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An Interplay of Loss and Hope: Analyzing Diaspora Consciousness in Arnold Zable's *Café Scheherazade*

Abstract. Diaspora is a term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered “deterritorialized” or “translational” – that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation states or span the globe. However the connotation of “diaspora” goes back in time and is a concept that referred almost exclusively to the experiences of the Jews, invoking their traumatic exile from an historical homeland and dispersal through many lands. The connotation of a “diaspora” situation was thus negative as they were associated with forced displacement, victimisation, alienation and loss. Along with this archetype went a dream of return. Nonetheless, not all forced migration suffered in loss and despair. This paper explores the new age concept of “diaspora consciousness” that according to James Clifford lives loss and hope as a defining tension in Arnold Zable's *Café Scheherazade*. The paper aims to portray the interplay of loss and hope in the lives of Jewish war stricken asylum seekers who, having migrated to Melbourne, a city alien to them, suffer both a longing for the past and a flickering hope of survival within the Jewish diaspora community, preserving the language and culture of their lot. The constant tussle between assimilating oneself within the foreign culture and feelings of displacement and haunting memories of the past that refrained one from absorption and acculturation is foregrounded in the research.

Keywords: Jewish diaspora, diaspora consciousness, loss, memory, alienation, migration, Holocaust, Second World War, trauma

“You have navigated with a raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas’ double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land,” Ponzanezi (2007: 1) quotes Medea in her seminal work *Paradoxes of Post Colonial Culture*, which analyzes a culture that suffers a condition of dislocation, torn between “distress and elation” (2007: 10), hope and loss, the loss of a world to which they belonged and an eternal hope – an everlasting wish to recreate, to return to that “old world” that remained an integral part of their life till their dying day.

This culture or “ethnic group” as Vijay Mishra (2007) terms it, whose commonality consists in their migration to a foreign country wherein they establish a separate community, roughly con-

notes the term diaspora. I say roughly because, as Fludernik in her essay “The Diasporic Imaginary” puts it, the term diaspora “seems to resist precise definition” (Fludernik 2003: xi). Thus, while scholars like William Safran (1991) associate diaspora with the dispersal of a group from “an original center to at least two peripheral places” (quoted in: Clifford 1997: 247), as a result of a political strife or exile, the classic example being the Jewish diaspora spread over parts of the United States, Britain, Canada, and ‘multicultural’ Australia, Cohen (1997) and more recently Avtar Brah (2006) attributes the influx of labour into a foreign country or the migration of a group through slavery as a cause of diaspora; for instance, the African and Asian diaspora in Britain and the Caribbean respectively. Cohen’s (1997) criteria that “a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements” and “an idealization of the putative ancestral home” (in Fludernik 2003: xiv) is constantly recreated and reactivated in the minds of the immigrant group; however it is the wish to return to ones homeland which, while it remains attainable by the South Asian and African diasporas, is reduced to a myth, a dream for the Jews in the event of a terrible war (World War II).

It is this longing for a “home” that alienates the immigrant group from its host country, accentuating the feeling of loss and nostalgia, reviving the history and memory of the past. This revival of history through memory, to recreate one’s past, to cling to ones country, leads to the preservation of one’s culture, history, and religion, and enables a particular diaspora community to maintain solidarity and unity in a foreign country, which in turn gives rise to the diaspora consciousness within that particular community. Thus, while diaspora consciousness promotes experiences of loss, marginality and exile in a foreign country, this suffering coexists with an urge to survive, to begin life anew, and to adapt and permeate oneself within a foreign culture while still preserving the past in memory – something which the Holocaust survivor Zalman, a Jewish immigrant to Australia, states in Arnold Zable’s novel, *Cafe Scheherazade*: “It was just another city coming into view... I just came. I wanted to drink, make merry and pass the time. I wanted to live for the day... I had no grand plans for a permanent home... This is what all my wanderings have taught me that the moment itself is haven, the true sanctuary” (Zable 2001: 218). While the diaspora consciousness, as James Clifford writes, is produced negatively by secluding and segregating ethnic groups in a foreign land, it also gives them a new lease on life by enthusing them with a hope, a dream a wish to survive by preserving their ethnicity in the host country or simply by reminiscing the past more as a pleasant memory than an indulgence for longing a nostalgia for one’s home. Thus Clifford theorizes that “diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension” (Clifford 2001: 257).

In my paper, I endeavour to portray the interplay of loss and hope in the lives of war – stricken refugees, the homeless alienated and isolated from their loved ones as they undertake a journey full of struggle for survival as memory and history continue to haunt them, well depicted in Arnold Zable’s *Café Scheherazade*.

Novels, writes Brennan in his essay “The National Longing for Form”, in the “post war period are unique” (1995: 173) for they proclaim the idea of nationality, identity synonymous with one’s

country and the pangs of exile. Zable's *Café Scheherazade* is no exception. Zable as a post-Holocaust writer based in Australia documents the lives of the Jewish diaspora living in Melbourne, immigrants who survived Hitler's Holocaust during World War II. Born of Jewish parents who escaped Poland during the Second World War, Zable as a writer of the Holocaust trauma vividly portrays the lives lived by the survivors in the "shadow of displacement, loss, bewilderment and rage... trying to find in a renewed sense of belonging and security" (Freadman 2005: 120), trying to outlive the horrors of a "ruptured past." Almost all his novels, such as *Jewels and Ashes*, describe the predicament of Second generation Jewish immigrants, i.e., children of Holocaust survivors living in Australia, the autobiographical *Fig Tree* which documents the lives of Zable's Jewish past, together with his wife's Greek-Australian background, while his celebrated bestseller *Café Scheherazade* gives an account of the loss of families, the displacement of the individual, the dispossession of one's country juxtaposed by a flickering beam of hope to survive in the event of the world war encountered by the Jewish community now living in Australia during the 1940s.

On a "rain-sodden Melbourne night", the narrator Martin introduces readers to *Café Scheherazade* an avenue of "world dreams" wherein Jewish emigrants from Poland unleash their tales of death and survival, of loss and hope, the heinous impact of the death camps during the Holocaust, and of their post war disillusionment and dispersion. Zable's novel unfolds with the story of three friends, Zalman, Laizer, and Yossel, their reminiscence and loss of the "old world", the lanes, streets and alleys of the city Vilna, and culminates in the love story of the cafe owners, the survivors of the Holocaust, Avram and Masha.

Before proceeding with my analysis I would like to draw a brief history of the events of World War II. It was in the event of non-acceptance of Nazi Germany's rising hegemony and power that Poland was attacked in the September 1939 and with this began the Second World War culminating in the destruction of lives and loss of family, identity and one's homeland, an existential predicament with the loss of home and an eternal search for refuge and shelter, a commonplace condition for millions of people existing in those trying times and to those narrating their tales in *Café Scheherazade*.

Zable's novel unfurls with the Cafe Scheherazade, a meeting joint for the Jewish community living in Melbourne. The novel's title and Zable's incessant description of cafes – be it the Wolfke in Vilna where the three friends Zalman, Laizer, and Yossel idled their time away, or the chain of cafes in Acland Street "raining caffeine. Of every conceivable variety and form: short black, flat white, froth-topped Viennese, raw Turkish, roughly ground..." (Zable 2001: 110), and among these the enchanting Cafe Scheherazade – depicts them as something more than meeting places, for they embody communities, a place to preserve one's culture, to share a commonality of dreams and hopes to communicate with the "old world" and to relate the harrowing experiences of the past which the inmates of Cafe Scheherazade do, relating their incidents of death, love, hope, survival, and migration during World War II. Besides this, the exotic name Scheherazade conferred upon the Cafe holds a different meaning for Masha and Avram, the owners of the café. Cafe Scheherazade is an embodiment of their love that survived and culminated in their marriage after the

end of the war, for it was in a certain night club by the name of Scheherazade in Paris that they had both read of in Remarque's novel where they both decided to reunite after their escape from Poland. As Masha recollects: "It was then that there came to us an idea that we would celebrate our reunion in Scheherazade, as did the lovers in Remarque's novel. It pleased us to think we were involved in romance" (Zable 2001: 195).

For Zable and for the narrator of the story, Martin, Cafe Scheherazade connotes enchantment and attraction to those tales of the Holocaust narrated by the regular visitors of the Jewish community, very like Queen Scheherazade herself, who with her wonderful tales seduced and amused the king of Persia for a thousand and one nights, thus making him "revoke his cruel decree" of beheading a queen every night.

The notion of home as a safe and secured zone, a niche obliterated by the German invasion of Poland and the East, which destroyed the Jewish city of Vilna, uprooting and dispersing Zalman, Laizer, and Yossel in different parts of Europe, Japan, and China as they struggled to survive while living with the memories of torture and death of their loved ones in the Nazi constructed death camps. While Laizer moved to Russia during the German bombing of Vilna where he was consequently charged and imprisoned for the illegal crossing of borders by Red Army soldiers, his friends Zalman and Yossel were favoured with better luck when they succeeded in migrating to Japan and in turn China with the help of the Japanese consul Sugihara who had given them transit visas to Japan "that enabled [them] to buy [their] way out" (Zable 2001: 93). Zalman describes his loss of home and family during the bombing in Vilna in 1941, "...within days they heard that sections of Vilna was in flames. More than ever they were isolated from their loved ones they had left behind. More than ever they were plagued by the sense of guilt and unbearable longing" (Zable 2001: 111) – true to what Kobrin also mentions in her study of Jewish immigration in World War II: "Bialystok was at the center of heavy fighting, with civilians in Bialystok enduring as much hardship as the common soldier on the front. Bialystok Jewry's experience was far from exceptional; similar dramas unfolded in dozens of cities in the region, such as Warsaw, Minsk, and Vilna that were all located either on or near the front" (Kobrin 2006: 34).

"Telling is an aspect of surviving" writes Freadman (2005: 121) and the characters in Zable's novel do the same, recollecting and unravelling history and memory, narrating their escapades and their final act of existence and a longing to live. While narrating his tale Laizer constantly moves back and forth, living between his past and present, his life in Siberia, in the Soviet prison of Lvov and his "wasted years in Vorkuta" (Zable 2001:156) juxtaposing it with his present life in Melbourne and those haunting memories of the past. Laizer speaks of his deportation to a Soviet prison in the city of Lvov along with a hundred and six refugees like him, imprisoned in a double room with a daily ration of bread and diluted soup that tasted, as Laizer recalls, "like swamp water"; of his tiring journey from Kotlas to Pechora, of his exhausting work building airfields and huts for Hitler's army, all the time dreaming of Vilna and his "mother's cholent and roasts, Wolfke's brisket and Vilna's bakeries and cafes" while starving to death. Yet what kept him alive was his association with a multicultural community consisting of Tartars, Uzbeks, Poles, Jews, Mongolians, Africans,

and Armenians who, like him, were refugees in a foreign country, prisoners of war, sharing tales of commonality. As Laizer reminisces: “They talked about their years in prison camps, their children, wives, lovers and squandered lives....They had once imagined future riches but now they lived for each passing day” (Zable 2001:76). This is coupled with his burning urge to live, to live to return to the “old world”, to live to narrate his story to the world. However, this hope to survive is marred when his past haunts him in the form of a “recurring dream” with the death of his “father and mother, his sister and brother [who] perished in a furnace of gas” (Zable 2001:89).

Shifting between two worlds, the past and the present, between Melbourne and the streets of Kobe and Shanghai, Zalman as the narrator notes seems to savour every moment of his stay in a foreign land with its promise of light and freedom with its “pastel shaded sky” and the “cool texture of damp sand,” which reflects Zalman’s acculturation and adaptability to his present surroundings and life. While narrating his story, Zalman switches between worlds reminiscing and contrasting his life in Warsaw to that of Shanghai and Kobe, while he finally makes his way out of Vilna, journeying his way through Vladivostok, to ultimately reach the Japanese city of Kobe. He speaks of a life full of “symmetry” in Kobe, with a concoction of the east and the west reflected in the Japanese theatrical performances, a city that endorsed the merging of the east and west, that approved of both the Jewish and Buddhist regions of Japan to flourish within the same city; however, like Laizer he is forever tormented with thoughts of the past, burdened with the guilt of having migrated without his loved ones.

But among all three of them, it is Yossel who shows remarkable acclimatization with his Yiddish surroundings in Shanghai. Like Zalman, Yossel escaped from Warsaw to become a part of the Jewish diaspora in Shanghai. As Yossel says, “...in Shanghai there were Jews from the entire world. From Bombay...Persia and Cochin....They owned factories, warehouses, real estate.... The whole world was in Shanghai” (142). It was with the help of a Russian Jew that Yossel started his work in textiles and even smuggled goods and “traded in diamonds” for survival. Yossel, in accommodating himself with Russian, French or even Chinese ways of life in a foreign country, presents himself as a global citizen, for although he recollects his life at Warsaw, he “identifies with the world cultural/ political forces” and thus in Clifford’s term appears “global” in order to live, to secure and begin his life anew. Yossel’s diaspora consciousness as Clifford puts it, “makes the best of a bad situation” (Clifford 1997: 257), and in this way survives the war.

Unlike their Jewish companions, Avram and Masha’s story of hardship, isolation and displacement finally culminates in their love in Poland and marriage in France. Avram relates to his narrator the ravages made by the Nazi invasion upon Vilna, looting and plundering homes, the Nazi army shooting Jewish men as a part of Hitler’s anti-Semitic policy, while he hid himself in the peat bogs and the ghetto of Vilna struggling to help his family survive. It is amazing to read how life flourished in the ghetto with the Jewish slaves setting up school for their children with Avram’s sister Basia, teaching music to children, relocating a Jewish place of worship within the ghetto, and forming the resistance movement which Avram joined to resist the Nazi invasion of Poland. The Jewish ghetto symbolizes the small Jewish world, a little community wherein the exiled Jews pre-

served their culture and ethnicity; as Said puts it “it is a home created by a community of language, culture and customs and by doing so it fends off ravages of exile” (Said 1984:269). Avram’s guerilla warfare alongside Russian, Jewish and Polish partisans to crush the Nazi power, when along with the band of partisans he attacked Nazi soldiers, is reminiscent of the “struggles to win American independence, to unify Germany, to liberate Algeria where those of national groups separated – exiled... [try] overcoming estrangement – from soil, roots, from unity, from destiny”(Said 1984: 269). Masha undergoes a similar isolation and estrangement when she is deported to the snow-clad Siberian labour camps along with her family. Although Masha’s family survives in Siberia, they later return back to the old world, Poland, to find “the devastation that had been wrought in their absence: the piles of rubble, twisted girders, the razed hamlets...the desecrated temples and shattered homes;” it is here in a Bund gathering that Avram and Masha meet and fall in love, a love that culminates in Paris, that according to Said “attracts cosmopolitan exile”.

