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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Karin Petko

PROOFREADER-IN-CHIEF: Ariela Herček

EDITORS: Lenča Ambrožič, Ascia Guseva, Ariela Herček, Nadja Jukić, Dominik Lenarčič, Kaja Rakušček, Petra Ramšak, Kaja Šafar, Andrijan Tasevski

ENgLIST LOGOTYPE: Ines Ana Jarc

DESIGN: Ariela Herček

the.english@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/ENgLIST

https://www.instagram.com/the_english/

englist.splet.arnes.si

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EDITORIAL

Dear reader!

Every beginning starts with an end of something and every ending needs a reflection, so let's finish off this year and begin this issue with one.

How can I describe this academic year? Weird? Check. Unusual? Check. Unexpected? Check. It certainly was neither boring nor easy. Let's just call it eventful. Or was it maybe eventless?

This academic year offered many firsts, such as the entire exam period moving online and ENgLIST's first (ever) international collaboration, some seconds, such as the second year of pandemic, but some things have stayed the same, our newspaper being one of them. What more could you possibly ask for than a written fixed star that you, dear reader, are currently holding in your hands? Well, no masks, live lectures... I get it, but at least ENgLIST is still here, now thicker and more exciting than ever!

Everything bad is good for something, and the pandemic was definitely good for our writers since the ENgLIST has never before received so many contributions. You can see the result of many aspiring poets, prose and academic writers in your hands. They sure kept our editorial team busy, and what a team that was! Do you remember when you were little how your parents always warned you not to lose any of the puzzle pieces or the picture will not make sense? It was pretty much this way with our team this year. Every member was irreplaceable and indispensable just like pieces of a puzzle. Yet, this amazing team of wonderful people is not the only one that deserves a massive thank you. Are you one of our writers? Then, I would like to say a big thank you on the behalf of our entire team. Thank you for trusting us with your written word. Furthermore, there is another group of people that deserves our gratitude. It is the biggest of all and the one that is the reason that we and our predecessors have been able to publish 20 issues of this amazing newspaper: you, dear readers! Thank you so much for taking this newspaper home with you year after year. For reading it and for making the written word matter. Because it matters, it truly does. And so does my elbow-shake to you, even if only in a written form. Thank you to all and every single one of you.

Dear reader! You are reading the anniversary 20th issue of ENgLIST this very moment. Now, off you go, turn the page and immerse yourself in the world of academic articles, short stories, opinion essays, film reviews and poems... Oh, and don't lose yourself, you probably still have some exams to write. Best of luck!

Yours truly,

Karin Petko, editor in-chief

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ACADEMIC WRITING

Is Canonical Literature Relevant to the World Today?

Jonathan Rebetz

TL;DR: NO

By definition, canonical literature is the most powerful, important, and relevant literature in a given place at a given time. These are books with an extremely high aesthetic and didactic value, books that have great re-readability, books that provide immense insight into the human experience. Inversely, these are also books that patrons borrow least in public libraries, at least judging from their “Recently Returned” sections, where books by Danielle Steel, E. L. James, Stephenie Meyer, or other authors to that effect abound, but where one can find relatively few editions of, say, Homer or Chaucer. The question thus looms whether the Canon is becoming a useless concept, taken seriously only by a handful of literary scholars and the authors of school curricula who, from the point of view of teenage smartphone-enthused students, try to force dusty and inedible texts down young people’s throats. This essay approaches the question of the Canon’s relevance by showing that if one demands that the Canon be useful and relevant to the world, it is not – and was never – a particularly useful concept.

The secular Canon is a relatively new invention. It does not appear before the middle of the eighteenth century. This late appearance has a lot to do with the fact that right up to Gutenberg’s invention of movable type, few books existed and even fewer people knew how to read. Among the literate, there were mainly clerics, who had their own (Catholic) canons, and aristocrats, whose expensive and often extensive education enabled them to judge the literary merit of writings for themselves and were thus able to make their own selections. Montaigne’s all-time favourite was, for example, Plutarch.

The need for a catalogue of approved and recommended authors arose especially in the nineteenth century, a period that saw a rise in literacy and in the number and availability of printed works. Some upper-class members of society were becoming worried about what the lower classes were reading. William Cobbett, in his *Spelling Book* (1831) for the working classes, warns against a whole genre, saying that novels “besot, without enlivening, the mind.”¹ Similarly, many earnest attempts at enriching the minds of the *hoi polloi* were made not only by encouraging education and supporting the creation of public libraries, but also by prescribing what was perceived as the best books to be read. The latter, as opposed to the former, was quite probably a mistake.

The trouble in such an attempt is that not every member of the masses has sufficient knowledge of literature and a heightened enough aesthetic sensibility to make good use of outstanding works of literature. For this reason, Shakespeare is usually seen as difficult, Goethe as obscure, Joyce as impenetrable. The

¹ “Cobbett’s Spelling Book”, *The Examiner*, 25 September 1831.

barrier is not only a linguistic one – modern editions of works such as *Falstaff* are very well equipped with glosses explaining peculiarities in the use of language, be they strange spellings, uncommon semantic meanings, or bizarre grammar. It is the ideas themselves that an unread person, someone unused to pondering high literature on a regular basis, has difficulty wrapping their head around. One cannot expect such a person to disambiguate, for example, all the psychological and philosophical layers of meaning which make for the agonistic whale hunt in *Moby Dick*.

Herein lies the catch when it comes to canonical works in the present day. We have changed our expectations as far as education and the Canon are concerned. Education, especially secondary and higher education, used to be a thing of the elite.² Consequently, reading and debating outstanding works of philosophy, poetry, and prose was on the same high ground. This was rightly so – expecting everyone to partake in the activity is essentially a lost cause, for much training is needed to succeed in the endeavour of reading, say, *Paradise Lost*. Nowadays, however, everyone in our school systems is nevertheless expected to read and debate similar works.

Many critics have grudgingly argued that the Canon, as it exists, is an elitist selection of works made by an elite, or even a clique, that promotes their own kind. The phrase “dead white men” is often flaunted about. However, to paraphrase the late Harold Bloom, it is the severely artistic criteria by which the selection is made that are elitist.³ Trying to open up the Canon with the inclusion of authors whose works are not aesthetic achievements in order to make it more appealing to as wide as possible an audience defeats the purpose of there being a canon.

It is surely an error of judgment to go in line with North American universities and be forcefully inclusive by adding selections from ethnic literatures or women’s literature or any other such literature of a specific demographic to the Canon with the only purpose of showing that this specific demographic is “important” and “should not be overlooked like it has been for too long.” There should be no room in literary studies for such politicized discourse. The celebration of diversity and multiculturalism is a laudable principle, but it cannot be the basis for the selection of canonical works.

It has always been *aesthetic* choice that has guided every aspect of canon formation, affirms Bloom,⁴ not *political* choice or some other criterion. The aesthetic being an individual not a societal issue, there is no benefit in the inclusion of societal considerations into the idea of the Canon. There have, of course, been attempts at artificially promoting authors into the Canon, but Time is the best judge and succeeds where even the finest critics make an occasional blunder, always winnowing the chaff from the grain. There is thus no point in taking everyone into account, trying to think of and please everyone when selecting the great works of the Western literary tradition, especially since stretching the narrowly useful idea of the Canon to this extent dilutes it into uselessness.

To someone who has done a lot of reading in their life, who has a well-developed critical apparatus, a list of “greats” is a treasure and a source of moral betterment – in *The Defence of Poesie*, Sir Philip Sidney affirmed that “the final end” of learning “is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls [...] can be capable of.”⁵ To all others, every item on the list is a source of anguish. They will more easily achieve moral betterment through the appreciative reading of bestselling mass culture literature than through the vain tackling of Dante.

Very select things have been intended for very select people as long as very select things have been in existence. Literature is no exception. Give industrial literature to the industrial-minded many, say I, and

² There were, of course, issues with how this elite was chosen and how this hierarchy of class was maintained, but this is not at the core of the question here.

³ Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. Harcourt Brace, 1994, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Sidney, Philip. “A Defence of Poesie and Poems”. Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1962/1962-h/1962-h.htm>.

high literature to the highly-educated few. Do not treat everyone as if they were the same in terms of education and intelligence. Since enforcing the Canon to everyone simply as it is and popularizing or politicizing it are both fallacies, we can easily conclude that the Canon is of highly limited usefulness and relevance. This has always been the case and is not a result of the degradation of human appreciation of great literature.

We have seen that the existence of a secular canon is a consequence of the spread of literacy. Educated people who had been selecting works for themselves perhaps mistakenly took it upon themselves to recommend works to those who they felt did not have a heightened enough aesthetic sensibility to do it for themselves. The problem is that if the latter were incapable of making selections, they most probably could not profit from them either. Since then, our expectations for the Canon have changed. What used to be recommendations are now prescriptions. Such prescriptions, when put into school curricula, for example, deform an issue that used to be purely aesthetic into a political one. Questions of elitism thus appear and the point of the Canon gets lost. It can be argued that since aesthetic value “cannot be conveyed to those who are incapable of grasping its sensations and perceptions,”⁶ the Canon is the catalogue of books out of which only highly educated, intelligent, and reflection-oriented people can get something meaningful. It needs to be stressed, however, that it is *only* that. The Canon’s properties being what they are, it is rather useless to the world as a whole. “To quarrel on its behalf is always a blunder.”⁷

Deathlings: the New Movement for Death Positivity

Petra Ramšak

Being an internet aficionado, I feel it is safe to say that the past two or three years have been accompanied by an atmosphere of hopelessness and fear as social media platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, YouTube, and Tumblr stepped to the forefront of informing the masses on daily goings-on all over the globe (focusing on, but not being exclusive to, European and Anglophone countries). No wonder the youth feels completely disempowered when bombarded with “Trump is winning, Brexit is happening, anti-vaxxers are talking, and the world is burning and we are dying” news on a daily basis. Of course, a rather loud minority welcomes these views with open arms, but from my observations, most rational people feel disheartened by them. I mean, why are we debating whether the Earth is flat in 2019? Or, more controversially, whether women deserve the rights over their bodies and whether members of the LGBTQ+ community deserve basic rights? It is a confusing time to be young and be told that you are the future, while the older generations seem to be running around like headless chickens, causing irreversible damage to the world that they say will one day be yours. Trying to regain some control over the inevitable end, a community called the *deathlings* or the death positive community arose.

While scrolling through my YouTube recommendations page some years ago, I encountered a video titled “Ask a Mortician”. I was a morbid little teenager, so I clicked on it right away and was met by a funny, twenty-something-year-old woman, with black hair and bold bangs, answering a question a viewer left on one of her videos. It was about necrophilia, a topic that most content creators, as well as viewers, would shy away from. The video was humorous and had a very head-on approach to such a taboo topic.

⁶ Bloom, *Western Canon*, 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Since then, I have been following her and her effort to spread death awareness. The mortician's name is Caitlin Doughty, and she describes herself as: "a mortician, activist, and funeral industry rabble-rouser" (Doughty, n.d.). She is the founder of a non-profit organisation *The Order of the Good Death* as well as the funeral director at *Clarity Funerals*, which strives to provide green and affordable funeral options. Doughty makes videos centring on death and how one can embrace mortality, even coining the term *deathlings* to refer to the like-minded. The Order of the Good Death is a community of authors, funeral directors, doctors and artists who made it their mission to de-mystify death and present it how it is – natural.

The Order is about making death a part of your life. That means committing to staring down your death fears- whether it be your own death, the death of those you love, the pain of dying, the afterlife (or lack thereof), grief, corpses, bodily decomposition, or all of the above. Accepting that death itself is natural, but the death anxiety and terror of modern culture are not. (The Order of the Good Death 2011)

When we talk about death and its aftermath, we often use the term "the funeral industry". It must be acknowledged that the industrialisation of death is a rather recent invention, one originating in the US Civil War (Laderman, n.d.). Yes, various death rituals have existed for millennia, in cultures all over the globe, but the modern funeral practice involving funeral homes, embalming and caskets – leaving "professionals" in charge of our dead – is relatively new. The man credited as being the founding father of the modern funeral industry is Thomas Holmes, who popularized the practice of embalming. He was asked to embalm Union soldiers so they could be shipped back home to their families (Hickman 2003). The practice spread rapidly across America and the world. The preparation of the body post-mortem was no longer carried out at home by the family but was moved to funeral homes, to be dealt with by undertakers. As the USA is the hub of capitalism, it did not take long for adjacent industries to be born. A modern-day American funeral now includes expensive caskets, flower arrangements, transportation, even make-up artistry, which is employed for the sole reason of masking death – to make the deceased look as if they were merely sleeping (Laderman, n.d.). Funerals have become a financial feat, as the price of an average funeral (including cremations) can reach up to five digits.

Keeping in mind what is mentioned above: I believe that the creation of a community like The Order of the Good Death was inevitable. The "traditional American funeral" is a practice that does not fit into the plan of a better future for us and our planet. There are two aspects of why so many Millennials are revolting against this ultra-capitalist and industrialised way of dealing with death.

The first factor is environmental. Embalming is by far the most damaging to the environment. The gist of it is that the blood is replaced by a cocktail of chemicals, which are normally injected into the common carotid artery and internal organs. This mixture includes substances such as formaldehyde, glutaraldehyde, and methanol. Most of the chemicals are merely irritants, but formaldehyde is much worse. It has been proven that this compound can act as a carcinogen and that it is lethal in high-enough dosages. It acts as a preservative, delaying visible decay and is therefore perfect for embalming. It sates the desire for eternal existence as believing that your beloved grandmother will stay intact forever is an idea that sounds pleasing to a large number of Americans. What we do not think about is that this is putting around three million litres of a toxic chemical into the ground per year. Putting embalming aside, we are also cutting down about four million acres of forest just to build caskets. The vault in which the casket is placed is usually made out of concrete and is a part of a larger cemetery. These parks require constant maintenance using pesticides, chemical fertilizers and a substantial amount of water (Calderone 2015).

Cremation, which is often referred to as an eco-friendlier option is admittedly better, but still not good enough. According to Nora Menkin (as cited in Little 2019), executive director of People's Memorial Association, the average cremation "takes up about the same amount of energy and has the same emissions as about two tanks of gas in an average car". Cremation also produces thousands of tons of CO₂ emissions per year, further damaging our atmosphere.

The other factor is social. In the past, when a loved one passed away, the care and burial of the body were left to the family. They cleaned and dressed the departed, talked to them and consequently dealt with their grief efficiently. The modern conventional funeral takes all of that away. If the person dies in a hospital, they are usually taken away by a funeral home soon after death. The family has almost no contact with the body, aside from the wake at an open-casket funeral, where they can view a preserved and painted corpse. What effects does this have on grieving? It intensifies our fear of death. The dead body becomes something to be feared, a foreign object, despite it being completely safe to be around (unless the cause of death was a contagious disease). The dead person is taken away from the bereaved instantly and a traditional wake does not provide the intimacy that is often needed in order to properly say goodbye. It must also be mentioned that many families cannot afford a traditional funeral and sometimes have to take loans in order to cover the costs. A traditional funeral is simply not a feasible option for a large percentage of the population.

What solutions does the death positive movement offer? Home funerals with natural burials seem to be the most eco and budget-friendly option. A home funeral entails keeping the departed at home, caring for them (with the help of a midwife/doula if so desired) and arranging the funeral to fit the family's needs. As mentioned on the website of The Order of the Good Death:

We've seen home funerals that are a family keeping mom at home for several hours in order to sit with her body. We've seen home funerals that are elaborate, intimate ceremonies that last three days. Don't feel pressure to conform to any idea of a home funeral that isn't exactly what brings you comfort and feels safe. (The Order of the Good Death, n.d.)

A natural burial would, in its most basic form, involve a corpse and a hole in the ground. It is the way humans have been burying their dead for hundreds of thousands of years. To make it more tasteful, one can use a cotton cloth or a wicker casket, which are cheap and eco-friendly options. A conservation burial would be an added bonus, as the land where the body is buried, would become protected with a conservation easement (The Order of the Good Death, n.d.). The cost of such a burial could also be kept under one thousand dollars, which is drastically lower and more affordable than a "normal" casket funeral.

There are other novel, eco-friendly burial methods available, such as composting, sea burial, sky burial, body farms, etc. Some may be expensive but are more environmentally sound than traditional cremation or embalming.

I believe that the majority of people are not ready to be faced with an idea as radical as what Caitlin Doughty and The Order of the Good Death want to spread. I find that ironic, as it is how we dealt with death for millennia. The new industrialized version of death care, which has been around for about 150 years, has achieved its goal of alienating us from our own mortality and instilling fear into the minds of many nations. It is normal to be afraid of dying, but that does not make it any less of a fact. It awaits us all. And being prepared for it mentally could help us cope with our mortality, as well as make us ready to deal with the loss that we will inevitably encounter in our lives. By talking about death and trying to accept the fact that decay is a natural cycle of life, I believe (hope) that we could, in time, stop polluting our planet and emptying our wallets for nothing. We keep hearing about natural catastrophes and the soon (if not already) irreversible effects of global warming. The funeral industry as it exists today is a massive pollutant and I hope we will be able to focus less on preserving the dead and more on preserving the world for those who have yet to live.

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Slenglish or Notes on the Language of the Future

Nejka Šuštar

For the past decade or so, a new language has been emerging in Slovenia, based on Slovenian and mixed with English. For the purposes of this essay, we will call it Slenglish. My research is based on my conversations with a fluent Slenglish speaker and their remarks on the way they and their peers speak. An appropriate citation will be provided for any external sources. We will look at the general properties of Slenglish, try to understand its grammar, and discuss its origins.

Slenglish is used mostly by the Slovenian youth, meaning people between 13 and 25 years of age, sometimes even by younger children with little preexisting knowledge of English. Its formation seems to have been spurred on by the widespread bilingualism arising from the compulsory English classes in Slovenian schools and from the growing popularity of social media. Slenglish can be difficult to understand for those not fluent in English, especially for those who do not encounter it often.

Firstly, we shall discuss Slenglish on the phonological level. Slenglish combines the phonological features of Slovene and General American English. Consonants are typically retained from Slovene, which is mostly evident in the pronunciation of /r/, /n/ (dental instead of alveolar), and /l/ (dark /l/ will be avoided in Slenglish). Most vowels are also adapted to the Slovene vowel system, where that is possible. This means that /ʊ/ becomes /u/, /ɑ:/ becomes /a/, etc.

In most contexts, Slenglish retains the Slovene voicing or devoicing of consonants with regard to their immediate phonetic context. The word "awkward", /'akwərd/, becomes /'ókwərt/, the nominal phrase "hot dog" becomes /'hó:d:òk/, etc. As is evident in the last example, unlike English, Slenglish utilises gemination or long consonants.

Although most Slovene dialects do not typically feature pronunciations involving /w/ followed by a vowel, this combination of phonemes is common in Slenglish. For example, whereas the standard Slovene pronunciation of the operating system Windows would typically be /'vɪ:ndóws/, the Slenglish pronunciation is /'wí:ndóws/. Similarly, the social media platform Twitter, pronounced /'tví:təɾ/ in Slovene, is pronounced /'twí:təɾ/ in Slenglish. Interestingly enough, not all Slenglish speakers can agree on this phonetic

particularity of their language. Some choose to retain the pronunciation using the Slovene phoneme /v/, while others swear by /w/.

On the level of morphology, Slenglish tends to apply Slovene inflectional suffixes to words of English origin. To provide some examples of verbal inflectional suffixes, we shall look at some authentic Slenglish sentences: “mačko samo taunta”, which means “they are only taunting the cat”; “seenal me je,” meaning “he left me on read”, etc. (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication). Interestingly, the divergence in the words used for the action in the last sentence seems to come from their different origins. The English expression “leave on read” might originate in the word “read” used in text messaging software on American mobile phones, while the word “seen” seems to find its origin in Instagram instant messaging, more popular among Slenglish speakers.

We shall now look at the inflectional suffixes applied to nouns. When it comes to English words that are originally in the plural, such as the title of the movie “Avengers”, we tend to get a double plural in Slenglish, for example “Avengersi” (“Avengerses”), while we tend to get only the Slovene plural, “Avengerji”, in Slovene. Slenglish nouns are typically declined by means of applying standard Slovene inflectional suffixes (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Although Slenglish speakers inflect English nouns with little to no restraint, inflecting adjectives is uncommon. Adjectives are commonly used in the predicative function, for example, “ta pogovor je bil ful awkward” (“this conversation was very awkward”). When they are used attributively, they will not be inflected: “en ful awkward pogovor” (“a very awkward conversation”), “niti enega awkward pogovora” (“not even one awkward conversation”), “se izognem awkward pogovoru” (“I avoid an awkward conversation”), etc. (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Unlike Slovene, Slenglish uses a lot of noun-noun compounding, especially when the premodifying noun denotes a copyrighted name, such as the names of brands. The noun premodifying the headword will not be inflected. Some examples of this include: “Denis Avdić show” (“the Denis Avdić show”), “Discord pogovor” (“a conversation on the platform Discord”), “Windows program” (“a Windows program”), or even the affectionate moniker given to the author of this text: “jezik piplar” (“language nerd/geek”) (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication). Pre-existing set expressions in Slovene are not subject to a reanalysis of the type. For example, no Slenglish speaker would say “zob ščetka” instead of “zobna ščetka” (“toothbrush”) (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Slenglish prefers to use anglicised words to slovenicised versions of the same words. A Slenglish speaker might, for example, say: “Če čutiš oppression že leta ...” (“If you’ve felt oppression for years ...”). In this example, we can see the Slenglish speaker opting for “oppression” instead of something akin to “opresija”, which in and of itself is not a Slovene word either, but which might ring more familiar to Slovenian ears (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Slenglish speakers use prepositions in creative ways, not always, but often, directly translated from English, for example, “zamenjati med nečim in nečim” (“to switch between something and something”), “čakati za dve uri” (“to wait for two hours”), “pogledati na besedilo” (“to look at the text”), etc. (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Slenglish speakers tend to use more possessive determiners than standard Slovene would require. For example, they might say “umijem si svoje roke” (“I wash my hands”), “boli me moja noga” (“my leg hurts”), or “poskusiti svojo srečo” (“to try your luck”) (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

Slenglish vocabulary is based on a mixture of Slovene and English words. Often, English expressions will be translated literally, for example “biti slan”, meaning “to be salty (upset)”, “voda pod mostom” (“water under the bridge”) (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication), or “opustili so svoje divjaške načine” (“they abandoned their savage ways”) (Moore, R., Howard, B., and Bush, J. (2016)).

Much of Slenglish vocabulary is adopted from English, with some phonological and spelling changes (it must be noted, however, that Slenglish spelling is not yet standardised and may vary from person to person). Very often, English linking words will be adopted into Slovene, used at the beginnings of utterances, for example: “granted, nimam izkušenj” (“granted, I don’t have any experience”), “however, našla sem ...” (“however, I found...”), or “also, granatno jabolko bom rabila” (“also, I will need a pomegranate”). The last sentence will serve as a contrasting example of linking words appearing only at the beginnings of Slenglish utterances, as most Slovene speakers would find sentences like “also granatno jabolko bom rabila” or “granatno jabolko bom also rabila” (“I will also need a pomegranate”) unacceptable (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication).

We can therefore see that English conjunctions are reduced to interjections. Other interjections are also commonly borrowed from English into Slenglish as well, for example “bah, bah” (sheep’s bleating, transcribed as “bee, bee” in Slovene), “oh” instead of “o” or “a”, “peekaboo” instead of “kuku”, etc. (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication; Moore, R., Howard, B., and Bush, J., 2016).

An important aspect of Slenglish pragmatics is the incessant code-switching the speakers go through. They shift between Slenglish and English with no critical evaluation. The process of switching between languages usually has one initiator and one or more respondents. As described by an authentic Slenglish speaker, the initiator typically starts by speaking Slenglish, stumbles upon an English phrase they do not know or care to translate, and switches between the languages. The respondents follow suit, until someone takes over the role of the initiator, prompting a switch back to Slenglish. These kinds of switches can also occur within a monologuing utterance, where the traditional roles of initiator and respondent are realised by one and the same speaker (A. E. Šuštar, personal communication). Provided here is a slightly modified example of code-switching within a single utterance: “Also za nasledno zgodbo, i dont know anything about this person tko da ne vem ce so bli iz Ljubljane al ne im just gonna tell you about it”. (“Also, as far as this next story is concerned, I don’t know anything about this person, so I don’t know if they (used in the plural, which is unacceptable in Slovene) were from Ljubljana or not, I’m just going to tell you about it.” (transozlom, 2020)). This utterance also provides an excellent example of English linking words used as interjections.

As we can see, Slenglish is an ever-developing language full of borrowed English colloquial expressions. It is not yet standardised, which is why it features so much variation within its structure, but its popularity seems to be on the rise, especially in translations of children’s media. Children’s books, animated shows and movies often feature translations from English into Slenglish, which are difficult to understand for Slovene speakers. They are commonly falsely advertised as “Slovene translations”, which will undoubtedly contribute to the gradual spread of Slenglish among the population, as many children use them as one of their primary sources of language acquisition.

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Homoerotic Elements and Masculinity in Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*

Nadja Jukić

There is a lot to focus on in Bret Easton Ellis' infamous novel *American Psycho*. The endless series of gruesome murders and tortures, for example, or the equally endless and gruesome lists of brands and products, or whether any of it was real in the first place, at least as real as life can be within the fragile fictional reality of a postmodern novel such as this one. Understandably, some aspects, especially those that are less noticeable, may go unnoticed. The interplay between homoerotic elements and the construction of masculinity is one of them. Patrick Bateman is an enigmatic and almost inconceivable character. He might proudly proclaim that there is not "a clear, identifiable emotion within [him]," and kill people with chilling ease, but he is uncharacteristically unnerved by Luis Carruthers, and provoked by a few simple catcalls coming from a Gay Pride Parade into going home and torturing a dog (Ellis 151). What might appear as inconsistencies on the surface can be explained, guided by Judith Butler's gender and queer theory, as tight interconnections between gender and sexuality as they are understood by the novel's main character and the society around him. Butler's theory here is a starting point, offering a theoretical background that can help clarify and analyse Bateman's perspective, thoughts, feelings, and actions. By applying this theory to several significant scenes in the novel, I aim to prove that not only are Bateman's views on gender and sexuality firmly intertwined, but that they also influence his relationships with people around him, and ultimately define and determine how he understands himself and others.

1. (Un)tying Knots

Butler's revolutionary and subversive ideas about gender and sexuality can be summarised by using *knots* as a metaphor for how we, as a society, think of and understand these two concepts. Since her theory is quite complex, this approach allows a somewhat simplified but accessible and comprehensible explanation of various points relating to these topics. The main knot, then, and one which in fact joins together many

smaller but equally significant knots, is the following: gender follows from sex, desire follows from gender, and combined with sexual acts which follow from desire, these knots unite in the concept of compulsory heterosexuality. Or, in Butler's own words, these knots are tied by "casual or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the 'expression' or 'effect' of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice" (*Gender Trouble* 17). In other words, separate concepts are joined in what Butler calls "unity of experience" that implies "internal coherence" and "continuity" between sex, gender, desire, and sexual acts, which supposedly follow from one another naturally (*Gender Trouble* 22). In Bateman's case, for example, this would mean that he is born of the male sex, is a man, acts masculine, desires femininity in women, and has sex with women. Furthermore, it would mean none of these links or ties can break if he wishes to comfortably live in a society where compulsory heterosexuality is the norm. He cannot, for example, be a man and not act masculine, or be masculine and desire masculinity in others, because "gender reflects and expresses desire, and desire reflects and expresses gender" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 22). Within this framework, only men who are feminine (and are therefore sometimes not even considered to be *men*, because men are supposed to be masculine) can desire masculinity or other men.

But while such a strict and rigid framework of gender and desire generally *is* observable in *American Psycho*, Butler gives us plenty of options or ways we could untie these metaphorical, but in fact very real, knots. Starting at the beginning, Butler questions various interpretations of sex and gender. Where the "biology-is-destiny formulation" essentially conflates the two, a more prevalent explanation that has survived well into the 21st century is "that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 6). Yet, although this indicates that "gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex," Butler points out how in this interpretation, "gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny" (*Gender Trouble* 6, 8). Rather than seeing gender as "a seemingly seamless identity" that is defined by either biology or culture, Butler reimagines gender along entirely different lines, redefining it as a "process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end" (*Gender Trouble* 22). In her redefinition, gender becomes a "performative act" not unlike "performative acts within theatrical contexts" ("Performative Acts" 526, 522). As a "continuous act," Butler says, "[g]ender is what we put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly" ("Performative Acts" 531). It is us who perform our own genders, constantly, by the way we call ourselves, the way we choose to dress, talk, move, even by the music we listen to. It is these gender acts we perform that create gender, "because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 522). Butler puts gender back into our own hands, rather than leaving it in the hands of biology or culture, thereby untying an important knot which can then be followed by various other instances of subversive untying of knots.

2. The Pride Parade

Not that *American Psycho* gets close to any sort of radical untangling of gender and sexuality. Bateman, for one, most certainly believes that, to rephrase Butler, gender reflects and expresses desire and desire reflects and expresses gender. He is almost as obsessed with *faggots* as he is with *hardbodies*, though it is far more obvious how he recognizes the latter: they are young women he deems sexually attractive. On the other hand, it is not quite clear how someone comes to be defined as a *faggot*, though there are some indications within the narrative, most of which have to do with appearance and behaviour rather than the

men's sexual orientation. During a conversation with a "street bum," before Bateman kills him, the man starts crying, and Bateman responds with: "look at me and stop crying like some kind of *faggot*" (Ellis 71, italics author's). Although he expects his female victims to cry and never responds to it, the same emotional response coming from a man causes "rage" to build within him and even elicits a derogatory comment (Ellis 71). What Bateman is saying here is not *stop crying like a man who desires and has sex with other men*, but *stop crying because that is a feminine response (and femininity means being fragile, emotional, etc)*. The two things are portrayed as meaning one and the same thing, proving Bateman's belief in gender reflecting desire and vice versa. On other occasions, it is men he believes are flirting with him who are deemed to be *faggots*, or his assumptions are based on appearance only, meaning that *looking* feminine is just as important as behaving in a feminine way when it comes to determining sexual orientation.

The inevitable fusion of gender and sexual desire does not stop at Bateman's evaluation of other people: at all costs, Bateman wants to protect himself from appearing either homosexual or feminine, as the two, for him, mean the same thing. The Pride Parade incident is the most prominent example of this line of thinking and exemplifies the extremes Bateman will go to in order not to be considered either of those things. One day, walking down Wall Street, Bateman comes across what he calls a "Gay Pride Parade" (Ellis 75). He stands to watch it "with traumatized fascination," until some men start catcalling him, at which point he alters his plans for the day, returns home instead of going to the office, and tortures a dog (Ellis 75). The language used to link together the Parade and his decision is clear, but since the two are separated by a description of the men in the Parade, the connection can easily pass unnoticed. Consider the following excerpt with the relevant information in bold:

I stood in front of Paul Smith **and watched** with a certain traumatized fascination ... **but when I began to receive fey catcalls from aging, overmuscled beachboys** with walruslike moustaches in between the lines "There's a place for us, Somewhere a place for us," **I sprinted over to Sixth Avenue, decided to be late for the office and took a cab back to my apartment** where I put on a new suit (by Cerruti 1881), gave myself a pedicure **and tortured to death a small dog** I had bought earlier this week in a pet store on Lexington. (Ellis 75; emphasis added)

Bateman's decision to return home and torture a dog immediately after being catcalled by men who are openly homosexual is crucial in an analysis of his assumptions and beliefs about gender and sexuality. Bateman's fear of being identified as homosexual/feminine, even just by association like here, requires a *manly* (i.e., masculine) act, one that would disprove any such implications, and violence for him is a way of achieving this. After all, violence is often associated with masculinity, in the sense that both can be a showcase of power, control, and agency.

3. Desire – Meaningless?

Underlying all of Bateman's opinions and actions I have discussed so far is a strong belief that femininity, implicitly characterized as irrational, emotional, and fragile, is less valuable and valued than masculinity. And just as masculinity is naturally tied to men, femininity is inherently tied to women, meaning that this belief strongly influences and determines Bateman's relationship with women. In a very telling conversation amongst Bateman and his friends, a generally accepted opinion emerges that women, and correspondingly femininity, can be associated strictly with appearance, submissiveness, and intellectual inferiority. "If [women] have a good personality then... something is very wrong," says one of Bateman's friends (Ellis 50). The conversation continues:

'There are no girls with good personalities,' we all say in unison, laughing, giving each other high-five. 'A good personality,' Reeves begins, 'consists of a chick who has a little hardbody and who will satisfy all sexual demands without being too slutty about things and who will essentially keep her dumb fucking mouth shut.' (Ellis 50)

Relationships between men and women, therefore, are inevitably defined by the prescribed notions of masculinity and femininity, which prevent any real intimacy or genuine connection between the two parties. Since women are to appear beautiful and satisfy men, and are intellectually inferior to their partners, anything beyond a physical connection between men and women is impossible, and even sex, since it is entirely devoid of feelings and meaning, is essentially unsatisfactory. In light of all this, Bateman's declarations that "[s]ex is mathematics" and "[d]esire – meaningless" make sense: "falling in love" really must appear "dull" if the only intellectual connection in life can be formed with equally masculine male friends, while emotional and physical attachment to another person is unobtainable (Ellis 200).

