

ESSE Doctoral Symposium 2018

Abstracts of the presentations

CULTURAL AND AREA STUDIES

Lýdia Desiatniková (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia)

Representation of Society in Media Discourse: Media Discourse on Teachers and their Role in Society in Selected British Periodicals

The study will look at the media coverage afforded to teachers and educators and their (changing) role in society in selected British periodicals. It aims to explore the issue of teacher status, its importance and its impact as determining the attitudes of selected newspaper articles on the portrayal of teachers. It strives to inspect the language used to shape public perception and construction of beliefs and attitudes to teachers and their community role in the face of social changes. The goal is to investigate the media coverage afforded to the notions of educational issues concerning teachers in UK and their role in society in politically opposed newspapers in order to elucidate the ideological representation of the teacher's profession and to examine the approach which reflects the nature of the selected newspapers representing opposite ends of the political spectrum as well as different qualitative content. The research focuses on articles published between 2015 and 2018 when the Conservative Party secured a surprise victory and a majority single-party government was formed. In order to do the analysis, a collection of newspaper articles selected from the primary sources will be chosen to create a corpus. The research is aimed at two quality newspapers – *The Guardian* with its centre-left orientation and *The Daily Telegraph* with a pro-Conservative position. In terms of the popular newspapers the research looks at the left-oriented *Daily Mirror* and the right-oriented *Daily Mail*. A combination of an interpretative approach to newspaper discourse with a comparative cross-analysis method supported by the corpus-driven methods of Critical Discourse Analysis will be used to detect particular language patterns of collocations and concordance lines which enable the researcher to choose a key word and see patterns in representation as well as view the context that the word falls in. The use of the above-mentioned methods should prove the hypothesis that portrayals of teachers and teachers' issues are stereotyped and manifested with an explicit and implicit, predominantly negative connotation, regardless of the occurrence in quality or tabloid, liberal or conservative press. The exploration of the image of the teacher via the press could provide another source for the thematic study of media culture, school culture, pedagogy, stereotyping in media, human rights and power relations.

Orsolya Karácsony (University of Debrecen, Hungary)

Nostalgia and Remembering in Contemporary US and Eastern European Suspense Thrillers

My field of research belongs to the discipline of film studies. I analyze how contemporary (produced after 1991 and 1989) Hollywood and Eastern European suspense thrillers can help to process past events related to Socialism and the Cold War in the countries of the former Eastern bloc and in the United States of America. I am looking for the answer to the question to what extent this genre and its subgenres, including the police thriller, spy thriller, psychological thriller etc., are capable of influencing the viewers' reception, that is, what effect the methods of remembering applied in the films have on them, and how relevant the films can make the problems they represent for present-day audience. I argue that the thriller genre is suitable for portraying games of loyalty, brotherhood, betrayal, and survival because it relies heavily on suspense, which is probably the most powerful tool for evoking the feeling of a special kind of discomfort that can only be experienced while watching a cinematic piece of art. Since the thriller is a popular genre whose characteristics regarding form and narrative have always been defined by Hollywood (by Alfred Hitchcock and his followers), it is an important aspect in my research which qualities of style can function as a kind of frame for Eastern European film-makers who can complete it with local cultural particularities, thus being able to create artworks that can be enjoyed by national and international audiences alike. In order to define the particularities related to the genre, I use the monographs written by Charles Derry and Martin Rubin who consider the thriller as a major film genre which is especially open to hybridity, that is, to combination with other genres (e.g. drama, horror or even comedy) without losing its typical characteristics. In the analysis of remembering I apply Hayden White's theory according to which "history is a collection of narratives" as well as Jan Assman's works about cultural memory.

Antonios Karampourniotis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

A comparative study of "fear" through cinematic language

Studying how the concept of fear through the social term of social construction is depicted in cinema, we start from the work of Gilles Deleuze about Cinema. In the first of his two works about cinema, *Cinema 1: The movement-image*, the French philosopher points out Søren Kierkegaard as the philosopher who played an important part on changing the way of thinking during the 20th century, following the attempt of philosophy to renew its content in the second half of 19th century. According to Deleuze, in order to conquer new means and forms of expression, new thinkers such as the Danish existentialist, who feels himself to be one of the first representatives of a philosophy of the future, took a leading role and totally changed the way of thinking philosophically in the previous centuries. Kierkegaard managed to turn philosophical thought inward, showcasing the internal potential of personal transcendence, a kind of self-cognitive repetition which starts when one person confronts himself to face the fear and the dread occurring when he tries to make a decisive choice for his life. In this case arises the concept of fear, which is considered as a developing process that Kierkegaard talks about in many parts of his work. At this stage of my thesis, I have collected all the elements that showcase the importance of fear in Kierkegaard's thought and have started to do a comparative test to check their progression in contrast with the meaning of fear as it was before Kierkegaard's philosophical rise. In this paper I intend to present what I have found so far about the consideration of fear in philosophy and then concisely introduce how I am planning to match to specific cinema scenes, investigating the aesthetic criteria in which this approach reflects the film-making logic. We consider the whole project as innovative because it is mainly an attempt to study the case of fear in a new perspective that is going to bring to the surface, through the distinctive nature of cinema, the active and – in some alternative way – regenerating role that fear plays in every kind of social relationship for every human being.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Maria Bochkova (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)