Zable’s *Café Scheherazade* is a tale of constant movement, of migration – the shift between countries, between past and present wherein the characters migrate from one country to another traversing borders and barriers in search of a home. However, while they settle in Melbourne, a sense of non-belonging and alienation still persists deep in their minds, as their memory of the past, the history of their struggle for survival and their loss of home during the Second World War annihilated their hopes for a new life, a new world, a new home. Thus, Zalman lives for the sheer sake of living with no “grand plans of a permanent home”, Laizer settles in a new world to do away with the old memories of his dead family and ravaged home, and Avram and Masha’s dream of becoming a teacher and doctor lay buried within their past as they begin their life afresh as restaurateurs in Acland Street. In such a circumstance of homelessness, estrangement, and alienation, Avram and Masha’s Cafe Scheherazade entertains and welcomes Jews from Warsaw, Budapest, Vienna and Berlin, men who lost their entire families, who craved for the Sabbath stew, to hear “the Yiddish word.” As Mandaville points out “The estrangement of a community in diaspora – its separation from the ‘natural’ setting of the homeland – often leads to a particularly intense search for and negotiation of identity” (2001: 172), like that conserved within this Cafe which serves as a home to Holocaust survivors, wherein “old worlds were recreated and festering of wounds were healed”. Zable’s novel thus gives us deep insight into the inwardness of a person’s mind cut off from the world by trauma, loss, and uncertainty.

Thus by drawing on the concepts of identity, ethnicity, and nationality; of hope to find the security and safety of a home; to live, to survive, to begin life anew; of loss and displacement from home; of feelings of alienation, isolation, and the dispossession that remains etched within the consciousness of the diaspora community; it can be said that diaspora consciousness promotes assimilation of a foreign culture in foreign soil – as in the case of Yossel in Zable’s *Café Scheherazade* who capitalizes on his opportunity, making the best out of every situation. His urge to prosper, to live unlike his fellow companions, is never extinguished even when he migrates to Melbourne: “This city was yet an arena of opportunity to revel in, to impress upon with his cunning and charm” (Zable 2001: 217). However, it cannot be ruled out altogether that the positive feeling

promoted by diaspora consciousness is engulfed and devoured by the feelings of loss of homeland and the haunting memories of the past; a past recollected and retold, shared and suffered by the Jewish community in their utopic home, the Café Scheherazade. Though the novel ends with a flickering hope for survival within the diasporic community established in the Café by preserving Jewish culture, cuisine, and language, as done by Avram, Masha, Yossel, Zalman and Laizer, there still remains in Zable's *Café Scheherazade* an emptiness, a void, a longing for the past that the "new world can never fill." As Said states, "pathos... resides in the loss of contact with the solidity and satisfactions of earth" (Said 1984:174).

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Homeward Dove: Nomadism, “World”- -Travelling, and Rita Dove’s Homecoming(s)

Abstract: This article focuses on the question of changing landscapes in Rita Dove’s poetry, and its strict connection with her redefinition of the identity and role of a black poet. A constant movement through various sceneries in terms of space, culture and intellectual concerns is a distinguishing feature of Dove’s poetry. My analysis of her poems sets into motion an interplay of concepts such as: Lugones’s “world”-travelling, Braidotti’s *nomadism*, Frye’s *arrogant perception*, Kent’s *legitimate universal* and Ellis’s *cultural mulatto-ism*. The purpose of this strategy is to demonstrate that Dove’s poetry permanently operates between the poles of nomadism and homecoming(s), where the two terms are not perceived as antinomical and mutually exclusive but as dialectical, mutually complementary. As a result, Dove avoids being pigeonholed as either an integrationist or separatist poet, transcending the traditional binary critical categories of classifying American black poets.

Key words: black(ness), Black Arts Movement, cosmopolitanism, cultural mulatto, homecoming(s), nomadism, universalism, “world”-travelling

Moving through changing sceneries – in geographical/spatial, cultural and intellectual terms – is a constant strategy in Rita Dove’s exploration of various ‘worlds’ and her own identity as a poet of the post-Black Aesthetic generation. Her poetic journeys have always been simultaneously outward – and inward-oriented: the movement in space has been accompanied and complemented by the movement of thought, and by acute awareness of her position as a subject moulded by such categories as gender, race, class, education and age. Dove’s literal and metaphorical *nomadism* allows her to borrow and assemble her poetic material across seemingly rigid categories, and work towards the “legitimate universal” which, in George Kent’s (1972: 112) formulation, is a function of one’s experience. Thus, Dove can be perceived as Trey Ellis’s “cultural mulatto” – a black artist “educated by a multi-racial mix of cultures” who can “navigate easily in the white world” (Ellis: 235) represented in her poems by Europe with its history, culture and art. Even though Malin Pereira (2003: 94) suggests that in Dove’s poetry “[u]ndergirding all is cosmopolitanism,” which

frees the black poet from entrapment in a narrowly defined black landscape (e.g. the ghetto), it would be interesting to complement this observation with Maria Lugones's concept of "*world-travelling*" which refers to friendly visiting of the experiential space(s) of the Other(s). Interestingly, among the "worlds" that Dove "travel[s] to lovingly" (Lugones 1987: 17) are the old black "*unfamiliar neighborhoods*" (Dove 1999: 88; italics mine), a phrase that points out that her *homecoming(s)* are essentially different from those demanded by black revolutionary poets of the 1960s/70s such as Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez. As she states directly in "QE2. Transatlantic Crossing. Third Day," a poem which skillfully uses the trope of the Middle Passage, "I'd go home if I knew where to get off" (Dove 1999: 85).

This article locates Dove's poetry at the nexus of the above-mentioned categories. It focuses on the question of changing landscapes in her poetry, and its functional connection with her redefinition of the identity and role of a black poet of the post-Black Arts Movement generation.

In the brief poem "*Wake*," which is part of a sequence forming "A Suite for Augustus," a personal section in Dove's debut collection *The Yellow House on the Corner*, the female persona states: "My heart, shy mulatto, wanders toward / The salt-edged contours of rock and sand / That stretch ahead into darkness" (Dove 1993: 25). Taken as a confession, these words express Dove's longing to venture into new territories, confronting unfamiliar landscapes, being lured by the endlessness of experiences promised by new vistas waiting in the fascinating darkness on the horizon. In the context of a clearly romantic relationship between the speaker and Augustus, the next line: "But you stand in the way," can be understood as a realisation of the limitations represented by a permanent relationship that the young female subject is not yet ready for. Instead of settling down, she chooses to follow her desire to wander. However, this statement should not be read merely in a narrowly personal manner since Augustus is not only the persona's lover but also a US soldier stationed in the Middle East and happy to move up in military ranks, as clarified by "*Back*," a poem which comes immediately after "*Wake*". The solidity of this figure represents an obstacle on the way to poetic-cum-personal development; walking past him becomes a necessary step towards self-definition.

In this way Dove problematises her human-and-poetic position, emphasizing both self-awareness as a black woman who just in time' saves herself from being trapped in a love plot and Americanness (symbolized by Augustus), associated with colonizing the world by military control and economic exploitation of its natural resources. For him Kuwait equals career: "Down / through columns of khaki and ribbons, / escorted at night.../ You think: how far I've come," whereas she – as we remember – remains mesmerized by "[t]he salt-edged contours of rock and sand" (Dove 1993: 26), completely useless from a pragmatic point of view, and longs for "darkness" which gains an additional *racial* meaning as it is wandered toward by the poet's "heart" referred to as a "shy mulatto." In contrast with Augustus's certainty and, to use Marilyn Frye's (1983) term, his masculinist/capitalist-cum-military "arrogant perception" of the world, the result of which is reduction of the metaphysical desert landscape into merely "the radiance / of oil fields" (Dove 1993: 26), the

female persona prefers a non-intrusive exploration of the world, whose pre-condition is ‘shyness’ and emotional involvement.

It must also be noticed that the speaker refers to her heart not only as “shy” (which excludes any possibility of conquering and exploiting other lands or lands of Other(s), suggesting gentleness, sensitivity, and respect for the object of perception although not timidity, let alone fear), but also as “mulatto,” which brings to mind the concept of “cultural mulatto” launched by Trey Ellis in his New Black Aesthetic manifesto. As Ellis (1989: 235), who classifies himself in this category, puts it:

a cultural mulatto, educated by a multi-racial mix of cultures, can also navigate easily in the white world... We no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural baggage to please either white or black people...Today’s cultural mulattoes echo those ‘tragic mulattoes’ critic Sterling Brown wrote about in the Thirties only when they too forget they are wholly black.

Even though Ellis’s proud announcement of the rich complexity of his cultural mulatto experience and enthusiastic expansionism is checked by Dove’s strategy of ‘shyness’, she, too, combines an exploration of the “multi-racial mix of cultures” with a constant awareness that as a person and poet she is “wholly black”. It seems that for Dove-the-cultural-mulatto her natural habitat is a constantly changing landscape, the moving through of which allows her not only to discover the world, but also comprehend and actively reshape her identity, so as to avoid entrapment in the cage of the narrowly defined category of blackness forged by luminaries of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements. Her personal and artistic freedom is achieved through intellectual confrontation with the experiences of other people – experiences which occurred at different times in history in various, frequently distant, places in Europe, Asia, North Africa and North America. This strategy protects her from the black solipsism of the earlier generation, and simultaneously makes her acutely aware of subtle aspects of her own personal/poetic identity resulting from an interaction between specific categories such as gender, race, class, education and age. It is difficult to resist the impression that her movement in space, and the fluidity of experience that it generates, allows Dove to rebel against the concept of blackness as a strict, predominant and self-explanatory category defining African American identity, and anchoring it within the limits of what Baraka calls *home*: the *black* ghetto, *black* history, *black* culture, *black* ideology and *black* (self)awareness. Simultaneously, her blackness becomes liberated as a result of this constant confrontation with other experiences and, in consequence, gives her freedom enough to revisit the old black neighborhoods.

Dove’s collections of poetry abound with references to various geographical sites and places – almost without exception mentioned by name – all over the globe: Paris, Versailles, Florence, Siena, Rome, Munich, Willendorf, Delft, Tunisia, China, Alexandria, Argos, Corinth, Damascus, Jerusalem, Eastern Europe, Dominican Republic, Washington D.C., New England, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana to mention just a few locations actually visited by the poet or travelled to in imagination. Also sometimes the very titles of her individual poems emphasize movement, changing places, being in a state of transition and impermanence: “The Transport of Slaves From

Maryland to Mississippi,” “Early Morning on the Tel Aviv-Haifa Freeway,” “The Sahara Bus Trip,” “Corduroy Road,” “On the Road to Damascus,” “On the Bus with Rosa Parks,” “QE2. Transatlantic Crossing. Third Day.” Thus, Dove creates a poetic unquiet-spirit persona who does not wish to take root and remain situated or fixed in one place, and who simultaneously chooses strongly culturally-coded locations for her poetic peregrinations. In this sense she chooses to function as, to use Ross Posnock’s (1998: 12) term, a black “world citizen,” and also – by erudite implementation in her references to, and materials borrowed from, a range of cultures – follow the “cosmopolitan” (Posnock 1998) path within the African American literary and intellectual tradition (e.g., DuBois, Locke, Hurston, Ellison, Baldwin, Hayden).

Dove’s critics and commentators have noticed the poet’s almost compulsive strategy of perpetual travel through physical-cum-cultural landscape. And as she herself says in a poem “Early Morning on the Tel Aviv-Haifa Freeway,” noticing discreet manifestations of intense horror and beauty of the world around her, “We should stop / but drive on” (Dove 1993: 124), the critics often speak about *nomadism* as an essential quality in her works. Nonetheless, they ascribe different meanings to this term: Ekaterini Georgoudaki (1991) and Therese Steffen (1997) talk about *displacement*, *exile*, and *migrating* in their respective discussions of Dove’s *oeuvre*, whereas Malin Pereira takes a somewhat separate and more precise view, emphasizing the fact that these are not categories resulting from one’s free choice, but are determined by the external circumstances. The latter critic acutely points out that the exile is not only “forever displaced” but also “in a sense ‘countryless,’” while the migrant changes one location for another and is “often fixed in a lower class” (Dove 2003: 95) – surely not categories that apply to Dove. Pereira chooses to use Rosi Braidotti’s conceptualization of the term *nomad* which “does not stand for homelessness or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire or nostalgia for fixity” (Braidotti 1994: 22). For Braidotti, *nomadism* is not merely the practice of moving from place to place, but rather a

theoretical figuration for contemporary subjectivity – out of the phallogocentric vision of the subject [that represents a] situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject... This subject can also be described as postmodern/industrial/colonial, depending on one’s locations. In so far as axes of differentiation such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and others intersect and interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity, the notion of the nomad refers to the simultaneous occurrence of many of these at once. (Braidotti 1994: 1,4)

Such an understanding of *nomadism* applies perfectly to Dove’s way of speaking and probing the world in her poetry – and not only in the case of her mature poetry as claimed by Pereira, since Dove from the very first volume has spoken ‘in tongues’ as a black, American, mother, lover, daughter and granddaughter, erudite writer, artist, traveller, conference participant, etc., always negotiating with herself and the world the position from which she speaks. Statistically, she is most frequently concerned with various aspects of female experience that become available to her not only from everyday personal and professional occurrences, but also through confrontation with

the fates of individual women ranging from historical figures like Fiametta, Boccaccio's beloved muse, speaking in despair about the plague; Catherine of Alexandria, who rebuked the emperor Galerius Valerius Maximinus and was condemned to be broken on the wheel; Catherine of Siena, who received stigmata and became politically and socially active; Tou Wan from ancient China, who without open complaint accepts her inferior position as a woman and wife; Nestor's wife talking about her loneliness; Claudette Colvin, who was the first person to resist segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama; and Rasha the black Dove – a circus artist painted by Christian Shad; to Dove's grandmother, whose life story is presented in the "Canary in Bloom" section of *Thomas and Beulah*; a slave woman Pamela and her unsuccessful attempt to run away from a plantation; a house slave hearing her sister being raped; a slave Belinda, petitioning the "honorable Senat and House / of Representatives of this Country" to sever the "Binds of Tyranny" for blacks (Dove 1993: 28); to the mythological Demeter and Persephone whose story is retold in the reality of contemporary Paris. Thus, it seems to be only partially true that – as Georgoudaki (1991b: 430) says – Dove "speaks with the authority of an artist who claims the world's civilizations as her rightful heritage." The poet herself goes further than that by giving voice to women so different from herself: by relating their fates without idealizing them, she deliberately and consistently alters the cultural landscape she travels through while simultaneously and continuously redefining her own identity in the process.

