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Editoriale

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Evoluzione e cambiamento sono tra le idee chiave che negli ultimi quattro anni hanno definito *LEA - Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*. Sono tendenze che trovano conferma anche nel presente numero, a partire dal quale la Rivista si presenta con una struttura più snella, organizzando i suoi contenuti attorno a tre nuclei fondanti: la sezione monografica “Scritture”, la miscellanea “Studi e saggi” e raccolta di recensioni “Osservatorio”. Tale articolazione è volta a conseguire maggiore coesione e omogeneità e agevolare ulteriormente il dialogo accademico: abbattendo alcuni confini tematici, auspichiamo di stimolare nuovi incontri tra prospettive e aprire sempre più ampi spazi di condivisione.

Con piacere introduciamo un'ulteriore novità: la curatela di “Scritture” è quest'anno affidata alle *guest editors* Elisabetta Cecconi ed Elisabetta Lonati, che propongono approfondimenti sul tema *Antiquity and Antiquities in the Long 18th Century: Construction and Dissemination of the Classical Past in British Dictionaries and Periodicals*. Senza entrare nei dettagli, ampiamente illustrati nell'introduzione delle curatrici, desideriamo mettere in rilievo come questa sezione configuri un vivace dibattito in cui l'indagine linguistica di ambito inglese espone alcune delle sue più recenti prospettive di ricerca in settori quali lessicografia, *historical pragmatics*, *discourse analysis* e *corpus linguistics*.

Anche la miscellanea “Studi e saggi” testimonia il tentativo di costruire sulle acquisizioni del passato aprendo prospettive di ricerca innovative. La sezione si apre con un intervento di Pia Masiero, che rivela le tematiche di genere sottese a *The Story of an Hour* (1894) di Kate Chopin attraverso un'inedita analisi delle sue strategie narrative. Segue il contributo di Diego Salvadori, che riporta l'attenzione su un'opera parzialmente dimenticata, *I litosauri* di Idolina Landolfi, esplorandone il ricco tessuto intertestuale. Gli studi germanistici sono ampiamente rappresentati, attraverso tre contributi di ampio respiro: Giovanni Giri celebra il centenario della scomparsa di Franz Kafka con un'analisi delle strategie traduttive adottate in quindici versioni italiane de *Die Verwandlung* (1915); Marco Rivadossi esamina percezione, valutazione e uso di austriacismi e di alcune caratteristiche grammaticali tipiche di questa varietà linguistica da parte di studenti universitari. Infine, Maria Chiara Susini indaga le funzioni connettive della particella “nun” nel romanzo *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* (1932) di Hans Fallada, analizzandone le ricorrenze e le sfumature semantiche.

Come ogni anno, desideriamo esprimere un sentito ringraziamento a tutta la comunità di *LEA*: grazie alle curatrici di “Scritture”, a tutti gli autori e autrici, ai/alle *peer reviewers* e a tutti coloro che, con il loro tempo e impegno, hanno reso possibile la realizzazione di questo numero. Un ringraziamento speciale va alla Direttrice del Dipartimento FORLILPSI, Vanna Boffo, al Direttore del Laboratorio editoriale Open Access, Marco Meli, e alla journal manager Arianna Antonielli, nostro costante punto di riferimento. Desideriamo inoltre menzionare le nostre collaboratrici Alessia Gentile, Francesca Salvadori, Elisa Simoncini, Alessandra Lana e Letizia Pacini, che contribuiscono alla Rivista con dedizione e competenza.

SCRITTURE

Antiquity and Antiquities
in the Long 18th Century

Guest Editors

Elisabetta Cecconi and Elisabetta Lonati



Antiquity and Antiquities in the Long 18th Century Construction and Dissemination of the Classical Past in British Dictionaries and Periodicals

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In the long eighteenth-century, British society underwent enormous changes owing, among other things, to the rise of a new middle class in need of reading and writing. This phenomenon triggered a significant increase in the production of books, including dictionaries and encyclopædias, as well as in the publication of periodicals, such as newspapers, journals, and magazines. According to Raven,

Books and other publications framed and communicated popular ideas and opinion, and they figured particular cognitive modes and the character of scientific and artistic appreciation and debate. Print established and modulated standards of language and behaviour [...] acted as a prime agent in social cohesion as well as dissent. The press ensured the effectiveness of political and religious governance, but also of the independence as much as the compliance of different communities. (2007, 1)

The scientific and technical progress of the period, the new geographic expeditions and the archaeological discoveries of classical antiquity defined as “the exemplum of good taste” (Brewer 1997, 171), all became key areas of focus for authors, compilers, and editors, significantly influencing life and society. The contemporary gaze on reality started to mould a whole new state of learning in reference works, to shape new values in news-reporting, and to foster the translation and adaptation of earlier works. In the course of the century, archeological discoveries and (re)discoveries of ancient manuscripts affected social practices. Descriptions of private collections and the acquisition of new artifacts by the British elite would often make their way into print, emphasizing the prestige associated with possessing classical works. Italy became the favourite destination of many British travellers (172), and accounts of the grand tour in Rome, Sicily, Tuscany, Umbria and Latium, among others, were often published in newspapers and magazines. In this context, dictionaries and encyclopædias as repositories of traditional and innovative knowledge (158; McIntosh 1998; Yeo 2001; Donato and Luesebrink 2021), as well as periodicals reporting on the discoveries of classical antiquities, played a crucial role in shaping new perceptions of the past and in tracing the origin of western civilization.

The record and transmission of the classical past – along with the popularisation and vernacularisation of knowledge about antiquity – represent some of the most significant accomplishments of historians, antiquaries, travellers, polymaths, men of science, writers and editors. The celebration of antiquity, whether conveyed in lexicographic works or periodicals, was

potentially addressed to an expanding cross-section of society and assimilated as contemporary cultural and language heritage. In the 18th century, the study of the ancient past was to “provide the essential empirical foundation for the science of society” (Sweet 2001, 188) with antiquaries becoming the essential partners in the development of a new style of sociological history.

In this perspective, the general aim of this monographic section of *LEA* is to investigate the notion and the representation of the distant past as it emerges from those words and contents labelled as and/or tracing back to antiquity. This approach is also crucial to highlight the relationship between past and present in 18th-century contemporary (educated) society, and the status of antiquity in a changing world. In particular, the interest focuses on which aspects of antiquity may be found, appreciated, selected, explained, discussed, represented, magnified, and eventually popularised in the text-types under scrutiny. The studies show how dictionaries and periodicals contributed to constructing and shaping people’s knowledge of the classical past through a careful selection of words, concepts and discourse practices which were informed by the moral, ideological, and socio-cultural values of the time.

The collection of articles consists of two parts. Part 1 focuses on the construction and dissemination of classical past in dictionaries and *encyclopaedias*. Part 2 investigates the construction and dissemination of classical past in periodicals.

1. Part One

Aldo Corcella investigates the nature, purpose, and cultural significance of the mythological dictionary *The Gentleman and Lady’s Key to Polite Literature [...] Intended for the Assistance of those who would understand Mythology, Poetry, Painting, Statuary, and Theatrical Entertainments; and particularly adapted to the use of Latin and French-Schools*. Largely based on 17th- and early 18th-century French sources, the 18th-century dictionary experienced considerable popularity, as evidenced by its multiple reprints and editions (from 1776 onwards). Unlike scholarly or moralistic texts that sought to interpret or rationalize ancient myths, the *Key* prioritized the values of accessibility and utility to an audience who would understand and appreciate the subjects of liberal arts. Corcella notices how the compilers addressed readers – mainly aspiring gentlemen and ladies – who needed a brief introduction to classical mythology without delving into extensive academic resources. Despite a number of mistranslations and erroneous transcriptions from the sources, or deeper misunderstanding of the text, the dictionary presented itself as an essential tool for those seeking to enrich their understanding of ancient myths and, by extension, engage more deeply with the cultural productions of the Enlightenment.

Jack Lynch’s contribution investigates Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) in relation to the early modern lexicons of the classical languages, especially those of the Continental humanists in the 16th and 17th centuries. These lexicons, which were landmarks of Renaissance lexicography, inspired Johnson’s perspective (e.g. title-page motto) and lexicographic practice (e.g. hanging indents, all-capital running heads, Latinate and Greek wordlist from his readings, etymologies, quotations, etc.), and placed him in a European context. Critics argue that Johnson’s classical interests and aspirations, as they clearly emerge from his own library catalogue, sometimes led him away from addressing the unique characteristics of English. Lynch, on the other hand, shows that Johnson recognized the distinct nature of the English language and aimed to preserve its purity and meaning (*Plan* 1747). While Johnson did not introduce radically new techniques, Lynch concludes that, in adopting several classical precedents, his dictionary laid a solid foundation for future developments in English lexicography.

In her paper, Ruxandra Visan examines Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia or An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728) and Nathan Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1736). The two early 18th-century lexicographic works, relying on ethnic stereotypes (e.g. French sources: Bouhours 1671, *Les Entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène*; Trévoux 1704/1721; Furetière/Basnage de Beauval 1701), played a crucial role in establishing the connection between the notions of ‘language’ and ‘nation’, which were central to the ideology of linguistic standardization. English is systematically associated with Greek and Latin and, as a result, given direct connection with a prestigious classical heritage. Visan focuses on the recontextualization of ancient commonplaces, or topoi, which informed lexicographic portrayals of languages and nations and shows the way in which they significantly contributed to the shaping of English linguistic identity in the 18th century. By examining linguistic and ethnic stereotypes in the lexicographic representations of “languages” and “nations”, Visan’s essay emphasizes how the myth of the nation-state gradually intertwines with that of a uniform and coherent standard English.

2. Part Two

Matylda Włodarczyk explores the relationship between editorial stance and references to antiquity, by focusing on the representation of Napoleon Bonaparte as the “French Hannibal” in British and Polish periodicals during the early phases of the French Revolutionary Wars. The research highlights the previously underexplored connections between evaluative language and intertextuality in historical news discourse. Adopting a diachronic and comparative approach, the analysis reveals that British news from this period clearly articulated editorial stances, using established conventions to convey opinion. Conversely, Polish news outlets lacked these conventions, indicating a less developed framework for expressing editorial viewpoints at the time. The disparity between the British and Polish press underscores the complexity of media representation and the influence of cultural and historical contexts on the construction of political narratives.

Isabella Martini’s contribution on early 19th-century British news articles regarding Etruscan antiquities provides insights into how these discoveries were communicated and perceived by the public. By applying a corpus-assisted discourse approach, Martini examines recurrent language patterns thus allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how Etruscan antiquities were framed in news discourse. Results show that the British fascination with the Etruscan civilization extended beyond academic circles and permeated cultural spheres, most notably fashion. Etruscan artefacts became symbols of status and sophistication among the aristocracy, influencing luxury fashion designs. Martini concludes that the news reporting of Etruscan finds not only shaped perceptions of beauty within the realm of antique collectibles but also contributed to contemporary luxury trends, thereby intertwining archaeology and fashion into a broader societal narrative.

Elisabetta Cecconi examines the way in which news about archaeological discoveries in Herculaneum and Pompeii was reported in 18th-century London newspapers. By combining van Dijk’s persuasive features of journalism (1988) with the popularisation indicators identified by Umbricht and Esser (2016), the study shows how 18th-century London weeklies employed a set of discursive strategies to make specialized knowledge more accessible to a wider audience. The analysis reveals a gradual transformation in the narrative of Italian discoveries over the decades: from the early framing of antiquities as mere collectibles to a more critical examination of the excavation practices. This gradual shift in focus highlights the important role that 18th-century London newspapers played in disseminating knowledge of antiquity and in developing public awareness of the cultural heritage of the past.

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Antiquity and Antiquities
in the Long 18th Century

Guest Editors
Elisabetta Cecconi and Elisabetta Lonati

PART ONE



A Mythological Dictionary *The Gentleman and Lady's Key to Polite Literature*

Aldo Corcella

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Abstract

An investigation on the nature and sources of *The Gentleman and Lady's Key to Polite Literature* (London: J. Newbury, ca. 1761), a dictionary of mythology that results to have been a hasty compilation mainly based on Pierre Chompré's and André de Clautre's French dictionaries, and from Ainsworth's *Thesaurus*.

Keywords: Dictionaries of Mythology, Mythology in 18th-century France, Translations from French into English in the 18th Century, John Newbery

We do not know the exact date of publication of the book entitled *The Gentleman and Lady's Key, to Polite Literature; or A Compendious Dictionary of Fabulous History: Containing the Characters, and principal Actions, ascribed to the Heathen Gods, Goddesses, Heroes, &c. and the manner in which the Ancients represented the Deities & Heroes, Virtues and Vices, in their Paintings, Statues and Gems; Together with some Account of their Poets, and References to the principal Places mentioned in their Works. Intended for the Assistance of those who would understand Mythology, Poetry, Painting, Statuary, and Theatrical Entertainments; and particularly adapted to the use of Latin and French-Schools*, which was printed in London for J. Newbery, at the Bible and Sun in St. Paul's Church Yard.¹ The first known edition bears no year indication in the title page or elsewhere; subsequent editions, or reprints, were printed for John Newbery's successors in 1776, 1780, 1783, 1788, and then until the beginning of the 19th century.² The *Key* was already listed in the catalog of children's books attached to *The*

¹ ESTC N7922; Roscoe 1966, 27-28; 1973, 121-22, J145. Thanks to the courtesy of Giovanni Iamartino, I have consulted the digital copy in the collection ECCO (*Eighteenth Century Collections Online*), from an original kept in the Houghton Library, Harvard University (GEN Class 7047.96.5*), as well as the copy of the Bodleian Library (17573.f.4), digitally available in *Google Books* (<<https://books.google.it/books?id=3GQDAAAQAAJ&newbks>>, 11/2024). Since the book is unpaginated, we shall quote passages from the four pages of the *Preface* without any further indication, and when quoting from the body of the dictionary we shall refer to the entries.

² The main editions and reprints until 1788 are reported in Roscoe 1973, 121-22. A "fifth edition, considerably improved" was printed in London for G.G. Robinson and J. Robinson, J. Scatcherd, W. Bent, G. and T. Wilkie, M. Pote, and E. Goldsmith in 1796; and a "sixth edition, corrected", for J. Walker, J. Scatcherd, W. Bent, G. and J. Robinson, G. Wilkie, C. Law, T.N. Longman and O. Rees, and M. Pote and T. Williams in 1802. A pirated edition, under the title *The Arcana of Polite Literature*, had been printed in Dublin, by W. Gilbert, in 1789; and still in 1803 an apparently unauthorized version of the *Key*, entitled *A Mythological Dictionary*, was printed in London for B. Crosby and Co. and J.F. Hughes.

Newtonian System of Philosophy, printed for Newbery in 1761, and was reported to have been “lately published” at the end of another book issued under the imprints of Newbury in the same year, *The Art of Poetry On a New Plan*; it figured among the Christmas and New Year’s gifts for 1762-63 (e.g. in *London Chronicle* vol. 13 [1763]: 20), while the first reviews known to me date back to 1763 (*Critical Review* vol. 15 [1763]: 328 and *Monthly Review* vol. 28 [1763]: 240). Sydney Roscoe suggested that the dictionary was published in “1761 or before” (1966, 27; 1973, 121), and 1761 is indeed the most likely date; but even 1762 would be a possible alternative, if we suppose that the 1761 announcements just anticipated a forthcoming publication.

Be that as it may, the *Key* was part of a wider program launched by the well-known publisher John Newbery (1713-67), who in those years produced a whole series of books specifically addressed to children and young people, thus intending – as John Dawson Carl Buck appropriately said – “to make polite letters available to an audience who had not been brought up on such a diet”: these books are therefore presented “as instructive works, and literature in them is seen at least as much as a vehicle of upward social mobility as it is an intrinsically delightful pastime” (1972, 303).³ In particular, in 1753 Newbery had published a handbook of mythology, Samuel Boyses’s *New Pantheon: Or, Fabulous History of the Heathen Gods, Heroes, Goddesses, &c.*, that according to the *Preface* aimed at providing young people with “some acquaintance with the heathen Gods and the ancient fables”, which was considered as “a necessary branch of polite learning” (iv); while in the already mentioned *The Art of Poetry*, at page 382, it was suggested that “some knowledge of apologue, or the fables of antiquity, is absolutely necessary to every one who is concerned in poetical compositions”, and to this purpose the perusal of Boyses’s book and of the *Key*, “which, being printed in the manner of a dictionary, and in a small pocket volume, may be more portable and commodious to the student”, was recommended.

The advertisements inform that the price of the *Key* was set at 2 shillings, the daily wage of a labourer in London (Gilboy 1934, 255). What was John Newbery selling at this price? The title offers a clear enough answer. The term *Key*, as the Latin *Clavis*, often recurred at the time in the titles of books that had a somehow introductory character. Also the reference to the “Gentleman and Lady” is not rare in 18th century booktitles, and Newbery appears to have been especially fond of this formula, to the point of making it a sort of trademark;⁴ it conveys the idea of readers aspiring to a higher rank or quality, and suggests that these, by buying and consulting the book, would be “raised above the vulgar” – to quote a contemporary definition of “Gentleman” in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary*. As for the second part of the long description that occupies the title page of the *Key*, it bears a strong resemblance to the title of another dictionary that had been published 30 years before: *A Compendious Dictionary of the Fabulous History of Heathen Gods and Heroes: Design’d for the more ready Understanding of Poets, Paintings and Statues. To which are Annex’d, References to the several Authors, from which their Characters are deduc’d. Peculiarly Adapted to the Use of Latin and French Schools, And to Persons who Read, or Attend Theatrical Entertainments* (London: Printed for J. Clark in Duck-lane, L. Gilliver at Homer’s Head, and F. Cogan at the Middle Temple Gate in Fleet-street. 1731). This volume, which seems to have had some diffusion in its time but is quite rare today, bears no author indication.⁵ Its real character is revealed by an advertisement published in *The Grub-Street Journal* for the year 1730 (no. 19 [May 14, 1730]: 4; no. 20 [May 21, 1730]: 4; no. 21 [May 28, 1730]: 4), where the *Compendious Dictionary* is said to be “done from the French of the learned Sieur P. Chompre” (Goldgar 2002, vol. 1): it was the translation of a French dictionary that had been issued four years before, and was destined to become a best- and longseller, the *Dictionnaire abrégé de la Fable, pour l’intelligence des poetes, et la connoissance des tableaux et des statues, Dont les sujets sont tirez de la Fable* (Paris, Chez la veuve Foucault, 1727) by Pierre Chompré (1698-1760), a schoolmaster who had devoted his life to the instruction of youth and was the author of several educational books.⁶

³ On John Newbery and his publishing activity see, i.a., Welsh 1885; Buck 1972; Roscoe 1973; Townsend 1994; Branch 2006, 135-74; Granahan 2010.

⁴ See the list of titles in Roscoe 1973. The same author observes that it is not clear, in Newbery’s production and in the advertising lists he drew, where the dividing line between books for “Children” and books for “Young Gentlemen and Ladies” lay (12). In fact, Newbery’s educational program consisted in teaching “even little children to become polite gentlemen and ladies”, to quote the words describing the activity of Master Hiron in Lilliput at page 34 of *The Lilliputian Magazine: or, the Young Gentleman and Lady’s Golden Library*, originally published by Newbery in 1752, and reprinted in 1765 (Roscoe 1973, 166-70, J219). As for the “Ladies”, Newbery’s ideas about the education of women are revealed by Charles Allen’s *The Polite Lady: or, A Course of Female Education. In a Series of Letters, From a Mother to her Daughter*, published in 1760 (43-44, J8).

⁵ Thanks to the courtesy of Giovanni Iamartino and Paige Roberts, I had access to digital reproductions of the copies kept in the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford (Weston Library, Vet. A4 f.967) and in the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library, Andover (Sp Col 292 C73). A copy of this dictionary was owned by Samuel Johnson, who annotated it (Fleeman 1984, 15, no. 59); for its use in American schools see Littlefeld 1904, 298-301 (who seems to identify it, erroneously, with Pomey’s and Tooke’s manual, for which see below).