Bateman's relationship with Evelyn, as well as Courtney and to a lesser extent Jean, demonstrate his failure to relate to women in his life intellectually, emotionally, and even physically. In one of the many bizarre scenes in the novel, he attempts to break up with Evelyn, whom he clearly does not love, and even casually mentions he would bring an "assault rifle" to their wedding after she says they should get married (Ellis 68). But somehow, Evelyn does not hear him at all: "she's still talking; she doesn't hear a word; nothing registers. She does not fully grasp a word I'm saying. My essence is eluding her" (Ellis 68). Far from being simply one in the series of many unusual episodes of Bateman confessing to his violent tendencies and being ignored, the scene in question also illustrates emotional distance between the two characters. Communication gaps and failures characterize most of Bateman's as well as many other character's relationships in the novel, and are especially prominent in male-female relationships. A person's "essence," encompassing their personality and even something as basic as their name, is, as Bateman himself points out, elusive and constantly "eluding" others (Ellis 68). Bateman is regularly misidentified and mistaken for someone else, as are other people. Characters in *American Psycho* are notoriously replaceable, and the impossibility to form genuine connections with one another can be seen as one of the causes rather than merely a result of the characters being interchangeable. Since people's personalities are guided by the rigid and strictly defined roles of masculinity and femininity, which prevent fulfilling human bonds, "[i]ndividuality" truly is "no longer an issue," because it simply ceases to matter (Ellis 200).

4. The One That Got Away

There are two people who break this monotony and disrupt the otherwise straightforward and inflexible gender/desire system in *American Psycho*: Bono and Luis Carruthers. Starting with the former, Bono falls into the category of Bateman's celebrity obsessions that border on infatuation, the prime example of this being Donny, i.e., Donald Trump, whom Bateman reveres above all others. But while his obsession with Trump does not seem to include sexual desire, the connection he feels to Bono does. At a U2 concert, irritable because he "hate[s] live music," Bateman soon starts to feel like Bono is singling him out in the crowd: "[t]he lead singer reaches out to us from the stage, his hand outstretched, and I wave him away" (Ellis 78-79). Somehow convinced that Bono is devoting his performance to him specifically, Bateman observes how "Bono has now moved across the stage, following me to my seat, and he's staring into my eyes, kneeling at the edge of the stage" and becomes transfixed watching the singer, narrating details of his body and appearance (Ellis 79). This point marks the onset of intense physical sensations for Bateman:

... and while his eyes blaze, the backdrop of the stage turns red and suddenly I get this tremendous surge of feeling, this rush of knowledge and my own heart beats faster because of this and it's not impossible to believe that an invisible cord attached to Bono has now encircled me and now the audience disappears and the music slows down, gets softer, and it's just Bono onstage—the stadium's deserted, the band fades away... (Ellis 79)

For the first time in the novel, Bateman feels a sincere connection with another human being, which leads to an overwhelmingly positive, almost euphoric feeling. Once Bono turns away and the rapture passes, Bateman is “left tingling, [his] face flushed, an aching erection pulsing against [his] thigh” (Ellis 79). He is convinced he now shares a “bond” with Bono, signifying that interpersonal bonds are possible for him, and can even feature signs of sexual desire, but of course this is only possible because Bono is a celebrity, and therefore outside of Bateman’s ordinary gender/sexuality framework (Ellis 79).

In an even curiously, and likely the most notable, departure from the constraints of compulsory heterosexuality and the established structure of gender/desire, Bateman is uncharacteristically unnerved, even unhinged, by Luis Carruthers. From early on, Bateman is aware that Luis, who is not openly homosexual but is presumed to be gay because of his implied femininity, craves to establish physical intimacy between them. At work, “Luis Carruthers follows [him] like a puppy dog at [his] heels,” sits next to him, and candidly flirts by touching Bateman’s hands and tie (Ellis 59). Although Bateman continuously rebuffs his advances, he becomes preoccupied with Luis, even more so as he starts sleeping with Luis’s girlfriend Courtney. Throughout the course of the novel, Bateman seems at the same time to be avoiding and seeking out Luis’s company. Consider, for example, that in the *bathroom incident*, the most remarkable encounter between the two, it is Bateman who spots Luis at the restaurant, even puts on a show pretending to be laughing with his friends when he knows Luis is watching, and also him who decides to follow Luis to the bathroom (Ellis 84). When he finally confronts Luis in a stall, Bateman places his hands around Luis’s neck as if to choke him, at which point Luis kisses his wrists. Bateman’s physical response is compelling: “I stand there, frozen ... I shake my head to clear it and look back at Luis ... and I try to squeeze harder, my face twisted with exertion, but I can’t do it, my hands won’t tighten, and my arms, still stretched out, look ludicrous and useless in their fixed position” (Ellis 85). Not only is he unable to harm or even insult Luis, he is “immobile,” and when he “make[s] a helpless attempt to lift [his] arms back up to strangle Luis,” they “feel weighed down and lifting them becomes an impossible task” (Ellis 86). Two similar episodes with Luis ensue, both of which follow the same pattern: Luis fervently confesses his love and desire to be with Bateman, who, despite having killed and tortured an incalculable amount of people and animals, is unable or unwilling to hurt him. All Bateman does is “hiss” at Luis, refuses to look at him, tries to walk away, and even warns Luis to stop crying unless he wants to be killed (Ellis 119-120, 156-158). In other words, Bateman is uncharacteristically passive and “completely defeated” by Luis, has plenty of opportunity and reason to kill him, and yet does not (Ellis 86). Furthermore, two out of three of these episodes with Luis are (exactly like the Pride Parade incident) followed by a display of cruelty and power, as the following chapters are titled *Killing Dog* or *Killing Child at Zoo* (Ellis 86). The reasons for Bateman’s strange behaviour towards Luis seem like an inexplicable mystery. However, if we follow Bateman’s patterns of thought and behaviour in these and other scenes, we can come to some conclusions: Bateman is equally intrigued and frightened by Luis, Luis’s raw and honest desire and emotions, and quite possibly his own conflicting feelings. It is inconceivable that he could *want* Luis, because this sort of desire just cannot exist within the established framework of gender and sexuality, so he must prevent these feelings and restrain himself, which leaves him passive and speechless, eager to compensate for the perceived loss of masculinity through other means.

Butler’s revolutionary *Gender Trouble* was published in 1990, just a year before *American Psycho*, though it is quite difficult to imagine the two sharing any similarity apart from their time of publication. As this essay shows, this does not mean that Butler’s theories cannot be beneficial in a literary interpretation and analysis of Patrick Bateman, quite the opposite: by not taking the interrelation of gender and sexuality in *American Psycho* for granted, a different type of understanding of the novel and the character opens up to us. Gender is irrefutable and constricting, desire is predetermined and disappointing, and characters, for

the most part, are just pawns in the game of rigorously established norms of femininity, masculinity, and purely heterosexual attraction. However, much like with the novel's portrayal of violence and racism, it is hard to tell whether this is meant to be a critique, parody, or neither. On some, albeit unconscious level, Bateman seems to be aware that gender requires a sort of performance, a show-off of masculinity that will underpin his status as a masculine man who desires nothing except feminine women. Deriving pleasure and satisfaction from authentic human connections is inconsequential and in fact generally impossible. "It did not occur to me," thinks Bateman, in a surprisingly truthful and dismal confession, "ever, that people were good or that a man was capable of change or that the world could be a better place through one's taking pleasure in a feeling or a look or a gesture, or receiving another person's love or kindness" (Ellis 200). To believe in such a world would require the untying of a couple *knots*.

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Feminism in L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*

Karin Petko

1. Introduction

What does a children's or young-adult book have in common with feminism? Not much at first, and they definitely cannot share the audience, right? Well, as it turns out, the two in fact go hand in hand in the novel *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery. It is a novel intended for children and/or young adults, but it is also a book that shows several types of behaviour, characters and events that can be considered very powerful from the feminist point of view. This proves that children and young adult literature is not necessarily meant only for the youth, but also for grown-ups. After all, it is often the adults who read stories to their offspring, so there should be something for them in the fairy tales as well. Yet, *Anne of Green Gables* is no fairy tale, it is a proper Bildungsroman that on the one hand showcases female empowerment, while still presenting examples where gender inequality is reinforced on the other. This seminar paper deals explicitly with this dichotomy and analyses it with the help of certain events from the novel. Furthermore, this paper presents three levels of gender as structure, with regard to the analysis by Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer.

2. Facts First: Feminism, Setting, Autobiography, Bildungsroman

This seminar paper does not discuss feminism and feminist traits in general, neither does it analyse its origins and development. However, what needs to be stressed is that feminism in literature strives for the female characters and female voices to no longer be seen as less worthy and as "the other", but rather as

equally important as the male ones and no longer repressed. This can be achieved through different techniques and *Anne of Green Gables* shows us quite a few of them: characters, narration, events, and behaviour (Makuc 361–371).

The novel in question is set in 20th century North America, which means that there is a different system of values from the one we know today, making it essentially a different world. Thus, the setting is also extremely important, although it will not be further discussed in this paper.

The novel is a conglomerate of autobiographical elements. Lucy Maud Montgomery lost her mother when she was very young and her father left her with her grandparents. That made her more or less an orphan and resulted in her being raised by an older couple, just like orphaned Anne who is raised by an elderly pair of siblings. Both girls, the author and her protagonist, come from Prince Edward Island and have very vivid imagination that helps them create imaginary friends – coincidentally, both make up a friend whose name is Katie Maurice and another friend lives in the bookshelf. Anne and Lucy both dream of academic success and study to become teachers, thus completing two years of their study in a single year. However, they are different in some respects too. Lucy Maud was a fashionable young woman with many suitors and she married a reverend. On the other hand, we know that Anne was never too much of a fashion diva. The first book of the series does not yet reveal whether Anne later marries or not, but she already raises the question of female ministers and admires a minister's wife. Finally, we know that Lucy had to take care of her widowed grandmother before she died, just like Anne by her own choice takes care of Marilla so that the latter does not lose her eyesight.

The novel follows the literary tradition of the Victorian female bildungsroman, which praises the ideal of femininity, which Anne is so desperately trying to achieve, and it shows ways to achieve the domestic perfection of the angel in the house, which Anne at the end of the book actually becomes (Makrancy 1). Furthermore, *Anne of Green Gables* is also a Bildungsroman. We follow the path of a young girl who becomes a woman. We see her growing up and maturing, her imagination becoming more restricted, her talkativeness turning into silence and rather active and vivid thoughts. When she matures, she becomes an angel in the house, but also an educated woman capable of making good and free decisions. The following sections will show the analysis of patriarchal and feminist traits, as well as parts of the plot, by discussing certain events and characters.

3. Analysis

3.1 Anne Arrives at Green Gables

Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert are unmarried siblings. They have sent for a boy that could help Matthew on the farm, because Matthew has heart problems, but they get Anne instead – from the very beginning Anne is defined by what she is not: she is not a boy. “[Her] value is determined by role and role is determined by sex category” (McQuillan and Pfeiffer 24). Anne cannot help on the farm due to the fact she is a girl. However, they decide to keep her. It turns out that physical help was not what the brother and sister needed the most: it was someone to lift their spirits up. So, Anne is of help in terms of emotions and in the house, but she does not take up a boy's chores. Because she is a girl, she is expected to not be strong enough and is thus simply put behind the kitchen sink (McQuillan and Pfeiffer 22–24). However, it seems that there is one advantage of being a girl – she gets her own room, because Marilla decides that she cannot have the girl on the couch in the kitchen chamber. Apparently, that would do for a boy.

Throughout the entire book, Anne is constantly reminded to be a good girl, not a good person. Being a good girl will enable her to stay at Green Gables, bring her friends, and make people like her. Good girls pray before bed, good girls don't throw tantrums, etc. (McQuillan and Pfeiffer 28). However, it is also very important to point out that Anne constantly fails on her way to femininity. This highlights the fact that it is the society that expects her to behave and to do things in a certain way – she could be considered

as more of a tomboy than a girly girl, but the society expects her to be as feminine as any other girl and she has to deliver. At last, she always succeeds.

3.2 Anne's Imagination

Anne in the book is the other, as women are often portrayed in fiction, and the outsider, but also the one who belongs. This can clearly be seen through her name problems. She does not like her name, but if she has to be called Anne, she says at least let it be Ann with an e. She fancies herself to be Lady Cordelia. However, towards the final chapters she realizes that it doesn't matter if she is not Cordelia – as long as she is not Anne of nowhere in particular, but Anne of Green Gables. This is enough (Makrancy 5).

Her imagination helps her survive in, for example, her loneliness (she makes up imaginary friends) and in her failures. In short, it helps her grow. It can be also seen as something typically feminine – after all, as many people believe, imagination is supposed to be a feminine thing. However, by imagining new names for places and making things up, not only does she make her life prettier, more interesting, and in general more bearable, she takes for herself God's power of creation, which is traditionally considered to be a masculine power (Makrancy 4). She creates monsters, friends, and names.

3.3 Carrots and Dares

Anne has red hair and she is very upset when Gilbert Blythe (later her biggest rival in the academic sphere) calls her “carrots” because of her hair – she is constantly complaining that she will never be able to be completely happy because of her red hair, but she points out several times that she does have a very fine nose. This is something that would probably be considered stereotypical of women: being concerned with appearances so much and, furthermore, dreaming of dresses in the latest fashion – dresses with puffy sleeves in Anne's case. She is obsessed with and concerned about her looks to the point where she tries to dye her hair black and ends up having to cut it very short, because of it turning out green.

Despite being feminine when it comes to looks, she is very proud – a trait that we would think typical of masculinity. Men have to fight for their honour, but Anne feels the same way when she is dared to walk the ridge-pole. So, her honour is not any less important than a boy's and this is essential from the feminist point of view.

3.4 Anne's Ambition and her Studies

Anne's ambition in terms of her education is probably the part of the novel most crucial for a discussion about feminism. She has very high aspirations and succeeds just as well as her male rival, Gilbert. Although Anne is valued in the domestic sphere and in the academic world, she still does not have as many options as she would, were she a boy. However, not for a second does she question her right to knowledge and disagrees with Mrs. Lynde who thinks that after her teacher's exams, where she wins a scholarship for college, Anne has gained as much knowledge as is still appropriate for a woman. Anne aspires for more. She intends to go on to college, study some more and then teach. Yet, her plans are changed, or rather she herself willingly and happily changes them. After Matthew dies and she learns of Green Gables having to be sold and Marilla losing her eyesight, Anne decides to not pursue her college path, but rather stay at home, teach at the nearby school and take care of Marilla, so that she wouldn't lose her eyesight completely. Critics' opinions are divided. Some think that Anne here adheres to the patriarchal society – after all she has been through, she suffocates at the end and gives in to being the domestic angel in the house. However, some other critics see it differently and this seminar paper supports their thesis. It is Anne's free choice. She could have gone to college, but freely chooses to stay at home, while at the same time stressing that this does not mean the end to her desire for knowledge – she plans to study by herself and is as ambitious as ever. It is of

her free will that she stays at home and this, in my opinion, is a feminist move on Anne's part (Makrancy 7–8, McQuillan and Pfeiffer 29–30).

3.5 Other Characters and Thoughts

Anne is not the only one who conveys feminist traits in this novel. They are hidden throughout the entire text. For example, Thomas Lynde, Mrs. Lynde's husband, is known as a meek little man and called "Rachel Lynde's husband" (Montgomery 2), which is not very manly. Matthew, as the male figure discussed the most (in the novel), is not a very typical example of his kind either, since he is very shy and afraid of women. Montgomery also takes the opportunity to discuss women's right to vote in this novel and so sets Rachel Lynde as an example of a politically active female.

4. Three Levels of Analysis of Gender as Structure

Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer have written an article in which they analyse Anne of Green Gables from the gender perspective and mention three levels of analysis of gender as structure that we can also see in the discussed novel: individual, interactional and institutional. Here is a quick overview from this perspective as well: individually, Anne's gender is shown when she is not the expected boy, in her personal failures and in self-discussions, when she herself wants and wishes to be more feminine, not because others want her that way. In short, it is how Anne sees herself. This brings us to the interactional level of gender, where Anne has to behave as others want her to, being forced to adhere to social feminine standards. The institutional level of gender is evident when it comes to Anne's job, marriage, and education – where she encounters limitations due to her gender (McQuillan and Pfeiffer 19–25).

5. Conclusion

Anne as a character is not explicitly feminist and neither is the novel, but as readers we can read the book from this perspective and find many examples of female empowerment, such as Anne constantly failing at feminine behaviour, as well as her studying hard and having real ambitions. Additionally, the story evolves mostly around women. It is Anne's thoughts and ideas that we follow, which makes her important as a female voice. Furthermore, she is the one who at the end freely decides about her future. However, there are also parts of the plot that reinforce gender inequality, such as Anne not having the same privileges as a boy would have, her trying to be a feminine girl, boundaries to her education and her aspirations. The ending of the novel where Anne stays at home instead of continuing her education can be considered from both the perspective of free choice and societal expectations, and has been up for debate for many critics. It is important to keep in mind that even if we decide to read the book from the feminist point of view, what we see should not be that women are better than men as some radical feminists may want to prove, but that women should be men's equals, because they can be and they are – Anne's academic success alongside Gilbert's is just one of the proofs of that.

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Mandibles – A Film Review

Kaja Čančer

Unquestionably one of the most light-hearted films of 2020, Quentin Dupieux's *Mandibles* provides us with just over an hour of much needed easy-going comedy that allows us to forget the madness happening in the world right now. First released at the 2020 Venice Film Festival on September 5th, the director's 8th film continues his streak of exploring obscure topics, themes, and characters.

Can we talk about the giant fly in the room? Or, more accurately, in the car boot? Dupieux takes us on a journey across the South of France following two childish and feeble-minded best friends after they discover a giant fly in the boot of the car that they hijacked. When Manu (Gregoire Ludig) and Jean-Gab (David Marsais) first meet up, the average film watcher immediately gets the impression that they are in for a pastel-coloured French adaptation of a *Dumb and Dumber* film. Jean-Gab's million-dollar idea is to tame the monstrous yet peaceful insect and teach it how to perform tricks for money and steal food. The homeless Manu, who is being paid to make a package delivery for his shady boss, enthusiastically nods along, and the pair is reluctantly joined by the viewer.

What the movie lacks in deep philosophical meaning, it makes up for in its portrayal of the overarching importance of friendship. Unconditional companionship and complete equality between the pair are obvious, and though each is dim in his own right, the two form a half-functioning human being. When Manu and Jean-Gab coincidentally encounter a group of friends on vacation, their simple-mindedness rubbing off on the crowd is the only reason they remain undetected impostors at the summer house. This is also where the viewers are introduced to Agnes (Adele Exarchopoulos), whose straightforwardness and deafening speech, the results of a childhood brain injury, provide the audience with comedic relief, as well as a great way to dampen the two protagonists' eccentricity.

What is perhaps most noticeable from a technical perspective is the contrast between the absolute lack of music throughout the film, and surprisingly, at the same time, almost a complete absence of silence. The film is almost entirely built on dialogue – either between the two friends, or among the friend group, and there are even one-sided conversations with the fly. The main score, a simple flute, tambourine and claves composition by the English electronic music group Metronomy, is only played over the opening and the closing credits. It is not hard to imagine that this is the background music of the duo's minds.

A monster movie about friendship, *Mandibles* is not a film to be taken too seriously, or be observed with too critical an eye. It requires a certain level of suspension of disbelief, forces you to join the intellectual level of the two leads and just enjoy some bad humour, at most times even less ingenious than a knock-knock joke.

British Humour – the Charm of Irony and Enjoyment of Sarcasm

Ana Krstačić

Comedy is a remarkable force that makes life a little bit easier and enjoyable. It is a coping mechanism that makes all the problems go away for at least a minute and has been shown to have positive mental and physical influence. While we are surrounded by everyday problems, stress and anxiety, it is a way to escape a negative trip down the rabbit hole. Studies have shown that laughter boosts the immune system, reduces anxiety and protects the heart. Therefore, “Laughter is the best medicine” remains relevant. Comedy plays an important role in connecting people because it is inherited in us – even now, while we are socially distant and are communicating to a limited degree, there is still a connection that we crave and laughter is a part of that. The beauty of it is that everyone has their perception and way of understanding comedy, and most of us would probably say that light-hearted jokes are essential in everyday life. But Brits take it differently.

British comedy history goes back in centuries, beginning when the dearly-loved Shakespeare started merging many comedic scenes and characters into his writing, such as in his plays *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*. Additionally, the traditional puppet play *Punch and Judy* by George Cruikshank dominated Covent Garden by provoking shocked laughter because of its satiric lines, which were unusual at that time but gradually formed into their own cultural identifier.

Dry, emotionless, self-deprecating themes, usually with impassive delivery, make British humour oddly entertaining. It is free and bold, with a variety of subjects of which none are taboo. Whimsical words based on multiple meanings play an important role, as well as portray the banality of everyday life. The basic rule is not taking yourself too seriously, because there is no room for egotism. There is nothing remotely funny about being flawless and exquisite, but there *is* about being relevant, falling over and picking yourself up. Through satire, the absurd, and social ineptitude comes a sense of compassion that connects the audience and makes it rawer. People love to be included and feel important and connected; it is a form of personal fulfilment.

British humour can occasionally be difficult to understand. Filled with sarcasm and irony, it can feel baffling and undetectable. What adorns British humour is superior timing combined with deadpan delivery, which leave people wondering and thinking about the joke. The art of a good punch line is when time seems to stop just for our brain to catch up with a clever joke. Timing is essential to comedy, along with comedic pauses, which Brits are superior at doing. To understand certain jokes, it is preferable to know basic history as well as cultural problems and facts.

A master of wit and boldness who is worthy of mentioning is an Irishman Dave Allen. Through humorous anecdotes and controversial jokes, while sitting on a tall stool with a whiskey glass in hand, he made a quintessential turn in comedy as one of few who frequently highlighted political hypocrisy and demonstrated their disregard for religious authority. His delivery was dry and sophisticated, yet quick and intelligent.

Flying circus

Another crucial aspect of comedy is freedom. Creators must be allowed to have a wide range of liberty in the creative process to express themselves in the best light they can, especially in sitcoms where the expectations are always high, but the lack of freedom often results in dissatisfaction. The necessity of

believing in personal work is beyond important, which is shown in the production of the well-known Monty Python. From the start, it was assumed that it would not go well, but the group pulled through. “Pythons” could not get along on television, so they tried to excel in films, which was a highly successful endeavour. While making films, the members took up live shows in their spare time. This was a fabulous setting for their comedic approach, and it offered a range of possibilities for them to explore and improvise. The results were delightfully received by the public.

It's all lovely jubbly!

A perfect representation of humour inherent in everyday life is the sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*, in which the characters are presented as the so-called “loveable rogues”. These characters often come from a working-class upbringing, have a lot of flaws and unappealing characteristics, yet they are loveable and charming, even if the audience cannot see a particular reason why. The main characters, Del Boy and Rodney, are a great representation of loveable rogues. The sitcom itself is about two brothers and their grandad, who are attempting to get wealthy by selling cheap, illegal goods that are either stolen or shabby. The word “attempting” should be capitalized and bolded, since they followed their famous saying “This time next year, we'll be millionaires” for the whole 22 years of filming, yet in the last episode, they finally became millionaires after finding a rare pocket watch. Their behaviour is exposed in the title of the sitcom. *Only Fools and Horses* is an old cockney saying implying that if you are smart enough, you will find a way to make a living without hard effort; only a foolish person would actually work for a living. The brothers were tricked and lost their money an uncountable amount of times, as Del said after being scammed: “As Macbeth said to Hamlet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'We've been done up like a couple of kippers” (S. John 1981). Peckham-born and raised, and driving an iconic three-wheelers Supervan III, Del and Rodney are a pair trapped in a loop of constant frustration and disappointment. Del, an endearing spiv, full of charm and glamour, is a gauche vendor who would sell anything to anyone, but all with a dash of faux pas. Constantly slipping his “knowledge” of French into the conversation is normal for him, as is smouldering a large cigar and wearing his cushty camel coat, then spicing it all up with cheap gold chains and rings. His younger brother Rodney, proudly possessing two GCSEs (Maths and Art, failed 8 others), is a lanky, naive and full-of-dreams lad raised by his older brother Delboy. Despite the fact the sitcom is one of the funniest in British history, the gender and racial politics of the show might be seen as clumsy. There is a surprisingly acute reflection on gentrification, the influx of city money and Thatcher's “right to buy” scheme – which, typically, Del regards as a nifty way of “making a bit of bunce.” However, there are plenty of other reasons why the worldwide public would fancy this sitcom, even after watching it countless times. There are tears, regret, laughter, and remorse packed into 30 minutes. Family Trotter has mates which have significant importance for the show. Prepotent Boyce with his wife Marlene, Mike the barman, Denzil, a lorry driver, Trigger (not because he carries a gun but because he looks like a horse), and the brainless friend of Rodney Micky Pearce. They all make a marvellous team adapted from the superb writing of the director John Sullivan. *Only Fools and Horses* will forever be a favourite of millions of people.

The British quick, intellectual, and sarcastic humour has in some way generalised the nation and, as in everything, they are proud of it. With all of the British tv series, panel shows and even reality shows, British comedy is safe.

A preview of British one-liners (sources from various British comedians):

- “Remember, being healthy is basically dying as slowly as possible.” (Gervais, Twitter 2013)

- Comedian: Ricky Gervais
 - “I’m just like a Russian doll of winter. Open me up and there’s more and more ice, coldness and despair.” (Ayoade, Was It Something I Said? 2013)
 - Comedian: Richard Ayoade
 - “I’m not willing to say how I feel about anything. But that’s just because I’m British.” (Mitchell, Would I Lie to You? 2007-)
 - Comedian: David Mitchell
-

The Past in the Present or Does Walt Whitman’s Poetry Still Matter

Anastasia Guseva

Despite being one of the most influential writers in American history, Walt Whitman’s presence in literature was taken with colossal criticism. What would be seen as revolutionary today was eminently disapproved in the 19th century. His take on poetry was controversial in a multitude of ways to his contemporary writers, readers and critics. However, Whitman’s voice came to light through this uncommon approach to literature. The message of literary works does not wither even when the periods pass and authors cease; therefore, it would be erroneous to claim Whitman’s poetry does not matter if it matters to at least one mind. Although many do not find his poetry remarkable or relatable, it allows people to hold discourse on socio-economic issues, such as LGBTQ+ representation, racism, slavery, and war, led by Whitman’s critical thoughts in aiding Americans to unify the nation.

Whitman is a poet who helped consolidate the American nation during the Civil War of the late 1800s, and it seems noteworthy to rediscover his works today considering the distressing events of 2020. In “Song of Myself” (1855), the author called himself “the poet of slaves and the masters of slaves”, and although slavery has been abolished, the unifying message of being spoken to and heard by divergent subgroups of people still stands. His poetry and voice reminded people of the strong national character and identity the American society is founded on – liberty, law, equality and love – that people had forgotten and that led to the war. According to one of the scholars of Whitman, Ed Folsom, “[t]oday, the nation is so divided in political and social and economic and racial ways that it has become impossible to imagine a single unifying voice that speaks for America. Every voice that claims to speak for the ‘American people’ today is in fact a divisive voice, alienating as many Americans as it unifies” (49). The U.S. has not gotten far with the actualization of its goals, but progress has been made. Whitman spoke to the future rather than to the present, believing in better times; however, living through the devastating human loss and war casualties had dimmed his hopes, but reignited the importance and necessity for unity of people. The poem “I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing” (1860) reminds the reader that we are humans, not trees that thrive alone, and that we need each other to survive as a nation. The same concept is listed in “I Hear America Singing” (1860) as descriptions of individual occupations that connect to create the peaceful and harmonious United States, ironically on the verge of the upcoming bloodshed. Ultimately, “America” (1888) sums up Whitman’s prospect for equality no matter the gender, age, complexion or class, which is still not achieved to this day, almost two hundred years later.

The meaning of literary works is not fixed to a standard. Any reader of any generation and of any literary epoch sees the text in their own way. To matter does not only involve having a positive influence and admiration, but also triggering arguments, debates and other discourse that keeps art alive and makes

society grow. Formed more than a century ago, Whitman's views on democracy in the United States and equality among its people are in the process of realization, which confirms his poetry still matters, especially during these difficult times.

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The Impact of Land on Mental Health, Place Attachment and Character Identification in the Novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

Anastasia Guseva

Belonging can exceed basic familiarity with certain people, culture, community, and location. It is a robust, inherent feeling that is universal to all human beings and one that helps shape one's identity. In connection, those who lack the sense of belonging may experience psychological difficulties regarding their identification. *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck tells a story about a family of tenant farmers who have been driven out of their homeland, representing a historical exodus of "Okies" during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s United States. There is a significant appeal towards environmental psychology where characters demonstrate a clear-cut case of place attachment, such as Grampa Joad and Muley Graves' unyielding bond with the land. Conversely, the younger generation shares an affective historical ground of the ancestors born and deceased on the same land. The incorporation of binaries, such as of gender and generation to the protagonists, further supplements the topic of belonging and self-identity. This is shown through the juxtaposition of dying and withering Oklahoma and green and prosperous California. The role the land has on the mental health and place-attachment of the characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* is critical to the development of their sense of self while the difference in gender and age signifies how they impact the place-identity.

Farmers are profoundly associated with a substantial connection to their land. Steinbeck explicitly amplifies the bond's descriptive narrative, going into people's memories, feelings, values, and attitudes. To remove individuals with force from the place they call home is to ask them to forsake an essential physical and emotional component of their life. We can often find attachment, dependency, and identification based on location connected in literature and science as they cultivate the esteem, worth, and pride of a person or society (Florek 347). The entire history of a man's existence is often tied to certain places where it was experienced—the deeper the emotions, the more personal identification with that location and core memories may be developed. Any damage done to the inner self can cause the individual to develop trauma that can undermine their wellbeing. Steinbeck united man with his possessions on the psychological level:

Funny thing how it is. If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it's part of him, and it's like him. If he owns property only so he can walk on it and handle it and be sad when it isn't doing well, and feel fine when the rain falls on it, that property is him, and some way he's bigger because he owns it. (Steinbeck 50)

In the late 20th century, Harold Proshansky and his team of environmental psychologists gave prominence to place identity and attachment, stating how both can heighten the sense of belonging in people and, thus, solidifying their purpose in life (60). For instance, Chapter IX of the novel focuses on the concerns of the tenant farmers about leaving their belongings, their habitual lives, and the selves they knew before the arrival of the dust and held dear during the tractor invasion. This demonstrates the importance of the land to the inhabitants' psyche. They begin to question their existence, their purpose, and their inner selves. Eventually, they lose their rationale, as is seen in the following quote: "How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past? ... Can you live without the willow tree? Well, no, you can't. The willow tree is you. The pain on that mattress there—that dreadful pain—that's you" (Steinbeck 120-121). Magdalena Florek argues that the affective relationship with the land is essential to the sustenance of the psychological balance, successful adaptation, and sense of stability (347). The mass trauma experienced by Steinbeck's farmers to the point of physical destruction of residence and forced eviction allows us to observe the gradual loss of their psychological resilience. This issue gets readdressed from the other point of view of those less affected by the Dust Bowl. They notice how much the mental health of the migrant families deteriorates, to the point of stripping them of their humanity: "Them goddamn Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do. A human being couldn't stand it to be so dirty and miserable. They ain't a hell of a lot better than gorillas" (Steinbeck 301). The land is more than just a territory for traditional farmers to live on—it is not only the source of their provision but also a place that offers security, privacy, independence, comfort, and peace (Rollero and Picoli 198). At the onset of the novel, the farmers argue that the overtaking large industries are oblivious to the heart of the land, and their men will never feel the smell, the warmth, and the power of the earth (Steinbeck 48). According to Florek, the means of attachment to the place involve features such as the duration of the stay, established public networks, and personal values made about the place (348). Most of the workers accepted the job solely due to financial necessity, which is not enough to encourage the cultivation of place-identity. The displaced farmers became defensive about the protection of what constitutes a large part of themselves as well as their dignity. "That's what makes it ours—being born on it, working it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it" (45).

The difference in gender and generations branches out the analysis of how the place impacts identity. The effect on men as opposed to women is much greater throughout the novel as their power of authority as the owner of the land and head of the household is compromised. "In a world where men and masculinity are defined by the labor and land ownership, to take both away is to thrust men into more than just economic crisis — it is to remove the signifiers of masculinity, the most basic premise of their identities" (Williamson 97). The traditional gender role boundaries begin to blur as the families endure a critical situation. For example, Jim Casey asks Ma Joad to let him salt down the meat, which is recognized as women's work, and stands his ground admitting it is not sensible to split the work by gender when there is an abundance of it (Steinbeck 146). Another instance is when Ma waits for her son to speak up because he is a man but steps in herself as he speaks no word, giving her a feel of leadership later in their journey (127). It takes a strong man to withstand the stress and not to break down when their land and identifier of masculinity gets taken away, stripping them of their dignity. However, age also represents a major factor since the younger generation is much more open towards change. As education becomes more and more accessible, it is important to consider the direct correlation of the education level to the extent of place attachment as declared by Rollero and Picoli—the lower the education, the more local identification is present (204). Sociologically, a healthy individual's sense of self is malleable to grow, change, and adapt to the world as it transitions with time since the shaping of identity is not bound only to the early years (Proshansky 59). Nevertheless, it is notably harder to perceive and connect with the minds of the older population compared to the minds of the younger. The novel stresses that by saying, "[b]ut you can't start.