Confrontation with 'otherness' without being morally judgmental does not only concern Dove's poems about women. An identical approach can be seen in the case of the male characters she confronts in her works – including the dictator of the Dominican Republic Rafael Trujillo, who in 1937 "ordered 20,000 blacks killed because they could not pronounce the letter 'r' in *perejil*, the Spanish word for parsley" (Dove 1993: 136). In "Parsley" Dove attempts to reconstruct his thought processes along with his covert motivation for ordering the slaughter, yet she does so not in order to explain, let alone excuse the murderer, but in order to try to understand.

Thus, Dove's nomadism and movement through changing cultural landscapes turns out to be less an attempt to keep a poetic travelogue and more an epistemological strategy. Without it, no serious – or even real – understanding can take place, a decided contrast to the attitudes advocated by her immediate poetic predecessors, the Black Arts Movement activists such as Amiri Baraka and Haki Madhubuti, who demanded from African American poets that they, to use Robert Stepto's (1979: 167) terms, 'immerse' in black culture rather than 'ascend' toward white artistic standards and norms like the 'integrationists' Robert Hayden or Melvin Tolson, choosing black particularity and cultural separatism over the so-called 'universality' of human experience. Nomadism allows Dove not only to avoid black parochialism, but also to discover and represent the relational character of human experience, working towards what George Kent calls the "legitimate universalism" which, as has been already said, is a function of one's experience rather than internalised intellectual constructs and assumptions. In this aspect it can be interpreted as a version of Maria Lugones's "world'-travelling," presented by her as an efficient way of knowing oneself and knowing others.

The feminist philosopher Lugones distinguishes two types of “worlds” and the two types of travel they determine: “[t]here are ‘worlds’ we enter at our own risk, ‘worlds’ that have agon [in Roger Caillois’ sense of the term], conquest, and arrogance as the main ingredients in their ethos...But there are ‘worlds’ that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants” (Lugones 1987: 17). Lugones extends Hegel’s concept that “self-recognition requires other subjects” by disagreeing with him that “it requires tension or hostility” (Lugones 1987: 17). She maintains that “travelling to someone’s ‘world’ is a way of identifying with them... because by travelling to their ‘world’ we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*. Only when we have travelled to each others’ ‘worlds’ we are fully subjects to each other” (Lugones 1987: 17).

Among the worlds that Dove “travel[s] to lovingly” are the old black “unfamiliar neighborhoods,” a phrase that points out that her *homecoming(s)* are markedly and intentionally different from those of Black Arts Movement poets of the 1960s/70s such as Sonia Sanchez for example. The latter poet in her manifesto-poem “Homecoming” (Sanchez 1969: 9) talks about two chronologically separate kinds of homecoming. The first one was visiting home after being away for a longer period of time during her studies in college, when she discovers her own estrangement from the place – she perceives her return as done “tourist style”. The second return that the poem talks about is the result of a mature decision (“now woman”). It also requires leaving behind the white intellectual world represented here by “freudian dreams” and “the newspapers.” The persona rejects this world as generating a false picture of black reality: “i have learned it / ain’t like they say / in the newspapers.” Thus, for Sanchez there existed only an either-or choice, an attitude characteristic of the Black Aesthetic period: the truly black artist rejects white discourse, merges with the black community and serves its spiritual and ideological needs. In Dove’s poems, however, such regular returns are always treated with ambiguity and sometimes even with self-distancing (often ironic), which nonetheless does not erase love or any sense of belonging to the place. The most striking examples are provided by poems such as “Teach Us to Number Our Days,” “Nigger Song: An Odyssey,” “Shakespeare Say,” “QE2. Transatlantic Crossing. Third Day” and “The Pond, Porch-View: Six P.M., Early Spring.”

“Teach Us to Number Our Days” sketches a depressing picture of the ghetto landscape:

In the old neighborhood, each funeral parlor
is more elaborate than the last.
The alleys smell of cops, pistols bumping their thighs,
each chamber steeled with a slim blue bullet.
Low-rent balconies stacked to the sky.
A boy plays tic-tac-to on a moon
crossed by TV antennae... (Dove 1993: 13)

This is a dreary landscape of hopelessness, with everpresent violence and death, permeated by a claustrophobic atmosphere (“Low-rent balconies stacked to the sky”) enhanced by the motif of

imprisonment (“a moon/crossed by TV antennae”). Dove’s poem evokes the subject matter and atmosphere of Sonia Sanchez’s “Bubba” (1984: 55-58) which relates the story of the poet’s sensitive young schoolfriend, an artistic soul Bubba who, trapped in ghetto life with its lack of any prospects, becomes a drug addict who finally ends his life by jumping off a roof. Nevertheless, unlike Sanchez’s short story-poem, Dove’s is no didactic ‘consciousness raising’ text, but a disinterested statement of hard facts. In consequence, it should come as no surprise that “Teach Us to Number Our Days” is followed by “Nigger Song: An Odyssey” whose theme is escape out of this place:

We six pile in, the engine churning ink:
 We ride into the night.
 Past factories, past graveyards
 And the broken eyes of windows, we ride
 Into the grey-green nigger night.
 ...
 Weeds clutch at the wheels;
 We laugh and swerve away, veering
 ...
 The green smoke sizzling on our tongues...
 In the nigger night, thick with the smell of cabbages,
 Nothing can catch us.
 Laughter spills like gin from glasses,
 And “yeah” we whisper, “yeah”
 We croon, “yeah.” (Dove 1993: 14)

As Pereira (2003: 59-60) claims, this poem “seems a next-generation response to being set free from the black arts movement...This generation is free... to ‘swerve away’ from the restrictions of the past, although the weeds ‘clutch at the wheels,’ free to go straight into the heart of blackness, the green again connoting the potential for growth.” It must be pointed out that such an interpretation results from the critic’s somewhat arbitrary decision to pair the poem with “Upon Meeting Don L. Lee, In a Dream” (Dove 1993: 12). However, placed after “Teach Us to Number Our Days” with its bleak ghettoscape, it appears to treat more with the impossibility of leaving home even in a situation when black youth are free from the necessity to obey the artistic and ideological prescriptions of their elder brothas and sistuhs. The poem is replete with references to intoxication and altered states of consciousness: “the grey-green...night,” “weeds,” “the green smoke sizzling on our tongues,” “[l]aughter spilling like gin from glasses,” suggesting that Dove may here be confronting her own suspicion or even anxiety that, in spite of her generation’s freedom from ideological obligations, escaping the ghetto is still only an illusion since the joyride ends at the point of departure: “we ride / Into the gray-green nigger night. / ... / thick with the smell of cabbages,” in whose context the proud and arrogant statement “[n]othing can catch us” sounds tainted with irony and ignorance. The poem seems to say that there is no escape but navigating a long way back home – hence the subtitle: “An Odyssey.”

The theme of homecoming has appeared regularly in Dove's subsequent collections of poetry. Its importance and discreet centrality in the output of the author of *Thomas and Beulah* becomes evident when Dove opens her 1993 *Selected Poems* with an "Introduction" that contains a long poem "In the Old Neighborhood" (Dove 1993: xxii-xxvi) which describes her visit home for her sister's wedding after a longer absence. The poem's mood is far from joyful and affirmative (unlike that of Nikki Giovanni's childhood and home poems, her signature-poem "Nikki-Rosa" for instance): the central image being a recollection of a starling "caught in the blades" (Dove 1993: xxv) of an attic fan. Here Dove clearly makes an allusion to her bird-surname, choosing for herself as a poet and person the role of a homing pigeon – a bird that regularly flies long distances away from home but always returns to the nest.

Nonetheless, this homewardness of Dove's poetic "world"-travelling has its price in anxiety and uncertainty, which seem to serve as a pre-condition for a sense of belonging to a particular black location. Characteristically, the poet deals with them either by adopting someone else's voice or by assuming an ironic tone when speaking in the first person singular. They come forward most conspicuously in "Shakespeare Say," "QE2. Transatlantic Crossing. Third Day" and "The Pond, Porch-View: Six P.M., Early Spring."

The first poem, which maintains a subtle dialogue with Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues," concentrates on the experience of Champion Jack Dupree, a black blues singer who extensively toured Europe, staying away from home for extended periods of time. When caught in winter in Munich (Rita Dove also lived in Germany for a few years) he moans to himself:

*my home's in Louisiana,
my voice is wrong,
I'm broke and can't hold
my piss;
my mother told me
there'd be days like this.* (Dove 1993: 91)

It must be emphasized, however, that the musician's complaints are made with full awareness that "even the mistakes/sound like jazz" (90), which means that they are necessary part of his blues identity, essential for his artistic creativity. Being broke, ill, in bad singing form, and far away from a home talked about with ironic distance, all allow Dupree to maintain authenticity on stage. In "QE2. Transatlantic Crossing. Third Day" Dove herself reveals a similar paradox connected with *travelling in the "world"* of blackness rather than living in it:

Here I float on the lap of existence. Each night
I put this body into its sleeve of dark water with no more

than a teardrop of ecstasy, a thimbleful of ache.
And that, friends, is the difference–

I can't erase an ache I never had.
 Not even my own grandmother would pity me;
 instead she'd suck her teeth at the sorry sight
 of some Negro actually looking for misery.

well, I'd go home if I knew where to get off. (Dove 1999: 84-5)

Significantly, the Middle Passage cannot be experienced second-hand or as a simulation of historical experience of transported slaves in the act of creative imagination, and when an attempt is made to pretend it can, it results in nothing more than mediocre, pathetic emotions: "a teardrop of ecstasy, a thimbleful of ache." "World"-travelling, which becomes nothing more than "float[ing] on the lap of existence" and turns into "actually *looking for* misery," ends in the speaker's disorientation and confusion concerning the question of where home is and where her journey ends.

As a result, Dove's subject is caught in a permanent movement whose result is, on one hand, the defamiliarization of black "neighborhoods" and on the other, disappointment mixed with resignation to the possibility that the journey has come to its end 'right here, right now.' This point is made perfectly clear, even though characteristically to Dove slightly ironically, in "The Pond, Porch-View: Six P.M., Early Spring," a poem closing her 1999 collection titled *On the Bus with Rosa Parks*:

Where I'm now
 is more like riding on a bus
 through unfamiliar neighborhoods—
 chair in recline, the view chopped square
 and dimming quick. I know
 I vowed I'd get off
 somewhere grand; like that dear goose
 come honking down
 from Canada, I tried to end up anyplace but here.
 who am I kidding? Here I am.

Nevertheless, if the irony of this excerpt is interpreted as a device screening the speaker's relief which is revealed in the final short statement "Here I am," we can conclude that Dove perceives her poetic nomadism and her homecoming(s) not in terms of antinomy but dialectic (in Hegelian sense of the term). Contrary to being mutually exclusive, the two terms, which organise Dove's understanding of role of an African American poet of the post-Black Arts Movement generation, function as mutually complementary opposites necessary for successful "world"-travelling based on constant departures from and returns back to the old black – forever unfamiliar – neighborhoods.

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Prosody Learning Strategies and What English Philology Students Know about Them

Abstract. Although learning strategies are in the focus of attention of both theorists and foreign language teachers, only few scientific descriptions highlight the significance of the prosodic skills and strategies to practice them. This paper discusses the results of the questionnaire the aim of which was to determine English philology students' understanding of prosody and prosodic skills as well as to identify prosodic strategies they use to improve their pronunciation in English. We can conclude that students understand prosodic phenomenon of language but they cannot define it, and they apply a variety of activities that develop prosodic skills.

Keywords: learning strategies, suprasegmentals, prosodic skills, students' assessment

Introduction

As Mennen (2007:52) observes in her description devoted to the phonetic and phonological influences in non-native intonation, "Just as poor pronunciation can make a foreign language learner very difficult to understand, poor prosodic and intonational skills can have an equally devastating effect on communication and can make conversation frustrating and unpleasant for both learners and their listeners". Hence the constant need to propose, describe, discuss, and implement learning strategies that develop learners' prosodic competence.

Although research on strategies used to improve pronunciation has been conducted for almost two decades (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996, Peterson 2000, Vitanova and Miller 2002, Eckstein 2007, Wrembel 2008, Pawlak 2010, Derwing and Rossiter 2002, Sardegna 2011), only a few scientific descriptions highlight the significance of prosodic skills and refer directly to improving the suprasegmental (prosodic) component. One of the first attempts to investigate prosody learning strategies was made by Cruz-Ferreira (1999) who, in a report on the negative transfer of prosodic patterns in multilingual children's speech, simply asserted their application in the process of language acquisi-

tion. From the results of Osburne's (2003) survey designed in order to identify learning strategies used by L2 learners, eight different categories of pronunciation learning, with a focus on prosodic structures as one of them, were identified. The purpose of another experiment – Ingels' (2011) research – was to evaluate the effectiveness of adult L2 learners' use of strategies for suprasegmental features: message unit (intonation group) boundaries, primary phrase stress (utterance stress), intonation, reduction of unstressed vowels in content words and function words, linking, word stress, and multiword construction stress. Finally, in the most recent publication (Romero-Trillo ed. 2012), the authors' attention is focused on a wide scope of prosodic issues in reference to the learning process, such as early prosodic production, prosodic adaptation in foreign/second language learning, teaching prosody with a pragmatic orientation, prosody, and feedback.

