.

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# Studentship as Vocation or This Is Not a Paper

Matjaž Zgonc

This is not a manifesto. Manifestoes are programmatic texts of perpetrators who want to change the world for their version of “the better”. This is instead an instance of fascist awakening masquerading as progressivism. Walter Benjamin said fascism is a re-rendering of anything political as a form of aestheticism. This is a beautiful pogrom. D’Annunzio flew over Vienna, bombing it with messages in bottles explaining to the coffee drinkers how he could have so easily bombed them with actual bombs. Then, he went to Fiume to throw a party to end all parties, which was all made briefly sustainable by people’s volition to rob pirate ships carrying treasure back to colonialist kings and queens who had hired them. This is my message in a bottle: keep your eyes peeled, for my planes may be approaching.

This is not a critique. Critiques are like parodies: they establish themselves necessarily in a relationship with that which is parodied. There is no Monty Python without religious fundamentalists. There is no *Waste Land* without Romanticism, whose privileged status as the golden age of Britain was cemented by pre-war ministry of education elevating English as the necessary, true-vocational patriotic subject matter for male students to learn. You should all know where you come from. Nah, this is an exercise in anarchic pleasure. I could not care less for all the syntax and word-formation of the native speakers of English, regardless of their origin.

This is not to distance myself from the ones in power. Plenty of ink has been spilled and even more breath wasted over our professorkind. Rather, dear irreverent student, this is directed against you. You who have failed time and again to contribute to the formation of a proper body public, yet have ceaselessly demanded one to be there for the times when the going got tough. You find yourself perfectly satisfied writing lines like these, albeit, because you are not a good fascist, you tend to either be ineffectively verbose or painfully limited. Your prose and poetry is not rejected but ignored. Your crusades in comment sections under various topics languish wallowingly, languishingly wallow. Do not feel offended, I am well aware that I am one of you. But who can admit they belong here with me?

This is not benevolent. Hell no, this is an act of white-hot rage. How every shred of my natural curiosity has suffered stuffed between the four walls of this putrefaction FFactory – I cannot feel fascination anymore, there is only disdain. Above all, the disdain towards those who disdained us because we now favour contributions over pretentious fiction. Tell me, why do you want your peers to institutionally approve your little poems and stories where there is the vast ocean of non-reviewed fiction waiting for you to discover and embellish on the internet? Are you so fixated on earning a grade, a gold fucking star, for every piece of work you manage to stitch together? Discover again the joys of creativity separated from an immediately superordinate elder. This “creativity” which gets rewarded like a dog with a biscuit every time it does what the master says is not a part of your nature. This fake, molested creativity is only applicable to you if you voluntarily submit yourself to vulgar capitalist rhetoric of the good entrepreneur who saved his country from joblessness. Write me a jingle, create me a creative ad, go make a twitch-dot-TV-forward-slash outlet for yourselves. No sticker for you.

This is not a fable which ends with a morale. This is a document showing how things are. If you were waiting for this, congratulations! You are something of a fascist yourself, and you can admit it. Do you feel better than those who refer to themselves as human capital? Don’t, this is only a beginning. You *hate* me for writing this. You *hate* being analysed, because you are not a number. In fact, you absolutely *despise* anything scientific. You would rather understand than learn, and you absolutely *love* identification. Identify the parts of speech in this sentence. Identify the number of black people at the very top. Identify which features of a theory can be seen in this passage. Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit. You also believe that only black people truly understand the position of black people. You have had the experience of conversing with two people whose level of English was significantly lower than yours. Suddenly, you find yourself communicating in basic sentences because the worst guy can understand that. You are never able to transcend this bubble of complacency; you believe yourself to be actively helping this poor idiot learn from your wisdom through osmosis. You love immigrant food, immigrant dances, their fiestas with their pretty colours, but if one of them decides to run for a superior position and exercise thereby their legal equality, you suddenly rally! You start seeing rivers and waves of immigration coming in to take your jobs! And I haven’t forgotten about those dangling black people: yes, they understand how black people feel. You are so disgustingly liberal that you have rendered discrimination into some kind of sick privilege. To say this is to say we cannot understand anaerobic bacteria unless we stop breathing. DISCRIMINATION! To say this is to say this is my home, get those bilingual signs with Italian/Hungarian/Serbian/Albanian/Slovene out of my face. To say this is to say you’re on a wheelchair, let me do everything for you. To say this is to say, this is fine, nobody should be forced to vaccinate their children. Let everyone keep their own personal privileged position of understanding, because only you can understand how you truly feel.

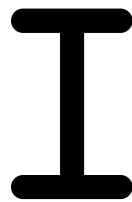
Some humans are out of shape. This does not affect the veracity of the fact that among all animals, humans are best built for long-term running. However, there are theoreticians who

build theories and careers on establishing a twisted connection between biology, nature and perception. No one would take you seriously if you claimed humans' legs are not for running because some humans are fat or paralysed. Why would you take seriously the people who claim human chromosomes are not for sexual procreation? [It is Mozart to my fascist ears to hear you all tell one another how you don't "see" gender, or race, or disability – thereby you combine the *übermensch* mentality of individually solving a social problem, as well as align the mentality with the dictatorship by ostracizing anyone who sees through your bluff. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. There is no alternative! There is no alternative!] Dinosaurs and fledgling birds alike are abusing transgender people. For it is not true that they wish to remove the source of inequality – they nurture it, they revel it as a source of an indefinite amount of easily reviewable articles. A seismologist does not truly wish for earthquakes and volcanoes to stop bothering people. So too does a gender scientist not want its subjects to reap the fruits of their social struggle, because this is how well-paid tenures are lost. In fact, there is no greater academic hypocrisy than lamenting how stupid the average person is. If everyone was as smart, clever and well-read as a professor, why, then there would be no need for the academia, would there?

Is this not the beginning of the end? We used to say that science is superior to religion because religion changes fact to fit its narrative while science changes its paradigm to accommodate more facts. Religion doesn't allow you in if you don't believe – your starting point is to be an adherent. If you believe in the privilege of your position because of who you are, because you have earned merit solely for your identification, you have already won this battle. For it is not welcome anymore to criticise, to be malevolent and to hurt. Have you ever been faced with the fact that your work was utter crap? God forbid, it would have hurt your feelings! Best pretend the person who called you out was an idiot, yeah? That's right, let us instead focus on all those who keep telling you how impressive you are. Good, good.

The rest of you, grab a black shirt and a knife. We meet at dawn. Onslaught at eight. This is unbearable; either we win, or we dine in hell tonight.

Opinion Essay



# In Defence of Donald Trump

Tim Kiseljak

It is a well-known fact that universities all across the Western world espouse increasingly dogmatic and political views. We hear of countless examples of ideologue professors who indoctrinate their students and force them to adhere to their extreme world views. I expected to see precisely that when I enrolled at the Faculty of Arts, and still I was shocked, to a degree, by the blatant anti-Trump rhetoric I encounter on a daily basis. I suppose it's taken for granted that we all agree with these views. While I'm in no way offended or angry, I do wish to express at length certain things that just cannot be expressed in class, but that nevertheless need to be addressed, lest some people think themselves and their views untouchable. Thus, behold, the heretic cometh with his slimy ways and evil thoughts.

I remember the election night of 2016 as if it were yesterday. We were watching the beauty of the electoral college in action as states turned red or blue and votes went to one candidate and then to the other. The whole world collectively held its breath as it watched the events unfold. Dozens of minutes passed as the votes were being counted, and, for a time, Hillary and Trump stood relatively equally. But then, lo! what is this? Is Trump . . . in the lead? Is he winning? How could this be possible, I thought; all the polls had predicted his spectacular loss. For was he not a terrible bigot, a sexist, an islamophobe, a homophobe, a xenophobe, a racist, white supremacist Nazi who wants to put blacks and Hispanics into concentration camps; and was he not accused of more than three thousand and twenty-five rapes and instances of sexual harassment, and does he not eat deep-fried babies for breakfast, and does he not have an IQ of 75, and, that most horrid sin, is he not also orange in the face?! Surely such a man must lose. Surely only people of similar views and of similar intelligence could vote for this monster.

And yet, against all odds, Donald J. Trump managed to cross that magical boundary of 270 electoral votes and become the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America. And as I saw the result on screen an uncontrollable wide smile appeared on my face and my heart was filled with joy and the room with spontaneous cheers and laughter. My friends and I hugged in celebration and all our hearts were filled with disbelief. We won. None of us expected it, but we won; and for that reason the victory was so much sweeter. Yet, in that seminal moment, the fight had just begun.

Let me reassure you that I in no way endorse or support every single thing that the scary orange man says or does. In fact, I'm very amused by his simplistic speech and silly goofs. He's clumsy and imperfect and shoots words from the hip. He takes credit for things he didn't do, sometimes even outright lies, and his decorum is hardly that of Churchill or Thatcher. However, what we often seem to forget is that when we elect a president, we aren't electing a friend or a spouse—we're electing a policy maker. Thus, despite all his personal imperfections, we ought to focus on such issues as crime and disorder statistics, on jobs and the GDP, trade, nuclear deals with Iran, handling of immigration and responses to terrorism. The only way to evaluate his performance is to focus on these matters, for every silly moment will eventually be forgotten, but the effects of the laws he passes and policies he enacts are going to be felt for generations.

But that, of course, is all too technical and factual and boring. That would mean we'd actually have to educate ourselves and read and learn and then discuss. How much easier it is to just insult! Where are the juicy scandals, I hear you ask, and where are the mean tweets? Forget the important things; we want to hear more about how evil the orange man is!

What I find so incredibly amazing is just how easy it is to refute the many insults and false accusations thrown at Mr. Trump on a daily basis. It has become almost an established religion to shower him with every "-ism" one can think of, and by extension, accuse his supporters of those same sins.

I remember hearing about Donald Trump's candidacy for the first time in early 2016. I initially believed the childish mockery and the slander, but, being curious, I opened YouTube, typed in "Donald Trump speeches" and started listening to them – for what better way to listen to this bigotry than from the man himself? But after ten, twenty, and sixty minutes, and then after hours and dozens of videos under my belt I was still unsatisfied. Where were the sexism and the racism? I certainly couldn't seem to find it. And where was any concentration camp talk, or anything remotely white supremacist? Yes, he spoke of dangers of mass illegal immigration, the issues of crime that are brought with it, but that's, at least to a degree, just factually correct and incontestable, as well as easily accessible online. That is to say, it is unavoidable that illegal immigrants commit crime, and even just one may be too much to some people. Immoral acts caused by the native population are to an extent unavoidable, whereas immigrants' crimes most certainly can be by just not letting them enter in the first place. That's what Trump tried to express. In that sense facts can't be racist, and even if they may be abused for racist purposes, they still must be shown to the public. Trump, as I discovered, also never mocked a disabled reporter. In fact, it takes about five seconds to google clips of him mocking other people, including himself, in that same exact way – waving his limp hands and opening the mouth so as to ridicule. But, of course, why would anyone wish to google something that is going to ruin their fantasies?

How Trump hates blacks is still a mystery to me. From what I can tell, he has been working with black people his entire life, has many black acquaintances and seems to have a genuine concern for the well-being of all African Americans, their horrendous crime rates and poverty levels. It is also interesting to note that Mr. Trump has never before been accused of racism – that is, before he ran against Democrats whose unofficial political slogan these days seems to be "Anyone I disagree with is a Nazi". Whether Trump's presidency proves to have a benevolent effect on black communities is yet to be seen, but he certainly doesn't seem to me as anywhere close to being a white supremacist. Anyone making that outlandish claim would have to show some explicit data to prove that he is (I won't hold my breath).

Aside from the myriad of "-isms" that Trump is supposed to be, there's one more accusation that the Left's mobs seem to love to throw at him on every occasion they can. That is, of course, his supposed lack of intelligence. For of course, what's better than being smarter than the president himself? You heard it right; you're smarter than him! Than Trump! Ye mighty student, paragon of intellectual thought; how you

spend your days endlessly scrolling through Facebook and Instagram, and how you've read a whole five and a half books over the course of your life, and how gallantly you place trust into such reputable sources as CNN, BuzzFeed, and your favourite singer's Twitter feed. You are smarter than the billionaire personification of the American dream, who fought against the media, the Democratic party, and his own party, and became the president of the most powerful country on Earth. And, oh, I hear you crying that classic line of "but he got a small loan of a million dollars". How long would it take, would you say, before you wasted such a loan on iPhones, expensive cars and jewellery, alcohol and endless trips to your favourite Chinese restaurant, and vapid excursions to India and Korea? Would you know how to make more millions and even billions out of that small loan? Surely if someone as stupid as Trump could do it, you can too! Again, I won't hold my breath.

It's incredible, isn't it? How so many people are able to indulge in such blatant doublethink and they don't even see it. On the one side, Trump is a 75-IQ orange monkey who can't discern his head from his backside, and on the other, he's an incredibly competent and calculating evil man who's going to destroy America with his dangerous policies. I, for one, wouldn't be afraid of Hillary Clinton with Down syndrome – I was fearful of her becoming president precisely because she is so ruthlessly competent. So, which is it? Is Trump at least somewhat competent and dangerous to your utopian dreams, or is he really about as smart as a squashed grape? He can't be both.

The moral of the story is that most of your issues with Trump are probably either imaginary, trivial, or both. Instead, make the effort to inform yourself about the actually important events and policies coming from his administration and engage them with a healthy measure of respect and logic. He's no saint, and I myself disagree with many of his decisions and sentiments. However, instead of showering him with petty insults, like a six-year-old would do, I try to engage the issues surrounding him with careful thought and at least some research. What most of his opponents seem to be doing at the moment is a sort of Lovecraftian version of "four legs good, two legs bad" where their nonsensical sentences turn to meaningless words and then to gibberish of syllables and odd noises; and very soon, out of that gibberish comes, first faintly and then with increasing clarity, a chide that goes "Orange man bad" repeated again and again as a substitute to debate—and that chide seems to constitute the whole of their political doctrine.

I urge you to break free of that childlike rhetoric and instead debate the world around you like the adult that you so wish to be. Until you take that intellectual leap, keep in mind that with every tear you cry, and with every empty slur that comes out of your mouth and with every unfunny joke you make, the wall just gets ten feet taller.

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## Enemy Combatant or Collateral Damage?

Lara Majerle

The term War on Terror has been brought forth by the well-known 9/11 attacks in the United States of America in 2001. The president of the US at the time, George Bush, was the first to utter the words War on Terror; the words that resonated with the masses who were outraged, shocked and most of all in grief. Three thousand people lost their lives that day. The attacks had incomprehensible consequences not only for the US as a country and for its people but also on a much larger, global scale. The world needed to react to the atrocities. The United States responded with the War on Terror – a military strategy for exterminating international terrorism. However, you do not fight violence with violence. It only creates more of the same. In addition, it also brings fear and panic among people. The result of that violence, panic and terror is that lives have been lost on all sides. So, to what extent can the War on Terror be justifiable in regards to human rights and more importantly, human lives? The end does not justify the means. Human rights have been created for a reason and should be respected at any cost. Nothing is more valuable than a human life, not even winning the so-called war – the one actually meant to save human lives and not spread hatred.

In the state of war, collateral damage is admissible, which is inexcusable. Stalin allegedly said that ‘The death of one man is a tragedy, the death of millions is a statistic.’ If we see the face of the victim and know their story, we are more inclined to feel sympathy and commiseration for them. That is not the case when we are faced with cold hard facts. When we hear about collateral damage in the newspapers and on the news, we are presented with just that – a statistic. We do not hear about the names of the victims, whether they have a family or not or about their hopes and dreams. War on Terror actually succeeds in dehumanising humans. Headlines are piling up: ‘78 found dead’, ‘158 people killed in bombing’, ‘592 missing, presumed dead’. Where does it end? We do not see flesh-and-blood people killed but ‘others’ fighting in a faraway land. Collateral damage turns into a statistic. Media profits from heinous stories and at the same time makes us detached. Some might care for a day, perhaps two, then go on with their daily lives. We turn a blind eye, become apathetic and numb to those events which enables their reoccurrence and it results

in even more hatred, racism and discrimination. That is evident in the case of 2015 hospital bombing.

During the time of president Barack Obama, a deliberate bombing of a hospital in Afghanistan occurred. In 2015, a United States Air Force bombed the Kunduz Trauma Centre operated by Doctors Without Borders. Forty-two people were killed and at least thirty were seriously injured. This was a breach of International Humanitarian Law whose aim is to minimize the effects of armed conflict by protecting civilians (‘The ICRC Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law’). In the Kunduz hospital, both women and children, as well as injured soldiers from both sides, were being treated. General director of Doctors Without Borders Christopher Stokes said:

*Some public reports are circulating that the attack on our hospital could be justified because we were treating Taliban. Wounded combatants are patients under international law, and must be free from attack and treated without discrimination.’ (‘Patients Burned in Their Beds’).*

They had no right to bomb that hospital with innocent people inside. The medical staff did not deserve such a deplorable attack, nor did the wounded combatants. Because of their arrogance people died and you would expect severe punishment to be meted out to the culprits. Nothing of substance has happened – an official apology was issued by the former president Obama. He admitted that the bombing was a mistake and no major repercussions ensued. Civilians who have lost their lives were regarded as collateral damage and no one was held responsible. The so-called mistakes should not be acceptable. Yet, that is exactly what is happening. All in the name of the War on Terror.

The War on Terror brings fear and panic. Fear and panic contribute to stripping away all constitutional rights of a human being for a greater purpose – to win the War on Terror. There are numerous people of different nationalities being discriminated against who have no part in terrorist acts.

## Zero tolerance against terrorists or tolerable racism?

For the fear of being terrorists, people have been put in prison, undergone excruciating torturing and all without even getting a trial beforehand. This is a clear violation of their constitutional rights. An example of that is the president George W. Bush’s accusation of Jose Padilla, also known as Abdullah al Muhajir, as an ‘enemy combatant’. He was allegedly one of the al Qaeda operatives and has been held in several American military prisons. The label ‘enemy combatant’ enabled the United States of America to rob him of his freedom, consulting with a counsel, a hearing, a lawyer and a judge. The term ‘enemy combatant’ has in the past been used for all residents of an enemy state that are in the military. However, now the term is so broad that it enables almost anyone to be regarded as an ‘enemy combatant’. It became a convenient way to disregard basic human rights and rapidly achieve a goal – may that be taking back a lost territory or killing an enemy. Ter-



rorists should be apprehended and answer for their horrendous crimes against humanity. Nonetheless, we must never stoop to their level and so easily 'forget' our humanity. Human rights help keep our humanity in check.