Only a baby can start" (Steinbeck 119). Different generations have different perceptions: "They was too old ... They wouldn't of saw nothin' that's here. ... Who's really seein' it is Ruthie an' Winfiel'" (313). Even if Grampa and Granma Joad made it all the way, they would have difficulty adjusting to a new environment and accepting the new reality. Despite being in agreement with the need to migrate, their inner selves opposed, resulting in their timely, significant deaths, as is visible from the following quote: "Grampa didn' die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place. ... He's jus' stayin' with the lan'. He couldn' leave it" (199). Muley Graves, Grampa, and Pa represent the rural and hardworking generation of farmers while Al, Rose of Sharon, and Connie are drawn to the development of cities and machinery, giving an allegory to the dying, withering Oklahoma and prosperous, green California. Grampa concludes the point by admitting, "[y]ou all go ahead. I'll jus' stay right here where I b'long" (152).

Throughout the novel, the land plays an extensive role in the mental health of the Joad family. They endure drastic changes to both their physical environment, as well as their emotional stability. Later on, their sense of self goes through a crisis as they leave their homeland and seek the sense of belonging and new purpose in life in unfamiliar places and communities. Steinbeck goes so far as to sacrifice characters to make a point of the significance of place identification. The extraction of the land from those who have profound association with it results in substantial psychological damage. In conclusion, we can see that the land is not just a piece of territory for the displaced farmers, but a significant feature of belonging and human identity.

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The Evolution of Afrikaans and the Influence of Other Languages on its Lexicon and Grammar

Ariela Herček

1. Introduction

As a language that sprouted from an ethnically diverse area, Afrikaans has been influenced by many languages throughout its evolution. Since Afrikaans is usually called the daughter language of Dutch, this European language is perhaps the most important for the linguistic characteristics of Afrikaans, as well as the language's use in different social contexts, especially since Dutch has a dark history of slavery, war and human rights violations. Closely related to the origins of Afrikaans are also indigenous African and Asiatic languages, which left their mark on the history of South Africa and Afrikaans as we know it today.

For the purpose of this seminar paper, I will steer more towards the principles of historical linguistics and contact linguistics in order to discern Afrikaans's development from a pidgin into a creole and onwards into a lingua franca and an official language. However, sociolinguistics will play an important role in determining the mechanisms of lexicon with regard to language contact and language conflict theories.

2. Origins and Sociolinguistic Background

2.1 Indigenous Population in the South-African Area before the Arrival of the Dutch

The area of the later Dutch colony was populated as far back as roughly 20,000 years ago by the now-called San people. These later (around 2500 years ago) mixed with the arrival of the Bantu people and they acquired cattle and sheep, becoming pastoralists. Their descendants were the Khoikhoi or "Hottentots" (the latter name was given to them by the Dutch settlers) and they traded extensively with Bantu-speaking tribes. By 1600, there were some 50,000 Khoikhoi living along the southwest coast of the Cape, up until the arrival of the Dutch.

The Khoikhoi spoke a language of the Khoe language family, a variant of the San people's language dialects (the descendants of which are now referred to as the "bushmen" of the Kalahari, which is considered a slur). The first European language contact that the Khoikhoi experienced was that with the Portuguese seafarers in the 15th Century, followed by the Dutch settlers in 1652 (Byrnes, *The Earliest*).

At some point before the Dutch colonial rule, there were multiple tribes occupying the area of the present-day South Africa, among them the Nguni peoples (the Zulu, the Xhosa, the Swazi and the Ndebele), whose languages also played a part in language contact with the Khoisan (Khoikhoi and San tribes).

2.2 The VOC and Dutch Colonialism in South Africa

With the expansion of the Dutch colonial rule, the VOC or *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company) was established in 1602. It was the first public company that "[...] was empowered to sign treaties in the name of the Republic, to wage war and administer conquered territories"

(entoen). With the help of the VOC, the Netherlands was able to export goods from Asia (mostly Indonesia) to Europe, acquiring riches along the way.

However, the presence of the Dutch in Indonesia was forced upon the indigenous peoples, leading to crimes against humanity and slave trade, which in turn allowed the Dutch to transport Asian slaves to South Africa, where a supply station was established at the Cape of Good Hope (Table Bay) in 1652 by the VOC employees led by Jan van Riebeeck (Byrnes, *Origins of Settlement*).

The settlement first worked hand in hand with the African tribes present at the Cape of Good Hope, since friendly contact with the Europeans presented a means to acquire firearms and European technology (SAHO, *History of Slavery*). As the settlement grew, a bigger workforce was needed and van Riebeeck decided to use the VOC's colonial rule in East India and other countries to get the slaves he needed, since he did not want to start a war with the African tribes that were populous and presented a risk of war.

The following paragraph describes the nationalities of the slaves that were transported to the Cape of Good Hope in order to do difficult labour and help in expanding the VOC's empire:

Between 1652 and 1657, a number of unsuccessful attempts were made to obtain men from the Dutch East Indies and from Mauritius. In 1658, however, the VOC landed two shiploads of slaves at the Cape, one containing more than 200 people brought from Dahomey (later Benin), the second with almost 200 people, most of them children, captured from a Portuguese slaver off the coast of Angola. Except for a few individuals, these were to be the only slaves ever brought to the Cape from West Africa. Thereafter, all the slaves imported into the Cape until the British stopped the trade in 1807 were from East Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, and South and Southeast Asia. Large numbers were brought from India, Ceylon, and the Indonesian archipelago. Prisoners from other countries in the VOC's empire were also enslaved. The slave population, which exceeded that of the European settlers until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was overwhelmingly male and was thus dependent on constant imports of new slaves to maintain and to augment its size. (Byrnes, *Establishing a Slave Economy*)

It wasn't just the slaves coming into South Africa from Asiatic countries that affected the language spoken in the Table Bay. The Khoikhoi were in close contact with the VOC settlers in the Table Bay, although they later led an uprising when it became clear that the Dutch were planning to stay and steal their traditional grazing land to grow crops. Additionally, the Dutch and the Germans were invited to settle in South Africa and were even offered free farms to do it (Byrnes, *Emergence of*).

2.2.3 The Boer Wars

By the 18th century, the settlers at the Cape were known as Boers. After the takeover of the colony by the British on two separate occasions in 1795 and 1806, a large number of settlers came to the Cape from Britain, forcing the previous settlers, who had by then already defined themselves by the ethnic identity of 'Afrikaners', further north. In the 1850's they established the "[...] Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (Transvaal) and the Oranje-Vrijstaat (Orange Free State), with Dutch as the official language" (van Niekerk 385). Moving away from the Cape allowed the Afrikaners' language to gain true South African qualities and move away from the identity of Dutch settlers, which is why their pronunciation of Dutch started to differ greatly from that of the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands at the same time.

In the second half of the 18th century, diamonds and gold were found in the area of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, tempting the British to take over the land from the Boers. This led to the First Boer War, fought between 1880 and 1881, which was unsuccessful for the English. However, they did better in the Second Boer War, lasting from 1899 to 1902, leading to the British annexation of the Boer republics and the unification into the *Union of South Africa*.

It is crucial to highlight the atrocities and war crimes that the British committed during the Second Boer War – mainly that they

[...] rounded up around a sixth of the Boer population – mainly women and children – and detained them in camps, which were overcrowded and prone to outbreaks of disease, with scant food rations. Of the 107,000 people interned in the camps, 27,927 Boers died, along with an unknown number of black Africans. (Osborne)

The political and social outcome of the two wars was “[...] an intense Anglicisation campaign [...]” (van Niekerk 385), although English and Dutch both became official languages. Due to the urbanization, there was

[...] a massive influx of people from Europe, the USA and Australia, accompanied by the large-scale influx of black people into the mining areas, resulted in a unique mixture of foreign languages. [...] A unique pidgin ‘contact language’ developed around the mines and in the urban areas. (ibid.)

2.3 Racial Segregation and Apartheid

Systems of racial oppression, segregation and white supremacy were already in place, though unofficially, in the time of the Dutch and British colonial rules. The main characteristic that divided the two races (although there were more than two, since there were many other people of colour, a lot of them coming from interracial relationships) was the social and economic status – the slaves were set apart from the colonizers by the sheer fact that they were slaves. The fact they were coloured was the ‘handiest’ manner to distinguish between classes. However, it is important to note that Africa was systemically colonized and its indigenous peoples slaughtered, which might lead us to believe that some form of racism was already present.

Apartheid in its core was the ideology in South Africa that was supported by the National Party, which introduced the official apartheid laws in 1948 (SAHO, *A History of Apartheid*). These laws forcibly segregated white and coloured people under the white supremacy rule, which also aimed to stop interracial marriages and relationships. By that time, the world had learnt of the dangers of racism and racial supremacy on the basis of WWII, so it was very critical of the segregation policies that had been implemented in South Africa, although the so-called First World countries had still not provided for racial equality and justice on their own lands (e. g. black voting rights in the US).

The ideology of apartheid persisted even in the mines and in physical labour workplaces. As Thompson writes: “In 1946, white income per head in South Africa was more than ten times that of Africans, six times that of Asians, and five times that of Coloureds” (156). The main idea was to make as much money as possible while paying the black (African – natives that usually lived in reserves where living conditions were harsh) and coloured workers as little as possible. This kind of work practice reminds us of the Dutch colonial period in South Africa, with the implementation of the coloured working force that was not paid or was paid very little for difficult labour. For all intents and purposes, the period of apartheid in South Africa perpetuated racism and slavery, even going as far as to build imaginary hierarchies within the coloured peoples.

By 1978, following an economic downfall and recession, the apartheid state was losing force (Thompson 221). Additionally, this was in part thanks to the Soweto uprising in 1976, when black students protested to have half their school subjects taught in Afrikaans, which they deemed the language of their oppressors (212). In 1984, the Blacks were, for the first time, allowed to participate in politics, but the Natives Land Act from 1913 and the Group Areas Act from 1950 still effectively “[...] confined Africans to specific zones

in towns [...]” (226). By June 1986, some segregation laws were dismantled, allowing once again interracial marriages, as a consequence of nationwide protests against the apartheid. In the following years,

[t]o reestablish control of the black population, the government resorted to bannings, arrests, detentions, and treason trials. Police interrogators tortured victims, and unidentified persons who were widely believed to be members of the security police assassinated antiapartheid activists inside and outside South Africa. (235)

The leading figure in the years leading up to 1994 was Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in jail for his opposition to Apartheid and his participation in politics. After he was released in 1990, political negotiations began that resulted in the election of an interim constitution on 27 April 1994, putting an end to the apartheid state (256).

3. Linguistic Evolution of Afrikaans

In order to sufficiently explain the evolution of Afrikaans, we have to first look at the theoretical aspects of what pidgins and creoles are, how they come to be, and what their possibilities to evolve are. Bear in mind that the proposed definitions and explanations hold true for the majority or even only some pidgins and creoles, not for all of them.

3.1 Pidgins

Sarah G. Thomason, one of the leading experts on language contact, writes:

Traditionally, a pidgin is a language that arises in a new contact situation involving more than two linguistic groups. The groups have no shared language [...] and they need to communicate regularly, but for limited purposes, such as trade. (159)

For this reason, these language groups in contact develop a language, a pidgin, whose vocabulary mostly stems from one of the languages in contact, whereas the grammar is “[...] a kind of a crosslanguage compromise of the grammars of the languages in contact [...]” (ibid.). This implicates that pidgins are nobody’s native language and have fewer elaborate morphological structures or none at all.

3.2 Creoles

As opposed to pidgins, creoles are native languages of a speech community, arising typically from contact situations of two or more languages. “[T]hey typically draw their lexicon, but not their grammar, primarily from a single language, the lexifier language” (Thompson 159). This is why creoles are typified based on which language they took their lexicon from, e.g. English-based creoles (such as Sranan Tongo in modern-day Suriname) or Portuguese-based creoles (e. g. Papiamentu in Aruba). The grammar is constructed through the same principles as in a pidgin language. “In fact, some creoles are nativized pidgins” (160), where a pidgin became the main language of a speech community and then became the first language the children learnt. In this case, “[...] its linguistic resources expanded with the expansion in its spheres of usage” (ibid.).

3.3 Theories on Afrikaans

Markey writes that “[o]ne of the best known and more frequently debated ethnolinguistic controversies is that over whether or not Afrikaans is a creole, a creole, or a partially creolized language, or merely a “massive language” comparable to, say, Maltese or Yiddish” (169).

However, the first challenges in developing a legitimate theory lie in the conflicting ideas on which languages had influenced the settlers’ Dutch in the first place, resulting in a later substrate of Dutch called Afrikaans.

The importance of the socio-economic and political background is clearly seen in the many theories that were explored on the influences on Afrikaans. Many theorists have argued (although, which is important to stress, in the first half of the 20th century) that Afrikaans has had no influences from the indigenous languages of Khoisan and Zulu tribes, which shows an undoubtedly racist comprehension of the evolution of this South-African language (“Afrikaans” 323).

However, as we have demonstrated in the second chapter, the immense variety of foreign-language speakers was introduced to South Africa via slave relocation and European migration. The resulting layered linguistic situation was as diverse as they come:

[...] the European immigrants spoke Dutch, German, French and Scandinavian languages, while the slaves brought with them Niger-Kordofanian languages, Malagasy (an Austronesian language), Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, and South-East Asian Austronesian, as well as non-Austronesian languages. (den Besten in van Niekerk 385)

For the simple needs of communication, three languages were mainly used: Dutch, Asian Creole Portuguese and Malay (ibid.). The Khoisan languages lost speakers during the wars with the Dutch in the 17th century, as well as due to the population decrease following the import of smallpox into the area by the Dutch settlers. The Khoisan languages went extinct, although they managed to leave traces of individual linguistic features in the ‘contact’ languages (ibid.).

Markey argues that:

There are essentially three theories as to the origin of Afrikaans: change due to foreign influence (e. g. Low German, French, Hottentot) Dutch input, but not outright creolization; 2) change due to a creole-producing situation that arose between Dutch-speaking whites and Malayo-Portuguese-speaking slaves, but with only partial creolization; and 3) change due to the spontaneous, discontinuous, and natural development of particular (North Holland) dialectal features and inherent tendencies in Dutch grammatical structure, but no creolization. (169)

Early versions of Afrikaans started to come into usage around 1750 and 1775, used mainly in informal communication, whereas Dutch was still used for formal communication. The language of the original Dutch settlers appropriated the pronunciation of some indigenous languages, most notably the Khoikhoi and Xhosa, and with the arrival of the British, English spoken at the Cape also began to change its pronunciation under the influence of the indigenous African languages (van Niekerk 385).

3.4 Overview of Creole Features and Afrikaans

Markey provides a checklist of features that “true” creoles should have. For comparison, he takes Negerhollands, a Dutch creole from the U. S. Virgin Islands, which has the longest documented history of any creole (175).

The following checklist deals with several grammatical structures that should be present in a “true” creole language:

1. All creoles lack grammatical gender.

Afrikaans does not have systemic desinential gender classifiers, such as Slovenian *-a* for feminine gender. The definite article is invariably '*die*' and the indefinite article '*n*'. However, Afrikaans has subclassification of nouns into genders, e. g. *lam* (EN: lamb) is masculine, whereas the female lamb is *ramlam* and therefore feminine. Additionally, the language has gender specific agent classification (like in English *actor* vs. *actress*) and natural gender, like in *seun*, meaning 'son' (177).

2. Nominal number by anaphora.

Creoles build numbers with anaphoras, pluralized by the addition of the 3rd person plural pronoun. For example, Papiamentu (an Iberian-based creole in Aruba) pluralizes the word 'book' by adding the 3rd person plural pronoun *nan*: *buki-nan*. Afrikaans uses a system that is used in Dutch, meaning that the plural is not formed by the addition a creole language would expect. Instead, it is formed by the addition of *-(t/n)s* and *-e*, like in *straat – strate* (EN: street) (178-179).

3. All creoles have a dominant SVO order.

Markey writes that "[t]his is the typical order for analytic, deflectional languages [...] In Afrikaans, after certain subordinate conjunctions (e. g. *nogtans* 'nevertheless', *aangesien* 'because', *ofskoon* 'although', etc.), there is reversion to underlying SOV-order. As a result of English influence, the reversion rule is sometimes voided: Afrikaans may be moving toward SVO-order" (179).

4. All creoles make a number distinction between third person anaphoric pronouns, universally fail to distinguish gender in the singular and only infrequently make a subject-object distinction.

We will not go into further detail on this, as it is a complicated endeavor to explain it in detail in a limited space of a seminar paper. However, there is a tendency in Afrikaans to agree with this feature of a creole language (179-181).

5. All creoles lack nominal case inflection.

As opposed to the Slovenian inflections for 6 cases, creoles make do with prepositions rather than inflections, similarly to English. Afrikaans falls into this category of lacking nominal case inflection, as is seen from its use of, for example, the preposition *voor* (identical to the Dutch version of this preposition) to say 'for', where we would use the Dative case in Slovenian (181-182).

6. Creoles never have independently generated and completely new formal markers or syntactic expressions of comparison.

An exception to this rule is Sranan Tongo, an English-based creole in modern-day Surinam. Afrikaans forms the comparative by adding *-er* to the positive or premodifying the adjective with *meer* (the same holds true for Dutch).

7. True creoles have only three tense-aspect markers.

These markers are divided into 1) anterior (similar to the plu-perfect), 2) irrealis, which "[...] encompasses future, subjunctive, and conditional [...]" (183) and 3) nonpunctual, which encompasses habitual, iterative, continuative, and progressive. Markey adds that alternatively, these can be defined as anterior = tense, irrealis = mood, and nonpunctual = aspect (184). Afrikaans roughly fits into this category.

8. Creoles lack non-finite verb forms.

Afrikaans has remains of a past participle, where *ge-* is added before the nuclear stem, e. g. *ge-loop* (Dutch: *gelopen*). However, this prefix is omitted if the stem prefix is *be-*, *er-*, *her-*, etc. and after inseparable prepositional qualifiers (e. g. *aan*, *af*, *teen*). The same holds true for Dutch and German (191).

9. Creoles lack morpho-syntactically marked “full” passives in which a semantic agent is expressed.

Afrikaans and Dutch as its mother language have a morpho-syntactically marked full passive with the formants: AFR: *word* = DU: *worden* (EN: be, become) + AFR: *deur* = DU: *door* (agent marker, EN: by), like in the example below:

Piet skryf die brief. = DU: *Piet schreef de brief.*
= EN: *Piet writes (is writing) the letter.*

Die brief word deur Piet geskryf. = DU: *Die brief wordt door Piet geschreven.*
= EN: *The letter is/was written by Peter.*

English has influenced the modern use of the passive in Afrikaans, so that sometimes the preterital *was/is + deur + PP* is used (191-192).

10. In creole copularity, possession and existence are expressed by the same form, while location is expressed by a different form.

In English, possession is expressed with the verb ‘have’ or the Saxon genitive, whereas existence is expressed by ‘(there) is’, where ‘is’ is a copulative verb. Afrikaans fails to meet this condition, since it uses a similar system to that of English (but which is also present in Dutch – possession in Dutch is expressed by using the verb ‘hebben’ or the Saxon genitive, and existence is expressed by the existential *er + is*) (193-197).

11. Creoles uniformly have the preverbal positioning of negation (Subj+NEG+VP).

Most of the world’s languages follow this rule – as Markey writes, it “[...] to be the prototypical pattern” (197). The obvious exceptions to the rule are English and German. Creoles also do not lexicalize negation (like in English *un-* and *dis-*). Creoles lack many negation formants, but have analytic negations and the preverbal negation placement. Afrikaans fits into this, except that it does not always place the negation in front of the verb. It is important to note that Dutch also varies between pre- and post-verb placement of the negation. In Afrikaans, negation occurs after MV (Main Verb) and Auxiliary verb, but precedes MV and Auxiliary verb in subordination (much like German):

*Hy se da thy **nie** sal kom.* = DU: *Hij zegt dat hij **niet** zal komen.*
= EN: *He says that he is **not** coming.*
= GE: *Er sagt, dass er **nicht** kommt.*

*Hy kom **nie**.* = DU: *Hij komt **niet**.*
= EN: *He is **not** coming.*
= GE: *Er kommt **nicht**.*

However, an additionally confusing aspect of negation in Afrikaans is its double negation *nie ... nie*, which works as a framing agent and is not present in English or Dutch (or German, for that matter). The double negation is present in some creoles (like Seychelles Creole) and Yiddish, among others (197-199).

3.4.1 Is It a Creole or Not?

Since we could not go into detail on the individual features of true creoles, you might lack some information that would deepen your understanding. For this reason, I recommend further reading of Thomas Markey's article.

Going through the salient syntactic and morpho-syntactic features we defined in the previous subchapter, we can see that Afrikaans in some way possesses these features, with some exceptions. A tabular representation of these is available in Markey's article.

To some extent, Afrikaans does cover some of the underlying syntactic and morpho-syntactic realizations in these features, but it lacks too many to be named a "creole".

Before we define the creoleness of Afrikaans, we need to mention that this language did not evolve from a pidgin language, and therefore did not go through the same processes as some other creoles. According to Trudgill (in Millar 110), this means that the language we are investigating fits more into the group of *creoloids*. These are languages with no pidgin history and, as Trudgill goes on to explain,

demonstrate relatively undramatic admixture and simplification relative to some source language but are known to have no pidgin history behind them. [...] The process of creoloidisation thus consists of admixture and simplification. Unlike creoles, however, creoloids have not experienced a history of reduction followed or 'repaired' by expansion. [...] Creoloidisation is, of course, the result of the influence of imperfect learning by relatively large numbers of adult speakers. However, creoloids are varieties which have never been reduced because they have maintained a continual native speaker tradition. A good example of a creoloid is Afrikaans, which is clearly a creoloid relative of Dutch. (Trudgill 2002: 71) (in Millar 110).

When we consider Afrikaans, we usually contemplate the Standard variety used in written texts. This variety has no specific language features that would point to the rich South African demographic history, especially due to the constant presence of Dutch as an official language of communication. However, 'Cape Afrikaans' *does*. This variety, "[...] spoken by poor, rural whites and by 'Cape Coloureds', exhibit[s] many features which would be considered creole-like at the very least" (Millar 114).

Millar finishes by suggesting that the first evidence of pidginization began with the use of 'broken Dutch' (also semi-well recorded in documents) between slaves and servants in the beginnings of the colony. This shows that there is at least some historical basis for Afrikaans to be called a creoloid, although many questions remain unanswered.

3.5 Lexical Borrowings

The last aspect of language contact to be discussed in this seminar paper is the lexicon of modern-day Afrikaans. Markey writes that "[l]exical diffusion or borrowing, as opposed to relexification, is frequently culturally, not linguistically, bound" (199).

Around 90-95 % of Afrikaans lexicon derives from Dutch (Brachin 132), while the remaining 5-10 % represents non-Dutch origins. Of these, English and Xhosa have the most prominent influence on the Afrikaans lexicon, although the words are usually simplified, as is expected in the process of lexical borrowing via pidginization and creolization.

Branford and Claughton highlight that there are three distinctive manners of lexical borrowings, basing this on their research on mutual influence between Afrikaans, English and Xhosa. The following three distinctions are quoted directly from the book *Language in South Africa* (200).

1) Loanwords, borrowed with sound changes only, though their grammatical markers are likely to be those of the borrowing language. An example is Afrikaans *gogga* (insect), from Khoe *xoxon*, with obvious sound-changes and a normal Afrikaans plural form.

2) Loanblends, of native origin with borrowed lexical morphemes, as in South African English (SAE) *muti-man* ('herbalist', 'doctor') in which an Anglicised Zulu *umuthi* (medicine) combines with English 'man'.

3) Loan translations, also called 'calques', e.g. Afrikaans *swarthout* from English *blackwood*, where only a meaning is borrowed but the forms that represent it are native.

These three manners of adopting or borrowing words from other languages in the same area are all present in Afrikaans. Some most prominent borrowings are visible in Cape Dutch, for example:

- from Malay *hampir* came *amper* ('almost'); Malay *badju* turned into Afr. *baadjie* ('jacket');
- from Portuguese *cobertas* came Afr. *kombers* ('blanket');
- from the Khoesan languages came names for plants (*boegoe*, *dagga*), animals (*koedoe*, *kwagga*), artefacts (*kaross*, *kierie*), topographical features (*Karoo*) and many place names (Branford and Claughton 206).

More could be said on this topic, but the "[v]ocabulary [...] was a minor differentiating factor between Afrikaans and Dutch as compared with pronunciation and grammar" (ibid.).

3.6 The Fight for the Official Status of Afrikaans

After the British seizure of the land at the Cape when the new Boer republics were created, the conflict between the British and the Dutch grew. Afrikaans became a tool of identity for the Afrikaners (descendants of the original settlers) and "[u]nder the leadership of S. J. du Toit (Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging; First African Language Movement) Afrikaans activism gained impetus" (van Niekerk 385). As van Niekerk goes on to explain, this movement was not just the opposition to the British, but Dutch as well, and from 1860's onward, Afrikaners used their language increasingly more in written communication (386). This was followed by the first translation of the Bible into Afrikaans, a newspaper in Afrikaans and the Afrikaans national anthem.

By this point, Afrikaans had decidedly diverged from its mother language. After the Second Boer War, Afrikaans was cast in shadow by the then official languages of the Union of South Africa – English and Dutch. The response of the Afrikaners was the second activist movement for the recognition of Afrikaans (Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging), which yielded results in 1914, when Afrikaans (instead of Dutch) became the official language of instruction in schools (ibid.). However, it is crucial to mention that the "Afrikaner ideology (*die Afrikaanse gedagte*) linked the Afrikaans language exclusively to white speakers of the language, while the coloured speakers were not regarded as belonging to 'the Afrikaner'" (ibid.).

In 1925, Afrikaans replaced Dutch as the official language and from then on was promoted through its use in literature, although its ties with the oppressor (Dutch colonialism) raised conflicting views throughout the 20th century.

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Categorization of Idioms in English and Slovene Using Speech Act Theory and Nunberg's Division: A Corpus-Based Analysis

Ariela Herček

1 Introduction

The subfield of pragmatics in linguistics has seen numerous academic discussions regarding its contrastive analysis. Jef Verschueren writes in his article "Contrastive Pragmatics" that pragmatics within the scope of contrastive analysis actually consists of several sub-derivates, mainly *cross-cultural pragmatics* and *intercultural pragmatics*. Although it is important to make a distinction between these disciplines, contrastive pragmatics, in a way, includes both aspects (3).

Pragmatics as its own linguistic discipline is concerned with "the linking of sentences with the contexts of use in which 'performances' of them are welcome and fitting, and the evaluation of the nature of the fit between the sentence and its contexts" (Fillmore in Verschueren 6). Attempting to decipher the meaning of a written or spoken expression should undoubtedly include an in-depth analysis of the context.

In order to better understand how context works and how our expressions fit into it, a relevant mention would be the Speech Act Theory, which will be described in detail in the next chapter. As a note, it would be relevant to mention that Saussure and Peirce's respectful theories on semiology and semiotics provide a substantial basis on which to explain the processing of idioms, but we will not be paying closer attention to their theories of sign in this seminar paper.

2 Speech Act Theory

In the previous century, Austin gave a series of lectures in which he discussed the newly-coined term speech act. The theory of speech acts concerns itself with the speaker's intention hidden within utterances. The relationship between the intention and the utterance is expressed with the word *act*, for which Oishi writes, "[...] in uttering a sentence, that is, in utilizing linguistic conventions, the speaker with an associated intention performs a linguistic act to the hearer" (1).

Hidayat surmises the theories and writes:

Birner (2013) also says that uttering something means doing something. Here, people can perform an action by saying something. Through speech acts, the speaker can convey physical action merely through words and phrases. The conveyed utterances are paramount to the actions performed. (3)

Pertinent examples will be provided in section 2.1.

2.1 Types of Speech Acts

Speech acts can be divided into *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary*.

In the utterance "It's so hot in this room", the locutionary speech act would mean that what was said was also meant (Cutting in Hidayat 3). In the same utterance, the illocutionary speech act would be to say "It's so hot in this room", yet perhaps with the purpose of requesting of the co-locutor to turn on the air conditioning or open a window. The same utterance would be perceived as a perlocutionary speech act

if it made the co-locutor open a window or turn on air conditioning, since a perlocutionary speech act directly affects the thoughts and actions of the hearer.

It is also important to distinguish speech acts from performatives. These are utterances or types of sentences which are articulated while actually performing the act, or, better said, utterances that are performed acts themselves (Green, *Content, Force*). For example, a performative would be, “I name you the new president” or “I forgive you”.

2.2 Illocutionary Force

Austin also coined the term *illocutionary force*, which is

used [...] to refer to a dimension of communicative acts. [...] Austin's reason for using 'force' begins with the observation that, construed as a bit of observable behavior, the communicative significance of an act may be underdetermined by what has been said or observably done. I bow deeply before you. So far you may not know whether I am paying obeisance, responding to indigestion, or looking for a wayward contact lens. So too, an utterance of a meaningful sentence (which Austin calls a *locutionary act*) such as 'You'll be more punctual in the future,' may leave you wondering whether I am making a prediction or issuing a command or even a threat. The colloquial question, "What is the force of those words?" is often used to elicit an answer. In asking such a question we acknowledge a grasp of those words' meaning but seek to know how that meaning is to be taken—as a threat, as a prediction, or as a command. (Green, *Content, Force...*)

Illocutionary force then, in some way, explains the underlying meaning or purpose of the utterance. However, Cohen and Searle challenged Austin's perception of the *illocutionary force*. Cohen proposes that in some sentences the meaning and the actual utterance correspond, meaning that the sentence's meaning already guarantees the purpose of the utterance. Searle additionally stated that some locutionary acts are already illocutionary acts – it is important to note that for statements such as promises, e. g. “I will read that book” or “I promise to read that book”, the contextual factors are very important, in our case the seriousness of the utterance of a promise (Green).

The distinction between the content of an utterance (locutionary act) and the illocutionary force is, of course, much more complicated than explained above, but we will not go into further details for the purpose of this seminar paper.

2.3 Austin's Categories of Illocutionary Acts

The seminar paper will focus on the initial or Austin's theory of speech acts, although it was further developed by other theorists like Searle.

Austin proposed five categories of illocutionary acts: *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives*, and *expositives*. Their function is explained in Oishi as: “One can exercise judgment (Verdictive), exert influence or exercise power (Exercitive), assume obligation or declare intention (Commissive), adopt attitude, or express feeling (Behabitive), and clarify reasons, argument, or communication (Expositive)” (4).

3 Idioms

In general, idioms are expressions or multi-word units that hold arbitrary meanings. Murar writes that idioms “[...] constitute a special category of lexical items presenting a fixed structure, a greater

rigidity (represented by ready-made structures with small range for variability), structural complexity, as well as a specific behaviour in language use” (1). The reader or listener therefore cannot discern the meaning of the utterance from the individual word units of an idiomatic expression, but has to perceive it as a whole.

Nunberg et al. (in Espinal) divide idiomatic expressions into two parts: *idiomatically combining expressions* (ICEs) and *idiomatic phrases* (IPs). The first category includes idioms that can draw parallelisms with non-idiomatic expressions, such as *spill the beans* (divulge information), where *spill* carries the meaning of ‘divulge’ and *beans* carries the meaning of ‘information’. On the other hand, IPs cannot be taken apart, because the meaning is not tied to individual word units in the expression, but rather to the expression as a whole. A telling example of that is the idiom *kick the bucket* – we cannot say that any part of this idiom can give us an individual meaning that we could connect into a non-arbitrary whole. It also does not allow syntactic mobility, meaning that it is impossible to say *The bucket was kicked by Jack* and for it to still mean the same – *to die*. However, ICEs *do* allow syntactic mobility, making it perfectly plausible to say *The hatchet was buried by Jack and Grace* (Espinal 1398).

Glasbey later posited the following definitions of ICEs and IPs:

- a. ICEs – their aspectual information is compositionality derived;
- b. IPs – their aspectual information is not compositional and is stored in long-term memory (i.e., in the lexicon).

Although this distinction has been well-received by linguists, the division of certain idioms into only these two classes can be problematic to some extent, and this theory is therefore not well-rounded. However, we will focus only on ICEs and IPs for the sake of this seminar paper.

3.1 Idiom Transparency and the Role of Context

In her article on idioms and pragmatics, Vega Moreno writes:

A feature of idioms, even the most opaque ones, is that, unlike lexical items, they are generally composed of words which are familiar to the hearer. The degree of transparency of an idiom would be determined by the extent to which some of the encyclopaedic information made accessible by these words can actually help the hearer to derive an appropriate overall interpretation. At one end of the transparency spectrum, we find very opaque idioms, for which none of the encyclopaedic assumptions made accessible by the words in the string (separately or in combination) helps with the identification of the speaker’s meaning. (394)

An example of an opaque idiom would be *kick the bucket*, where the hearer cannot derive the meaning of the idiom from encyclopaedic knowledge of the word ‘bucket’ or ‘kick’, therefore prompting the hearer to assign tentative meaning to the expression, which consequently preoccupies his thoughts, leading to a more analytic approach to the utterance.

However, research has shown that most idioms are not opaque at all and that most idiomatic expressions have at least some degree of transparency (Vega Moreno 395). Opaque idioms are most likely to correspond to IPs mentioned in this chapter, whereas transparent idioms fit better into the category of ICEs.

Other researches have shown that context is not necessarily the only aspect that influences the interpretation of unknown idioms, but also “[...] the internal semantics of the string [...]” (401).

Therefore, “[i]diom acquisition seems to depend on the accessibility of information both from the context in which the expression is processed and from the concepts encoded by the words in the idiom” (ibid.).