⁶ In this first edition the title page did not report the name of the author, which was however indicated in the privilege; in the subsequent editions mentioned below Chompré’s name appeared after the title. On Pierre Chompré and his educational publications see, i.a., Michaud 1843-65, vol. 8 [1854]: 197-98; Colombat 1999, 153-55, 657-58 and *passim*; Furno 2005, 167.

Chompré's dictionary drew heavily on the great French scholarly tradition in the field of antiquarianism, from Louis Moréri to Pierre Bayle, and was influenced by the cultural climate of 17th- and early 18th-century France, in which the study of ancient myths had flourished, becoming a model for the whole of Europe (for instance, François-Antoine Pomey's Latin handbook *Pantheum Mythicum, seu Fabulosa Deorum Historia*, first published in Lyon in 1658, had gained a wide success, and had been translated into English by Andrew Tooke in 1698).⁷ In 1728 the famous historian Charles Rollin insisted on the importance (and difficulty) of studying ancient mythology, and expressed the hope that a "histoire de la fable" would be published for the instruction of young people: reviewing the most recent works, he observed that Pierre Gautruche's *L'Histoire poétique pour l'intelligence des Poètes et des Auteurs anciens* (1682) was too brief, while Antoine Banier's *Explication historique des fables* (1711) was too learned for scholastic use; as for Chompré's dictionary, which had just been published, it could be very useful for self-instruction, but was no continuous history (Rollin 1728, 276). Chompré, on his part, after explicitly quoting Gautruche and Banier in the *Avertissement* at the beginning of his work, expressed the conviction that ancient mythology was just a collection of bizarre fantasies, and that therefore in dealing with ancient myths not so much a history as a dictionary was needed, since the latter could help to find easily what for its irrational nature tended to escape memory.

Hence the merely utilitarian and compilative character of Chompré's *Dictionnaire abrégé*, which had no "philosophical" ambition.⁸ As any compilation, it was not totally accurate, and only a part of the mistakes present in the first 1727 edition was corrected in the subsequent, and variously improved, ones (nine at least up to 1760: 1733², 1740³, 1745⁴, 1749⁵, 1752⁶, 1753⁷, 1756⁶, 1760⁹, some with various reprints; many others followed in the following years, until the 19th century, not only in Paris but also in other French cities, with the granting of reprint rights through the so-called "permission simple" or by pirated copies). The very number of these editions shows the fortune of this dictionary, that has been defined a "very popular – and lucrative – work" (Dawson 1992, 447).⁹ The book was successful not only in France, but throughout Europe, being translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian.¹⁰ Although no English translation is typically recorded in bibliographies, an analysis of the 1731 Compendious Dictionary reveals that the author of the advertisement in the Grub-Street Journal was entirely correct. Starting from the preface, this book was just a very faithful and literal translation of Chompré's work, and one of the first testimonies of its circulation outside France.

In sum, the idea of publishing at an affordable price a pocket dictionary that could be useful for understanding the references to ancient mythology in literature and arts originated in France; and already in 1731 an English publisher had chosen to translate a French model, thus offering the reader help in interpreting, in particular, theatrical pieces, and aiming at providing a tool for school teaching, at the relatively cheap cost of 2 shillings and 6 pence. That knowledge of mythology should be required for interpreting classics in "Latin schools" needs no further explanation. As for "French schools" – a definition that has not been properly understood by some scholars¹¹ – they were private schools, mostly established by Huguenot refugees and usually attended by the children of craftsmen and businessmen, where the teaching of French received special attention; in London, many of them were grouped in St. Paul's Churchyard, where also the chief booksellers lived and worked.¹² Therefore, by referring to French schools, the publisher of the *Compendious Dictionary* meant that some knowledge of mythology was useful not only for the happy few that could afford a classical education, but also for people who aspired to a more "modern" culture, in order to attain a higher social position – an audience with which he must have had some familiarity.

⁷ See, i.a., Manuel 1959; Feldman, Richardson 1972; Boch 2002.

⁸ It is curious that Pierre's brother, Étienne-Maurice Chompré, published a booklet entitled *Apologues ou Explications des Attributs d'un certain nombre de Sujets de la Fable, par rapport aux Moeurs & à la Religion; selon l'ordre alphabétique, pour servir de Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Fable écrit par son frère* (Paris: E.-G. Mérigot, 1764; then Paris: Couturier fils, 1769 and 1770, with a slightly different title) in which very elementary moral reflections, often aiming at comparing Greek myths to sacred history and sometimes inspired to rationalistic and allegorical interpretations, were appended to some entries of his brother's dictionary, as if to integrate what was felt to be missing.

⁹ More generally, on the "permission simple" and the fortune of Chompré's *Dictionnaire* see Dawson 1992, 243-44, 446-47 and *passim*. Diderot seems to have had Chompré's work in mind when he mentioned a *Dictionnaire de la fable* as the example of a successful and profitable book in his *Lettre historique et politique adressée à un magistrat sur le commerce de la librairie* (1767).

¹⁰ On the Portuguese and Castilian translations see Kemmler 2005, 2010; the history of the various Italian editions (since at least the *Dizionario delle favole in compendio* published in Turin, "nella Stamperia Reale", in 1742) would deserve a full reconstruction.

¹¹ According to Brewer "the reference to Latin and French schools is odd, though the anonymous preface refers to standard French mythographical authorities, and with the usual contempt in such books for other mythographers. The reference to theatre seems unique" (2002, 27).

¹² On French schools see, i.a., Lambley 1920, 128-52; Sumillera 2014, 83; an interesting witness of the contrast between Latin and "modern" French schools in the 18th century can be found in the pamphlet *A Letter to his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury: Containing a proposal for the improvement of Latin schools*, printed in London for J. Clark in 1748.

Thirty years after, John Newbery could only share such a program, and it is not strange that in the title of the *Key* he takes up the idea according to which mythology proves useful for training young ladies and gentlemen, both in Latin and French schools, and for better understanding and appreciating the subjects of liberal arts, and especially of theatrical works. Therefore, it is not entirely out of place to say that the 1731 dictionary was an “ancestor” of the *Key*;¹³ and judging from the similarity of the titles, one would imagine that the compiler (or rather compilers: it is possible that they were more than one) of the *Key* knew, and used, the 1731 translation of Chompré’s dictionary. Matters are, however, more complicated. As we shall see, there is no doubt that also the *Key* depended heavily on Chompré’s *Dictionnaire abrégé*. Nevertheless, the entries derived from Chompré which are found both in the 1731 *Compendious Dictionary* and in the *Key* exhibit different translations from the French; moreover, the *Key* contains several entries missing in Chompré’s first French edition (and consequently in its 1731 translation), but present in the subsequent ones. This leads to the conclusion that the compilers of the *Key* made use of an improved and augmented edition of Chompré’s work; judging from a sample of entries – one of which will be examined below – they seem to have consulted one among the second, third and fourth editions (resp. 1733, 1740, 1745). In other words, when they decided to repeat the choice already made by their predecessors in 1731 and to translate a French source for the benefits of pupils and young people, they consulted the model in a more update version.

As a result, out of ca. 1,600 entries in the *Key*, a good half is little more than a translation of the corresponding entries in Chompré’s dictionary. As for the rest, it should not be thought that they are original additions; the *Preface* itself does not encourage this conclusion, when it says:

It is not pretended that this is an original performance, for the best dictionaries, and such other authorities have been consulted as were most likely to enable us to execute our contracted plan, without leaving out any thing material to the main design.

It is not difficult, indeed, to single out a second source that was widely exploited by the compilers of the *Key*. It is another French dictionary of mythology, the *Dictionnaire de Mythologie, pour l'intelligence des Poetes, de l'Histoire Fabuleuse, des Monumens Historiques, des Bas-Reliefs, des Tableaux, &c.*, which had been published in Paris, “chez Briasson”, in 1745 and whose author was the *abbé* André de Clautre.¹⁴ In comparison to Chompré’s, Clautre’s dictionary, which consisted of three volumes, was larger and more ambitious in its contents: the iconographic descriptions were much more extended, and some space was devoted to the fortune of the mythical themes in modern art and literature; above all, the author paid a special attention to the origin and the interpretation of the meaning of myths. Thus, while Chompré in the *Preface* to the third edition of his *Dictionary* (1740) had written, not without irony, that “the origins of so many pitiful tales” remained outside of his projects (all the more so because those who had investigated them had arrived at very different conclusions), Clautre, on the contrary, did not refrain from recurring to rationalizations of the most incredible features, and even to allegorical and euhemeristic explanations.¹⁵

That the compilers of the *Key* made use of Clautre is shown, first of all, by the *Preface* to the *Key*, which for a large part is little more than an abridged translation of Clautre’s preface. But apart from the *Preface*, the compilers made a wide use of Clautre in order to integrate the material present in Chompré. As an illustration of the dependance of the *Key* from both Chompré and Clautre, we may take an example from its very first page, and particularly from the two first entries:

ABA’DIR, the name of a stone which Ops or Rhea, the wife of Saturn, wrapt up in swadling cloths, and gave to Saturn instead of her son Jupiter, who was just come into the world; because it was the custom of Saturn to devour all the male infants for fear of being dethroned. *Priscus. Soph.* (Italics in original)

¹³ This is suggested in the bibliographic record of the *Compendious Dictionary* in *The Grub Street Project* (<<https://www.grubstreetproject.net/publications/T185415/>>, 11/2024).

¹⁴ André de Clautre (or Declautre), whose birth and death dates are not known, between 1768 and 1769 was the protagonist of a scandal that attracted the interest of Voltaire: see Sgard 1999. Also Clautre’s dictionary achieved good popularity, and was translated into Italian, but was very harshly judged by Otto Gruppe: “ein trauriges Denkmal von Unwissenheit und Flüchtigkeit, die dadurch nicht entschuldigt werden, daß der Verfasser mehr für Dichter und Künstler als für Gelehrte schreibt” (1921, 92).

¹⁵ It is characteristic that most of these more “philosophical” observations were eliminated in the second edition of Clautre’s dictionary, published in 1765 for Briasson under the title *Dictionnaire Portatif de Mythologie, pour l'intelligence des Poètes, de l'Histoire Fabuleuse, des Monumens Historiques, des Bas-Reliefs, des Tableaux, &c.*: in the *Avis* (probably written by François Richer, to whom this second edition is usually attributed), they are defined as uncertain “conjectures historiques”.

ABA'DIR, was also the name that the Carthaginians gave to their most considerable Gods, to distinguish them from the less; for this word in the Phenician language signifies *magnificent father*. (Italics in original)

In Chompré's first edition (and, as a consequence, in the 1731 *Compendious Dictionary*) there was no entry ABADIR. It was only in the second edition of 1733 that such an entry was added; and it was reprinted, with only some slight variants in the interpunction and orthography, in the third and in the fourth editions (resp. 1740 and 1745). In the fourth edition it read so:

ABADIR. C'est le nom de la pierre qu'Ops ou Rhée, femme de Saturne, emmaillota lorsqu'elle mit Jupiter au monde, pour la présenter à son mari qui dévorait tous ses enfans mâles, de crainte qu'ils ne le détrônassent. *Priscus. Soph.* (Italics in original)

In the fifth edition of 1749 the text remained unaltered, but the reference to the ancient source was emended: instead of the mistaken "*Priscus. Soph.*" (evidently derived from the erroneous expansion of an abbreviation) the correct "*Priscianus. Soph.*" (i.e. the grammarian Priscian of Caesarea) was introduced, while in the subsequent editions the name of the source was omitted, and the entry was modified.

Also in Claustre's dictionary two entries ABADIR were to be found:

ABADIR OU ABADDIR, c'est le nom d'une Pierre que Saturne dévora, au lieu de l'enfant que sa femme avoit mis au monde. Cette Pierre devint célèbre dans la suite, & fut adorée comme une Divinité sous le nom de Dieu Terme. voyez *Terme, Bétyle, Rhéa*. (Italics in original)

ABADIR étoit aussi un nom appellatif, qu'on donnoit chez les Carthagois aux Dieux plus grands & plus considérables, pour les distinguer du commun des Dieux. Car *Abaddir*, sont deux mots Phéniciens, qui signifient Pere Magnifique. (Italics in original)

Just like in the *Key*, Claustre's former entry is about Saturn's stone, but its formulation is different from those of Chompré and the *Key*, which are very close to each other. The latter entry, on the contrary, is very similar to the second entry in the *Key*.

We may, therefore, conclude that the compilers of the *Key* took the first entry ABA'DIR from Chompré (and precisely from one among the second, the third and the fourth editions, where the erroneous reference to "*Priscus. Soph.*" could still be found), and the second one from Claustre. This is not the only case in which we can see with vivid immediacy how the compilers added entries from Claustre to those present in Chompré. There are, indeed, many entries in the *Key* (ca. 300) that are clearly taken from Claustre; and it is noteworthy that their distribution seems to be concentrated in the first part of the dictionary, which could confirm the presence of more than one compiler, each of whom behaved differently.

Claustre is not, however, the only source used by the compilers of the *Key* to integrate Chompré. The title of the *Key* explicitly says that the dictionary will comprehend an account of the "Poets, and References to the principal Places mentioned in their Works", and the promise is kept: the *Key* contains a huge amount of entries on ancient writers and places that are found neither in Chompré nor in Claustre – *et pour cause*, since they have little to do with mythology. For these entries the compilers appear to have drawn on some repertoires of ancient anthroponyms and toponyms, and the main source is likely to have been Robert Ainsworth's *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae compendarius: Or, a compendious Dictionary Of the Latin Tongue, Designed for the Use of the British Nations*, first published in London, for J.J. and P. Knapton and many others, in 1736, and then republished several times.¹⁶ This dictionary contained an appendix on proper names, where most of the entries and explanations present in the *Key* appear just in the same wording; as we shall see, it is probable that the compilers of the *Key* made use of an exemplar of the third edition in two volumes, printed in London in 1751. For a few entries that cannot be traced back to Ainsworth, other repertoires may have been used: a probable suspect is the *Index of Persons and Things* appended to the fourth volume of the English translation of Banier's *Explication historique des fables (The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, Explained from History)*, (vol. 4, 1740, London: Printed for A. Millar), from whence, for instance, the entries ADES, ADOD, NINUS were possibly copied.

¹⁶ On Robert Ainsworth (1660-1743) see Smith 2004; on his *Thesaurus* and its position within the history of English-Latin and Latin-English dictionaries, Starnes 1954, 325-40 (esp. 337 for the proper-name section, based on Adam Littleton's *Linguae Latinae Liber Dictionarius quadripartitus* [1673] with changes and improvements).

Thus far we have seen, in the light of some examples, that the compilers of the *Key* added a number of entries derived from Claustre, Ainsworth or other sources to the series already present in Chompré. In some cases, however, they behaved differently, inserting passages taken from the other sources within the entries taken from Chompré (or vice versa). These additions may be tacit, but there is a number of entries in which the insertions from another source are marked by formulas like “as others say” (e.g. ORPHEUS, PYRENÆUS, SCAMANDER, TITAN): in these cases, the juxtaposition of multiple sources is especially evident.

In sum, the compilation was not totally slavish and uncritical. It was, however, certainly hasty. On the one side, several mistakes present in the sources went unnoticed, while new mistakes were generated as a consequence of mistranslations from the French sources, or even of erroneous transcriptions from the English ones. On the other side, the combination of different sources produced typical confusions and redundancies. Some examples will be illuminating.

The entry “A’CAË, an island in which Ceres made her abode” is taken from Chompré’s dictionary, where, since the first edition, an analogous entry “ACAË’, Isle où Circé faisoit sa demeure” appeared. ACAË’ was, however, a ghost-name: the island where Circe dwelt bore the name of *Aea* or *AeaealAeae*, and *Acae* is clearly the result of an *e* misread as *c*. The compilers of the 1731 *Compendious Dictionary* seem to have realized this, since they omitted the entry. On the contrary, the compilers of the *Key* did not notice the fault, and added a misspelling of their own, transforming “Circe” in “Ceres” – either a phonetic or graphic mistake: both types of error find several parallels in the *Key* (e.g. “Corsira” for “Corcyra”, or “Lysia” for “Lycia”; while a confusion of letterforms may explain, for instance, the *monstrum* TERIFRUS, under which lies Claustre’s TENERUS).

In many cases, the compilers of the *Key* appear to have encountered difficulties in transposing into English the ancient names that their sources had reported in French guise. Sometimes they failed in repristining the original Latin diphthongs, which in the case of less-known names was indeed far from easy (we shall see some examples in what follows). Other mistakes involved the terminations of the names. For instance, the *Key* has two entries ABDE’RA: one, dedicated to the Thracian town of Abdera, is derived from Chompré, who reported the name in the French form ABDERE, while the second is taken from Claustre, who wrote “ABDERE, jeune homme ami d’Hercule, & son compagnon d’armes”, which the *Key* slavishly translates as “ABDE’RA, a young man a friend of Hercules, and his companion in the wars”. Needless to say, this friend of Hercules was called Abderus: both Latin *Abdera* and Latin *Abderus* give *Abdère* in French, but in English the two forms should have been differently rendered. Another example is the form PALLANTUS, for Pallas, erroneously derived from Chompré’s PALLANTE; and many other instances might be quoted.

There are also cases in which the ambiguity of the French forms produced, or at least favoured, a deeper misunderstanding of the text of the source. A curious example is the entry “ETHE’TA, the wife of Laodicæus. She obtained of the gods, the power of becoming a man, to bear her husband company in his adventures without fear, and was then called Ethetus”, which is a literal translation of an entry that, in the second edition of Chompré’s dictionary, read so: “ETHETA OU ETETUS, femme de Laodicée. Etant avec son mari, elle obtient des Dieux le pouvoir de devenir homme, pour l’accompagner partout sans crainte, et fut nommée Etetus”. It is not immediately clear who this strange character really is. In fact, Chompré was taking up, from an intermediate source, the amazing story, narrated by the Greek author Phlegon of Tralles (*Book of Marvels*, ch. 9), about Aitete, a woman from the Syrian town of Laodicea, who changed her sex and was renamed Aitetos. In the *Key*, this “femme de Laodicée”, properly a “woman from Laodicea”, underwent a further transformation, becoming “the wife of Laodicaeus”. It is rather funny, however, to see that the compilers were in good company, for the same Chompré (or perhaps a revisor of his dictionary?) was not able, from a certain point on, to understand what he had written: since the third edition, the entry was emended – or rather corrupted – into “ETHÉTA OU ETÉTUS, femme d’un certain Laodicée, inconnu dans la fable; étant avec son mari, elle obtint des Dieux le pouvoir de devenir homme, pour l’accompagner partout sans crainte, & fut nommée Etétus”. Once a man called Laodicée/Laodicaeus had been erroneously created, the silence on him in any other mythological source became a source of amazement!

Also the English sources did not escape the fate of being misunderstood or corrupted. It is hard to imagine, for instance, what exactly is meant by “ANACREON, a Lyric Poet; whose life and poems are still extant”: maybe an ancient biography of Anacreon, of which unfortunately nothing more is known? The right answer is to be found in Ainsworth’s dictionary, where the following sentence appears: “Anacreon [...] A lyric poet, whose life, as well as poems, which are still extant, was very lascivious”. The compilers of the *Key* abridged this sentence too hastily. There are other cases in which Ainsworth’s text was poorly summarized. The entry on Athamas begins thus: “A’THAMAS, a King of Thessaly, and son of Æolus, by his wife Nephele; he had two children Phryxus and Helle”. Nephele, however, was not Athamas’s mother, but his wife. The fact is that in the third edition in

two volumes of Ainsworth's *Thesaurus*, published in 1751, the entry on Athamas had "*A king of Thessaly, son to Æolus. By his wife Nephele he had two children, namely Phryxus and Helle*": the compilers of the *Key* altered the interpunction of the model, with momentous consequences.¹⁷

The genesis of the *Key*, compiled from different sources, explains, finally, many perturbations in the alphabetical order and the presence of several doublets (also favoured by the difficulty in reprinting the original Latin forms): to give only some examples, CÆSTUS (from Chompré) and CESTUS (from Claustre); CEIX (Chompré) and CEYX (Claustre); ÆGERIA (Claustre) and EGERIA (Chompré); ÆGESTA (Claustre) and EGESTA (Chompré); MENÆCEUS (Chompré) and MENŒCEUS (Ainsworth), PALÆMON (Ainsworth) and PLÆMON (Chompré). Cases like these may confirm that there were various compilers at work, or at least point to the absence of a serious revision work.