The war on terror has contributed to the growing abuse of human rights because international human rights get tossed aside during the War on Terror. The line of right and wrong that was determined by International Humanitarian Law gradually becomes blurry every time people lose their lives and are considered collateral damage. Human rights need to be respected especially during the war because that is the time when they are most compromised. Civilians that get hurt are not regarded as victims of atrocious crimes against humanity but as collateral damage. People who get wrongly accused or imprisoned are executed without a judge or jury and without anyone being held responsible. Not all is fair in war. Human life needs to be valued above all else, as optimistic as this sounds. It is written in UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that:

*'The promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law is essential to all components of the Strategy, recognizing that effective counter-terrorism measures and the promotion of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing.'*

One does not contradict the other. We need to put that theory into practice and ensure that these policies work together. Nobody actually wins in war but you can win if you fight for basic human rights.

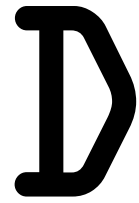
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# ominated by Science, Technology and Industrialization, There Is No Longer a Place for Dreaming and Imagination

Kaja Tržan

It is certainly true that science, technology and industrialization have had a great impact on our lives. It seems like every day we hear of new innovations from the field of science and are left in awe when we see a hologram singing onstage at its very own concert. Consequently, I cannot agree completely with the premise stated in the title.

Firstly, I have to admit that in some cases it would seem like technology is numbing the minds of the most vulnerable members of our society: the children. Children seem to be so caught up in the virtual reality when using smartphones and tablets that they no longer know how to play with a toy that does not do anything. I have seen the effect on my two-year-old cousin who already knows how to unlock an iPad but gets frustrated when given a toy because she does not know what to do with it.

On the other hand, I also believe that – in moderation, of course – playing computer games can be beneficial for a child. Take the game *Minecraft* for example: the point of the game is stacking blocks in order to create houses, castles, caves or anything you want. I find that to be extremely beneficial not only for the child's imagination but also for developing a sense of space and organization of both time (because parents limit screen time) and space. Cutting down on screen time would also be beneficial for young people; however, those mostly have problems with communication rather than imagination.

Another matter people keep forgetting is that imagination is what drives all the inventors to create new devices. The quote "If you can dream it, you can do it," by Walt Disney is really not that far-fetched if you acknowledge the accomplishments of the last few decades. If you look back, I am sure that at least once in your lifetime you have said: "It would be so nice if I

could just relax while someone else vacuumed the house.” While many of those wishes were granted by your kids (you are welcome, mother), one particular engineer thought of a more efficient method that did not include whining and asking why. And *voilà*, that dream turned into the *iRobot Roomba*, an automatic vacuuming robot which soon hit the shelves.

It is astonishing that the human mind is so creative. Granted, we are still waiting for flying cars – which have become almost a symbol for the future – yet we are not taking into account everything that has happened and is happening in the field of medicine. Can you imagine going to the ER after having hurt your arm and the doctor saying: “*Well, the bone could be broken in half but we will never know. I wish I could see inside your body though. Pray it heals.*” No, you cannot. Because Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen invented the X-ray, thus making the first step in radiology, and undoubtedly saving many lives. This is just one of many dreams that made it out of someone’s head and into reality.

In hope of inspiring children to become inventors, many movies have been made over the years which encourage children to dream big and believe that nothing in this world is impossible. I have seen many of those movies, including *Robots*, *Inside Out*, *Chicken Little*, *The Incredibles*, *Big Hero 6* and others, my favourite being *Meet the Robinsons*. After watching them, I felt as if I had the power to change the world, even though I was not that little anymore. I can only imagine what an impact all of those movies have had on small children.

In conclusion, I still believe that imagination and dreams are limitless. Perhaps all we need is some guidance, be it in the form of parents cutting down their child’s screen time, reading scientific articles or watching children’s movies. Keep in mind that sometimes even thinking of ways to get out of doing chores can be beneficial for everyone – maybe just not for you if you say “no” to your mother when she asks you to vacuum.

Argumentative  
Essay



ome Strawberries,  
Please: Dear Future  
Teachers of  
English, This One  
Is for You.

Maja Perne

Teaching or learning a foreign language has never been a piece of cake for most. However, many experts such as Hymes, Canale, Savignon, Palloti and the likes have supposedly concocted a recipe that few didactic dissidents dare to contradict. What is this mysterious recipe for foreign language teaching and what happens in practice if it is misread? (A scorched pie.) Lastly, are there any bygone recipes for foreign language teaching that could be pulled out of the rusty cabinets, get some good old dusting and be revived?

Students at the Faculty of Arts rummaging through heaps of didactic literature have been well inculcated with this mystical commandment of foreign language teaching, namely, the Communicative Competence. This is “[...] *the ultimate goal of foreign language learning and teaching*” according to Skela (2014: 113). It is “the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals” (ibid.). Simply put it means that teaching a language should make practical sense; the tasks should be authentic, pragmatic and the materials learnt should actually be useful in students’ lives as suggested by Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005, as cited in Tarvin 2014: 18). This outlook on teaching has been around since the 1960’s and today most teachers swear by it. All swell and well until you observe the misapplication of this communication obsession in practice. The result: many teachers bewitched by their par excellence subject are unable to discern what communicative and practical notions mean, however, they still insist they know best. Their belief – in all honesty – “I teach communicatively”.

## This misappropriation of the Communicative Competence by the teachers in practice is ubiquitous.

Working as a tutor of English and German, I have the privilege to cringe every time I hear what my pupils have to wolf down. An eighth grader, for instance, needs to spill out an exact definition of a *hypermarket*, *supermarket* and *department store* which makes perfect sense if planning a retail store layout. Furthermore, when they learn about purchasing food items, they can’t buy just *some strawberries* at the store, as the berries need to be pre-packed in a *punnet* – a critical word for a child not working as a shop assistant at the fruit stand. Moving on to high school, my jaw dropped when a freshman studying German knew exactly what to call a *paperclip* (*Büroklammer*), recited the correct article with its plural form, but had no idea how either the *sky* (*der Himmel*) or a *bird* (*der Vogel*) were called. Similarly, a student who didn’t know how to pronounce an elementary verb *to dream* (*träumen*) knew exactly what to call a *ruminant* (*Wiedekäuer*): a word of practical use for any average teenager not studying to become a veterinarian in Germany.

Only naturally, the notion of Communicative Competence itself is not at fault for this discrepancy, it’s always the people behind it. It happens very often that teachers are blindsided by the importance of their own teaching subject which only inhibits them to discern the superfluous pieces of information. They forget the fact that their role as “*the language teacher is to help learners get along in real-life situations*” (Savignon, 1997, as cited in Tarvin 2014: 7) and real-life situations

require not native-like detailed mastery of language, but rather “[non-native speaker] creativity” as Jenkins states (2006, *ibid.* 16). To simplify this idea: imagine your pupil masters Standard English with all the proper forms and elaborate idioms and always gets the perfect score on tests; one day this pupil starts working alongside a foreigner who also speaks English. On a lovely Saturday picnic luncheon, the two converse about work; suddenly the foreigner starts to gape at his Slovene colleague as he has no idea what he means by saying that their boss is *a few sandwiches short of a picnic*. What now? As you can see, awkward real-life moments can arise if teachers misunderstand the communicative idea and hail the redundant. Alas, indeed!

Another phenomenon on the rise alongside the misused Communicative Competence is the depreciation and abashment of older traditional methods of foreign language teaching as already observed by Richards and Rogers (2001 as cited in Siefert, 2013: 1). One of the traditional methods is the so-called Grammar Translation Method which was all the rage for quite a long time. Monks translating scripts from their mother tongue into Latin, scholars translating literary works, students doing drill grammatical exercises whilst the teacher never uttered a word of English: that’s the method in a comically simplified nutshell (Conti, 2016). With adaptation, however, this traditional way could be a rich supplement for the modern classroom at any level. Research suggests there are many benefits to this elderly method as the today’s “scarce focus on grammatical knowledge does not help the learners develop the metalinguistic and analytical skills necessary for L2-students to learn grammar independently and to produce and comprehend texts that contain sophisticated syntax” Cunningham (2000, as cited in Conti, 2016). Damiani (2003, *ibid.*) believes that by using this method a teacher can be most certain if their students are actually learning as their progress can be easily followed and graded.

As aforementioned, there are benefits to learning a language through grammatical drill and translation exercises. Moreover, by early exposure to authentic texts, lists of vocabulary items and drill exercises students would passively absorb the language which could ease the follow-up communicative tasks. This passive absorption of language is even known as the *silent period*: it’s how babies learn their ABCs. And experts dub it as “*a crucial time for self-mediated learning within the early years*” (Bligh, 2011, as cited in Bligh 2015: 1). This goes hand in hand with the Grammar Translation Method as it allows utilizing silence as a tool for learning, fractionally increases participation and gives way to self-meditated learning according to Bligh and Drury (Bligh, 2015: 17). Understanding how language learning process functions with regard to the *silent period*, this ostracized Grammar Translation Method may prove to be beneficial especially in the earlier stages of language learning – naturally with communicative sprucing up, as we don’t want to send our pupils back in time to transcribe scripts all the time.

Unfortunately, this traditional way of teaching is often frowned upon by many communicative adherents. Try defending this traditional way of teaching at our faculty and you will be able to hear platitudes such as: “You need to teach communicatively as required by the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages. Period.” This sentence is often accompanied by some inconspicuous eye rolling as, Goddess forbid, older ways of teaching a foreign language make their comeback. Luckily for the CC-heretics, not all professors share this view. Some will encourage you to venture in your lessons and mix up the communicative cocktail with Oldie-Goldie ways of teaching – as long as you have proper background knowledge on the matter, naturally. They even cheer deviating from quasi-pragmatic coursebooks and taking the matters into your own hands. Still, they simultaneously keep their fingers crossed in hopes you are well equipped with the know-how to be able to make these decisions.

As you can see, studying at the Faculty of Arts will impair you and make you think about things you never dreamed of thinking such as this entire article. The Communicative Competence is a great approach to teaching foreign languages; the problem arises when teachers don’t really understand what it stands for – what expressions such as “communicative”, “pragmatic” or “real-life information” mean. Furthermore, the haughty belief that older methods of teaching should rest in peace is unfair as, ironically, these very methods were deemed the ultimate recipe for foreign language teaching once and their benefits still hold gallons of water.

So, what would be my conclusive piece of advice? Pay attention to what you learn about the Communicative Madness and other methods at the faculty, but take everything with a grain of salt and find out for yourself what actually brings best results no matter what the CC-zealots advertise – a visit to the library might do the trick. Most and foremost, with or without the library visit, be aware that you as a future teacher have the responsibility to discern what makes sense for your students to learn. Aim for practicality instead of native-like perfection as Leung suggests (2005, as cited in Tarvin 2014: 15). To put it in simple terms – an eighth grader in a store can do without buying *a punnet of strawberries, some strawberries* will do just fine.

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# Why Koreans Are So Adept at Teaching Foreigners Their Own Language, and So Abysmal When It Comes to Them Learning English

Ajda Rozina Zupančič

I am prefacing this lengthy piece of writing by saying I whipped it up in an afternoon at a coffee shop, i.e. it is not well-researched nor supported by credible sources alphabetically written at the bottom of the page for further perusal. These are my own opinions, and while I believe them to be true and stand by them (until proven otherwise), I implore you to fact-check the stated facts, especially the Korea-related bits, if this is your first encounter with the topic. The foundations on which I base this article are my degree in Korean Studies and living in Korea for almost two years. I in no way, shape, or form call myself an expert.

Koreans are no different from Slovenians in when they start learning the English language: at a young age, often even before primary school, if their mothers have a say in this. And yet it seems futile since we still make fun of their accents, L and R are apparently one and the same for some, and they seem to use 'he' and 'she' interchangeably as well. It is not a question of studying hard or not – Korean students often employ hagwons, specialised centres for learning school subjects after school, English included. So why then are they so poor at it when they study English as long and definitely harder than Slovenian students?

Setting aside the significantly different language and sentence structures of Korean, which of course do impact learning a structurally different language such as English, I have surmised this is largely due to how the English language is taught in schools and who teaches the language. If we focus on the latter, Korea has been very prolific with hiring (native) English speakers to teach in their schools in the last decade. When I

say Korea employs native English speakers I mean that they hire indiscriminately, as long as the person has a BA... in any field. So you have history, geography, philosophy graduates teaching English to impressionable minds without having the proper skills and qualifications to do their job.

The other problem is the way students learn English in schools: they are taught not to say anything if it is not 100 % correct or they risk bringing shame upon themselves. This coincides greatly with the 'saving face' culture of East Asia and their collectivist mentality. 'Saving face' simply means to preserve one's honour in front of other people, and it is one of the defining features of Koreans, as well as the Japanese.

Koreans may rank high academically speaking, and they are sure to know their way around English tenses and declensions and conjugations, but they fail to have a simple verbal interaction with a stranger because of the emphasis on achieving a high score on a written test with little to no actual communication practice. This, I believe, is largely due to the *College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT)*, the Korean version of the 'matura' exam we have here in Slovenia. Only it is much more decisive than ours and can make or break one's future.

Most Koreans wish to enter one of the three SKY universities: Seoul National University, Korea University, or Yonsei University. Failure to do so, or failure to attend the desired university, is quite literally deadly. When some of the students realise the CSAT exam is too tough and they will not be able to get a good enough score, they hand in the exam, leave the examination centre, and find a decently high building to jump off. It has gotten to the point that the buildings surrounding the examination centres make sure to lock their rooftop access doors to prevent suicidal teens from attempting the worst on the day of.

To steer away from the morbid reality; since one of the exams on CSAT tests the English language ability, many teachers simply make their students proficient in test-taking while largely ignoring that the purpose of learning a language is communication, as a certain English Department lecturer is wont to say. So for the focus of English language teaching and learning to change, we would first need to amend the importance of the CSAT, and since this is still far off or nigh impossible, I will focus on what Korea is doing right in regards to language teaching.

Though they may seem hopeless in getting a better grasp on the English language, I do believe there is still hope for the new generation. Just recently, for example, a new challenge has popped up: Korean mothers are encouraging their children to read 1,000 English books to accelerate the language-learning process. The Korean government has also voted to allow grades one and two in public schools to return to English after school classes, which means that wealthy students and those studying in private schools had an advantage on English learning while the ban was in effect since they could simply pay for afternoon English lessons at hagwons.

Mayhap I will not have to eat my words in a decade when eloquent Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students speak in perfect Queen's English, eat their scones, and shine their Oxfords on the way to dominate the English-speaking world, who knows. Or they will develop a hard outer shell when faced with their own incompetence, all the while asking, "Does this

face look bothered?" While they may be failing to teach students passable English, Koreans excel in teaching foreigners their own language. Exhibit A: Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

According to the 2019 QS World University Rankings, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) ranks as the 13<sup>th</sup> best university in Korea. (There are around 200 of them in Korea, just to make explicit the fact that this particular university is not the bottom of the barrel.) It is primarily known as a language university, and if you ask any Korean Studies students at the Faculty of Arts where they went on their exchange, they will most likely say HUFS since the university is a sister university to ours, which means classes there are free for us University of Ljubljana students. The private university has two campuses, one in the capital Seoul, and one a good hour away in Yongin. I studied Korean and English for a year in Seoul and am currently spending my second year in Yongin only focusing on learning Korean.

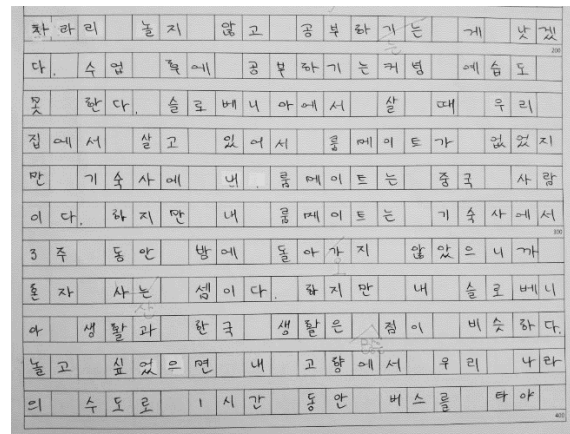
(A tip from somebody who likes to encourage fellow English Department students to take a chance and go abroad during university years: HUFS Seoul campus has over 150 courses at the College of English to pick and choose from, and the level is more or less comparable to that of the BA English courses at the Faculty of Arts, and more importantly, the credits are easily transferable. The things you have to pay for are the plane ticket and dormitory fees, and of course the day-to-day expenses, but otherwise it is a wonderful opportunity for those more adventurous students. The bad side: this is not like ERASMUS, where you get paid to go abroad. If you don't have a scholarship already, extra funds will be hard to get a hold of from the Slovenian or Korean governments.)

I have studied the initial two levels of Korean at HUFS Seoul campus, and am currently relaxing after the midterm exam for level four (out of six) at the Yongin campus. My days start at six or seven in the morning in order to study. Then I have four 50-minute classes of Korean from 9:30 AM. I particularly enjoy the brisk 20-minute walk to the classroom every morning to get some exercise in as my *modus operandi* is otherwise permanently set on "don't leave my room except for food". I am the type of person who is less than worthless for doing anything productive in the afternoon after classes, but I do force myself to review the day's lessons and/or make notes for future lessons for an hour or two even so. Then I go to sleep as soon as possible, rinse and repeat from Monday to Friday. That means twenty hours of Korean lessons plus ten to fifteen hours of self-study per week.

I don't know about other students, but I have sailed pretty smoothly through all my classes and courses back in Slovenia with a few weeks of studying before the exams. (I know that's not what you're supposed to do, the term 'sprotno učenje' is imprinted in my mind, but the current system at the English Department doesn't incentivise me not to study just before the exam, and hey, it's been successful so far (if my BA in English is to be believed.) But, alas, my usual method of procrastination is not sustainable for the Intensive Korean Course, since there is a Monday quiz that tests what was learned the previous week. Now, the weekly quizzes comprise 10 % of the grade for writing, which is 2.5 % of the overall grade, so technically I could just skip them, but 2.5 % is 2.5 % and those are some easy points so... I am bad at mathematics, but I do use

my paltry skills to calculate my chances of postponing studying.