4 English Vs. Slovene Idioms

To perform the analysis, corpora were used to extract pertinent examples. For the English language, the sentences were taken from the English Web Corpus enTenTen15 and Slovenian sentences were taken from the Slovenian corpus Gigafida 2.0, the reference corpus of standard written Slovenian. I purposefully chose examples that were similar in formality, so that the English corpus I chose would not negatively affect the analysis.

The analysis will take a look at these examples on the basis of Austin’s speech act theory and the division of idioms into ICEs and IPs. The main task will be to analyse Slovenian idioms according to these theories and see whether and to what extent they are applicable for Slovenian idioms.

4.1 Categorization into ICEs and IPs

The following table shows the examples taken from both corpora.

Table 1: Examples of corpora-based sentences with idiomatic expressions coloured red

ENGLISH	SLOVENE
Martin tried to investigate, only for big mouth Louise to let the cat out of the bag and give Jimmy King (Nick Miles) time to cover it all up.	Potem pa so na sejmu le spustili mačka iz žaklja . Napovedali so prihod enkratne enočke digitalke. / Dokončno je jedrskega mačka pred mesecem dni spustil iz žaklja njegov najverjetnejši naslednik, sin Gamal.
Here is a film made by an agnostic who hit the bullseye.	[In kateri od njiju je zmagal?] Dnevnikov Jojo je za malenkost bolj zadel v črno , sicer pa sta se njuni napovedi močno približali končnim rezultatom zmagovalk.
Fard trained Muhammad night and day for 3 ½ years before he took over NOI in 1934.	Tako sem dvojni profesor, kar je naporno, ampak gre. Izzivi so tako veliki, da živim dan in noč s svojim strokovnim delom.
Don't talk, sir; hold your tongue.	Čprav si prepričan, da lahko osvojiš naslov prvaka, moraš držati jezik za zobmi . [O svojih velikih pričakovanjih ne smeš govoriti naokrog.] / Pravzaprav so morali držati jezik za zobmi , saj je bilo oglašanje v zvezi z odškodninami strogo prepovedano.
Unfortunately, 2004 set back the Chinese player's progress slightly, but it was the calm before the storm.	Dobrega občutka ob tem mi ne morejo pokvariti niti tisti, ki trdijo, da je to le zatišje pred nevihto . / A morda je bila nedavna umirjenost Lindsay Lohan zgolj zatišje pred nevihto , ki je pretekli konec tedna z vso silo udarila v romantičnih Firencah.
Samantha feels that James is the icing on the cake of her new life at the college.	Vsi smo lahko ponosni na izid. Manjka nam samo še češnja na vrhu torte - državni naslov. /

	Za posladek, kot češnja na vrhu torte , pa je za sam konec nastopila še londonska zasedba Placebo.
The second movement was a piece of cake, and I'm especially pleased with the way the long theme fits the french horn.	Izpiti, ki vas čakajo bodo mala malica , saj ste se v zadnjem času nanje odlično pripravili. / Ja, znanost se hitro razvija. O čemer smo nekoč lahko le ugbali, je dandanes mala malica .
Theresa gets a modelling job in the City and wants to kill two birds with one stone and visit her mum Kathleen in prison while she's there.	Tamkajšnjemu poljedelcu je šinila v glavo zamisel, kako ubiti dve muhi na en mah : zmanjšati število nadležnih opusumov in jih koristno uporabiti.
Going from relationship to relationship, hoping that my charming prince was going to appear out of the blue.	Tega nisem pričakoval, prišlo je nenadoma, kot strela z jasnega . / Pomenil ti je vse, potem pa - kot strela z jasnega - sta se razšla.
Betting is illegal, but police often turn a blind eye towards it.	Smo zaradi potencialno večje varnosti pripravljeni zamižati na eno oko in žrtvovati delček svoje zasebnosti? / Kljub vsemu blišču in luksuzu se ne da zamižati na eno oko in se pretvarjati, da ekonomska kriza ni vplivala na letošnje božične nakupe.
On the weather side, it has been raining cats and dogs since yesterday, frustrating.	Nikoli se ne sprašuje: gremo v Planico? Seveda gremo, pa naj bo sonce, naj pada sneg ali lije kot iz škafa .
*A great guy, amazingly competitive athlete, John will be missed by his friends and foes.	Zdaj se spomnim, da je bil tudi policist zraven. Fant od fare se mi je zdel. / Kljub temu pa je prisotnim deklinam dokazal, da je fant od fare , ki bi s svojim pogumom lahko tudi gore premikal.
She is a strong and brave woman who has been there for me through thick and thin, she is my hero.	V obdobju tiska je bila tiskarska delavnica tisti prostor, v katerem so razmnoževali objekte, ki so, v dobrem ali slabem , zagotavljali širjenje literarnih del. / Pravna fakulteta v Ljubljani je v svojem razvoju delila usodo Univerze v Ljubljani v dobrem in slabem , v prijaznih in v težkih časih.
* You got anything to say, just come out with it.	Po njegovem odhodu so se mnogi opogumili in prišli na dan z besedo . / Kar na dan z besedo , prej ali slej mu boš morala povedati.
I'm looking forward to seeing what other tips and tricks you have up your sleeve.	Bodite previdni, saj ne veste, kaj ima za bregom . / Zdaj vemo, da ima zdravnik/prodajalec/lekarnar vedno nekaj za bregom in da je tisto "nekaj" osebni (finančni) interes.

The two examples of English sentences that are marked by an asterisk do not present actual English idioms, but instead show collocations or frequently used expressions. These examples were taken into account in order to show the discrepancies in the abstract nature of Slovenian and English idiomatic expressions.

The chosen idioms were picked from the great variety of possibilities with regard to their equivalents in the other language. Based on this, I divided them into three categories:

- 1) idiomatic expressions in English and Slovene contain the same lexical units;
- 2) idiomatic expressions in one language have a variation of one of the lexical items in the other language;

3) idiomatic expressions are significantly different in both languages.

Table 2 shows this distinction clearly.

Table 2: Division into lexical content categories

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH AND SLOVENE CONTAIN THE SAME LEXICAL UNITS		IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN ONE LANGUAGE HAVE A VARIATION OF ONE OF THE LEXICAL ITEMS IN THE OTHER LANGUAGE		IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT IN BOTH LANGUAGES	
ENGLISH	SLOVENE	ENGLISH	SLOVENE	ENGLISH	SLOVENE
let the cat out of the bag	<i>spustiti mačko iz žaklja</i>	icing on the cake	<i>češnja na vrhu torte</i>	[it's] raining cats and dogs	<i>lije kot iz škafa</i>
hit the bullseye	<i>zadeti v črno</i>	kill two birds with one stone	<i>[ubiti] dve muhi na en mah</i>	great guy/fellow/chap	<i>fant od fare</i>
night and day	<i>dan in noč</i>	[appear] out of the blue	<i>[prikazati se] kot strela z jasnega</i>	through thick and thin	<i>v dobrem ali/in slabem</i>
hold [one's] tongue	<i>držati jezik za zobmi</i>	turn a blind eye	<i>zamižati na eno oko</i>	come out with it	<i>na dan z besedo</i>
the calm before the storm	<i>zatišje pred nevihto</i>	piece of cake	<i>mala malica</i>	have sth up [one's] sleeve	<i>imeti kaj za bregom</i>

The idiomatic expressions were further divided into ICEs and IPs, as Table 3 will show for the English language, and Table 4 for Slovenian.

Table 3: English idiomatic expressions according to the division into ICEs and IPs

ICEs	IPs
let the cat out of the bag	night and day
hit the bullseye	hold [one's] tongue
kill two birds with one stone	icing on the cake
[appear] out of the blue	piece of cake
great guy/fellow/chap	turn a blind eye
come out with it	[it's] raining cats and dogs
the calm before the storm	through thick and thin
	have sth up [one's] sleeve

Table 4: Slovenian idiomatic expressions according to the division into ICEs and IPs

ICEs	IPs
spustiti mačko iz žaklja	dan in noč
zadeti v črno	brzdati jezik
[ubiti] dve muhi na en mah	češnja na vrhu torte
[prikazati se] kot strela z jasnega	zamižati na eno oko
zatišje pred nevihto	lije kot iz škafa

mala malica	v dobrem in/ali slabem
	imeti kaj za bregom
	na dan z besedo
	fant od fare

It seems that English is a bit more lenient with regard to possible parallelisms to be drawn between the idiomatic lexical units and non-idiomatic versions of the same meaning. However, it is important to note that two of the idiomatic expressions chosen from English are not idiomatic at all, but are rather frequently used expressions (that have idiomatic equivalents in Slovene). Because they are not idiomatic, it is harder to put them down as IPs, although *come out with it* could be regarded as such.

Taking a couple examples from the ICEs in English, we will try to draw parallels with non-idiomatic expressions. ‘Let the cat out of the bag’ could therefore carry the meaning of [REVEAL THE SECRET], with the ‘out of the bag’ part not carrying the brunt of the meaning. To say ‘kill two birds with one stone’ would have the same meaning as saying [TACKLE TWO PROBLEMS AT THE SAME TIME] and ‘to appear out of the blue’ would translate to the non-idiomatic [APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE].

Examples of ICEs in Slovene include ‘spustiti mačko iz žaklja’, which is a parallelism of [IZDATI SKRIVNOST], ‘ubiti dve muhi na en mah’, which would be the non-idiomatic [REŠITI DVA PROBLEMA Z ENIM DEJANJEM] and ‘mala malica’, carrying the non-idiomatic parallel of [NO PROBLEM] or [SMALL PROBLEM].

On the other hand, we cannot simply draw lexical parallels for the IPs in both languages – these are expressions that have to be learned as a part of the lexicon of a language and therefore present the biggest challenge for foreign learners of Slovene and English. This is mostly due to the inability to draw parallels with other, already known words. However, the context of such expressions helps, which will be shown in the following examples.

Some Slovenian idiomatic phrases in Table 1 appear in more than one sentence or they have the following sentence without any idiomatic expressions put in between square brackets. These examples illustrate the power of delivering more information in order to build a context that helps the reader or listener to understand the meaning of the idiomatic expression. While searching for these sentences in Gigafida (using SketchEngine), I realized that most concordances included additional explanation or paraphrase right after the use of the idiomatic expression, presumably to make the message more coherent. Such concordances include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Čeprav si prepričan, da lahko osvojiš naslov prvaka, moraš **držati jezik za zobmi**. [O svojih velikih pričakovanjih ne smeš govoriti naokrog.]
- 2) Tega nisem pričakoval, prišlo je nenadoma, **kot strela z jasnega**.
- 3) Kar **na dan z besedo**, prej ali slej mu boš morala povedati.

In example 1), the part between the square brackets is a direct follow-up sentence to the one containing the idiomatic expression. This follow-up enables the hearer to immediately know what was said, although the illocutionary force of the slightly informal ‘držati jezik za zobmi’ conveys the message clearly to a native speaker of Slovenian. In example 2), ‘prišlo je nenadoma’ functions as a precursor to the used idiomatic expression and in example 3) the verb in the second part of the sentence ‘povedati’ is a

paraphrase for the idiomatic expression. For a learner of Slovenian as a foreign language, this extra lexical information allows a quicker understanding of the utterance.

The English idioms and the chosen examples show a tendency to leave out additional information or a paraphrase, although some examples include it:

4) Don't talk, sir; **hold your tongue**.

5) Theresa gets a modelling job in the City and wants to **kill two birds with one stone** and visit her mum Kathleen in prison while she's there.

4.2 Division according to the Speech Act Theory and the Illocutionary Force

As proposed earlier, this section will deal with the division of idioms according to their illocutionary force within individual categories of illocutionary acts based on Austin's speech act theory.

The following table arranges the English and Slovenian idioms into Austin's illocutionary act categories. The division was made on the basis of corpora examples provided in Table 1, thus bear in mind that the sentential context of idioms – instead of the idiom itself – often provides the clue to the categorization into one of the illocutionary act types.

Table 5: Categorization of idioms based on the type of illocutionary act performed by their context

VERDICTIVE		EXERCITIVE		COMMISSIVE		BEHABITIVE		EXPOSITIVE	
EN	SLO	EN	SLO	EN	SLO	EN	SLO	EN	SLO
let the cat out of the bag	spustiti mačko iz žaklja	hold your tongue	/	/	držati jezik za zobmi	icing on the cake	/	night and day	dan in noč
hit the bullseye	zadeti v črno	come out with it	na dan z besedo			kill two birds with one stone	ubiti dve muhi na en mah	through thick and thin	v dobrem ali/in slabem
the calm before the storm	zatišje pred nevihto					out of the blue	kot strela z jasnega	/	ima za bregom
/	češnja na vrhu torte					turn a blind eye	zamižati na eno oko		
raining cats and dogs	lije kot iz škafa					have up your sleeve	/		
a great guy	fant od fare								

The chosen corpora examples fill all categories of illocutionary acts according to Austin. The least common are commissives and exercitives, leading to the assumption that deontic verbs in a sentence do not play well with idiomatic expressions, since 'morati' and the imperatives 'hold' and 'come out with' assume obligation or exert influence or power. Verdictives are the most common, followed by behabitives and expositives. Since verdictives and behabitives carry the illocutionary force of exercising judgment and adopting an attitude or expressing a feeling, idioms seem to carry a personal note – this would mean that the use of idiom is directly connected to the personal feelings and thoughts of the speaker, which correlates to a more emotional illocutionary force, although it might be subtler.

The yellow-coloured cells in the table present Slovenian idioms where the corpus examples were two – both presented different illocutionary acts according to their context. ‘Češnja na vrhu torte’ and ‘fant od fare’ could also be classified as behabitives, whereas ‘na dan z besedo’ would easily fall under the expositive illocutionary act category.

The focus group of idioms in both languages was not extensive enough to warrant their absolute and final division. The categorization in the table above therefore might not hold true for all instances of use for these idioms and a wider research taking into account many more corpus examples would be necessary to classify with some degree of certainty the illocutionary force of these idioms and their illocutionary act categories.

5 Conclusion

The seminar paper examined chosen idiomatic expressions from corpora-based sentences with regard to their categorization in either ICEs or IPs and their classification under individual illocutionary acts. Austin’s Speech Act Theory was used to provide the theoretical basis for the pragmatics of the used idioms, and context was examined in order to show how idioms work hand in hand with the surrounding lexical units.

Most idioms in English and Slovene function very similarly, although there are some discrepancies, which would be better explained had there been a larger quantity of examples. The seminar paper has also shown that the underlying Speech Act Theory and the theory on ICEs and IPs can be used to examine and study idioms in both English and Slovene.

However, absolute definitions and categorizations on idioms seem impossible, for, as Vega Moreno so succinctly writes, “[t]he most essential feature of idioms is in fact this ability to move back and forth between literalness and looseness, creativity and standardisation” (396).

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A Comparative Overview of the Differences and Similarities between Monolingual and Bilingual First Language Acquisition

Neža Marija Slosar, Ariela Herček

1 Introduction

The most common definition of bilingualism is that it “refers to the ability to use two languages in everyday life” (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, paras. 2). Not much research has been executed on this topic, especially if we compare studies done on monolingual first language acquisition as opposed to bilinguals (ibid). Therefore, this chapter serves as a short overview of some most common questions or issues concerning bilingual children, taken from the article *Bilingualism in the Early Years: What the Science Says*.

The article states that bilingual children are not confused but are instead “code-mixing” (mixing words from two languages in the same sentence). One reason for that is their language environment. Another research shows that “children’s early code mixing adheres to predictable grammar-like rules, which are largely similar to the rules that govern adults’ code mixing” (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 5). Bilingual children have the same limitations pertaining to their vocabulary as their monolingual peers (ibid). Additionally,

[b]ilingual infants may be even more sensitive than monolinguals when it comes to discriminating languages.... By 8 months of age, only bilinguals are still sensitive to the distinction, while monolinguals stop paying attention to subtle variations in facial movements.... Further, studies are beginning to reveal that bilingual children as young as 20-months are able to understand code-mixed sentences, and show similar processing patterns as bilingual adults (Byers-Heinlein, 2013). This would suggest that bilinguals are able to cope with code mixing from an early age. (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 6)

Also relevant is the question of how bilinguals can acquire twice as much as monolinguals do in the same time frame. Kovács and Mehler in the article *Flexible Learning of Multiple Speech Structures in Bilingual Infants* (2009) show “that preverbal 12-month-old bilingual infants have become more flexible at learning speech structures than monolinguals.... Hence, bilinguals may acquire two languages in the time in which monolinguals acquire one because they quickly become more flexible learners” (n. g.).

Another very common question is whether “bilingualism makes children smarter? So far, bilingual cognitive advantages have only been demonstrated using highly sensitive laboratory-based methods, and it is not known whether they play a role in everyday life” (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 10). Even though there is some evidence on how bilingual children are better in social understanding, we cannot generalize the fact that bilingualism necessarily improves intelligence (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, paras. 8—11).

Another question to consider is the time – when is it too late for proper language acquisition? Although there are many different research-supported suggestions where the term “critical period” plays an important role, Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams claim:

Bilinguals who learn two languages from birth are referred to as simultaneous bilinguals, and those who learn a first language followed by a second language—whether as toddlers or as adults—are referred to as sequential bilinguals. The evidence points to fairly robust advantages for simultaneous bilinguals relative to sequential bilinguals. They tend to have better accents, more diversified vocabulary, higher grammatical proficiency, and greater skill in real-time language processing. (2013, para. 24)

Last but no less important is whether bilingual children are more likely to have language difficulties, delays, or disorders. The currently available studies show that there is absolutely no greater degree of likelihood that bilinguals (in comparison with monolinguals) will have language difficulties, delays in learning, or language disorders. (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, paras. 28—32) Still, there are some challenges for doctors and speech pathologists, since it is difficult to treat “bilinguals using a monolingual measure, [because] you are more likely to find false evidence of delay” (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 30).

Precisely because the standard for first language acquisition research is based in most part only on monolingual children, it is important to provide a rudimentary overview of currently available research and highlight some methodological issues that arise with regard to bilingual first language acquisition research.

In chapter 2 of her book *The Acquisition of Two Languages from Birth (A Case Study)*, Annick De Houwer writes that “[t]he study of children growing up with two languages from birth is comparatively new” (1990, p. 9). The earliest research performed with bilingual children on their acquisition of first language(s) and for which we could confidently claim trustworthy as far as methodology is concerned, appeared in the 1980s. This research was executed by, among others, Jurgen Meisel and his colleagues, Annick De Houwer, Elizabeth Lanza, and Marilyn Vihman, in various countries around the world (Genesee, 2006).

The first issue to discuss when taking a critical view on the research of bilingual first language acquisition (hereafter BFLA) is whether the research subjects were children who started acquiring two languages from their birth, which would mean that they are simultaneous bilinguals, or if the children learned the languages successively with a certain time period between the beginning of the acquisition of first language A and second language B. The question of how much time is required in between the beginning of acquiring language A and language B roughly defines whether a child is a simultaneous or a successive bilingual, but it has been the subject of disagreement among scholars. Defining the critical time period in between the learning of languages A and B in successive as well as simultaneous bilinguals is best decided on by comprehensive research in the field of BFLA. Genesee (2006) states:

Whether children who acquire an additional language within one, two, or three years of birth comprise different kinds of dual language learners is an empirical question, one that can only be answered by examining whether dual language learning that begins at different ages is different in kind or rate from that of dual language learning that begins at birth. (p. 2)

Serratrice (2018) summarizes the distinction between bilingual first language acquisition BFLA, which concerns children who acquire two languages from birth or within the first year of life, and the early second language acquisition ESLA, where children learn their second language later in early childhood, which the author defines as the period between ages zero and six. However, “there are fundamental differences between these two contexts of acquisition” (p. 15).

Children with ESLA usually hear and use their L1 and L2 in different contexts:

While BFLA children are typically exposed to two languages in their home environment, ESLA children tend to hear a first language (L1) at home, and only later are they exposed to a second language (L2) when they start attending some regular form of childcare in the community. (Serratrice, 2018, p. 16)

For BFLA, it is generally accepted that children more or less treat the two languages as their first languages and essentially the same developmental mechanisms that are present in monolingual FLA also apply to BFLA. At the same time, Serratrice (2018) claims that the ways in which children acquiring two languages from birth understand and produce language are significantly different from those of monolinguals.

2 Methodological Issues

Research that would allow for reliable examination of any linguistic phenomenon is based heavily on methodology that allows for statistically significant and trustworthy results. Annick De Houwer claims that there are five questions or specific issues that help to discern the reliability of the research.

Firstly, there is the question of “the nature of data, i.e. whether the data in a particular study are longitudinal or cross-sectional” (De Houwer, 1990, p. 13). In general, the cross-sectional studies focus on specific issues on the basis of longitudinal studies, which is also why Rosansky advocates the use of longitudinal studies over the cross-sectional ones (ibid).

Secondly, it is important to investigate what data collection technique was used in individual studies. The questions that arise here are: “did the investigators use a diary method, video- or audio-recordings, a mixed method, or perhaps only infrequent notes? Was the investigator the only data collector or was there a counterbalancing for both languages?” (De Houwer, 1990, p. 13).

The third issue concerns the transcription method that was used, which has to be as clear as possible.

The next question to ask is whether the data was noted phonetically or orthographically, which is especially important in studies with children under the age of two – in such cases, phonetic transcriptions or manual records are indispensable. Otherwise, “the researcher might be over-interpreting what the child is actually saying” (De Houwer, 1990, p. 14).

The last question concerns the use of quantification, which “greatly expands the possibilities for empirical testing and often leads to new hypotheses and theories which, without the use of quantification, might not have arisen (van der Lely 1983)” (De Houwer, 1990, p. 14).

Additionally, De Houwer highlights the importance of MLU or Mean Length of Utterance measure as quantitative information. However, she also brings into question the reliability of the MLU measure in BFLA, especially due to the fact that it was created “for the analysis of standard English early child language only” (1990, p. 15). Furthermore, it is difficult to take a tool that is primarily used in the research on monolingual acquisition of first language and apply it to BFLA studies. Therefore, an alternative measure for determining language abilities of children is needed, especially when it comes to BFLA (ibid).

Not only is a different approach in comparison to monolingual FLA crucial in BFLA studies, but it should also be adjusted to the nature of bilingualism as a gradient measure rather than “a dichotomous category framed in terms of bilingual versus monolingual” (Serratrice, 2018, p. 16). Such conceptualization would help provide a better and more nuanced understanding of BFLA.

A conclusion of the status of research on BFLA up until now, especially taking into account the cross-linguistic influence in bilingual individuals, would tell us that BFLA is best examined by using a naturalistic approach in longitudinal studies (Döpke, 2000, p. 3).

3 Cross-Linguistic Influence In BFLA

Up until the year 2000 and several years afterwards, there was agreement among most researchers that “bilingual children are able to differentiate their two language systems from a very early age” (Notley, 2007, p. 229). This view was supported by authors such as Paradis and Genesee in 1996, Müller in 1998, and Döpke in 2000, and came to be known as the separate language hypothesis. However, Notley states that it “doesn’t exclude the possibility of systematic cross-linguistic influence” (2007, p. 229).

The phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence in bilingual first language acquisition as a separate study starts with Hulk and Müller in 2000, who proposed a hypothesis that would predict solely when to expect cross-linguistic influence:

[Hulk and Müller] suggest that: “...cross-linguistic influence...is possible only if the two following conditions are both met:

(i) Cross-linguistic influence occurs at the interface between two modules of grammar, and more particularly at the interface between pragmatics and syntax in the so-called C-domain, since this is an area which has been claimed to create problems in L1 acquisition also.

(ii) Syntactic cross-linguistic influence occurs only if language A has a syntactic construction which may seem to allow more than one syntactic analysis and, at the same time, language B contains evidence for just one of these possible analyses. In other words, there has to be a certain overlap of the two systems at the surface level.” (Notley, 2007, pp. 229–230).

The assumption that Hulk and Müller continue with is that if these two conditions are met, then “the *direction of influence* will be from the language containing strong evidence for a construction compatible with default discourse licensing strategies, into the language with limited evidence for such a strategy” (Notley, 2007, p. 230).

The idea of the default discourse licensing strategies was then later further developed with the notion of *universal pragmatic licensing strategies*, which have to be mapped onto language specific syntactic rules if we suppose that the child starts with a minimal default grammar. As Notley writes, “[a] bilingual child presented with input which reinforces his/her default grammar may persist longer at a universal stage. Moreover, [Hulk and Müller] suggest that this universal stage corresponds to a stage when the C-domain is radically underspecified” (2007, p. 230).

This cross-linguistic influence hypothesis was supported in Hulk and Müller’s studies by the evidence on object drop and root infinitive use in the following bilingual children: Dutch-French, German-French and German-Italian. The constant in these three pairs of languages is the presence of both a Germanic and a Romance language, which differ in their use of object drop, but not in the use of root infinitives. The results of Hulk and Müller’s 2000 and 2001 studies confirm their hypothesis:

[B]efore the C-system is in place, Germanic-Romance bilingual children use object drop in their Romance language to a higher degree than monolingual children, while they show no significant difference to their monolingual peers in terms of root infinitive use. (Notley, 2007, p. 230)

An issue that arises is when cross-linguistic influence occurs after the instantiation of the C-system, since Hulk and Müller's hypothesis does not account for this phenomenon.

For example, bilingual children acquiring a pro-drop and a non-pro-drop language show deviant use of lexical subjects in their pro-drop language (Paradis & Navarro 2003; Serratrice & Sorace 2003; Serratrice, Sorace & Paoli 2004), and this has been found even after the age of 3 in the Italian-English bilinguals studied by Serratrice, Sorace and Paoli (2004). To account for this within the framework of Hulk & Müller's hypothesis, Serratrice et al. (2004) propose to extend the theory to include cases of cross-linguistic influence after instantiation of the C-system. (Notley, 2007, pp. 230–231)

The issue directly related to cross-linguistic influence is language differentiation, which “refers to children's ability to treat their two languages as separate and independent systems” (Serratrice, 2013, p. 3). This idea of language differentiation was promoted by Meisel in 2001 and 2007 studies via the Autonomous Development Hypothesis (ADH). According to ADH, “the course of bilinguals' language development is not thought to be qualitatively different from monolinguals” (ibid). As a hypothesis, ADH is principled by three assumptions:

- 1) bilingual children differentiate their two languages from early on;
- 2) linguistic development in bilingual children proceeds as it does in monolingual children;
- 3) the nature of the grammatical knowledge that bilingual children ultimately attain in each of their languages is qualitatively indistinguishable from monolinguals'. (Serratrice, 2013, pp. 3–4)

The current literature dealing with the level of speech perception, phonology, the lexicon and morpho-syntax substantially supports early linguistic differentiation, which is the first assumption of ADH.

The second assumption is currently the most relevant in the “debate on the empirical evidence and theoretical significance of cross-linguistic influence in terms of quantitative and/or qualitative difference” (Serratrice, 2013, p. 4), and the studies are still on-going, especially in connection to the third assumption of the ADH, which claims that the nature of grammatical knowledge in bilinguals is qualitatively the same as in monolingual learners.

Serratrice (2013) states that the most extensive research on qualitative and/or quantitative differences in bilingual and monolingual first language acquisition has been performed in the field of morpho-syntax. She also gives two basic scenarios on what counts as cross-linguistic influence, noting that “the notion of cross-linguistic influence is incompatible with the ADH hypothesis only in its strongest version where no allowances are made for any qualitative differences between monolingual and bilingual development” (p. 5).

In the first scenario, “a phenomenon is observed in bilinguals' comprehension and/or production of language A which is completely unattested in monolingual speakers of language A” (Serratrice, 2013, p. 4). A study performed by Döpke in 1998 showed this phenomenon in three German-English bilingual children and their production of complex verb constructions in German, where the word order in their constructions did not match the one used by monolingual German-speaking children, but instead (plausibly) copied the only grammatical word order from English. This study showed a qualitative difference between monolinguals and bilinguals (ibid), although it is important to note that the sample size (three children) was inarguably too small to generalize such linguistic behaviour to all bilingual German-English children, let alone to all bilinguals across the world.

The second scenario supposes that:

[Q]uantitative differences are found between bilinguals and monolinguals in language A that can plausibly be attributed to the co-existence of language B in the bilinguals' environment, as opposed to other group or individual differences (e.g. age; level of linguistic development). (Serratrice, 2013, p. 4)

Serratrice states that language B can influence language A in a bilingual environment in such a way that it reinforces a phenomenon also present in monolingual development. An example of a study with results that showed such quantitative differences is Serratrice's 2007 research performed with "a comprehension task for English-Italian bilingual and Italian monolingual 8-year-olds" (Serratrice, 2013, p. 5). The study uncovered a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of both groups of children "to accept an overt third person pronoun as co-referential with a subject antecedent" (ibid) in comparison to adult Italian monolinguals, although "the bilinguals were ... significantly more likely than the monolingual children to do so" (ibid). However, as this study was performed with 8-year-olds, it does not necessarily show linguistic behaviour on the basis of cross-linguistic influence in language acquisition, as the majority of literature on BFLA claims that it is only sensible to perform such research with children up to 6 years old, before they start attending school. The main reason for this is that children who begin their schooling at the same time also begin structured language learning led by teachers and any qualitative or quantitative differences noted after those years cannot be attributed only to natural language development (Genesee, 2019).

4 Differences and Similarities In First Language Acquisition Of Monolinguals And Bilinguals

This chapter focuses on the comparison of only a few elements of language acquisition, although there are some very detailed studies (on the basis of Hulk and Müller's cross-linguistic influence hypothesis) which show:

that quantitative differences between monolingual and bilingual children do exist for a range of linguistic phenomena including anaphoric subject pronouns, pronominal object clitics, specific and generic noun phrases, adjectival placement, nominal compounds. Qualitative differences have also been observed for the ordering of verb and complements, wh-fronting and subject-verb inversion and the position of clitics in restructuring contexts. (Serratrice, 2013, p. 5)

The following sections will provide a brief overview of what the science says on phonetics, vocabulary development, morphosyntactic development, and the pragmatic comparison of mono- and bilingual children.

4.1 Phonetics

In one study the researchers examined the capacity of 4-month-old infants to identify their maternal language when phonologically similar languages are contrasted. It was a comparison between mono- and bilingual infants. Both groups could discriminate between languages (Spanish/Catalan vs. English). Another experiment found that infants growing up in bilingual environments had no preference for either of the familiar languages. "Moreover, when their maternal language was contrasted either with English or Italian, the bilingual group showed a similar pattern in both cases, consisting of significantly longer latencies for the familiar language" (Bosch and Gallés, 1997).

Another phonetic experiment was performed by Mattock, Polka, Rvachew and Krehm (2010). They compared 17-month-old infants in their performance on a word learning task using the Switch task. The results were as follows:

Bilingual infants looked significantly longer to switch vs. same trials, but English and French monolinguals did not, suggesting that bilingual infants can learn word-object associations when the phonetic conditions favor their input. Monolingual infants likely failed because the bilingual mode of presentation increased phonetic variability and did not match their real-world input. (Mattock, Polka, Rvachew and Krehm, 2010)

To confirm this hypothesis, the second experiment included only “monolingual infants with nonce word tokens restricted to native language pronunciations” (Mattock, Polka, Rvachew and Krehm, 2010). Results show that monolinguals succeed in this test. Furthermore, the “phonetic variability impacts how infants perform in the switch task in ways that contribute to differences in monolingual and bilingual performance. Moreover, both monolinguals and bilinguals are developing adaptive speech processing skills that are specific to the language(s) they are learning” (ibid).

The researchers also noticed some other differences in sensitivity to language prosody between mono- and bilinguals.

Differences between neonates exposed to two languages versus one suggest flexibility in the processes simultaneous bilinguals engage to learn language; this is attested to by evidence that the phonemic boundaries in their two languages may remain open longer than is found among monolinguals; they use facial cues longer than monolinguals, arguably to differentiate between their developing languages; and they use prosodic differences in their developing languages to begin learning the grammars of each. (Genesee, 2019, p. 304)

4.2 Vocabulary development

As mentioned before, it is impossible to compare mono- and bilingual children using the same measures. Based on this, if researchers and clinicians do not apply bilingual-specific measures, the results may not be true and reliable. This is especially pertinent in their measurement of bilingual children’s vocabulary, as there is a misconception that bilingual children know fewer words than their monolingual peers. Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams try to explain this misconception as follows:

Science has revealed an important property of early bilingual children’s language knowledge that might explain this misperception: while bilingual children typically know fewer words in each of their languages than do monolingual learners of those languages, this apparent difference disappears when you calculate bilingual children’s “conceptual vocabulary” across both languages (Marchman et al., 2010). That is, if you add together known words in each language, and then make sure you don’t double-count cross-language synonyms (e.g., dog and perro), then bilingual children know approximately the same number of words as monolingual children (Pearson, Fernández, & Oller, 1993; Pearson & Fernández, 1994). (2013, para. 28)

Furthermore, a study in 2010 performed by Marchman, Fernald and Hurtado shows that “links between efficiency of lexical access and vocabulary knowledge in bilinguals parallel those previously reported for Spanish and English monolinguals” (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 15).

Hence:

[I]f a Spanish/English bilingual toddler knows 50 Spanish words and 50 English words, she will probably not appear to be as good at communicating when compared to her monolingual cousin who knows 90 English words. However, assuming 10 of the toddler’s Spanish words are also known in English, then the toddler has a conceptual vocabulary of 90 words, which matches that of her cousin. (Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 16)

This hypothetical experiment is later supported and described by other researches. Additionally, research by Comeau, Genesee, and Mendelson (2010) shows evidence “that bilingual children match monolinguals in conversational abilities; for example, when somebody uses a confusing or mispronounced

word, or says something ambiguous, bilingual children can repair the conversation with the same skill as monolinguals” (Byers-Henlein and Lew-Williams, 2013, para. 16).