Many other examples could be cited. A thorough analysis of each and every entry, inappropriate here, would perhaps not be entirely without interest, and could probably lead to a more accurate picture. The entries examined above are, however, sufficient – we believe – to shed light on the *modus operandi* of the compilers, and show that they variously exploited the different sources in order to put together a richer text, and thus place a more attractive product on the book market, but the result was not entirely accurate and organic.

As for the general principles that guided the choices of the compilers of the *Key*, it must be observed, first, that in accordance with the title and the preface, and in the wake of their sources, they actually gave some space to iconographic descriptions. In absence of illustrations, however, one wonders whether the *Key* could really be useful for identifying the subjects of paintings and statues. For this purpose, Chompré had inserted entries such as, for instance, "*AILES sur la tête, aux talons. V. Mercure. Persée. Calais*", which were, however, eliminated in the *Key*.

A problem that any author of schoolbooks on ancient mythology had to face was the intrinsic immorality of the tales. As for the *Key*, grosser obscenities were avoided, in the wake of the French models (characteristic in this sense is the entry PRIAPUS), and euphemisms appeared here and there ("to be great with", for instance); but otherwise quite explicit terms such as "incest", "adultery", "to violate", "to abuse" were freely used throughout the dictionary. In sum, the compilers showed no special concern for protecting the morality of young students; that is why the reviewer for the *Monthly Review* could comment, from his Nonconformist point of view, that the *Key* had been compiled "for debauching the minds and morals of youth in our public schools, with the help of such classic impurities as are to be found in Horace, Ovid, and other obscene Wits of antiquity" (vol. 28 [1763]: 240).

A similar attitude can be observed in the compilers' approach to the meaning and interpretation of ancient myths. As Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richardson noted, handbooks on mythology in the late 17th and early 18th centuries often displayed a "serenely Euhemerist" perspective, occasionally leaning "more toward simple allegory" (1972, 130-31). As we have seen, especially Claustre, more than the pragmatic Chompré, indulged to rationalism and allegory. As for the compilers of the *Key*, they show little or no interest in discussing the origins or the meaning of myths. Some traces of rationalization, for the most part slavishly inherited from Claustre, appear, like a sort of residue, in a small number of entries (e.g. ACACALLIDA, AMPHITRYO, CASTOR and POLLUX, HERCULES, LAMIE); but generally the allegorical or rationalistic explanations present in Claustre (and much more rarely in Chompré) were simply eliminated.

We can conclude that the compilers of the *Key* were not especially interested in either moralizing or rationalizing the ancient myths, and limited themselves to providing the reader with a tool by which some essential data could be easily found. The gods, goddesses, heroes and heroines of ancient mythology, in spite of the immoralities and the absurdities characterizing most of the tales of which they were the protagonists or supporting actors, had not ceased to be represented on the scenes, or in painting. Therefore, the capacity of recognizing and understanding them remained an essential part in the culture of a polite gentleman and lady; and the members of those classes who could not afford a fuller classical education but aspired to a higher position, and to social recognition, had to gain some acquaintance with the "fabulous history" of the Greeks and Romans. For only

¹⁷ More precisely, while the other editions of Ainsworth's dictionary, since the first, read (in the wake of Littleton) "*A king of Thessaly, the son of Æolus. He had by his wife Nephele two children, Phrixus and Helle*", this sentence was reformulated as "*A king of Thessaly, son to Æolus. By his wife Nephele he had two children, namely Phrixus and Helle*" in the third edition in two volumes, with additions and improvements by Samuel Patrick, printed in London by C. and J. Ackers, for W. Mount and T. Page, W. Innys, R. Ware, J. and P. Knapton, T. Cox, T. Longman, C. Hitch, A. Millar, J. Pote, J. Hodges, J. Oswald, E. Wicksteed, J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper, J. Davidson, J. and J. Rivington, J. Ward, W. Johnston, M. Cooper, and the Executors of Mr. J. Darby, in 1751. The same modified form is to be found also in the fourth edition, printed in London by H. Woodfall and C. Rivington, for W. Mount and T. Page, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, B. Barker, J. Pote, C. Bathurst, H. Woodfall, A. Millar, J. and R. Tonson, J. Buckland, G. Keith, J. Beecroft, W. Strahan, J. Rivington, R. Baldwin, W. Owen, W. Johnston, J. Richardson, S. Crowder, T. Longman, B. Law and Co., E. Dilly, C. and R. Ware, J. Coote, and M. Cooper, in 1761. Yet, due to the probable datation of the *Key*, it is more likely that its compilers consulted the 1751 edition.

two shellings, the *Key* (as well as its 1731 ancestor, and the French models) somehow responded to this need. Its quality, indeed, was far from excellent, and one wonders whether it could really be useful within Latin schools; but it certainly gave the pupils of the “French schools”, and the aspiring “gentlemen and ladies”, the possibility of getting a smattering of classical culture at a rather affordable cost; and thus, offering a “key” to literature, theatre, painting, and statuary, it promised to ensure an easier access to liberal arts and an introduction to cultivated society.

In a sense, it is just the utilitarian and compilative nature of our dictionary, founded as it was mainly on French sources which summarized a great scholarly tradition, that makes it an example of the democratization of culture in the Enlightenment era. As Joel Mokyr wrote, “knowledge revolution in the eighteenth century was not just the emergence of new knowledge; it was also better access to knowledge that made the difference” (2016, 322); and translated compilations, insofar they were easier to produce and could be sold at a cheaper cost, took a relevant part in this process (Donato and Lüsebrink 2021). This may explain the fortune of the *Key*, in spite of its rather mediocre quality. On the one side, we have already seen that it went through several reprints and new editions, and there are also traces of its success outside the English-speaking world.¹⁸ On the other side, its entries found their way into various dictionaries and encyclopedias until the beginning of the 19th century, which testify to the fact that it remained a ready-to-consult reference tool.¹⁹

And thus, the *Key* was not immediately and totally superseded by more sophisticated products like John Lemprière’s *Bibliotheca Classica; Or, a Classical Dictionary, Containing A full Account of all the Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors*, whose first edition was published in Reading (and printed for J. Cadell in London) in 1788 and then remained a standard reference book into the 19th century and beyond.²⁰ A general repertoire of ancient proper names mainly intended for the use of schools, the *Bibliotheca Classica* reserved ample space for mythological names; and in the *Preface* Lemprière displayed a profound knowledge of the literature on mythology and antiquity, mentioning authors like Charles Etienne, Nicholas Lloyd, John James Hoffman, Jeremy Collier (who had translated Moréri’s *Grand Dictionnaire Historique*), Antoine Sabatier de Castres, and, of course, the *abbé* Banier. In fact, also his dictionary was little more than a compilation, not always accurate; and yet it proved more precise and reliable than the *Key*: the names were reported in their Latin forms (with the quantity of the penultimate syllable), the explanations were more detailed, and the ancient sources were exactly cited (not simply “Ovid” or at most “Ovid *met.* l. 8”, as in Chompré and in the *Key*, but, for instance, “Ovid *Met.* 8, v. 306”). All this implied, of course, a more specialized audience, and a different purpose – Lemprière’s work “was too voluminous for the pocket”, as was noticed in the *Preface* of the 1803 reprint of the *Key* (the *Mythological Dictionary* that we quoted above), in a desperate attempt to assert the latter’s merits against a dangerous competitor.

In any case, Lemprière’s *Bibliotheca Classica* shared with the *Key* the merely utilitarian character, and the disinterest in the interpretation of myths. A very different kind of dictionary was published in the last decade of the century: William Holwell’s *A Mythological, Etymological, and Historical Dictionary; Extracted from the Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, printed in London, for C. Dilly, in 1793. It was, so to speak, a theory-laden dictionary, in fact a sort of reasoned index and facilitated entry to Jacob Bryant’s *A New System; or, An Analysis of Antient Mythology* (1774-76), an ambitious work in which, according to an old tradition but with the addition of a great deal of new daring etymological combinations, Greek mythology was derived, via the Egyptians, from the Bible, and in all ancient myths, once freed from their inconsistencies and obscenities, traces of an original truth were found. I do not know whether this curious dictionary had some wider fortune, in schools or with the general public; it is perhaps no coincidence that it was consulted and exploited by an extravagant genius like Edgar Allan Poe.²¹

¹⁸ A curious example is Friedrich Weise’s *Deutsches und englisches mythologisches, genealogisches und historisches Real-Lexicon*, published in Brunswick in 1798 and then variously reprinted, where the text of the *Key*, integrated with additions from other sources, is reproduced and translated into German. Captain Weise had served as auxiliary, among the Brunswick troops, in the American Revolutionary War, thus coming into contact with British officers and soldiers (Elster 1901, 418). He is also reported (Hamberger and Meusel 1796-1806, vol. 10 [1803], 807) to have translated an English comedy entitled *The Masquerads* (*sic*; maybe Charles Johnson’s *The Masquerade?*).

¹⁹ In particular, the *Key* appears to have been the main source for the supplements on heathen gods, goddesses and heroes appended to some of the late-eighteenth-century English dictionaries recorded in Domínguez-Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Álvarez 2018, 82-84.

²⁰ On John Lemprière (ca. 1765-1824) see Smail 2004. Stray 2015, 86-87 offers a balanced assessment of the *Bibliotheca Classica* and some hints on its never-ending fortune, on which see also Edelman, 2015.

²¹ On William Holwell (1725/26-1798) see Sambrook 2004; on Jacob Bryant (1715-1804), Feldman, and Richardson 1972, 241-48 and Kidd 2016, esp. 111-30. For Poe using not Bryant’s work but Holwell’s dictionary, see Corcella 2018/19, 83.

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Johnson's *Dictionary* and "the Lexicons of Ancient Tongues"

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Abstract

Though Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) is often compared with the major vernacular dictionaries of the seventeenth century, a better point of comparison is the early modern lexicons of the classical languages, which Johnson knew well, and which informed his practice in his own lexicography.

Keywords: Classical Studies, Dictionary, Lexicography, Samuel Johnson

From the very beginning, the natural point of comparison for Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) has been the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694). Johnson, the legend tells us, did single-handedly for the English language what the Académiciens had done for the French sixty years earlier. When he signed a contract and promised to produce a two-volume dictionary in just three years, he was measured against expectations set by the French: "But, Sir," his friend William Adams asked, "how can you do this in three years?" "Sir," Johnson responded, "I have no doubt that I can do it in three years". Adams thought immediately of the *Dictionnaire*, and made the comparison to Johnson:

ADAMS. But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary. JOHNSON. Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman. (Boswell 1934-64, vol. 1, 186)

And when the work was completed – not three years later, to be fair, but a bit more than eight; still an impressive proportion – the conquest of the French was foremost in many minds. David Garrick, for instance, relished the French humiliation at Johnson's hands:

Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France;
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men:
In the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may toil,
Can their strength be compar'd to Locke, Newton, and Boyle?
[...]
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more! (300-01)

But while Johnson's *Dictionary* certainly has some similarities to the *Dictionnaire* – its two double-columned folio volumes, the hype surrounding its production, its monumental status in one of the major modern languages of Europe – the two books were in fact conceived on different plans, had different goals, and reflected different priorities. The *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612) may be closer to Johnson's, as will appear later. There is no question that Johnson knew and admired both of these works. As John Considine writes, as he began his work “Johnson had dictionaries in the academy tradition in mind, sometimes as rivals, but more importantly as models to be emulated” (2014, 125). But the most apt comparison is neither of the great academic vernacular dictionaries of the seventeenth century, but the tradition of early modern lexicography of the ancient learned languages, Latin and Greek. In fact Johnson, more than the creators of any of the English dictionaries published before him, is aligned with the humanist lexicography of the classical languages.

The widespread legend notwithstanding, Johnson's was not, of course, the “first English dictionary” (see Lynch 2020). It is not straightforward, though, to count the *Dictionary's* predecessors, since the number is largely a function of the definition one uses. Here I follow Robin C. Alston in focusing on monolingual English dictionaries, excluding field-specific dictionaries and glossaries appended to other works, and limiting the count to “those works which (i) attempt to cover the whole range of the vocabulary” – though here Alston includes “hard-word” dictionaries, provided they are not restricted to one semantic domain – “and (ii) attempt a definition of each word, however briefly” (1965-2009, vol. 5, n.p.). These criteria produce a list of nineteen titles before the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary* in 1755, listed here in their first editions only:

- Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* (first edition 1604)
- John Bullokar's *English Expositor* (1616)
- Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623)
- Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1656)
- Edward Phillips's *New World of English Words* (1658)
- Elisha Coles's *English Dictionary* (1676)
- [Richard Hogarth], *Gazophylacium Anglicanum* (1689)
- J[ohn] K[ersey?]'s *New English Dictionary* (1702)
- Edward Cocker's *Cocker's English Dictionary* (1704)
- the anonymous *Glossographia Anglicana Nova* (1707)
- John Kersey's *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* (1708)
- Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological Dictionary* (1721) and *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1730), along with Joseph Nicol Scott's revision of the *New Universal* (1755)
- Benjamin Norton Defoe's *New English Dictionary* (1735)
- Thomas Dyche and William Pardon's *New General English Dictionary* (1735)
- Benjamin Martin's *Lingua Britannica Reformata* (1749)
- the anonymous *Pocket Dictionary or Complete English Expositor* (1753)
- John Wesley, *The Complete English Dictionary* (1753)

It is a diverse list, published over the course of a century and a half, ranging from 12mos to folios, from Cawdrey's 2,500 headwords to Bailey's 60,000. If we use this list as our basis for comparison, we can see a number of ways in which Johnson's classical interests made him an outlier in English lexicography.

1. Samuel Johnson, Classicist

Johnson was unusually well versed in the classical languages and literatures. Despite having a curtailed university education – funds ran out after thirteen months at Oxford – Johnson was an impressive classicist. At his entrance interview at Pembroke College, he “sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself” (Boswell 1934-64, vol. 1, 59). And he kept up that interest in Latin and Greek authors, major and minor, through his entire lifetime. Among the projects he planned but never completed are a number of works on classical antiquity: a “History of Criticism, as it relates to judging of authors, from Aristotle to the present age”, and a “Dictionary of Ancient History and Mythology”. He hoped to write “Classical Miscellanies, Select Translations from ancient Greek and Latin authors”, and he planned translations – often with notes – of Herodian's *History*, Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Rhetoric*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Hierocles of

Alexandria's commentary on the *Golden Verses*, Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* and *De Natura Deorum*; selected stories from Claudius Aelianus; and "Claudian, a new edition of his works, *cum notis variorum*, in the manner of Burman" (vol. 4, 381-82n; see also Tankard 2002).

We know, too, that he was well acquainted with the lexicons of the classical languages, including especially those of the Continental humanists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As James H. Sledd and Gwin J. Kolb observed in the 1950s, "The number of etymological works among his books was rather large, including not only Junius and Skinner but Bailey, of course, and Camden, John Davies' Welsh dictionary, Hickeys' *Thesaurus*, Martinius' Latin etymological dictionary, Ménage, Minsheu, Somner's dictionary of Anglo-Saxon, and G. J. Voss's *Etymologicon linguae Latinae*. For a dictionary-maker, Johnson had a useful collection" (1955, 38). Paul Korshin was among the first to explore the subject at length in 1974. Still John Considine argues, with justice, that the subject has been neglected at least in part because "there has traditionally been a certain reluctance on the part of Anglophone scholars to see dictionaries of the English language in their European context" (2000, 206). The territory is best covered by Considine himself and by Robert DeMaria, Jr., who is one of the authorities on the *Dictionary*, and who has argued that Johnson's whole career can be seen as the progress of a frustrated would-be humanist scholar forced to make his way in a commercial vernacular market with little interest in classical learning. He observes "the presence of classical learning and literature on virtually every page of the *Dictionary*" (1986, 108).

We can be more specific. We know the state of Johnson's library with a good degree of confidence, because the sale catalogue from his own library survives. As Korshin notes, among his books "are important monuments of Renaissance lexicography, often very rare" (1974, 301). This list, probably incomplete, gives the major dictionaries of the learned languages – Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and polyglot dictionaries including at least one of these – and gives their lot numbers:

- 57. Lexicon Hederici, Lips. 1754
- 89. Linguarum veterum Thesauri, a G. Hickerio, 3 t., 1703
- 93. Lexicon Græc. a Phavarino, Bas. 1538
- 95. Tusani lexicon, 2 t., Bas. 1572
- 97. Hesychii Dictionarium, Ven. 1514
- 103. Suidæ lexicon, 2 t., Col Allob 1630
- 112. Lexicon Pentaglotton, Franckf. 1612
- 113. Scapulæ lexicon, 1636
- 137. Schreveli lexicon, &c.
- 138. Buxtorfi lexicon, &c.
- 152. Hederici lexicon, &c.
- 221. Hoffmani lexicon universale, 4 t., L. B. 1698
- 226. Stephani Thesaurus Linguæ Latinæ, 4 t. in 3, 1734
- 227. Suidæ lexicon, Græc. & Lat. Kusteri, 3 t. Cant. 1705
- 230. Basili fabri thesaurus eruditionis scholasticæ, Lips. 1696
- 312. Holyoke's dictionary, 1675, Minshewe's dictionary of eleven languages, 1617
- 316. G. J. Vossi etymologicon linguæ Latinæ, Amst. 1695
- 336. Calepino dictionarium, octo linguarum, 2 t. Par. 1588
- 338. Thesaurus Pagnini linguæ sanctæ, Lugd. 1575
- 429. Crispini lexicon, 1620, &c.
- 432. Hederici lexicon, 1755, miscellanea græcorum aliquot scriptorum carmina, 1722
- 457. Lexicon Ægyptiaco-Lexicon, a Scholtz, Oxon. 1775, &c.
- 461. Thesaurus linguæ sacræ Merceri, Gen. 1614
- 462. Lexicon Scapulæ, Gen. 1628. Dictionarium historicum, Lloydii, Oxon 1670
- 584. Minshew's dictionary, &c.
- 603. Scapulæ lexicon, &c.
- 641. Constantini Lexicon Græco-Latinum Lugd. 1637
- 650. Lexicon philologicum a Martinio, Bren. 1628¹

¹ Eddy 1993. My selection depends on some judgment calls. I exclude dictionaries that address the Germanic languages and living languages. Apart from the few that are described so vaguely as to escape identification completely, we can confidently identify nearly all:

There are several things this list does not tell us. Some descriptions are too vague to be useful: what, for instance, are we to make of “3. Dictionaries”? And we cannot be sure whether he owned these books in the 1740s and 1750s when he was at work on his own *Dictionary* – though it is worth noting that only the two editions of Benjamin Hederich, published in 1754 and 1755, and La Croze, published in 1775, could not have been at hand while he was writing the *Dictionary* in the early 1750s. All the others remain at least possible.

The list includes many of the most important early modern lexicons of the learned languages: Robert Estienne’s *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, polyglot dictionaries by Calepino and John Minshew, multiple editions of Johann Scapula’s *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum*. And while Johnson’s proficiency in languages like Hebrew and Coptic was minimal, he had at least enough interest in these languages to own their lexicons, and enough proficiency to use the books intelligently.

This list, moreover, is not comprehensive. We know Johnson used other lexicons that were not in his library at the time of his death, either because he worked with borrowed copies or because he once owned them but did not retain them until his death. He helped to prepare the *Catalogus Bibliothecae Harleianae* in 1743–45, just before he began work on the *Dictionary*, and that collection contains 345 dictionaries (see Korshin 1974, 301–3). Johnson made extensive use of some edition of Robert Ainsworth’s *Thesaurus linguae latinae Compendarius; or, A Compendious Dictionary of the Latin Tongue, Designed for the Use of the British Nations* (1736). DeMaria, in fact, counts more than 500 instances in which Johnson’s definitions are lifted from Ainsworth’s, with a particular concentration in the botanical vocabulary (1986, 114).² We see entries like *culerage*, “The same plant with ARSE-SMART. *Ainsw.*”, and *patefaction*, “Act or state of opening. *Ainsworth.*”

We know, then, that Johnson was well versed in the classics, and that he knew the important classical lexicons. We can go further: we also know that he envisioned himself as a belated Renaissance humanist lexicographer who happened to work in a vernacular language. He tells us as much explicitly. As he finished the fourth edition of his *Dictionary* in 1773 – the only unabridged edition after the first in which he had any direct hand – he composed, in Latin, one of his most personal and most revealing poems, and declared his affective connection to one of the giants of early modern classical lexicography.