To expand a bit more on how the Intensive Korean Course is structured and what it comprises, it is a 10-week course (technically an 11-week course due to the national holidays that sprout up and whatnot) that crams in 200 hours of Korean, and focuses on all four major language skills: writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The first two hours of the day are usually spent learning new grammar and speaking practice with one teacher, and the latter two are for reading with the second teacher. The listening practice switches between the two teachers, and the writing portion is usually reserved for Fridays when we are given a 400-700-square wongoji paper (each square represents a syllable, a space, or a punctuation), and a good half an hour to write something on the given topic.



Every week we learn eight to ten new grammatical points or expressions, usually two per day, for example: reported speech, different ways to say 'because' (there are seven I have learned so far, well, ten if I stretch it, and they are dictated by what precedes the conjunction and what follows it, or if the speaker and listener both know the 'why' of it, or if the two clauses are happening asynchronously or not, etc.), expressions of agreement, proverbs, how to say 'even' (at least two ways) or 'even if' (at least six ways), and on and on and on and I want to bash my head in just a bit sometimes. But as any other person under the language-induced Stockholm syndrome, I don't mind all that much. (I think my teachers mind more when I ask for clarification between -아/어/여서 'because' and -(으)니까 'because'.)

The listening portion consists of dialogues that are sometimes easier, sometimes more complex, depending on the vocabulary and grammatical structures used. With the progression of levels, the conversations have been getting longer and longer and they encompass more and more difficult words. To practice our pronunciation, we then read the conversations we have listened to in twos or threes, and the unknown words are explained or expanded upon.

We also have a different topic we focus on every week and build the vocabulary around it. For example, when we learned about environmental problems, vocabulary such as 'abnormal climate', 'industrial waste water', 'domestic sewage', 'chemical fertiliser', and 'ozone depletion' appeared. With each level the student is then able to hold a more nuanced conversation, further increasing their communication skills. Having peeked

ahead, the textbooks and workbooks for the final two levels exclude grammar and mostly focus on expanding vocabulary and communication skills.

Reading has progressed from a couple of paragraphs with short sentences to winding writing in the form of a newspaper article or an interview that spans over a page. The focus is on understanding the vocabulary presented in the given text, comprehending the sentence, summarising the paragraphs, extracting the main points... Each of the four main skills is then tested in a separate midterm and final exam. One hour for the writing, listening, and reading exam, and a presentation and an interview with the teacher for the speaking exam.

This long explanation of my Intensive Korean Course I have given has two main purposes: one, for those who think differently, an exchange semester or year abroad is not all fun and play, I am postponing a year of my postgraduate studies to learn a valuable skill that may aid me in my future employment prospects. And I am sure many other students who (wish to) attend an ERASMUS or CMEPIUS exchange have similar aspirations. For example, I completed all of the second year courses during my BA in Korea for both majors, English and Korean. That means that on top of taking the Intensive Korean Course I took English classes for my credits. I believe many other students would be similarly inclined if given the opportunity to study abroad without restrictions on their grades. Besides, teachers then receive sophisticated students in return, all fit and ready to debate their broadened worldview.

And two, I am wondering if the apparent competence and success of the Korean course could be transferred to the English classes Korean students are taking in their schools. Of course it is not as easily done as said; for one, Korean students do not have the luxury to study English twenty hours per week. Also, if the goal is a perfect score on a (written) exam such as the CSAT, then it is understandable why communication takes a back seat for teachers and students alike. But school is an ivory tower, and soon the students will be sliding down the razor blade of life. In the real world, the score on an English exam has little significance if (English) communication skills are non-existent.

To summarise my ramblings: language learning is tough, Korea is tough, Korean is tough, English is also tough, and 'tough' has now lost its meaning because I have written it too many times. I share snippets of Korea with my friends every now and then, and sometimes get asked why I would even choose to live in Korea due to the (negative) experiences I tell them about. But one of the universal human traits is that we more often talk about the negatives than the positives, which means to truly experience the best a country has to offer, you should visit it yourself. So go check out our university's exchange program options and live the life you're wishing you would. (I am most certainly not a walking and talking ad for foreign exchange. Or am I?) **읽어주셔서 감사합니다.**

Report

A

## Once-in-a-generation Excursion

Matjaž Zgonc

This is the story of 29 trail blazers from three departments who somehow managed to go on an excursion to London and escape relatively pain-free. What we went to see was famously dubbed "the once-in-a-generation exhibit" – it was *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* in the British Library.

WHAT ARE ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOMS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Well, if you want to be really strict, we saw only the remnants of the seven kingdoms formed by the Germanic tribes settling in Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The seven kingdoms which included Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Wessex, Essex, Sussex and Kent. Ring any bells? It should, since the core of the language we are dedicating our lives to, was created by their inhabitants, particularly those of Wessex, and since they left us with plenty of interesting artefacts to ponder.

Many of those were on display in the British Library. Ask any student of English to name three Old English texts, 99 % of them will mention Beowulf among them. The epic from the fictional land of the Geats indeed awaited us – but not in the form we had been exposed to. This is what first three lines of Beowulf look like today:

*Lo! the Spear-Danes' glory through splendid achievements*

*The folk-kings' former fame we have heard of,*

*How princes displayed then their prowess-in-battle.*

But here is what this was translated from:

*Hwæt! We Gardena                    in ġeardagum  
þeodcyninga                    þrym ġefrunon  
hu þa æðelingas                ellen fremedon.*

This language, strange as it may seem, is what the global Lingua Franca developed from. It exhibited case variation, grammatical gender, several declensions, a mighty confusing system of verbal suffixes and much, much more.

Now, for those of you still reading after this bore-fest, it is obviously not the case that your average student of English could read the original *Beowulf*. In fact, ask around the faculty, and you will quickly learn that we are being mocked as "those who only speak one foreign language". Fair enough – but how, then, to make sense of this text? To aid us in this quest, we

joined forces with the students of comparative linguistics – all six of them – who come equipped with the elusive ability to think diachronically. Finally, because at the time all of us together possessed a grand total of half a shred of appreciation for the finer things in life, the art historians have tagged along as well. After all, we are talking *illuminated manuscripts*: it didn't use to be the case that just anyone could write a document, for better or for worse.

Speaking of manuscripts, some of those you should probably know and that we were able to read some pages of include: Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the *Domesday Book*, which is kind of an early form of census and quite likely the book with the largest format you've ever seen, the *Vercelli manuscript*, which had returned to Britain for the very first time after it was written there and then taken to modern-day Italy, and literally hundreds more. Most of us stayed in one of the two basement levels where the manuscripts were held for four hours before we left, lamenting that we had to rely on the dimly lit translations to understand what was going on in the text. Above all, we learned that once you turn 65, wherever you go, you have the right to elbow anyone you like should you feel you need to temporarily privatize more space.

One question remains: *why on Earth* would anyone voluntarily dedicate hours and hours to understanding a dead language? Old English “doesn't matter anyway”, Middle English “did away with all that Germanic nonsense and brought in Latin, and civilization”. Well, first of all, because of the misconceptions like that. It is common to focus on lexis alone, especially on the prestigious part of it, when describing a language. Dismissing Old English as a preface to English means you are not only locking yourself out of five hundred years' worth of fascinating literature, but also from understanding how much English has in common with many other (Indo-)European languages, and how you may use this to your advantage. On top of that, while it is now common for departments dedicated to one language to cultivate a dismissive attitude towards the diachronic perspective (though *þæs ofereode and þisses swa mæg*), true history is the only correct outlook into the nature of linguistic change, and patterns of change are the only way of making sure why certain patterns of “irregularities” persist in a language. If you are even remotely interested in sociolinguistics, language change, dialectology and the like, a synchronic analysis can only take you so far. It helps to have an open mind.

## IMPRESSIONS

Now that that's been dealt with – of course the exhibition was not the only reason we went. Rather, the excursion was designed with a specific target in mind: because we are all adults with different preferences, different styles, and because this was for some people the first visit to London, as opposed to the umpteenth one for the others, the rest of the paltry three available days were left unoccupied by any sort of structured activities. In other words, everyone did as they pleased.

Naturally, as far as the organizing committee is considered, a lot went wrong even though there was nothing to go wrong. There were buses missed, trains were smuggled onto accidentally, papers in Slovene were being explained to a very patient hostel worker, creepers were conversed with in Camden,

and so on. See some of the accounts, anecdotes and reports by those involved down below.

*“Since there really seem not to be any coincidences in life, it had to happen that the very year I was asked to teach Old English at the English Department a short-term exhibition should open in London, featuring all there is to see of the Old English literary monuments, including the entire spectrum of the Anglo-Saxon runic documents (even, and to my great surprise, the life-size replica of the Ruthwell Cross!). But since any teacher's enthusiasm can only push the student so far, the project to actually go see the exhibits in situ would never have been carried out without the keen interest of a few devoted and passionate students, to whom I am deeply thankful! Indeed, the opportunity to be able to read from the actual originals was as unique (and likely unrepeatable) for me as it was for the appreciative young minds that decided to make the best of the occasion and spend three unforgettable days in London. And thanks be to Ælfrīc or some other Wessexian near deity watching over us for that extra day, since there WAS an object missing from the exhibition after all! Luckily, however, the Franks Casket, an absolutely mind-boggling early 8th-century Northumbrian runic document, could be seen, read and analysed in every possible detail by my little group of laudable die-hards in The British Museum the next day. Quite unmistakably this has indeed been an excursion of a lifetime!” (Luka Repanšek)*

*“Yes, I passed First AND second year of English BA without going to London. So, my Instagram profile during that early February week looked something like this: the squirrels and cemeteries. The beers. And football. Tesco. And stumbling upon a Brexit protest after taking a selfie with the Buckingham Palace. Beers. Oh, did I mention it was Chinese New Year when we were there? My bank account didn't have as much fun as I did in all the bookstores and antiquaries I've been to (to all Victorian Novels I left there: I'm coming with a sheik next time). Also, a very big public thank you to prof. Repanšek, Matjaž and Luka, the organizing think-thank.” (Anja Zidar)*

*“You should've seen my face expression when I stumbled upon the announcement there was going to be a trip to London to see a bunch of the Western World's most precious illuminated manuscripts in real life at the British Library. That I was over the moon with excitement would be an understatement. Not only did I sign up myself, I immediately forwarded the invitation to the Art History department website. This is the joy of being a double major student. Forget about the courses overlapping for a second; it's not only an excursion that has to do with the history of the English language and its peoples – there will be illuminated manuscripts as well! Fast forward to the actual trip; my over-enthusiastic friend and I ended up spending two hours in the first three rooms of the exhibition alone, only to find out there were NINE. MORE. ROOMS. Full of manuscripts I could literally spend hours looking at. From the symbols of the four evangelists and Codex Amiatinus to illustrated saint legends and even a fragment of an annunciation bas-relief, I probably spent the majority of the exhibition squealing with excitement. Just when I thought my heart couldn't possibly take it anymore, I figured there were pages upon pages of illuminated Gregorian chant scores in the last room!!! In the end, I somehow survived and have the catalogue of the exhibition on my bookshelf to prove it. A once-in-a-lifetime exhibition without a doubt!” (Vida Jocić)*

## STUDENT EXCURSIONS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Thank *God* for the double-subject system at this faculty. Seriously. This department is in such a bad position when it comes to student excursions because they are expected to pertain to English-speaking countries, so there is practically no collective memory of an excursion taking place. Due to this fact, many misconceptions have arisen in the past years. For future generations, let me dispel them one by one.

*Misconception #1:* the organizing committee actually organizes the excursion.

For all purposes, an excursion is a group of people which just happens to be travelling together. A glance over the legal documentation regarding guiding, organizing, collecting funds and the like tells you that not only would actually organizing be 22 % more expensive immediately, it is also highly illegal. We are not a student version of Kompas Holidays – most of the time, two or three people are urged (We, for instance, received an e-mail reading “Dear students, should we go or should we go?!”) to deal with everything in a period of two months or less. Don’t expect to be treated as a customer.

*Misconception #2:* every excursion receives money for discounts.

I don’t know where to start. First off, nobody ever receives any money, not from the departments, not from ŠSFF, not from the Student Organization. What happens is that someone has to get through a pile of paperwork and if they procure an invoice, they obtain an order form with an invoice-specific discount paid by one of the former, provided they did everything right. For more information, contact your friendly neighbourhood representative. I’m sure they’ll be happy to explain what they do, just be prepared for a 30-minute onslaught of facts. Oh, and did I mention each organization has its allocated time windows when you can apply for a discount? Or that they don’t match? At all? Don’t feel entitled, every 100 € an excursion gets is a bonus.

*Misconception #3:* it is known in advance how much an excursion is going to cost.

Building on the ruins of misconception #2, ask yourself what happens if your client doesn’t do business with order forms. This is completely feasible: the hostel clerk thought she would have to go to a P.O. Box and was absolutely flabbergasted at the idea. Secondly, ask yourself what happens if you receive an invoice from a company you worked with last year, but this one is twice as pricey as the one from last year. Imagine also there is a contract which states you will only get a discount if you work with this particular company. Congratulations, this happens to ENgLIST every couple of years. Companies are volatile. They also know they have a monopoly for our students. You will only know the final cost of the excursion when you get back home. Our last order form went through 45 minutes before check-out time.

*Misconception #4:* the departments cover most of the cost of the excursions.

Hahahahahaha. Oh wait, you’re serious. Let me laugh even harder. HAHAHAHAAAA. Unless you’ve been living under

a rock for the past five years, you will know that higher education is severely undernourished by the state. As a result, the departments tend to be either broke or reluctant to give any money. Why should they? First and foremost, they have to pay the staff their salaries! Still, as was the case here, students go to department heads and pester them. General and comparative linguistic caved, and we got 200 €. English caved too, and we got 400 €, for which we are forever grateful. Art history claimed they were broke.

*Misconception #5:* the organizing committee actually know what they’re doing.

In the end, we should all take a nice, long look at ourselves and realize nobody’s a saint. When we put a 60–70 € “price tag” on the excursion, we looked at hostel prices, plane ticket prices, exhibition prices, past discounts from all the organizations and departments, and took a calculated risk. Aren’t we glad that this faculty is known for its students’ maths proficiency! We prayed and hoped to God that the costs and order forms would somehow even themselves out. But can you blame us? This is the beauty of student excursions: you can either predict the whole thing to cost around 200 €, ask for 250 per person and give back what’s left in the end, or work your arse off to bring the whole thing down to potentially 180, end up with 190, ask for 10 more on the bus and look like an idiot. The risk is always there. To those in charge of the next one: Godspeed!

Seminar Paper

# A

## Attitudes to the Language of the Colonizer in Frantz Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong’o

Jure Skubic

In this paper, I will take a look at the different perceptions of the language of the colonizer by the colonized. The theoretical basis for this composition will be the first chapter of Ngugi’s book *Decolonising the Mind* titled “The Language of African Literature”, with some references to the introductory chapter. In addition to that, I will focus on the first chapter of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin White Mask* titled “The Negro and the Language”, and the second chapter from his book *Dying Colonialism* titled “This is the Voice of Algeria”.



## LANGUAGE OF THE COLONIZER

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century slavery slowly started to lose its profitability because of the abolition movements. This was also the time after the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the steam engine which led to some of the most powerful countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Spain facing problems of hyper-production and lack of space. The expansion, therefore, became necessary and these countries started searching for the means of creating colonies in various unexplored parts of the world. *“The European imperialist push into Africa was motivated by three main factors; economic, political and social”* (Inweriebor 2007). Although the reasons were first and foremost economical. The growing European countries needed and wanted to expand their markets since their home markets were becoming too small and with colonization, they started exploiting those parts of the world which still had enough natural resources. In addition to that, the 19th century was also the time when Europe started facing social problems in the form of unemployment and poverty. As a consequence of the industrial revolution, these countries now had enough money to invest it in external colonization. They inhabited their subordinate countries, thus creating a form of capitalist slavery and economic nationalism. The struggle for invading African countries was so extensive that there was a danger of war against one another.

To prevent this, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck convened a diplomatic summit of European powers in the late nineteenth century. This was the famous Berlin West African conference, held from November 1884 to February 1885. This conference produced a treaty known as Berlin Act, with provisions to guide the conduct of the European inter-imperialist competition in Africa (Ibid.).

During the conference, they were bargaining about colonizing Africa and without having any consent from the countries ultimately divided the continent into parts. The lines were drawn with a ruler and a pencil, because of which African borders remain straight to this day. The colonizing countries invaded Africa and other unexplored parts of the world and started imposing their own customs and culture on the indigenous people. The colonized were usually seen as backward and underdeveloped since they lived in much closer symbiosis with nature and the environment. The colonizers, therefore, saw it as their mission to make indigenous people civilized and teach them how to live according to European standards. The idea of Eurocentrism helped them justify their doings. The whites appeared in the middle of the indigenous people and interrupted the way of life they were used to. In that way, the colonizer and the colonized were facing each other and the colonial situation was created.

A colonial situation is created, so to speak, the very instant a white man, even if he is alone, appears in the midst of a tribe, even if it is independent, so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position, even though only in his most secret self, a feeling of his own superiority (Mannoni 1990, p. 18). What Mannoni tries to show is that the colonizers always thought of themselves as superior to the colonized, thus their culture and language were considered better than the “uncivilized” culture and language of the colonized.

Language is one of the most important entities of a certain nation or a tribe and stands as a building block which forms the culture and collective national identity of its speakers. Frantz Fanon dealt with the importance of language and had a great insight into what was happening to the language of the colonized when the colonizers began to take over. He grew up in Martinique which was under the French rule. He spoke Creole, a language considered subordinate to French which was spoken by the colonizers. As Fanon realized, the ability and availability to speak is extremely important for every human being since

**“to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization”**

(Fanon 1967, p. 8).

What he implies is that the language creates a culture of a certain nation and if a language becomes extinct, the development of that culture ceases. The colonized people were usually subjected to the pressure of adopting the language of the colonizers and therefore had to accept their culture. With that, the language and culture of the colonized people slowly became of minor importance. Not only that, the indigenous languages were usually forbidden after colonization happened. Indigenous tribes usually used only one language which was used in schools and during their work in the fields. What happened with the arrival of the colonizers was that suddenly *“the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture”* (Ngugi 1986, p. 11). This nicely reflects the idea that the colonizers considered themselves superior to the colonized since their language was of primary importance. Ngugi also reveals that if students were heard speaking in their mother tongue they were usually punished. With the adopting of the language of the colonizers, the black Africans were actually becoming white (i.e. civilized) Europeans. It was as if black people with their own culture were considered children without any knowledge. By adopting the white culture and language, however, they were learning how to speak. The idea behind all of it was that the language, which was newly presented to the colonized nations, would break their own language and make people inclined to learn and speak a new language.