4.3 Morphosyntactic development

Both mono- and bilingual “vocabulary size and growth are related to grammatical complexity” (Genesee, 2019, p. 310). Bilingual children acquire “differentiated grammars”, which means that they acquire complete grammar from both languages.

In principle, young simultaneous bilinguals could acquire separate grammars early in development, but their grammars might develop differently from those of monolinguals. In fact, in-depth studies of the acquisition of specific grammatical structures and constraints indicate that, for the most part, young bilinguals exhibit the same patterns of morphosyntactic development as monolinguals, other things being equal (see De Houwer, 2011; Paradis et al., 2011, for reviews). (Genesee, 2019, p. 311)

Furthermore, many experiments claim the acquisition of two “separate” grammars, not just one mixed from both languages, even though code-mixing is shown to be quite common.

Paradis and Genesee (1996) found that young French-English bilinguals in Montreal exhibited the same patterns of usage, with respect to finite verbs, subject pronouns, and verbal negation, as same-age monolingual French and English learners. These are language-specific grammatical properties, and, thus, the bilingual learners in Paradis and Genesee’s study can be said to exhibit both language-specific and language-appropriate usage. (Genesee, 2019, p. 311)

Those same patterns between mono- and bilingual children support the idea that “the same neuro-cognitive processes drive language learning in both groups of learners” (Genesee, 2019, p. 311). Another similarity is also omitting “function or closed-class words and grammatical morphology during the two-word stage and in some of their three-word and even their multi-word utterances” (ibid). For both groups, it is also true that there is a “correlation between vocabulary size and overall complexity of utterances produced” (ibid).

There are of course some differences between mono- and bilinguals, for example, if a child is far more exposed just to a majority language, then the “grammatical competence in the minority language can begin to diminish” (Genesee, 2019, p. 311). Moreover, “[t]his could result in deviations in underlying knowledge and in overt use of specific grammatical structures and constraints in comparison to typical monolingual patterns (Montrul, 2008)” (ibid). There are also two explanations on cross-linguistic influences on grammar.

Hulk and Müller (2000) argued that crosslinguistic effects are more likely when the grammatical constraints or properties of the two languages overlap. For example, with respect to the use of sentential subjects, Spanish allows subjects to be null or overt, but English requires overt subjects. The optional use of null subjects in Spanish might “invite” influence from English to Spanish, but the other way around is less likely because English requires sentential subjects. The second explanation entails issues related to language dominance. If children are more proficient in one language than the other, crosslinguistic effects from the dominant to the non-dominant language can occur, as was found in Yip and Matthews’ Cantonese-English bilingual children. (Genesee, 2019, p. 312)

As with all other aspects of language acquisition, a sufficient exposure to both languages is also important for morpho-syntactic acquisition. If a child does not receive enough exposure in one or both languages, then they are not able to fully acquire grammar.

In brief, studies of the morphosyntactic development of bilinguals has shown that, given adequate learning environments, they acquire differentiated grammars from early in development and that their patterns of development in each language are like those of children acquiring the same languages monolingually. Some differences in morphosyntactic development have been noted and can take the form of actual deviations from monolingual patterns or simply atypical but nevertheless acceptable usage. Differences between simultaneous and monolingual learners in this domain of language learning can often be attributable to the context of language learning and, more specifically, how much exposure and what kind of exposure bilingual learners have to each language. Crosslinguistic differences in grammatical properties of each language can also play a role. (Genesee, 2019, p. 313)

4.4 Pragmatic view and code-switching

First, let us take a quick look at the environment which is “created” around bilinguals. Köppe and Meisel in their article *Code-switching in Bilingual First Language Acquisition* briefly describe the first “language shock” of bilingual child being raised in a monolingual community. They understand “code-switching” as:

[t]he ability to select the language according to external factors like the particular interlocutor, the situational context, the topic of conversation, etc. Concerning grammatical competence, adequate code-switching requires that switches within one sentence observe specific grammatical constraints. (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 277)

On the other hand, “code-mixing” is understood as “violat[ing] syntactic or pragmatic constraints on code-switching established by the language use of [a child’s] bilingual community” (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 277).

The fact that most children raised bilingually in an otherwise monolingual community apparently experience what Arnberg (1987: 72) calls a ‘language shock’, i.e. the fact that most people only understand one of their languages, seems to reinforce the development of those interpersonal distinctions and to contribute to the awareness of the child’s own bilingualism. In consequence, self-corrections in cases when the child addresses someone in the wrong language are observed quite early: Vihman (1985: 313) notes the age of 2;0 and Taeschner (1983: 171) the age of 2;6. (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 278)

This is one of the first differences, which has also impacted language acquisition and cognitive development through social context.

Another important fact is that even though “children began to repeat their own utterances in both languages in order to attract both their parents’ attention or in order to assure that the content of their utterance was understood.... [p]arents normally understand utterances of both languages and react even when addressed in the ‘wrong’ language” (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 278).

Köppe and Meisel later also describe bilingual abilities in the following years and how being bilingual affects them:

As a consequence of their increasing bilingual awareness during their third year, children begin to comment on their own language use and to ask their parents for translations (see Clyne 1987b; Taeschner 1983). This is reported as early as age 2;2 by Kielhofer and Jonekeit (1983: 45). Note that such metalinguistic awareness clearly indicates separation of the two languages and also the child’s ability to switch, both of which nevertheless are present earlier than the child’s bilingual awareness. [...] Fantini (1985: 69) reports that his son began to quote other people’s utterances in the original language at the age of 3;5. According to Kielhofer (1987: 143f.), at the age of 4;1, a French-German bilingual boy used code-switching, in reporting a conversation, to mark his own utterances in contrast to those of other speakers, which he translated. (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 279)

Authors finish their description with bilingual children from the age of four onward, who “are reported to use ‘marked language choice’ (Fantini 1985: 66ff.) as a stylistic means of expression, in order to amuse or

to tease the hearer or even to exclude a third person from the conversation” (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 279).

The article also studies the relations between pragmatic function and grammatical development, where the former is especially significant in BFLA research. The authors conclude that:

The development of pragmatic functions of code-switching, however, seems to be related to grammatical development only in a more general sense. Remember that language choice according to the interlocutor may occur at sentence boundaries and, consequently, does not need to observe grammatical constraints. Rather, pragmatic aspects of code-switching, largely influenced by external factors like language use in the family, the parents' expectations about language choice and their reactions to mixing, etc., may contribute to an early separation of languages as well as to the development of specific strategies helping to avoid mixing. (Köppe and Meisel, 1995, p. 297)

5 Conclusion

Genesee (2019) writes that studies on morpho-syntactic development of bilinguals have shown that, if the learning environment encourages learning of both languages to a very similar extent, there are no differences in the patterns of language development in bilingual children when compared to those of monolingual children. In general, scholars seem to agree that the nature of language acquired by bilinguals and monolinguals is virtually the same and that, up until the beginning of schooling, bilinguals acquire the same language knowledge across all areas as monolinguals do.

However, Genesee does point out that unequal exposure below a certain minimum level to both languages may lead to “diminished competence and altered development trajectories in one or both languages” (2019, p. 315), as was pointed out in the study by Oller, Pearson, and Cobo-Lewis in 2007. Nonetheless, bilingual children seem to need less time to learn a language than monolinguals – and bilinguals have to learn *two* – while achieving “remarkably similar levels of competence” (ibid).

The similarities in bilingual and monolingual developmental patterns, which were briefly described in chapter 4 of this paper, “argue that the same underlying neuro-cognitive processes and strategies underlie and support dual language acquisition and monolingual acquisition” (Genesee, 2019, p. 315).

It is also necessary to mention the differences that appear in BFLA and monolingual first language acquisition. Mostly, these differences appear at the level of phonetics, where “simultaneous bilinguals have been found to tolerate irregularities in phonotactic constraints on spoken language in comparison to monolinguals, to exhibit delays in distinguishing some phonemic contrasts that are subtly different in their two languages, and, sometimes, but not always, to show crosslinguistic influences that are usually short-term” (Genesee, 2019, p. 315). These differences can mostly be attributed to the contexts of learning, linguistic differences in the languages they are learning, as well as in the level of exposure and input. Additionally, simultaneous bilinguals adopt other methods to successfully overcome the challenges of learning two languages at once:

... [T]his is evident in their use of language-specific prosodic patterns to bootstrap into the grammar of each language, their ‘violation’ of the mutual exclusivity bias to acquire vocabulary in two languages, and their extended use of facial cues to distinguish their languages, among others. (Genesee, 2019, p. 315)

However, the question of suitable methodology in BFLA research still remains, as there is still an insufficient number of researches performed with bilingual children in longitudinal naturalistic studies, which represent the most suitable method for BFLA research. Moreover, Serratrice (2018) also claims that bilingualism should be studied as a gradient measure rather than a dichotomy between monolingual and bilingual first language acquisition, which has gained some ground, especially with the distinction of bilingualism into BFLA and ESLA, as well as simultaneous bilingualism in contrast to sequential or successive bilingualism.

Several hypotheses and theories for BFLA have been put forward, among them the cross-linguistic influence (Hulk and Müller) and the Autonomous Development Hypothesis (Meisel), but these have not yet been tested with larger data pools (with a statistically significant number of children) and/or using suitable methodology. There are also multiple inconsistencies in both hypotheses that were briefly presented in this paper, as they do not apply to all areas of linguistic development.

In general, this paper has provided a short overview of the current knowledge on BFLA and the similarities and differences that appear in first language acquisition of monolinguals and bilinguals based on available research. However, additional research applying suitable methodology should be performed in order to supply a more detailed look into bilingual language development in early childhood.

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PROSE FICTION

The Raven (as told from the perspective of the raven)

Breda Hribernik

It was a late December night as far as I remember, and I had just made my great escape: ran away from that crazy scientist that believed he could make me talk. He took me from my mother when I was a small hatchling in order to see if a raven could be taught to speak. Bah! How wrong he was! One word was all he could get out of me: “Nevermore”. You can clearly tell that he was crazy—who on earth, being given the chance to teach an animal a word, would decide that, yes, “nevermore” is the word, that is the jackpot, that is what is going to make me famous. And you teach that to a raven. We are smart birds, I will not lie, but from the aspect of talking, I think that a parrot would have been more useful for his study.

I would have told him that but my vocabulary ended with “nevermore”.

Now, my great escape was well planned: open the window when he’s not looking and fly away whenever possible. There was just one teeny tiny detail I forgot about – I was an indoors raven and it was DECEMBER. FREEZING DECEMBER. So, naturally, I started looking for a place to stay as one would in my shoes. Except that I was not wearing shoes. Or a coat. Or a scarf. Or a hat.

Anyway, back to the point. I did find this house. Since I was aware of the polite concept of knocking on one’s door in order to be allowed inside, I tried that. How does a raven knock you may wonder? Well it is simple, but I will not get into details. In short - there was no response at the door, so I decided to try the next best thing: the window. Maybe it would be open.

Once at a suitable window, I did what every normal bird does to a window: I flew into it a few times and ... Behold! Someone had opened it! I quickly flew in, looking for a place high enough to land. And boy, did I find a place. Let me tell you, there was this really nice statue above the door that I was probably knocking on earlier. I finally relaxed, feeling warm.

But then I saw the guy. I began having second thoughts of landing at his place.

“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” he said, “art sure no craven, ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”

Even though I was an experiment subject I was not a rude bird, so I replied “Nevermore.” My real name is actually Jerry, but SOMEONE decided to only teach me the word “nevermore”.

The guy was looking at me weirdly.

“Other friends have flown before—on the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.”

What does one say to that?! Probably something comforting, but again, I only knew one word and that was “Nevermore”. It was probably not good for the fellow’s spirit. However, I still muttered it out.

“Doubtless,” said he, “what it utters is its only stock and store caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore of ‘Never—nevermore’.”

I was really starting to question this fellow’s sanity at this point, like “I’m just a raven, not a priest in a confessional.” And then, THEN, he had the audacity to wheel his chair closer to me. Did he not understand personal space?! Was he really so devoid of knowing what friends are that I excited him so much?!

Then it got really weird.

“Wretch,” he cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore; quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”

I had no idea who this Lenore was, but all I could say was “Nevermore”.

“Prophet!” said he, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—on this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”

Now, I didn’t really understand it all, but no one will call me, Jerry the raven, a thing of evil. I would have cursed him out, but all I could say was (yet again) “Nevermore”.

“Prophet!” said he, “thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil! By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn, it shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”

“I don’t know this Lenore you idiot!” was what I thought I had screamed, but all that came out was “Nevermore”.

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” he shrieked, upstarting — “Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken! Leave my loneliness unbroken! — quit the bust above my door! Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”

I would have flown away, but I was honestly starting to enjoy the kid’s dramatics. He honestly thought that a raven, a raven that could only say one word, would give him the answers to his life questions? I toyed with him a final time and said:

“Nevermore.”

Parts of the story quoted from:

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Raven." *Gleeditions*, 17 Apr. 2011, www.gleeditions.com/theraven/students/pages.asp?lid=310&pg=5. Originally published in *The Raven*, by Edgar Allan Poe, Harper & Brothers, 1884.

See You in Spring

Lir K

Lare was often told that ze was brave by the townsfolk when ze came down to the village for supplies. Which wasn't all that often anyway, as the lighthouse was almost three hours away from the nearest settlement, and ze kept the chickens and a small garden next to it on top of the cliff.

“It must be so hard, living there all alone, with no one to talk to. And keeping that huge light burning... You're so brave, dear boy,” the herb seller would say every time Lare came to her shop, patting zir cheek in a motherly way while she packed zir purchase into zir shoulder bag. Ze just smiled awkwardly at that, not replying and lifting zir hand in goodbye as ze left the shop.

Truth be told, people scared ze a bit. Even before Lare's grandfather passed away and left zir alone to keep the light on top of the lighthouse burning, ze only came down to the village every now and then, for the oil, the spices and to sell the thick woollen sweaters that Lare's grandfather used to make. Speaking of which, ze was almost out of yarn, so it would be wise to purchase some while ze was here – who knows when the next storm would hit and cut the small peninsula on which the lighthouse stood away from the land again. And ze needed thicker socks for the winter anyway.

No, ze was not brave, Lare decided as ze stopped by the stand selling yarn, thread and a few other wares. Ze was so engrossed in choosing between a skein of moss green yarn and one on which the colours seemed to alternate between varying shades of purple and blue, that ze almost did not notice a presence behind zir until the person spoke.

“I would personally recommend the green one, as it matches your eyes better, but I have to admit that the variegated one is something special as well and would look great on a sweater.”

Lare turned around to face a smiling stranger who grinned amicably at zir.

“I haven't seen you here before. Are you new to town?” the man asked, still smiling.

“No. I just don't come down from the lighthouse all that often,” Lare replied. Ze noticed ze was still holding both skeins in his hands, so ze lifted them slightly, hoping the man would understand that ze was about to pay and leave. That did not seem to stop the seller from talking Lare's ear off, however, as he kept going on about the various skeins and asking if Lare had any project in mind for the two ze purchased, while he stored Lare's coins in a box beneath the table and wrapped zirs skeins in brown paper. He did not seem to mind Lare's lack of replies, and Lare was quietly grateful for that.

Ze was already turning to leave when the yarn seller caught ze by zir sleeve.

“What's your name, by the way? You never said.”

“Lare.”

“Lare,” the yarn seller carefully repeated, almost as if testing how it sounded on his tongue. “I'm Ainsley.”

Lare just nodded zir head and walked off.

“I come here every third Friday,” Ainsley all but shouted behind him, but Lare ignored it and walked on.

The walk to the lighthouse took Lare longer with a shoulder bag full of the things ze bought, but ze managed to make it back before noon. Ze put down the bag in the kitchen, before going to the garden to pick up a few tomatoes and throw a few handfuls of feed to the chickens.

It wasn't until after the lunch, that ze finally unpacked the bag. Pulling out the packet with the yarn, ze unwrapped it carefully, so as not to tear the paper that could be reused later. To zir surprise, there was another skein of dark but still vibrant red next to the two skeins ze had purchased. Ainsley must've slipped it in while Lare was busy ignoring his chatter. Or perhaps it was an accident. Either way, Lare felt guilty keeping something that ze did not pay for. It seemed like ze would have to go back to the village in three weeks' time after all.

Time went by quickly. Lare woke up every day, fed the chickens, cooked a meal or two, read books and started working on zir socks. Ze was almost done with the first one, but it seemed like ze had miscalculated how much yarn ze'd need to make a pair.

The skein of dark red yarn that Ainsley gave zir was still waiting untouched on top of the dresser opposite to zir bed. It was a nice colour, Lare thought when ze noticed the skein every now and then when ze was getting ready for bed. But ze didn't really know what to do with it.

The third Friday of the month finally came and Lare took zir shoulder bag from the hook by the door, putting it on zir shoulder. Ze savoured the sunlight on zir skin when ze walked down to the village. The days were getting increasingly colder and the rainy season would probably start in a few weeks if Lare was guessing correctly.

Ze stopped by the herb store again, and the shop keeper seemed surprised to see zir.

"Back so soon? Have you finally decided to visit us more often?" she asked, patting zir cheek as always. Lare shook zir head and smiled at her before leaving.

Ainsley's stand was set on the same corner of the market place as the last time and Lare took the time to observe Ainsley from afar for a bit, how he patiently listened to an elderly woman and answered her questions about the dyeing process, how he bantered with the boy from the stand next to his, who was selling herbs and honey, how easily he flirted with the ladies who seemed to be more interested in Ainsley himself than the embroidery threads for embroidery that they allegedly came to buy. Lare slipped closer to the stand while Ainsley seemed busy chatting with a pair of them, searching for the same moss green that ze purchased the last time. But Ainsley seemed to notice Lare nonetheless, and immediately turned to zir, ignoring the stares from from the two girls whom he was talking to before.

"You came back!" Ainsley said, as if it weren't obvious, the same amicable smile wide on his face.

Lare just shrugged and handed him the two skeins of yarn and the coins to pay for them and the dark red one that Ainsley gave zir the last time.

Ainsley wrapped the skeins up again and then counted the money. He took two of the silvers and slid the third one back across the table towards Lare.

“It’s for the red skein,” Lare explained, pushing the coin back across the table. Ainsley shook his head and frowned a bit, pushing it back towards Lare.

“The red one was a gift.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah.”

“In that case... thank you. But please, take the money anyway,” Lare tried to persuade him, but Ainsley just shook his head again and repeated, “It was a gift.”

One of the two girls that Ainsley was talking to before Lare approached the stall, giggled into her hand, while the other elbowed her in the ribs trying to shush her unnoticeably and failing miserably. Ainsley seemed like he wanted to laugh as well, and Lare was not exactly sure why, so ze just nodded and put the coin back into the coat pocket.

“See you next month?” Ainsley asked after zir when Lare started to walk off.

Lare turned back just enough to nod once and then lifted his hand in goodbye while walking away. Perhaps it was just zir imagination, but Ainsley’s cheeks seemed to be a bit red, and the girls now both seemed to be holding back the laughter. It must’ve been the cold autumn air, Lare decided, putting the shoulder bag back on zir shoulder and starting zir way away from the village.

Lare found zirself noticing the dark red skein more often now. It was still sitting on the dresser, unused, and ze still didn’t have any ideas on what to do with it. Ze finished the second green sock and when ze tried them both on, the yarn felt warm and soft on ze feet. Ze still fed the chickens as always and picked the last of the vegetables and herbs from the garden, savouring the tomatoes and drying the teas for the winter that was just around the corner now.

It was Friday again, and Lare was headed to the village to buy oil, flour and salt before winter fully hit. It had been raining more or less for the entirety of the past two weeks, however, the sky seemed content remaining stone grey without actually raining down on ze, as ze walked down the narrow path from the cliff. The wind was biting cold though, and Lare wrapped zirself tighter into zir coat and pulled the hat lower over zir ears, as ze continued towards the village.

Purchasing the goods ze came for didn’t take much time, so Lare decided to stop by the market on the square before ze headed back to the lighthouse, even though ze didn’t technically need anything. Ze strolled between the stalls, listening to the vendor’s calls and pieces of conversations between the people ze passed.

Somehow, ze ended on the part of the square when Ainsley’s stand was, and ze hesitantly drew closer to it. There seemed to be fewer people around that day, and Ainsley was wrapped tightly in his coat, rubbing his bare hands together to keep them warmth, while he waited for potential customers. His face lit up when Lare came to the stand and Lare suddenly felt a bit warm, despite the cold wind.

“To what do I owe the pleasure today?” Ainsley asked, smiling as always.

“I came to buy... this,” Lare picked up a skein of yarn at random, not even checking which one ze grabbed.

Ainsley’s eyebrows rose.

“Didn’t take you for a yellow sort of person, Lare, but who am I to judge,” he laughed, as he wrapped the skein up, and Lare could feel the tips of zir ears burning.

“Until next time?” Ainsley asked, lifting his hands closer to his mouth and blowing hot air onto them.

Lare nodded and left. The image of Ainsley’s bare hands kept playing in zir head that night when ze set the yellow skein on the dresser next to the dark red one.

Lare had never tried to make gloves before in zir life, and ze was already cursing the stupid decision to make a pair. The diagrams in one of zir grandfather’s old books seemed easy enough, but ze almost started crying when ze took a look at the final product. The knitting was uneven and some of the fingers seemed a bit too long, while others would probably end up being quite a bit too short for anyone to wear the gloves comfortably. The glove was as soft and warm as the green socks ze had made when Lare put it on though, so ze decided it would have to do.

The dark red skein was almost finished, so ze would have to continue with the yellow one ze had purchased a few weeks before, but at least ze had time to finish the second glove before the third Friday of the month rolled around.

Hopefully, the second one would be a bit better.

A pair of mismatched gloves was waiting on the corner of the table while Lare put on zir shoes, coat and wrapped a scarf around zir neck and ears. Ze hesitated a bit before picking them up and stuffing them in zir pocket. There was technically nothing that ze needed to pick up from the village, but the thought of Ainsley’s cold hands bothered zir so much, ze decided to take the walk despite that.

It was snowing when Lare stepped outside, and ze was already cursing zir stupid decision to leave the warmth of zir home, even before ze started walking down the cliff.

All because of a stupid pair of gloves and a man who seemed to make himself at home in Lare's brain somehow in the past few weeks.

By the time Lare made it to the market, zir scarf was soaked through and zir breath was fogging up the air in front of zir face with each exhalation. Ze could hear the sound of the blood rushing in zir ears as ze walked towards Ainsley’s stall, and ze desperately wanted to turn back and forget zir dumb idea and Ainsley’s dumb cold hands, but the man in question had already spotted zir and waved in zir direction.

“The townsfolk said you wouldn’t be back until spring,” Ainsley said instead of his usual greeting.

Lare grunted at that and shrunk into zir scarf slightly.

“I’m usually not,” ze replied, avoiding Ainsley’s questioning stare.

“I came to give you these,” ze then said, pulling the gloves from zir pocket and handed them to Ainsley.

Ainsley seemed surprised, but only for a moment, quickly covering it up with a smile twice as large as usual. He pulled the gloves onto his hands and Lare frowned slightly as he seemed to struggle a bit with the left glove’s thumb, before he could get his finger into the correct finger hole.

“I know they are not much to look at, but at least they are warm,” Lare felt obligated to say at that, still looking down. “Your hands looked cold the last time.”

“They’re perfect,” Ainsley smiled at zir and wiggled his gloved fingers as if to prove a point. “Thank you, Lare,” he said so earnestly that something in Lare’s chest felt a bit tight.

“Anyway,” Lare coughed out, “I should probably leave now. Long way back and all that...” his voice gradually grew quieter, until ze was mostly muttering to zirself.

Ainsley seemed disappointed at that somehow, but he only nodded and waved his hand at Lare, who turned to leave.

“Lare,” he called behind him a moment later and came around the stall, running a few steps to catch up with Lare.

“Say, your lighthouse’s the one on the cliff, right?”

Lare nodded in confirmation. “It’s the only one around, can’t really miss it.”

“Right, er... would it be okay if I came by in spring?” Ainsley asked. Lare felt like all air was punched out of zir lungs.

“...Or not...” Ainsley trailed off when Lare didn’t reply for a few moments. His shoulders sagged and Lare somehow felt as if ze’d just kicked a puppy.

“NO. No, I mean... yes. Please come by in spring,” Lare spluttered out and Ainsley immediately perked up at that. “I’d like it if you visited,” ze added in a quieter voice, but Ainsley seemed to have heard it nonetheless, as he smiled so widely that the corners of his eyes crinkled.

“See you in spring then?” he asked and Lare nodded. The snow fell slowly around them, but Lare had never felt warmer in zir life.

“See you in spring.”

Note: “ze” and “zir” are neopronouns

Nothing At All

Lir K

“What do you want from life, Ezra?” Astrid asked him one day when they were lying on the roof of her garage. Ezra was staring at the clouds above him and he thought about how he currently wanted to get lost in the big blue width of the sky and never be anything ever again. He would be nothing but one with the endless blue.

When he didn't answer quickly enough, Astrid lightly kicked his shin with her bare foot, so he just shrugged. There was a cloud just above him that looked like a weird mushroom and he had a sudden urge to poke it with his finger.

“Really? There's nothing? Man, your life must be so great, wishing for nothing at all,” Astrid laughed, stretching her arms on the roof tiles and moving her freckled face closer towards the summer sun.

Ezra sighed and went back to staring at the clouds. He could feel Astrid's gaze from time to time when she lazily blinked in his direction, like a cat that was warming up under the late evening sun. It wasn't that he didn't wish for anything or that he expected nothing from his life, it was just that he felt like every time he said something out loud, he ruined it. Something that is said out loud cannot be undone and Ezra always had trouble putting his thoughts into words in a way that would actually convey them. What came out was usually a jumbled mess of all the wrong implications and hidden meanings that could easily destroy everything like a wildfire.

He wasn't even sure why Astrid still wanted him around. They knew each other basically since kindergarten and Astrid was always there, bright and loud and warm like the sun. When Ezra's words failed him, she was the one to tell them for him. It was also her who asked Ezra if he wanted to date her, and he of course went along with it. When she kissed him for the first time, hidden behind the graffiti-covered wall that surrounded their high school, he felt... nothing. He felt nothing.

And he wanted to feel something for Astrid, but no matter how much he tried to love her as she wanted him to love her, he could only love her as his closest friend. Dating her wasn't much different from being friends anyway. They still hung out in her room after school, Astrid still snuck into Ezra's house when his father wasn't around and they still lay on the garage roof, drank the disgusting grape sodas from the convenience store down the street that Astrid's sister loved, and cried in each other's arms when something bad happened.

It was only when Astrid wanted more and Ezra turned her down that she sighed and said: “You know what. Let's just be friends again. This is pointless.”

Ezra just shrugged and Astrid only laughed at him, even if it sounded a bit sad, then punched him in the shoulder and told him to go die in ditch. He was grateful to her on the one hand, but on the other, he had no idea where they stood now. He sometimes felt like Astrid hated him, but at the same time, she just carried on as always after their breakup. The day after it happened, she came to pick him up for school just like every other morning and ruffled his dark curly hair before they started walking.

She was in other relationships after that and Ezra was pretty sure she was over him, but still, a part of him felt guilty. Perhaps if he'd just said something, he could've spared them both the awkwardness. Or perhaps it was just him that still felt awkward about it.

The sky was getting darker, the hues of reds, oranges and pinks slowly colouring the clouds. A dog was barking down the street somewhere and the sound of a car turning into the neighbour's driveway brought Ezra back to reality.

Astrid was still lying next to him, scrolling on her phone, occasionally humming or snorting at something she read or watched. He shifted closer to her, leaning his head on her shoulder, and she moved to accommodate him so that they could both see the screen of her phone.

She was watching a video on how to make vegan soufflé pancakes and Ezra wasn't particularly invested, but he liked being close to Astrid like that and he loved the spark of excitement in her eyes when she found something that then became her latest obsession. Last month, it was lichen and Ezra faithfully followed her around as she dragged him to a nearby forest and took a billion pictures of all the different kinds she could find, while excitedly telling him about how lichen was neither an algae nor a fungus but a symbiotic combination of both, which, objectively speaking, made it even cooler. He sometimes felt like maybe they were lichen, a tangled mass that was not one being, but a strange symbiotic combination of both, made flesh.

Last year Astrid got into figure drawing, something that Ezra became surprisingly good at after they signed up for a free class at a local community college together. Astrid huffed at how unfair it was that he was better than her in something that was her interest in the first place and Ezra just quietly laughed at her indignation, his shoulders shaking, and told her that maybe he was just naturally talented, or perhaps she would have to practice a bit more. She chased him around the campus, violently swinging her bag while the onlookers jumped out of their way, laughing or frowning in their direction when they passed them until they both broke into laughter and collapsed into a giggling heap on the grass. A week later, he gifted her a portrait he drew of her, which she still had pinned above the nightstand next to her bed.

The video was coming to an end, the pancakes artfully presented on a plate and drizzled with honey, while the cheerful music in the background played over the host kindly asking the viewers to like and subscribe if they wanted to see more vegan recipes in the future. He snuggled closer into Astrid's shoulder and she smiled and patted his head, before turning back to her phone. Ezra closed his eyes, breathed in Astrid's warmth and wanted for nothing at all.

into that world inverted

(a re-vision of Hansel & Gretel)

Nadja Jukič

illustrated by Korina Rožman

*where left is always right
where the shadows are really the body
where we stay awake all night
where the heavens are as shallow as the sea
is now deep, and you love me*

Elizabeth Bishop, "Insomnia"

Dear moon, does it hurt? All year walking by the river I kept my head down and the trees rippled in the water. That year I never looked up once. At home in the evening I spent hours gazing at the fire, so long I thought my eyes would burn. She said, *keep your head down when they talk to you* and I forgot to ever lift it. But tonight the river is loose like longing. Its currents are hands gripping me close. The mist covers the forest like a widow's veil. With every step I take the ground below me creaks like an old and crinkled bed and the leaves rustle softly in the breeze.

And they say a haunted forest won't haunt itself.

But unlike the forest, I would rather be haunted than hunted.

Deeper in, the mist lets up, but the trees are denser. The air is still, heavy with expectation, with suspense. It is a thing too ferocious to outrun, the deepening of the night. The cold starlight is no friend; it lights a path leading only further away. I falter in dismay, almost yield —

then, in the distance, a pale light shimmers, penetrating the night forest, as if the darkness could no longer contain it. I run towards it, half wild from the feral longing of the forest.

She is waiting for me in the doorway, clad all in black, shielding the candle flame with her bare hand. *Come in*, she beckons. In the light of the pallid stars above her house looks dainty and brittle, made not of wood but something sickly sweet; a gingerbread cake to take a bite out of.

Been a while since you've come 'round here, she says as she sits me down at her table. The pattern on the tablecloth is no longer the same. *Your hair is long*, she mutters, almost tersely, and as soon as she turns away to tend to the fire, my hand reaches back to feel the pin clasp my hair at the nape of my neck, half expecting some spell to have dissolved it. Already I feel child-like, wide-eyed and timid, but she is as formidable as ever. By the time she sits down I am already ravenous. The dim light of the oven flickers in the background, the fire crackles. When I eat she watches every bite from hand to mouth, until my cheeks glow red and I can take no more.

Well, she starts, *where've you been?*

It is a story she is hungry for, and I am willing to give it.

“There was a dance in the village,” I begin, hesitantly. “A fortnight ago. I had to go; my father made me. ‘You need keeping in order,’ he said, ‘even if you are old enough already to have been made wife more times than I can count.’ My mother and brother were there, keeping a close eye on me. Boy after boy asked me to dance, but I said no until my throat hurt. My mother slapped my hand over and over where no one could see. But still I wouldn’t listen. I remembered you saying, *dancing is a dangerous game*. So I kept to myself, and when my mother rose to find more to drink, I slipped quietly away. He must have seen it; he slithered behind me like a snake. I thought I was safe, but another boy in the crowd gripped my arm, pulled me close. ‘One dance, lassie, only one and I will let you go,’ but just as he said it, before I could object or step on his toes or spit in his face, there he was. My brother, his voice now clear to those around us. ‘Not her,’ he said, ‘Someone has her wrapped around his finger like a slow wounding road ‘round a mountain.’ All eyes turned to him. Even the music, loud and merry though it still was, hushed a little. ‘It’s like a spell,’ he continued, ‘and though she lies asleep in her bed at night, her eyes are heavy in the morning, as if she hasn’t slept at all. She is spoken for, I tell you. By who we might never know. Not one of them here, I suppose.’ ‘The other village!’ Shouted the loud boy who had held me. He let me go finally, pushed me away roughly, and I ran and ran, taking the path lined with pebbles, until I came to the clearing at the edge of the forest. I had put the pebbles there myself in long, laborious nights. Even by a hazy, crescent moon they show a way into the heartland of the forest. Though I had no heart, not that night, nor many others, to venture there. I sat down on the cold ground. I felt weary, and my head and throat ached. I must have sat there for a while, for someone to come looking for me. I knew it was not my brother, for his feet were not gentle in the dark, and now the pebbles made but little sound. I had to hold my breath to hear them. It was a boy with soft hands, with kind eyes, one that I had seen before in the crowd and in the village, but who never asked or demanded, who was quiet and restrained. ‘Do you feel that?’ With his hands he embraced the pale night around us. ‘It takes my breath.’ But in my chest my heart beat heavy as a drum. I kept quiet. He never put his arm around me, only took my hand in his, welcoming and warm. ‘They were only jesting,’ he said, ‘I never believe half of what they say in this town. But where there’s smoke there’s fire, so they say. Are you spoken for?’ I nodded, yes, then, realizing in the dark he could not see, said ‘yes,’ but my voice trembled, as if pierced with needles.”