In light of the above observations, it can be argued that there is still much to examine in the field of prosody learning. Such questions as to how students (learners) understand/define and diagnose prosody learning strategies (techniques), what strategies they use (what actions they employ) in an effort to practice and to master specific prosodic skills, whether they implement the techniques consciously or subconsciously, and many others still remain unresolved.

The aim of the research

The present study has been motivated not only by the lack of comprehensive analysis of prosodic phenomenon from the learning/teaching perspective discussed above, but also by several more prosaic observations.

To begin with, even though linguistic research propagates correctness and compliance with prescribed rules, more and more (non-) native speakers use language in a slovenly fashion, simplifying the content and sound of everyday speech in the same way as they abbreviate SMS text messages and e-mail messages, which results in language impoverishment. Next, we can often observe teachers' apparent reluctance to teach pronunciation on the suprasegmental level despite the fact that they are provided with a variety of modern manuals containing a prosodic component. Furthermore, first year English philology students (who have not yet achieved any credit in practical phonetics) perform well and sound better than did students of a decade ago, which is clearly observable. They belong to a generation who has many more opportunities to travel, to be exposed to living language in English-speaking countries, and to communicate in English in their own country via the Internet, TV and radio channels. Nonetheless, their phonetic skills are (near) native-like when the pronunciation of segmental components is taken into account – but there is still much to be done as far as the suprasegmental level is concerned.

In view of the abovementioned facts, the authors of the article set the following purposes:

1. to determine if and how English philology students understand prosody and prosodic skills,
2. to investigate English philology students' degree of awareness in their use of prosodic strategies,
3. to identify the range, type, and frequency of the prosodic strategies they use.

Subjects and instrument

A study on whether third year B.A. English Philology students of the University of Białystok, Poland understand and apply suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies was carried out on a group of 50 respondents. All students had completed courses on practical and theoretical phonetics so they were expected to be familiar with the phenomenon of suprasegmental phonetics at the time of their participation in the research.

The instrument – a questionnaire – consisted of 12 questions, the majority of which were of a structured type (in the form of a list or scale) though there were a few verbal questions as well (Bell 2009: 137-138).

Data collected

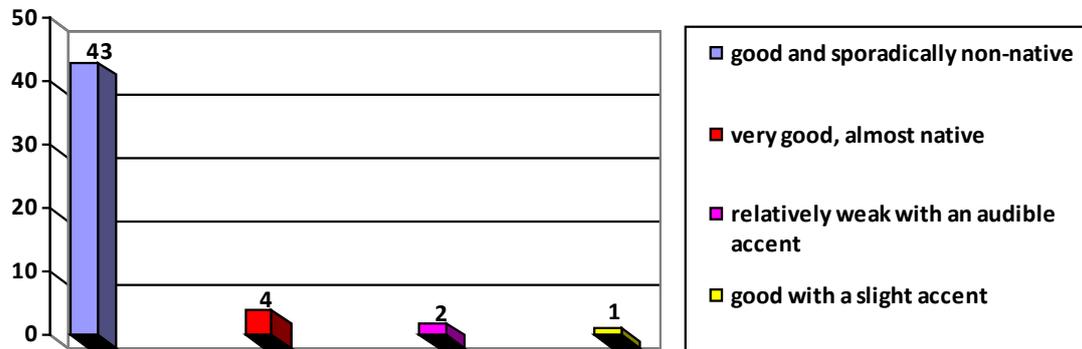
The results gathered are presented below. Thus, in reference to the first question of the questionnaire 43 respondents assessed their competence as EFL users of phonetics (the quality of their pronunciation skills in the target language) as good and sporadically non-native, 4 participants evaluated their competence as very good, almost native, 2 as relatively weak with an audible accent and 1 as good with a slight accent. The results are illustrated in Diagram 1.

When asked about their pronunciation skills at the suprasegmental level, respondents assessed their abilities as follows: 4 declared them to be very good, almost native, 39 believed them to be good and sporadically non-native, 6 relatively weak with an audible accent and good with a slight accent. The results are illustrated in Diagram 2.

When asked to define in their own words the concept of ‘prosodic skills’, students proved to understand it as: the skill of proper pronunciation (6 respondents), skills how to apply and identify intonation, accents, tempo, rhythm, and pauses (22 respondents), or either wrote no answer or declared not to know the concept (22 respondents). These results are illustrated in Diagram 3.

When we asked students to assess their abilities in reference to their phonetic sub-skills they provided the answers that are gathered in Table 1.

**Diagram 1. Students' assessment of their phonetic skills
in the target language**



**Diagram 2. Students' assessment of their pronunciation skills
at the suprasegmental level**

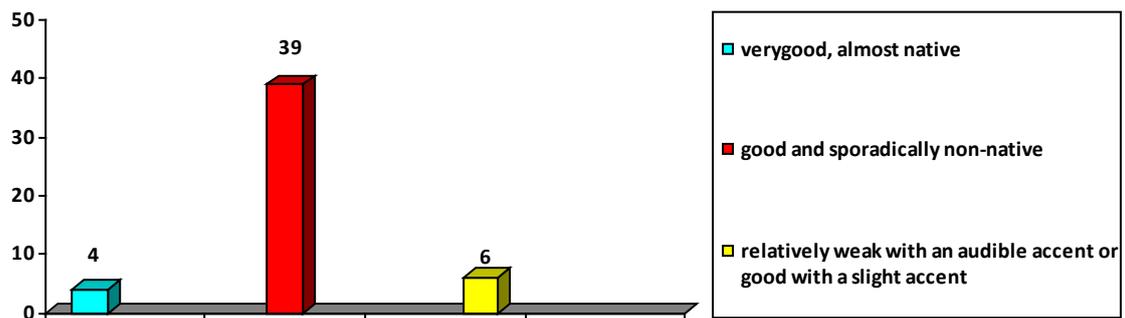


Diagram 3. Definition of 'prosodic skills' according to students

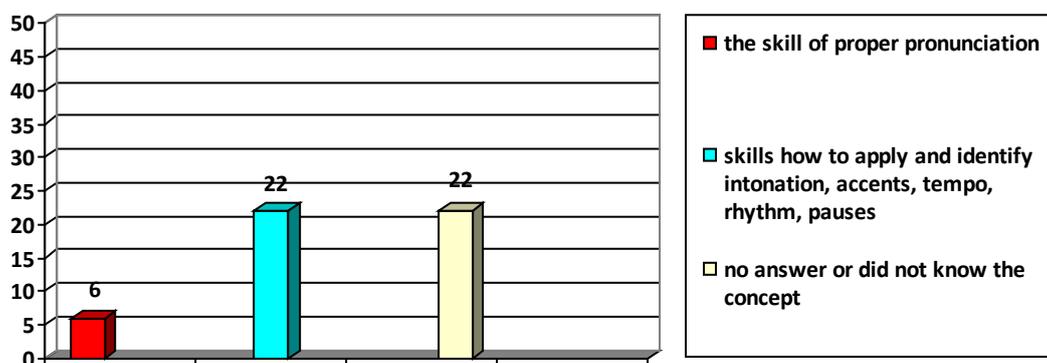


Table 1. Students' assessment of their phonetic sub-skills

Phonetic sub-skills declared by respondents	Number of respondents declared they:		
	definitely possessed	could not decide	did not possess
	particular skill		
I am good at pronouncing individual sounds.	36	8	6
I am good at pronouncing individual words.	36	6	8
I locate pauses correctly.	30	14	6
I am good at pronouncing individual sounds, I mainly make mistakes at the word stress level.	25	19	6
I divide sentences into intonation groups properly.	32	11	7
I pronounce difficult sound clusters correctly.	22	22	6
I locate and pronounce sentence stress correctly.	30	13	7
I stress individual words correctly.	25	9	16
I understand the contrastive function of sentence stress.	25	13	12
I recognize the contrastive function of sentence stress.	24	14	12
I can apply the contrastive function of sentence stress.	20	17	13
I stress words and simultaneously pronounce weak and strong forms correctly.	24	20	6
My utterances are correct in respect to rhythmic organization. I can divide sentences into rhythmic groups.	26	14	10
I apply word linking properly.	29	10	11
I recognize and properly pronounce falling terminal tones.	24	16	10
I recognize and pronounce falling-rising terminal tones properly.	25	17	9
I recognize and pronounce rising terminal tones properly.	24	15	10
I recognize and pronounce rising-falling terminal tones properly.	26	15	9
I pronounce weak and strong forms properly.	25	15	10
My main problem is an incorrect usage of intonation patterns related to sentence type (statement, general or specific question, command, etc.	16	10	24
I cannot apply emotional tones according to emotions a given utterance expresses (surprise, hesitation, approval/acceptance, doubt/reserve, etc.).	13	10	27

All 50 respondents, when asked whether they thought that prosodic skills could be improved, were fully convinced that such progress was possible to be achieved. When asked what they did to improve their prosodic skills, 17 students gave no answer or suggested they did nothing, 12 said that they watched films and TV programmes to improve their prosodic skills, 11 respondents declared they repeated the model pattern. Listening to English speech was indicated by 3 respon-

dents, similarly reading aloud, talking to natives, self-recording, or exercising in front of a mirror were indicated, each respectively by 3 students. 2 students said they did transcription, while each of the following answers was highlighted by 1 respondent: diction and singing classes, repetition of tongue twisters, singing English songs, or going to the target language country. The answers are collected in Table 2.

Table 2. Strategies declared by students to be used by them to improve their prosodic skills

Strategies used by students:	Number of respondents:
no answer (or did nothing)	17
watching films and TV programmes	12
repetition of the model pattern	11
listening to English speech	3
reading aloud	3
talking to native speakers	3
self-recording	3
exercising in front of a mirror	3
doing transcription	2
diction and singing classes	1
repetition of tongue twisters	1
singing English songs	1
going to the target language country	1

In reference to the question whether students, at the time of their study at the University, came across the concept of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies, 12 respondents confirmed that they had, 36 declared that they had not, and 2 respondents refused to answer the question at all. Their answers are gathered in Diagram 4.

Diagram 4. Students' experience with the concept of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies

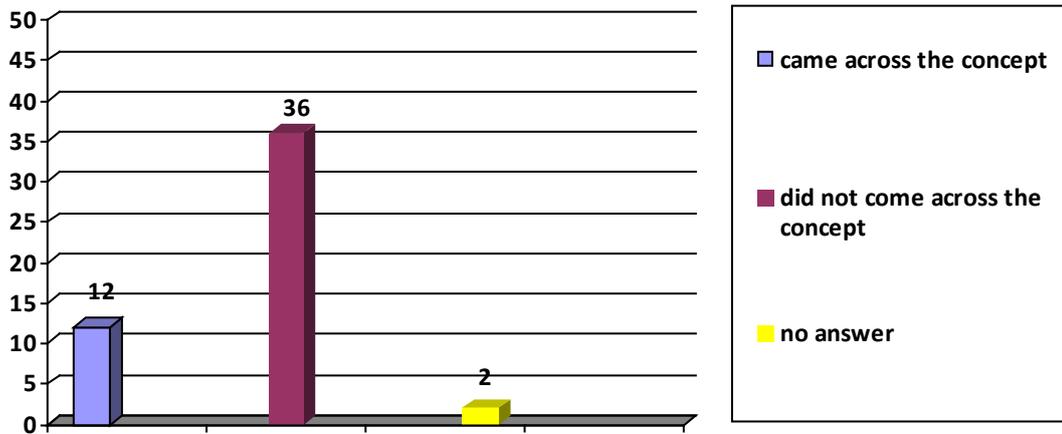


Diagram 5. Students' understanding of the concept of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies

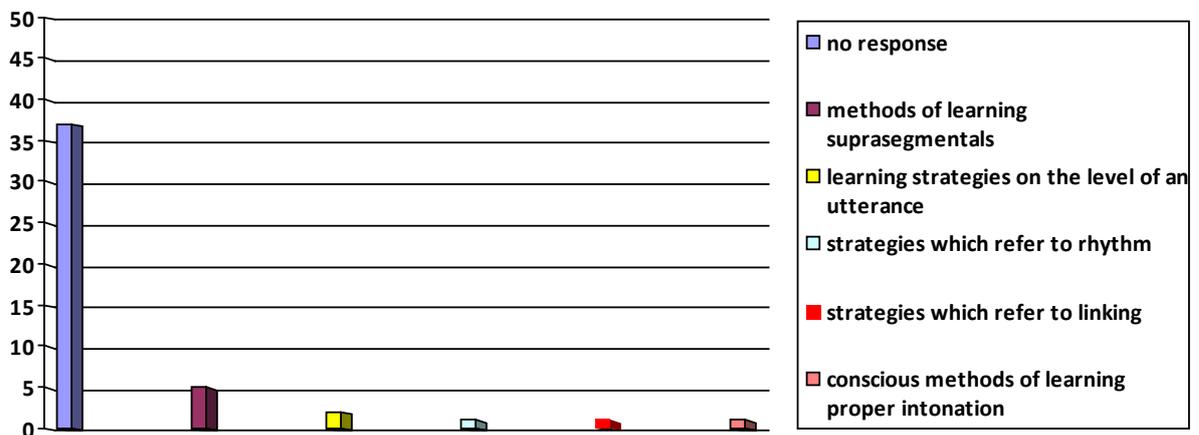
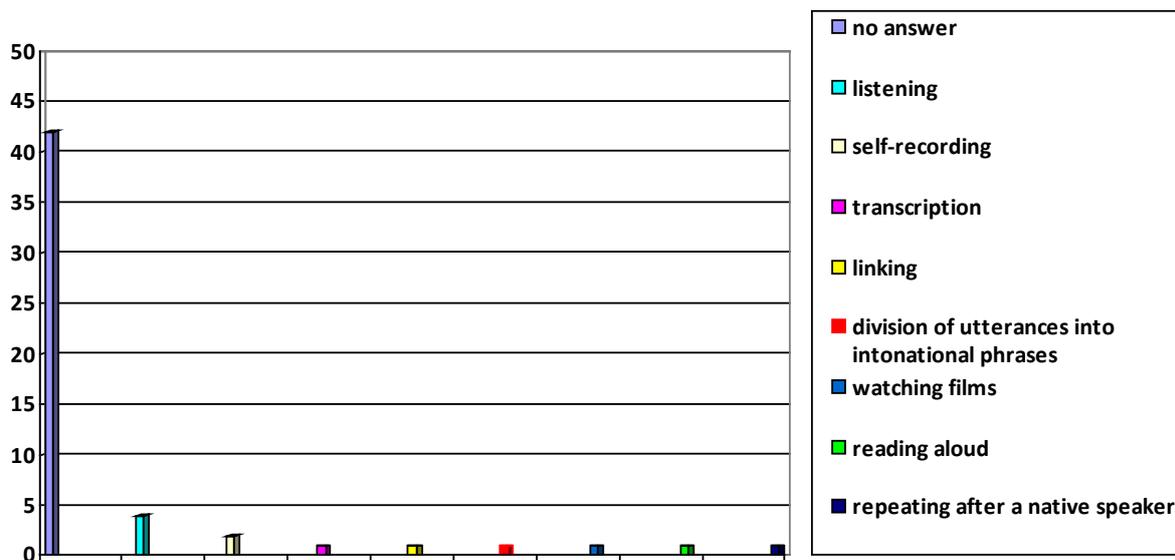


Diagram 6. Examples of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies as understood by students



When requested to define suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies, 37 respondents provided no answer. Others understood them as methods of learning suprasegmentals (5 students) or learning strategies on the level of an utterance (2 students). For 1 respondent suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies refer to the rhythms or strategies which refer to linking, or to conscious methods of learning proper intonation (1 student). These results are illustrated in Diagram 5.