Additionally, Ngugi noted that the language of the colonizer became the only language of conversation and teaching. In Kenya one was unable to finish their education successfully if they did not speak English perfectly. *“English was the language of formal education. In Kenya English became more than a language; it was the language, and all others had to bow before it in deference”* (Ibid., p.11). Even the highest positions in the society were reserved for those who excelled in English. With forcing children to learn their language the colonizers succeeded in creating a new generation of Africans who were

completely subordinated to the language and the culture of Europe. Children were alienated from their own mother tongue and culture. English was not the only language colonizers enforced upon others; there were also French and Spanish which were imposed on the colonized. Language and literature were two vehicles which helped the colonizers draw the colonized further away from their own culture and give them their new identity. This mental supremacy was, in fact, the basis for the successful colonization.

Although colonizers succeeded in imposing their language on the colonized, "*imposed languages could never completely break the native languages as spoken, their most effective area of domination was the third aspect of the language as communication, the written*" (Ibid., p. 17). As a consequence, children were split between speaking their own language at home and writing, speaking and thinking in the language of the foreigners in public. The idea of making the language and culture of the colonizer a primary one succeeded. By abandoning their own language, the colonized forgot about their culture and therefore about their national identity. They became similar to the white people so they felt accepted and a part of the newly created society. Children, for example, saw the world only through the language and literature they were adopting. The language that was imposed on them created a new culture inside children who were the most vulnerable part of the society. It even went so far that the colonized people accepted the language of the colonizer as their primary form of communication, although they were forced to do so. Sedar Senghor, a Senegalese poet and cultural theorist said that even though the "*colonial language was forced upon him if he had been given the choice, he would still have opted for French*" (Ibid., p. 18–19). The power of the colonizers is clearly visible. Senghor (as well as many others) internalized the language of the colonizer and saw it as the real language which other people can understand. He was even grateful to the French and those who brought the language to him. An immense adoption of European languages happened in Africa and together with that the emergence of a new culture and an almost complete loss of the old African heritage. One important note to make here is about the mentality of the white people who customarily think that with colonization they "rescued" black people from "underdevelopment" or "backwardness" and therefore assume that black people should be grateful that they were saved and should not complain about the loss of their own language and culture.

Although there was severe pressure from English, French and Spanish colonizers on the colonized, some nations succeeded in preserving their mother tongue and their culture. African tribes are one such example since the "*African languages refused to die. They would not simply go the way of Latin to become fossils for linguistic archaeology to dig up, classify and argue about the international conferences*" (Ngugi 1986, p. 23). African tribes did not allow the European languages to uproot their own language, so they retained it in spheres of their homes. Those tribes were united, and they opposed the colonialist movements and have taken an anti-colonialist position. The peasantry was the one with the most important role in keeping the African languages and culture alive. In their home sphere, they retained traditional African customs and language and were in that manner creating a form of national consciousness which helped them survive. The importance of

African literature was not seen only in the writer being an African, but also in the literature itself being written in genuine African languages. Such literature meant that its authors were not conforming to the colonialist movements and wanted to retain the importance of African languages through African literature.

The problem at that time was, that the black people (or generally the colonized people) who travelled to the countries of their colonizers usually forgot about their own mother tongue and culture. This was due to the fact that they wanted to become more like the white people inhabiting those countries and hence tried to adopt not only the general language but also proper pronunciation and mannerisms. The personality of the colonized people living in the colonizing countries changed immensely and the language made a black person feel that they belong to the white society. The problem was, however, that white people had a very bad attitude when it came to talking to a black person. The tone in which they spoke to them can easily be compared to the tone in which a human being speaks to an animal whereas the tone which white people used while talking to each other remained polite and respectful. Therefore, the desire of a black person to become more similar to a white person was even greater. The extent to which the colonized people adopted the language and culture of their colonizers was seen only when those people returned to their home communities. The use of the elevated language style (which was the consequence of living with the colonizers) was completely redundant in their home environment, yet they still used it. The two dimensions to which the colonized person is subjected become clearly visible. However, the relationship to their family and the relationship to the white community in which the colonized lived should remain separated. Fanon gives us the following example.

After several months of living in France, a country boy returns to his family. Noticing a farm implement, he asks his father, an old don't-pull-that-kind-of-thing-on-me-peasant, "*Tell me, what does one call that apparatus?*" His father replies by dropping the tool on the boy's feet and the amnesia vanishes (Fanon 1967, p. 13). The truth is that the language and the culture of the colonizers become a part of the everyday life of the colonized. Not only spoken language, also newspapers, magazines and other forms of media which broadcast the language of the colonizer insult the colonized, but are on the other hand "*broadly regarded as a link with the civilized world*" (Fanon 1994, p. 72) for the settlers. One such example is the presence of the radio. Listening to the programme of the colonizers means imposing their culture onto the very soul of the society – a family. In fear of colonizers destroying the faint possibility of them preserving their own culture and language, the Algerian families long resisted to buy a radio, although they were anything but poor. Radio was a symbol of the colonizer and thus carried a negative connotation. Ngugi in one of his interviews clearly shows that the problem with the languages has always been with oppression and hierarchy because some countries always considered their languages better than the languages of other countries, or the countries they have colonized (Ngugi 2013).

One important and still unanswered question remains: *What is considered a true literature of the colonized people?* The fact

is that most of the authors from the colonized countries do not write in their own mother tongue but rather in the adopted language, the language of the colonizers. Authors are producing literature of their home colonized country in the language of the colonizer because the latter (be it English, French or any other) is known worldwide and therefore such literature has a higher potential to succeed. Until a person is a respected and a well-known author the decision which language to use is obvious. Ngugi gives the reader a nice example of how *A Conference of African Writers in English Expression* – where he was invited – proved to be biased against the African writers who were writing in their mother tongue. Even some of the most acknowledged writers of this type (such as Shabaan Robert) were not invited to the conference just because their literature was in their home language. Ngugi on the other hand, who at that time was only a student of English and an author of a few papers in the English language was invited to participate in the conference (Ngugi 1986, p. 5–7). The bias was obvious. African literature written in English was considered proper, whereas African literature written in Gikuyu or any other native African language was not. Some of the authors abandoned their mother tongue in order to become known in the world and to be able to write about the situation in Africa and other colonized countries. As Chinua Achebe stated in his speech with the title *The African Writer and the English Language*: “*Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else’s? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me, there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it*” (Ibid., p. 7). Even the authors themselves knew that abandoning their mother tongue would mean abandoning their own culture and for that matter forsaking their national identity. However, the use of the language of the colonizer was necessary for them to be able to write and to be allowed to publish their works. Although they felt guilty about it, there was nothing they could do. European languages did present a unifying force.

The point Ngugi is trying to make is that language definitely changes according to the location where it is spoken – English spoken in Africa is definitely enriched with expressions of the African languages spoken in that location. Therefore, a distinction must be made between African, Afro-European and European languages. Afro-European languages are the ones brought by the colonizers, but enriched with domestic African expressions (Afro-English, Afro-French, and others). Thus, the literature written in those languages is “*literature written by African in European languages. Their work belongs to the Afro-European literary tradition. [...] Afro-European literature can be defined as literature written by Africans in European languages in the era of imperialism*” (Ibid., p. 27). An Afro-European author can, after they become well-read and known, start using their own mother tongue and produce the culture which was almost lost. As Ngugi states, such authors did hit some walls and were subjected to some harsh words. However, the importance of continuing the development of their domestic culture is enormous so the transition from writing in the language of the colonizer to writing in their own language is justified and completely reasonable.

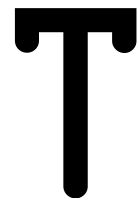
“To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (Fanon 1967, p. 25). Language is definitely one of the most important human abilities and privileges. Language creates a culture and

reflects the society in which it is spoken. It belongs to a group of people, identifies them and connects them into a collective consciousness. The ability to speak and to be able to speak in one’s own language should be considered one of the basic human rights. Many times, however, the language of a certain nation was subjected to various injustices and therefore often became extinct and forgotten. Because of the impact of colonization and the oppressors, language and culture in the colonized countries were treated as unequal, backward and even undeveloped, while the language of the colonizers was seen as superior. I wanted to show just that in my paper – languages should be considered as equal and a certain language should never be seen as subordinate to another.

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Argumentative  
Essay



## The Glory Days of Young Adult Fiction Are Over and It's Our Fault

Anamarija Krassnig

As far as I am concerned YA died when *Wonder* stopped being a hit. It's dead now and in its place, we have a new money-making monster that will never hold up to the pure excitement we felt when we first read *The Fault in Our Stars (TFIOS)*. The YA we all grew up with is dead and we killed it. Want to know how? Read on, my child, and learn.

Young adult literature has been popular since the 1960s, when the big names such as *I Know why the Caged Bird Sings*, *The Outsiders* and *Deathwatch* were published. It fell out of favour in the late 1980s only to come back with J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. All good so far. It would make sense that YA isn't a completely new invention, after all the *Bildungsroman* goes back a lot further and YA borrows elements from it, but at the same time, those books are not the ones from our youth. It's not the titles we are looking for, I hear ya. You're asking "but where are the contemporary big names? Where is the God of YA John Green?" Well... *Looking for Alaska* was published in 2006 and it wouldn't be for another 6 years that his monster hit *TFIOS* would be published. So, I declare the golden years for YA to be 2006 to 2016, something that publishers agree with, as according to a 2015 article by Ashley Strickland for CNN (n. p.) they refer to this boom as "the second golden age".

Firstly, we need to define what I mean with young adult fiction, more specifically the one popular between those years. It's fiction meant for the demographic around 12–18 years old, as many of us were then, any older you fall into a separate box called "new adult". The issues it discusses were our issues, those of the adolescents – discovering sex, alcohol, cigarettes, depression, sexuality and other day to day issues a teenager might experience. It is a safe place for exploring and finding a protagonist whose problems resemble ours, so that we may feel better about the world and our future. Like romance novels, it caters to the concerns and the everyday life of its readers they wouldn't otherwise find in other genres, as they might be seen as trivial or uninteresting. It's usually set in high school, there might be a road trip involved, a school play, or a big summer vacation. The protagonist is usually a regular, almost boring boy, or a quirky girl, but because this was before intersectionality, they were very much white. A side character was the one providing some comedy and diversity as needed. They would crack jokes and brighten up scenes, but their role is supporting the main character, rarely would they be explored in any kind of depth. Not unusual, since supporting characters aren't supposed to be the stars of the show, but enough of a thing to be noted as a characteristic of the genre. Female protagonists are quite rare, but that is not to say that they were not there. Many young adult stories have two protagonists, a boy and a girl that fall in love over the course of the book, girls being interesting and mysterious and the boys surprisingly passive and boring. The narration is frequently delegated to him. The girl he loves is the coolest, most mysterious one he could find. She would wear band T-shirts for bad music ironically, smoke because she wanted to die and read poetry from Shakespeare or other iconic poets because she is that cool. Indie music is all she cares about, her parents are annoying or one of them is dead and she is deeply marked by it, but the show isn't about her so she never heals, she heals the protagonist. Looking back, they were the least interesting ones of the bunch. I can see why – if your main character is bland, everyone can project themselves onto them. This is what I mean by pure YA of our times. It is not blended with other genres and stands alone, distinct from let's say chick lit. John Green was king of this game. His books are still widely hailed as good YA and he's sold an incredible amount of books. More important to this article is that many of his books follow the same pattern as described above, even the most recent one, *Turtles All the Way Down*. Take any one from the bookshelf and you will

see what I mean. That is not to say, however, that they are boring. Of course, other types existed within the YA, dystopian literature and paranormal romances were all the rage, just think of *Twilight* and *Divergent*. I will refrain from making a concrete case regarding their development, as those are still going strong in their own right. You will see why in a minute.

However, genre is a cruel mistress, it is ever evolving and changing. And worst of all, one can never be sure what makes a certain genre. Is it actually only a ploy by the libraries and the publishing houses for easier storing and marketing? That is a different question altogether, though. In 2019, young adult fiction hasn't escaped anywhere, it's still here but because we craved for it so deeply for 8 years it has sung itself out. There are only so many stories one can tell before being horribly repetitive. Since we loved it so much, those were produced quickly and devoured until the end was reached. Once that happens, you need an edge. Your story needs to stand out from the rest, otherwise you'd be boring. Naturally, you add something to it. A setting of great importance or a murder mystery. I recognise that *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are YA that has fantasy elements, their sole concern isn't getting laid or getting that A. But those YA genres are still doing great, they will always be doing great because there are many possible permutations of tropes, characters and new worlds to be discovered. They are not without their tropes and a certain degree of retentiveness is to be expected, but a high school is boring in comparison, unless you add something to go along with it. On the other hand, we should recognise that the appeal of YA as a cultural phenomenon has ended. They once dominated the cinematic box office, friendships and allegiances to a certain franchise would be born and division over the favourites would form. However, in the recent years the adaptations have struggled to make the same kind of bank they once did. The books are still profitable, on the other hand, but in a contained fashion where their influence does not stretch as much as it once did. The last *Divergent* book film adaptation was cancelled, while *Mortal Engines* lost 100 million dollars. Only *Wonder*, a 2017 film based on an extremely popular book by the same title, made a big profit.

YA has a history of changing and in his 2016 speech Michael Cart (n. p.) – I recommend anyone who has a passing interest in YA reads it – recounts how the genre has changed and re-invented itself many times. It is happening again. Teens crave authenticity and realism, and as I will point out later in this article, times are changing. I've read only a handful of 2018 and 2017's finest YA, *Leah on the Off Beat* being one of them, but examining what was popular, I see an easy pattern that I have already begun describing in the previous paragraph. 1) The concerns of YA are not those of white suburban children 2) societal issues are addressed 3) YA mixes with a new genre 4) fantasy and sci-fi are still alive. The first three points are the ones I will be examining more. The world in which we grew up has changed. It's a fact. Climate change and global warming aren't just a possibility, but a reality, Trump is in the White House having a temper tantrum that is costing people their livelihoods, racism and homophobia are rife. Each day we are presented with more bad news. Literature reflects that, *Leah on the Off Beat* is about bisexuality presented in a classic YA setting, and is a sequel to the surprise hit *Love, Simon* that is about homosexuality. Of course, those are bad examples, since *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* and other David Levithan

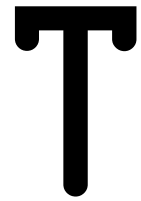
books are also about sexuality. More specifically about being gay. But what separates *Leah* and *Simon* from them is their light-heartedness. They are just like any teen book, their sexual identity, while it causes some angst, isn't the most important thing in the book. Being in high school, them navigating life, having friends and parties is.

Other recent books deal with racism, migration, war – themes that although possibly touched upon, weren't present in YA 6 years ago. *The Hate U Give*, a 2017 book, saw its film adaptation in 2018. The book features African-American protagonist seeking justice for a police shooting an unarmed young black man. Not only is it going into political territory (that in 2018 we should all care about regardless of your age), it is reaching out into other genres. Some YA novels have been flirting with them, but 2018 is beyond flirting. *The Hate U Give* is a crime drama with teenagers. *One of us is Lying* from 2017 is a murder mystery set in high school. The teens, next to their familial issues, are also solving the murder of their fellow classmate. Life is messy, it is compiled out of too much crap and we are just jugglers that no one taught how to juggle properly. Realism and real life have always been at the core of young adult fiction. Hinton (1967, 14), author of the seminal work *The Outsiders*, was right to say: “teenagers today want to read about teenagers today”. We are no longer teenagers, our issues are not the only thing modern teens are facing. They are those and those of the world. The genre has adapted that; our YA was killed so a new one could rise.

In conclusion, young adult literature, like any good genre, has been constantly reinventing and adapting to the demands of its readers. A key to understating YA is knowing the society we are living in, as it reacts to it. Truth has and always will have a big impact on the genre. Our YA was difficult at home, we struggled with ourselves, our identities and families. Today's readers need to take on the world. YA is speaking to them with heavier themes in many different genres combined. Perhaps it's not that bad the old YA is dead.

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## The Significance of Dreams, Sleeping and Waking in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction: The Representation of the American Dream in *The Awakening* and *Rip Van Winkle*

Maja Ina Ruparčič

If literary critics were asked to list the sleepest pieces of American fiction, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* would doubtlessly make the top five. Written during a very turbulent period of American history, they both demonstrate how quickly society and its values develop, but at the same time criticize how this change – a metaphor for the American Dream – has been insufficient. Chopin published her novel eighty years after Irving wrote *Rip*, and knew a different America than he did, so even though in nineteenth-century writing, sleep is typically followed by change, this change represents a slightly different version of the American Dream for the two authors. For both, the Revolution is established as the 'awakening', or the transition between sleep and reality, and the state preceding it as far from satisfactory. The three stages—sleeping, waking, and dreaming—are in this order present in both narratives. Paradoxically, one needs to awaken from a drowsy, dreamlike state to be able to pursue their individual concepts of the American Dream. However, the quest for either version of the American Dream is long and hopeless. America—like Edna Pontellier and Rip Van Winkle—although (partially) liberated from British rule, is in many ways still an infant country. It lacks expe-

rience, knowledge, and maturity to be able to reach its full potential and the American Dream in its entirety; the question arises whether it is ready to embark on this fresh journey at all. In this respect, America as personified by the two protagonists encourages a psychoanalytical reading of the nation as a whole. Additionally, almost a century-long gap between the novel and the short story proves that the American Dream is not a constant, but an ever-evading ideal that is being reinvented by each new generation.

Irving wrote *Rip Van Winkle* only a few decades after America had gained independence, while the memory of British supremacy was still fresh in the minds of its newly-freed citizens. He wrote under the influence of Jeffersonian democracy and the principles it celebrated, so it is not surprising that the short story exhibits the characteristics of the 'traditional' American Dream, which among other ideals hails the self-made man and hard work. The concept originates from the Declaration of Independence and as such entails that every individual should have the opportunity of upward social mobility by means of labour, education, and their own abilities. When the notion is juxtaposed with the character of Rip Van Winkle, it becomes quite evident that the two could not be less alike. Rip is idle, unambitious, infantile and literally sleeps through the key moment of his country's history, to which he is also completely indifferent. He is an antithesis to the change he witnesses after his long sleep, and consequently the antithesis to the traditional American Dream.