Why did you say that? She says severely. I am drowsy, as if woken from a dream. So lost I was in my story I forgot where I was, who with. Her eyes are on me, within me, searching; a pang of shame chokes me.

“Say what?”

That you are spoken for. Who claims you?

In my memory the black guard dog of the night howls and whimpers. His eyes are black like charcoal. I take a deep breath.

“You.”

She grips the chair in front of her with both hands. She is standing above me now, looking down, and her grip is strong. Still I sit, transfixed, holding my breath; time halts and stands still.

Suddenly, as if breaking a spell, she laughs and lets go. Time snaps back. Now she appears old, worn out, and all her poise is gone.

You silly girl, she says, uneasily, and turns away. *Go home*.

*

I want to say one evening my path led me across the clearing, and then deep and deeper in. That my footfalls were soft as feathers in the night. That I stood at the edge of the forest by chance, in a moonlit trance, or lost and running. But it would be a lie.

All my life I dreamt of the Witch in the Woods. No stern warning my mother gave me was enough to keep me out of them; other children laughed and jeered and I stood at the edges, peering in. In winter, the glistening dew made my shoes wet and soft, and when we had to throw them out my father struck me hard across the face. In spring, the bottom of my dress was caked in mud, and my mother cursed me washing it in the river. In summer, my hands were yellow from the pollen, so deeply coloured not even my grandmother's rough hands could scrub it off. In autumn, the leaves scrunched and rustled beneath my feet. But every season I went only one step further, and sat and thought, until finally the village behind me was like a lighthouse in the distance, hidden behind the shadow of the trees as wide and dark as the sea.

That year, the early autumn sun was still hot and heavy. When I walked across the clearing, I carried it around me like a heavy cloak. Summer waned like a threat, but I was no longer a child. It was time for one step further. The cold grey light of the forest swallowed up the sun; the cool breeze soothed me. I was walking with feet that did not feel my own, stepping closer and closer to the river. The blue water was clear as crystal, swirling softly. I took off my shoes and left them on the riverbed. When I lifted up my skirts, I thought I heard, from someplace deep within, a whisper. It is only the language of the wind, I told myself. But when the silken water flowed over both my feet I trembled. It came now, clearer and closer than before, louder than a whisper, quieter than a voice.



Would the river overrun, I thought to myself, if I did not run from it? Would it overflow and swallow me up, like the forest had swallowed up the sun? Terror gripped me but still I could not move, my feet were lead.

Who are you to come here? The voice said, all around me.

“Who are you to ask me?”

But the voice only laughed, a harrowing sound.

Out of the shadows two black eyes watched as one step became two, and three, and four, and I was out of the river, running, but the forest was alive. I should have known the night has teeth. It grabbed and pulled; its branches were paws, and before I knew it, I fell down on the sharp claws of the earth. In the distance, the black dog of the night howled like the wind.

This is the heartland of the forest, said the voice, the home of the VVitch. Don't you know, child, that none who come here ever come back out?

“Are you the gatekeeper of the forest?” I asked back, less frightened now; having dreamt so much of the Witch I felt I knew her; the lean curve of her back, her parchment skin.

What gate do you think I keep? There are no gates, child, except for in your mind.

“Let me in, then, and I will take my chances,” I replied firmly, angry at being called a child, embarrassed by my own child-like fears.

If there is no gate, there is no door to open.

“Can I come in then? Can I?” But no voice spoke anymore, not even the wind.

If there is no gate... I repeated to myself, over and over. I got up, now the earth let me go. There was nothing to look back to; nothing to look back for. So I started walking. I walked until the morning was breaking in the distance and the snow-white birds were singing. Until behind me the willow trees were a shroud over the world. I was so far gone I wondered if I would ever find my way out.

But still there was no sign of the Witch. I imagined her as old as the hills, leaning on a crutch. I imagined her eyes dark with hunger, like mine.

Every step was the same, every path sinister and familiar. If coming in was not the question, was it the answer?

And then I saw it. Hidden among the trees, a quaint little house, nothing like the Witch's house of my dreams, tall and shimmering. There was not a trace of magic in the plain wooden windows, the austere door shut tight. Still a strange force pulled me in. In the window nearest to me the curtains were closed half-way. A delicate silk light spilled out into the night.

Impetuously, desperately, I crept closer.

I groaned and cursed wading through the thick bushes surrounding the house. I wanted so badly to see within. The window was high up, but I wanted to be tall enough; I reached up, on the tips of my toes, grabbing the windowsill, holding myself up, but only for a moment or two, until I couldn't anymore, and my strength was gone, my hands gave in, and my body fell backwards into the thick darkness.

A pain as sharp as a thousand knives sliced through me. It was over before I knew it, the way the darkness took me in; I felt sure I was dead. I never heard the door open, or her solemn, exasperated sighs in the dark. When my eyes opened it was bright; though by the light of the moon or by some other magic I could not say.

Ah, you're awake.

The fire inside was warm and welcoming. My eyes hurt, I tried but could not see whom the voice belonged to.

“Am I dead?”

Dead? She laughed. Her voice was soft, subdued. There was not a trace of the Witch about her.

Oh, no. You fell into my rose bush. You have been penetrated by many thorns.

I looked down at my skin, which used to be white as snow, now smeared with blood. I was sitting on a chair next to the kitchen table; she was kneeling beside me.

Are you ready? She asked, with her fingers wrapped tight around the first thorn, applying pressure, and before I could say yes, she gently pulled it out. I gasped. My body was not my own; it was like I had never felt before, and this was the first pain of my life. A pain both sharp and sweet; a rupture, an opening.

She placed the thorn on the table. A single drop of blood stained the white tablecloth.



She said, *close your eyes*, and I did. It was the first advice she ever gave me. In time, her advice became secrets, like treasures, and I kept them close to me. They were secrets better than any others. I imagined hiding them under my pillow like knives.

“What can I give you that will repay this kindness?”

I was fed and clothed; all the thorns were out. Suddenly I was abashed; my cheeks grew red.

There is only one thing you can give me, she said, tell me how you came here, and why.

As I spoke, of my poor woodcutter father, my hard-working mother, my strong-willed brother, of our hunger and our pain, the fire in the oven warmed me to the bone.

No story was enough to stay her appetite; I spoke till next morning light, cool and soft, sneaked in through the windows. When she sent me home, my eyes felt heavy, as if weighed down by tears. She stood by the door, and I saw for the first time that she was tall and strong, nothing like the old, wicked Witch from my dreams. She said, poignantly, *come back, whenever you want, and more.* And I did.

*

“I’m not ready,” I say, my mouth full of sorrow. “Can I stay for a while?”

Would your mother not weep, if you were not in your bed in the morning?

When I was a child I spoke too much, laughed too much, ate too much. My father slapped my hands away from the table. My mother shook her head silently. In her arms, my little brother howled like a wolf. “Would you eat your brother’s food? Would you have us all starve to death?” But it was never enough; always I longed for more. I stole glances at the market so my hands were free to take; what I hid under my skirts was for no one but myself. A ripe peach here and there, buttery bread that melts in the mouth. But wandering eyes have wandering hands, and I learnt soon enough to keep mine to myself. As dusk brushed the mountain tops I wept alone with my hands and my stomach empty. The first night I dreamt of her, the Witch fed me strawberries and cream. When I awoke I could still feel her hands in my mouth. Year by year the hunger closed in on me; my body was melting away limb by limb. Still the sight of the forest frightened me. My brother grew and grew strong, and a woodcutter’s son does a woodcutter make. That he would enter the forest first, without me, was inconceivable. I ran behind him but stopped short, and looking back he waved and grinned. But they were only going further out, not further in. It was the wrong way, the long way round towards the other village. If it was not the way of the Witch it was not the way for me. I stared at the mournful and solitary forest diffident, all filled with dismay. Could I not take one step forward, I reproached myself, one step only now, and see where it leads me?

“No one would weep for me. They are too hungry or too busy to care. Will you not let me stay the night?” I imagine watching the milk-white sunrise with my hair undone, my dress unfastened. When she speaks her voice is calm, quiet, but she wrings her hands as if some pain had almost left her body yet remained stuck at the fingertips.

There are things yet to discover further inland.

It sounds rehearsed; said before to the mirror or to no one in particular; a refusal, an explanation, a goodbye.

I have not gone there myself. My place is here, at the crossroads of the villages, to guard the hills and their people. But it is not my place to keep you here. It is not in my power to protect you from what is to come.

She falters suddenly, and I want to kneel down beside her and take her hands in mine, wrap them around my neck if nowhere else. But I remember her saying, *don't hold yourself like that, you'll only hurt your knees.*

“What? What is to come?”

Two men – two men came by here, not a fortnight past. They had no stories to give but many to take away. They, and those that came after. They took from me all I had. I am afraid now of what is to come. I am afraid of what they will make of you, sweet child. Of what they will make of me.

“You want me to go now while there is still time.” I am shuddering thinking this is only the rim of the forest, of what it took to get here. “But I cannot, there is no way.”

There is always the way of the moon.

And she says no more; her palm on my back, pushing me gently out the door, feels hot and heavy, like an anvil. If I am the weapon, what is the hammer?

I step out and when I glance back quickly, the door is closed. How the world crumbles: all I feel is a tangible, piercing pain of the heart. I take a deep breath, then look up. A yellow moon is showing me the way.

Fashion Week

Nada Kos

The thing about being a supermodel's daughter is that they kind of impose the whole modelling mess on you. Not that I'm complaining, of course. Any other girl in my class would kill for the VIP tickets to modelling shows, for the trips to Paris and London and Tokyo. Not fair at all, they say. Why does she get to cut class and go on holiday all the time? She's not even pretty.

It stings a little. I don't say anything back, just keep staring at the blackboard and try not to let it show I heard them. We used to be friends when I was little. Or I thought they were my friends, at least. They got bored of me pretty quickly when my mum stopped inviting them to tag along for the dress rehearsals and fittings. They must've realised I wasn't actually all that clever or funny or pretty when the models weren't around and it was just me.

I like the models all right. They stay for a while, a season or two, and then get signed off to a different agency or quit modelling for their health. Most aren't much older than me. I'll be thirteen in November and some of the girls are just over sixteen. My mum says it's not exploitation because they get a lot of money and don't really have to do much. I ask the girls what they think and they say I'm very grown up and that I must be really clever to know such big words. They don't know I just remember what my

mum says and repeat it back to them. They must've got it into their heads that I'll tell my mum they're being nice to me and then they'll get to go on good shows and be on TV and stuff. But my mum's way too busy for anything like that. We don't talk much at all during fashion week.

Sometimes the reporters will ask me if I like the clothes. I smile and say they're a tad eccentric for my taste. That I, of course, appreciate extravagance and the bold avantgarde strokes of the designers, but prefer my clothes more on the plain side. The reporters laugh and move on and I smile and smile and smile until my face hurts.

The only dresses I actually like are the ones everyone else hates. I once saw a dress that looked like a human heart, with big bulging veins and everything. I'm not squeamish at all, but a lot of the people in the audience were, and I loved their grossed out faces as they pretended to clap for the model. It was a hideous dress, obviously, but at least it made them feel something. I don't think they do that a whole lot anymore, the whole feeling thing. Maybe you get some papers if you're an adult and deal with supermodels; some sort of contract to sign all your feelings away. I wonder if I'll be grown up enough for a contract like that any time soon. I think it might be nice, not having to feel everything all the time.

The Sun, the Moon & young Earth

Alen Grobin

Once upon a time, in the faint light of distant stars, a loner young Moon hovered alone in the vastness of space. Her expression bore the marks of sadness as the lustre of her long silver hair was barely visible. Then one day a young, unlit Sun happened to float by. He caught a glimpse of her, fell in love and lit up, burning half as brightly as he does today, so that one could still make out the features of his face. Feeling beautiful for the first time, the Moon was thankful for the light that had been given to her and decided to follow the Sun. Eventually, she even grew fond of him. Together they rolled in the vastness of space and, sure enough, a green-faced love child was born. Glowing with love and attention, the happy interstellar family drew looks from all around the universe, to which they paid little notice as they were so preoccupied with one another, their faces focused only on themselves. Everything revolved around them and for a time all was well. The Moon was a vision of beauty, her long hair flowing like a silver river, almost touching the peaks of young Earth, drawing radiance from her brownish-red partner. And the ancient people, who didn't yet scour the face of young Earth, lived in a never-ending haze, gazing at the purple skies, stuck in perpetual twilight and constantly looking at the faces of Earth's parents. They

would float together, fixed upon the sky, never setting, never rising. The ancients led a drowsy existence, napping in tall grass, knowing neither heat nor cold, neither fear nor hunger, as the only two seasons were autumn and spring, and the animals followed suit. Such were the ways of the long, bygone days; the exchange of a loving look was all it took.

But as the Earth grew, something happened. A certain Venus with voluptuous curves started sneaking around the family, and the Sun couldn't help himself from taking a peek once in a while, directing some light upon Venus instead, for she too was in want of flattery. And it didn't take long for the Moon to notice; her face was no longer fully illuminated – phases appeared for the first time. Young Earth and the ancients were rightfully distressed. Jealous and insulted, the Moon had to avenge herself and so turned her pretty face just briefly away from the Sun, in the direction of the newly arrived muscular Mars. This made the Sun flare up. Jealousy overtook him, and his pent-up rage set him ablaze to the intensity we know today, hiding his face underneath the flames. The Moon couldn't cope with the extra heat; to save her face, she turned into the shadows before the heat might ruin it, and besides, she couldn't even recognize the Sun anymore. As she was turning, a lock of her hair caught fire, which slowly spread, until she was engulfed in flames. Enough was enough – a decision was made – time to go separate ways. It's hard to imagine the horror the ancients must have felt, seeing the Sun and Moon parting in the sky, heading towards opposite ends of the horizon.

Young Earth didn't know how to react. There were no answers. She turned in desperation to find the faces of her parents, to the left, to the right, to the left... Until it didn't matter anymore, so she turned perpetually to meet both at intervals. The ancient people felt frightened for the first time. The soft light they were so accustomed to was a thing of the past – now a stark contrast replaced it; the birth of night and day. This changed everything. Afraid of the dark, they hid in caves, longing for light so much they lit fires, while at day, the heat tired them out, so they searched for the shadows. Thus forced into constant activity, perpetual motion, their leisure days were over. But in time they got used to it.

Which isn't something that could be said for young Earth. Confusion, fear, and anger took their toll. First, the pressure cracked her face, then swollen tears amassed into oceans, and finally, huge portions of her face drifted apart, into the distribution we are able to observe today. Time passed. At first the ancients reminisced... But since all they could see now was either the burn-scarred back side of the Moon's head or the blazing Sun, they, through millennia, forgot... Only the constant need for comfort, which is so deeply instilled in us, survived as the sole legacy from those days of old. And to this day, the Earth turns in madness, and we're all part and parcel of this star-crossed family.

The Icons

A story inspired by Monuments and dedicated to its author

Alen Grobin

For as long as I can remember, self-defence was what they taught us. And as the years went by, icons were handed to us, to mark the stages of our progress. I still recall the dignity, the relief on the faces of those older than me, when as children we attended the ceremonies and vowed to one day meet the same success. But the work was hard. We honed our skills, from sunrise to sunset, year after year, driven by our goal. Many of my colleagues couldn't take it and abandoned us. But I did not falter and I succeeded. At long last the five icons were accessible to me and I was ready to face the world. I hung them on beaded strings and proudly walked the city streets, surveying the crowds, keeping the peace. It was a time I considered myself to be at the peak of my powers, in full control of my destiny. All was well. Until the day I noticed some obscurity moving ever closer to my presence. At first unnoticeable, it seemed to veer off my route each time as I was finishing my shift, but, unbeknownst to me, inched behind me, until its presence became infallible. The fool that I was, I ignored it and kept the situation to myself. It peered in through the window. I reasoned it must have seen my icons and recognized my rank. I believed its intentions were honourable, its motive to prove itself worthy. Such foolishness inhabited my thoughts until it calmly stepped in to face me inside. I sat alone in the sun-drenched hall that evening and barely noticed it through the thick orange light. I hesitated. Then I bid a page to take away my icons and assessed the challenger before me. The tattered apparition stared me down, grinning. Days rushed on and before long I could make that grin out in detail, but still I lingered to act, until it stood only an arm's length away from me. I acted, then, or maybe I was defending myself. I cannot clearly recall which one of us made the first move.

I'd parry; its blows seemed deliberate, focused, but had no real strength behind them. *Now* I know they'd just been there to compound my anxiety. As I began to tire, I knew I had to counter. I relied on my knowledge and drew from my experience. The first blow I dealt seemed decisive, promising a swift end, but in reality, it's when the weirdness really began: the initial agony of its cry morphed into laughter. I struck again and – to my horror – it seemed as though I gave it pleasure. My punches seemed to humour it; the harder I punched the louder its laughter roared. There was a mad pleasure that filled the room, which, strangely, only I seemed to notice. Nobody noticed it on me, despite the absent mindedness with which I conducted my obligations. There was also no resolution in sight – a never-ending stalemate. When we tired each other out, it would lay down in the shadows, breathing heavily, grinning all the while. The next day we would continue, and the next, and the next, and the next... I lost all sense of time.

Looking back at it, it may have lasted a month, maybe a year or even longer. But what I *do* know is that I made a mistake.

Somehow, I had it pinned down on the floor as it chuckled ever more faintly. We knew each other well by then and I recognized its signs of fatigue. Despite the exhaustion that consumed me every evening, that day I had a feeling – a rare feeling I hadn't had since my youth. I recalled the faces of my elders at the ceremonies, the dignity with which they bore themselves. And that is when I believed that I could end this. I gathered all my strength and gave it one last blow – silence followed. Then, the steady breathing. As I got up, I bid a page to bring me back my icons. I was blinded with anticipation. The page hurried back and handed them to me, and I very nearly tore the strings, so great was my excitement. And then it happened: the tattered apparition caught me by surprise, ran into me, one hand on my shoulder, the other gripping my icons. I prepared for a tug of war, but it calmed down for a second. Its grin was in my face. Its fist clenched. I yelled. My icons crushed to dust. It released me then and left. The page looked on as it disappeared into the crowd. I didn't care. I kneeled on what once were the icons.

POETRY

ALTERCATIONS WITH GOD #1

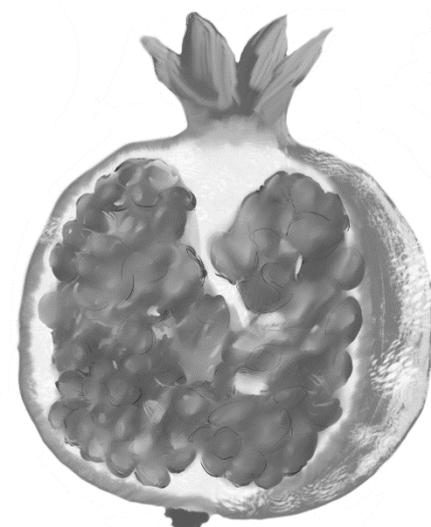
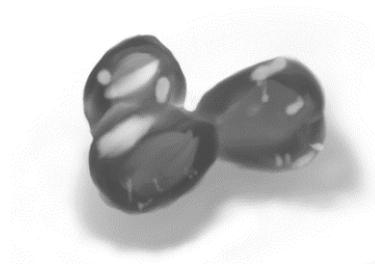
Ariela Herček

In my dreams, the benevolent God
licks my lips clean of the pomegranate juice,
says "it will make you yearn more for things you can't have"
and lately I've been seeing double-glitched images of people laughing
and I wonder whether they can hear the ultimate prosodic giveaway that tells me they're actually crying,
and in my dreams, the sea urchins sticking to my hands become my best friends -
the world has been too rough, they say,
so rough,
it's time to return the damned pain,
wound it with the claws at your palms,
become a sure, stable, untouchable thing.

In my dreams, the God ceases to be benevolent.
He burns the green shrubbery,
slices the whole damn world open with his nails,
wants the suffering to come easily to anyone guilty of being a carbonated star dough and
fuck it,
that means we're all going to go out with a bang,
maybe bring out another world,
another life worth all the suffering,
or maybe an entire universe where suffering is a word nobody knows anymore.

Lately, my dreams haven't been feeling like dreams at all.
Lately, I've been hoping that we all get collectively sucked into
oblivion,
alive and alone,
dead and alone,
It doesn't matter, does it?

I will still forever dream of a benevolent God that kisses me into
heaven.



illustrations by Ariela Herček

ALTERCATIONS WITH GOD #2

Ariela Herček

There must be something else out there.

There must be something more,
something that would explain the constant surge of electricity that zaps my body alive,
the secret sky-marrow song of birds waking up the world from its deathly slumber.

There must be something that would explain my dreams.
Something that would explain the weariness I carry every day from being awake in another world
while sleeping in this one.

I turn in my sleep and the same old periodic infinity brushes a haze of warmth over my skin.
If there is anything that is constant in my life,
it is my profound ability to imagine the most complex of stories
right after falling asleep.

I used to believe that dreams are just hologram fantasies of a life we can't have.
Now I cry in my dreams and my pillow ends up wet under my cheek.
I don't know what else that tells me except that there must be an alternate reality that
burns my body into feeling every night.

And in this dream?
I startle out of a brush with death
so perfect it nearly makes me cry.
This doesn't mean I want to die,
but if I must go, I want to go out holding your hand.

What else does that tell me except there are universes where you want to hold my hand
and it has deadly consequences?

How else do I interpret that except in the sense that I have to stay away to stay alive?
Is there any other way to save you?

Is there a dream where holding your hand doesn't end up in death?
If so, I want to stumble upon it by accident one night and decide,
in reality,
to stay there until we have nothing to hold onto anymore.

And even then,
there must be something else out there.

ALTERCATIONS WITH GOD #3

Ariela Herček

Dear honey-hexed god,

all my love letters are too long and too short at the same time.
I keep writing about longing and it never diminishes.
(you said it would stop if I talked about it)

Dear languidly gentle god,

I am sure there must be a universe in which your lips are warm and blunt when I kiss you.
On this earth, they're either closed in belonging to someone else
or open and wanting for moments at a time,
only for an evening of an alcohol blur.

Dear unreachably distant god,

I admit. I've been too careless with my love.
I sent love letters that never made it home,
I wrote poems about your breath and the way it looked expelled into the air.
I sang about sorrow and it burned my skin in response.
I preached about god and faith and it was always a person,

you are always a small, warm-blooded body carrying divine pleasures.
You are always somebody that tumbles onto the sand from the other side of the ocean,
dry and alive with feeling.

And dear god how it hurts to brush sand off your skin.
Dear god how I ache with the wanting as I lick salt crystals off your body,
bruised and shivering open.

I keep talking about longing like it's something that can be quenched.
Dear terribly all-encompassing god:
I know that it will never be quenched.

A WARMER LANGUAGE

after Emily Dickinson's letter to Susan Gilbert

Ariela Herček

There is a warmer language within me that longs for your skin.

And it goes like this: you hug me tightly in greeting and all the words seem to fall out of me all at once.
Your fingers fill the spaces between my own and I'm left speechless, drowned lethargic in the sensation.
You look at me like I am magic and don't say a word
but I know that your love for me must make you ache.

The lightness of this, your hand in mine, your mouth opening with laughter, our outfits matching by accident, denim jackets and jeans and smiles that could make even the black holes seem immeasurably small in comparison.

I can write a thousand poems about the way it feels when we touch,
but none that would ever explain it well enough.

So I sit, heavy with longing, and wait for a warmer language.

uncertainty

Lana Meh

uncertainty is part of the human condition.

i think there is nothing that could hurt me more, so i think about the future like it is certain.

no you, just me and what i'll do.

cool things and boring things and happy things and sad things.

i'll meet a simple guy who'll adore me for my weirdness and it'll make me happy that i'm always the smarter one.

i'll have a baby. maybe two.

and i'll read them books and take them on walks around the city.

and when i've had enough their lovely dad will put them to bed

and i'll sit in the garden, light a naughty cigarette,

and think about me of the past.

i'll laugh at the silly outbursts of 23-year-old me and pine for the simplicity of falling in love. i'll think of hands of ex-boyfriends and lips of ex-girlfriends.

i'll think of beers by the river and beers in my bed (the latter will make me a bit sad).

i'll think of that one date i went on with a communist and the irresponsible sex and responsible relationships.

just as i put out my cigarette, i'll think of you.

i'll feel a tinge of regret and then i'll push it down.

i'll go inside and he'll be there.

and he'll hug me and it'll be all i ever wanted.

Thunder

Petra Zajc

Most people, they like the sun.
In sunrays they bathe and cheer,
their hearts in possession of no fear.
They enjoy the sun's warm caress,
and for them it's perfect, nothing less.
But I unlike others like it when it rains.
It feels as if it's washing away all my pains.
And I adore it when the thunder rumbles,
'cause it sounds and feels like a heart when it crumbles.
And I love it when with lightning the entire sky is in a gleam,
because it tells me even nature sometimes has to scream.

Anti-Socializer

Mija Luštek

We're crying,
We're laughing,
Going out of our minds;
No stories,
No people,
To leave behind.
Never thought I'd be one of those
Who lived in the world
Where everything was closed –
Never thought we'd be locked
In the cell called a house,
With no permission to go out.
People gone crazy,
Some also lazy;
Kids not going to school,
Acting all cool
But later they won't know what to do.

Youth hanging on zoom,
Stuck in their rooms
Days and nights
Because reality bites.
We should go out,
We should be wild,
Stuck in a crowd!
Hey, it's not allowed!

Talking to the mirror,
Now everything's clearer
That I'm not fine--
I'm out of my mind!
We're crying,
We're laughing,
Going out of our minds;
No parties,
No people,
To hug really tight.
Just madness
Because Anti-Socializer found us,
and brought heavy silence all around us.

A LONE SOLDIER LIES IN THE SNOW

Dominik Lenarčič

A lone soldier lies in the snow,
pondering the meaning of life
and war.

A lone soldier lies in the snow,
aching to stand and aching

to see his loved ones again.

A lone soldier lies in the snow,
having seen his friends' souls depart
one by one
before his eyes.
Now he feels his life force fading,
fading,
fading, ...
...

A lone soldier dies in the snow.

CHRISTMAS SCENE

Dominik Lenarčič

Snow has fallen.
The hills are white
and so are the roofs.
Snowmen grow on each backyard.

Snow has fallen.
The tracks are white.
Far away, a deep-toned cry;
a locomotive coming through.

Snow has fallen
and so has the night.
The churchbells toll;
the black is broken by yellow homelights.

untitled

Asija Gusceva

Black shades of trees and white emptiness of sky,
Birds don't even seem to fly.
The world has lost its colors—what a shame;
I've lost the meaning for a name.
A seated place you could have left a while ago,
But where would you even go?

The bird poem

Asija Gusceva

A bird flew past me
But no one did see
I have wondered for hours
What is wrong with me.

Maybe they're all preoccupied
With things I'm oblivious to
Or maybe I'm seeing
More than they view.

It was swift as a sparrow
But I doubt it was even there at all.
Am I going crazy?
I made friends with a pole.

It is there when I need a support to lean against.
It is there when I need to hit my head.
It is there—you know it too.
And yet, I often wish I was dead.

— — —

What's strange—I hate people.
I don't even know if I'm a person myself.
I find myself running along with wolves.
And felines seem to resemble me better.
These are the different realities,
Ironically, none but one being real
The one which makes the least sense.

I wish my mind were shoved in chest.
More days even be knocked off,
I wish I was given an escape
From this world,
From this body,
From everything, really...
Living appears simply non-bearable.

Even that bird from the start—
I went back to the place I first saw it—
There are no sparrows.
Only black birds scattered on the ground
And people who weren't there before.
Maybe I saw the color it *is*
But then who is the crazy one here?

What even am I

Asija Gusceva

I don't know why I want to say
Wolves are more human than people.
They say they're violent,
They say they're beasts,
They say they lack morality,
Intelligence is none of their wits;
And yet I wonder who speaks.

I don't know why I live in split worlds
The reality does not seem real.
I'm the odd one out in all my endeavors,
I ponder if I'm even human at all,
And existence is simple pain without disguise.
I know you want me to say the things you want
me to,
But that is you. What do I do?

I'm always a different person
Who only acquaints past self.
Why is this the reality?
The least preferred among mines...
I have been lost in the sanity
Nor am I supposed to be alive.
Yet, here we are in depravity.

I love watching the stars,
But in locations you can hardly find any.
I love the clarity of sky on a sunny day,
Which many seem to loathe.
I would dissociate on purpose
Just to touch my own hand,
Just to feel love of another,
And enjoy the peace under the sky's cover.

Walking on two sided line...

Asija Gusceva

A sprinting wolf that ran away
Doesn't know where to go or stay.
It looks for people, purpose, places,
Not even recognizing faces.
Yet, in the end of any way,
Just gets to sit somewhere, astray.

They are known to walk alone;
However, their thoughts are left unknown.
They are loners, one agrees,

But do you think they are like trees?
Not meant to exist as lone –
Do you perceive the silence they've shown?

The howl may penetrate your soul.
Contemplate for what is this long call.
In the coldness of the rain,
Deeply hidden signs of pain.
It might lie some place in a curled up ball,
Or climb up high and sit straight, tall.

There is no aim, no destination —
Just a creature yearning ceased starvation.
The touch of other now of foreign nature,
Though if approached – pull back from gesture.
It trusted many to whom it had relation;
Stories left in devastation.

Ardent eyes imbued with drive,
These paws still walk the land of time.
Hollow emptiness exists somewhere within
And intense feelings filled to brim.
Living as themselves is seen a crime,
Loyal beasts who have to hide.

Searching for the wind of right,
Stinging importance to belong on sight.
Years have passed, got used to, outcast
Who's haunted by the scarring of the past.
But in the darkness of the night,
Fur glistens in the blue moon light.

Ample stories could be told —
Pity no one's there whom it could hold.
A captured wolf caged in its mind
Longs for someone who accepts its kind.
Day by day, leaves graze the shabby coat;
Perhaps, someday the poison turns to gold.

fingers, interlaced

Berenika Kavčič

golden rays of the rising sun
pour into the room
combining with the light
that shines from cheeks
covered with sparkles

the soft whisper
of soothing sighs
and soaring smiles
cradles me in a smoky sea
of serendipitous peace

we reach out our hands
and let the wind rush over us
a call to surrender
to the infinite tenderness
of fingers, interlaced

glitter

Berenika Kavčič

he watches as they pass
studying their movement with twinkling eyes
he aches to find a part of a body which he can
melt into
aches to crawl inside that crevice that hides
inside every chest
aches to light it up with his gaze
so that the aching strangers
wouldn't ache anymore

he sits and watches as they pass
rushing past the boy with glitter in his eyes
not allowing the corners of his mouth a chance
to turn up in the smile he was born to wear
defeated, he lifts the cup of coffee to his lips
and conceals their sorrow of not being looked at
he turns his eyes to the ground
and lets the glitter inside them
wash over the grey concrete

reflections

Berenika Kavčič

there is a small body of water round the corner
you can see a gloomy reflection of the past year
in the half-frozen surface
the sorrows of the world looking up at you
shamelessly
glistening almost proudly as you tilt your head
to examine them closely
'I have the power now'
they say
every day that puddle looks up at me
shamelessly
proudly
but today I didn't simply walk by
let it narrate the outcome of another day
today I lifted my heel and plunged it into the ice
and to my surprise
it was as easy as that
the stale reflection shattered
in every little piece lay a new opportunity
a thrilling game of chance
'reflect upon me'
each shard of ice whispered
'look in all directions
before you walk on the same road as all the days
before'
the surface has since frozen over again
yet you can still see little seams
making tiny tracks previously unimaginable
and so every day I shall break the ice
and every day I shall look in all directions
and every day I shall choose a new path
and every day
I shall claim back power
shamelessly
proudly

CHRISTMAS SCENE

Dominik Lenarčič

Snow has fallen.

The hills are white
and so are the roofs.

Snowmen grow on each backyard.

Snow has fallen.

The tracks are white.

Far away, a deep-toned cry;
a locomotive coming through.

Snow has fallen

and so has the night.

The churchbells toll;

the black is broken by yellow homelights.

The Quest

Kaja Rakušček

the night dissolves itself
into tears of dew
which lazily crawl
from the Thunderbird's vinyl roof
into the illuminating puddles
beneath its belly

dawn comes easy
the motel keeps quiet
and the vacated responsibility
withers away
whispering
ego te absolvo

pervasive and nauseating
prancing lights find you
weary and ready
for another day on the lam
and you leave softly before you wake

Disintegration

Enej Sečki

The sight was veiled,
even if it wanted to see.
Even if it dared to see,
the sight would incomprehensible be.

We fear what we don't understand,
what we fear we hate.

Closed eye visuals crazy create
dark red flash blind.

Strike struck foiled matter
Word paper bone born flesh

Struck stone blood drawn

Light flash flash back

Symbol sign seize veiled

Word idea cloud truth

Tear the tatter title torn

Skin sight touch blind

clause cause

sand gone

paper flesh

sound storm

incite

incise

veil

slash

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Rendezvous

Kaja Rakušček

An old piano player's serenades swirl through
the night air
as I hide in a room where walls bleed with rain.
Salt on my eyebrows has crystallised; I wipe it
off.
The cold seeps through the walls and
encapsulates me.
I pull on the opposite ends of the quilt even
tighter,
remaining in my bubble of heat and a stale smell
of what once was pungent coffee.
Gravitation has done its toll and it's not finished
with me
for it pushes against my back, bending my bones
and straining my muscles,
so I let it do away with me as I slowly slide
towards the soil beneath my feet.
I'm getting smaller, but I don't feel like I'm
getting crushed;
it's rather pleasing to feel my body faintly buzz
and bumble
as the soil absorbs me with a wet sound that
reminds me of feeding rainwater to a thirsty
spider plant.
I ooze and ooze into nothing until there is
nothing of me left.
The quilt slips and softly drips from the bed
covering the grave of what once was me.