42 respondents could not give any examples of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies, 4 students said that listening was an example of such strategies, self-recording was indicated by 2 respondents. The remaining examples were suggested each by 1 respondent: transcription, linking, division of utterances into intonational phrases, watching films, reading aloud, repeating after a native speaker. The answers are collected in Diagram 6.

Students when requested to share their view on the usefulness of different types of behaviour in the process of development of their prosodic skills in the target language declared as follows (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. Students' view on the impact of different types of behaviour upon their prosodic skill development

Type of behaviour or strategy:	Number of respondents who declared the influence of a particular behaviour upon one's prosodic skill development as:		
	positive	neutral	negative
Good suprasegmental phonetics can be accomplished by students who produce the greatest amount of utterances.	27	15	8
Good suprasegmental phonetics can be accomplished by students who get feedback on what was correct or incorrect in their utterances.	26	16	8
Prosodic errors should definitely be corrected by the teacher.	32	14	4
Students should listen to different speakers of the language if they are to achieve good pronunciation at the suprasegmental level.	35	9	6
Students should know the segmental features of the target language if they are to have good pronunciation at the suprasegmental level.	27	16	7
Students can accomplish good phonetics at the suprasegmental level only in a stress-free setting.	27	12	11
Suprasegmental phonetics cannot be mastered in a classroom setting, even if errors are corrected.	20	16	14
Students who are weak at suprasegmental phonetics can increase their skills by doing exercises on their own at home.	26	12	12
Students who are weak at suprasegmental phonetics can increase their skills by doing suprasegmental transcription exercises on their own.	25	15	10
Students who have poor suprasegmental pronunciation can increase their skills by listening to authentic recordings (radio, TV).	37	7	6
Students who have poor suprasegmental pronunciation can increase their skills by repeating recorded utterances.	34	6	10
Students who have poor prosodic skills can increase them by themselves by doing exercises that aim at tone recognition and identification.	23	18	9
Students who have poor prosodic skills can increase their abilities by doing exercises that aim at division into intonation and rhythm groups.	24	17	9
Students who have poor prosodic skills can increase their abilities by doing exercises on their own that aim at locating main sentence stress in utterances in various contexts.	23	18	9

When asked about which activities they regard as strategies of learning phonetics and which of the strategies indicated they had applied in their learning process, the following results were obtained (cf. Table 4).

Table 4. Activities considered by students as phonetics learning strategies and amount of respondents who use them in life

List of activities (phonetics learning strategies to be chosen from)	Number of respondents who consider them to be phonetics learning strategies	Number of respondents who claim to apply them in real life
Learning new words together with their pronunciation, e.g. by checking pronunciation in a dictionary	48	42
Repeating words aloud after the teacher (especially when they are new or difficult to pronounce)	35	34
Conscious listening to recordings, paying attention to the pronunciation of words, phrases, rhythm and tone of utterances	44	39
Speaking aloud so that the pronunciation of sounds, words and the intonation of utterances can be heard	37	37
Recording and listening to one's own utterances, monitoring the quality of one's own pronunciation in the target language	41	20
Using phonetic transcription not only during lessons but also by transcribing words or text on one's own	34	25
Motivating oneself to talk in the target language (assuring oneself about having good pronunciation)	31	30
Taking risks, or a lack of fear of making pronunciation errors or of not having perfect pronunciation	32	26
Believing in one's success as an FL learner	27	27
Conscious avoidance of sounds and intonation patterns typical of one's native language	15	15
Convincing oneself that proper pronunciation enables communication in a foreign language	20	21
Monitoring the quality of one's own utterances, their phonetic correctness at the sound and word stress level	38	31
Monitoring the quality of one's own utterances, their phonetic correctness at the rhythmic and intonation level	33	28
Conscious elimination of one's own individual (idiosyncratic) features	24	20
Motivating oneself to do self-run exercises that aim at practising proper pronunciation	32	27
Doing exercises that aim at identifying incorrect phonetic forms or doing error correction exercises	33	17
Conscious division of utterances into intonation groups	20	14
Doing self-run exercises focused at pronouncing each intonation group with a proper stress (accent)	25	12
Paying attention to weak and strong forms and applying them consciously in speech	31	16
Conscious practice of linking	24	16
Being attentive to pauses, practising them by numerous repetitions of the same fragments	29	20

Trying to recognize correct and incorrect forms in the utterances of other speakers	27	28
Taking any opportunity of using the language for communication with native and non-native speakers (trying to practise one's own pronunciation)	35	27
Repeating the same form many times so that the most native-like model is remembered	27	26
Monitoring the quality of one's own speech, their phonetic correctness at the sound and word stress level	34	29
Monitoring the quality of one's own speech, and their phonetic correctness at the level of rhythm and proper intonation model	34	25
Paying attention to changes in a communicative unit that result from the intonation of a speaker (analysing one's own utterances and the speech of others)	24	26
Guessing the communicative function of one's own utterances by interpreting its intonation pattern and different sentence stresses	21	22
Asking the teacher as soon as doubts concerning the target language phonetics (pronunciation) appear	38	30
Self-assessment of one's own speech in reference to their phonetic correctness	33	31

Conclusions

Having reviewed the most significant findings of the questionnaire, perhaps the most astonishing conclusion is that although almost 86 percent of students assessed their segmental and suprasegmental phonetic skills as (very) good and only sporadically non-native, only 44 per cent of them understand the concept of prosodic skills. When asked to define prosodic skills, students find them either hard to define or tend to understand them as skills how to apply intonation, accent, tempo, rhythm and pauses. Although students declare that they possess such sub-skills as dividing sentences into intonation groups and rhythmic units correctly, locating sentence stress and pauses properly, and applying native intonation patterns, they consider them prosodic skills, but do not refer to them as suprasegmental phonetics. This may indicate that they do not understand that prosodic skills and suprasegmental phonetics are synonymous terms as well as that they associate phonetic skills with the ability to articulate correctly only foreign sounds and their clusters. It is not surprising in the light of another conclusion that 72 percent of participants have never come across the idea of suprasegmental phonetics learning strategies and as few as 6 percent of respondents associate them with learning speech rhythms, linking, and intonation. What is more, when asked to name phonetic strategies that they consciously use, students cannot name any, or indicate two main techniques: watching TV (and films), and repetition of model patterns. Simultaneously, and surprisingly with regard to the philology training they have received, they seem to disregard the corrective value of using phonetic transcription as a strategy.

The facts noted above are reflected in the list of phonetics learning activities students claim to apply in real life. These include, among other points, conscious listening to recordings; paying attention to the pronunciation of words and phrases; the rhythm and tone of utterances; speaking aloud so that the pronunciation of sounds, words, and intonation of utterances can be heard; monitoring the quality of their own utterances; their phonetic correctness at the rhythmic and intonation level; doing self-run exercises focused on pronouncing each intonation group with the proper stress (accent).

Generally speaking, although students understand the prosodic phenomenon of language, they cannot define it. They have not come across the concept of prosody learning strategies, but rather apply activities that develop prosodic skills. They study and practice English prosody during their practical phonetics laboratory but, sadly, our experience shows that they are afraid of prosody, and they think it is waste of time.

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The Functioning of the CONTAINER Conceptual Metaphor in Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence*

Abstract. This paper is based on the assumption that there is a system to conceptual metaphor and to its conceptualized linguistic expression. Conceptual metaphor is not a matter of arbitrary fixity. Individual basic metaphors and even generic-level metaphors are not isolated. There is a higher unity to metaphor that governs not only all basic and generic-level metaphors, but novel metaphors as well. When we understand a scene, including those described in literary texts, we naturally structure it in terms of conceptual mega-metaphors which may structurally unite the patterns of meaning throughout the whole of the text and find expression in various minor novel metaphors. As the subject matter of this analysis I have chosen the series of novels *Children of Violence* by the famous British writer Doris Lessing (1919-2013), the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2007.

Key words: metaphor, conceptualizing, container, object, substance, environment, house, room, spaces, landlocked

The image-schema conceptual metaphor of the CONTAINER is an extended or mega metaphor present throughout the novels comprising Doris Lessing's series *Children of Violence*. Before we start analyzing the instances of this metaphor in the text, it is worth mentioning some general notions concerning CONTAINER metaphors. According to Lakoff and Jonson (1981: 29-30), people, as physical beings, are bounded and set apart from the rest of the world by the surface of their skins, and they experience the rest of the world as outside them. Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and outside. Rooms and houses are obvious containers. Moving from room to room is moving from one container to another, that is, moving *out of one room* and *into* another. A clearing in the woods has something we can perceive as a natural physical boundary – the fuzzy area where the trees more or less stop and the clearing more or less begins. But even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries – marking off

territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface – whether a wall, a fence, or an abstract line or plane. There are few human instincts more basic than territoriality. And such defining of a territory, putting a boundary around it, is an act of quantification. Bounded objects, whether human beings, rocks, or land areas, have sizes. This allows them to be qualified in terms of the amount of substance they contain. Substances can themselves be viewed as containers. Take a tub of water, for example. When you get into the tub, you get into the water, both the tub and the water are viewed as containers, but of different sorts. The tub is a CONTAINER OBJECT, while the water is a CONTAINER SUBSTANCE.

We conceptualize our visual field as a container and conceptualize what we see as being inside it. Even the term “visual *field*” suggests this. Given that a bounded physical space is a CONTAINER and that our field of vision correlates with that bounded physical space, the metaphorical concept VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS emerges naturally. Thus we can say: ‘The ship is *coming into view*’; ‘I *have him in sight*’.

We use ontological metaphors to comprehend events, actions, activities, and states. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities and substances; states as containers. Thus we have examples like these: ‘He is *in love*’; ‘We are *out of trouble now*’; ‘He is *coming out of the coma*’; ‘I’m *slowly getting into shape*’; ‘He *entered* a state of euphoria’; ‘He *fell into* a depression’.

The search for logical connections in the extensive use of the CONTAINER metaphor in the novels by Doris Lessing reveals both the constancies and the unique features of literary metaphor, and shows us the way a literary text takes advantage of the brain’s ability to reproduce and understand what writers want us to envision. We can follow Stockwell in saying that a mega metaphor is a conceptual feature that runs throughout a text and can contribute to the reader’s sense of the general meaning or ‘gist’ of the work and its significance. Specific realizations of the numerous metaphors that occur in the text and that accumulate into the sense of a **mega metaphor** are, by contrast, **micro metaphors** (Stockwell 2002:111).

Whether the author was aware of the effects the CONTAINER ontological metaphor has on the story is of less importance than the fact that the cognitive approach should more firmly express the view that cognition is a shared condition of writers and readers, and that textual meaning can therefore be considered to exist objectively.

The patterns of meaning in Doris Lessing’s fiction interpenetrate in complicated and unexpected ways. The writer’s profoundly dialectical consciousness sees multiple forces in constant interaction, and it is consciousness that displays itself in the way characters and narrative patterns are deployed. The characters’ consciousness in Lessing’s writing is not limited to political or thematic expression, but it has a formal component which describes the way characters and narrative forms are juxtaposed, just as it can describe the specialized kind of juxtapositions between parts of the self. In particular, Lessing frequently uses environments (walls, rooms, houses, cities) as expressions of her characters’ inner selves. Roberta Rubenstein comments on the “correspondence between dwellings and interior states” in Lessing’s work (1979:113), and Carey Kaplan rightly defines Lessing’s house metaphor as “typologically female” (1988:164). Frederick R. Karl explains the four

gates in the title of the last novel in the series, *The Four-Gated City*, as referring to four houses in the novel – a restaurant, Mark’s house, Jack’s house, and Paul’s house. More important than this possible equivalence is Karl’s sense of Lessing’s dwellings as psychic reflectors (Karl 1986).

The private and the public, the individual and the collective, make a permanent dialectic in Lessing’s work. One way she dramatizes that interaction is by making her environments mirrors of the self and psychological reality of the characters. Apart from being a physical reality of their own, walls, and the rooms and houses people inhabit become living extensions of the characters’ bodily selves.

The semi-autobiographical series *Children of Violence* comprises five novels¹ – *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965), and *The Four-Gated City* (1969) – and describes Martha Quest’s awakening to greater awareness on every level. The novels were pioneering in the depiction of the mind and circumstances of the emancipated woman. The story of Martha is told with the mild despair of someone seeing her younger self from the heavens of an afterlife, unable to intervene. Moreover, Martha’s self, seen from the outside, is always located inside a space which is appropriate for a certain period of her life and a certain state of her questing mind. This space, each time different, can be seen as an appropriate container for Martha’s self, which otherwise is not fulfilled.