Gender Identity Construction in American and Czech YouTube Vlogs

My PhD thesis involves comparative research aimed at investigating the discursive means of gender identity construction in the context of asynchronous computer-mediated interaction and quasi-interaction, namely YouTube video blogs produced by American and Czech YouTube users, as well as exploring universal patterns and specific features in the discursive performance of a range of

gender identities in the two linguacultures. The study is conducted in the framework of the social constructivist approach and Judith Butler's (1999) performativity theory, which presuppose that gender identity is not an inherent feature but is constructed in discursive practices in the context of social interaction. The strategies of constructing gender identities and their interrelation with the immediate context are explored in terms of positioning as developed by Davies and Harré (1990) in the context of social psychology and well established in research on identity in sociolinguistics. The corpus to be analysed is a collection of transcriptions of videos recorded and uploaded by YouTube users featuring (quasi-)interaction with the viewers and other participants in the video. The aims pursued by the users of the abovementioned social media website, namely popularity and channel promotion by means of gaining subscribers, views and "likes", are expected to have a direct impact on the way gender identities are performed, rendering them salient, exaggerated, highly stereotypical and easy to recognize, and making YouTube vlogs a unique source of exploring gender identity construction in the context of new social practices. Given the drastic differences between Czech and American political histories and current sociocultural environments, it is expected that, on the one hand, the patterns of gender identity construction as well as the range of gender identities performed should be divergent, whereas on the other, a similar tendency should be observed preconditioned by global trends dominant in today's social media (specifically, YouTube) and globalized popular culture in general.

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Jessica Dheskali (TU Chemnitz, Germany)

Metalanguage in Chinese Master and Doctoral Theses: Focus on Engagement Markers

The term 'Engagement' can be used as a cover-all term for evaluative uses of language that include those instances by which writers negotiate their value positions towards other positions and voices and how they engage with potential or actual readers. During this dialogue with the reader, evaluations can be explicitly or implicitly conveyed and consequently influence the reader. This study investigates rhetorical and semantic features of Chinese student writings and aims at analyzing their engagement with the reader and other voices and in order to improve their metalanguage. The basis for this comparative corpus analysis is provided by a corpus of 304 Chinese master theses and a corpus of 112 Chinese doctoral theses, all written in English in the disciplines of Cultural Studies, Linguistics and Literature. With this project, I am expanding the research of my Master's thesis. While I chose a new linguistic topic, the corpus that I have started compiling during my internship in China has been augmented. The student writings are analyzed using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, a framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics, with a focus on the system of ENGAGEMENT. First results indicate that both groups of Chinese L2 students generally underuse engagement markers. A closer look shows that Chinese Master's students rather expand (e.g. attribute, entertain) other studies and ideas, whereas doctoral students use engagement markers more to contract (e.g. disclaim, proclaim) them. As hypothesized, the Chinese students preferably use personal pronouns (*you, your; inclusive we, us, our*) to engage with the reader. What is striking, however, are the usages of *promote** and *justify*, with both variables often being found in the Chinese doctoral corpus in collocation with *hypothesis, study, discussion, results* and *research*. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of *claim** and *argue** has suggested the implementation of another subcategory next to Acknowledge and Distance (expand).

Vincenzo Dheskali (TU Chemnitz, Germany)

A corpus-based Comparison of Albanian and Italian Student Papers in L1 and L2: the Case of Hedges and Boosters

Modality (and modalization) constitutes an area of uncertainty. It is at an intermediate point between positive polarity *it is* and negative polarity *it is not* with various degrees of indeterminacy (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). This indeterminacy includes probability and is expressed through items that Holmes (1990) and Hyland (1998) have termed hedges and boosters. Writers use these to achieve approval by finding the right balance between the investment of statements with the confidence of reliable knowledge and tentativeness to convey doubt and achieve adequate social interrelations (Hyland 1998). The aim of this comparative study is to investigate the usage of hedges and boosters in Italian and Albanian students' academic writings in L1 and L2. I analyze author-related and proposition-related hedges (e.g. *possibly, approximately*) and boosters (e.g. *show, completely*) as well as interrelated aspects such as their positioning, orientation, manifestation, and prosody of modalization. My paper will interweave a pragmatic categorization (cf. Prince et al. 1980), a semantic division (cf. Lafuente Millán 2008) and Systemic Functional Theory (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) in an innovative combination. I have compiled two corpora of Italian student writings (3 million words each) in Italian and English respectively and two corpora of Albanian students in Albanian (2.2 million words) and English (550.000 words). A similar number of males and females, academic level and number of words for each discipline are presented in all corpora with disciplines from soft and hard sciences. As Toska (2015) has stated, very little research has been conducted on academic writing in Albania. Thus, it is essential to initiate research in this field. Results show that Italians use hedges and boosters significantly more than Albanians. Additionally, the same hedge (*probably*) and booster (*significantly*) appeared as author-related (shield) and proposition-related (approximator). I conclude that Italians showed more commitment more explicitly in their writings.

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Borbála Fűkőh (University of Szeged and Budapest Business School, University of Applied Sciences, Hungary)

Establishing the Context and Scoring Validity of an English for Academic Purposes test

Main topic and issues: The main topic of my dissertation is to establish the validity of two writing tasks in a C1 level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) test. When designing a new academic test, validity evidence is needed in order to see whether the construct reflects the skills required in higher education, and whether the results reflect reliable scores and unbiased marking. The aim of this research is to find evidence for the validity of the two proposed writing tasks (*formal transactional email* and *discussion essay*). The research covers (a) the development stage; (b) the completion of the specifications and the test items; (c) the piloting and pre-testing of test items; and it aims (d) to collect and analyse data to establish scoring validity. The research has relevant implications for the different stakeholders of the test: development teams of EAP tests, students pursuing university studies in English language higher education, and university admissions staff.