Coastal Rumination #11

Kaja Rakušček

Passive observations of shiny orange meatsuits
embryonically convoluted
chasing shadows and shade

I, a pebble among boulders,
dig my soles into the sand
my imperious eye glares over the wasteland

celestial heaps of ice crystals
guard my skin from the glowing orb

that is slowly falling into the Atlantic

sweat that is sticking to my shoulder blades
is beginning to dry
as the clouds hide the blue hues of heaven
behind them

I lay my head into the warm granules of sand
which encapsulate my forlorn bones
as I stare into the growing absence of space

TO BE FREE

Kaja Kacafura

Four walls confine me.
I scream, trapped inside.

All I want is to be free
like a bird flying on an airborne tide.

Uncaged, unbound,
not pinned to the ground,
roaming the sky.
Don't look down, and fly!

Fly, sing your song,
let it be heard.
Perhaps someday I'll go along
and be like you, divine bird.

EMOTIONS

Kaja Kacafura

Tell me, what is pain?
The darkness that drives us insane?

Tell me, what is sadness?
The combination of perfectly bitter sweetness
and amazingly tidied madness?

Tell me, what is hate?
The rage that can create,
or destroy your fate?

Tell me, what is fear?
A little puppy you can't even hear,
but when he lets himself show,
he will never let go?

Tell me, what is love?
A big red butterfly or a golden-winged dove?

No, these are just emotions
that we cannot hide.
But they can work like potions,
consuming all of us worldwide.

YOU

Kaja Kacafura

(to my niece for her 13th birthday)

Your eyes are grey,
like the sky on a cloudy day.
But do you know what those clouds hide?
The Sun and its bright light.
Do I need to mention your bravery
that you so selflessly share with me?
Please stay that way forever,
and don't lose faith, ever.
I know the easiest way would be to just not care,
but the right way is to be bold and dare.
So don't be afraid to close your eyes,
and let your heart rise.

Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder

Karin Petko

Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder
but as I am growing older
I realize that one thing is more true
than looks will ever be to you.

It is not the clothes or shoes,
not your possessions or their use,
neither is it weight or age;
even less your daily wage.

It's not your height and not your health,
not your diamonds or your wealth,
not the way you comb your hair
nor the underwear you wear.

It's not the taste you have in books,
once again, it's not the looks.
It is only who you are –
be it a tramp, a nurse, a star.
What truly matters is your heart:
staying true to yourself 'til end from start.

This is not an ode to love

Karin Petko

This is not an ode to love,
to all the lovey-dovey stuff.
No: it's more like a poetical complaint.
We both know you are no saint
but you sure do pretend to be
and to all of those that cannot see
through the facade and the pretence
it is sainthood that makes sense.
And I seem to be the only one who knows
that you can bring alike the joy and woes.
You did made my grammar ungrammatical.
My vocabularius problematical.
Downsideup sentences my turned you.
You the only personal pronoun. Myself a who.
And as if all of this is not enough,
you are incapable of giving love.
So, despite all my affection for you,
your feelings will never be true.
Therefore, the only thing left to say
is: I love you, but just stay away.

Enough

Karin Petko

People usually don't think that I am pretty.
But you do.
You think I'm pretty,
and that's enough.
That's enough for me.

I was never called beautiful,
and it didn't really matter.
But then you came along,
and you called me beautiful.
And it meant the world.

I was never a girl a man would want,
lust after, desire.
But you did.
And I asked you why.
And you said:
"I like you.
That's enough."

I have never been kissed.
But then you hugged me
and I melted in your embrace.
And I didn't want to seem easy.
Didn't want you to think I was easy.
And then you called me yours.
And said that you loved me.
And it felt like forever.

You love me.
The way I am.
And it doesn't even matter that I am not
beautiful,
or pretty.
Cause I *am* to you.
And that's not just enough,
it's everything.
And I love you too.

Why do you love me?

Karin Petko

Why do you love me?
I never will know.
But you say that you do,
so I guess it is so.
And truly I don't
really care for your reasons
as long as you love me
through all of the seasons.
I know I'm not pretty,
not a beauty, but still -

when you look at me,
no shame do I feel.
Because I know in your eyes
you like me this way,
you never would change me,
you'd tell me to stay.
I love you so much
but not only for this:
what you make me feel
each time that we kiss.
I love you the way you are
and for who I am with you
and the way we are together.
A perfect one,
no longer a two.

DECAYING LIMBO

Lucija Petrovčič

Exciting impatience,
longing for endless possibilities,
a head full of paragons.
The switch flips.
Grey clouds and green roads.
Life hanging on a thread.

Desperately grabbing onto...
nothing.
I am unable to care
yet I'm experiencing
every shade of emotion.

I've lost the life in me.
Have I lost my life
with it?
I wish
there was something
for me to grab onto.

MY LIFE HURTS

Dominik Lenarčič

My head hurts.
My arm hurts.
My leg hurts.
My heart hurts.
My soul hurts.

My life hurts.

NUMB

Dominik Lenarčič

I am numb.
There is nothing left that can be done
to make me feel
to make me think
leave me alone
and let me drink.

SHAPELESS

Nina Šebenik

She's insecure about the shape.
Shape of her face,
shape of her lips,
shape of her torso and
shape of her hips.
The shape she can't see

is the shape of her heart.
Perfectly perfect
it makes her shine bright.
The beauty within
is shapeless to her,

physique's what she sees,
she thinks that makes her *her*.
But besides the imperfections
that she hates so much,
there is irreplaceable beauty
that only lives in her heart.

LILIES

Patricija Končar

What happens when the lilies down the water
flow,
when pieces of our broken selves are cast
ashore?

High winds upon the land blowing,
knifing the watery surface
in a grief-stricken dissonance.

Somewhere deep beneath the surface,
all our memories forgotten
are enveloped by tainted pearls.

By no man, nor a creature found,
there where not even an eye can see
through those murky depths of our minds.

What happens when the lilies are torn to pieces,
when rippling waves of guilt leave nothing but
demise?

The stormy night, the stormy stars,
dancing in the moonlit sky they
leave not a speck of it untouched.

Tiny rays together woven,
cutting through the lit glassy dark,
caressing the lilies flowing.

Their final breaths, their final songs,
in a loving embrace of the
chilling waves and ribbons golden.

What happens when the lilies down the water
flow,
when pieces of our broken selves are cast
ashore?

Parallel Lines

Petra Zajc

We are each other's sweet little dream
Together flowing in the slumber's stream.
We are each other's old books unread
With verses and lines left unsaid.
We are each other's alternate destiny,
Like two parallel lines always running
separately.
We are each other's astounding full moon
Wrapped in the night's lonely cocoon.
We are each other's tragic Adonis,
Nothing remains of this, only a promise.

The Art

Stefan Stojkoski

It's funny how time and destiny work.
One mistake transforms into something
beautiful, something waited for so long.

Long time spent looking into the wrong
eyes, adoring the fake smile and
following the path of untrue love.

A coma, a darkness that has been
lifted and have disappeared with the
touch of one's honesty and purity.

Now, the sun rises from the east
and I am out of the coma, out of the deep sleep,
and out of the darkness that once had me
chained up.

One look at thy new face that
shows its innocence, the eyes that
never seem to stop shining, thy touch
that shows me the good from the bad.

A creation of God that walks amongst
the paths of saintliness and thy roads that
lead to the depths of my soul.

Now it all feels so right and so

great and I know this by holding
thy art, thy art of perfection
that is thy body in my bare hands.

a man in hue

Pino Pograjc

what's the color of a man in hue?
i gaze upwards, inspecting
as he stands bare,
illuminating the wallpaper that others
before me picked so prudently

is it pink like the tenderness
of a newborn? unaware
that one cannot melt into the world,
learning just now
that she is not her mother,
he is not his father,
they are not the sun

does the blood seep from his skin
in bright red? does it flow
into your mouth? as i shiver,
terrified of the risk
that i'll consume the plague
and in return it'll consume me

is it orange like peach fuzz?
i place pieces of fruit delicately
on the lips, the knees,
between the legs, longing,
as if i held a caduceus,
that they soften the sighs of the dying
and raise the dead

does his body envelop you
in yellow streaks? my very own
private sunlight that i wish
i had the courage to see,
feel the warmth of, much sooner,
so i didn't have to breathe
the moldy air inside a closet

is it green like the carnations that grow

from suit pockets?
i bloom for him,
his hands are grapevines, climbing
up my body, fermenting my mind,
until mountains seem like pebbles
and clouds like specks

do his eyes pour turquoise streams
into basins? do you bathe yourself clean?
minuscule motion, a gentle sway,
but to me it's a show
of colossal proportion

is it indigo like the feathers of a royal bird?
it sings of history, hidden
in cabarets and feasts, behind closed doors,
of lavender nights
beneath a crescent moon,
where dancers, light as air
performed their acts
in brutal honesty

do violet circles hurt his vision?
he stands proud, labrys in one hand,
the other laying tiny purple blossoms across
time and space,
laying the ground for cosmic birth
in weary bodies

a man in hue has borders crossing
inside himself, multitudes contained,
as iris overlooks and sees
all hues in his controlling,
i watch him look back
at piles of debris, tenderly picking up
the scraps he knows
he can still place in his heart

The Moody Aeons Old Teenager in the Sky

Jaka Brezavšček

I don't follow the Moon's cycles,
but I always notice when she's full.
She doesn't follow the Sun's circles,
for she is more eloquent than he.

She outshines even the brightest stars
that show their hearts to us every night.
Not even clouds, nor fog, nor scars
can block her eternal might.

She is Earth's little sister
and like people has her phases,
a moody aeons old teenager in the sky.
Compared to her, how moody am I?

I don't follow the Moon's cycles
but I always notice when she's null.

We poured silence over ourselves

Nika Gradišek

We poured silence over ourselves,
the one that is created with the death of the sun,
we caressed the tide-glossed grass,
sank knee-deep into the mud and desert sand,
and said,
We can build here.

The rivers found us for a reason
and our hands were made
to build flood barriers,
but we'll rather use them differently,
to embrace the heath,
kingdoms fall apart
as they should.

translated from Slovene by Ariela Herček

Windowless rooms are holes in time

Nika Gradišek

Windowless rooms are holes in time,
an unplanned glitch in the matrix.
Air grows extremities in them,
grows lungs,
nuzzles close to you,
breathes under your hair,
caresses your wrists,
grabs your ankles,
hides your shoes
and your keys,
liquidizes the tick-tock
into a mechanical tremble of the air,
whispers into your ear
that numbness is the most natural of states,
that the light cuts into the skin
and people even more so,
you stay,
because all that's left of your bones
is an unglued puzzle
and because you don't have any shoes.

translated from Slovene by Ariela Herček

Kafkaesque

Nika Gradišek

Yesterday I called The Bureau of Matters.
Twice.
And then a millipede answered the third time and she said,
no, no, ma'am,
this must be a wrong number.
I said it wasn't,
I checked four times,
it said Bureau of Matters.
There was a scurrying sound on the other end of the line,
and she said,
no, no, ma'am,
this is not the Bureau of Matters,
this is the Bureau of Objects,
are you looking for information on matters or objects?
I said I wasn't sure,
probably a little bit of both,
because I didn't feel comfortable admitting
that I wasn't completely sure
what the difference is.
There was a scurrying sound
and she said,
I'll transfer your call to the Bureau of Matters.
Then I waited in silence for a few minutes
and doodled flowers onto a piece of paper
in then another millipede answered the phone
and she said how she may help me,
I said
they sent me here from the Bureau of Objects,
because I have a question about a certain matter.
There was a scurrying sound and she said,
no, no, ma'am,
the Bureau of Matters is not open today,
today we're the Bureau of Items,
do you have a question regarding any items?
I said no, because this time I could tell what the difference was,
I think,
and my question had nothing to do with any items.
There was a scurrying sound then
and she said,
I'll set up an appointment for you next Thursday at two PM,
we'll send you mail on Wednesday
so you can confirm the date,
and then we'll speak about matters.

I said okay and there was a scurrying sound and the line went dead
and I remembered
I didn't ask her
where I could find the phone number of the Bureau of Matters
and that she didn't ask me
where they could send me the mail for appointment confirmation,
and that I don't know what her name was
and then I looked at the thing on the table in front of me
and then I cried a little.

translated from Slovene by Ariela Herček

I keep dreaming about streams

Nika Gradišek

I keep dreaming about streams
when I should be dreaming about oceans,
I wake up to a room in a house with
unwashed dishes and dusty houseplants
and think,
this will do,
when all the while
I'm locking my doors in the evening,
closing the windows tightly,
listening to white noise on replay
so I don't hear the breathing,
the screaming,
the howling
of the world outside.

They said, "you'll grow conservative".
One either dies or sees themselves become the villain.
One sinks, accepts, sits down and never stands up again,
waters the flowers and grows deaf.

I cannot grow backwards
when I don't even have feathers instead of fingertips yet.
I cannot grow backwards
when I'm still waiting
to forget to lock the door one night,
waiting to be shaken by the shoulders
once the world breaks in,
waiting until I cannot dream anymore,
until I can only say *Welcome*.

PROJECT IKTERUS

A Bellyache and a Homesick Heart: Healthcare for International Students in Slovenia

Nina Kocjančič, Emina Neslanović, Petra Polanič, and Nina Tunteva

“Thanks for taking care of the international people, I feel very safe here,” was one of the comments we received from a student and it describes the IKTERUS project really well. Its aim was to improve the availability of information regarding healthcare services for international students (both degree-seeking and exchange students) as well as the communication between medical staff and international students at the Student Health Centre (ZDŠ Aškerčeva).

Stress. Stress. STRESS.

Imagine that you are an international student arriving in Slovenia for a semester. Managing living arrangements, finances, and learning agreements can be difficult, especially when you're dealing with a language you don't speak. And then there's healthcare. Besides petty theft and international crime lords, it's the issue of finding efficient medical assistance in a foreign country that keeps earnest, doe-eyed international students up at night.

The question of finding the healthcare information you need is not to be taken lightly. The information available online tends to be scattered among different sources and is sometimes available only in Slovenian. It can seem entirely too difficult (if not impossible) to get a straight answer about what exactly (and how much) your international healthcare insurance covers in certain circumstances or in certain countries.

Full name of the project	Improving Communication between International Students and Staff at the Student Health Centre of the University of Ljubljana
Programme	Student Innovative Projects for the Benefit of Society (Študentski inovativni projekti za družbeno korist – ŠIPK)
Funding	Republic of Slovenia, EU (through the European Social Fund)
Participants	10 students and 4 supervisors from the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, and the Faculty of Social Work, plus two employees from the partner organisation
Partner organisation	Student Health Centre of the University of Ljubljana
Project coordinator	Monika Kavalir (Faculty of Arts, Department of English)

There is also the issue of struggling to explain your medical concerns to a doctor in a foreign language – or the significant issue of being *understood* by doctors, who may or may not speak English/Italian/Greek/etc. Communication between healthcare staff and patients from ex-Yugoslav countries presents another set of challenges, as both parties cobble together and mismatch different South Slavic languages in the hopes of making themselves understood.

Our first task was to evaluate the current situation and then think of ways to improve the experience of future international students that might need healthcare services in Slovenia. The questionnaire we distributed among international students at the University of Ljubljana (*left*) shows a third of the respondents find seeking medical assistance in Slovenia either stressful or very stressful. What is particularly worrisome is that **40% of the respondents strongly agree they would wait longer to seek medical help in Slovenia than in their home country**. Over half of all respondents stated they would seek medical assistance in Slovenia **only if their medical concerns were very serious**.

About the questionnaire
75 questions
859 respondents (500 of whom answered all the questions)
58% degree-seeking students and 42% exchange students
45 home countries from 6 continents
52% of the respondents coming from former Yugoslav countries
Most students coming from: North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Spain, Croatia and Italy

Likewise, the questionnaire distributed among healthcare workers at the Student Health Centre (ZDŠ Aškerčeva) revealed that communication in a foreign language can present an issue when providing medical help to international patients. Some of the problem areas highlighted in the questionnaire are **providing accurate information about medication, additional specialist treatment and therapeutic communication techniques (offering emotional support, comforting patients)**.

Not everything is doom and gloom, however, as both international students and healthcare workers expressed a desire and willingness to learn and use different strategies and methods to improve the effectiveness of staff-patient communication. Cue the IKTERUS team, which was going to help them do just that. In the first week of March 2020, we were very excited and looking forward to all the face-to-face interactions with SHC staff and international students.

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES:

- Postopek pridobitve državnega zavarovanja v Sloveniji, po osnovi bilateralnega sporazuma Srbije in Slovenije je zelo kompliciran. Do zdaj sem dvakrat poskušala pridobiti in izpolniti formular v Srbiji, ampak brezuspešno. Verjamem da je problem v zdravstvenemu sistemu Srbije, sicer zaradi tega veliko študentov ki živijo v Sloveniji, a prišli so iz Srbije, nima zavarovanje ali rabi vzeti privatno. Ko bi ta postopek bil lažji na obe strani, verjamem da bi veliko več študentov imelo zdravstveno zavarovanje. Mislim da bi bilo odlično, ko bi imeli en office samo za tuje študente in njihove zdravstvene, psihološke in socialne težave.

- If this message somehow reaches healthcare workers, or for that matter any type of public workers, please be more friendly and try to help people who don't speak Slovenian or are simply foreign to you. There is a lot of internationals in Slovenia and especially Ljubljana. If you see somebody who is trying to talk to you, but at the same time having difficulties – be more friendly to that person, use body signs, just try to understand him/her or at least find somebody around you that can understand the person. Communication is a virtue in this day and age, let's all improve on that together!

- Zdi se mi da študenti iz tujine sploh niso seznanjeni o svojimi pravicami glede uporabljanja zdravstvenih storitev v Sloveniji, ter se zaradi tega večinoma izogibajo vsakem obisku neke zdravstvene ustanove v Sloveniji. Jaz osebno ne vem katere storitve so zame plačljive in katere ne. Pomoje, bilo bi dobro če bi Upravna Enota, Univerza ali posamezne fakultete naredile nek dokument, ali brošure z informacijami, ki so pomembne za tuje študente. Če bi le vedeli svoje pravice, bi študenti iz tujine gotovo več obiskali zdravstvene ustanove v Sloveniji.

- I wish foreigners were better informed about what we can and can't have in Slovenia in terms of medical health and most importantly HOW to get it.

- Lahko bi dali bolj jasna navodila nekje glede tega kaj se je nahaja, kako se dogovoriti za termin, kakšen je sistem (npr v čakalnici bi lahko pisalo nekje na steni ali se javiš sestri, ko prideš, ali počakaš da pokliče ali sploh ni treba in greš direkt doktorju) in podobno.

And then THAT Happened...

We managed to have exactly one regular, in-person meeting before the epidemic hit – we met at the Student Health Centre and briefly discussed the virus situation, not knowing it would move our entire project online pronto. We were one month into the project when we were faced with a tough decision – do we keep going as planned or do we put the project on hold for a month and reassess the situation then?

We chose the latter and just as the country went into lockdown, our project was put on hold in April. We made the necessary adjustments to our goals and methods and resumed work in May. Our meetings turned into video calls, a focus group with the medical staff became a questionnaire and the interviews we conducted with international students happened over Skype or Zoom.

Apart from the changes to our daily life that we shared with many others – working from home, conducting our research online – the content of the project shifted slightly because of the pandemic. We included questions about coping with COVID-19 in our questionnaires and interviews to see how the international students were managing – we wanted to know if they were informed about the restrictions, whether or not they considered ending their studies in Slovenia early, who they would contact if they thought they might be showing symptoms (as most do not have a GP in Slovenia) and so forth.

Additionally, we compiled a list of resources (websites with accurate information and advice, helplines and counselling options) for social and psychological support during the coronavirus pandemic. Managing stress and anxiety in lockdown has proven a challenge for many – international students are in an even more demanding situation as a result of language barriers and worries about their loved ones in other countries, as well as the ever-changing travel restrictions that might leave them stranded somewhere (either in Slovenia or unable to return to the country).

We wanted to offer international students resources they could rely on. We contacted some of the helplines and made sure they were comfortable talking to people in English, we looked at the English versions of Slovene websites to see if they were clear and up-to-date and so forth. The list of resources for social and

psychological support in a pandemic – which wasn't even part of the original plans for this project – turned out to be the first product of our project, and the latest edition is also available on [our department's website](#).

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES:

- I have concerns that if I go back to Ljubljana and get the coronavirus there, that I will have problems receiving healthcare there, or that I would have to pay for the treatment. I don't have a lot of info about what does my student healthcare cover in Slovenia.

- V Sloveniji sem od leta 2014, in je to prvič v teh letih, da nekdo sprašuje o tujih študentih in jih zanima njihovo splošno počutje in zdravje. Namreč, sama poznam veliko študentov, ki so v času študija v Sloveniji psihično zboleli, ampak se noben nikoli ni vprašal zakaj je temu tako. Včasih se počutimo, kot da za nas ne skrbijo ne v Sloveniji, ne v državi iz katere prihajamo. V času pandemije koronavirusa obstajajo različne denarne pomoči v Sloveniji, ampak samo za študente ki imajo stalno prebivališče v Sloveniji, in to se ne nanaša na tuje študente (večina ima samo začasno). Žal, tudi v državah, iz katerih prihajamo, ni predvidenega denarja za nas, ker študiramo v tujini. Veliko študentov je trenutno ostalo v Sloveniji, ker so vsi avtobusni in železniški prevozi prekinjeni. Noben se v tem času ni spraševal (Vlada BIH, Vlada Slovenije oz. odgovorne službe, ambasade), kaj je s temi študenti? Ali imajo dovolj denarja za življenje v RS, zdaj ko so mogoče njihovi starši v Bosni ostali brez službe, ko so oni sami ostali brez službe; ali imajo maske, razkužila, rokavice, ali so bolni itd... Najlepša hvala za to anketo in upam, da vam bodo moje odgovori pomagali pri analizi.

How did we fit into all of this?

The resources we created are meant for both target audiences: the international students and the healthcare staff at the Student Health Centre. These included: informational leaflets explaining the healthcare system in Slovenia, updated website of the Student Health Centre (with information in both English and Slovene), and interactive materials (e-classroom) for the staff of the Student Health Centre.

As linguists, we participated in all the tasks, but our main focus was on translating texts into English and Slovene, as well as the creation of teaching materials for the e-classroom. We made contributions in different fields previously alien to us; the whole project really put emphasis on teamwork while making us step out of our comfort zones and try something new. As a result, the work process was very dynamic throughout, especially due to the underlying interdisciplinary collaboration with the six students from other faculties.

One of the main goals of the project was making information easily accessible to international students – when it comes to language, this meant we opted for Plain English. The basic principle of Plain English is using clear, everyday language whenever possible; think of it as the opposite of what you do when you try to sound fancy for an essay. We explained things with basic words. We used short sentences. We asked the nurses and doctors to do the same. We followed these principles in Slovene texts for international students as well, for example on the Student Health Centre's website. For a patient who is already dealing with the stress of a doctor's appointment in a foreign country, using the words "upset stomach" instead of "dyspepsia" can make a world of difference.

The first few tasks involved analysing the questionnaires, so our colleagues from the Faculty of Social Work taught us how to do that. We quickly got the hang of it and made their job, since they were practically in charge, much easier. We brushed up on our Excel skills and learnt how to organise, sort and code the answers to a questionnaire. After doing this, we also learnt how to write a final report.

Two task teams were formed in the second half of the project. The first team's job was to remodel the website of the Student Health Centre and prepare brochures for international students. The second team worked on learning materials for healthcare workers, covering communication strategies, medical vocabulary and helpful phrases in English. The materials involved interactive practical exercises and examples of how to communicate in English over the phone and over email, all stacked neatly in the e-classroom.

While working on the exercises, it became apparent that the e-classroom was not as easy to use as we thought it would be. Making a simple quiz with multiple choice answers takes up from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Luckily, we had the support of our mentors, who were always there to guide us through the creation process.

The other team had to do a lot of research when preparing the brochures. Luckily, three international students participated in the project, so there was always someone who knew where exactly to look for the information needed. After both teams had finished their tasks, we switched places and checked our results. We looked through the e-classroom exercises to see if they were easy to understand and proofread the content of the brochures. Students who do not study languages checked the texts and tasks from a non-linguistic point of view.

Going into this project, we knew it would be a challenge. Nevertheless, everything turned out the way we planned it, even with COVID-19 around. We got an opportunity to work in our field of study, but also to try working in some other fields. We always had to work in teams, which was a great 4-month-long team-building exercise.

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES:

- In general I feel like Slovenia has a good healthcare system, I just don't have heard anything about emotional care.
- I think it was a nice initiative to make this statistical analysis on how much students are informed on what to do and who to ask for help if they need it. It can be very difficult for a student in a foreign country and without his family for a long period of time to stay healthy and enthusiastic (especially in the beginning).
- Zelo me je razveselilo, da sem dobila to anketo in da ste pripravljeni pomagati nam, tujim študentom. Zdi se mi, da je slabo urejeno zdravstveno zavarovanje edina pomanjkljivost za študiranje v Sloveniji tujih študentov. Velik tujih študentov ne ve, kam se lahko obrne in kaj vse lahko pokrije zavarovanje, ki ga ima. Velikrat niti delavci zdravstvenih domov ne vejo, kaj z nami storiti.

Tropolitan Collaboration Introduction

This year, ENgLIST began a friendly collaboration with the Tropolitan, the student-run newspaper at Troy University. While the staff comes from many different majors – journalism to graphic arts and business to biology – the paper is supervised by the Hall School of Journalism and Communication. The Tropolitan publishes once a week, every Thursday, during fall and spring semesters, and maintains the website TropNews.com year-round. The newspaper covers breaking news, localizes national news stories, features arts and entertainment available on campus, and provides coverage of the campus and student body as a whole.

The ENgLIST staff hopes that this collaboration will continue to connect our students and those from across the pond, as well as endeavor to provide a critical look into the lives of both American and Slovenian students.

International Student Roundtable

Nika Gradišek

The pandemic has changed everything for people all around the world, but it hasn't changed things in the same way for everybody. What are the specific challenges that students from America, Kenya, Tanzania and Slovenia are facing currently and how do they differ? Is there a silver lining to be found in midst of social isolation and the standstill of our youth? That and more were the topics discussed at the International Student Roundtable, organised by Dr. Robbyn Taylor from the Hall School of Journalism and Communication at Troy University, Alabama, as part of international collaboration projects.

Troy University students converted to an all-online class when the pandemic started, but are now back to in-person learning with all of the safety measures in place. Slovenian students are (as we all know) currently still in the online phase, with the recent disconcerting mental health study results showing that every fourth student feels suicidal. Kenyan and Tanzanian students have it even worse – their public schools couldn't afford the transition to online learning, so they haven't been having classes at all. To quote Loise from Kenya, "I feel left out". She is absolutely correct; the majority of first-world countries is too preoccupied with changes at home to notice the challenges abroad.

How can then, as Victor from Kenya put it, a lemonade be made, in this plentiful season of lemons? For Hannah from America that might mean getting used to online classes, which will help her transition into her master's programme that was always going to be online. For Joangelyne from Tanzania the pandemic brought new opportunities of connecting with students from abroad and gaining more experience in different sectors. Ariela noticed how students and adults alike were forced to create new ways of connecting with people, such as calling rather than texting, and how the extracurricular activities have found their own way of existing and expanding during the lock-down, such as having Zoom writing sessions for poetry.

Victor from Kenya sees in the pandemic the opportunity to revolutionise the Internet and digitalise our projects. Some good may yet come out of all of it, even if the status quo looks rather bleak.

Journalism was the common interest – and study area – of the roundtable participants, so they dived deep into analyzing how this, too, has changed. Brady, who had done his internship at NBC News, stressed the importance of team work and international collaboration that enabled his television network to keep up with what’s been going on domestically and internationally. But even more importantly – and all participants agreed – globalisation and international connections can contribute to better and more well-rounded journalism even after the pandemic, providing access to many sides of the same story.

To finish this international collaboration on a positive note, all the students gave a first-hand account on what living in their respective countries is really like. They all seem to love our homelands just as much as they are capable of criticising them when necessary, so the discussion turned into a lovely little tourist pamphlet, inviting people from abroad to come experience the beauty we are all witness to. Therefore, dear readers, if you haven’t decided on the next location you would like to travel to when the pandemic is over (supposing that we actually see that day come), you are welcome to listen to the recommendations yourself at: https://youtu.be/luabh3W1_BM or scan the QR code provided below.



ENGLIST FOR TROPOLITAN

How would you like your education free?

an opinion essay by Nadja Jukič

As it happens, very much. But it's also more complicated than that.

I can still remember my first time hearing some people have to *pay* to attend university, college, or whatever their various equivalents might be. To me such a notion was almost too extraordinary to be taken seriously. I had to be assured it wasn't a joke. In hindsight, this was the first culture shock I ever experienced.

By the time I was at university myself, finishing a BA degree in English Language and Literature at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, I found myself applying for a scholarship to study abroad at St Mary's College of Maryland, US. The scholarship, worth around \$13,000, covered the costs of accommodation and tuition for one semester. Quite a handsome sum for someone who tends to get annoyed about paying a €30 enrolment fee each year. "Tuition" and "student debt" are not part of a Slovene student's vocabulary. Public universities are still entirely state-funded; a remnant of socialist values ingrained deep within the education system. In socialism, education is free and accessible to everyone.

Of course, I got the best of both worlds, and I am wholeheartedly thankful for it. My university offered me balanced, well-rounded, and quality education. But with tuition fees come perks and possibilities unfamiliar to most Slovene students. Combined with typically Anglo-American pedagogical methods, higher education in the US makes for a very different educational experience.

I had never had an academic advisor before coming to the US, or received detailed feedback on my written assignments two times a week, let alone taken a class in which active participation was the norm and not the exception. It took some adjusting. Slovene students are quieter, but more independent. We are used to fending for ourselves and helping each other only through an informal emotional and academic support network. And though many of us are friends, none of our classes are as relaxed, fun, or intimate as the classes I attended in the US.

That is not to say college in the US isn't hard work. The workload is distributed much more evenly throughout the semester than it is in Slovenia, where your grade is usually determined by one, perhaps two exams. There is more reading, writing, and talking. The teachers pay close attention to you. Your opinions and academic interests matter to them. Many of my university professors in Slovenia never knew my name. So you can imagine how surprised I was when, after my semester at St Mary's was over, a professor invited our entire class to come hang out at his house for the afternoon.

When you pay more, you get more. There's no denying that. What I never counted on are the differences in core values and perspectives that underlie the two systems of education, free vs. paid.

At St Mary's, I was invited to a sociology class to speak about free college and universal healthcare in my home country. I walked in confident that the benefits of these are plain to see. It wasn't until someone asked "Why would you pay for someone else's education?" that I first properly realized the fundamental beliefs I had taken for granted were up for debate. I was shocked and amazed. I had simply never thought about it like that before; the idea that in Slovenia we are, in fact, paying for the education and healthcare of others through (high) taxes. My best answer to that question would be "Why wouldn't I?" Of course the possibility of everyone having an equal chance at education is more important to me than having more money for myself. The values behind free education are rooted in principles that favor the welfare of the collective over the financial success of the individual. Those are the kind of socialist ideas we grew up with, and, though Slovenia is no longer a socialist country, still deeply value.

Don't get me wrong – although I very much appreciate the education I got at home, I still prefer the university experience I had in the US over the one I've had in Slovenia. But I also know neither would have been an option for me had it not been for the free education and various grants received at home. So, in the end, I stick by free education. It was established for the good of everyone, and that is a powerful thing to believe in.

Inspiring Girls and Breaking Legs

Dominik Lenarčič

Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of one Harley Quinn (2020), director Cathy Yan

I used to be a fan of the DC Extended Universe. Somehow, I managed to be enthralled by the grandiose vision and grimdark atmosphere of *Man of Steel* and *Batman v Superman*. I swallowed up these two films, despite their unfavourable reviews. Not long after the second film, *Suicide Squad* hit the theatres and blew everyone away by how poorly directed and misguided it was. It was there and then that I dropped out. I figured I was wasting my time watching the half-baked cinematic efforts of this stillborn franchise. In the last few years, however, things seemed to have picked up. *Aquaman* and *Shazam* proved there was still some life force in this cinematic universe. And as disastrous as *Suicide Squad* was, that didn't seem to dissuade the creators of *Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of one Harley Quinn* (yikes, that title). So, is Harley Quinn's solo outing another promising rejuvenation of the DCEU infant? Let's find out.

Birds of Prey and the Absurdly Long Title picks up a few years after the events of *Suicide Squad*. Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) has broken up with the Joker which paints a target on her for the vindictive Gotham underworld to hunt her down. She seeks protection from the cold-blooded and charismatic crime lord Roman Sionis, aka Black Mask (Ewan McGregor), in return for a priceless diamond. Unfortunately, said diamond is in the bowels of the young pickpocket Cassandra Cain (Ella Jay Basco). As she escorts the kid around the city, Harley is caught in a wild goose chase with detective Renee Montoya (Rosie Perez), club singer Dinah Lance/Black Canary (Jurnee Smollett-Bell), a mysterious motorcycle riding vigilante named

Huntress (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) and Sionis' henchmen, all of whom wish to protect the girl and retrieve the diamond. Will Harley Quinn continue to go solo or will she team up with those who have the same goal?