Landlocked, which is the fourth book in the series, definitely takes Lessing from social realism to science fiction. Martha’s quest – and the name “Quest” marks her as the prototypical questioning protagonist of contemporary women’s fiction – is also Lessing’s: both seek “**something new**” against the nightmare repetition which is the burden of history, something oppositional to the culture that has formed them. But the problem Lessing encounters in the two decades she spends writing *The Children of Violence* is how to express “**something new**” when the discourses from which the novelist creates – indeed, all signifying systems, language itself – are inscribed within the culture she would oppose. Even in *Martha Quest* there are tensions between the novel’s themes and the realist form which makes such changes inevitable. The possible nature of those tensions is evident in the novel’s opening chapter, which draws attention to Martha’s less typical aspect. Her visionary daydream lays the foundations for the four-gated city of the last novel in the series. Martha’s vision raises questions and introduces concepts which cannot easily be dealt with within the conventions of realist fiction (King 1989: 15). But the paradox of Lessing’s example is that her straining against the boundaries of realism has proceeded without modernist strategies, for her experimentations are not formally radical. Although her language is pointedly ordinary, even in the most fantastic of her novels, Lessing usually endows commonplace diction and syntax with unexpected features, one of which is evidently making environments reflections of her characters’ interior states.

¹ All references to *The Children of Violence* novels are to the Granada Publishing House editions and are indicated in the text as MQ (*Martha Quest*), PM (*A Proper Marriage*), RS (*A Ripple from the Storm*), L (*Landlocked*), *The Four-Gated City* (FGC).

Landlocked covers the years 1944 to 1949 in Martha Quest's life. In an irrational world of organizational corruption and personal frustrations, Martha enters a love affair and finds a temporary solace. Paradoxically, this relationship becomes both a balm for her troubled soul and the most profound emotional experience of her entire life. The visionary heights that Martha achieves through her sexual expression with her new lover reflect Lessing's view that, from the release of intense feeling and passion, one can achieve a sense of connection and balance in the universe. At the outset Martha is offered a promotion at her law firm. Instead of being happy for the opportunity, she refuses the offer, believing further commitment to a collective that she does not esteem will only detract from her search for self. After refusing the job she dreams that she is a "large house...with half a dozen different rooms in it," but the house is empty, ready to be filled. She accepts the dream as an "image of her position", and reasons that new knowledge is needed to fill her inner space. Martha's choice becomes Thomas Stern, a Polish Jew who escaped from Poland but discovered later that Nazis had murdered all members of the family that he had left behind. Thomas's passionate outrage toward Nazis stirs Martha and alerts her to his potential for filling her empty centre with emotions that could ignite her true self. Nothing much happens to Martha in the course of *Landlocked*; her life is not only without the crises, turning points and resolutions that she had expected, but is almost entirely eventless. The novel's real outcome is the new knowledge Martha starts to acquire through looking for new environments and filling in the empty spaces in her consciousness.

Pattern and meaning in Lessing's fiction interpenetrate in complicated and unexpected ways. Lessing's dramatic projections are a way of questioning and enlarging the singleness and stability of personality – especially for women – and of narrative conventions. Lessing's principle of making environments extensions of her characters' mentality provides a framework for her need to see the individual in constant juxtaposition with the collective. In one of the first reviews of *The Golden Notebook*, Irving Howe notes the replacement in Lessing's fiction of what he calls "social man" by "psychological man". For him, as for many readers, one of Lessing's strengths is her refusal to accept that replacement, and her powerful grasp of the connection between Anna Wulf's neuroses and the public disorders of the day (Howe 1975:17). The private and the public, the individual and the collective, make a permanent dialectic in Lessing's work. One way she dramatizes that interaction is to make her environments mirrors of the self. Something unprecedented happens to the character-environment interaction in the novels of the *Children of Violence* series, especially in the last two volumes: the walls, and the rooms and houses people inhabit become living extensions of their bodily selves.

Doris Lessing may be called an architect in a metaphorical sense because she is a builder of imagined cities and has become involved in an architectural pattern. The city Martha dreams about when she is fifteen is a leitmotif in the five novels of the series *Children of Violence*. The earliest image of the ideal city is triggered by Martha's leap from the reality of racism to her dream of a city in which 'black and white and brown' parental figures smile approvingly at "the many-fathered children' who play together (MQ 11). Unexpectedly, the city is not in the future but in the past, for

it is described as “fabulous and ancient”. Other details also suggest an older prehistoric time from which humankind has fallen away: “colonnaded, fountains and flutes”, “flower-bordered terraces”. Martha’s dream of this four-gated city is explicitly described as “Martha’s version of the Golden age” (MQ 11). Thus, in *Martha Quest*, the very first volume of the *Children of Violence*, Martha’s dream of the ideal city is described as nostalgic and therefore implicitly ironic. It is also exclusionary, for “a stern and remorseless Martha” stands at the gate keeping out the unworthy, that is, her parents and other English and Afrikaners in the district.

On the private level, Martha’s vision of the city at this stage in her life can be described as an adolescent revenge fantasy or as a “familiar daydream”, to use Lessing’s own words (MQ 10). On the public level, Martha’s golden city is remarkable for its nostalgic quality. For a young girl already more than casually interested in the socialist ideal, her dream is notable for its assignment of racial equality to the past instead of the socialist future, where it belongs. What seemed conflated in embryo here are the heavenly past and the utopian future. The location of the golden age in the past as well as the future has often characterized human dreams of the earthly paradise. Indeed, a past utopia has often justified hopes for a radical future. Martha cannot know how archetypal her dream is, how much the nostalgic mode has been an auxiliary of utopia.

A ‘new age’ begins in *Landlocked*, though it is not the “New Jerusalem” envisioned by the young revolutionaries of the two preceding novels of the series. In contrast to Martha’s beautiful dreams, it is, rather, the age of nuclear threat for which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are symbols, and for which the ruined city is an image. The city of Martha’s dream in *Landlocked* is no longer the place of harmony, the realm of generous and freely exchanged emotion that Martha once imagined, but a ruin. This sort of imagery is so deep in the imaginative texture of the novel as to anticipate and invoke the end of Martha’s and Thomas’s affair. The imagery of a ruined city culminates in the passage where Martha tries to envision her own city as “emptied”, “desiccated” – “Yes, emptied, this town would stand slowly desiccating, filling with drifts of dust” (L 197). What is new in the narrative mode of *Landlocked* is apparent in this surreal description of a city which, shifting shapes as images do in dreams, blends with the ruined cities of Europe.

Martha’s early earthly paradise of the first novel is also not the same as the city she dreams of in *The Four-Gated City*, which is the last novel of the series. That later city is an archetypal one, in fact, a rigid, over-ordered city in violent contrast to the living, volatile London that has such different faces in the 1950s and 1960s. That London in all its phases engages authorial and reader sympathy as its equivalents in the Canopus novels do not. The cities in the appendix to *The Four-Gated City* are in a different category; they are closer to the degenerated cities of Shicasta. Between the Canopean cities and those of *The Four-Gated City* fall the cities of *Briefing for a Descent* into hell and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. In these two novels, Lessing emphasizes the symbolic and the archetypal, rejecting the flawed but living cities of her earlier novels.

“She could have drawn a plan of that city,” we are told of the sixteen-year-old Martha. These words are almost exactly repeated when Martha and Mark discuss their city in *The Four-Gated City*. Their shared dream of the “mythical”, “hierarchic”, “archetypal” city is so detailed it is ‘as good

as a blueprint to build" (FGC 139). Its four gates, set to point north, south, east and west, become a square containing arcs and circling streets. The shadow city that grows up around it ultimately engulfs the perfect inner city. The over-ordered city breaks down into inner and outer, into inner perfection and outer degeneration, into permanence and change, for while Martha and Mark discuss their mythical city, the real London is growing and changing away from the gracelessness and deprivation of its postwar state. In the late 1950s, "the dirty, ruinous, war-soaked city" (FGC 301-302) is quite changed. Martha keeps "that other" city "in her mind" as she walks through this new London, so that "that other" postwar city exists side by side with the present London of the 1950s (FGC 302).

These two real Londons, the London of the present and that of the past, are contrasted with the mythical four-gated city that is "the ideal city" of Martha's youthful dreams. The capitalized City is changeless, "a solid, slow-moving thing" with known landmarks generations can refer to. But the real city has more vitality, excitement, fluidity. We can feel and watch the real London of the 50s in this description of the actual city: "But London heaved up and down, houses changed shape, collapsed, whole streets were vanishing into rubble, and arrow shapes in cement reached up into the clouds. Even the street surfaces were never level: they were always 'up', being altered, dug into, pitted, while men rooted in them to find tangled pipes in wet earth" (FGC 302). This extraordinary flux makes London "exhilarating" for Martha. It almost erodes her dream of the ordered, hierarchical city: "It seemed as if the idea of a city or town as something slow-changing, almost permanent, belonged to the past when one had not needed so many pipes, cables, runnels, and types of machinery to keep it going. If time were slightly speeded up, then a city may now look like fountains of rubble cascading among great machines, while buildings momentarily form, change colour like vegetation, dissolve, reform" (FGC 302). This new London, explicitly connected with the house on Radiant Street, survives war and other erosions. Its rebuilding is exuberant, energetic. This London does not dissipate the archetypal image for Martha, but "the old city all movement" surely commands the reader's greater loyalty than the hierarchical city at which Mark now laughs. The real city is closer to the process that the novel celebrates. The living, changing London is organic and stimulating. It seems almost like the tree whose organic nature is a celebratory motif throughout the series.

So we cannot say that Lessing's picture of the four-gated city embodies harmony, reconciliation and integration throughout the series. Racial integration is its earliest and most durable, most positive feature. Because it reflects Martha's own changing consciousness, its meaning is variable, even ironic and limited. The ideal city contrasts with the disorder and variety of the Coldridge house in the last novel of the series – *The Four-Gated City*. Martha's ideal city of the first volume is only a blueprint without the human figure, while real houses and cities contain human beings.

The houses in *The Four-Gated City* are obviously mirrors of psychological reality, but they do, however, have a physical reality of their own. The mud houses of Lessing's earlier fiction come out of the present time and her direct personal experience. For Martha, mud is the African bush, grass, sky, earth. It is sensual; "... this frank embrace between the lifting breast of the land and the

deep blue warmth of the sky is what exiles from Africa dream of” (MQ 230). Although the critical, rebellious adolescent Martha defines the native-style Quest house “as disgracefully shabby, even sordid” – its roof sags, its walls are patched and spotted – she does call it original (MQ 15). For this house, planned in white, settles a style for “bricks and proper roofing” built with “grass and mud and stamped dung” (MQ 14). When Martha puts her ear to the central pole, she can hear a “myriad tiny jaws at work”.

The Turner house in *The Grass Is Singing*, with its brick walls and corrugated tin roof (destined for a “proper roof” it never gets), is, like Mary the protagonist, out of place in the wilderness. The native houses are very different. Their huts of grass, poles, and mud collapse back into the earth when the workers leave for another job: “So there were always new huts, and always empty ones” (Lessing 1994:152). These huts look “like natural growths from the ground, rather than man-made dwellings”. Lessing continues: “It was as though a giant black hand had reached down from the sky, picked up a handful of sticks and grass, and dropped them magically on the earth in the form of huts” (Lessing 1994:152). Their qualities of spontaneity and naturalness make these mud huts the antipodes of Lessing’s magical cities – the four-gated city, the inner city of *Briefing*, and the geometrical cities of *Shikasta*.

Lessing’s image of the mud house has a central place in her iconography. The writer’s journey from *Martha Quest* to *The Four-Gated City* may be described as a journey from mud to void, and as the abdication of earth for space. It is also Lessing’s progressive move toward the remote and the abstract. A parallel mode marks Lessing’s architectural journey, but the journey is not a simple one, for the mud house is not a viable reality for Martha Quest or Doris Lessing. Martha, like Lessing, longs for the London in her mind, but accepts the actual London she finds.

In *Landlocked*, the fourth book of the series, the influence of Sufism on Lessing’s writing is first to be seen. Martha’s mental condition in the novel is epitomized by two recurrent dreams: the dream of the house whose rooms she must keep separate, and the nightmare of being landlocked. The fact that both symbols, house and landlock, can signify internal, psychological states as well as external phenomena breaks down the conventional empiricist/realist distinction between subjective and objective. “Ruin” also has this sort of double significance; as Robert Graves quotes Idries Shah: “In Sufi literature...’ruin’ stands for the mind ruined by unregenerate thought and awaiting reedification” (Graves 1971:XIV-XV). The dream imagery intermingles with Martha’s conscious thought and actions in a way that further undermines such distinctions.

The dream of the house in *Landlocked* (14-15) is described in language like that of the “emptied city” passage. The images are hallucinatory and shape-shifting, as the ruin Martha fears will follow from her failure to keep things separate becomes “the house on the kopje, collapsed into a mess of ant-tunneled mud, ant-consumed grass,” and then turns to “the burial mound of Martha’s soul”, the ant tracks becoming “red veins” (L 15). The ruin looks forward to the disintegration of the Quest house, which is later described as “rotted...in a fierce compost”. Though chronologically, it looks back to it, since this dissolution has actually already occurred (L 190-191). Then Martha’s perspective moves “back in time, or perhaps forward – she did not know”, and the house is “no

longer the farm house of grass and mud; but ...tall rather than wide, reached up, stretched down ... built layer, but shadowy above and below" (L 15). Whereas in the preceding *Children of Violence* novels, houses like Colonel Brodeshaw's and the house on the avenues were substantial and real, in *Landlocked* houses are shape-shifting, disintegrating. Time, too, is disrupted: past, present, and future are conflated, as the dream points both forward and backward in time – back to the South London scene of Mrs. Quest's childhood and forward to Mark's Bloomsbury house.