Budé, Guillaume, Conrad Gessner, Jacobus Tusanus, and Adrianus Junius. Λεξικόν Ἑλληνορωμαϊκόν, *hoc est, Dictionarium Graecolatinarum*. Basileae: Ex Officina Henricpetrina, 1572; Buxtorf, Johann. *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum complectens omnes voces*. Editio tertio ab autore recognita. Basileae: Typis Ludovici König, 1621; Calepino, Ambrogio. *Ambrosii Calepini Dictionarium octo linguarum*. Parisiis: Nicolaum Niuellium, 1588; Constantini, Robert, and Franciscus Portus. *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum: nunc denuo recognitum et partim ipsius auctoris, partim Francisci Porti*. 2 vols. Lugduni: Apud G.-A. Huguetan, 1637; Crespini, Jean. *Io. Crespini lexicon graecolatinarum: nunc recens restitutum & auctum*. Coloniae Allobrogum: Apud Iohannem Vignon, 1615; Faber, Basilius, August Buchner, and Christoph Cellarius. *Thesaurus Eruditionis Scholasticae, sive, supellex instructissima vocum, verborum, ac locutionum, tum rerum, sententiarum, adagiorum & exemplorum*. Lipsiae: Apud Thomam Fritsch: Excudebat Immanuel Titius, 1696; Hederich, Benjamin. *Graecum lexicon manuale: Tribus partibus constans hermeneutica, analytica, synthetica*. 2 vols. Lipsiae: In bibliopolio Ioh. Frid. Gleditschii, 1754; Id., *Lexicon Manuale Graecum: Latinarum [...]* Interpretationem Graecam Exhibet. Londini: W. Innys et al.; Hesychius, Alexandrinus. Ἑσυχίου λεξικόν = *Hesychii Dictionarium locupletiss: Ea fide ac diligentia excusum, ut hoc uno, ad veterum autorum fere omnium, ac poetarum in primis lectionem, iusti commentarii vice, uti qui vis possit, & plane nihil sit, quod ad rectam interpretationem desiderari hic queat*. [Venedig]: [Aldus], 1514; Hickes, George. *Linguarum vett. septentrionalium thesaurus: grammatico-criticus et archæologicus*. 4 vols. Oxoniae: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1703; Holyoake, Thomas, and Francis Holyoake. *A Large Dictionary in Three Parts: I. The English before the Latin [...] II. The Latin before the English [...] III. The Proper Names of Persons, Places and Other Things*. 3 vols. London: G. Sawbridge et al., 1676; La Croze, Mathurin Veyssière de. *Lexicon Aegyptiaco-Latinum ex veteribus illius linguae monumentis*. Edited by Christianus Scholtz. Oxonii: E typogr. Clarendoniano, 1775; Martini, Matthias. *Lexicon philologicum, praecipue etymologicum*. Bremae: Willius, 1623; Minshew, John. Ἡγεμῶν εἰς τὰς γλώσσας, *id est, Ductor in linguas, The Guide into Tongues: Cum illarum harmonia, & etymologijs, originationibus, rationibus, & derivationibus in omnibus his undecim linguis, viz: 1. Anglica. 2. Cambro-Britanica. 3. Belgica. 4. Germanica. 5. Gallica. 6. Italica. 7. Hispanica. 8. Lusitanica seu Portugallica. 9. Latina. 10. Graeca. 11. Hebraea, &c.* [London]: [Printed by William Stansby and Melchisedec Bradwood], 1617; Pagninus, Santes. וְשֵׁל רְצוּא: *Hoc est, Thesaurus linguae sanctae, sive, Lexicon Hebraicum*. Lugduni: Apud Bartholomæum Vincentium, 1575; Id., and Jean Mercier. וְשֵׁל רְצוּא = *Thesaurus Linguae Sanctae, sive, Lexicon Hebraicum ordine & copia ceteris antebac editis anteferendum*. Coloniae Allobrogum: Petri de la Rouiere, 1614; Scapula, Johann. *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum novum*. Editio ultima. Basileae: Henricpetrinus, 1628; Id., Laurentius Martius, Jacob Zwinger, and John Harmar. *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum novum*. Editio novissima. Londini: Typis Thomae Harperi, 1636; Schindlerus, Valentinus. *Lexicon Pentaglotton, Hebraicum, Chaldaicum, Syriacum, Talmudico-Rabbinicum, & Arabicum*. Hanoviae: Typis Joannis Jacobi Hennēi, 1612; Stephanus, Robertus. *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*. Ed. nova auctior. 4 vols. in 3. Londini: S. Harding, 1734; [Suidas] and Æmilii Portus. Σουΐδας το μεν παρον βιβλιον Σουΐδα. οι δε συνταξαμενοι τούτο, ανδρες σοφοι = *Suidas: Praesense quidem liber est Suida: Qui vero ipsum composuerunt, viri sapientes fuerunt ...* 2 vols. Coloniae Allobrogum: Apud heredes Petri de la Rouiere, 1630; [Suidas] and Æmilii Portus, and Ludolf Küster. *Suida Lexicon, Graece & Latine: Textum Graecum cum manuscriptis codicibus collatum a quamplurimis mendis purgavit, notisque perpetuis illustravit*. 3 vols. Cantabrigiae: Typis Academicis, 1705; Varinius, Camers. Λεξικόν Βαρίνου Φαβωρινου Καμηρτος του της Νοικαριας Επικποτου = *Dictionarium Varini Phavorini Camertis*. Basileae: [Robert Winter], 1538; Vossius, Gerardus Joannes. *Gerardi Joannis Vossii Etymologicum linguae latinae*. Editio nova. 6 vols. Amstelodami: P. & I. Blaeu, 1695.

² There are more than twice as many Ainsworth citations in volume 2 of the *Dictionary*, covering L-Z, as in volume 1, suggesting that he relied on it more as he worked his way through the alphabet.

That he chose to write a poem in Latin in 1772 is itself telling, though not unusual for him. In fact many of his most personal thoughts were recorded in that language. He staved off insomnia by translating poems from the *Greek Anthology* into Latin. When in June 1783 he suffered a stroke and temporarily lost the ability to speak, he feared that he had lost the power to reason, and so tested his verbal acuity by composing a Latin poem. As he put it a few days later to Hester Thrale, "The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good. I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties" (Johnson 1992-94, 4:151).

Most relevant for his lexicographic interests, in 1772 he wrote "ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ (Post lexicon Anglicanum auctum et emendatum)", a poem of 54 lines of Latin hexameter. The title echoes the Delphic oracle's advice, "know thyself", an appropriate title for an introspective poem about his scholarly identity as he neared the end of a long career. It opens by invoking one of the great scholars of the previous century:

Lexicon ad finem longo luctamine tandem
 Scaliger ut duxit, tenuis pertaesus opellae,
 Vile indignatus studium, nugasque molestas,
 Ingemit exosus, scribendaque lexica mandat
 Damnatis, poenam pro poenis omnibus unam. (Johnson 1995, 75)³

The reference is to Joseph Justus Scaliger (Scaliger the younger), who completed a manuscript *Thesaurus Linguae Arabicae* in 1597 and followed it with a bitter epigram:

Si quem dura manet sententia iudicis olim,
 Damnatum aerumnis suppliciisque caput:
 Hunc neque fabрили lassent ergastula massa,
 Nec rigidas vexent fossa metalla manus.
 Lexica contextat, nam caetera quid moror? omnes
 Poenarum facies hic labor unus habet.⁴

Johnson praises Scaliger, one of his intellectual heroes, as "sublimis, doctus, et acer" (75) ("lofty, learned, and keen-witted", 77, line 6). The poem shows he saw lexicography as an intense personal struggle, and that he aspired to be the sort of *heroic* figure that John Considine describes in his book-length "attempt to understand the association between dictionaries and heroic narratives". As Considine puckishly observes, real-life "Dictionary-making is not a conspicuously heroic business", but we are in the realm of legend. Johnson, who equally puckishly defined *lexicographer* as "a harmless drudge", "both acknowledges the possibility of seeing lexicographers as drudges and expects the intelligent reader to see them as something much more like heroes" (2008, 3-4). "Γνωθι σεαυτόν" implies that a scholar needs to *earn* the melancholy that plagued him and Scaliger.

2. The Dictionary's Classical Antecedents

Johnson, then, knew the tradition of classical-language lexicography and thought of himself as part of it. What effect did this background have on the *Dictionary* he published?

2.1 Front Matter

Johnson declares his classical allegiances from the very first page. It has not, to my knowledge, been observed that Johnson's *Dictionary* is the first monolingual English dictionary to sport a proper classical title-page motto. There were antecedents of sorts – Cawdrey, for instance, has "*Legere, et non intelligere, neglegere est*", adapted from

³ Trans. by Baldwin in Johnson 1995, 77: "When Scaliger after a long struggle finally brought his dictionary to completion, utterly bored with the piddling result, indignant over the worthless pursuit and the tedious trifles, he groaned aloud in hatred, and prescribed the compilation of dictionaries for condemned criminals, to be the punishment of punishments, replacing all others". A reliable Latin text, a readable and faithful modern English translation, and a good discussion can be found in Baldwin's edition (75-86).

⁴ Trans. by Baldwin in Johnson 1995, 82: "If the harsh sentence of a judge awaits someone in the future, a person condemned to toil and punishment, let not prisons weary him with their workman's anvils, and let not the mining of metal pain his calloused hands. Let him compile lexicons! I need say no more. This one occupation contains all forms of punishment". The full text of Scaliger's lexicon has never been published – Scaliger, in fact, forbade its publication in his "Testament" of 1607: see Scaliger 1927, 68. It is now Leiden University Library MS Or. 212.

Cato's *Distichs*, helpfully translated immediately below for the "unskilfull persons" who constituted his readership as "As good not read, as not to understand." Bullokar in 1616 is a bit more adventurous, with an untranslated Greek epigraph: "Ἔργον γ' οὐδὲν ὄνειδος". It comes (having picked up an errant gamma along the way) from Hesiod's *Works and Days* line 311, "Work is no disgrace". Coles has a few lines from Horace, though they are quoted from Ben Jonson's English translation, not the Latin. Kersey's *Dictionarium* is attributed on the title page to "JOHN KERSEY, *Philobibl.*", and both of Bailey's dictionaries to "N. BAILEY, Φιλολόγος" (Kersey the book-lover, Bailey the word-lover). And the anonymous *Pocket Dictionary* of 1753 comes with a cheeky "Μέγα βιβλίον μέγα Κακόν", "A big book is a great evil", an aphorism traced to Callimachus (fragment 465) – a pre-emptive defense against accusations that a mere pocket dictionary was not what the world needed in 1753. Of these, only Bullokar's can be said to require any actual classical knowledge, and he trips over his own feet with the misspelling.

Compare the title-page epigraph from Johnson's first edition:

Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti:
 Audebit quæcunque parum splendoris habebunt,
 Et sine pondere erunt, et honore indigna ferentur.
 Verba movere loco; quamvis invita recedant,
 Et versentur adhuc intra penetralia Vestæ:
 Obscurata diu populo bonus eruet, atque
 Proferet in lucem speciosa vocabula rerum,
 Quæ priscis memorata Catonibus atque Cethegis,
 Nunc situs informis premit et deserata vetustas. HOR.

The source is Horace's *Epistles*, 2.2.110-18. Johnson had used the same epigraph (at least the first five lines) in *Rambler* 88, published in 19 January 1751, when he was at work on the *Dictionary*. In a later printing of the *Rambler* he provided Thomas Creech's verse translation to accompany the Latin, but a more literal translation may be useful:

But the man whose aim is to have wrought a poem true to Art's rules, when he takes his tablets, will take also the spirit of an honest censor. He will have the courage, if words fall short in dignity, lack weight, or be deemed unworthy of rank, to remove them from their place, albeit they are loth to withdraw, and still linger within Vesta's precincts. Terms long lost in darkness the good poet will unearth for the people's use and bring into the light – picturesque terms which, though once spoken by a Cato and a Cethegus of old now lie low through unseemly neglect and dreary age. (Horace 1926, 433-35)

It requires no great leap of imagination to see Johnson – a self-described "poet doomed at last to wake a lexicographer" (2005, 100) – trying to identify himself with both the "honest censor" and the "good poet" bringing old words back to light.

And when we open the *Dictionary* we see even more signs of influence from humanist lexicons. Johnson's preface to the *Dictionary* is now one of his best-known works, and occupies an important place in history as the first statement of principles in English lexicography. It is particularly notable for wrestling with many of the problems that, more than a quarter-millennium later, continue to be the biggest challenges for working lexicographers, and also for its strikingly personal statements, culminating in his gloomy conclusion, "I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please, have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise" (113). It deserves more attention, though, for its affiliation with a classical lexicographic tradition. As Considine writes, "Dictionaries in the academy tradition had always been presented with prefaces, but Johnson's was strikingly unlike theirs because of the powerfully autobiographical elements which make it such a wonderful literary achievement. [...] Johnson's model for this is to be found in early modern work on ancient texts: particularly in the prefaces of Henri Estienne, and most particularly in Estienne's preface to the *Thesaurus graecæ linguæ* of 1572" (2014, 129).

2.2 Main Text

As we turn from the front matter to the main body of the dictionary, the classical antecedents continue to exert their influence. We do not know how much input Johnson had on questions of typography and page design. The *Dictionary* was a booksellers' project, after all, and the booksellers may well have had clear ideas of what their book would look like once Johnson delivered the text. But whatever the driving force, the *Dictionary* introduced a number of innovations into English lexicography, and many of them seem to have been influenced by classical

lexicons. Johnson's large two-columned folio page, with hanging indents, all-capital running heads, and a blend of uppercase and small-cap headwords looks nothing like most of his predecessors' pages (see Luna 2005). Even Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum*, 2nd ed. (1736), which comes closest, uses not hanging but paragraph indentation. Johnson's *Dictionary* looks much more like Robert Estienne's *Thesaurus linguæ latinæ* (1531), Henri Estienne's *Θησαυρος της Ελληνικης γλωσσης* = *Thesaurus graecæ linguæ* (1572), or Schindler's *Lexicon pentaglotton* (1612).⁵

The influence of the classical tradition on Johnson's wordlist is less obvious. Perhaps counterintuitively, Johnson's *Dictionary* includes a smaller proportion of words derived from Latin and Greek than many of his precursors. To get a sense of the proportion of classical languages, I have looked at all the entries beginning *ne-* and offered rough counts of the origins of the words in Johnson and five of his most important precursors, roughly categorizing them as Latinate (including the Romance languages), Greek, Germanic, and "other".⁶

	Latinate/ Romance	Greek	Germanic	Other
Cawdrey (1604)	5 (63%)	3 (37%)	–	–
Bullokar (1616)	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	–	–
Blount (1656)	27 (61%)	15 (34%)	2 (5%)	–
Phillips (1658)	17 (55%)	8 (26%)	5 (16%)	1 (3%)
Bailey (1736)	103 (46%)	45 (20%)	73 (33%)	2 (1%)
Johnson (1755)	49 (34%)	12 (8%)	85 (58%)	–

Johnson, we can see, devotes only 42 percent of his headwords in this section to words of Greek or Latin origin, compared to 100 percent of those in the earliest English dictionaries and two-thirds of those in Bailey. Precise figures will vary in different parts of the *Dictionary*, but the general pattern holds.

How do we explain the classically educated Johnson's seeming lack of interest in words of classical origins? Virtually all seventeenth-century monolingual English dictionaries focused particularly, even exclusively, on "inkhorn terms" – what Cawdrey called "hard usual words" – and in the eighteenth century the tradition was not entirely moribund. This makes for a disproportionate number of Latin- and Greek-derived headwords. Many early English lexicographers swelled their headword counts by coining endless words from Latin and Greek roots, with little regard for whether they were actually in use in English, and no regard whatsoever for whether they were known beyond a tiny circle of initiates. Thus we get alphabetical runs like this, from Bailey's *Universal Etymological Dictionary* (1721): *hyperoa*, *hyperphysical*, *hypertthyron*, or *mucrocordis*, *mucronated*, *mucronatum*, *muculency*.

Johnson's relatively few Latinate and Greek terms are a result of his principled decision to include only words he found in his reading. And this more restricted wordlist, less given over to on-the-spot coinages from Latin or Greek, is itself a product of a classical lexicographic tradition. Many lexicographers who set out to capture what Johnson called "the boundless chaos of a living speech" (2005, 84) have taken the liberty of coining words of their own, listing words they thought *might* exist or *should* exist. Classical lexicographers did not have the same freedom. While Johnson recognized that "the lexicons of ancient tongues" could be "inadequate and delusive", still they are "now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes" (112). In cataloguing a language with a clearly demarcated and finite corpus they almost necessarily limit themselves to "real words". Few lexicographers of dead languages feel the compulsion to fatten their wordlists with novel coinages, and their dictionaries were grounded in the actual usage of ancient authors – at least as far as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philology permitted.

Johnson brought that same principle to English, and his wordlist includes *almost* entirely words he found in his reading project. The *almost* comes from his occasional hesitation over some words, as he wondered whether they were in fact in use:

⁵ The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* also has hanging indents, two columns, all-capital running heads, and small-cap headwords.

⁶ Why *ne-*? By the middle of the alphabet most lexicographers have settled on their working methods, and words beginning with *ne-* are not dominated by prefixes associated with any one language family. I exclude proper names and proverbs, and count as Greek words that were originally Greek but passed through Latin. All the counts should be considered approximate since what constitutes an entry, what constitutes a proper name, and the origin of many words necessarily involve many judgment calls.

Many words yet stand supported only by the name of *Bailey, Ainsworth, Philips*, or the contracted *Dict. for Dictionaries* subjoined: of these I am not always certain that they are seen in any book but the works of lexicographers. Of such I have omitted many, because I had never read them; and many I have inserted, because they may perhaps exist, though they have escaped my notice: they are, however, to be yet considered as resting only upon the credit of former dictionaries. (87-88)

More than fifteen hundred entries or senses are so marked in the dictionary, including such obscurities as *abannition, abarcy, aberuncate, ablegate, ablepsy, abnodation, abstentaneous, abstorted, abstricted, abstringe, abstrude* ..., the overwhelming majority of which are of either Latin or Greek origin.

2.3 Etymologies

Johnson is remembered as, at best, a mediocre etymologist. On etymologies from the classical languages, however, he was generally sound, if without any original insights. The *Dictionary* includes the full word “Latin” in 5,230 of the first edition’s etymologies and “Lat.” in 4,112 more – significantly more even than “French” (2,897) and “Fr.” (4,100). There is, of course, overlap among these two groups; as Johnson observes in his preface, “Of many words it is difficult to say whether they were immediately received from the *Latin* or the *French*, since at the time when we had dominions in *France*, we had *Latin* service in our churches” (2005, 77). Only 61 works are explicitly identified as of “Greek” or “Gr.” origin, though the Greek typeface, as in “PO’LITICK. *adj.* [πολιτικὸς]”, makes an explicit identification unnecessary.

Johnson’s most evident weakness was in the Germanic languages, and there he could look to few others for guidance. “Our knowledge of the northern literature is so scanty”, he complained, “that of words undoubtedly *Teutonic* the original is not always to be found in any ancient language” (83). He acknowledged his debt to Stephen Skinner’s *Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae* (1671) and Franciscus Junius’s *Etymologicum Anglicanum* (1743): “For the *Teutonic* etymologies I am commonly indebted to *Junius* and *Skinner*, the only names which I have forborn to quote when I copied their books; not that I might appropriate their labours or usurp their honours, but that I might spare a perpetual repetition by one general acknowledgment” (81). When he was forced to venture an opinion of his own on a matter of Germanic etymology, he rarely had much to say. At least he was usually honest about the fact. Most of his weak etymologies simply admit ignorance – for *boy* “the etymology is not agreed on”, and of *girl* he writes, “About the etymology of this word there is much question”, with previous etymologists proposing Greek, Latin, Welsh, “Saxon”, and Icelandic origins. Only occasionally does he embarrass himself with his own hypotheses, as in his swing-and-a-miss conjecture for *spider*:

Skinner thinks this word softened from *spinder*, or *spinner*, from *spin*: *Junius*, with his usual felicity, dreams that it comes from σπικειν, to extend; for the spider extends his web. Perhaps it comes from *spieden*, Dutch; *speyden*, Danish, to spy, to lye upon the catch. *Dor, dora*, Saxon, is a *beetle*, or properly an *humble bee*, or *stingless bee*. May not *spider* be *spy dor*, the insect that watches the *dor*?