Although the references to sleep in the story are not as numerous as they are in Chopin's novel, they still alert the reader to the change that is being brought about. The clear structure of the story makes it very easy to identify the three stages connected with sleep, waking, and dreams. The descriptions of Rip's world before the Revolution "[a]bound with somnolent modifiers" (Kann 1979, 185) and lack any kind of action. The village is "[a]ccustomed to phlegm and drowsy tranquillity" (Chopin and Culley 1976, 18–19). It is generally agreed that the drowsiness represents the nation's numbness under British oppression. Rip himself is doubly oppressed: both by King George III and Dame Van Winkle. After his awakening—the American Revolution—he finds himself a free man. But the world he used to know was transformed radically during his slumbers; it is Irving's way of showing how despite twenty years being a relatively short time in a greater historical context, it was sufficient to turn Rip's world upside down. Rip's terror at this apparent loss of self is evident in his exclamations: "I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!" (Ibid. 22). His confusion demonstrates to what extent an individual identifies with a nation they belong to. Rip used to be one of the many, a typical representative of his folk under King George; under General Washington, he no longer is. Everything he identified with—the tavern, the idle atmosphere, the sense of belonging to the British Empire—crumbled while he slept. He awakens to find a new America, inhabited by people he does not know, speaking a language he does not understand and adhering to principles he cannot internalise. There is a "busy, bustling, disputatious tone" (Ibid. 18) about the village; phrases like 'Federal or Democrat', 'Congress', and 'heroes of seventy-six' mean nothing to him. Everyone else's American Dream appears to be Rip's nightmare—save for the

freedom from tyranny even he, idle and good-for-nothing as he is, has the right to enjoy as a citizen of the United States. Does, then, Irving naively believe the American Dream to be an ideal all people can strive to achieve, regardless of race and gender? Perhaps to a certain degree; liberty seems to be the only concept that even Rip has a claim to, but all other advantages of the American Dream still remain unattainable to him.

At first sight, Rip's adventure has little in common with Edna Pontellier's in *The Awakening*. Irving's story has but one allusion to sleep; Chopin's teems with them. There are over twenty references to sleep, dreams, tiredness, and waking in the novel, but they do not all convey the same state of mind of the heroine. To see what changes to Edna's either inner or outer life they set in motion, and how these could be interpreted in terms of understanding Chopin's idea of the American Dream, it is necessary to closely examine the passages in which these references appear.

The first time Edna awakens from a deep sleep is when her husband reproaches her for neglecting their children. At the same time, she awakens into a new realisation about the oppression she is subjected to in her married life. In the following days, she begins to daydream: "[I]t moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness [...] In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being" (Chopin and Culley 1976, 14–15); "[S]he discovered many a... corner, fashioned to dream in. And she found it good to dream" (Ibid. 58). So what kind of America does Edna—and through her, possibly, Kate Chopin—daydream about? While her daydreaming does not reveal much in terms of content, other instances of sleep do. Many of her dreams are erotic; they "[s]tir the animalism within her" (Ibid. 78) and induce her to accept the blooming sexuality in her that the Victorian spirit in America at the time represses. They tell us "about her habit of longing for the unattainable" (Franklin 1984, 516); in other words, she finds herself unable to transform her dreams into reality. Whenever she wakes up, it is either into the unrelenting real world ("The years that are gone seem like dreams—if one might go on sleeping and dreaming—but to wake up and find—" [Chopin and Culley 1976, 110]) or into a new realisation about herself ("It was you who awoke me last summer out of a life-long, stupid dream." [Ibid. 107]) Her awakened sexual desire is also often conveyed through restlessness and insomnia, which she experiences after Arobin's visits. Robert, however, is frequently associated with drowsiness and above all a comfortable exhaustion (often after great physical exertion or an emotional overload) that accentuates Edna's increasing awareness of her own body. Their excursion to the Chênrière emphasises Edna's corporality. Chopin engages all our senses: Edna observes her strong limbs, inhales the sweet country odour, listens to the faint voices, devours the food. Robert is well aware of her revitalisation. Moreover, the image of the snow-white bed evokes a comparison to the Sleeping Beauty; Edna, like Rip, also sleeps for decades, but afterwards wakes up into a world that does not recognise her. They are both outsiders in America, but for very different reasons. Rip is a product of the past, of the world before the Revolution, whereas Edna is ahead of her time. Apart from her literal awakening, she awakens also sexually and as an individual. If Edna represents America, she might be ready to awaken into a new era, but is being hindered by the patriarchal society that controls her.

Chopin's American Dream is the liberation of the female, yet Edna's ambiguous fate shows just how unattainable this dream was at the time. The liberation of women would be threefold: bodily (Edna's sexual freedom: she engages in affairs, rejects social conventions), intellectual (she has aspirations, reads Ralph Waldo Emerson), and material (she is able to earn her living, moves out of her husband's house). Chopin's vision is closely linked to the concept of the New Woman, who refuses to be acknowledged as her husband's property and defies existing societal norms. Like in the case of *Rip Van Winkle*, the narrative can be divided into three stages: Edna's married life (symbolised by sleep) stands for the Pre-Revolutionary America. Her realisation of the oppression (instances of literal awakenings) implies a defining moment in US history, but not necessarily the Revolution of 1765-1783; it is likelier that it represents a revolution that still needs to happen and which will bring about the emancipation of women. Lastly, Edna's living a new, liberated life illustrates the American Dream Chopin advocates. With her behaviour and the famous words

**"I am no longer one of  
Mr. Pontellier's possessions  
to dispose of or not. I give myself where  
I choose"** (Ibid. 106-107)

Edna Pontellier quite literally 'declares her independence'—which is exactly what the United States did in 1776.

To really understand what the American Dream meant for the two authors, it becomes necessary to explore the time which inspired their work. Edna and Rip live in entirely different epochs. More than a century separates them and consequently, the reasons for their alienation from their respective environments are distinct as well. While Edna's estrangement is due to her progressive and emancipated mind-set, Rip experiences change in his physical and material world. In other words, the breach between him and society is less abstract. Through Rip as a remnant of the old colonial order, Irving is able to highlight the ideological gap between him and the new regime. Critics disagree as to whether Rip has no role whatsoever in the new world or whether his function is to demonstrate the importance of the past that every country needs. His sleep lasted approximately from 1773 to 1793; the home he left behind was a colonial village under Great Britain, whose values and characteristics were largely still a result of European influence. Rip's temper, described as "[m]eek of spirit", "pliant" and "malleable", (Irving 1966, 2) can, interestingly, also characterise America's submission to the colonial rule. Is, then, Irving criticising the backward royalist tendencies and intellectual as well as political stagnation, or is he simply being nostalgic about the past? In fact, Irving can hardly be said to make a comment on either era; his main aim is to "exhibit the contrast between the old provincial times, and the state of things subsequent to the American Revolution" (Pearce 1993, 120), as pointed out by one of the first readers of the story. For Pearce, what Rip's new world esteems most is the pursuit of practical achievement, social success, and materialistic self-interest. Republicanism, egalitarianism, democracy, and capitalism are highly regarded ideologies. Can the two worlds coexist? Rip

seems to prove so: "his presence in the new community serves as a reminder that life is more anchored in the past, is less active, more simple, more contemplative, and is more content with the inevitable limits of human achievement and endeavour" (Ibid. 121). Yet he will never be truly integrated, never assimilated or accepted as part of a community fixated on the pursuit of the American Dream. This further substantiates the claim made earlier: the freedom to be himself—even among people he has little in common with—is the only benefit Rip is entitled to through everyone else's American Dream.

If life speeded up for Rip in twenty years, the change towards the end of the nineteenth century was even more dramatic. Although Chopin never actively fought for women's rights or joined any political movements, her writing alone is enough to characterise her as an early feminist author. Her exploration of 'the woman question' is emotional rather than political. Edna, like Chopin, is not (politically) active in her rebellion against the patriarchy, even though many women at the time were. They were part of various women's organisations, attended college and earned their own wages, while Chopin was more interested in the neglected personal and sexual aspect of female emancipation—writing provocative fiction, smoking and walking out on her own demanded just as much courage as attending feminist conventions. Through Edna, she subtly suggests that a woman's inward life is just as important for her personal fulfilment and happiness as her material condition and rights. By doing so, she rejects the overall belief that women can thrive only in the domestic sphere and have no higher aspirations. Despite Edna's putting the blame on Léonce, it is actually the oppressive societal norms that restrict her freedom and development on the larger scale—Léonce mostly lets her do whatever she pleases. Both she and Rip seem oppressed by their respective spouses, but on the symbolic level (i.e. their representing America), their oppressors are two different entities. As we have already established, in Rip's case the tyrant is King George III; for Edna, it is the community where she cannot be herself. Her American Dream is that of the acknowledgement of female individuality and a change in the collective perception of non-conformist women who defy social conventions.

However, Chopin is aware that Edna's American Dream is far from becoming reality. Many critics have observed regressive and infantilised traits in Edna's behaviour, and the same can be said for Rip Van Winkle. When we read the two characters as allegorical representations of nineteenth-century America, it becomes apparent that mentally, the country is still too inexperienced to turn over a new leaf. The American Dream is in itself a form of escapism, and it paradoxically results in instances of dreaming about it. While there is room for doubt concerning Edna's psychological immaturity, the evidence of Rip's retreat to infancy is abundant. By being incapable of materially providing for his family, avoiding his wife and experiencing a fantastical adventure in the mountains, he "clings to regressive fantasies [and] denies responsibility" (Kann 1979, 187). Not only does he associate with children in his daily life rather than adults, his dream involves interaction with infantilised creatures as well. He has no function pertaining to responsible adults outside the realm of fantasy and the readers inevitably find themselves commiserating with Dame Van Winkle, whose daily concerns are rooted in the real world.

Both 'tyrannical' spouses (Dame Van Winkle and Léonce Pontellier) expect adult partners, and while we can forgive Edna her neglect of the pressing concerns of reality around her due to her inability to choose freely, Rip's condition fails to win our sympathies because quite frankly, he has nothing but his own spinelessness to blame for the life he has chosen for himself.

Although there are many Freudian symbols to be found in *The Awakening*, it remains a fact that the novel was published several months before *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As well pointed out by Franklin (1984, 510), "[p]sychological critics have helpfully detailed the infantile regressive traits in Edna, but this line of interpretation tends to view Edna's struggle as narrowly pathological rather than universally human". The same cannot be said about Rip, whose idleness and irresponsibility are not a way of rebellion against his community but merely ingrained personality traits. This supports the claims made above about the protagonists representing America. Rip's immaturity cannot find a place in the quest for the American Dream, and while Edna may be ready to do so, she lacks experience: 'a solitary soul' cannot persevere on her own against the patriarchal system.

The question then arises – is the realisation of the American Dream possible? For individuals who feel 'out of place' in nineteenth-century America, only partially. Edna's dream will come true long after she has perished, of which she is well aware. Rip, however, never fought for Irving's version of the American Dream as it is, and had no other dream except freedom – which, although through no effort of his own, he still manages to obtain. The elusive American Dream is a vicious circle, and protagonists in nineteenth-century American fiction need to awaken from a comfortable sleep to be able to dream of a better country, not knowing whether it is at all possible to achieve this ideal. Kate Chopin and Washington Irving, although nearly a century apart, convey their visions and hopes for America through writing characters that either stagnate or inspire. What path the nation chooses is up to the people: they may follow Edna into a world of greater freedom or linger with Rip in the past. The change that always follows sleep is, ironically, the only constant for the United States. The characters symbolise America at different stages of development, so the realisation of the American Dream will depend on their maturity, perseverance, and the surrounding community. Even though a dream that transgresses societal expectations cannot flourish in an unsupportive environment, the idea will live on and perhaps become reality for future generations (who will, inevitably, come up with a new ideal to pursue). How many years did Edna sleep on Grand Isle? And how long Rip in the mountains? Nineteenth-century America may be asleep, but it is waking up. Waking up only to find itself dreaming on and on about a utopic future that often transcends one lifetime and may or may not come.

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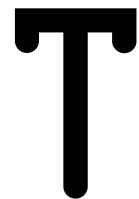
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Seminar Paper



## The Gothic in A Series of Unfortunate Events

Rok Vahter

Unlike the name suggests, the Gothic has fairly little to do with the Gothic peoples. It is, in fact, a clearly modern phenomenon. First, the term attained a wider meaning in art history, mostly to refer to several revivalist movements in architecture. During the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, but more prominently during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, it began to signify a certain bleak and melancholy aesthetic that has found its way into every nook and cranny of culture, popular or otherwise. Today it amply exerts its influence on pop music (Gothic rock/metal...), film (film noir, horror films, thrillers...), video games, and of course literature. Some works of Gothic fiction



are today considered to be “classic” novels (*Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*...), although throughout its existence as a genre, there has been a corresponding low-brow current of Gothic fiction (i.e. pulp fiction). The so called “penny dreadful” format was extremely popular in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, for example. In this paper, I will not pay much attention to this distinction in the reception of Gothic fiction. The fierce admiration or vehement denunciations of said texts in the literary community and beyond is, however, a clear sign of the ubiquity and importance of the genre. The debate on what exactly characterizes the Gothic is still very much ongoing and has sparked many new investigations of Gothic texts in the last few decades.

It should be clear enough that Gothic fiction cannot be just any literature with supernatural (occult) or macabre elements (many holy books might then be considered Gothic literature). I believe that the Gothic movement is best conceived as a cultural formation, meaning that it has its own specific material and historic character (Williams 2009). Most literary historians place the origin of the Gothic movement in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It gained significant popularity a century later because of tackling taboo topics and great societal changes in Victorian society, which saw the decline in traditional (agricultural) activity and the dawn of the mechanical age. The philosophy of positivism was fast becoming the dominant epistemology. Psychology became a science for the first time in human history, which had a great influence on Gothic fiction as well. The divided mind of schizophrenia is analyzed seriously for the first time, for example (this is reflected in such works as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dorian Grey*, *Frankenstein*...). Generally, rational knowledge came crashing into religion and burgeoning capitalist social relations were undoing century-old customs and biographical patterns. The prevalence of the Gothic can be viewed, in my opinion, as a simultaneous reaction to the emerging positivist philosophy of science (including political economy) and the deterioration of values of old. Marx and Weber offer some of the most famous descriptions of this “disenchantment” of the world that marked the onset of modernity. The Gothic was thus both, an escape from and a reckoning with the rationalizing and simultaneously alienating drive of capital accumulation. The genre survived and has re-flourished in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; a sizable amount of texts that we may consider a continuation or revival(s) of the specific Gothic tradition have emerged. Some of the new features of modern Gothic include satire and parody of the Gothic itself, gallows humour, cheerful nihilism, bathos and intertextuality.

*“Approximations to the notion of contemporary gothic were made initially by mapping out a “modern Gothic”. This term served to establish the existence of such a genre or mode in the 20th century and thus to challenge the historicist view that it should be connected exclusively to what has been referred to as “first wave” Gothic, roughly covering the period between the publication of Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) [...] Ambiguity regarding the development of the Gothic mode in the 20th and 21st centuries has also arisen, at least partly, from its dispersion across different media, a further reflection of its transhistorical, self-referential, and formulaic nature.” (Aldana Reyes 2015, 12).*

Xavier Aldana Reyes recognizes two main approaches to the Gothic in present-day critical theory. The first “prioritizes certain aesthetic or thematic aspects and, in a materialist historicist vein, explores their potential for social commentary” (2015, 14). The aim of the second major approach is to: “[...]focus on the cultural need for the Gothic and understand specific texts as negotiations or projections of social and political anxieties often repressed by subjects or by the nation in which they live” (Aldana Reyes 2015, 15). In this paper I will combine both approaches in order to discuss *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, a series of 13 novels penned by Lemony Snicket, in terms of contemporary Gothic scholarship.

#### CHILDREN’S FICTION AND THE GOTHIC

Gothic literature for children has steadily become an entirely mainstream genre. A quick glance at the bestselling young adult fiction will confirm this. Think of the countless vampire-inspired sagas (*Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*...), the *Harry Potter* series, Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and so on. Whether or not children should read about such ghoulish literature has been the subject of intense debates, though this has never deterred young audiences from selecting these works, in fact, the opposite likely holds. “Children, it seems, have always had a predilection for what we now categorize as the Gothic, for ghosts and goblins, hauntings and horrors, fear and the pretence of fear. As Townshend argues, this appetite was fed by their nursemaids, in part because fear effectively secures docile behaviour, and in part because the nursemaids themselves enjoyed the titillation of a good horror story” (Jackson 2008).

This also goes to show that Gothic fiction for children has had a long history of successfully establishing a dual address; the texts appealing to both children and adults. In fact, some scholars argue that the origin of the Gothic is actually in children’s literature. If we think of the witches, monsters and other spectres haunting children’s stories as collected by the brothers Grimm, they are clearly Gothic in nature. It was only later that gory stories started to be viewed as inappropriate for children.

*“Perhaps the really strange development of the eighteenth century was the transformation of the Gothic narrative into an adult genre, when it had really belonged to children’s literature all along. [...] Nonetheless, transformed it was, and the Gothic was soundly suppressed in children’s literature in favour of morally uplifting texts that suited the desires of adults to construct an innocent child [...]” (Jackson 2008).*

This ambiguous attitude towards Gothic literature for children is evident in the reception of a *Series of Unfortunate Events* as well. It provoked a considerable conservative critical (and parental) backlash (Olson 2011). Snicket was accused of exposing children to truths too difficult for them to comprehend, or at any rate trying to instil in them despair, nihilism and “unfavourable” values. He has responded to such criticisms in interviews and even within the series itself. When accused of creating characters that do immoral things he curtly retorted: “I’m at a loss for how to construct a villain who isn’t doing villainous things. If Count Olaf were only doing things that no one would object to, then he really wouldn’t be much of a villain.”