Methodology: The methodology of generating validity evidence follows Weir's (2005) proposed validation stages using a mixed-method approach. Literature review, expert judgement, student interviews and textual analysis are to be used for context validity. For scoring validity, apart from establishing validity for the rating procedure, a further objective is to design a checklist-based marking scheme for the writing tasks. The benefits of a checklist over a scale, and its suitability for level testing are present in the literature (Kim 2011; Struthers et al. 2013). The dissertation wishes to adapt the methods applied in Lukácsi (2018), and aims at developing two task specific writing checklists for the EAP exam.

Results obtained so far: As for context validity in the development stage, a small scale research was carried out in connection with the transactional writing task to complement expert judgement. The research through semi-structured student interviews revealed evidence for target language use and tried to map the different topics and the writing demands of English language correspondence in a university context.

Eliana Garzón Duarte (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Identity construction of child refugees in Sweden from the perspective of language rights

My research proposal examines the identity construction of child refugees in Sweden in terms of their linguistic background and schooling process. Taking inspiration from Piller's (2016) theoretical concept of language rights, Wee's (2011) approach to Minority Language Rights, and Bucholtz and Hall's (2010) conceptualization of identity in/by language, I trace the integration process of new arrival kids from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the Swedish context. The two questions that lead this research are concerned with the role languages spoken by child refugees play in the formation of the kids' sense of identity and the negotiations of the potentially contradictory linguistic and other cultural needs these newly arrived students are faced with in their daily activities in school. My objective is (1) to explore the type of tensions and conflicts among languages and cultures of child refugees in contact within the broader Swedish context, (2) to understand how these children negotiate conflictual moments of communication in their schooling, (3) to examine the symbolic significance the various languages they speak index for their identities within the school, and (4) to explore the linguistic and cultural dimensions of their sense of identity. I aim to accomplish these goals through in-depth case studies in Sundsvall, Sweden, using life stories, semi-structured interviews with teachers, local officials and children (local and new arrivals), and observations. These observations will be done in the school context and in extracurricular activities and in local cultural gatherings. The results I am going to discuss in my presentation will be based on a preliminary

fieldwork I carried out in Sundsvall in December 2017. I could initiate the contact with people at different levels of the educational system in this Swedish municipality who gave insights into the situation of child refugees from varying perspectives, helping me to establish the scope of the cultural and linguistic issues at stake for the host country.

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Meriem Gueche (University of Paris 8 – Saint-Denis Vincennes, France)

Interference and Input Complexity Effects on L2 Acquisition

As a result of the global spread of English, learners of English find themselves today confronted with challenging situations where they have to communicate with speakers from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This study seeks to explain how both multilingualism and exposure to mixed input shape the acquisition of English as a foreign language. The first hypothesis is that the richness of a learner's vocabulary is affected by their multilingual competence since they already possess a well-established double or triple lexical competence in the languages they speak. The second hypothesis is that exposure to mixed input does not necessarily hinder the acquisition of a pragmatic competence. The aim here is to investigate how learners of English who have been exposed to mixed input (British and American English in this case) acquire a pragmatic competence in using English. Indeed, the learners would eventually develop their own strategies in order to achieve mutual understanding and overcome communication failure resulting from cultural differences between their L1s and these two English varieties. For the sake of this study, the data have been collected, so far, from two distinct sources: university students in a highly multicultural environment in the north suburbs of Paris, and students in a fairly homogeneous context in Poznań. Timed essay writing and questionnaires were used in the first, whereas three pragmatic tests (MDCT, WDCT and DSAT) and other questionnaires were administered in the second. The data are analyzed using univariate and multivariate statistics. The preliminary results regarding the first hypothesis reveal that there is a significant correlation between lexical richness and the number of early childhood languages. As to the second hypothesis, the subjects are expected to employ pragmatic strategies, such as rephrasing, meaning negotiation, repair and clarification.

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Federica Modafferi (TU Chemnitz, Germany)

Gender differences in Academic Italian English: A preliminary study

The concept of “projection” was introduced by Halliday in his Systemic Functional Grammar (2014). It consists of a logical-semantic relationship where the clause functions as a representation of a linguistic representation – i.e. a system for quoting and reporting direct speech or thought. Such grammatical system fits with the enterprise of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is constructed around the sharing of ideas by means of publication. The aim of this study is to examine, through a quantitative and qualitative analysis, the writing behavior of Italian scholars when they produce texts in English, and the differences between the writing style of Italian men and women. In order to achieve this purpose, the CIAO (Corpus of Italian Academic Organization) was compiled: it is a specialized corpus of published research articles (RAs) written by Italian academics in English. The corpus consists of 150 texts, each related to a field of the humanities and social sciences (e.g. linguistics, visual arts, anthropology), and published between 2008 and 2018. Such a decade was chosen for important political reasons in Italy – the Berlusconi era, which contributed to a mortifying vision of women within the country, came to an end, but left its legacy of cyberbullying, feminicides and abuse (both physical and verbal). In this study, the sexist vision of women in Italy is expanded to the academic context, where female scholars still suffer from paternalism and mansplaining by their male colleagues. Being this study at its very beginning, it will address some social and sociolinguistic issues in Italy, and deal with the problems related to the corpus compilation. Some preliminary results

of the research will be shown, mainly concerning verbs serving as Process in verbal and mental clauses (*believe, guess, judge, hypothesize, claim, imply*).