His ghost can perhaps take some comfort in the thought that his most important successors over the next century were no better than he in Germanic etymologies, and the most prominent, Noah Webster and Charles Richardson, were far worse.

2.4 Quotations

The classical influence on Johnson’s lexicography is especially clear in the use of illustrative quotations, roughly 115,000 of them. It is well known that Johnson was the first English lexicographer to make extensive use of quotations; “Quotation gathering, while new in England, was an old story with the Continental dictionaries of the Renaissance” (Korshin 1974, 304).

It is true that the French *Dictionnaire* includes examples of words in use, but most of these examples are invented. The formula “On dit” (or “On appelle”) signals the Académiciens’ handiwork, and authors’ names are hard to find.⁷ Classical lexicons, on the other hand, were grounded in textual evidence. Calepino is an important figure here, as Considine tells us:

⁷ Once again, the Italian *Vocabolario* is more devoted to actual examples than the *Dictionnaire* – brief phrases, rarely more than a line of text, with a citation, as in this entry for *fronda*, defined as “Foglia” and traced to “Lat. *frons, dis*”: “Bocc. n. 96. 19. Senza auer preso, o pigliare del suo amore, fronde, fiore, o frutto. Petr. Son. 248. Non ramo, o fronda uerde in queste piagge. Dan Par. 15. O fronda mia, in che io compiacemmi. Qui è metaf. e. ual figliuolo, o nipote, o nato di lui. Son. 288. Ma, ricogliendo le sue sparte fronde, Dietro leuò, Dan. Purg. c. 12. [...]”. (1612, 368, s.v. *Fronda*).

The dictionary was a response to the new printed dissemination of classical Latin texts, and aimed to document their vocabulary while excluding that of the post-classical world. It is particularly notable for its use of illustrative quotations from ancient authors. [...] "Here", as one historian of the lexicography of Latin has said of Calepino's work, "we have in front of us, although in a quite rudimentary form, the prototype of the modern Latin dictionary". (2008, 29)

Considine also notes some of the shortcomings that made Calepino merely "rudimentary":

the quotations from ancient authors are sometimes missing, and they are very summarily referenced, to author and work or even to author alone (here, Calepino suffered to some extent from the limitations of the texts available to him, since early printed editions of classical authors lacked the page numbering that makes it easy to give precise references to every quotation). [...] The quotations are not set off typographically from the surrounding text. (30)

Still Calepino would have been an obvious model for Johnson, and his ostentatious erudition immediately strikes the eye, with five typefaces – roman, italic, Greek, Hebrew, black-letter here indicated with boldface – in a single entry. Here is how one entry, for the verb *litigo* "dispute, sue", appeared in the edition of Calepino Johnson owned, with Latin quotations accompanied by citations:

Litīgo, as, penultima correpta, Discepto contendo, siue id in foro sit, siue extra forum. {רַב הַצִּהַב *histsab*, G. ἀμφοιβητῶ, ἐγκαλῶ, δικάζομαι, διαφέρομαι. Auoir noise, debat, different ou proces cōtre quelqu'un. I. *litigare*, *far lite*. G. **Zanken spenneing sein**. H. *Pleytar ὁ contender*. A. **To stryue, to debate, to be at variance.**} Cic. pro Cælio, Aliquot enim in causis videram eum frustra litigantem. Mart. lib. 7. Ah miser & demens viginti litigat annos Quisquam, cui vinci Gargiliane licet? Plaut. in Rud. Qua de re nunc litigatis inter vos? Cic. ad. Att. Hircius cum Quinto acerrimè pro me litigauit. Idem Qu. Frat. Litigarè tecum, si fas esset.

Not all classical dictionaries, it is true, included illustrative examples, and those that did sometimes skipped full extensive quotations, working on the assumption that learned readers would own good editions of the primary texts. But many of the major early modern lexicons of the learned languages were loaded with citations to ancient authors. An eighteenth-century edition of Robert Estienne's *Thesaurus linguæ latinæ* is typical: under *sylvæ*, after a definition ("generale nomen est, proprie arborum, et quæ cædua est") comes a list of the briefest snippets followed by detailed citations:

Brachia silvarum, Rami. Stat. 1. Theb. 362.
Comæ silvarum, Frondes. Stat. 3. Silv. 3. 98.
Filia silvæ pinus. Hor. 1. Carm. 14. 12.
Gloria silvarum pinus. Stat. 5. Silv. 1. 151.
Agrestis. Ovid. 7. Met. 142.
Alta. Ovid. 14. Met. 364.
Antiqua. Virg. 6. Æn. 179. (Estienne 1743, vol. 4, 241, s.v. *sylvæ*)

Henri Estienne's *Thesaurus graecæ Linguæ*, too, included brief quotations from Greek authors, sometimes with a full citation, more often with simply an author's name. And Ainsworth's *Thesaurus Linguæ Latinæ Compendiarius*, an important source for Johnson, is similar:

Ingrāvesco, ěre. incept. (1) *To grow more heavy, weighty, or lumpish*. (2) *To become worse, to increase, to grow bigger*. (3) *To rise to a higher price*. (1) *Vix credibili pondere ingravescat*, *Plin.* 31, 7. (2) *Ingravescit in dies malum*, *Cic. ad Brut.* 10. (3) *Annona ingravescere consuevit*, *Cæs. B. C.* 1, 52. *vid. & Cic. pro Domo*, 5. (Ainsworth 1736, s.v. *Ingrāvesco*.)

2.5 Classical Authors' Cameos

There are other signs of Johnson's classical learning throughout the *Dictionary*. DeMaria writes that

One cannot read far in the *Dictionary* without encountering the names of Aristotle, Vergil, and Homer. Also prominent are Cicero, Caesar, Horace, Seneca, Juvenal, Plato, and Pindar. Some of the many others that crop up here and there are Claudius, Caligula, Dionysius, Antony, Octavius, Lucan, Agrippa, Lucretius, Hiero, Demosthenes, Hesiod, Pythagoras, Titus, Vespasian, Plutarch, Vitruvius, Ptolemy, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristides, Galen, Xerxes, Archimedes, Anacreon, Themistocles, Theseus, Philo, Casselius, Anaxagoras, Solon, Prodicus, Telegonus, and Cato. (DeMaria 1986, 110)

These names are especially evident in the many English translations from classical authors: Horace above all, but also “Addison’s Ovid; Chapman’s Homer; Creech’s Juvenal and Manilius; Dryden’s Vergil, Homer, Ovid, Lucretius, and Juvenal; Garth’s Ovid; May’s Vergil; Pope’s Homer (with his and Broome’s notes); Pope’s Statius; Tate’s Juvenal; and West’s Pindar” (108). For Johnson these translations are emphatically works of English literature, worthy of inclusion in an English dictionary, even though he worried that “The great pest of speech is frequency of translation” (2005, 108). Translations were important enough that, in his career-topping *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), he gave the major translations from the classical languages serious attention.

And while most are, not all the classical authors are translated. On special occasions Johnson drops in classical quotations – sometimes with a translation, often without – to comment on some theme that is larger than the English language. The etymology for *cattiff*, for instance, is clearly inspired by his detestation of the slave trade, and he signals his indignation with an untranslated quotation from Homer:

cattivo, Ital. a slave; whence it came to signify a bad man, with some implication of meanness; as *knave* in English, and *fur* in Latin; so certainly does slavery destroy virtue. Ἡμισυ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀποάινεται δούλιον ἤμαρ. *Homer*. A slave and a scoundrel are signified by the same words in many languages.

The Greek quoted (with variations) from *Odyssey* 17.322-23, when the swineherd Eumaeus laments that Zeus “takes away half a man’s worth [*aretē*] the day he becomes a slave”. And the entry for *lich* “A dead carcass” leads him to think of related words – *lichwake* “the time or act of watching by the dead”, *lichgate* “the gate through which the dead are carried to the grave” – which leads him to think of his hometown:

Lichfield, the field of the dead, a city in Staffordshire, so named from martyred christians. *Salve magna parens*.

The line comes from Vergil’s *Georgics* 2.173-76:

Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,
magna virum; tibi res antiquae laudis et artem
ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontis,
Ascreaumque cano Romana per oppida carmen.⁸

Conclusion

Might Johnson have gone too far? In trying to be a great classical lexicographer, did he miss the opportunity to be a great English lexicographer? “The eighteenth-century grammarians” routinely feature as the villains in histories of linguistic and lexicographic malfeasance, and are often accused of misunderstanding the nature of the English language, forcing a West Germanic language to conform to Latinate rules. Johnson is not entirely immune from such charges. But he recognized English and Latin were very different languages. As early as the *Plan* (1747), he sought “to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of the English idiom; and this seems to require nothing more than that our language be considered so far as it is our own” (Johnson 2005, 29).

Johnson, it is fair to say, “asked no questions, gave no answers, and invented no techniques which were new to Europe, though they may very well have been new to English lexicography” (Sledd and Kolb 1955, 4). His achievement is the synthesis of many parts, not a single breakthrough, and he found most of those parts outside the mainstream tradition of English lexicography from Cawdrey to Bailey and Martin.

Johnson was a little too early to play a role in the next major importation of classical lexicography into English. In the early nineteenth century, Franz Ludwig Carl Friedrich Passow’s *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache* (1819-24) called for a thorough historicization of every sense of every word in the Greek language. Johnson had generally arranged his quotations in chronological order, but not strictly, and he provided no dates for his citations. Neither did he arrange his senses in chronological order; this selection from the *Plan* describes how he conceived the arrangement of senses:

⁸ Trans.: “Hail, land of Saturn! Great mother of corn and wine, great mother of men. For you I venture open the sacred fountain and sing the song of the Ascrean through the towns of Rome”. Ascrea was home to Hesiod, so there is a recursive quality to this invocation.

it seems necessary to sort the several senses of each word, and to exhibit first its natural and primitive signification [...] Then to give its consequential meaning, to *arrive*, to reach any place whether by land or sea; as, he *arrived* at his country seat. [...] Then its metaphorical sense [...] Then to mention any observation that arises from the comparison of one meaning with another [...] Then follows the accidental or consequential signification [...] Then the remoter or metaphorical signification [...] After having gone through the natural and figurative senses, it will be proper to subjoin the poetical sense of each word, where it differs from that which is in common use [...] To the poetical sense may succeed the familiar [...] The familiar may be followed by the burlesque [...] And lastly, may be produced the peculiar sense, in which a word is found in any great author. (2005, 47-48, italics in original)

In the *Dictionary* he did not stick strictly to this vision, but he generally proceeded from literal to metaphorical senses without regard for chronology. Johnson's *Dictionary*, therefore, cannot be called a "historical dictionary", and this was the greatest desideratum of Richard Chenevix Trench in *On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries* (1857). Passow's historical method was picked up in German vernacular lexicography by the Brothers Grimm, and in English classical lexicography by Liddell and Scott, but would not form the basis of an English-language dictionary until the *Oxford English Dictionary*. But in adopting several classical precedents – a wordlist based on textual evidence, quotations illustrating words in use – Johnson put English lexicography on a firm foundation.

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Linguistic Stereotypes and National Topoi from Antiquity to Two Early 18th-century English Lexicographic Texts

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Abstract

The article focusses on the process of recontextualization of ancient topoi in the English lexicographic representation of “languages”/ “nations” in the early eighteenth century. Laying emphasis on the way in which the dictionaries of the first half of the eighteenth century contribute to the shaping of the correlation between “language” and “nation”, a correlation which is central to the ideology of standardization, the article examines how linguistic and ethnic stereotypes that can be traced back to Antiquity find their way into representations of English present in Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia* (1728) and in the second edition of Nathan Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1736).

Keywords: Commonplace, 18th-century Dictionaries, Ethnic Stereotype, Language Ideology, National Identity

Introduction

Previous accounts have emphasized that “ethnic stereotypes, ancient and modern, though revealing almost nothing about the groups they are intended to define, say a great deal about the community which produces them” (Hall 1989, ix). Taking into account analyses that see the eighteenth century as the time when standard language ideology rose to prominence (Milroy and Milroy 1999; Watts 2011) the present paper examines the way in which two of the most influential texts in the English lexicography of the eighteenth century, Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia* (1728) and Nathan Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1736), recontextualize ethnic stereotypes that have their roots in representations which emerged during Antiquity. On the one hand, the aim is to examine in detail the complex process of recontextualization through which (late) ancient ethnic topoi become part of modern representations of the English language “devised to glorify England as a nation” (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2022, 178). At the same time, the paper means to underline the role of the lexicographic texts of the first half of the eighteenth century in the shaping of a correlation central to the discourse of standardization, that between the English national identity and the English language (see Rodríguez-Álvarez 2009; Vişan 2018; Rodríguez-Álvarez 2022).

As means of taxinomization and as attempts to capture the totality of knowledge (see Yeo 2001 and 2003), eighteenth-century lexicographic texts

such as Chambers's *Cyclopædia* and Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* make a significant contribution to the transformation of what Benedict Anderson has famously called "imagined communities". Moreover, both these lexicographic texts function as significant points of reference in (eighteenth-century) lexicography, as Chambers's *Cyclopædia* serves as a source of inspiration not only for Bailey's early eighteenth-century universal dictionary but also for several well-known lexicographic texts, which include the *Encyclopédie française*. Reprinted in multiple editions over the years, Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* was not only "the most comprehensive English dictionary of its day" (Osselton 2009, 151) but also, in its various versions, one of the most popular dictionaries of the eighteenth-century (Reddick 2009, 156). The *Dictionarium Britannicum* also served as a working base for Johnson's 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* (Starnes and Noyes 1991, 117), most probably in its 1736 edition, which, unlike the first edition (1730), includes prefatory material that provides a historical account of the English language (118; Vişan 2018, 285-87).

Focusing on the historical accounts of the English language from the early to the late modern age, Alicia Rodríguez-Álvarez has pertinently underlined that such accounts emerge as fairly homogeneous, based on common value judgements and similar bodies of ideas (2022, 198). As will be shown in subsequent sections, this common ground significantly relies on a commonplace whose roots are to be found in Antiquity, and which finds its way into English lexicography through a series of previous European texts.

1. Ethnic Stereotypes in Two Early 18th-century Texts

While national consciousness has usually been envisaged as a nineteenth-century phenomenon (Burke 2013, 22), there are many continuities concerning "nation" across the divide between the early and the late modern age (23). Relying on ethnic stereotypes, the excerpts below, which appear in representations of the English language in two significant texts of eighteenth-century English lexicography, emphasize the existence of such continuities:

Chambers 1728 (LANGUAGE)	Bailey 1736 (The Preface)
<p>There is found a constant Resemblance between the Genius or Natural Complexion of each People and the Language they speak. Thus the <i>Greeks</i>, a polite but voluptuous People, had a <i>Language</i> perfectly suitable, full of Delicacy and Sweetness. The <i>Romans</i>, who seemed only born to command, had a <i>Language</i> noble, nervous, and august; and their Descendants, the <i>Italians</i>, are sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, which is as visible in their <i>Language</i> as their Manners. The <i>Language</i> of the <i>Spaniards</i> is full of that Gravity and Haughtiness of Air which make the distinguishing Character of the People. The <i>French</i>, who have a World of Vivacity, have a <i>Language</i> that runs extremely brisk and lively. And the <i>English</i>, who are naturally blunt, thoughtful and of few Words, have a <i>Language</i> exceedingly short, concise, and sententious. (429)</p>	<p>Some have remark'd that there is a constant Resemblance between the Genius of each People and the Language which they speak, and thence</p> <p>The <i>French</i> who are a People of great Vivacity have a Language that runs extreme Lively and Brisk, and the <i>Italians</i> who succeeded the <i>Romans</i> have quite lost the Augustness and Nervousness of the <i>Latin</i> and sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, as well in their Language as their Manners.</p> <p>The <i>Spaniards</i>, whose distinguishing Character is a haughty Air, have a Language resembling their Qualities, yet not without Delicacy and Sweetness.</p> <p>The <i>Romans</i> who seem'd to be a People design'd for Command, us'd a Language that was noble, august and nervous.</p> <p>The <i>Greeks</i> who were a polite but voluptuous People, us'd a Language exactly adapted thereto.</p> <p>The <i>English</i> who are naturally Blunt, thoughtful and of few Words, use a Language that is very short, concise and sententious.</p>

Tab. 1 – Language and genius in two English dictionaries

Highlighting a correlation between the genius of "each people" and "the language they speak", the entry for LANGUAGE in Ephraim Chambers' 1728 *Cyclopædia* includes a comparison between English and the languages of European nations. English, perceived as "short, concise and sententious", is the last of the items listed in a comparison which starts chronologically with the languages of the Greco-Roman world (the "polite but voluptuous" Greek and the "noble, nervous and august" Latin). The list goes on to include Romance languages such as Italian

(represented as having degenerated into a “soft” and “effeminate” language), Spanish (seen as “grave” and “haughty”), and French, characterized as “brisk and lively”. The representation of “national” stereotypes and their correlation with languages includes elements of both derision and praise, emphasized by the contrast between negative epithets such as “soft”, “effeminate” or “haughty”, and attributes such as “polite”, “noble”, “august”, “thoughtful” or “concise”.

Recontextualizing remarks which, in Chambers’s lexicographic text, were part of an encyclopaedic entry, Nathan Bailey includes the same representation of European languages in his Preface to the second edition of his *Dictionarium Britannicum* (Vişan 2018, 290-92). Significantly, no longer included in an encyclopaedic entry meant to provide a comprehensive representation of the keyword “language”, the linguistic bluntness of the English becomes part of the paratext of a universal dictionary more narrowly focused on “English”. Also fulfilling a paratextual function, the Latin title of Bailey’s lexicographic text (*Dictionarium Britannicum: Or A more Compleat Universal Etymological English Dictionary Than any Extant*) not only brings the English language into focus, but also reinforces the connection between eighteenth-century English culture and *Britannia*, a name which emerges as part of an imagined Roman Empire. In Bailey’s early eighteenth-century Preface, which also selects passages from Chambers’s encyclopaedic entry for ENGLISH, the recontextualized excerpt becomes part of “an encomium” to this language (297).

Bailey’s choice of changing the order of presentation of the European languages in his lexicographic paratext cannot be random. It is plausible to assume that this choice has not been dictated only by an attempt to conceal the author’s plagiarism of Chambers, but also by a *translatio imperii*. In the Preface to Bailey’s *Dictionarium Britannicum*, English no longer follows French, but is immediately placed after Greek and Latin in the list of languages and nations. Bailey’s decision to use a different order than Chambers can be interpreted as prompted by the desire to emphasize a more direct connection between the English language and a prestigious classical heritage (see Considine 2008; Rodríguez-Álvarez 2022). Here, English is no longer the last language in a list of (more) prestigious European vernaculars. Instead, it becomes the central image in a dictionary preface which emphasizes its superiority over other European vernaculars.