Much like the two DCEU films that preceded it, *Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emanci*-whatever gladly ditches the doom and gloom of the failed Snyderverse in favour of a wackier, more colourful aesthetic. And since Patty Jenkins's *Wonder Woman* was a critical darling, Warner Bros. decided that, going forward, the girls should be in the spotlight instead of the boys. *Birds of Prey and the Fabulous* What-not is an energetic joyride stuffed with non-too subtle messages about female empowerment through violence against chauvinistic men in a post-MeToo world. What is perplexing is that this film, despite pandering to a young female demographic, sports an unwelcoming R rating. Why would you want to make it unappealing to general audiences? Does the display of girl power really need to involve blood and broken bones? Anyway, Margot Robbie reprises her role as former psychiatrist and spotlight stealer Harley Quinn. Her performance was considered by some critics as a highlight of *Suicide Squad* and Robbie's return was considered to herald a good time at the cinema. Can't say I agree with them, since I consider this iteration of Harley Quinn to be an obnoxious glitter girl, not to mention an absolute horrible role model for young girls. This film sadly didn't change my mind on the matter. At least this time she gets to show that she used to be a psychiatrist. The titular *Birds of Prey*, Harley's glorious female entourage, are a mixed bag. Smolett-Bell's Black Canary is a flat character, noteworthy only for the colour of her skin and her supersonic voice – a neat superpower that she rarely uses in this film. Perez's Renee Montoya is an affectionate parody of 80's detectives, but her subversion of detective show tropes is shallow and uninspired in a similar manner to other modern (Marvel) blockbusters. Plus, her being of Latin American descent and a lesbian pretty much defeats the point of Black Canary's existence as the token minority character. Winstead's Huntress is a different story: her character is a realistic depiction of an orphan, trained from birth to be an assassin. She is socially awkward and hot-tempered, and her life being defined solely by revenge is rightfully mocked. Newcomer Ella Jay Basco (niece of Dante Basco AKA Prince Zuko) gives a decent performance as Cassandra Cain, although her role seemed to be overshadowed by the liberal interpretation of her character on part of the screenwriters (Cassandra going from a mute and illiterate assassin to an abled adolescent). The villains of this piece, however, stand out dramatically. McGregor portrays Black Mask as a whiny rich man-child who nevertheless manages to be convincingly scary a lot of the time. If a story is only as good as its villain, then *Birds of Prey* must be quite a decent story. Cathy Yan's direction of a zany cartoonish adventure is solid, and the action does not disappoint. The fights are well-choreographed and the violence, while admittedly out of place, does offer some catharsis.

I'd be a fool to say that *Birds of Prey and the Fantastic* yada yada is for everyone – that much is obvious from the film's premise. It was inevitable that it would appeal to a specific demographic and virtually no one else. It's an entertaining romp of a film, even if it's not very creative. I think that the said demographic will get a kick out of it. Girls might like it. Comic-book fans might also like it. And the average film-watchers might like it too if the stars align and they just happen to wander into the cinema at the right time.

A Day in the Life

a personal essay by Karin Petko

I know, I know, you have probably just fallen asleep and you have just forgotten about your worries and started dreaming about something wonderful, yet I am bothering you with my morning routine already . . . Well, it is not my fault – let's rightly put the blame on the time difference. So, bear with me.

Sweet dreams to you and good morning to me.

Waking up comes first and apart from staying awake at occasionally boring lectures, it is the hardest part of the day. The rest is pretty easy, eating breakfast, brushing teeth, dressing up, taking the bus or riding my bike to the faculty.

Speaking of which . . . Here's the thing about our faculty: it is too small for the many subjects it offers. Therefore, the lectures are spread through the entire day. Some study programs turn the students into early birds, the others into night owls. I must have been born under the lucky star, since one of my studies usually starts before the sun rises and the other finishes way after the moon takes over. Okay, I admit that I might be exaggerating, but just a little bit. Anyway, there are usually big empty slots between the lectures – some are so big that students can actually return home for a few hours if they are from Ljubljana, while others spend time in libraries, cafeterias and restaurants. One such little coffee and snack place is actually a part of our faculty – surrounded by lecture rooms, but also with its very own little garden.

Did you know we have a thing called student coupons that make the food much cheaper and sometimes even free? It sounds awesome, right? The government finances a part of it and it makes students' life a whole lot easier. Anyhow, after the first couple of lectures, it is lunch time! Bon appetit to me and good morning to you, my dear Troyan! While on the other side of the pond you are making your last turns in bed, shutting off the annoying alarm clock and trying to get up, here we are already merrily eating our lunches. And while we are eating a very cheap but delicious meal, let me tell you something more about our faculty. The Faculty of Arts is a part of the University of Ljubljana and its different faculties are scattered throughout the entire city – quite different than what you are used to, right?

Anyway . . . Then the second part of the lectures starts and some students even go to work. Well, some work in the morning, others in the afternoon, a few not at all. But the majority of us tries to take up at least one job to make our college experience easier.

Some of our lectures happen in enormous lecture halls, while some are more private and only consist of up to a dozen students. I personally prefer these since they are more practical and usually also more inclusive. However, there are some perks to huge lecture rooms and countless students – chatting with your neighbors is much easier.

After a long day at the faculty, we return home, either to the dorms, rented rooms, apartments or real homes – depends on where you are originally from. You see, Ljubljana is the capital of Slovenia, but even though our country is considered small, a lot of us have to stay in Ljubljana during the week when the lectures take place, but we return home for the weekend. It would mean too much driving to do it daily. However, this is completely different now that the virus has changed our normality. All that I have described so far is thus a lie. This is how life of a student at the University of Ljubljana used to look like, but now we stay home all the time and wake up for lectures that are held online via Zoom. We pray that the professor will not ask us to turn on the cameras while happily crunching our breakfast in our pajamas. If the day allows it, there is an unavoidable nap between the lectures – oh, but the bed is so close and it is loudly demanding attention. When you, dear reader, are just waking up, we are cooking lunch while once again hoping that we won't have to turn on our cameras. But, to be honest, we have gotten used to seeing each other with spatulas in our hands, smoke around our heads and flour on our faces. One of the perks of

staying home and Zooming your lectures is that the entire family can join in, even the four-legged furry friends. Trust me, I have never gotten to meet so many of my colleagues' families. Or invited so many of them into my room for that matter, but that is the topic for another article. Now, let's return to our ex-normal for a short time.

It's evening here. I bet you are eating your lunch now, huh? Well, I am slowly preparing to go to bed and being a diligent student: I am doing my homework, projects, studying . . . Okay, you caught me red-handed again. Books are awesome, and so are movies. As for the school work? It will be done some time during the night or in-between lectures. This is one of the things that the quarantine has not changed – as it is appropriate for the students, we tend to keep up the last-minute standard and late hours. Still, even during the quarantine we try to make an extra euro with a student job. Those of us in the pedagogical branch tutor and teach online. Let's just say that we all try and – somehow – we manage. The same goes for sports and other healthy activities, where the opportunities are much more numbered than usual, but we still make sure to get some air, take a walk and sweat a little bit, so that the reason for it is not merely studying.

Well, I am now fast asleep. You? I bet you are eating your evening snack. Enjoy, but please do not eat it so loudly, some of us are trying to sleep here.

Thank you, that's better. Now, I am off to my dreams, and I promise that I will not wake you up again when you'll try to fall asleep and I will already be snoozing – except if you decide so. The words are always here, you know, even when the world has shut itself out. And even when there should be no touching and no closeness, the words can do both: touch your heart and come close to you even in isolation.

Check out the virtual walking tour through the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, with a special focus on the Department of English, the home of ENgLIST, by scanning the QR code below.



American Music Review

Ariela Herček

If you want to listen to the playlist while reading, you can scan the QR code below.



The opening notes of “Call Me the Breeze” by J. J. Cale immediately transfer the listener to the era of blues and rock, with both music genres mixing together to give the song that special sound that can only be considered “American”. The simple lyrics of the song give the impression of riding down the highway in the South with the windows down and the breeze ruffling your hair as you listen to the radio turned up as loud as it can go to really feel that 12-bar blues guitar riff. In general, an experience we would probably all like to have.

On the other hand, Childish Gambino’s “Have Some Love” does not build on impressionism as much as J. J. Cale’s song. “Have Some Love” is essentially a plea for people to love each other as brothers because the times are getting rougher, all while the funky bass riff in the background provides a constant reminder that we can have some fun and dance even in the worst of times. It certainly seems that Childish Gambino knows the solution to all our problems and it might just be love. We should totally listen to him. In more ways than one.

Kanye West proposes a different reaction for when the world gets tough, and it has to do with remembering how free and happy we were as kids – certainly not how most of us are feeling now under the pressure of the modern world. The entire song is therefore in juxtaposition with real life, which is carried through the rhythm and especially highlighted by the sound of an arcade pinball machine in the background. Those were the good old days!

The new wave song “This Must Be the Place (Naïve Melody)” by Talking Heads definitely carries some of that 1980s tune, especially the short bursts of synth as the singer tells us about the power of love. It is also incredibly interesting to read the comments under the YouTube video of this song, with people claiming how this is a “feel-good” melody or that it brings forth happy memories of their loved ones. I guess this has something to do with the almost hypnotic melody, where the riffs keep repeating and there is really no polyharmony to be heard. Some would call that a bad song, I am going to call that an exercise in hypnotizing people into happiness and love.

“Big Me” by Foo Fighters is probably more interesting to watch than to listen to. It has to do with the video being a parody on Mentos advertisements. It was so popular that fans even started throwing Mentos at the band on their concerts whenever they would play that song. The music itself is nothing special; it carries that Foo Fighters’ pop rock tune throughout the verses and the chorus with no guitar solos that usually make rock songs so popular. The lyrics themselves are a bit confusing, having no special meaning except for maybe trying to invoke a carefree attitude in the listener. I’d give it 6/10.

Grouplove's "Good Morning" certainly has a pop melody that entices the listener into bobbing their head but the lyrics are on the level of a middle school songwriter. It seems at moments that the lyrics were simply written to fit the beat, with no special regard for their meaning. As a person who really likes meaningful lyrics, I have to admit that the following lines just make me cringe:

*"From the black to the blue
To black, black, you like that?
Call on the cat cause the cat dragged in
I caught the rat
The rat, rat, the rat trap
All I know"*

That being said, I *have* heard worse. I would recommend this song for background noise while washing the dishes.

I have never really been a fan of Paramore, but their song "Ain't it Fun" has very good energy. This is mostly due to the lyrics, which are a "burn" for narcissists who think that the world revolves around them and are suddenly surprised when they figure out it isn't so. It is certainly an important message, to realize that you are responsible for your own life and that the choices you make are *your* choices. Since I am not a fan of pop rock in general (or I used to be, but those years are long gone now), I will have to say that I am giving this song 8/10 only because of the energy.

I absolutely adore the intro to "Dearly Departed" by Shakey Graves! The drums are a great starting point for the later inclusion of vocals. The lyrics themselves fit the melody like a glove and the man-woman duet is absolutely fantastic. Esmé Patterson's slightly husky voice reminds me of some of my favorite country love songs and it plays off Shakey's vocal so perfectly, they might as well be meant for each other!

Eddie Vedder is no less than a genius when it comes to songwriting, and "The Fixer" is a (good) proof of that. Pearl Jam's music has that distinct energy of alternative rock that is amplified by Vedder's vocals. This truly is a "feel-good" song, maybe also due to the varying beats in the chorus and the verses, but in general it's just an all-around great song to play on a road trip!

Ok Go's "The Writing's on the Wall" has a terrific video (I have to say this first). It plays around with the composition and angles to create optical illusions and although it does not reflect what the lyrics are all about, the video goes along beautifully with the pop rock feel of the song. The distorted bass in the background gives it a 90s groove that emphasizes the playful and yet melancholic mood of the lyrics. All around a good listen and a good song to end this review with.

Best of Contemporary American Blues Rock and Soul According to Ariela from Slovenia

Ariela Herček

You can listen to the playlist by scanning the QR code below.



I've always had a lot to say about approximately a thousand different things, but I'm taking this opportunity to say something about the American music that I like. Now I know that there's tons of different genres out there and that we all have our individual music tastes; it's what makes us creative! However, I am taking this opportunity to highlight what I consider the best of American blues rock and soul, performed by some less-known artists. So, if you *are* interested in what I'm talking about and if you want to hear about some amazing artists, scan the QR code to the YouTube playlist, sit back and play the music while you read this review!

We're starting off this review with one of my all-time favorite bands – Larkin Poe. It's actually a duo of sisters from Nashville, TN – Rebecca and Megan Lovell. They're primarily a roots and blues rock band, but their range certainly extends to unimaginable proportions – they do covers, too! And no matter how much you like their music while listening to “Bleach Blonde Bottle Blues”, they're ten times better live. This song certainly leaves you wanting more smoky blues and I am quite sure that you will soon find yourself listening to more of Slide Queen absolutely shredding it and Rebecca's talented vocals giving the band the glue that binds it all together perfectly.

Next up are Rival Sons, a band I discovered last year. They also dabble in the blues rock genre, but theirs is a melody that seems more haunting in its core, building up on that sense of longing that must be primeval in all of us. This is also depicted through their lyrics, especially in the song “Feral Roots” in which they invoke the sense of belonging to nature, the place where we all come from – and maybe the place where we all belong.

I'm usually crazy about deep and meaningful lyrics, but with Eliza Neals it doesn't really matter what she's singing about – she's just *that* good as a singer. The *American Blues Scene* describes her voice as “sand in a velvet bag, fired from a shotgun”. I'm inclined to agree. She's trained primarily as an opera singer, but it is the gravelly quality of her vocals that scratches that *itch* in my soul. “Another Lifetime” is absolutely one of my favorite songs to sing out loud when I'm driving. I hope that somebody looks at me one day while I'm doing this and goes, “Oh, I wonder what song she's singing along to, seems like a good tune”. It certainly is, my pal. It certainly is.

While we're on the subject of good tunes, we should move on to the next part of this review – the *soulful* soul. I know it sounds cheesy, but good soul can really make your soul sing. Okay, I might have moved from cheesy to cringy now. Let's move on!

Black Pumas are a fairly new band – their debut album came out in 2019 and they were nominated for the Best New Artist at the 62nd Grammy Awards in 2020. If this doesn't convince you to check out more of their stuff, I can butter you up some more: Black Pumas are busy creating songs that range from psychedelic soul to roots to RnB and it's not just Eric Burton's vocals that make it worth your while to give them a listen – it's also the fantastic guitar riffs, one of which you can hear in their song "Colors". Speaking of which, this song also offers some extraordinary synth and piano riffs that give the melody a burst of taste that I can't really describe. Let's say it's something I'd pay to hear live and leave it at that.

Moving on to more chill and soft melodies – Nathaniel Rateliff's "Early Spring Till" can be universally understood. "Are you tired do you feel wrung out" portrays that feeling of being exhausted that we have all felt. It's emotional and mental exhaustion, yes, but also the knowledge that we might mess up from time to time and that it's only human. Nobody has it easy all the time, right? I have to say that even the electric guitar in the background sounds a little bit exhausted. However, Rateliff also offers a remedy for that at the end, and it's symbolized at the same time by the rhythm guitar in the chorus and the sudden onset of drums – he even says it with words! And the remedy is that you just have to scream out loud. I might try that the next time I feel worn out.

Oh, but this last song really lifts me up, I have to say. I certainly don't feel tired when listening to it, but instead my heart seems filled to the brim with elation. I think this is what soul as a music genre is supposed to bring out in people – that sense of being full of something *good*. Can you hear that tambourine in the background? That gives the song spice – and I believe that this song really works primarily because the rhythm just pulls you into moving along with it. And we all know that moving along to the rhythm of a song means that we are enjoying it. However, it's also the lyrics that are soulful in whatever song Leon Bridges writes. "But there's blood on my hands and my lips are unclean"; I mean, that's *poetry*!

What I hope you have learned from this review is that contemporary American blues rock and soul artists are full of colors, of smoke and poetry, filling the audience up with the sense of belonging somewhere and the sense of running *from* somewhere to something better, and – most importantly – that they scratch that *itch* that makes you continuously search for great music, the itch that we all feel. If nothing else, I hope these songs brightened your day and maybe even made you feel less wrung out for a second. They certainly did that for me.

TROPOLITAN FOR ENGLIST

An American Perspective on Free Tertiary Education

an opinion essay by Sam Stroud

Before I address the topic at hand, free education, I feel several disclaimers are in order. First and foremost, I am offering AN American perspective, not THE American perspective.

While I believe my opinion on this matter certainly does reflect the views of many Americans, it would be ludicrous to say that my viewpoint is wholly representative of my country's perspective on education.

This issue in particular is one that has been under intense debate in American society now for many years. I firmly believe that with the most minimal effort, you could easily find someone who completely disagrees with my thoughts on free education.

As for my views, I must also clarify that I am speaking in terms of a specific viewpoint. There are two traditional schools of thought when it comes to public policy making in the United States. There are those who believe policy should expand government power, and there are those who believe it should limit government power. I fall into the latter category. This will inevitably paint the way this issue is viewed in my eyes.

The final disclaimer I must make is that, unfortunately, I have never traveled beyond the border of the United States. I sadly have no anecdotal experiences that can contribute to this piece.

Now, on to the topic at hand – free education.

I must admit, as a college student, I would absolutely love to be able to go to school for the very low cost of \$0 a semester. Unfortunately, that is not a possibility for me, nor, do I feel, should it be. My chief reasons for such a statement lay both in the practical and principled implications of a policy of this nature.

First, I shall address the practical reasons for my skeptical disposition toward free secondary education. The biggest and most obvious reason is the price tag. Cancelling student debt and other proposals to simply let the federal government pay off student debt would be massively expensive.

The United States is already racking up an almost impressively large deficit, more than \$20 trillion. The country really does not have the budget to be adding on more long-term costs.

The easy solution to bypassing this problem is simple; do not add it to the deficit spending. That would require massive tax hikes on people who most likely do not have the financial portfolios to pay larger amounts to finance institutions they are not using.

In addition, multiple studies have shown that as state spending on education increases, economic growth decreases. This would seemingly rebuke the claim that higher education spending is an investment in your community, as research does not reinforce that claim.

The other category of reasons which make free college undesirable is, I concede, not tangible. However, these reasons may be even more crucial in fostering my beliefs on subsidized education.

As a supporter of limited government, an idea that I dare stake the claim is one that originates from and is unique to the United States, I am not under the impression that is the government's job to provide secondary education. Subsequently, it is not the responsibility of one individual to use his or her own money to pay for somebody else's education.

The role of the government should be to ensure that an individual's civil liberties are protected. The list of such liberties is best summarized by the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution. Education is not mentioned as a right in these amendments.

In my view, the role of government in the lives of citizens should be as limited as possible. This means that spending tax dollars on paying for people to attend a university is not something I support in principle.

Reaching to participate in secondary education is a noble goal to be sure. However, not everyone is cut out for receiving college degrees. The choice to pursue one is up to each individual, who must take into account what their skills are and how they want to use those skills in their life.

The government does not need to provide blanket free secondary education to everyone. We are all individuals, and we should all take the costs and consequences of going to college on ourselves. We should not hoist those costs on others around us.

These are just summarizations of my general beliefs on free education. They are not definitive, and they only completely reflect my own views. However, I hope that I have at the very least managed to explain why someone would be against an idea such as "free college," which on the surface seems like something nobody should disagree with. The devil, as always, remains in the details.

A Day in the Life

a personal essay by Hanna Cooper

I should have known that a day in the life of a Troy student during this academic year was going to look a little bit different when I was searching the shelves at every store in the city for hand sanitizer as a part of my back-to-school shopping.

As a senior during a global pandemic, making sure I attend the correct pod (more on that later) and I have a mask on me has become a normal part of my daily routine.

So, it's morning here in Troy, Alabama, as you all fall asleep after a long day of work and school. To help you with the location, Troy is an hour south of Alabama's capital city, Montgomery. We are also about two hours north of the beaches along Florida's panhandle area – that's where many students spend weekends and spring break relaxing on the sugar-white sand when it is warm.

Just like any normal school day, I get dressed, grab breakfast and get ready to head out. But then, as usual, I have to turn around because I forgot a mask – again. Masking is mandatory on campus, as well as in the whole state of Alabama – at least until April.

Our classes here are scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, or Tuesdays and Thursdays – depending on the course. However, due to social distancing guidelines, our classes have been split into “pods,” which basically means only half the class meets in person at a time.

I only attend class in-person once a week because of pods and it meets Tuesdays and Thursdays. Typically on the day I am not physically in class, I have an assignment online or will attend class virtually. I am also taking an internship course and an online journalism course to finish out my program requirements to graduate in May.

After class, it’s time for lunch. I grab my student ID and head to the Trojan Center where our on-campus food court is. Our student ID has “flex points” that are essentially used as preloaded money. Some students choose to go to the dining hall where there are all-you-can-eat options of home-style cooking and a variety of international foods, but I like the convenience and selection at the food court. It’s fast and my days are packed – so, fast is good.

After lunch on the days that I have class, I head to work. On the days I do not have class, which is most days as senior only taking one in-person class, I head in at 9 a.m. sharp. I am really grateful to have a job working on campus in the athletic department where I help with media relations. That’s also where I intern. I am studying broadcast journalism and sport management, so my job there gives me great experience and I even get to travel with some of the sports teams. I wear my mask as I traverse the hallways of the field house before sitting in my chair to start working. I get off at 5 p.m., and then it is time to start doing homework. Due to the pandemic, my amount of homework has increased as in-person attendance of class has decreased.

I also have a job and scholarship at our student newspaper, The Tropolitan, where I am editor-in-chief. Each week I help section editors, writers and photographers plan and coordinate coverage of our campus. We meet virtually (thanks COVID) on Thursdays for planning, and then gather material until the next Tuesday. Wednesday is deadline day. That’s when the section editors and I meet in our newsroom to design the newspaper’s pages. We have to send our pages to the printer by 5 p.m. and the finished paper hits newsstands early Thursday morning before students trek to class. Then, we start the process again.

It feels like I’m always on the go, but it is usually fun.

When it’s time to eat dinner, I personally tend to lean toward cooking at home. However, on-campus dining options are open, or students can venture into the small city of Troy and find some fast food or local eats.

Because of COVID-19 and living in a smaller college town, students have to get creative with evening plans. Staying safe and healthy is a top priority. I usually will gather with roommates or close friends for movie nights and go hang out at sporting events – while of course staying socially distant.

Being on different sides of the world surely brings a lot of differences, but we are all still just college students trying to make it, one step at a time.

'Birds of Prey:' A Film of Madness, Mayhem, and Girl Power

Garrett McCall Jackson

Sometimes, madness ensues when two individuals endure a breakup.

Often, it causes those who become trustful in the other individual to lose not only their trust, but their identity – their understanding of who they are as an individual.

This is the evolution of the main character within the 2020 film "Birds of Prey."

Harley Quinn, played by Margot Robbie, opens the film by narrating the story of how she and her former boyfriend, the Joker, fell in love.

This was an excellent way to open the film because it allows for audience members to get a quick recap of the history behind the couple's relationship.

As Robbie continues the narration, she concludes with revealing to the audience that she and the Joker decided to breakup, which leads into the next portion of the film that I've coined "The Fallout."

The fallout portion reveals the mental breakdown, if you will, that Robbie's character endures.

She cuts her hair into pigtails as a result, which was a new look for her character that I thought was a tremendous benefit, aesthetically.

As the film's plot progresses, we're introduced to a handful of other female characters with their own subplots.

First, we have Renee Montoya, played by Rosie Perez.

She's worked as a detective for many years, but sadly receives little to no recognition by her co-workers, being all men.

Next, we have The Huntress, played by Mary Elizabeth Winstead.

She endured a tragic childhood due to her parents being murdered. She was then trained to be an assassin with one mission – slowly kill those who murdered her parents.

Finally, we meet Black Canary, played by Jurnee Smollet.

She sings at a nightclub run by a man named Roman Sionis, aka Black Mask.

Sionis, played by Ewan McGregor, is a prominent villain figure among the citizens of Gotham where the film takes place.

Each of these characters are tied together through one thing – a diamond.

Sionis plans to retrieve the diamond from the person who originally stole it, no matter the costs. This is where the audience is introduced to the common link that ties each character together.

Cassandra Cain, a young pick-pocket thief played by Ella Jay Basco, stole the diamond out of Sionis' assistant's pocket while walking down a busy street corner.

The plot thickens as the stakes are raised by Sionis to find the diamond and kill whoever is in possession of it.

Although this film is filled with intense stunt work and CGI explosions, it does contain an important message that I've written about in previous reviews – girl power.

Through joining forces, they are each able to play a part in the demise of the film's antagonist.

This film is perfect for any fan of the DC Comics universe. Although the characters are behind a camera, they still possess the comic book style animation within their personality throughout the film.

Though if you're not a fan of the DC Comics, I would still highly encourage watching it due to its fun, yet maddening, aesthetic.

This film also teaches that through unity, women can conquer even the most outrageous scenarios.

So, it begs the question, as Beyoncé famously asked - "Who runs the world?"

A Review of Slovenian Music

Andrea Hammack and Rory Johnson

If you want to listen to the playlist while reading, scan the QR code below.



Andrea Hammack's review

The great thing about music is its ability to connect people from all over the world. With the Tropolitan's collaboration with the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia underway, sharing new experiences through music was a priority for both staffs.

The Tropolitan, along with Ariela Herček, the poetry editor and proofreader-in-chief for the ENgLIST (whose review of the American music included in the playlist is also included in this edition) have worked together to compile some "feel good" songs that cater to those looking for both familiar and unfamiliar music to listen to.

Some of the unfamiliar songs you might hear as an American include Elvis Jackson's "This Time," Gramatik's "Just Jammin'" and Hamo & Tribute 2 Love's "Prva Vrsta."

Though most of the songs chosen by Ariela are not in English, she has chosen music sure to boost your mood. One of the tracks that caught my attention was Elvis Jackson's "This Time" which is surprising on many levels.

This group clearly draws its influences from multiple genres that include metal and reggae, punk, ska and more.

"This Time" starts off with a dark sounding intro but does not take its time cutting to a reggae groove that, along with its positive lyrics, contradicts any original expectations I had about how the track was supposed to sound. This song will be a hit with fans of musicians such as Sublime, or even more "pop" sounding bands such as No Doubt.

One song did not need lyrics — American or otherwise — to catch my attention. Grammatik's "Just Jammin'" is a bouncy, yet bluesy, instrumental song that borders on upbeat lo-fi and walks the line of the electronica genre. An easy-to-listen-to track, "Just Jammin'" includes a sax solo that will brighten up any day and is sure to be a hit no matter what country you're listening from.

The last track I want to highlight myself is Hamo & Tribute 2 Love's "Prva Vrsta." If you don't speak any Slovene, don't let the language barrier intimidate you into skipping this one.

Usually, lyrics are a big part of my listening experience, but with this song, I wanted to just close my eyes and pay attention to how it made me feel. Without even knowing what this song was about, I got chills from the amount of passion that was so obviously present in the arrangement and vocals. It's uplifting and "feel good" but in a way that hits you deep and takes your breath away.

“Prva Vrsta” is a standout in the playlist and deserves recognition for sure. I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t already added it to my rotation and dived into more of the artists’ catalog — each new song just as soulful and exciting to listen to as the last.

If there is one artist that I would personally recommend listening to further from the Slovenian recommendations, it is Hamo & Tribute 2 Love.

The things that have always appealed to me most about music is its universal nature. Getting to experience artists we otherwise might not have heard of without this collaboration is something that is extremely beneficial to all our readers who are music lovers and enthusiasts.

This international exchange of artists proves you do not have to understand something fully to feel something.

Rory Johnson’s review

“Signals” by zalagasper is a chill, melancholic song about feeling signals from your partner.

This song reminds me of music by Lorde and other modern-day pop artists. The production is like the music of that kind, as well, with the bass and vocals put in the background.

The lyrics tell the story of someone who is questioning why they are in a relationship and what is the benefit of staying.

“What do I get by being so sincere? Love and pain and what is dear to me” exemplify those feelings and also reassures them by answering the question.

The lyrics also tell of the partner having a hard time decoding the signals of the relationship and figuring out what the other is thinking.

I like the music behind the song, especially the way vocals and the woodblock are used toward the end to give this song a push.

“Na Golici” by Ansambel bratov Avsenik is a lively and cheerful polka piece. I have never really sat down and listened to music like this, but polka has been something I’ve heard in movies or TV shows before. When listening to the song, it certainly feels like something people could dance to and I love how involved the brass instruments are.

“Na Golici” reminds me of listening to a march with all the upbeat being played to a fast tempo. The accordion makes the song and provides excellent melodies to sing along with.

“Na Soncu” by Siddharta is an early 2000s rock song with a very upbeat attitude to it. Throughout most of the song there is an acoustic guitar playing an upbeat, happy part.

The song reminds me of the Foo Fighters, but with a little bit more modernism – especially with the distorted guitars coming in and out.

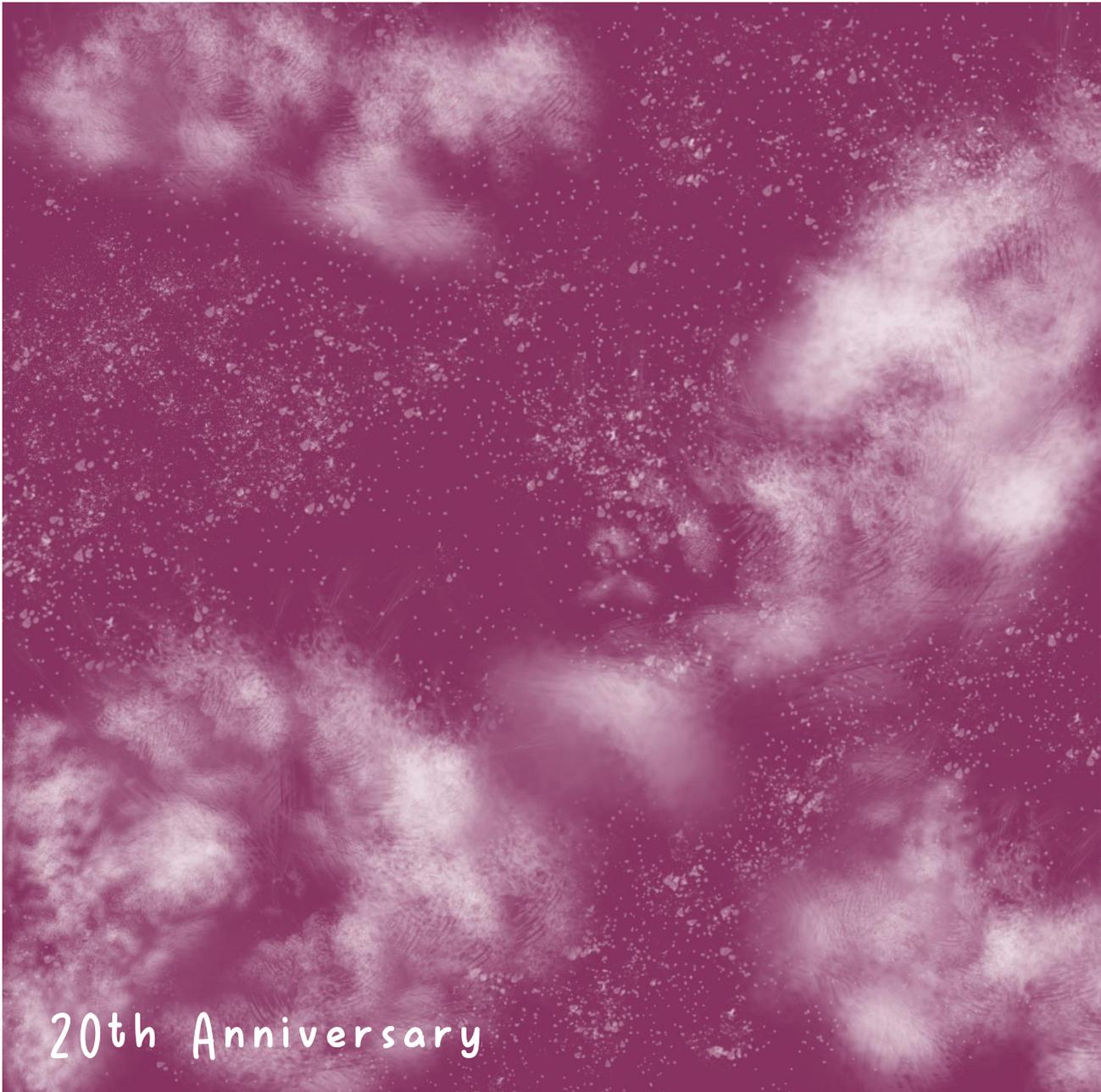
About two minutes into the song, a breakdown comes in with a saxophone playing a solo, which to me was completely unexpected. I enjoyed it though because of how easily the transition was made into the sax solo so it didn’t seem out of place.

The song was pretty energetic, and you could feel the intensity coming from the vocalist.

Top left to right: Karin Petko, Kaja Rakušček, Kaja Šafar, Andrijan Tasevski, Ascia Guseva

Bottom left to right: Ariela Herček, Nadja Jukić, Lenča Ambrožič, Dominik Lenarčič, Petra Ramšak





20th Anniversary