Gabriel Jay Rauhoff (University of Turku, Finland)

Collocations in Diverse Written English: An Exploration of Phraseology in Second Language Writing

My dissertation investigates the acquisition of collocations, i.e. frequently recurring two-to-three word syntagmatic units, in second language writing—specifically how task type (i.e. genres) of writing influences the collocations a writer uses. As second language research has found that a writer's understanding of task types influences the register, formality, and style they use for that task (Hyland 2013), I hypothesize that the collocations seen in, e.g. argumentative and creative writings will be different in terms of type, strength, and frequency. Historically, there have been two traditions of collocation research: frequency-based and phraseological, with each having different classifications of collocations, definitions, research methodologies, and interpretation of results. The dissertation attempts to utilize procedures of identifying collocations from both (see Henriksen, Schmitt, 2010). The data collected have been from participants in their first years at a secondary school, and the beginnings of a corpus for a larger external project, ACALEX. The data were compared against a native-speaking corpus, the Corpus of Contemporary American English, to obtain association measures of strength (e.g. mutual information, *t*-score). The results obtained so far are preliminary. Bigrams have been extracted from student compositions writing both expository essays and two sets of letters of self-reflections written at two different times. From these, statistically significant average means of high collocational strength were found for the students writing expository essays, and lower strengths for writing letters.

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Irina Stoica (University of Bucharest, Romania)

The syntax and the semantics of Manner of Speaking verbs

The focus of my research is the syntax of Manner of Speaking verbs (henceforth MoS verbs), in English (*whisper, shout, mumble, grunt, etc.*). The questions that my thesis wishes to answer stem from a study put forth by Zwicky (1971), who identifies a series of syntactic properties these verbs have, which are argued to be correlated with their semantic representation. If such a proposal were valid, then we would expect to find a unitary explanation for all these properties and, in addition, MoS verbs should behave similarly crosslinguistically. Analyzing MoS verbs in Romanian, I saw that, while their semantic properties are in line with those of their English counterpart, they differ from the point of view of their syntactic behaviour. More specifically, while MoS verbs in English are traditionally argued to ban extraction from the complement clause or the omission of the complementizer and to be incompatible with Double Object Constructions, in Romanian they do not function as islands and can appear in DOC. My proposal is that only in English, but not in Romanian, does the structure of MoS verbs contain a nominal component, responsible for this cluster of properties. However, a series of experiments on English MoS verbs shows that there are cases where extraction and complementizer omission are allowed and these verbs can appear in DOC. One possible solution to this problem would be to distinguish between “genuine MoS verbs”, which focus on manner and have a nominal component, and MoS verbs which behave similarly to verbs of communication, where the verbal component is emphasized. An alternative would be to follow Mufwene (1978), who states that what gives rise to these differences are elements of meaning which do not characterize exclusively these two classes of verbs, but are rather shared with other categories, verbs classes themselves being epiphenomenal. This is the problem my presentation will be focusing on.

Zeenat Sumra (TU Chemnitz, Germany)

'Boli, lugha and language, we use all these words': Code-Switching in Multilingual Speakers in Tanzania

My PhD project is in sociolinguistics, focusing on an unexplored linguistic demographic: the Gujarati Indian community in Tanzania. It investigates how a network of multilingual speakers in urban areas switch between English, Kutchi and Swahili in casual conversations, and how this language practice relays their social identities. The aims of this research are to establish that occurrences of English codeswitching are dependent on education levels, and how linguistic style contributes to their sociocultural identity. The codeswitching being examined in detail is categorized into two groups: single loanwords and longer utterances. Utterances can be further grouped into three categories: filler (connection) words which aim in driving the conversation onward, such as 'anyway' 'also' 'and' and phrases, which comprise grammatically complete sentences which serve as discourse functions in a speech act. Both intra- and inter-sentential occurrences are examined, which indicate the grammatical competency of the speakers. The following methodology is used: a research design was created with a network of participants, who were then categorized using the variables of age, generation and education levels (see Table 1 below.) Data collection was carried out in Tanzania using an ethnographic approach based on interviews and audio recordings of natural conversations. The data was transcribed and is being analyzed employing qualitative methods: conversation analysis and the markedness model (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The linguistic variables are the number of words in the conversation. Preliminary results indicate that common with many other second-gen immigrants, a clear link exists between participant's degree of English codeswitching and the independent variable of education (see Table 2 below.) Codeswitching overall establishes an integral part of the linguistic repertoire of a network of trilingual speakers. This examination leads to knowledge on the implications of codeswitching in lesser studied global multilingual communities.

References

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Table 1. Categorization of participants

Age Range	20+		40+		60+	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Generation						
Education Levels						
Primary School			1	1	4	
High School		4		4	3	
University		5			1	1
Total per Age Group	9		5		9	

Table 2. Occurrences of English loanwords and sentences in two conversations

Conversation No.	Conversation length (in minutes)	Total no. of words	Participant	Occurrences of English loanwords	Occurrences of English sentences	Education level
4	12:00	421	1	10	8	University
			7	9	7	High School
			8	11	8	High School
17	15:00	438	1	3	2	University
			2	5	0	Primary School
			11	6	1	Primary School
			17	12	4	High School

LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

Noémi Albert (University of Pécs, Hungary)

Memory in Space – Space in the Memory: A New Perspective through four Contemporary English Novels

The work centres on two concepts that are gaining substantial focus in contemporary literature and culture, namely space and memory. For the past two decades a burgeoning interest could be captured between the humanities and social sciences, focusing on a joint analysis of two concepts: memory and geography (the analysis of the human space). The two concepts and their investigation are not new phenomena. My purpose lies in the mapping of contemporary thinking about these issues, in the devising of a new terminology reflecting the contemporaneity of the aforementioned fields, and in the delineation of the different meeting points involved in the joint discussion of the terms. The selected four novels are the following: Emma Donoghue's *Room*, Tom McCarthy's *Remainder*, Evie Wyld's *After the Fire, a Still Small Voice*, and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. After a short historical overview of the different stages of memory studies and space studies separately and jointly, I am proposing a thorough investigation of these aforementioned literary pieces together with diverse disciplines relevant to the issues approached by the novels. The work entails the further analysis of such issues as trauma, nostalgia, spacetime, perception, embodiment, etc. Similarly to the "spatial turn" that Barney Warf and others identify and place approximately at the turn of the millennium, there is a visible shift around this time on the level of memory as well, largely characterized by a greater fluidity. My work so far led me to recognize a more accentuated transit perceptible in the previous dichotomies of place/space, private/public memory, and also between the two main categories of my work, namely memory and space themselves.