As my previous discussion of the excerpts above has revealed, Chambers’s representation is by no means original. The ultimate source for Chambers’s entry for LANGUAGE is in fact the French Jesuit Dominique Bouhours’s seventeenth-century *Les entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène* (1671), which includes “La langue Française”, a famous apology of French (Vişan 2018, 294-95):

Bouhours 1671 (La langue Française)	Chambers 1728 (LANGUAGE)
<p>Car le langage suit d’ordinaire la disposition des esprits; & chaque nation a toujours parlé selon son genie. Les Grecs, qui étoient gens polis et voluptueux, avoient vn langage delicat, & plein de douceur. Les Romains, qui n’aspiroient qu’à la gloire, & qui sembloient n’estre nez que pour gouverner, avoient un langage noble, & auguste; ce qui a fait dire à vn Père de l’Eglise que la langue latine est vne langue fiere et imperieuse, qui commande, plutôt qu’elle ne persuade. Le langage des Espagnols se sent fort de leur gravité, & de cet air superbe qui est commun à toute la nation. Les Allemans ont vne langue rude & grossière; les Italiens en ont vne molle & efféminée, selon le temperament & les mœurs de leur païs. Il faut donc que les François, qui sont naturellement brusques, & qui ont beaucoup de vivacité & de feu, ayent vn langage court & animé, qui n’ait rien de languissant. Aussi nos Ancêtres qui étoient plus prompts que les Romains, accourcirent presque tous les mots qu’ils prirent de la langue Latine; & pour les monosyllabes, qui ne peuvent estre abrezés, ou ils n’y changerent rien du tout, ou ils les changerent en d’autres monosyllabes [...] (62-63)</p>	<p>There is found a constant Resemblance between the Genius or Natural Complexion of each People and the Language they speak. Thus the <i>Greeks</i>, a polite but voluptuous People, had a <i>Language</i> perfectly suitable, full of Delicacy and Sweetness. The <i>Romans</i>, who seemed only born to command, had a <i>Language</i> noble, nervous, and august; and their Descendants, the <i>Italians</i>, are sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, which is as visible in their <i>Language</i> as their Manners. The <i>Spaniards</i> of the <i>Spaniards</i> is full of that Gravity and Haughtiness of Air which make the distinguishing Character of the People. The <i>French</i>, who have a World of Vivacity, have a <i>Language</i> that runs extremely brisk and lively. And the <i>English</i>, who are naturally blunt, thoughtful and of few Words, have a <i>Language</i> exceedingly short, concise, and sententious. (429)</p>

Tab. 2 – Bouhours and Chambers on language and genius

As can be seen, the stereotypical representation of the English is one of a people that is “naturally blunt”. A look at a French-English/English-French lexicographic text that was popular throughout the eighteenth century, such as Abel Boyer’s *The Royal Dictionary*, in its 1729 edition, reveals that one of the translation

equivalents of the French *brusque* is indeed “blunt”. While Bouhours’s text stereotypically portrays the French as “naturellement brusques”, Chambers transfers this attribute in order to create his representation of the English language. Relying on translation and recontextualization, the English author thus adds the formerly invisible English in the competitive comparison of nations/languages, by truncating the representation of French. However, he does not operate a complete erasure of French, which is preserved in this comparison, and portrayed as “brisk and lively”.

Based on recontextualized material, Chambers’s Preface emphasizes a contrast between the stereotypically blunt Englishman and the stereotypically vivacious Frenchman. Commonplaces and proverbial material are certainly instrumental in the lexicographic representations of the early eighteenth century. Significantly, “brisk” (another translation equivalent of *blunt*) is also one of the English equivalents of “lively” in Boyer’s bilingual dictionary. In its entry for “lively”, Boyer’s dictionary, which is a text well-known for its treatment of proverbial material and which explicitly mentions Bouhours as one of its sources, gives as French equivalents the adjective *vif*, as well as the collocation *qui a beaucoup de feu*, which recalls Bouhours’s iconic image of French (“les François, qui [...] ont beaucoup de vivacité & de feu, ayent un langage court & animé”).

2. Previous Lexicographic Sources

Part of a discourse of national glorification, Bouhours’s seventeenth-century text, which portrays the French language and culture as a worthy heir to the Roman Empire, in opposition to two other dominant cultures of the age, Italy and Spain, emerges as the ultimate source for the excerpt in Chambers’s lexicographic entry. However, it is essential to underline here that it is in fact the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, the popular name of *Le dictionnaire universel françois et latin*, first published in 1704, which is Chambers’s most probable direct source, yet not with its entry for *LANGUE* but with one of its subentries for *LANGAGE*.

A comparison between the entry for *LANGAGE* in the Trévoux lexicographic text and the entry for *LANGUAGE* in Chambers’s text reveals that it is a lexicographic truncation of Bouhours’s text that is employed in the 1728 *Cyclopædia*:

Trévoux 1721 (LANGAGE)	Chambers 1728 (LANGUAGE)
Le <i>langage</i> suit d’ordinaire la disposition des esprits, & chaque Nation a toujours parlé selon son génie. Les Grècs, qui étoient gens polis et voluptueux, avoient un <i>langage</i> délicat, & plein de douceur. Les Romains qui sembloient n’être nez que pour commander, avoient un <i>langage</i> noble et auguste. Le <i>langage</i> des Espagnols se sent de leur gravité, & de cet air superbe qui est commun à toute la nation. Celui des Italiens est mol & efféminé, selon le tempérament, & les mœurs de leur país. Les François, qui sont naturellement brusques, & qui ont beaucoup de vivacité et de feu, ont un <i>langage</i> court et animé, & qui n’a rien de languissant. PASQ. BOUH.	There is found a constant Resemblance between the Genius or Natural Complexion of each People and the Language they speak. Thus the <i>Greeks</i> , a polite but voluptuous People, had a <i>Language</i> perfectly suitable, full of Delicacy and Sweetness. The <i>Romans</i> , who seemed only born to command, had a <i>Language</i> noble, nervous, and august; and their Descendants, the <i>Italians</i> , are sunk into Softness and Effeminacy, which is as visible in their <i>Language</i> as their Manners. The <i>Language</i> of the <i>Spaniards</i> is full of that Gravity and Haughtiness of Air which make the distinguishing Character of the People. The <i>French</i> , who have a World of Vivacity, have a <i>Language</i> that runs extremely brisk and lively. And the <i>English</i> , who are naturally blunt, thoughtful and of few Words, have a <i>Language</i> exceedingly short, concise, and sententious. (429)

Tab. 3 – The Trévoux dictionary as a source for Chamber’s entry

Chambers’s reliance on the Trévoux dictionary regarding a significant number of entries has been already underlined by Bocast (2019, 2020a, 2020b), who argues that the mention of the “Jesuits of Trévoux” in the Preface to the 1728 *Cyclopædia* makes this dictionary (probably in its second edition, 1721) the most plausible source for Chambers (Bocast 2020b, 9-10). Moreover, the fact that the Trévoux dictionary is, in its turn, heavily indebted to the second edition of Furetière’s earlier *Dictionnaire universel* has already been noted by previous scholars, among whom Bocast (2020b).¹

¹ Bocast notes that it is not until the Preface to the second edition of the *Cyclopædia* that Chambers shows himself aware of the reliance of the Trévoux dictionary on Basnage de Beauval’s edition of Furetière (2020b, 9-10).

A look at the entry for LANGAGE in Henri Basnage de Beauval's second edition (1701) of Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690) reveals that the Trévoux dictionary has indeed used Basnage de Beauval's edition of Furetière as its source:

Furetière 1701 (LANGAGE)	Trévoux 1721 (LANGAGE)
<p>LANGAGE [...] Le <i>langage</i> suit d'ordinaire la disposition des esprits, & chaque Nation a toujours parlé selon son génie. Les Grecs, qui étoient gens polis et voluptueux, avoient un <i>langage</i> délicat, & plein de douceur. Les Romains qui sembloient n'être nez que pour commander, avoient un <i>langage</i> noble et auguste. Le <i>langage</i> des Espagnols se sent de leur gravité, & de cet air superbe qui est commun à toute la Nation. Celui des Italiens est mol & efféminé, selff on le temperament, & les mœurs de leur païs. Les François, qui sont naturellement brusques, & qui ont beaucoup de vivacité et de feu, ont un <i>langage</i> court et animé, & qui n'a rien de languissant. PASQ. BOU.</p>	<p>LANGAGE [...] Le <i>langage</i> suit d'ordinaire la disposition des esprits, & chaque Nation a toujours parlé selon son génie. Les Grècs, qui étoient gens polis et voluptueux, avoient un langage délicat, & plein de douceur. Les Romains qui sembloient n'être nez que pour commander, avoient un <i>langage</i> noble et auguste. Le <i>langage</i> des Espagnols se sent de leur gravité, & de cet air superbe qui est commun à toute la nation. Celui des Italiens est mol & efféminé, selon le tempérament, & les mœurs de leur païs. Il faut donc que les François, qui sont naturellement brusques, & qui ont beaucoup de vivacité et de feu, ont un <i>langage</i> court et animé, & qui n'a rien de languissant. PASQ. BOUH.</p>

Tab. 4 – Furetière's dictionary as a source for the Trévoux dictionary

A complex process of recontextualization underlies the lexicographic texts of the (early) modern age. As can be seen, the abridgment of Bouhours's text made in the Basnage de Beauval edition is preserved in the excerpt from the Trévoux subentry for LANGAGE exemplified above. In fact, the two subentries for LANGAGE are, with the exception of a couple of minor graphemic changes, entirely identical in both French dictionaries, which, as the references indicate, make use not only of Bouhours's text but also of Étienne Pasquier's apology of the qualities of French. Chambers's English translation of excerpts from Bouhours's "La langue Française" is undoubtedly mediated by these French lexicographic texts. An early eighteenth-century lexicographic representation of English thus emerges as based on the repeated recontextualization of remarks originally meant for French. Moreover, the ethnic representations employed are by no means an original creation of Bouhours himself but in fact European commonplaces of the time.

Bouhours's seventeenth-century text, which bears echoes of Boileau, as well as of Longinus and Quintilian, and which denounces excessive rhetorical ornamentation, relies upon already circulating ethnic topoi in order to express a correlation between "language" and "nation":

'La langue française' also turned the commonplaces of the time concerning the supposed characters of nations into objects of scholarly attention, articulating, for the first time in an extensive way, the rising interest of European scholars in the relationship between language and nation. Furthermore, the dialogue constitutes a significant example in the history of the debate because it documents the first combined use of the two terms *génie de la langue* and *génie de la nation*. (Gambarota 2011, 62)

3. Ancient Topoi, Language, and the Shaping of "National Character"

It has been argued that "an increasingly sharp national consciousness may be seen in the early modern period" (Burke 2013, 31). Peter Burke, who sees stereotypes, and stereotypes of "nations", as central to the history of *l'imaginaire social* (2022), has already evoked a well-known excerpt from Dominique Bouhours's *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* regarding a stereotypical representation of languages/nations: "*Les Chinois, et presque tous les peuples de l'Asie, chantent; les Allemands râlent; les Espagnols déclament; les Italiens soupirent; les Anglais sifflent. Il n'y a proprement que les Français qui parlent*" (Bouhours, quoted in Burke 2004, 67).² Significantly, this commonplace appears in "La langue Française",³ the ultimate source for Chambers's representation of LANGUAGE

² The fact that only the French are capable of speech is an echo of the ancient polarization Hellene/Barbarian (see discussions in Watts 2011; Vişan 2013).

³ Several scholars have already argued that such comparisons can be traced back to medieval musical treatises. According to previous

in the *Cyclopædia*. Moreover, Peter Burke pertinently underlines that such representations also appear in early modern apologies of vernaculars such as Henri Estienne's *La précellence du langage françois*. In Estienne's text, the topos is present in its Latin form: "*Balant Itali, gemunt Hispani, ululant Germani, cantant Galli*" (Estienne quoted in Burke 2004, 67).

Emphasizing a correlation which, according to previous authors, will become a frequent one by the beginning of the eighteenth century, that between the genius of language and the genius of nation, Bouhours's apology of French includes not only the comparison of the various "character traits" perceived as giving a unified identity to "languages" and "nations" but also the commonplace correlation between "nation", music, and ways of speaking. Bouhours's text is by no means the first which makes use of this particular combination of topoi. Agrippa von Nettesheim's sixteenth-century work denouncing the vanity of arts and sciences (*De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium atque excellentia verbi Dei declamatio*, 1531) is yet another text where these two commonplace images appear side by side. In the chapter "De Morali Philosophia", which means to show that, when it comes to the actions of human beings, astrological and environmental factors take precedence over moral philosophy, the German scholar employs similar imagery to that in Bouhours's apology of French:

[...] inquit Iulius Firmicus in astrologicis suis ad Lollianum scribens. Quædam gentes ita a cælo formatae sunt, vt propria sint morum vnitæ perspicuæ. Scythæ immanis veritatis crudelitate grassantur. Itali fuerunt regali semper nobilitate præfulgidi, Galli stolidi, acuti Siculi, luxuriosi semper Asiatici, & voluptatibus occupati, Hispani elata jactantiæ animositate præpositi [...] Iamque scimus etiam, quia in cantu balant Itali, gemunt Hispani, ululant Germani, modulantur Galli. Sunt in oratione graves, sed versuti Itali: culti, sed jactabundi Hispani, prompti sed superbi Galli, duri, sed simplices Germani.⁴ (1575, 130-31)

A French translation of Agrippa's popular text dates from 1582, and illustrates the way in which early modern texts culturally reappropriate ethnic labels which can be traced back to Antiquity:

Iulius Firmicus, en ses discours astrologiques qu'il escrit a Lollianus, dit, que aucunes nations sont tellement façonnées par les cieus, que lon les peut remarquer d'entre les autres à certaines moeurs & façons propres & particulieres. Les Scythes ou Tartares brigandent avec cruelle & farouche inhumanité. Les Italiens on esté de tous temps apparens entre les autres par vne royale noblesse: les Gaulois sont simples & sots: les Siciliens rusés: les Espagnols aduantageux & hardis en vanterie: les peuples d'Asie fondus en voluptés & toutes superfluités [...] Et est chaque nation diuisee en moeurs & facons par la nature & d'enhaut, en sorte que lon peut aisement cognoistre de quelle region ou païs est l'homme. [...] Nous sçauons aussi pareillement qu'en chantant les Italiens beslent, les Espagnols gemissent, les Allemans hurlent, les François chantent vraymēt. Au parler & au discourir les Italiens sont graues, mais rusés: les Espagnols ornés, mai vanteurs: les François prompts & hautains: les Allemans durs, mais ronds & simples.⁵ (1582, 209-10)

Since translation and (language) ideology are essentially interlinked, it is significant to focus on the French translation from Latin of one of the names of the proto-nations identified in von Nettesheim's text, namely *Galli*. As can be seen, the sixteenth-century French translation already substitutes *Galli* with both "les Gaulois", when the negative attribute "stolidi" ("stupid") is predicated of them, and "les François", when positive representations emerge. In *François*, the label "Frank/frank" becomes the basis for French identity, in a complex movement of *translatio*, which connects Gallic identity to Roman and Carolingian imperial roots. Significantly, the Gallic and Germanic identities evoked in Agrippa's text rely upon labels made prominent by Julius Caesar's famous ethnocentric narrative, *De bello Gallico*, in which *Galli* or *Germani* were "othered" as groups in relation with the expanding Roman Empire.

Ethnic stereotypes were certainly already present in medieval texts, and they have their roots not only in earlier classical texts but also in the biblical, patristical literature (see Grévin 2014). Agrippa von Nettesheim's early modern text thus employs familiar topoi, which can be, in their turn, traced back to recognizable previous sources (see also Florack 2001, 61). In fact, the German scholar makes direct reference in his book to the Late Antiquity astrologer, Iulius Firmicus Maternus' fourth-century astrological text, the *Mathesis*. Firmicus Maternus

discussions, animal metaphors underlie this commonplace (see for example Stoessel 2014).

⁴Trans.: says Iulius Firmicus in his astrological words which he wrote to Lollianus. All those nations that are fashioned by the heavens are thus characterized by certain habits and common ways. The Scythians raid with unspeakable cruelty, the Italians were always conspicuously loyal, and full of nobility, the Gauls stupid, the Sicilians sharp, the Asians always luxurious and occupied with pleasures, the Spaniards prone to animosity and boasting [...] And now we also know that the Italians bleat in song, that the Spanish moan, that the Germans howl, that the Gauls modulate. In their speech the Italians are grave, yet well-versed: the Spanish cultured but boastful, the Gauls prompt but proud, the Germans harsh yet simple.

⁵The 1582 translation was made by the French historian Louis Turquet de Mayerne (c. 1550-1618).

does not include the correlation between “language”, music, and “nation”, but he relies upon what must have been a commonplace representation of his time:

De moribus uero illud addunt: «Si Saturnus facit cautos, graues, tardos, auaros ac tacitos, Iuppiter maturos, bonos, benignos ac modestos, Mars crudeles, perfidos ac feroces, Sol religiosos, nobiles ac superbos, Venus luxuriosos, uenustos et honesto gratiae splendore fulgentes, Mercurius astutos, callidos et concitati animi mobilitatibus turbulentos, Luna acutos, splendidos, elegantes et populares, splendoris gratia praeualentes, cur quaedam gentes ita sunt formatae ut propria sint morum quodammodo unitate perspicuae? Scythae soli immanis feritatis crudelitate grassantur, Itali fiunt regali semper nobilitate praefulgidi, Galli stolidi, leues Graeci, Afri subdoli, auari Syri, acuti Siculi, luxuriosi semper Asiani uoluptatibus occupati, et Hispani elata iactantiae animositate praeposteri [...]» (1913, 1.2.2.6-1.2.3.6).⁶

Also present in Isidore of Seville’s famous *Etymologiae*, ethnic stereotypes such as those included in this Late Antiquity text have been reappropriated in various forms by medieval and early modern authors.⁷ Yet such stereotypical images were already in use during the Classical Antiquity. “Greek levitas”, an image of Greek frivolity, brings to mind Ciceronian works and a rhetorical *locus communis*, based on the opposition of the dangerous Greek rhetoric to the Roman *gravitas*. Part of the Roman narrative which opposed the simplicity and directness of the Attic style to Asianic luxuriance and theatricality, this representation also brings echoes of the correlation between climate and disposition, and climate and rhetorical style in the ancient world.

The juxtaposition of Greek *levitas* to Roman *gravitas* springs from a representation in the Ciceronian age of Greek rhetoric as drawing away from the simple Attic model, towards the overflowing Asianic style (Connors 1997, 84). This correlation of climate and rhetorical style (*tenuis*, the thin climate of Athens versus *crassum*, the heavy climate of Thebes) is in itself influenced by the well-known Hippocratic treatise *On Airs, Waters, and Places* in which the luxuriant landscape of Asia is associated with a soft, sluggish, feeble body (84-85). Scholars have emphasized the significance of the climate theory for commonplace ethnic representations which connect ancient topoi to the medieval and early modern age in Western Europe (see for example Weeda 2012; Grévin 2014 and 2022). Recontextualized, such topoi, which bring forth negative keywords such as “soft”, “effeminate” or “languishing”, rely upon complex imagery which draws not only from Hippocrates’ work but also from influential ancient historical representations, such as Herodotus’s *Histories*, where Persian civilization is represented as corrupt and effeminate in contrast to the more restrained Greek culture.

Grévin (2014 and 2022) pertinently argues that, in the transition from the medieval to the early modern age, ethnic stereotypes come to reside at the intersection of folklore, literary allusions, classical and biblical culture, on the one hand, and the emergent “scientific”, classificatory thinking, on the other. It is thus not surprising that these commonplaces find their way into seventeenth- and, subsequently, into eighteenth-century lexicographic texts. Scholars such as Richard Yeo have relevantly emphasized the connection between Renaissance commonplace books and encyclopaedic texts (2001 and 2003). In the dictionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such commonplaces begin to function more prominently in their classificatory dimension than in their aphoristic one, and they become significant elements of metalinguistic discourse, and, hence, essential aids in the definition of what emerges as a “language” versus other “languages”.

4. *The Prompt, Monosyllabic English*

Keeping in mind the early models that shape the boundaries of the ancient world, it is relevant to focus yet again on the translation and recontextualization of Bouhours’s remarks in early eighteenth-century English dictionaries, and on the re-imagination (to use Anderson’s watershed term) of English linguistic identity in the lexicographic texts of the first half of the eighteenth century in Britain.