## A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

In order to demonstrate that the series falls within the scope of Gothic literature I will first try to establish the link to formal and aesthetic aspects of the novels. *"A Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space - be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, a primeval frontier or island, a large old house or theatre, an aging city or urban underworld, a decaying storehouse, factory, laboratory [...]"* (Hogle 2002, 2)

Places such as these abound throughout the series. The main villain's lair is a classic Gothic palace, featuring a gloomy exterior and unwelcoming interior, riddled with secret passages and towers that function as a place of imprisonment. The Baudelaires go on to live through a myriad of typical Gothic settings: a forbidding boarding school which reminds us of Jane Eyre, and other Gothic bildungsromans. The condition of the working class is addressed in the Miserable Mill, the installment which paints a bleak and desolate capitalist hell space where children are forced to work; this being a clear call-out to early capitalism in England. The children also endure strange scientific procedures in a dark mysterious hospital and laboratory. Apart from buildings, nature is likewise haunting and menacing: dreary swamps, a morose lake with dangerous flesh-eating leaches, sinister mountain ranges and secluded and mysterious islands. Even the time and space which the series occupies can be said to meet this criterion. The setting is eerily ambiguous and gives off a vague Victorian/Edwardian England vibe. Smog and other signs of industrialization are mentioned throughout the series. There are, however, anachronistic references to computers, but since they are not used extensively, this only adds to the mystery of the universe the series inhabits. *"Within this space or a combination of such spaces are hidden some secrets from the past that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically or otherwise at the main time of the story"* (Hogle 2002, 2). This criterion is superbly met, as the central mystery of the series has to do with secret societies, mysterious fires and an absurdist catalyst for what is literally a series of unfortunate events: an enigmatic sugar bowl that made one particular tea set incomplete. The most obvious formal element missing from the series is the supernatural. This is the so called Radcliffean tradition of the Gothic, where everything is eventually explained in naturalistic terms. But a different kind of "ghost" haunts the protagonists. The spectre of Real Life. *"The longevity and power of Gothic fiction unquestionably stem from the way it helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural, throughout the history of western culture since the eighteenth century"* (Hogle 2002, 4). What sort of world do today's children need to come to terms with? Sociologists have developed several distinct and partly over-lapping theoretical frameworks to describe the predicament of the world roughly after World War Two. Some of the more prominent ones include: *post-modernism* (Lyotard), *late capitalism* (Jameson), *second modernity/risk society* (Beck, Giddens), *liquid modernity* (Bauman) and *society of control* (Deleuze). They all address the second big transformation in society after the brutal disenchantment of early modernity (the so-called big transformation). What were some main changes? The categories and social relationships

have become even more vague and fluid than ever before. Globalization and capitalism have turned the entire world into a global village, where the flows of money, people and ideas have become too quick for an average person (or societal institutions, even) to have a firm grasp on. In the old days of modernity life was fairly predictable relative to today. economies were chained to the nation state and the disciplinary society controlled the body much more successfully than today. School, factory (possibly hospital, prison and asylum) were the main ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state and they had an unrivalled control of ideology and power. Deleuze (1992) points out that in late modernity society struggles to be in control of itself, not so much disciplining the body, as trying to control variables (such as flows of money, migration and environmental factors). The official era of power-knowledge controlled exclusively by the state has ended. Ideology has essentially transcended national, official and "reputable" sources. The world has become more chaotic and less manageable. Identity, likewise, has become more fluid, more relaxed, but at the same time, more anxiety-inducing, as it is no longer as fixed as it was even 50 years ago. A child today is expected to make sense of the world and produce their own role in it: they can select their identity (religious, sexual, national etc.), educational, professional and domestic path. None is there for them to simply assume it. It's difficult and confusing to form a coherent identity, especially for a child, in a world that faces huge societal risks such as precarious employment, great economic inequality (the promise of meritocracy is dubious at best) and the rise of financial crises, fascist currents and a looming global ecological catastrophe. Gothic fiction is very suitable to assuage such anxieties. *"[...] we crave and/or need this Gothic experience [...] for the Gothic dramatizes the essential loss in the 20th century of a coherent psyche and a social order to which we can pledge allegiance in good faith"* (Aldana Reyes 2015, 15). Crises of the capitalist mode of production are a complex phenomenon where the contradictions of all the spheres of the capitalist mode of production culminate. (Harvey 2010, 117) I first read the series when I was a teenager in the first decade of the 21st century. In 2008 the markets crashed and eventually caused the Great Recession. The world economy came tumbling down and young people's lives everywhere were suddenly in jeopardy. The Adults let us all down. Shortly after the crash the Queen of England inquired the London School of Economics how come they did not see the crisis coming; it didn't feel a lot different from a signature Snicket jab at clueless adults. I personally feel that *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is an excellent series to ready children for the contemporary world. This is expertly done by the way the Baudelaires are continuously let down by adults and institutions and it is not hard to see how this is very relatable to young readers. Notably, almost all adults in the series are either malicious or well-intentioned, but ultimately helpless against the *status quo*. Whenever they needed to make a difference they all resorted to parroting the regimes of truth they grew up with. For example, when it seemed that Violet Baudelaire had indeed married Count Olaf, everyone, from the benevolent Justice Strauss to the protective Mr. Poe, regretted that Olaf had tricked them all, but, nothing else at all could be done about the matter: the law is the law. Even obviously morally contemptible plans are merely regrettable, just as long as they are legal. This is a nice

way to make children think about cultural production of social knowledge and power relations. Snickett teaches children another subtle lesson in *Foucault*: the newspaper Daily Punctilio (who wrongly accused the children of murder and continuously misreported what was really going on) is a clear example of how institutions, power and knowledge are intertwined in the dominant media. In this way the series encourages children to challenge convention by preparing them for sad endings and ambiguous resolutions to contradictions and paradoxes of life. Again, sentiments like these are conveyed in a typical sardonic Snickett fashion, employing irony and sarcasm to warn the reader of what lies ahead; “*If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things happen in the middle.*”

The absence of happy endings is not just a trivial narrative decision. “*The happy ending marks a restoration of order; indeed, as Pape shows, it often ‘reproduces a static social order’. It constructs a chain of cause and effect towards immediate or long-term happiness for the child protagonist, which in its didactic aspect supposes that particular actions, behaviours and attitudes will produce predictable and certain outcomes*” (Bullen 2008, 6). If the story is denied a happy ending, a child encountering such a text has to face and overcome social obstacles and perhaps even demand a change that is opposite to the status quo. This is often done in the series, though not always through entirely bleak scenarios. One of the most important techniques the author of the series makes use of is humour. “*Within children’s fiction, the comic Gothic can no longer be ignored, so prevalent has it become in the last 15 years or so. Indeed, the genre is gaining in popularity in these early years of the twenty-first century, arguably because of millennial anxieties adding to fin de siècle uncertainty, ambiguity and paradox*” (Cross 2009, 61). Children reading the books are not only faced with the weird world of adults through hardship, but also through the dry wit that Snickett readily employs in the books. Numerous examples of wordplay and other amusing techniques are used. Blank pages represent darkness. Repeated pages represent *déjà-vu*. This kind of structural comedy is one of the most enjoyable part of the series. The narrator often digresses from the story in order to humorously explain a certain vocabulary item that might confuse younger readers:

“*Like this book, the dictionary shows you that the word “nervous” means “worried about something” – you might feel nervous, for instance, if you were served prune ice cream for dessert, because you would be worried that it would taste awful — whereas the word “anxious” means “troubled by disturbing suspense,” which you might feel if you were served a live alligator for dessert, because you would be troubled by the disturbing suspense about whether you would eat your dessert or it would eat you.*” (Snickett 2001, 2)

The role of humour is not only to play into children’s desire to laugh and be amused. It is in fact one of the key coping mechanism that they will need to develop in order to come to terms with contemporary society. In this way literature can make them grow as people and critical thinkers. Finding pleasure in

reading allows children to develop analytical skills that are necessary to follow a sequence of main events and construct a narrative, which is crucial to one’s emotional and intellectual growth. Narrative is not simply the means by which we understand and analyse literature, but also the means by which we structure our lives and create meaning from our daily actions. “*Much of the humour in some comic Gothic texts for younger readers also relies on a sophisticated understanding of irony, parody, genre convention, and “higher” order cognitive forms of humour, such as the perception of, and ultimate enjoyment and even acceptance of, incongruity [...]*” (Cross 2009, 61).

## CONCLUSION

Considering all this *A Series of Unfortunate Events* definitely falls within the universe of the Gothic. Taking into account its extensive use of humour, intertextuality and meta narrative it could also be considered a kind of a hybrid mock-Gothic sub-genre. Generally speaking, it satisfies both major criteria set forth by contemporary literary theory; it abounds both in the Gothic aesthetic and the cultural need to address the prevalent anxieties of its time. The series is a wonderful addition to the rich and often under-credited world of children’s Gothic literature that takes the Gothic tropes and aesthetic and subverts and tailors them for the needs of young readers. They can learn valuable lessons about life, society and themselves by reading such literature. This has a lot to do with the fact they’re much more likely to learn spontaneously (as opposed to forcibly reading “appropriate” fiction) when they pick their favourite monster-themed volume on their own.

“*One cannot legislate against risk – which by its nature eludes control – or the fear and uncertainty that accompanies it. Nevertheless, critically empowered children are much less likely to be defeated by pessimism, nihilism, fatalism or false optimism. [...] By harnessing the power of darkness A Series of Unfortunate Events shows one way in which children’s literature can be illuminating and potentially empower child readers in their negotiation of risk society*” (Bullen 2008, 21).

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# B

## Becoming the Other: A Forced Transition in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Nisja Naja Resinovič

Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* shows the reader that society often forces its weaker or powerless members to change not only their behaviour, but through it also their sense of self, in order to ensure their own survival. In the case of Gilead and Offred, the narrator of the story, this transition is twofold: Offred is first forced to adapt to the new social norms, and later she finds herself a changed woman who thinks mostly in the way of the new society. The circumstances force her to become just like the others, who are complicit with the new society.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NAME

A person's given name is the focal point of their identity, and the name one gives when meeting others is dependent on who these others are (Windt-val 275). What, then, happens if a person's name is forcefully ripped away? In the new regime of Gilead, the Handmaids receive new names as soon as they are transferred from the Red Centre. These names mark them as possessions of their Commanders and are easily changed with their posts. The Handmaids know they are only useful as long as they can bear children; they know that they can easily lose a limb or an eye if they are disobedient. When they receive their post, they must forget their previous names and lives so that they don't interfere with their duty to the society. As Offred realises early on, it is better to not think. Thinking leads to ideas about escaping and that would hurt her chances of surviving (Atwood 17).

The Handmaid narrating the story, Offred, never mentions her true name. It can be assumed that her given name is June, as she mentions several names when speaking of the Red centre – Alma, Dolores, Janine, Moira and June (*ibid.* 14) – and all names but June are later mentioned regarding another girl. No matter her true name, she always introduces herself as Offred, both to the reader and to people around her. As mentioned before, a name is a big part of one's identity, and Offred inevitably changed when she had to suppress her own. Because she was treated like property, she gradually started feeling like one, slowly losing her identity and adopting a new one, with a personality worthy of a Handmaid. In her memories, she remembers herself as very outgoing, a smoker, a person not afraid to talk about and engage in sex (*ibid.* 66). Most importantly, she used to be a woman who followed her heart despite the protests of society. She started an affair with Luke, a married man, and defended her decision when her best friend chastised her for it. She remained with him through his divorce and later married him herself, and created a family, though in the process, she inevitably became a homewrecker. In contrast, as Offred she is terrified of breaking the rules and tries never to cross any lines; even when she sometimes wishes to, she never dares (*ibid.* 71). Due to her obedience, she finds herself in an impossible situation: she has the choice of breaking the law or disobeying Commander Waterford's orders when he wishes to see her alone (*ibid.* 146). Ultimately, the latter poses a bigger threat to her life and so she bows to his wishes. Still, she retains some of her rebellious streak and dares to ask him to break the law for her – an eye for an eye, so to speak – when she asks him for hand lotion (*ibid.* 167). She also listens behind closed doors to gain any information, something she admits she never would have done before, but now this is the only way to find out what is happening (*ibid.* 20). It seems that more than anything, Offred longs for an equal companionship and information that is no longer freely available to her (*ibid.* 21).

Once Offred realises she can bend the rules if ordered to, she is less afraid of doing so. She knows she must get pregnant at Waterford's house, as this is her last chance to produce a child. When Serena Joy suggests she sleep with another man, the Commander's driver Nick, Offred accepts the proposition (*ibid.* 215). At this point, however, she is resigned to her role as a child bearer and is willing to do anything to avoid being sent to the Colonies, radioactive wastelands where the misfits are sent. Ironically, it is following those orders that brings her rebellious streak out fully, as she falls in love with Nick and, once again, breaks the rules of society for love.

Offred's compliance with the new regime is partly truthful and partly fake. Her acting can be seen when she interacts with the original Ofglen, as she drops the pretence once they both realise they aren't true believers (*ibid.* 177). She also admits she enjoys having power over men; the power of being something they want. She knows her being the object of desire is not an active attack on the society, but knowing men will suffer at night thinking of her brings her satisfaction (*ibid.* 32). Another part of her, however, accepts the new circumstances and what they mean for her, and during important events, she falls into a believing state. A good example is the Birth, where she does and feels exactly as she was taught at the Centre (*ibid.* 135).

During her time in Gilead, she keeps her given name hidden inside herself, protecting it both from others, so no one can steal it, and from herself, as dwelling on the past would only hurt her chances of survival. It is obvious that she still hopes someday Gilead will fall and her hidden name will be dug out and be useful once again (*ibid.* 94). Although she doesn't agree with the new society, she fakes faith and compliance to survive, yet she never acts out against it. She allows herself to think about the name she bore before only after she finds love in Nick; even going as far as telling it to him (*ibid.* 282). Only then another, non-compliant part of her surfaces again and she dares to love and to risk everything for love.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOTHES

The transition Offred was forced to undergo can be seen by observing her relationship to clothes. She recalls wearing clothes she chose herself, from tight fitted leggings in bright colours to many different types of shoes (*ibid.* 34). The clothes she used to wear before Gilead were fitted and revealing, colourful and sometimes borrowed from her friends, but they were hers and represented who she was a person. In contrast, in Gilead she is forced to wear long loose red dresses and matching flat shoes, a red cloak and red gloves. In addition, her hair must always be covered and her head protected with white wings when she goes outside. The same outfit is prescribed to every Handmaid when she starts her education at the Red centre and helps differentiate them from everyone else. They must look the same, for there is no place for individuality in Gilead. When she is taking a bath, Offred remembers how she used to wear swimsuits, her whole body on display. She realises that she has become uncomfortable with her nakedness because her whole body is constantly covered (*ibid.* 72). She feels better when she does not stand out, when she is like everyone else.

The part of the narrative that shows just how much Offred's fundamental views have changed is when Ofglen and her meet Japanese tourists. They look at these women in their short skirts and high heels, linger on their uncovered hair and painted lips, and they think: "They [are] underdressed" (*ibid.* 38). They are both repelled by their near-nakedness, but at the same time deeply fascinated; clothes like that just aren't worn anymore, they are like a live museum exhibit. Offred suddenly realises she used to dress like that, but it didn't take long for the society and her training to change her mind (*ibid.* 38).

Although she realises she  
has been, essentially,  
brainwashed, she is al-  
ready too integrated in  
the new culture to either  
protest or change.

What she once found appealing is now repulsing, and the issued clothes she says she dislikes provide a cover behind which she is comfortable.

A rather similar thought process occurs when the Commander takes Offred on an illegal adventure into the Club. When she looks at the feathery dress he provides for her she is disgusted by it, yet highly curious how wearing it would feel (*ibid.* 242).

Similarly, once he provides her with makeup, she is hesitant to apply it – she remembers the motions but is uncomfortable having a painted face (*ibid.* 243). It can be assumed makeup was a part of her everyday routine in the before, but listening to the Aunts' warnings about wanton women makes her subconsciously hesitant to use it. Once at the Club, she realises the scantily clad women and their sharp makeup seem grotesque to her. She is no longer used to seeing women with makeup, and even her own dolled-up reflection with bright red lipstick makes her think it is wrong of her to look like that (*ibid.* 265–266). The transition from the woman Offred was before to the Handmaid she is now as seen through her relationship to clothes is incredible. There is no semblance between the two and it is like looking at two different women. Just like names, clothes, too, are a big part of a person's identity; and taking away the freedom of choice regarding everything, from the name to the cut and colour of the clothes, slowly chips away at the identity's core, until the only thing that remains is what the society wants.

#### THE DIVISION OF SOCIETY

Gilead's society is divided into many classes with different standings, but the pervading distinction is achieved with clothes. Each part of the society wears clothes of a different colour so they can be easily recognised and put in their place if necessary. The Handmaids wear red, the colour of blood and life, but also the most visible colour of them all – they can neither run nor hide. The Wives wear light blue, the colour that symbolises faith, truth and wisdom. It also gives them an aura of regality befitting their station. The colours of both sets of women clash terribly, representing what society expects of them but also alluding to the power struggle between them – the Wives with their superior standing waging a silent war against Handmaids and their singular ability to produce children. Other women of different standings are similarly garbed in different coloured clothing: Marthas wear light green, Aunts wear khaki and Ordinary Wives wear colourful stripes. Even Jezebels are easily recognisable by their trashy clothing from before the revolution; should they ever manage to escape the Club, they could be found easily.

It is interesting that only women are distinguished with colours of their clothing, as men wear mostly black regardless of their status. The only distinctions of their attire are the marks of rank the Angels and the Commanders wear. This alone is a good indication that Gilead is a completely patriarchal society. Even so, the men do not trust one another, much less women, and this creates the need for spies. The Eyes are Gilead's worst kept secret; everyone knows they exist, the silent watchers with no tangible form. However, no one but their direct superiors know who they are – as far as the public is concerned, they could be the driver, the tour guide or a random passerby. This state of not knowing sows distrust not just between members of different classes, but also within the same class. The Eyes do not only watch over the Handmaids and Marthas, but also over the Commanders and their wives and, ultimately, over one another.

The Eyes are not the only spies. The Handmaids must always walk in pairs so that they can both spy on each other and serve as a control measure. They know that, should their partner commit an offence, they will be questioned and possibly punished as well. Still, not all of them are without compassion and

are willing to issue warnings before reporting their partner to the authority. This is proven when Offred untactfully questions the new Ofglen's loyalties and is warned – the new Ofglen knows but will not tell if Offred never repeats such offence again (Atwood 296).

The distinction of people does not end with the living – in Gilead, a person is also marked in death. The criminals hanging as a reminder to others bear signs of their crime hanging around their necks. A doctor that aborted babies in the before has a sign with a foetus (*ibid.* 42), while priests wear their black cassocks and homosexuals have purple signs hanging around their necks (*ibid.* 53). The hanged serve as a reminder of all that is sinful, but also send a disturbing message: they were different, they thought differently, believed differently, loved differently; so we killed them.