Francesca Battaglia (Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Consonant but Dissonant to the (S)Core: The Neo-Victorian "Afterings" of Sherlock Holmes' Violin

By drawing on neo-Victorian criticism, musicology, and gender studies, the present project focuses on the neo-Victorian re-presentations of Sherlock Holmes' violin across media, examining the way in which the instrument's transformations influenced the portrayal of the detective as a model of maleness. My approach is interdisciplinary and intersemiotic. Indeed, while as a prop the violin's symbolism invites a psychoanalytical investigation into music's gender codes, as a musical instrument for cinema and television soundtracks it draws attention to the role of the composer in the process of adaptation from page to screen. It is argued that the impact of music is particularly strong in Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes films (2009-11) since the transformation of the violin into a Gypsy fiddle redefines the detective's masculinity in relation to ethnicity, questioning aspects of genre. Similarly, the violin plays a leading role in the BBC television drama *Sherlock* by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat (2010-17), where it helps the detective cope with hidden emotions, traumatic experiences, and threatening models of femininity and patriarchy. Even when absent, the iconic prop is implicitly evoked, such as in the novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind* by Mitch Cullin (2005), where a senile Holmes is haunted by an unresolved case concerning a glass harmonica. The unusual instrument is believed to have supernatural powers and is used to reinforce female homosocial bonds, summoning those very Gothic tropes and sinister connotations traditionally associated with the figure of the violinist. It is eventually claimed that, as a male signifier and non-verbal means of communication, the violin materializes unresolved conflicts, highlighting the clash between the Victorian construction of gender roles and postmodern plural identities.

Carlotta Beretta (Università di Bologna, Italy)

The Home and the World: Calcutta in contemporary Indian English Literature

This research project analyses the representation of Calcutta in Indian literature in English. In particular, it deals with the works of three authors – Amitav Ghosh, Amit Chaudhuri, and Neel Mukherjee – who have placed the city at the centre of their fiction. For these authors, Calcutta is the place in which they are aesthetically and culturally rooted, and, at the same time, the place from which they look at the global world. Although it has less economic and political relevance compared to Bombay or Delhi, Calcutta is still extremely significant in defining Indian modernity, especially from a cultural point of view. Indeed, Bengali culture has a long modernist tradition, which has tried to come to terms with modernity and modernisation in several ways, and which all the three authors refer back to extensively. As well as interrogating modernity, I contend that the novels under consideration present Calcutta as a city traversed by borders, which are continuously crossed in the attempt to build

relations between places and people. In order to analyse this conjunction, my research moves from two theoretical standpoints. On the one hand, I use the critical tools provided by Bertrand Westphal's geocriticism and by thematic criticism. On the other hand, I consider space from the point of view of space dialectics, following the works of Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Edward Soja among others. From this theoretical reflection, the postcolonial city emerges as a conjunctural (Varma 2011) or in-between space in which various cultural, social and political processes contribute, in turn, to draw borders and build relations. The conjunctural space of Calcutta is then investigated from three spatial and thematic viewpoints: the home (as in the relation between private and public space), the streets (the space of the flâneur, the space of politics), the world (Calcutta in the context of Indian migration).

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Adriana Chakarova (University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria)

Perspectives on Race and Gender in Post-Civil-War American Prose Fiction

My aim is to explore representations of racial and gender roles in Post-Civil-War American prose fiction. Even after the abolition of slavery, generally accepted social codes and legal statutes disavowed intermarriage and there was no clear-cut answer to the question of HOW the identities of newly freed blacks and people of mixed racial heritage could be defined and codified. Racial stereotypes were rampant, especially with regard to colored women, and their real or imagined relations with white men. A lot of the fiction of the time embodied and influenced predominant perceptions of intermarriage as rebellious and unacceptable. Moreover, such fictional accounts included the implied expectations of the colored heroine to be immoral, uneducated and unmannered. The texts which I consider most relevant to my analysis are Lydia Maria Child's *A Romance of the Republic* (1867) and Charles Chesnut's *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900). I will also present a reading of William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853) which was published before the Civil War but sheds light on relations involving the related categories of gender and race. I intend to trace the intersection between the racial and gender roles ascribed to women of color by applying the methodology of Critical Race Theory. CRT scholars such as R. Delgado and A. Onwuachi-Willig attempt to understand how cultural perceptions of race affect individuals and how they themselves can respond to such perceptions. As CRT is closely connected to and builds on feminist methodologies, I should be able to explore the constructing, imposing, challenging and possibly subverting of racial and gender patterns with regard to colored women in the three novels under consideration.