⁶ Translated by Jean Rhys Bram 1975, 14: “As for character, they add, ‘If Saturn makes men careful, serious, dull, miserly, and silent; Jupiter, mature, kindly, generous, temperate; Mars, cruel, treacherous, and fierce; the Sun, upright, high-minded, and proud; Venus, pleasure-loving, charming, handsome; Mercury, shrewd, clever, excitable, changeable; the Moon, intelligent, distinguished, well-mannered, capable of dazzling people with brilliance, why do certain human groups appear to produce largely one type?’ The Scythians are known for monstrous, savage cruelty; the Italians for their king-like superiority; the Gauls are slow-witted, the Greeks frivolous, the Africans tricky, the Syrians greedy, the Sicilians clever, the Asians lustful and pleasure-loving; the Spaniards are absurd with their exaggerated boastfulness”.

⁷ As various other scholars have already noted, ethnic stereotypes are present in Isidore de Seville’s well-known *Etymologiae*: “*Secundum diversitatem enim caeli et facies hominum et colores et corporum quantitates et animorum diversitates existunt. Inde Romanos graves, Graecos leves, Afros versipelles, Gallos natura feroces atque acriores ingenio pervidemus, quod natura climatium facit*” (Isidore 1911, 9.2.105.358).

As is underlined by the use of the term *François*, different from *Gaulois*, in the French translation of Agrippa von Nettesheim's text, French linguistic identity concentrates on the positive connotation of labels such as *prompti*. "Prompt" is listed as the equivalent of *brusque* in Basnage de Beauval's edition of Furetière, in an entry which includes the phrase "le génie français brusque et impétueux" (1701). In Bouhours's seventeenth-century text, equivalent labels such as *brusque*, *vivace*, *court* or *animé* contribute to create the representation of a language which does not have anything "languishing" (*languissant*), and hence one which is not to be associated with the luxurious Asianic model. This image echoes even earlier representations than those in the rhetorical models embraced by Cicero, Longinus or Quintilian. Certainly, it has its roots not only in Hippocrates' influential *On Air, Waters, and Places* but also in the early portrayal of Greek identity by Herodotus.

As Paola Gambarota has underlined, Bouhours, who takes his cues from earlier authors, represents French not only as an heir to the noble, august, imperious/imperial Rome – unlike its rival, Italian, imagined as a degenerate version of Latin – but also as a vital Gallic language, an image which appears in earlier apologies of the vernacular, such as those of Estienne (2011, 52). Discussions of Bouhours's text by several previous authors have already shown that "La langue Française" makes significant use of Étienne Pasquier's *Les recherches de la France*, whose first volume appeared in 1560 (see Gambarota 2011, 53-54). Both Basnage de Beauval and the Jesuits of Trévoux reference Pasquier in their entry concerning LANGAGE, before introducing Bouhours's competitive comparison of languages, and they include yet another image of Italian as soft and effeminate, and hence as an unworthy heir to the Roman Empire: "Les Italiens, degenerans de l'ancienne force du Romain, formerent peu-à-peu de ce langage mâle Romain, un vulgaire tout effeminé & molasse" (Furetière 1701; Trévoux 1721). This polarization between Italian effeminacy and French promptitude echoes the contrast Herodotus makes between the portrayal of the effeminate Persian, corrupted by the luxuries of civilization, and that of the more "manly" Greek society.

Significantly, Chambers' English translation of the lexicographic version of the French text relies upon "blunt", which is a different translation equivalent of the keyword *brusque*, in order to add the English in the comparative representation of the different European nations. The attribute *court*, which was associated with the animate, vivacious French in Bouhours's description, is now transferred to English, which emerges as "short". English is thus spoken by a people "of few words", a phrase which brings to mind not only Caesar's Roman *veni, vidi, vici*, but also the Germanic simplicity evoked by Firmicus Maternus, an image which goes back to Caesar's representation of Germanic populations as straightforward and fierce in *De bello Gallico*. It also bears echoes of Tacitus's well-known admiration of the simple Germanic society, in contrast to the corrupt imperial Rome.

While Chambers's early eighteenth-century encyclopaedia portrays the English language as characterized by bluntness, brevity, and conciseness, Addison's article 135 for the *Spectator* (1711), refers to "the Genius of the English [language]" as linked to "taciturnity" (1776, 230-33) and which relies on a motto from Horace (also employed by Alexander Pope): "Est brevitae opus, ut currat sententia".⁸ Addison's metalinguistic comment in *The Spectator*, in which, significantly, Germans, and not the English, are characterized as "blunt" (1776, 233), lays emphasis on both the monosyllabic character of English and on its particular kind of musicality:

As first of all by its abounding in monosyllables, which gives us an opportunity of delivering our thoughts in few sounds [...] The sounds of our English words are commonly like those of string music, short and transient, which rise and perish upon a single touch; those of other languages are like the notes of wind instruments, sweet and swelling, and lengthened out into variety of modulation. (230)

As Michele Cohen has already argued regarding this essay, "at the time Addison was writing, not only were the French the best model of conversation, but the French language was the language of politeness par excellence" (1999, 55). Addison's remarks upon English echo Bouhours's mention of French monosyllables, which neither Henri Basnage de Beauval nor Chambers include in their lexicographic entries, but which become part of a complex representation of both French and English as effective, clear means of communication and as "not languishing", in opposition to luxurious and effeminate models. Certainly, ancient representations had already linked the "manly", all-conquering Roman and Germanic identities to brevity and clarity.

Chambers's representation of English, which relies upon the erasure of French as a "blunt", "monosyllabic" language, and focuses only on its vivacity, also marks the beginnings of a polarization which becomes prominent in the second half of the eighteenth century (55-56), that of the talkative French versus the taciturn English as national characters. Certainly, in the first half of the eighteenth century, French is a model employed in the

⁸ Trans.: Terseness is needed so that the thought may run free.

metalinguistic comments regarding English, and Chambers's representation of English, later taken over by Bailey's paratext is, as can be seen, modelled on the image of the superiority of French over other languages and nations, and upon a recontextualization of the image of a European vernacular as a worthy heir to the Roman Empire. However, in a different excerpt in his entry for LANGUAGE, Chambers further transforms and expands a translation from Bouhours's French text (taken via previous lexicographic texts), in order to suggest the superiority of English over French linguistic identity (see also Vişan 2018, 295):

Bouhours 1671 (<i>La langue Française</i>)	Chambers 1728 (LANGUAGE)
La langue Italienne est vne coquette toujours parée et toujours fardée, qui ne cherche qu'à plaire, et qui ne se plaît qu'à la bagatelle. La langue Française est vne prude; mais vne prude agreable, qui, toute sage et toute modeste qu'elle est, n'a rien de rude ni de farouche. C'est vne fille qui a beaucoup de traits de sa mère, je veux dire de la langue Latine. (70)	The <i>Italian</i> , a Coquette, full of fine Airts; always appearing dres'd, and taking all Occasions of shewing her Findery; to be admired being all she aims at. The <i>French</i> , an easy Prude, that has her share of Modesty and Discretion, but on occasion can lay them both aside. The <i>English</i> is of a more Masculine Temperament. 'Tis not only a different Family from others, but appears of a different Sex too: Its Virtues are those of a Man: indeed 'tis the Product of a colder Climate and a rougher People, [...] but its Faculties are more extensive, its Conduct more ingenious, and its Views more noble. (429)

Tab. 5 – The superiority of the English language

Chambers's gendered representation of English as a language “of a more Masculine Temperament” and as “the Product of a colder Climate and a rougher People” is an obvious echo of geographical determinism, and of Hippocrates' *On Airts, Waters, Places*, as well as of images, also inspired by earlier Greek models, of Germanic simplicity and virility, present in the work of authors such as Caesar or Tacitus. As previous researchers have emphasized, Germanism, which can be traced back to Gesner's *Mithridates* (1555) becomes a significant part of the glorification of English, and is promoted by seventeenth-century antiquarians (such as Camden and Versteegan) who stress the excellence of English over other European languages (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2022, 186). In the early eighteenth century, Chambers's lexicographic entry portrays English as “short, concise and sententious”, which is not only a reappropriation of attributes already used by Bouhours in his apology of French clarity, but also an echo of the laudatory epithets such as “martial” or “moral” associated with Germanic populations in the work of antiquarian scholars (186-88).

The Preface to Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (1736) recontextualizes excerpts from Chambers's lexicographic entries in a paratext which is meant to reinforce English's Germanic heritage (see Vişan 2018, 298). Apart from material taken from Chambers's entries, Bailey's paratext includes a number of new excerpts from previous authors (including Camden) who further glorify English and decisively proclaim its superiority over other European vernaculars (288-90). No longer part of a lexicographic entry but included in a lexicographic preface which portrays it as a more than worthy rival to French, in Bailey's text, English becomes “the protagonist of its own history” (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2009, 190), and, in this way, it emerges as the worthy topic of a dictionary whose focus starts shifting away from “encyclopaedic” towards “linguistic” matters (see also Vişan 2009 and 2013).

Contributing to the representation of “the English language” in opposition to other languages, lexicographic texts such as those of Chambers and Bailey can be envisaged as marking the beginnings of a polarization which, as Michelle Cohen has already argued, will become crystallized in the second half of the eighteenth century (1999, 55-56). This polarization will come to oppose the manly English to the effeminate French, in a movement quite similar to the one in which the seventeenth-century Bouhours opposes the brisk, animate French to the soft and effeminate Italian, and which certainly bears echoes of the early polarization of the virtuous (republican) Roman versus the degenerate, effeminate Greek or the morally corrupt (imperial) Roman, and to even earlier Greek/Persian polarizations.

Conclusion

While English linguistic identity emerges as “blunt” in early eighteenth-century English dictionaries, it is nevertheless based on a florilegium of recontextualized quotes, whose copiousness is somewhat trimmed down

by its becoming part of a lexicographic endeavour. Focussing on the reappropriation of ancient commonplaces, while underlining a connection between lexicographic texts and the commonplace tradition (see Yeo 2001 and 2003), the present paper has explored not only the complex negotiation between English dictionaries and their European sources but also the complex interplay between ancient topoi and representations of national/linguistic identity in the eighteenth century.

Present both in an encyclopaedic text and in the preface of a universal dictionary more narrowly focused on “English” than on “arts and sciences”, the commonplace which correlates “language” and “nation” becomes a significant element in the conceptualization of what emerges as a unified English linguistic identity in the eighteenth century, distinct from and, eventually, perceived as decidedly superior to “other” linguistic identities whose boundaries are conceptualized in a similar manner. While the proto-nations in Firmicus Maternus’s ancient text and the *nationes* of Agrippa von Nettesheim’s early modern text are certainly not identical with the “nation” which underlies the early nineteenth-century nation-state, there is an obvious continuity which characterizes these representations. Eighteenth-century English lexicographic texts, which recontextualize earlier European representations, highlight this continuity, and the way in which reappropriated ancient commonplaces contribute to the shaping of the emergent nation-state and of the related ideology of the standard language.

As Richard Watts has shown, it is the linguistic homogeneity myth which “drives the ideology of the *Kultursprache* and the related ideology of the standard language” (2011, 129), a myth in its turn “made up of a complex web of myths that are interwoven and continually open to further extension” (*ibidem*). According to Watts, “the concept of a language is derived from an awareness that different communities of human beings use different variations of the capacity for human language” (*ibidem*). The competitive comparison of languages which is present in early eighteenth-century lexicographic texts is meant to consolidate not only a “hypostasisation of individual languages” (119) but also a representation of a homogeneous linguistic identity of English, in sharp contrast with other linguistic identities. Watts, who envisages language myths as the basis of language ideology, sees all language myths as “derived from the common, possibly universal conceptual anthropomorphic metaphor used to understand that nature of human language [...] A LANGUAGE IS A HUMAN BEING” (129).

The exploration of the topoi which make possible the fusion of “language”, “nation” and “genius” has shown that ancient representations and polarizations are a decisive part underlying the generalizations at the basis of eighteenth-century images of English. Such images contribute to the representation of a standard of English, which becomes prominent in the prescriptive texts of the latter part of the century. Quoting Philip White’s “Globalization and the mythology of the nation-state” (2006), Richard Watts underlines that the building of the nation-state is nothing more than a myth (2011, 115). In its discussion of the ethnic stereotypes which contribute to the lexicographic representation of the English language in the early eighteenth century, the present paper lays emphasis on the way in which the myth of the nation-state emerges as gradually interconnected with that of a homogeneous language.

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Antiquity and Antiquities
in the Long 18th Century

Guest Editors
Elisabetta Cecconi and Elisabetta Lonati

PART TWO



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The French Hannibal Antiquity, Intertextuality and Evaluation of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Italian Campaign in the British and Polish Press (1796-99)

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Abstract

This case study pursues connections between editorial stance and allusions to antiquity, focusing on the use of the “French Hannibal” designation, used to characterise Bonaparte in the early stage of the French Revolutionary Wars. The paper addresses the so far poorly explored interfaces of evaluation and intertextuality in historical news discourse. In terms of a diachronic and comparative perspective, the analysis shows that whereas editorial stance was easy to discern in the British news of the time, Polish news sources had not yet developed a series of shared conventions to express editorial opinion.

Keywords: British Press, 18th Century, Evaluation, Hannibal Napoleonic Wars, Polish Press

Introduction

When the tremendous success of General Napoleon Bonaparte Italian campaign¹ became clear in July 1796, the following piece was published by the *Telegraph* in response to fake news printed the previous evening:

(1) WONDERS! WONDERS! WONDERS!

An evening Paper of yesterday killed twenty-eight thousand French in Italy, took Salicetti prisoner and wounded Buonaparte. A more gallant exertion we have seldom witnessed. [...] Though the intelligence was contradicted by accounts [...] from Vienna and Paris, yet the prior news was given without any comment, for the gratification of true believers.

More great than Alexander, greater far
Than Caesar, Hannibal,² or Sweden's Charles;
Your loyal Editor can massacre,
With a mere dash of his destructive pen,
Full Eight and Twenty Thousand fighting Men. (*Telegraph*, 1796-07-01)

¹ Gueniffey indicates April 9th 1796 as the beginning of the campaign (2017, 280).

² Hannibal (247-183 and 181 BC) commanded the forces of Carthage against the Roman Republic during the Second Punic War. For a brief account of Hannibal's actions and consequences for the Roman Republic, see Erskine 1993. For a full biography, see Lancel 1999.

The quotation above (example 1) offers a convenient opening to this paper as it includes an evaluative metacommentary on news production and dissemination practices and alludes to the Roman and Greek antiquity by comparing “your loyal Editor” to prominent conquerors, Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), Scipio Africanus known as Hannibal (see footnote 14 below) and Charles XII of Sweden known as Carolus Rex (1682-1718; see footnote 15 below). The sarcasm of the lines may be extended to the figure of Bonaparte himself, juxtaposing the newsman’s weapon, his pen, with the fighting men, i.e., human resources of real war under a cruelly efficient military leader. The tongue-in-cheek remarks acknowledge misinformation spread by an unreliable editor and may be seen not only as scepticism, but also as seriously minded critique of their lack of professional ethics. Clearly, the “gallant exertion” poses some danger because, as trivial as “a mere dash can be”, it comes with consequences to “true believers”, who are most likely to fall for it. The specific fault of the “Editor” is not that the paper “killed twenty-eight thousand French”. It is rather leaving the message from a private source “without any comment”, such that should have naturally followed from newspaper accounts. Such accounts, as is implied, were based on a regular and reliable source of French news and gave intelligence to the contrary.

Thus, the quote epitomises the significance and the role of editorial comments in late eighteenth century news discourse. At the same time, it clearly displays evaluative features whose general tone has been briefly characterised above. As far as some detailed language and discourse devices of the quote are concerned, evaluation is expressed through metaphors (an evening paper as a killer, mere dash as weapon of destruction), a parallel and a comparison using comparative adjectives (“a more gallant exertion”, “more great”, “greater”), evidentiality (“we have seldom witnessed”), marked person reference (“your loyal Editor”), group reference (“true believers”, note also an allusion to the Bible), contradiction (“Though”, “yet”), modification with evaluative adjectives (“loyal”, “destructive”), adjectives (“mere”, “full”) and an adverb of degree (“seldom”), marked word order in the numeral phrase (“Full Eight and Twenty Thousand”).

The allusions to antiquity, as made evident in the quote mentioned above, are the specific focus of interest that this paper intends to combine with evaluation in the news (see Section 1 below). The following research questions are asked: what forms and degrees of evaluation are embedded in parallels with antique figures and allusions to antiquity? Here the focus is on three issues: 1. Specific language and rhetorical devices used; 2. the marking of editorial commentary as opposed to the direct presentation of excerpts from foreign press; 3. connections between evaluation and intertextuality. More generally, the paper addresses the extent to which the historical context, political agendas and editorial stance influence evaluation and it aims to connect the expression of evaluation to editorial practices. In order to pursue connections between evaluation and allusions to antiquity, I have conducted a case study into the use of one group of antique parallels employed to characterise Bonaparte in the Italian campaign (1796-97), namely the “French Hannibal” designation. In the network of European news in the period, some particularly successful comparisons like this one transcended boundaries of cultures and languages. For this reason, I have decided to retrace and analyse the designation in British and Polish news publications that covered the Italian campaign. The paper is structured as follows. In Section 1, I present aspects of evaluation in media discourse and its interfaces with intertextuality. In Section 2 more background on the political dimension of Bonaparte’s campaign in Britain and in partitioned Poland is offered. Section 3 contextualises antiquity references in the coverage of Bonaparte in British and Polish news sources. The following Section, 4, presents the data and method. This is followed by a discussion and analysis in Section 5. The concluding section closes the paper and offers some conclusions.

1. *Evaluation and Intertextuality*

Over the years, evaluation has been studied extensively in discourse and media studies (e.g., Hyland 2005, Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2006; Biber 2006; Hyland and Jiang 2016; Biber and Zhang 2018). Terminologically speaking, a distinction between evaluation and stance has been drawn. Hyland and Jiang (2016) follow Hyland (2005) and Biber (2006) and describe “stance as the writer’s expression of personal attitudes and assessments of the status of knowledge in a text” (254). Biber and Zhang use the term “grammatical stance”, i.e. a “finite set of lexico-grammatical devices that explicitly express attitudes and epistemic assessments, while ‘evaluation’ refers to any stretch of discourse that can be interpreted as conveying an (implicit) attitude or epistemic assessment” (2018, 99). Explicit expressions of stance thus cover grammatical features (modal auxiliaries: may, might, can), adverbials (reportedly, actually, in fact), verbs (appear, prove, claim) and other indicators of certainty or veracity (evidentials, e.g. I have seen him play football). Hunston, who uses the term *evaluation* to cover the expression of personal attitude and assessment, claims that “[e]valuation may not be immediately identifiable as it is largely implied by

the context of use and reader's assumptions" (2004, 157). In the distinction between stance and evaluation, it is thus important to notice the opposition between explicitness and implicitness. Whereas lexico-grammatical features enable corpus-based quantitative investigations and complex methodologies, such as Biber's multidimensional analysis, implicit expression of personal opinion requires a close contextualisation and qualitative analyses. For instance, a study by Biber and Zhang, based on two types of texts online, marked by the readers as Opinion (OP) and the other as Informational Persuasion (IP), has shown that "only the OP documents were marked for the use of grammatical stance features, while the IP documents were marked for the absence of those features" (2018, 97). This suggests that although both text samples were perceived as expressing assessment, the former used more explicit lexico-grammatical features (seen by the audience as overtly opinionated), while the latter employed different devices for persuasion of informational nature and that such devices cannot have been predicted or identified by means of a corpus-based approach. Thus, in the latter text samples evaluation was to some extent implicit.

When it comes to historical news discourse, whose communicative functions cannot be verified against user responses, researchers have pursued a broad range of phenomena that fall under both evaluation and stance. For example, comparison as an evaluative device has been analysed by Claridge (2009), with particular reference to the informational, persuasive and entertainment functions of early news discourse. Stance as personal attitude encoded among others in the use of pronouns (I, we vs. they), speech acts and modality has also been investigated.³ In addition, Bös analysed framing devices in relation to the process of acquiring intelligence and indicating epistemic stance in prefaces to London newspapers in the late 17th- and early 18th-century (2012, 135-36). This approach has uncovered some journalistic ideals and publication strategies. Metatextual evaluation has also been studied by Brownlees (2015) in the earliest periodical news, while Cecconi (2020) investigated evaluation and comments in paratexts from 17th-century broadside ballads and news pamphlets.