Ultimately, all these distinctions serve to create anonymity between and within classes. The Handmaids are scorned for their role in society by all other women, seen as a necessary evil. Cora and Rita, Marthas at Waterford's, talk about Offred as though she were another chore to be completed (*ibid.* 58). It seems as if they chose to forget the Handmaids did not choose their role and that they are the future of the society. What is more, Handmaids are not only seen as burdens behind the walls of their homes, they are also a constant source of jealousy. When one of them gets pregnant, others are happy for her, yet they are also jealous they are not the ones having the honour of bringing a new life into the world. The Commander's and Ordinary wives are also jealous of them, as they cannot bear children themselves. The two main events in the life of Handmaid, Birth and Ceremony, are an attempt to connect them with Wives, but these attempts at unity are paltry at best. The distinctions between them are too deeply rooted in their minds and simply cannot be overcome without the complete collapse of the society.

#### CONCLUSION

The main narrator of the story, Offred, proves how much a person changes when forced into a new role in the society, especially if there is no escape. It appears that adapting to survive changes the core of the identity, creating an almost completely new person in the process. This happens without conscious thought or consent; it seems to be a psychological reaction to unwanted circumstances.

Similarly, this analysis of the society and their reactions proves that forcing people to mark their status in the society in any way works towards instilling hate and fear in everyone. This damages society in the long run, as it starts to collapse from inside out, ultimately demolishing it completely.

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love & contrivance

or

## How Nurio's Desire Ended his Prime

Leja Dvoršek

Characters: AUNT, NURIO (AUNT's nephew), TAZIA (NURIO's fiancée-to-be), MAID

#### ACT 1, SCENE 1

(Kitchen, where the MAID is silently peeling potatoes and NURIO is fiddling with his bowtie.)

NURIO: (Glances down at his tie) Urgh! It cannot be! For a full 10 minutes have I been bothering myself with this task! I'd rather be stung by a bee and learn... I don't know – Basque!

AUNT (Arrives into the kitchen): What bothers thee, dear Nurio, on such a splendid evening? Is the knot against you winning? (She looks at the MAID, sighs) I see you are not the only one who troubles with a simple duty. Were you hired only for your – average – beauty? Away with you and these potatoes! What I asked for was tomatoes!

MAID: Apologies, mistress. There was no harm intended. A faerie must have resided in mine ear and whispered wrongly for a jest to be landed.

AUNT: A faerie indeed, away with thee!

(MAID quickly starts cleaning the things and dirt off the table and putting the bowls with potatoes away.)

AUNT: And put the milk back in the fridge. Tazia must have left it outside. The girl and I will have a talk later aside.

MAID: Of course, my lady. Oh, this fridge is an annoyance to open – (drops milk and gasps.)

AUNT: And now you dare smudge the cleanliness of the floor by thine incompetence? My eyes must deceive me, for my brain told me that hiring you was a good investment! Clean the white mark of deception at once!

MAID: Yes, my lady.

AUNT: Nurio, I cannot bear to watch you struggle so. Come here. Let your auntie have a go. I used to do this for your uncle, you know. However, that was such a long time ago, my fingers may be stiff and the pattern might not be clear anymore.

NURIO: Looking down has given me a dizzy spell. Please, do save me from this hell.

## SCENE 2

(TAZIA, wearing heavy make-up and a dress which would in no social circle be called conservative, arrives in the living room where AUNT and NURIO are sitting.)

AUNT: (Snarkily) Tazia! Your appearance was managed. Quite a delay it was but no matter. I am but an old lady with time to spare and no other things need my care.

TAZIA: (dramatically) Apologies! Hundreds and hundreds of apologies!

NURIO: Tazia, my love. Your presence brings a pure light which banishes this dreary weather. Who would have thought a storm would announce itself on our engagement party...?

TAZIA: Of this storm, I know. It threw troubles at me, left and right, while travelling here. Just now a tree branch –

NURIO: (gets up) What of this tree branch, my dove?

TAZIA: A tree branch nearly fell me over. It landed not but a hair's breadth away, resulting in mine near turnover.

(NURIO gasps.)

NURIO: The evil tree spirit must have been boiling with jealousy, knowing you to soon be my wife and it – a silent wooden strife.

TAZIA: It was the tree in front of your house, if I may say. I wonder how long it had been planning this plan.

NURIO: Let's go upstairs and freshen you up, my dove. We cannot leave with you in such disarray.

TAZIA: And then be quickly on our way.

(TAZIA and NURIO leave)

AUNT: (brooding) The tree has failed me too, I see. A second disappointment today it be.

## SCENE 3

(Same evening a bit later. AUNT alone in her study, she is writing something down at her desk but has trouble concentrating. She stops and is just sitting there, thinking.)

### AUNT

The lady of the house. That is currently my title.  
I preside over all things here and my disciple.  
My Nurio – I wished to pave his way  
into the world, to keep troubles away.  
If only t'was not that engagement to be,  
my heart would live in peace.  
Alas, the engagement of my dear old boy,  
whose mother left him for another joy,

brings sorrow to mine breasts.  
A decade and two years I nursed his quests:  
to have fun, to be smart, to be a looker...  
And now his "love" is a hooker.  
The child disappoints me – he could do better!  
God knows, into the ground I wish this whore to batter.  
Yet avoids all things she, which I throw at her.  
Guess I'll have to try some more, yes Sir.  
At least this affair gives me a lease  
to have my mind occupied with something.

Or...

or should I cease?

My endeavours have since all been for nothing.

Should I leave it?

Let the child live on his own,

learn from his mistakes and...

And watch his goals in life die due to this love which has  
grown?

Hell no.

With my dying breath I will plough on  
to blow this relationship apart, so hold on  
my dear boy, auntie will go as far as to the moon.  
The seductions of that snake will end soon.

## ACT 2, SCENE 1

(NURIO and TAZIA come home, a bit intoxicated from the party. They are giggling, trying to be quiet but failing.)

TAZIA: (Hugs him close) Nurio, Nurio. Wherefore art thou Nurio? Thy name itself is truly a curio. Elegant and sleek, never heard before – unique.

NURIO: Doth they know; you are my Anastasia? A princess in my eyes. Lost and wearing a disguise, I found you. To be elevated back to your former glory you are due, as soon as I marry you. With this ring upon thine finger, I swear to you, I'll always around thee linger. Use me as you wish and do command, I shall always do as you demand. (A short pause.)

My dear, 'tis better if we part. My stomach is not happy with the dinner's cream tart.

(NURIO leaves, the MAID comes in the background, but she and TAZIA don't see each other.)

### TAZIA (To herself)

Would it be that I harboured less worry – more patience,  
I could sleep without a sorry and not be my guilt's patient.  
To cross out this long planned task off my list  
to jump over the hurdles I shall insist  
until it's accomplished,  
this brilliant plan.  
Tazia's selfish,  
she wants this vain man.

### MAID

Polishing and cleaning –  
I would do it all  
as long as I could see you, my dear Nurio.  
In the corners I hide and steal of yee glances,  
knowing I could never push forth my advances.

For I am a maid -  
of poor class was born.  
Found half-dead on the street  
and was raised to be torn  
by the gentry above me  
whose souls are forlorn.  
Such high love's beyond me  
my heart is forborne.

TAZIA (planning and smirking)  
First, I shall kiss him  
on a whim it'll be done.

MAID (dreamy)  
How I wish to be kissed,  
in his arms be amiss'd.

TAZIA  
Then the fires I'll start  
in his fresh red young heart.

MAID  
His whispers in mine ear  
are all I'd hold dear.

TAZIA  
Then get with a child  
... from nights very wild.

MAID  
My heart couldn't take it  
if you were to stake it  
by saying "I love thee"  
to any but me.

TAZIA  
By the end of this summer  
your hand will be mine.  
No longer the mummer -  
soon riches and wine.

#### SCENE 2

(NURIO and AUNT alone in the living room, reading. AUNT keeps glancing at him, feeling restless. Finally, she can't take it anymore.)

AUNT: How was the party yesterday, dear nephew? Was everything in accordance with that shre- I mean - how was the menu?

NURIO: Many showed face and the music was pleasurable. But I ate too much cake and my stomach's a bit vulnerable.

AUNT: I'll send you the maid to administer aid. Such ills of the body best not be unbothered. Now tell me of Tazia. How has she been? I barely know her. Is she already eighteen?

NURIO: You jest me, dear auntie. You jest me for sure. D'you not think I'd check if she was mature?

AUNT: Your courting just started from nowhere so fast. Love exclamations made ready to last! I find it suspicious, her dress and her lore. Had I not known better, I'd thought her a whor-

NURIO: (interrupts her, angrily) -Horribly treated and never conceited - a maiden whose home was the shore. Raised by the sailors and despised by the neighbours, living itself was a chore!

AUNT: I meant no offense but I fear you should know that women like her carry much less than soul. Constantly searching for places not cold, the hearts aren't of gold where pleasure is sold.

NURIO: You hate her. I knew it. For weeks I've been told, but Tazia's words I chose to ignore. We've tried and we've tried and you wouldn't let us breathe. Well, my dear Auntie, I'm afraid I must leave.

(Stands up and leaves the room while the MAID enters and unintentionally eavesdrops, not noticed by Auntie, facing the other way.)

AUNTIE: (Hurt to herself) There's nails in my heart, you put them all there, you beat and you nail and you won't stop or care. That's it! I've decided - if words fail by thee, a poison on table will speak for all three.

(MAID slowly exits the room with shock on her face.)

#### ACT 3, SCENE 1

(The stage is separated by a wall, on the left is a simple cell room with grates, behind which the MAID is standing. On the right is the dining room where TAZIA, AUNT and NURIO sit at the table and act out what the MAID narrates.)

MAID (teary-eyed, sobbing):

A storm was a-coming and that we all knew.  
The servants, the gardeners, his aunt - and that shrew.  
Poor Nurio didn't know what was to hit him.  
I wish I could turn back the clock on that evening.

They started as partners,  
Hors d'oeuvres were the starters.  
Their smiles were everywhere,  
poisoning the air.  
Both Mistress and Tazia  
- witch and a Lamia! -  
had plans of their own  
to each other unknown.

(Servants serve soup at the table.)

First was the soup,  
my soul I bet on it.  
Mrs' eyes blackened,  
her arms became slackened.

(Servants take away the soup and bring roasted quill. TAZIA spills her wine all over herself because AUNT 'accidentally' pulls the table cloth with her slightly sluggish movement.)

The second was quill  
where there was a spill.  
Mistress asked servants  
to bring some more wine.  
The fetch was achieved  
and goblet refilled.  
Deeply drank Tazia,



with peace on her mind.  
(Servants start bringing cake as dessert.)

Nurio, love,  
'my only' now gone.  
Why hadn't you stopped  
and looked at your aunt?  
How come you ate it?  
I thought you felt sick  
and avoid you would sugary  
moist cakes that thick.  
I killed you with love in mind  
that I admit.

It was an accident  
a plan poorly writ'.  
(GHOST NURIO slowly appears behind the MAID and  
inches towards her.)

Memories of you,  
your face turning blue,  
haunt me at night.  
You're now my wight.  
(MAID turns towards GHOST NURIO, unafraid but still  
crying.)

Repentance you seek  
in my heart chaos wreak.  
I loved you, I still do!  
I'm sorry, it's true!  
You never loved me,  
but to me you were all.  
You reap what you sow  
-Adieu, Nurio.

(MAID kisses him and the lights go off.)

Short Story

M

## Maybe She's Just Not a Cat Person

Anja Zupančič

*Cat Person* by Kristen Roupenian is a short story that was published in *The New Yorker* in December 2017. The story follows the characters Margot, a twenty-year-old college student, and Robert, a man in his thirties, who go through a brief period of flirting, before going on a single date that ends on a slightly unpleasant note. It stirred up quite a fuss in the literary world, as men and women tended to understand the story differently, and took to Twitter to argue about it.

"Hi im not interested in you stop texting me"

Robert had read Margot's message over three times since his phone produced the unmistakable sound of a text coming in. Its brief, yet clear, content had remained unchanged throughout this whole ordeal, still he gave it one more curtesy reread – just in case – before punching in his reply and finally putting his phone down.

Dropping onto the bed in a free fall, he fancied himself quite heartbroken. It seemed unfair to be so cruelly rejected by a girl who had previously shown such interest in him, and for a brief unflattering moment he entertained the thought of calling her up, begging to be given a second chance.

Robert quickly chased the idea away, deeming himself more of a man than that. He might have, in the past, done something similar, but he was a grownup now. Margot was just a girl compared to him. And yet she was a pretty girl, quite funny too, cooler than other girls her age, Robert thought. And she did have a nice body. Dating her, or at least continuing to fuck her, would have been something he'd enjoy.

Letting out a melancholy sigh, he rolled onto his stomach and grabbed the bottle of whiskey he kept by the side of his mattress. He took a swig straight from the bottle, followed by another one, and another one until the sweet burning sensation in his throat felt soothing rather than unpleasant, and the edges of his vision started to blur. As he fell asleep one of his cats snuck into the bedroom and lay down on the corner of his bed, as if she could sense he was in no state to shoo her away. Patting the little creature's head Robert thought to himself that maybe Margot just wasn't a cat person.

Robert's initial resolution not to chase after Margot lasted exactly four and a half days. After that, he found himself going to the 7-Eleven where he had bought snacks for her that night before spring-break for all his grocery needs. He told himself repeatedly that he was respecting her wishes by not texting her. However, she had made no requests, and he no promises, which would prevent him from running into her by chance. Similarly, he had made no promise of not trying to increase the chances of something like that happening.

He refrained from visiting her at her place of work, thinking it would look to obviously staged, and then congratulated himself on his own smart thinking. Instead, Robert would spend his evenings sitting in the bar to which he had taken her on their date in the hope that she would show up there. That never happened, so after a while he moved his evening activities to the student joint Margot had suggested they go to.

Finally, about a month later, Margot entered the bar with a group of friends. "She looks lovely," Robert thought, sitting behind his now already usual table in the back of the bar where no one would notice him and wonder why a thirty-something-year-old man would hang out at a place catering to college students. Upon seeing her, Robert's chest filled up with an emotion similar to hope, yet not quite so positive. It was a sort of melancholy yearning that occurs whenever the heart wants something very badly but the logical part of the brain knows it will never happen.

In the weeks Robert had spent waiting for Margot, he had constructed dozens of scenarios of their reunion in his head. As he sat there cradling his lukewarm beer, and Margot made her

way to the bar, it became painstakingly clear that in not one of those fantasies did he imagine Margot would have replaced him with another man so soon. 'A boy' would be a more appropriate term, as the guy she was with was quite obviously a fraternity member, Robert thought. He couldn't have been much older than she was, but he was a replacement no less.

A pang of jealousy twisted Robert's guts and he had to force his gaze away from the young pair, who seemed to be laughing at some inside joke they had just shared. Only a month ago, Margot would have laughed at Robert's jokes like that. He thought back to those moments and tried, yet again, to piece together what went wrong between them. He came up with nothing.

When he finally looked up again Margot was gone, which only made Robert more upset. He downed his already flat beer and got up to order another one, but self-pity made him change his mind by the time he got to the bar. Instead, he ordered two shots of vodka and some whiskey to top it off.

The drinks went down fast and as soon as they were gone, Robert ordered another round, all the while thinking about Margot. It took two more shots of vodka for him to gather the courage and fish the phone out of the inside pocket of his jacket. The brightness of the screen assaulted his eyes when he turned it on and he had to tone it down to a minimum just to be able to open his text messages and find Margot's name. The last two texts they had exchanged lay there, silently mocking him, as he clumsily tapped on the screen.

"Hi Margot, I saw you out at the bar tonight. I know you said not to text you but I just wanted to say you looked really pretty. I hope you're doing well!"

The empty shot glasses had already been cleared away, so Robert ordered two more and requested that the bartender keep them coming.

"I know I shouldn't say this but I really miss you"

He waited for a while. When it became obvious that no reply was coming, he picked up the phone again and started typing.

"Hey maybe I don't have the right to ask but I just wish you'd tell me what it is I did wrong"

"\*wrong"

Nothing. Just a little check mark, declaring the message as seen. Robert took another shot.

"I felt like we had a real connection did you not feel that way or . . ."

"Maybe I was too old for u or maybe you liked someone else"

With each reply he didn't get, Robert grew angrier, and with every drop of liquor he swallowed his rage seemed to become more justified in his opinion. Frustrated, he thought back to the guy whose joke Margot had been laughing at.

"Is that guy you were with tonight your boyfriend"

Perhaps they were laughing at him. In his mind's eye, Robert could see Margot drape herself over the frat guy and tell him all about how she screwed over some older man. How she'd tricked him into taking her to the movies and buying her stuff

and sleeping with her by pretending she was interested in him.

"???"

And then the frat guy would laugh the stupid laugh that all frat guys have in those low-budget teen movies that were always on TV and say something like "Oh man bro, that dude's such a loser." And Margot would proceed to throw herself all over him like the little slut she was.

"Or is he just some guy you are fucking"

"Sorry"

He paused, telling himself that couldn't have been it, that Margot had to have liked Robert, really liked him, at some point. But then again, that would explain why she had so suddenly grown tired of him. After all, he'd done nothing wrong. She must have been using him to get sex. All the pieces fit together in his mind – he was the victim here.

"When u laughed when I asked if you were a virgin was it because you'd fucked so many guys"

"Are you fucking that guy right now"

Who did Margot think she was, using him like that, and then not even replying to his texts?

"Are you"

That little bitch.

"Are you"

He deserved an answer.

"Are you"

He was entitled to one.

"Answer me"

✓ Seen 0:42 AM

"Whore."

Short Story

T

## he Anthill

Maja Ina Ruparčič

The first time I saw Stephen's house, I liked it very much indeed. I don't like it so much now, of course, but I am older now, and wiser—Stephen always says so. I was, I think, very excited to have a bedroom of my own at last, so as not to share

it with Algie, who used to be such a nuisance, and still is occasionally. I suppose boys really can't be bothered to keep things neat and tidy.

Stephen's house has a large garden and front yard that detach it from other houses. We never used to have that big a garden, so I thought it a fantastic playground when we moved in. It is swarming with some excellent hiding spots (I know them much better than Algie, so I nearly always win when we play). Algie has no imagination; he always hides in the tool shed, whereas I choose a different place every time. Once I hid in a hollow oak trunk and missed dinner because Algie took so long to find me. He has little patience, Algie has?

I can spend the whole afternoon in the oak chatting to the squirrels over a cup of tea or lying in a petunia bed listening to the busy, busy bees, so Algie is bound to get bored to death trying to seek me out.

I would like us to play more in the garden together, but Algie says my games are too childish and fantastical, so I just play by myself. Last week I was an archaeologist in Egypt, and a week before that a pirate, but I fell into the pond trying to walk the plank and now I'm forbidden from playing pirates again.