Joanna Dworak (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia)

Human Struggle to Experience Kierkegaardian State of Genuine Humanness in John Updike's Novelistic Discourse

The (post-)postmodern era with no grounding anchorage to direct human existential striving presents itself as a challenge. With over 800,000 lives prematurely lost to suicides¹ per annum and a growing number of causatively unrecognized terrorist acts, preventative measures need to be called into re-orientating question. Literature with its depictive cauldron of relatable human experience and its distancing potential fostering subjectal reflexivity lends itself as one such re-orientating tool. The study undertaken here of the discursive patterns of the existentialised message transfer focuses on the endeavours of Updikean protagonists. Updike's novelistic oeuvre provides the corpus of case studies that exemplify the intricacies of existential (un)becoming. The case study corpus is presented through the framework of Kierkegaardian theory of human growth and corruption and analysed through the prism of Derridian deconstruction. The objective of the analysis is to identify the factors

¹According to the first World Health Organization report on suicide prevention, *Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014: 8-9. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/suicide-prevention-report/en/> [15.03.16]

that inhibit existential growth and defamiliarize binarily-oriented conceptual perspective. An active understanding of these factors is indispensable for the stimulation of critical inquisitiveness that individuals need for the potentiating navigation through the dehumanizing (post-)postmodern age. The overall aim of the thesis is to defend the research hypothesis that advocates that (post-)postmodern subjects can constructively process dualistically-angled existential tension which Updike depicts as essentially irresolvable. The attainability of such constructive processing can be fostered in the striving subjects through the process of their critical textual consumption of Updikean novelistic discourse when the latter is viewed from the Kierkegaardian perspective and deconstructively analysed. Updike's novels are a potent ground for such textual digestion as they centre on the paradoxical nature of existential dilemmas and their seeming irresolvability, the feature that makes the authorial production highly relatable. The results obtained are mainly pragmatic in orientation. They are intended to serve as the foundation of a Kierkegaardianised educational/early intervention program directed at those prone to an existentialised crisis posing a threat of self-regression and/or annihilation. Broadening the understanding of the self-constitution and the destructive potency of ideational practices of the binarily-structured linguistic habitualization, the program may be used as a preventative measure against (post-)postmodern dehumanization.

María Jennifer Estévez Yanes (University of La Laguna, Spain)

A Literary Approach to Migrant Vulnerabilities in Canada and the United States

How can vulnerability, commonly associated to injurability, be considered in a positive light? Is it possible to deny other ways of life once we realise our responsibility to others affect our own subjectivity? In a world where mobility questions the limits of policies, geographies, social norms and constructs that identify with practices of belonging, otherness is interrogated as it opens to the dialogue of who comes first, when the interests of the other and the self meet at a crossroads. Using the gap between vulnerability, as relationality, and precarity, as the capacity of being harmed, the aim of this project is to analyse the case of migrant subjects, who represent an element that breaks with the established patterns of identity between human and citizen (Agamben 20-21) and power relations that fix fluctuating realities. I will do so through a corpus of North American novels in which reinventing oneself is synonymous to movement, empathy and transformation, in a state of being nor fully here nor there, "a way of being *for* another or *by virtue* of another" (Butler, *Precarious* 24). To cover the different aspects by which vulnerability can be understood as relationality, first, I explore the double morality and interplay between security and danger that lies behind practices of hospitality (Manzanas-Calvo and Benito-Sánchez 2017; Clapp and Ridge 2016). Also, I will look at cosmopolitanism and transnationalism which reconceptualise spatial practices of belonging and being in the world (Nanda 2015; Appiah 2007). Accordingly, and to finish with the theoretical framework I describe the different dimensions of vulnerability considering its connections to creative responses offered through resilience, agency and power (Butler 2016). The characters in the novels delve into other versions of the self through a dialogue from (an)other place, (an)other perspective from beyond, taking change as it comes and exercising responsiveness.

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Talal Victor Hawshar (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; Lorraine University, France)
The Counterculture, Social Fear, and the Rationale for a Theory of Narrative Movements

My project is a study of the counterculture movement and deals specifically with the issue of social fear conditioning during post-War America. I distinguish between three types of counterculture narratives (fiction, non-fiction, and literary journalism) and suggest a key role for these narratives in responding to the production of artificial cultural stimuli. I recognize the American society of the post-War period as a network society, whose mass-communication of propaganda played a major role in social fear conditioning through the fabrication of selective associations to fear-related ancestral conditions. Then I analyze the reception of the counterculture ideology from a cognitive-evolutionary perspective, taking into consideration the psychological and ecological factors underlying the success of the counterculture as a set of (potentially) evolved cultural variants. I will use the findings to analyze the possible ways by which the different texts understudy contributed collectively in the mitigation of the susceptibility to American propaganda and build on this case study to suggest a universal function for "narrative" as a prime mover behind the formation of social movements. I propose to call Narrative Movement the set of "networked" narratives which has the capacity to stir dissidence and revolt by manipulating the cognitive infrastructure of information-transmission.

Caroline Ann Kyzek (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia)
Exploring Social Issues in the Works of Walpole and Hawthorne

The main aim of this dissertation is to explore how class systems and blood relations are represented in two texts of the Gothic genre: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) & Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Thus far, it has been found that both novels deal with people who are cast out of their rightful family homes. Inheritance and property are significant, especially for the property to stay in the family. Class systems were shifting during Walpole's time as well as Hawthorne's, and both authors illustrate this in their texts. The Gothic genre was chosen because many writers used it as an outlet for representing anxieties, due to historical events and cultural situations which will be examined. Our two novels deal with the uncertainty regarding family and inheritance, as well as law and power, since in both cases we are dealing with families who have unlawfully taken away power from other families, or rightful heirs. These power relations are clearly seen in Gothic literature, as they relate to the fears of people, and family is included in this power struggle. Because the dissertation relies heavily on the cultural atmosphere and historical events, the literary theory of New Historicism is used. This theory suggests that various aspects of cultural life, whether they are religious, political, familial, etc., influence the way that we interpret a text. Therefore, Walpole and Hawthorne may be expressing their own attitudes towards class, but no matter how individualistic they may seem, they subconsciously have already had these attitudes rooted in their minds, because society has had an impact on them throughout their whole lives. Both authors were reacting to the cultural atmosphere in the time period in which they have lived.

Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka (University of Debrecen, Hungary)
Motherhood and the Black Female Body in African American Literature and Culture

The topic of my dissertation is maternal identity and the representation of maternal bodies in 20th- and 21st-century African American prose writing, mainly in novels such as *Song of Solomon* (1977) and *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, and *Push* (1996) by Sapphire, as well as short stories such as "The Abortion" (1981) by Alice Walker and "Harvest" (2011) by Danielle Evans. Motherhood has profound implications on the sense of self, and on the subject positions/identity positions, emotions, practices, decisions that are part of it. Our perceptions of how it carries out tasks and emits signs are imbued with political meanings. My dissertation will focus on the embodied aspects of motherhood from conception until breastfeeding. My thesis is that since the maternal body is a site where gender, race, class, and the condition of being human intersect, these aspects influence the embodied experience of mothering and the ways in which it is represented. These categories are, in Judith Butler's terminology, all performative and performed to an extent, and they inform our cultural scripts about motherhood. African American women often find themselves in

an even more complicated position: they have been impacted by racism and the reverberations of slavery. I will analyze how the corporeal aspects of motherhood affect the narrative of the self of the female characters, keeping in mind that the signification of the body is contingent on the particular cultural context. My analysis will be based on the close reading of the primary sources and will also rely on the Foucauldian concept of dividing practices, and on trauma theory (especially the works of Cathy Caruth and Bessel van der Kolk) in order to examine how traumatic experiences shape the process by which characters assume their maternal identity positions.

Efrosyni Manda (National and Capodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

Emily Dickinson: The Unorthodox Epistolary Writer

My dissertation investigates the ways in which Emily Dickinson eluded the normative framework of 19th century epistolarity and developed her unique letter writing, a new genre, poetic epistolarity. Letters were the means of safeguarding the prevalence of moral – or even moralistic – values and perpetuating the existing hierarchies. While Dickinson initially moved within the frame of epistolary etiquette, she gradually transformed the letter into her arena of toying with conventions, and particularly into a Trojan horse through which she undermined tradition. Confronted with the epistolary conventions, she seized them, appropriated them till she ultimately turned them against themselves and deconstructed them. I suggest that while she took advantage of letter writing, which afforded her with the opportunity to map her own world and people it with the addressees that corresponded to her manifold personality, she did not comply with the epistolary rules. I argue that over the years she ceased to cling to the letter of letter-writing and, although she tended to her epistles to the letter, she converted them not only into spirit but into Letters. I am studying and analyzing Dickinson's corpus of letters in contrast with epistolary conventions. Information on letter writing manuals, books on Social etiquette as well as the woman's position in the 19th century serve as the background against which Dickinson employed transverse tactics to exploit conventions so as to avoid performativity. In my dissertation, I trace the structural, pragmatic and semantic divergences which led to Dickinson's idiosyncratic letter writing, from the first years of her epistolary practice, the ensuing pressure exerted on her by interpellators of performative heteronormativity, to her disentanglement of the epistolary rules and the development of her unique style. The study will offer a different perspective on Dickinson's letters since it focuses on the ways she employed the letter, a means of interpellation, to dodge interpellation as well as on the techniques she used to set a time and place specific document free from its spatiotemporal boundaries.

Silvia Riccardi (University of Freiburg, Germany)

Supernaturalism and the Word-Image Relationship in British Romanticism

Romantic literature and painting embodied an attack on the established bounds of logic at a time when the march of science championed by Newton had pioneered the demystification of the universe. Developing upon the themes of the supernatural and the uncanny in their works, British Romantics experimented at the margins of the nebulous and the indeterminable: the 'inbetweenness'. By exploring the 'in-betweenness', this project aims to problematize the dynamics of the interaction between textual and pictorial representations of the Romantic body and mind. It focuses on the tension between human and non-human forms, notably metamorphoses and hybrid beings, as well as ambivalent states of mind, such as dreams and mental illnesses. Drawing upon theories of embodiment and enactivism (Varela, Thompson, Rosch), this project proposes an account of the concept of subjectivity in the work of William Blake and Henry Fuseli, by examining the bodily implications of illuminated books and the 'mind-telling' power of paintings, respectively. The goal of this study is to explore the structure of the experiences afforded by Romantic poetry and painting, in order to establish the dynamics of interpretation and engagement with the characters in these works and the presence of embedded interconnections between *pictura* and *poesis*. Thus far, the research shows that illuminated books, which bring together words and images, offer a negotiation of media through embedded triggers for meaning-making, and that paintings are also powerful forms of storytelling which may share strategies and techniques employed in poetry and narrative, such as metaphors and free indirect discourse. Moving beyond the acts of reading literature or observing paintings, images and words mutually contribute to the reader's enactment of Blakean and Fuselian artefacts. Investigating this enacting process can bring greater understanding to the portrayal of mutant and deviant beings, as well as between pictorial and verbal forms of communication, in the Romantic era.