The dream instructs Martha to "keep things separate" because allowing them to merge would mean chaos, would incur "disintegration". But "keeping separate meant defeating, or at least holding at bay, what was best in her... the need to say yes, to comply, to melt into situations" (L 15). She follows the instruction of the dream by saying "no" to several male characters: to Mr Robinson when he offers her a job; to Mr Maynard when he tries to bully her about Maisie; to her husband Anton when he suggests that they remain married. Above all she must separate herself from the pain of her parents and refuse even pity for them lest they "drag her down into this nightmare house like a maze where there could be only one end" (L 76) – a nightmare house that is also an actual house where people "sat around, waiting for an old man to die" (L 197). Houses in the past and in the future, houses present and "a hundred miles away" (L 190), real houses and nightmare houses, blend in a mode that confounds chronology. The effect is similar to that created by the breaking of sequence in *The Golden Notebook*, to the simultaneity produced by the juxtaposition of the four notebooks. In *Landlocked* Martha behaves as if testing out various places "various other shells" (PM 65) to live in. When she feels uncomfortable in the relationship with Anton she perceives it as the necessity "to cut Anton out of her consciousness, to bring down a curtain in herself and shut him out". Lying in a twin bed every night in a shared bedroom with Thomas, "she was not there" (L 119). Falling in love with Thomas is for Martha like entering new spaces and new rooms through numerous doors in the process of endless exploration of her inner self: "What shall I do when Thomas goes away? And in any case, what was this absolute giving up of herself, **look at each other**, as if **doors were being opened** one after another inside their eyes as they looked – how was it that she was driven by him back and back into regions of herself she had not known existed" (L 105). To feel happy in the new relationship Martha must first find a 'room' for this new state of mind inside herself as well as in the real world: she finds the actual room in the shed at the end of the garden by the house where Thomas's brother lives: "She had complained that her life had consisted of a dozen rooms, each self-contained, that she was wearing into a frazzle of shrill nerves in the effort of carrying herself, each time a whole, from one 'room' to the other. But adding a new room to her house had ended the division. From this centre she now lived – a loft of romantic wood from whose crooked window could be seen only sky and the boughs of trees ..." (L 103). "Now she lived from this new centre, the room she shared with Thomas, the room that had in it, apparently, a softly-running dynamo, to which, through him, she was connected. Everything had become easy suddenly" (L 113). Later in *Landlocked*, after Thomas's death, when Martha sees a new perspective and a new kind of understanding which is evidently the consequence of her changed consciousness after the war, she strives to get back to the room in the loft she occupied together

with Thomas: “Nothing fitted, ridiculous facts jostled with important ones, if one only knew which was which... and she wished she was back in the refuge of the loft, reading” (L 168). But this room can no longer save her or give refuge; just like the reading she longs for it is not helpful any more, since the systems it depended on have been swept away by the cataclysms of the century.

Thomas’s death leaves Martha feeling “as if some part of me has died (...) Or is it in another room, looking on” (L 224). But the image of “another room”, which she uses to signify dislocation, appears in the Sufi tales of Mulla Nasrudin to suggest increased potential: “... they were like children born in a house from which they have never been allowed to stray, doomed to walk from one room to another without knowing that there could be another house, elsewhere (Idries Shah 1971:151).

The other dream that expresses Martha’s condition and acts as her guide is the dream of being landlocked: “On this high dry plateau where Martha was imprisoned, forever, it seemed, everything was dry and brittle, its quality was drought.” Like the dream of the house, this both cautions her against a condition and suggests a way of avoiding it: “Far away, a long way below, was water. She dreamed, night after night, of water, of the sea.” (L 199). This dream is prescient, prefiguring the deaths of Athen and Thomas: “Across the sea, which she could not reach... sailed people she had known...Athen, Thomas (L 128).

The images of both dreams – the house and landlock – are combined in a waking reverie when Martha, visiting the “nightmare house” of her parents, half listens to her daughter Caroline, playing with Mr Quest, taunting the old man with her youth and vitality. The situation – Caroline’s teasing, Mrs Quest’s engineering the situation as a reproach to Martha – pulls Martha back into “nightmare”. But dream imagery infuses her consciousness, as the sound of the sprinklers in the background – “water, water falling water” – recalls to her the possibility of rescue from the sea. “And one day...Martha would stand on a shore and watch a line of waves gather strength and run inwards, piling and gathering high before falling into a burst of white foam... Meanwhile, the old man lay, whimpering in his cage of decaying swelling flesh” (L 238-39).

The “lock” that is the landmass of Africa becomes, in this passage, the prison of mortal life, with the light-illuminated water beyond suggesting a transcendent reality of which Martha’s consciousness, instructed by her dreams, has an intimation.

In *Landlocked* the mythical “old Villan”, the patterns of the past, die hard. Imagery of cages, nets and webs is nearly as pronounced here as it was in *A Proper Marriage* – though associated not with Martha, but with those around her. Martha’s father is locked in his “cage of flesh” (L 239); her mother is “trapped, caged” in her life (L 197). It is most poignant in the dream Mrs Quest has of her mother reaching down from heaven to hand her roses that turn to medicine bottles, a symbol of the inadequate parenting that she repeats with Martha. Martha’s political career, which she is ready to reject while leaving for England, is associated in her mind with “so many dingy, bench furnished, dust-smelling little offices” (L 284). Thus for Martha the patterns of the past are stripped away, and one by one the illusions that held her in the preceding novels are laid to rest. The relationship with Thomas ends the fantasy that love, even as compelling as this, can provide a rescue.

The idea of the family as support is terminated by Mrs Quest's legacy to her daughter, just before Martha leaves for England, of "all the keys she had ever had in her life", "half a century's keys on a key ring" (L 233), "black, rusty, jutting, awkward" (L 232), keys "fit for a dungeon", opening nothing. There were numerous keys to "doors" and "gates" associated in Martha's consciousness with love, marriage, books, and Marxism, which promised a way out, but provided only a way back in to the system Martha was trying to escape. It is worth mentioning that Martha's mother, at the end of the novel, finds herself in the dry mountains on a farm that is even more "landlocked" than the Quest family farm. The political meeting of the last scene represents an end to the fantasy that political action can accomplish anything. Observing the meeting with ironic distance, Martha can now see that "history was repeating itself" and can "foretell the end" (L 275) – an understanding that enables her to step off the repetitive cycle and make a real end – after they sat arguing during a "closed meeting" of the Marxist group which takes place in a "small, stuffy" room, the three members of the group with Martha among them, go out to see "the skies that are swept by storms and by rain" (L 287).

As can be seen from the above analysis of the *Children of Violence* novels, Lessing's sense of cataclysmic destruction increases while her interest in society decreases, to be replaced by a new strain of mysticism. The evolution of Lessing's style coincides with her understanding of a way beyond social determinism, a place outside culture, by positing an "essential self" that is in touch with a "universal consciousness" or transcendent realm. The structure of the novel, beginning with *Landlocked*, is also made in such a way as to comprise a complex, richly allusive system of imagery both pictorial and metaphorical. First and foremost, the imagery involved concerns land-lock¹– desert landscapes, ideal and ruined cities, real and nightmare houses and rooms – and the regenerative forces of water and light. These visions are drawn both from Martha's dreams and her experience in a way that breaks down the distinction between objective and subjective. Dreams prefigure and influence events so as to register dream reality as equally valid as conscious experience, and rather an altered sense of experience. Unconventional imagery builds special meanings and resonances in the course of the novel and becomes more meaningful than anything that actually happens. Correspondences between all kinds of environments and Martha's inner states are obvious in the course of the five novels of *Children of Violence*. It becomes even more evident in *Landlocked*, and increases in the last novel of the series, *The Four-Gated City*. The testing out of various spaces for living in takes Martha to different places and states of consciousness; the houses and rooms she enters may be places of love and visionary experiences. Like many other women in Lessing's fiction she strives to leave her deterministic domestic spaces to find new transcendental experience in new spheres of life. But the paradox of Martha's ever – changing environments is that getting there

¹ The Polish translation of the novel's title *Landlocked* as *Czas nadziei* (Albatros 2013) does not retain Lessing's idea of being surrounded and blocked with no way out. The Polish translations of the other titles in the series are as follows: *Martha Quest* – *Martha Quest* (Albatros 2008); *A Proper Marriage* – *Odpowiednie małżeństwo* (Albatros 2009); *A Ripple from the Storm* – *Fala po burzy* (Albatros 2010), *The Four-Gated City* – *Miasto o czterech bramach* (Albatros 2013).

never quite happens in Lessing's worlds. Displacement, not arrival, is at the centre of her imagination, even in her galactic novels. In making displacement the organizing metaphor of her study of Doris Lessing, Lorna Sage describes it as an element so central in Lessing's work that virtually all critics have commented on it (Sage 1983). Displacement defines the varied shapes of Lessing's otherness – her female, white, colonial, political selves.

If we follow Martha after she leaves Africa at the end of *Landlocked*, bound for the ruined city of London in 1949, we will see that the “lock” has been broken, and with it the social determinism that governed the first three novels. In *The Four-Gated City*, which is the last book of the sequence, Martha looks for new environments, and finds the new house (the house of Mark Coldridge) which is to become her home for the rest of her life, and the exploration of which will provide her with the key to new perspectives oppositional to the values of traditional culture.

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WORK IN PROGRESS

“Work in progress” is a forum for students and university graduates who wish to present the results of their research.

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More than just Iron Man: A Brief History of Comic Books and Graphic Novels

Abstract. Comic books and graphic novels are a significant part of today’s culture. Popularity of blockbuster movies about superheroes such as *Iron Man* or *The Dark Knight* clearly indicates that stories created for the comic medium can captivate large audiences. Unfortunately, such stories are often considered to be lacking in substance and are often perceived as a very simple form of entertainment. The aim of this article is to briefly show how comic books and graphic novels developed throughout history. While observing how this form evolved, it is much easier to notice that this medium can actually be used to tackle serious subject matter and, contrary to popular belief, even superhero stories can have a significant level of depth.

Key words: comics, graphic novels, popular culture, visual art

The influence of comic books is constantly present in our everyday lives, even though we may not always realize this is actually the case. Actor Robert Downey Jr. scored number 1 on Vulture’s list of the 100 Most Valuable Stars of 2013 (IS1). The list is composed of people who can positively influence the earnings of the films they star in. Downey’s success is largely owed to his appearance in the *Iron Man* films. Thanks to those movies Iron Man, a comic book character unknown outside of specific fandom, has become a household name in just a couple of years. We may also point to

the recent success of Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight Trilogy* in order to show how a story about a comic book character can be the basis for a successful box office hit. The fact that such acclaimed actors as Robert Downey Jr. or Christian Bale are chosen to portray superheroes in order to fully show the depth of their characters, can convince some that there may be more substance to the comic book medium than they initially thought. Of course others will still remain unconvinced. After all, cinema blockbusters are considered to be popular culture and do not always tackle serious subject matter. An argument can be made that even the simplest works have artistic merit. But what is more important is the fact that comics are actually much more than just stories about superheroes.

As a matter of fact, both comics and graphic novels (comics in a book form) can be successfully used to talk about subjects as difficult as loneliness, the existence of God, even the Holocaust. Comic books and graphic novels are simply a different medium from films or books. They use different methods to convey their message, yet can be used not only to entertain, as we may initially think, but to make us ponder serious issues as well. In order to understand this better, it makes sense to briefly look at the history of comic books and graphic novels.

But first, we should ask ourselves: what is a comic? The answer may actually be complicated. Comic book creator Scott McCloud suggests that the best definition of a comic book would be: "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, invented to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). This definition is well formulated and thought through, in order not to exclude any important works. McCloud realises, however, that if we adopt this definition even Pre-Columbian manuscripts or the Bayeux Tapestry could be considered as ancestors of comic books (10-12). Of course there may not be a direct link between the development of comics and ancient works of art. Still, we should realize that humanity has created works based on principles similar to comics much earlier than we might usually think, and it is no easy task to pinpoint the exact starting point of the genre.

Throughout history, we may find many examples of people who created works increasingly similar to the comics we know today. We can look at the works of a painter William Hogarth (1697–1764) who created sets of paintings that made a cohesive story when viewed together. Another artist creating art similar in nature to comics was Rodolphe Töpffer, whose picture stories (stories told with pictures with a textual description) were sold in the form of albums. The next step in the development of the medium, were magazines with satirical illustrations such as the British *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday* (1884), which helped establish some of the conventions now present in comic books. During that time, comic strips (short satirical stories) began to appear in newspapers in order to boost their sales. One of the most well known was *Hogan's Alley* (1894) by Richard Felton Outcault, starring the Yellow Kid. Comic strips began to be more and more popular, and soon were collected in anthologies and sold separately from newspapers. Because of their humorous nature, the name "comic" started to be used just as it is today, even though comics now are not usually funny in nature. It is important to note that comic strips as a subgenre continue to be strong today; such works are still present in newspapers. What is more, many characters known

worldwide: e.g. Popeye (1929) or Garfield (1978) first appeared in comic strips. We also must not omit the fact that even though comic strips were originally funny in nature, we could still try to find some deeper meaning in them. *Krazy Kat* by George Herriman for example is said to “[...] have enough twists to give the plots true philosophical import [...]” (Estren 1993:30).

The most popular genre of comics is of course the superhero story. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith point out that the emergence of such comics should be linked to pulp magazines, which contained stories about heroes with unusual abilities like Zorro or Tarzan. Since the same companies were already publishing pulps and comic strip anthologies, it was not long before comics about uncanny heroes started to appear (28-29). After the appearance of Superman in *Action Comics #1* (1938) comic book magazines started to grow in popularity and began to develop rapidly.

It should be noted that analysis of how superhero comics changed throughout the years can give a pretty clear picture of the social concerns of a given era. For example, the attitudes of such iconic characters like Superman or Batman changed over the years to reflect the current socio-political situation. Sometimes one just needs to look at the cover of a certain comic issue to know when it was made, as with the cover of *Captain America Comics #1* (1941) which shows the titular hero punching Adolf Hitler. Many genres of comics for different types of readers were created throughout the years: war comics, westerns, detective stories, horrors, romance, or funny animal comics (comics with talking animals like Donald Duck or Bugs Bunny). Still, the superhero comic remained the most popular.

Comics took a heavy blow in the 1950s with the publication of Dr Fredric Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent*. In it, he criticised comics saying they may have a bad effect on children and might lead them to committing crimes. Roger Sabin states that Wertham's research was unreliable and the book was “academically unsound” (2010: 68). The damage was done, however, and it looked like the industry took a very heavy blow. Fortunately, instead of completely disappearing, comics reinvented themselves. Stan Lee was able to create new superhero characters, ones a reader could easily identify with. Characters like The Fantastic Four (1961), Hulk (1962), or Spider-Man (1962) showed that comics were not about violence like Wertham feared, but about flawed, relatable characters who ultimately try to do the right thing. These characters were not only able to entertain youngsters, but teach them some valuable moral lessons as well.