So you see, it really is a fabulous garden, with all its nooks and crannies, the tall trees and hawthorn bushes, the bees, squirrels and thrushes. The only thing I don't like about the garden is the anthill just behind the tool shed. I never used to mind ants, but what with their colony growing in number each day, I am not so comfortable with their living behind the shed anymore, as they interfere with my games. I showed them to Stephen and he laughed at me.

'The ants won't do you harm,' he said. 'See? They are friendly, hardworking animals, minding their own business. And besides, you are much taller and stronger than they are.'

Still, I avoid the anthill if I can help it. I don't care for seeing their little ant feet wiggle and sneak through the grass like some malignant thieves. I suppose it is their large number that bothers me so. Even the tiny sprigs and twigs in the anthill seem to shimmy with the incessant movement of their bodies. Stephen told me anthills somewhat resemble icebergs; the mound is only a visible exterior and the real home of the colony lies underneath the ground. I think he meant to comfort me, but it just unsettles me all the more. For all I know, there could be billions of ants living under our garden. Perhaps their narrow tunnels stretch all the way down to my oak, or the petunia bed. Or maybe the ants are just nourishing one giant, magnified ant, which will break free one day and crawl out of the anthill with its plump, glossy black belly and its livid blind eyes and the cobweb antennae and the many, many feet—

I check up on the anthill when I can, although this is getting trickier and trickier. It used to be about as tall as a molehill, but it has since grown over a nearby flower bed and reaches up to my knees, so I watch it from a safe distance. What's more, the ants are becoming insolent. They have been tiptoeing up the shed, boldly scratching at its wooden walls with their sharp teeth. Even Algie won't go near the shed now, and he won't play hide and seek anymore as he's lost his favourite spot.

All the lovely flowers are either withered or drying up. Of course, it might be due to this unbearable heat; insects like hot weather, and I secretly suspect they have been damaging the roots of the plants to make more room for their tunnels. The pond is in a sad state, too. Most of the water has evaporated, leaving stinky fish to roast on the rocks. I tried to overcome my disgust for ants by including them in my games about Egypt and casting them as scarab beetles, but all I ended up with was a series of bites. They also stole my explorer's lunch.

Now that the mound is the size of a box tree, Stephen has finally decided it ought to be exterminated. He bought different repellents and tried burning the anthill down when those did not work, but I think he just upset the ants. We spent the whole morning shut inside the house because the garden was teeming with the angry, revengeful creatures. Eventually, the ruckus subsided, and the ants returned to the anthill.

I hardly go out into the garden anymore. The hateful bugs have occupied my oak tree and driven away the squirrels. The tree fights back magnificently, though, because the ants get stuck on the sticky resin and suffocate, so I shan't lose hope. Its bark is now covered with a slimy texture and patches of dead black bodies, but I'll sort that out once the ants have disappeared from our garden. The tool shed, on the other hand, hasn't been so lucky as my tree. It is all but devoured by the tall mound boasting proudly behind it. Stephen claims he never cared much for the hut anyway, so he's willing to let it go to ruin.

Today I spotted an ant sneaking through the dining hall. I crushed it with my shoe, but then two more ants hurried in and carried its broken body away. I am sure I saw their eyes glisten hatefully as they passed me on their way out.

I borrowed a book on insects from the library. It's got a cross-section of a worker ant with the organs and all. I can now name all its body parts and their functions. I have been reading about their behaviour, too. It seems that one needs to kill their queen in order to eliminate the entire colony, but there can be several queens, and according to the book these can live up to thirty years. This leads me to despair a little, especially since I noticed five more ants today in the kitchen. They were feeding off some blueberry pie, scraping and stealing the crumbs and transporting them back to their nest. I haven't told Mum about it, because she gets awfully upset whenever I so much as mention the ants, but Stephen tells me I need to be brave and stop minding them so much. Sometimes I think I'm the only one that takes notice of their loathsome, clipped tummies and hears the patter of their lithe feet; everyone else appears to have grown used to them, goes about their daily business as usual and pretends not to see.

I am afraid the ants are invading our house. I saw two drowning in my milk yesterday and twelve scurrying up the kitchen cupboard. These days I half expect to swallow them accidentally with a spoonful of soup, so I take special care with my meals. I have seen them get in through the windows. They linger on the sill and sneak in quietly when they're sure you're not looking. When I tried scattering salt and cinnamon around the doors and such to prevent them from entering, Mum and Stephen got angry with me again and made me

clean it up; besides, I'm not sure it would have worked anyway. Ants are very resilient.

I constantly dread the ants climbing up the stairs and into my bedroom. It might be just my fancy (at least Mum says so), hearing them rattle about the house and listening to the staircase creaking with their heavy footsteps. From time to time, Stephen comes into my room at night to comfort me with a nice little pat on the knee. He says I shouldn't be scared because ants are harmless little creatures and that nearly every household experiences a bug infestation at some time or other. I suppose he is right, and I really am being silly, only I wish there were fewer of them and that their feet weren't so ticklish.

The garden is quite lost to us, I'm afraid. It is a pity, it used to be such a wonderful garden. Now I look out of my bedroom window and see a throbbing black sea stretching all the way from my oak tree to the vegetable beds near the porch. And in the middle reigns the anthill, with workers swimming out in waves. Mum needs to wear thigh-high fishing boots just to hang the clothes out to dry. It's a wonder our neighbours aren't inconvenienced by this ant armada at their doorstep. Even our front yard is swarming with a lively rustle, so I don't go out much anymore, except to the library, because I can't stand them creeping into my shoes and tingling all over my toes.

It is not a surprise that the ants are growing in number in the house as well. I don't think the house likes them either; I can hear her moaning and groaning under their weight and sleazy bites. The other day I noticed a heap of wood shavings under the parlour sofa, and a tiny hole in the wall behind it. Ants, burdened with wood dust, were rushing in and out energetically. I'm guessing they are busy building nests inside the walls and furniture. I told Stephen about my discovery, and he promised to call pest control as soon as possible. He tried to sound careless, but I think he is a little concerned.

Meanwhile, signs of a serious infestation are more and more obvious. I stumble upon a new pile of larvae each day. I detest them even more than ants; they remind me of maggots, what with their sickly white cocoons, and they move their heads a little when an adult ant comes to feed them. I daren't destroy them because I am afraid the slimy shells will pop in my hand and crawl into my sleeves—I've had it with their impolite intrusion as it is. I can't even brush my hair without combing a few ants out on my skirt. The ants aren't very considerate neighbours. As they have bitten their way into the decaying wood, I don't sleep well. The scratching and tearing noises in the walls keep me up most of the night. I imagine it is only a matter of time before they burst through the wallpaper and swallow me in my bed.

Whatever will I do? I did not know ants could fly. And those who can are nearly thrice the size of regular ants. One emerged from a lamp wire in the ceiling yesterday when I was playing cards with Algie. I panicked and smashed it with the nearest book, so now we have a gory stain on the wallpaper. Her ant friends will surely come for the carcass to have an ant funeral. She must have been someone of great importance, but I fear there are more winged ants where she came from.

My worst fears are coming true: the ants have occupied my bedroom. It was bad enough having them peep out of the

bathtub drain and munch on the dry bread in the kitchen, so I do not know how much more I can take. I think they nibbled their way in through the ceiling, or perhaps the chimney. They seem bigger and plumper in my room than anywhere else in the house, and bolder, too. My arms are strewn with itchy red bites. In the evening I hide under my duvet and pray for them to leave, yet I wake up nearly every night with hundreds of ants mounting my thighs. Last morning, I was roused by persistent tickling and discovered my legs drowning in them from hip to toe. I cried for hours, only very quietly, because I didn't want to wake up Mum and upset her again. My only comfort is I'll be leaving for school for the first time this autumn, and hopefully the ants will not plague me there.

I am quite sick of them. Dozens slither into my pillow cover and wriggle under my head so violently the whole bed shakes. This of course makes me have unpleasant dreams. I had a nightmare not long ago, involving a giant queen ant with wings worn back like a tailcoat, acting as a conductor. She waved her baton very gently at first, but as she picked up the pace, all the ants in her orchestra started buzzing and screeching and rattling their claws. The fuss was unbearable, my eyes flew open and I realised I was covered in sweat, ants sticking to my damp skin. Luckily, Stephen was there and stroked my hair until I was calm again.

It took him several weeks, but on Monday Stephen phoned pest control at last. He had to walk to town to use a telephone booth though, because the ants had chewed up the telephone wires. The exterminator, however, didn't look very competent to me. He had small, stupid piggish eyes and a very damp handshake. I reckon an exterminator ought to be more cunning so as to trick the nasty insects into leaving our home. Besides, I didn't appreciate his silly manner of speaking.

Still, he assessed the situation with some accuracy.

'It's rotten through and through, this house is,' he told Stephen. 'When was it built anyway? The wall panels are so brittle it's a wonder it still stands.'

'Uh,' said Stephen.

The pig-eyed man shook his head. "These are carpenter ants, these are. Get into old decayed wood, they do, to make nests, and thrive. See this pile of wood shavings here? Should've called me as soon as you noticed them."

He went on to inspect the house. He must have been quite surprised to find so many ants, but he never said a word. He went up to my room too, opened the drawers where I keep dead ant bodies, searched under my bed (two winged ants fluttered into his face). He even borrowed Mum's fishing boots to assess the garden.

'It's mighty unpleasant, what you've got here,' he said. 'I can give you some boric acid—that's what we usually use with ants—and hopefully the workers will carry the grains straight to their queen. But seeing how crowded you've got it, I'd say there are scores of queens, I would. We can try the borax a few times, but I can't promise you nothing, I can.'

Stephen said we'd try boric acid. It worked wonders for a while; we had ant corpses piling under furniture, dropping from the ceiling, winged ants plopping down on our heads mid-flight. But I suspect ants have a way of communicating

with each other. A few days after this wonderful massacre, the rest of the borax powder was left untouched and even those that did eat it grew immune to it.

So the pig-eyed exterminator had to come three more times, and after each visit, the house deteriorated further. The fourth time we called he swore he wouldn't come, said we were a lost cause and that he 'wanted nothing to do with us, he did'. We phoned again, but he wouldn't pick up the telephone, so I walked to town on my own to beg him to help with the ants; he just lowered the blinds on his shop window. I rang the bell anyway, and called him a coward through the letterbox. After all, it is I who must live with the loathsome ants every day and put up with their agile feet, not he.

There have been some developments. First, I pity the house more and more. I don't suppose there is a single piece of furniture or wall left uninfected. The ants have been rushing about the place with a new-found vitality ever since the borax experiment went to the dickens. Second, I think Mum is beginning to crack. She won't speak of it, but I have my suspicions. I catch her sobbing over the pots and skillets when she's cooking. And her handshakes violently when she holds her spoon. Ants, by the way, taste very sour. I told Mum it's because of formic acid (I learned that from my book).

Anyhow, Mum hasn't been herself. She has spent three nights in a row reading me bedtime stories (even though I insisted I was too old for fairy tales, going to school in autumn and all) and the poor soul falls asleep next to me every time. She must be very tired, or bored by the stories, or afraid of the ants. She and Stephen have been arguing a lot lately. I'd say it's on account of the ants, because I heard Mum say, 'We can't go on living like this, Stephen. It needs to stop.' I couldn't catch Stephen's reply, but it sounded grumpy.

This afternoon we sat down for lunch, as always. We had some delicious carrot soup and a nice roast with potatoes and peas (I didn't eat the peas). Mum's hand shook so hard during the meal that she spilt some gravy all over Stephen's trousers, and he got very angry. He slammed his fist on the table and all. 'Watch it, can't you, you stupid woman,' he said. I'd never heard Stephen call anyone 'stupid woman'.

So Mum burst into tears and started yelling at Stephen about how she can't stand the ants anymore, and how normal families don't have to live like this. Algie and I tried to finish the roast in peace, hoping they'd leave off arguing. Stephen got all blue in the face with yelling, and I didn't like it, and he grabbed Mum by the wrists and swore that if she ever complained about the ants again, he would make sure they devour us and the house. Mum was shaking all over, but I could see she was scared and didn't want to fight anymore, so we all let Stephen have his way.

And that was the end of it. I don't suppose anyone can chase out the ants now, they have grown too tough. So we simply went on living in the ant house, with their little feet crawling over our thighs at night and the quiet rustling in our ears and the gentle tickling in our bellies when we chanced to swallow one with some butter and jam.

# Poems

## Ariela Herček: *Longing*

I have forgotten how to belong  
to an ocean,  
its slip and slide licking my skin  
like an ancient lover licking strawberry juice  
off my fingers all those years ago,  
wailing steadily in my dreams still,  
like a church bell calling me to mass -  
except it never stops ringing.

Forgetting is easier than convincing  
my dreams to stop haunting  
me with demons I'd already exorcised  
by purging my body with words and  
no small amount of tears, yes,

this, too, is a relic of how I once loved the  
ocean but forgot its power until  
it seized a part of me that is  
so unforgettably human.

This is the part where I have to  
admit that I am  
not a goddess.

I did not crawl out of sea foam,  
or roll gracefully out of a shell,  
my making was forceful,

I was a child born of wrong kind of love,  
I stood up from the waves with hair  
green with algae, rusty nails and bones seething with anger,  
I was a monster before I was ever anything else,

how sad that it took you cracking my ribcage open  
like an egg  
for me to evolve into  
something earthly and divine.

## Dominik Lenarčič: *Anarchistic Alliteration*

In these terrible times of terrible turmoil,  
when thunder reigns and rain is plentiful,  
darkness will soon be vanquished by a powerful display  
of love and compassion,  
one that an individual like you couldn't possibly comprehend.

Alas, your avarice will be paid in agony  
and your zany foolishness defeated by violent zealotry

## Pino Pograjc: *False Idols*

I saw a tiny woodlouse  
strolling through my room  
with a golden shell  
and marble legs,  
creating a beat,  
a succession of steps  
from an eternal soul,  
divine in its nature,  
coercing me to dance.

So I danced,  
trampled the wood  
beneath my feet,  
bashed the lights,  
ripped the linens  
and made them watch.

Those who could,  
joined in  
and started to dance,  
to shake the foundations  
of our homes,  
to bolt through the walls,  
rip apart the blinds,  
burning down  
our shelters.

In the axis of our bliss,  
I became aware,  
so I clawed at myself,  
scratched my body,  
beat my senses  
to sacrifice  
to the tiny woodlouse,  
whose body stopped,  
very slowly turned  
and faintly whispered:  
"I am no god."

## Primož Čibej: *4 Sonnets*

The deeper it goes, the more it distorts.  
Your image, reflected on a mirror,  
Submerged and carried away by the river  
of time. Only your silhouette still floats,

torn and misshapen upon the ripples,  
unable to soothe the raging surface.  
Reach down and feel the absence of purpose,  
cold and lifeless, caressing your fingers,

only to then chase after nothingness.  
You wish you could dive into the waters.  
You want to take back what really matters,  
but you know that in the water lurks death,

with all its gold and sympathy  
which pools into some foreign, distant sea.

We held a communion in the forest,  
lips and fingertips painted in dark blood.  
We must have been such a sight to behold,  
communicating in this primal nest

of death and rebirth – and all in between.  
Every broken bone reminds us of home,  
which we have long ago forsaken. Gone  
with the wind are notions of the obscene

and the idea of humanity.  
I feel your cold claws on my fingertips,  
and tonight, you get to feel what it means  
to be human. Even more, to be me.

For we are so different, yet the woods  
help us to understand each other's truths

---

I come to this house of worship tonight  
since I forgot the prayers you taught me.  
But I sit here now, and I can hardly  
remember a single word. All the bright

candles flicker and their flames mockingly  
titter at my frustration. Yes, they do.  
It's not my fault if you can't hear them through  
the old church walls. You think they get lonely

from time to time? Do you think they can talk  
to each other? Or maybe they don't dare  
speak to break the silence – the same despair  
which drove me here at eleven o'clock.

At least the candles are good company,  
since wax seems capable of empathy.

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"You are lucky, you know." Death said to me  
when it came to visit me in my dreams.  
"I guess I am." I said, "because some things  
could kill me, but I still happen to be

here, alive and well. So! How are you man?"  
Death reared its beautiful hair and then laughed  
"I have been the sole master of my craft  
since forever, but there comes a time when

even I wish I could predict our fates.  
You were lucky, and managed to escape.  
Don't make it a habit." "What is your fate?"  
I asked Death. It replied: "The starwheel states

that with the passing of strange eons, I  
will eventually also one day die."

Jonathan Rebetz:  
*MODERN POEM*

in my Petrarcan nose  
the slimy swirling snots  
seem so startled!

they are afraid of  
giant glass centipedes  
who shatter their feet  
while dancing step.

maple syrup pours  
out of their wounds  
and hedgehogs come  
to lick it like moonrats  
licking corn syrup.

the nose is a receptacle  
for a whole universe.  
the snots are nots nots,  
but planets and stars and,  
when grouped together,  
sticky socialist galaxies.

when I spray fungistatic  
into my nostrils,  
I calm down the  
frightened orbs of goo.  
but! I also destroy  
the rigid celestial order,  
and so call forth mazurka-dancing millipedes.

Jonathan Rebetz:  
*Classical Poem*

Oh, muddled, opium-affected mind,  
Why startled be?  
These images in front of you are false,  
Can you not see?

The animals performing dancing acts  
Are far from true!  
For entertainment I created them,  
To tickle you!

When gradually you see them disappear,  
I'll summon more.  
I simply have to take a bigger dose  
Than heretofore.

I do not care what says my bleeding nose.  
Reality has far too many woes.

Petra Zajc: *Hearts*

In a cave as cold as the pole,  
In a cave as dark as the coal,  
In a cave as suffocating as  
silence,  
In a cave with no  
alliance,

He lies.  
He lies in it facing the sky,  
He lies in it without any  
tears left to cry,  
He lies in it motionless  
and still,  
He lies in it without a  
feel of chill

And he's dead.  
He's dead without a speck of life,  
He's dead because of the  
reaper's scythe,  
He's dead and unaware,  
He's dead and his  
eyes lack their flare,

He was robbed.  
Robbed of his love.  
Robbed of his trail.  
Robbed of his dove.  
Robbed of his pain.

Facing the robbery so cruel,  
The sight of the grave is  
an emotional fuel.  
Facing despair lonely and alone,  
She lost her trust and  
she lost her home.

Though, now he's resting, peacefully put away,  
But every breath she  
draws off the path  
could make her stray.  
His heart is still  
and doesn't feel  
the dread,  
But her heart  
even though  
it's beating...  
... is dead.