Petra Slavíčková (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)

The Influence of Friedrich Nietzsche on Virginia Woolf's Oeuvre

The project for the dissertation “The Influence of Friedrich Nietzsche on Virginia Woolf's Oeuvre” resulted from my reading of *Jacob's Room* as a consistent intertextual reference to Nietzsche. Since its first publication in 1922 *Jacob's Room* has been predominantly analyzed in relation to its fragmentary form and the elusive portrait of Jacob. As a result, the novel has been accompanied by literary criticism addressing the notion of the impenetrability of modern character, which consequently concealed the possibility of a linear approach of the novel. However, if the echoes of Nietzsche's metaphors are recovered in the seemingly unrelated passages of the novel, *Jacob's Room* can be appreciated for the literary possibilities of Nietzsche's metaphors which provide nuanced contrasts to the main conflict between the centripetal search for truth and centrifugal ways of art. Because the development of the metaphors in the novel is consistent and intentional, the main value of the dissertation is an author-centric study of an influence of Nietzsche's critical epistemology on Woolf. The methodology employed so far has consisted of both comparative analysis and biographical research. If the findings from the archives are put into relation to Woolf's first reference to Nietzsche as well as her interests in the period up to her marriage, Woolf's initial occupation with Nietzsche corresponds with the rise of his impact on the intellectual circles in England during the late Edwardian period. Indeed, Woolf refers to Nietzsche in one of the manuscript versions of *Melymbrosia*, which she was working on between 1908 and 1913 (the novel was published in 1915 as *The Voyage Out*) according to S.P. Rosenbaum. If the archival sources are verified, the results will enable me to conclude about Woolf's “poetic misprision” of Nietzsche, which will provide rationale for the aesthetical understanding of her major novels.

Eirini Stoukou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

Lost in Adaptation: Re-Imagining the Bodies of Alice and Peter

My research looks into the fantastic worlds of Wonderland and Neverland, as these are represented in the original works of Lewis Carroll and J. M. Barrie, with reference to the most popular visual adaptations of the figures of Alice and Peter Pan, in order to probe into the issue of gender and the body in children's literature. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* by C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and *Peter and Wendy* by J. M. Barrie have been adapted and appropriated in a variety of media, the analysis of which will be conducive to our discussion. In most adaptations of the works related to the two characters the subject matter is that of growing up, as well as the journey—or odyssey—from childhood to adolescence, along with the undertaking of the expected social role that the latter involves. However, the characters' gender partakes in the construction of that role, in many instances imposing physical or mental burdens on them. While most would agree that Alice, Peter, and the rest of the characters in their stories must have undergone a significant empowerment and exoneration from nineteenth- and twentieth-century hackneyed conceptions of gender and sexuality, I hypothesise that the utopic bodies of Alice and Peter, in their plasticity and puerility, have metamorphosed and adapted to new contexts in order to question and/or add to contemporary notions of gender, desire, and the (a)sexual body of the child. In testing my hypothesis, I will compare and contrast the selected novels, and films analysing each for the implications of adaptation in the notions of desire, sexuality and gender. Focusing on Disney franchises, I will map the theoretical shifts in the aforementioned fields, and I will include historical and critical sources in order to shed light on the social determinants of the adaptations and re-imaginings that have been produced. I will support my findings with a significant number of secondary sources drawing on gender studies, body theory, utopian studies, adaptation, film and new media studies.

Péter Tamás (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary)

Ethical concepts in Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita

Thesis: Even though Nabokov has denied that his novels had any moral purpose, his works (especially *Lolita*) exhibit an authorial effort to negotiate various values and moral concepts.

Methodology: To better understand what kind of ethical concepts Nabokov examines in *Lolita*, we have to compare the narrator's value judgments with philosophical treatments of relevant ethical concepts. Stanley Cavell's analysis of the creation of “the ordinary” as an ethical concept is especially illuminating. Nabokov's extra-literary writings (such as his personal correspondence and interviews) serve as additional context. Some of his statements found there seem somewhat contradictory and,

consequently, they point to the notions the writer found problematic. Finally, the novel will be compared with the screenplay version Nabokov prepared for Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation.

Results obtained so far: The narrator praises the extraordinary and mocks the ordinary in a way that is reminiscent of Cavell's explanation of how Western philosophy has falsified the notion of the ordinary. The narrator's story can be seen as the failure of what Cavell calls the "acknowledgment" of the Other. Nabokov's extra-literary writings and screenplay adaptation also demonstrate the implied author Nabokov's distance from the narrator. The screenplay, in particular, demonstrates an effort to give voice to Lolita, the "Other" of the story.

Sara Villamarín Freire (University of A Coruña, Spain)

The Father, the Other. Representations of fatherhood in contemporary American fiction

My dissertation deals with the representation of father figures in contemporary American literature. It focuses on the portrayal of fatherhood in the United States in late modernity, paying special attention to the construction of father-child bonds and the role enacted by fathers within the community. Likewise, it foregrounds the transformation of the notions of "father" and "fatherhood", and how these are characterized in the collective imagery. I intend to prove that father figures manifest an unprecedented ethical dimension that has turned them into mediators between individual and collective identities, thus offering an alternative to the totalizing discourses of the global era. Regarding methodology, I draw from Lacanian psychoanalysis, especially from Recalcati's revision of Lacan and his conception of father figures as intermediate nodes between the individual and the group. I've related Recalcati's standpoints to notions such as Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity, Emmanuel Levinas' notions of ethics and otherness, and Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism. The literary analyses conducted so far confirm the predominant representation of identities as dynamic constructions, shaped through the interaction with different possible affiliations. If the father-child relation has an ethical basis, father figures may become reference models for personal experience, thereby influencing (yet not forcing) the individual's ultimate confirmation or disavowal of those affiliations. Some of the questions left open include the way fatherhood is affected by globalization. The flux of events in the United States challenges the prevalent model of national identity, while the increasing presence of transnational elements also suggests that a newly emerging paradigm might neutralize the contentious micro-nationalisms derived from an increasing sense of fragmentation. The study of father figures provides a model for ethical community development, an alternative to the progressive loss of group identity at a small scale, but also an antidote to chauvinist conceptions of national affiliation.

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