Throughout the 1960s comics began maturing while still remaining socially relevant. For example, comics about Iron Man (created in 1963) talked about the Vietnam War. In the 1970s X-Men comics became popular. The X-men are mutant superheroes who have decided to protect all of humanity, despite being discriminated against by the rest of society. One of the clear themes of these stories was the discrimination against minorities. What is more, in the 1970s well-established characters began to face even more difficult issues. For example, Spider-Man had to deal with the death of his girlfriend. Even themes such as alcoholism are tackled – Iron Man himself struggles with alcoholism in the comic arc “Demon in a Bottle”. As Tim Morse explains, even though the authors of the comic did not purposely decide to include such a storyline in order to be socially relevant, Iron Man's addiction makes this hero very human and is an essential part of what the

character is now (IS2). Tony Stark's (the man behind the guise of Iron Man) problem with alcohol is mentioned even in the *Iron Man 2* film. We can clearly see that comic books/comic art matured over time. Its characters changed as well, and the Iron Man we now watch in cinemas is a character shaped through many years.

More serious issues were not only present in the mainstream comics. In the 1960s and 1970s the phenomenon of underground comix existed (spelled with x to be differentiated from the mainstream). This counter-culture movement consisted of mostly self-published works in which artists like R(ober) Crumb tackled themes as varied as drug use, women's rights, anti-Vietnam protests, racism, sex, and many others. Some artists were interested solely in shock value, yet many wanted to simply express their opinions on controversial topics. The movement was rather short lived, but it later transformed into a wave of "alternative" comics which were sold alongside regular comic titles, though they dealt with more realistic and serious subject matter.

In the 1980s comic books sought a new readership and thus a new model of publishing comics was born – the graphic novel. The term is often considered to be just a marketing ploy to make comics more credible, as they were previously seen merely as a form of entertainment for teenagers. Even though the term is not always viewed in a positive light, many great works have been published as graphic novels. One veteran creator of comics, Will Eisner, paved the way for other works with his graphic novel *A Contract with God* (1978). In it, he portrays the life of Jewish immigrants at 55 Dropsie Avenue (a fictional street in Bronx) in the 1930s, similar to the neighbourhood he had lived in. Not only does this work tell us something about life in the depression years, but while reading it we can also ponder the justice of God's will, or sexual innocence, among many other topics.

Some more serious graphic novels about superheroes were released as well. Alan Moore's *Watchmen* contains many references that will be understood by superhero fans, and tries to show heroes in a much darker light than readers are used to. This book is not only a great read for a comics fan, however. It also comments on the anxieties connected with the Cold War and the usage of weapons of mass destruction. The strength of the book lies in its characters, who have complex motivations rooted in the theories and philosophies of such varied people as Albert Einstein or Alexander the Great. This novel truly proves that stories about superheroes can be a mature and complex read.

The true gems of the graphic novel were created by creators linked to the underground or alternative comix. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (first part published in 1986) tells the story of Art's father Vladek, a survivor of the Holocaust. The title of the work may initially be puzzling. Everything becomes clear, however, when we begin reading. Every nationality in this work is depicted as a different type of animal: Jews are mice, Germans are cats, Poles are pigs, and Americans dogs. One may think that such a portrayal of the Holocaust is wrong and distasteful. In reality, however, this metaphor serves many different purposes, helping us to comprehend the contents of the novel better. Cartoons – the simple images used by Spiegelman – have the property called by Scott McCloud "amplification through simplification". As he explains, a simpler piece of drawing can act as a vessel that allows us to be more focused on the message of the comic, and partially project our

own emotions into it (1994: 30, 36-37). We are able to be engaged in the story much more than if we were reading about it in a history book. Therefore, we are more willing to remember and to try to understand the Holocaust, a terrible tragedy that should never be forgotten. The Pulitzer Prize winning *Maus* proves that comics and graphic novels can successfully tackle even the most serious of issues.

The term “graphic novel” was intended to make comics more respectable in the American market. In some cultures, however, comics developed differently, and there was no need for the creation of such a term. In France comics are respectable enough to be shown in museums, and Japanese comics – *manga* – are a significant sector of the book market and can tackle issues as varied as wine tasting or the tale of a Hiroshima survivor.

Nowadays, it is easier than ever to find all manner of comic books and graphic novels from all around the world suited for all kinds of readers. Comics and graphic novels are simply a different medium, unlike regular books, paintings, or movies. They are collectively no better nor worse than other media, but simply different. All use both words and pictures in ways that can create a very unique aesthetic response in the reader. Whether you want to read a funny strip (*Garfield*), a work that talks about serious and important issues (*Maus*), or a captivating story that can be the material for a Hollywood blockbuster (*Iron Man*), there is always a comic or a graphic novel out there that can amaze you. If you have heard little about this medium, you should remember that comics are much more than just Iron Man. And even the old superhero himself is a more complex character than you might initially think.

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A Game of Thrones – a New Classic?

Abstract. The following paper depicts George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* as a novel worthy of receiving the title of a classic. Classics are presented as a section of literature to which permission is granted based on particular criteria which is full of prejudice, especially towards specific genres. Fantasy is shown as a genre having particular difficulties entering the 'restricted' section of literature reserved for classics. A Fantasy novel *A Game of Thrones* is analyzed in terms of characters and symbols discerned as the paramount elements of a classic. Presented characters and symbols demonstrate that *A Game of Thrones* possesses the elements characteristic of all classics and despite the fact that it belongs to genre of Fantasy it is feasible it will become a classic.

Key words: classics, Fantasy literature, *A Game of Thrones*

Classics and "the canon" have always been the elite of the literary world, groups whose new members have to meet certain criteria to become a part of high culture. Over the years, newcomers joining "the clique" shared many of the key features characteristic of the existing members of the group – a fact contributing to divisions within and between genres of literature. The invisible line categorized books from particular genres either as potential classics or as popular literature unworthy of the name classic.

One genre whose books have been frequently overlooked as contenders for the "title" of classic is Fantasy. Although we can find some classics within the genre, for example *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, Fantasy was "once upon a time, largely ignored by the literary world, dismissed as beneath notice" (Mandala 2010: 2). Admittedly, many Fantasy novels were not worthy of becoming classics, but because of the existing prejudice against the whole genre many great novels have not been able to cross the line dividing popular literature and Literature with a capital 'L'.

When deciding which books to classify as classic, different critics and scholars have different criteria they rely on. I believe that when making the choice they should refer to "a definition generous enough to include all masterpieces of every school and time" (Erskine 1967: 182) and try to extract elements characteristic of most recognized classics, despite the genre they adhere to. In my opinion these common elements are great characters and symbols.

A Game of Thrones by George R. R. Martin is one book that adheres to the overlooked genre of Fantasy. Although first published in 1996, it became immensely famous a couple of years ago when it was made into a TV series. Becoming a world-wide bestseller, though, did not give it a fighting chance as a contender for the title of classic but rather caused it to be dismissed as “popular” literature unworthy of the attention of serious critics. However, if we take a closer look at the novel we will discover that it is full of the rich characters and symbols which make it a candidate in line to become a new member of the elite.

Characters in a novel are important to readers, as those individuals can become friends, enemies, or even embodiments of life lessons. Eddard Stark and Robert Baratheon are characters whose stories show readers what love can do to a person’s life. Robert’s life is deprived of love. He lost his fiancée, then entered a political marriage which ultimately led to his tragic death as the wife who hated him stood behind his demise. Unlike Robert’s, Eddard’s life was filled with love. Although Eddard, the same as Robert, entered an arranged marriage, he and his wife came to love each other. At the beginning of his marriage, however, love led him to sacrifice his moral values as he fell in love with a woman who was not his wife and fathered a son with her. Eddard’s life was also filled with parental love, which in the end led him to sacrifice his morality once again and unfortunately was an indirect cause of his death. Touching upon the topic of parental love we cannot overlook Cersei Lannister and Catelyn Stark, who both show readers the lengths to which a mother will go to protect her children, from personal sacrifice to committing a crime.

One character who we can treat as an embodiment of a life lesson is Daenerys Targaryen. The lesson which her character presents is that even the best of intentions and good deeds can bring the worst consequences (she lose both her child and her husband). Nonetheless, she should not be treated as merely the personification of a lesson: she is a complicated character. Daenerys is a person who despite a traumatic childhood and constant abuse manages to stand up for herself and subsequently impose her will upon others.

The characters of Tyrion Lannister and John Snow are foils who deal quite differently with the one thing they have in common: being an outcast. Both characters are outcasts as far as their families and the society are concerned. Tyrion Lannister is a dwarf; John Snow is a bastard. Tyrion deals with his situation by accepting who he is and making the best of what life throws at him. He is aware of his body’s limitations and concentrates on his best feature, his intelligence: “*My mind is my weapon. My brother has his sword, King Robert has his warhammer, and I have my mind . . .*” (*A Game of Thrones* p.123-124). On the other hand, we have John Snow who does not agree with the hand that life has dealt him and desperately seeks a place where he would belong. He finds his place in the brotherhood of the Night’s Watch. Living among other outcasts, separated from the society which treated him as a citizen of the second category, he can hide and try to forget about what makes him an outcast: his illegitimacy. The book portrays other characters as well who would not be categorized as ordinary citizens. King Aerys was mentally ill, Brann is paralyzed, Varys is a eunuch, and Khal Drogo is in a persistent vegetative state when the novel is coming to an end. The

portrayal of each of these characters raises a host of questions about important issues; for instance, Khal Drogo's death brings out the issue of euthanasia.

Not only the well developed characters, but also its numerous symbols make *A Game of Thrones* a novel worth noticing. The Wall functioning as one of the borders of the Seven Kingdoms is among the symbols present in the book. One possible explanation as to what The Wall can symbolize is that it is a material manifestation of the fears of the people living in the Seven Kingdoms. People afraid of the unknown build walls separating them from things they fear. In the Seven Kingdoms what citizens fear the most is what lies Beyond the Wall. And the Wall is what keeps them safe: "*On the other side were monsters and giants and ghouls, but they could not pass so long as the Wall stood strong*" (*A Storm of Swords* p. 759). In our reality people also build walls of fear. We can find many examples of those walls. For instance, following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in the USA in 2001 and as a result of the 'War on Terror' a "culture of fear" (Brzeziński 2007) was shaped. Many in the West built a metaphorical wall separating them from Arabic culture. Arabic culture became a feared monster much as the Wildings are what citizens of the Seven Kingdoms dread. It can be said that Martin has taken something which in our world appears only in a non-material form and given it substance and shape. Even the Berlin Wall was a material manifestation of the Soviet Union's fear of emigration on a great scale. The Wall in Martin's novel is a symbol of the barriers people set to keep their fears at bay.

The throne traditionally is a symbol of power and the Iron Throne is no exception. However, the fact that the seat is constructed from the weapons of past enemies allows the reader to presume that it might also symbolize something different. The Iron Throne can symbolize past enemies as the blades from which the seat is built serve as a constant reminder of defeated foes. Although the throne was forged a long time ago, its blades are still sharp, which can symbolize the notion that the past is never truly behind us and that issues we thought were resolved can always come back to hurt us all over again, just as the weapons of the defeated enemies can still cut the person sitting on the Iron Throne. The Iron Throne can also symbolize the idea that those in a position of power should never be able to feel too comfortable with the authority they possess. We may presume that this is one of the symbolic ideas of the Iron Throne, as the king who originally had it made said that „*A king should never sit easy*" (*A Game of Thrones* p.462).

Symbolism can also be discovered in the work's seasons, which are quite different from those in our reality. In the world of *A Game of Thrones* one season can continue for years, decades even, but what is more important than the seasons' duration is the fact that they symbolize the phases of life. Summer symbolizes childhood. Bran is referred to as a „*sweet summer child*" (*A Game of Thrones* p. 240) and when John and other recruits of the Night's Watch are pointed out to be young and inexperienced, they are called "*green and stinking of summer*" (*A Game of Thrones* p. 444). Since the summer is associated with childhood, winter is to symbolize adulthood. Stark's motto "*Winter Is Coming*" (*A Game of Thrones* p. 813). looms over everyone and seems to say that childhood always passes and adulthood is inevitable. The changing of the seasons, which the reader can observe throughout the novel, can symbolize the rite of passage from one phase of life into another. Sum-

mer changes into winter just as children turn into adults. The shifting of the seasons symbolizing the phases of life reinforces one of the important themes in the novel: how individuals deal with the coming of age. Readers can observe how some of the characters in the novel grow up as the seasons change. The transformation from child into adult is most visible in the character of Robb Stark, who turns from a boy playing with wooden swords to a man commanding an army.

More symbolism can be discovered in the way crows and ravens are presented in the novel. In the Seven Kingdoms there is a saying: “*Dark wings, dark words*” (*A Game of Thrones* p. 254), which clearly shows that people treat crows and ravens as a bad omen. The men of the Night’s Watch are referred to as crows, not only because they always dress in black, but we can assume that it is because crows also symbolize solitude (Cirlot 1971). The men of the Night’s Watch are sworn into the brotherhood for life, vowing never to have families and to protect the realm at all costs, which means a life in solitude. Crows can also symbolize the notion of seeing the larger picture. Brann has ‘prophetic’ dreams in which a three-eyed crow shows him what happens in distant places as well as what is yet to come. The crow’s third eye presumably means that the animal can see more than others and helps Brann understand what is truly important, whereas others are only able to see what is right in front of them.

There are many more symbols which readers may find in the novel. We could look into the symbolism of the sigils of the Houses, or the dragons and their “resurrection”, as *A Game of Thrones* is full of things whose meaning is open to interpretation if we just look beneath the surface.

Fantasy as a genre is often sneered upon by critics, but certain authors like Tolkien or Terry Pratchett have transcended the stereotype. Although *A Game of Thrones* has the great characters and rich symbols characteristic of most classics, only time will tell if it is also destined to become one.

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