Most recently, the potential of translation and intertextuality as sources of both explicit and implicit evaluation in news transfer has been suggested. Thus, McLaughlin and Brownlees (2023) have pointed out that evaluation is closely linked to emotivity, evidentiality and reliability of journalistic genres. These issues may be studied through the analysis of framing and naming (person reference), of active vs. passive verbs, speech acts and modal verbs. Next to lexico-grammatical devices, however, it has been emphasised that implicit attitudes and evaluation have to be given considerable space (Brownlees forthcoming).

In response to this line of research, I would like to study evaluation understood as both an explicit and an implicit expression of attitude and assessment in connection to overt references to prominent ancient figures in news on Bonaparte and his Italian campaign. As numerous studies indicate, the cultural heritage of antiquity was universally shared, contested and re-appropriated in the Enlightenment. Thus, allusions to antiquity selected for this study may be seen a form of intertextual exchange throughout contemporary European news networks and beyond. The method of analysis is qualitative and follows the studies referred to above (Bös 2012; Brownlees 2015; Cecconi 2020 and forthcoming), while retrieval of examples is mostly automatic through key-word searches in electronic resources.

The nature of evaluation invariably results from a viewpoint on a specific person or issue. Hence, I have decided to juxtapose news drawn from political milieus that had different agendas in the French Revolutionary Wars, and more specifically, in the Italian campaign. As is briefly explained below (Section 2), the British political stakes were in opposition to the Polish interests. Thus, the two contexts could be broadly characterised as providing a negative (anti-Bonaparte), positive (pro-Bonaparte) setting for the presentation of the General and his French army.

2. *Bonaparte in Britain and in Partitioned Poland*⁴

The First Coalition War against the expansion of revolutionary France started in 1792 when Britain, in alliance with Austria, Prussia and Russia, among others, invaded the enemy (Grab 2003, 1). However, tensions between Britain and France had been growing much earlier following Britain's political response to the French Revolution as well as conflicts of interest in trade.⁵ Thus, being at war with France provided a very clear frame to the attitudes expressed by contemporary news publications within a broader picture of the long-standing Anglo-French rivalry.⁶ It comes as no surprise that Bonaparte had become the preminent hate figure for Britons.

³ See Bös 2012, 129 for more references.

⁴ The terms "Poland" (and "Polish") may be taken to designate the language as well as political entities, i.e. the Kingdom of Poland which was part of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1569 and 1795.

⁵ See Blanning 1986 Chapter 1 for a detailed background.

⁶ See Semmel 2004 for a monograph on this issue.

Moving on to the “The Polish question”,⁷ it is important to bear in mind that Poland lost its political sovereignty in 1795. This was brought about by military conflicts, as well as by lack of internal stability of the state, culminating in the first partition in 1772, followed by the second in 1793 and the third one in 1795. The Kingdom of Poland disappeared from the maps of Europe into Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary, though some territories came to enjoy relative autonomy temporarily (The Duchy of Warsaw 1807-15; the Free City of Cracow and the Grand Duchy of Posen after 1815 following the Congress of Vienna). Thus, understandably, there was resistance to Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian empire on the side of the “imagined nation” of Poles.⁸ This meant that enemies of the partitioners were friends and potential allies of Poles, with France fighting its revolutionary wars in Europe being the most important one in the period immediately following the third partition (Sautin 2011, 27). Political ambitions of Polish nobility from different areas of the former kingdom of Poland had been closely connected to the French revolutionary campaign since 1795.⁹ These ambitions materialised in the creation of Polish legions under general Henryk Dąbrowski (1755-1818), which, attained with help from France, started fighting for Bonaparte in 1797 in his Italian campaign (Sautin 2011, 28-29).

Although the Napoleonic influence in Poland did not formally start until his victory over Prussia in 1806-07, when the Duchy of Warsaw was founded, the press publications in Polish followed very closely the French advances in Italy made a decade earlier. The overall attitude would have been that of sympathy and support, if not enthusiasm. It is important to underline that news publication in partitioned Poland was regulated by different systems of control and censorship under the governance of Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary. At the same time, the creation of the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 changed the legal constraints on the freedom of the press and shifted the bias to the propagandistic publicity exercised in all the territories under the French rule (Łepkowski 1962). From this point on, news publications across the Duchy simply reflected the Napoleonic cult. For this reason, the earlier times of the Italian campaign are likely to provide more interesting material in terms of the evaluation of Bonaparte and his army.

3. Contextualising Antiquity References in the News on the Italian Campaign

The profoundly neoclassical eighteenth century was full of both reverence and rifts in its inspirations and revisions of antiquity. Contemporary archaeological excavations and discoveries generated the “social energy” that led to the commercialisation of ancient artifacts and to a variety of disciplinary developments in the realm of science, such as the rise of antiquarianism (Heringman 2013, 21). In addition, as Heringman continues, the period was marked by a proliferation of antiquities in the sense of a ubiquitous presence of ancient artifacts (real and fake) in the lives of contemporaries. Not only did the antiquarian virus infect collectors, but it also affected the mindsets of many from different walks of life and social strata. One medium that was involved in this proliferation was undoubtedly the growing and consolidating periodical press. Towards the end of the century, news on the monuments, marbles, inscriptions and antique art spotted by travellers in Italy, discovered and analysed by connoisseurs (e.g. Johann Joachim Winckelmann 1717-68), or accidentally revealed by ordinary workers in obscure places in England, established its presence in the political and military domains of contemporary press (e.g. *London Journal* (1720) (1723-06-22) wrote about a “wondrous and curious stone” containing inscriptions in Latin found by workmen digging the foundations for a house in Chichester).

General Bonaparte’s Italian campaign (1796-97) was equally about conquest of land as it was about its ancient cultural heritage:¹⁰ wars may be about political power, but they begin with plunder. If “[t]he Romans

⁷ The term is used frequently by historians (e.g. the title of Sautin’s paper).

⁸ Some researchers use the term “nation without a state” and assume the existence of a (imagined) community unified by language, especially in the later nineteenth century (Stegmann 2000).

⁹ See Grab 2003, 177-79 for more details.

¹⁰ As early as a couple of months into the Italian campaign, *Telegraph* (1796-07-01) reported “The French Gallery at the Louvre! With ... the Correggio from Parma, the Italian Crown of Thorns from Milan, [...] the Apollo, and the Laocoon. &c. still want some beads to be complete [...]”. Works by Correggio’s, Michelangelo’s and Raphael (60 in quantity) are mentioned in Polish papers even sooner (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 31.05.1796, no. 46 + dod [Warsaw and Foreign Correspondent]; see also *Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 1796 no. 47 and 1797 no. 53, 60 and 68). Moreover, *Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny* no. 70 from 1.09.1797 lists c. 17 paintings, sacked and brought to Paris, by author and titles appended with short, but enthusiastic descriptions. British papers, understandably, expressed criticism and sarcasm: “General Buonaparte wishing to ornament Paris with such pictures as will do it honour, desires a proper artist may be sent to select the best: this is acting upon a very different system to that Roman General, who, when he despoiled Greece of many of her finest statues, and sent them onboard different vessels to be conveyed to Rome, assured the captains, that, ‘if any of

managed the most efficient city-smashing, land-grabbing, slave catching machine of antiquity” (Wiener 1973, 501), then the young General’s army most likely surpassed them. Not only British, but also Polish periodical news publications reported keenly on the military advances and on the scope, details and transports of the art-sacking machine. Bonaparte’s political programme involved building an empire not only politically inspired by the ideal of the Roman republic (initially, at least), but also recognising the power of ancient thought, classical education and the value of cultural and artistic heritage of antiquity.¹¹ Education in wisdom and beauty¹² and the appreciation of the works of art were to lay foundations to the new state.

Through the press and other forms of communication from the battlefields, Napoleon Bonaparte consciously generated an image of himself as an unstoppable warrior and military genius. In order to achieve this, he employed a rhetoric with abundant references to antiquity in his proclamations, speeches to his generals, his correspondence with the Executive Directory and bulletins. These materials, in samples or in full, occupied a profound place in contemporary press in Britain, as well as in other European news publications. It is thus only understandable that these topics are well known (e.g. Billy 2000, Hanley 2005, Fulińska 2013, Santangelo 2022 on Roman references in Napoleon’s private and public life; see also Santangelo’s bibliography references for more relevant works).

It is noteworthy that the studies referenced above mostly deal with the texts and references coming from Napoleon himself, even though references to antiquity in laudatory designations from the French public are also abundant in the press and in news commentary. For example, Hanley lists 89 given names and war pseudonyms of ancient figures used to refer to Napoleon (2005, 1.40). In this work, which is based on secondary sources of the contemporary French press and some data drawn directly from contemporary newspapers, Hanley has analysed Napoleon’s policy of image-building through dispatches. The paper corroborates the view of Napoleon as master of propaganda whose strong presence in the press was reinforced by the boldness of his writing style. However, Hanley’s claims, based on official forms naming Bonaparte, that both the antiquity character and the enthusiasm underlying these designations are to a large extent a consequence of Napoleon’s own propaganda activity.¹³ In any case, among victorious names we can find the “French Hannibal” (Hanley 2005, 1.40 and footnote 46 for the sources).

Fulińska (2013, 37-41) pursues the analogy with Hannibal further. She emphasises that Republican heroes, Brutus and Scipio,¹⁴ were of great importance for revolutionary France. Moreover, the Punic Wars were a common source of analogy. That Napoleon saw himself as an emulator of Hannibal is also supported with anecdotal evidence,¹⁵ such as a prominent position of the busts of both Scipio and Hannibal in the Palace of Saint-Cloud where he resided as first consul (Fulińska 2013, 39). Moser (2021, 102) quotes Bonaparte placing himself alongside the great rulers and military leaders such as Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal and Gustavus the Great in a talk with his biographer Emanuel de las Cases (1766-1842) during his exile to St. Helena. Finally, a position taken by Fulińska is that “at the end of Napoleon’s life, though, Hannibal, the greatest of the conquered heroes, was a suitable model to evoke” (2013, 41).

That Hannibal was a crucial point of reference for the contemporary press relating to Bonaparte’s not only in these final years, but also in early conquests is corroborated by the material drawn from *Burney Newspaper Collections* (covering the 17th and 18th centuries)¹⁶ from 1796-999 analysed here (Section 4 below). Similarly,

them were damaged in the voyage, they should pay for making new ones in their place!”. To delineate his victories, Lewis the XIV. carried a painter in his train; to display their conquests the French Generals of the present day, take the pictures already painted, as their trophies” (*Morning Chronicle*, 1796-05-31). However, British papers also reported in detail on the progress of the French Commission of Arts and Sciences that operated in Italy (*Courier*, 1796-11-10).

¹¹ Open competitions for dissertations on topics related to antiquity were reported in Polish papers. One was a contest on connections of the French national spirit to antique heritage where one of the questions to be resolved was how the teaching of ancient Greek and Latin could be brought back into the curriculum (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 20.07.1797, no. 60 + dod.). Winners were to be awarded golden hectograms.

¹² Bonaparte is described in Polish press as “przyjaciel sztuk pięknych i nauk” (a friend of fine arts and sciences). This is a comment on his attempt to recruit Italian scientists and artists to move to France (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 30.07.1796, no. 61).

¹³ See Gueniffey 2017, 365 who expresses a similar opinion.

¹⁴ Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, 236/235-183 BC c.), a Roman general and statesman, played a crucial role in Rome’s victory against Carthage in the Second Punic War. His greatest military achievement was the defeat of Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 BC. The honorific epithet Africanus is understood as a conqueror of Africa.

¹⁵ Matteson’s analysis (1980) of William Turner’s contemporary painting *Snowstorm. Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps* (1812) inspired by Jacques-Louis David’s *Napoleon Crossing the Alps, 20 May* (1803) presenting three stones in the Alpine Passage inscribed with HANNIBAL, KAROLUS MAGNUS and NAPOLEON is only one example of the profound resonance of the parallel between Napoleon and Hannibal and other charismatic leaders in art and popular culture which continues till today (see e.g. Allan and High 2021).

¹⁶ *17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection* is hosted by a variety of platforms, e.g. *Gale Cengage*.

a quantitative study based on a broader corpus, i.e. the *British Newspaper Archive*, over the entire period of the Napoleonic Wars (1796-1815) by Ruiz-Tapiador confirms this observation. In this time span, Ruiz-Tapiador found 171, 688 mentions of Napoleon Bonaparte in the British press (2022, 21). 103 relevant terms that were most popular in contemporary press were listed and their frequencies presented on a time axis. Among them are: “modern Alexander”, “modern Hannibal”, Appolyon and Proteus (80-81).

The analysis below builds upon this research, but it takes a news commentary perspective and a comparative angle. It is designed as an addition to the works summarised above in terms of focusing on involvement of the contemporary news discourse with the figure of Hannibal and some further ancient tropes in presenting the activity of Bonaparte in the Italian campaign.

4. Data Sources, Selection and Presentation

Due to space constraints, it is not possible to provide an overview of the contexts of news discourse analysed in this paper. What needs to be emphasised strongly, though, is that in terms of news publication markets, the late eighteenth century partitioned Poland can by no means be compared to Britain. The coverage of the *Burney Collections* is ca. 1,000 individual publications (not all were periodical), which, vast as it is, does not reflect the totality of the publications and shows that the market has been expanding in many dimensions in the period (Brownlees and Finkelstein 2023, 34-39). As far as the Polish news market is concerned, an estimate for 1792 mentions six different periodicals published in Warsaw including three titles in Polish, two in French and one in German (e.g. *Gazeta Rządowa* [Government Gazette], *Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny* [Warsaw Correspondent], *Gazette de Varsovie* [Gazette of Warsaw]) (Łojek 1980, 10).¹⁷ None of these papers was a daily in the literal understanding; they all appeared two to three times a week. A further issue which is problematic for the study of the Polish as opposed to the British press is the relatively less consistent representativeness of the available electronic resources. Among the most important ones, are *CRISPA* and *Jagiellonian Library* platforms,¹⁸ both undeniably invaluable archival resources. However, in both cases, it is not always clear what rationale underlies the selection of the sources or the gaps in coverage. For the purpose of this study, mostly *CRISPA* was used as it offers pdf files with extended search options, although these are not free from limitations.¹⁹

Antiquity references in connection to Napoleon were the first pursued course of automatic searches. In the *Burney Collections* for 1796-99, the items *Bounaparte* (the conventional spelling in English in the period) and *Hannibal* yielded 91 hits. Many search results referred to a ship named Hannibal and were hence disregarded. Overall, 32 items were relevant, 9 of which were selected for detailed presentation below. In the Polish database, *CRISPA*, there is considerable spelling variation. First of all, the contemporary form <Bonaparte> does not occur in the time span of the Italian campaign with <Buonaparte> being the most frequent variant. In addition, searches were conducted also for the variants *Buonaporte* and *Buonoparte* in connection to the variants *Hannibal*, *Annibal*, *Hanibal* and *Anibal*. The number of relevant hits was very low (three relevant ones), thus further searches were conducted manually and were limited to the time span of 1796-99, yielding the following mentions: *Buonaparte* – 93, *Buonaporte* – 9, *Buonoparte* – 1. The newspaper samples that included these were read carefully. Contrary to expectations, manual searches did not add to the automatised ones.²⁰ However, even this low number of items provides some ground for comparison and insights into the intertextual dimension. The data is presented in two sections below (4.1 and 4.2).

¹⁷ See Dziki 1961, 143-44 on the press landscape in the 18th century, and Łojek 1965 on a more general overview.

¹⁸ *Jagiellońska Biblioteka Cyfrowa* (Jagiellonian Digital Library) (<<https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/>>, 11/2024) and *CRISPA* (<<https://crispa.uw.edu.pl/>>, 11/2024) are managed by the Jagiellonian University Library in Kraków and Warsaw University Library respectively. The sources are repositories of facsimiles in different formats (jpg, djvu, pdf) rather than linguistic corpora, thus their range cannot be established in terms of word counts.

¹⁹ See Włodarczyk (forthcoming) for details.

²⁰ One possible explanation here may be the fact that the most important periodical publication, *Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny* was discontinued at the end of July 1797 to return in January 1796 with its subscribers transferred to *Gazeta Warszawska* (Ziółek 1989, 153). It is difficult to explain though why other periodical publications (including *Gazeta Warszawska*) do not feature further references to Hannibal either for the years covered here, especially since extracts from the French press had such an important position. For the time span under study, the *Jagiellonian Digital Library* offers *Gazeta Krakowska* which was also automatically checked for the reference, with no success. However, over 200 copies of the newspaper published between 1796-99 include references to Bonaparte, which is extant and promising material for further qualitative studies.

4.1 *Hannibal in the British Sources*

In the British sources, references to Hannibal occur in foreign intelligence (mostly from French papers, but also from other European news sources) and in editorial commentary. In the former case, the sources closely related to Bonaparte are usually quoted (excerpts from proclamations, letters, dispatches, speeches, etc.). Because such sources may include third-party material (such as e.g. the responses of Italian states to Bonaparte’s occupation or the letter from the Pope), two categories of references may be distinguished. Namely, these represent, respectively, the internal French perspective and an external perspective. Table 1 below presents the categories of sources.

Source of references	
Foreign intelligence	Editorial commentary
Internal (French)	+
External (third party)	-

Tab. 1 – Sources of references to Hannibal in the British data

The presentation of data is chronological in order not to obscure potential intertextuality and interconnectedness among the references. The first illustration in example (2) offers a comment on Bonaparte proclamation from May 20th 1796 that followed the battle of Lodi and opened the way to Pavia and Milan (Gueniffey 2017, 290). Although the evidential value of the news from Frankfurt is undermined in the first sentence, the impact of Bonaparte’s army is acknowledged as the source compares the rhetoric of his proclamation to “the style of Hannibal” and indicates the similarity of circumstances of the two military operations. Evidential status of the final sentence is that of an editorial perspective expressing a resigned acceptance of the fact that the march cannot be stopped. The “style of Hannibal” involves a derogatory tone and is likely to extend from the person of Bonaparte to his actions. One negative connotation with the figure of the ancient Carthaginian commander might be the revanchist motivations of his state regarding the Roman Republic which had won the First Punic War, as well as the cult of militarism.

(2) Editorial commentary

If we may believe the letters from Frankfort, the Army of Conde has received orders to march for Italy, to cover the Imperial dominions in that quarter. The Proclamation of Buonaparte, written in the style of Hannibal, and in similar circumstances, announces to his soldiers his march to Rome; and we do not see at present any circumstances than can prevent his triumphant march. (*Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 1796-06-06)

The following illustration in example (3) below is also an editorial commentary which expresses great faith in the resistance of Italy against the French. Fabius Maximus, who stopped Hannibal’s march, is the central figure here. He is seen as a model for General Johann Peter de Beaulieu (1725-1819; since April 1796 field marshal of the Habsburg army in northern Italy) who still stands a chance against Bonaparte, as long as he follows the actions of Fabius against Hannibal, although the latter may seem to be at the very top of his military power and glory.

(3) Editorial commentary

There is no country in Europe where a greater resistance can be made against an invading enemy... than Italy [...] or Rome had been often saved, when vast armies of what were then called Barbarians had entered Italy, whu [sic!] were either obliged in a short time to retreat, or otherwise cut to pieces; and thus by the prudence of Fabius, who gained thereby the title of Maximus, Rome was saved at the time Hannibal had beaten every Roman General that dared to attack him, for Fabius declined every context, hovered on him in the mountainous parts, cut off his supplies, and obliged him to desist at last from his enterprises. Thus Beaulieu can only act. (*Evening Mail*, 1796-06-08)

The example below, (4), represents a piece of foreign news which circulated in a relatively unchanged form between August 20-23rd 1796 in different British periodicals.²¹ The piece covers quotes from a speech by a deputy to the National Convention, Pierre-Anselme Garrau (1762-1829), who negotiated the Armistice of Bologna with the Papal States:

²¹ “Battles of Hannibal” were mentioned by *Telegraph* (1796-08-23), *Daily Advertiser* (1796-08-23), *Morning Chronicle* (1796-08-23),

(4) Foreign intelligence

Paris, Aug 15. The particulars of the rapid victories of our army in Italy would be too long to give at full length; [...] ‘To find any comparison in History’, adds Gereau, ‘we must look back to the times of the battles of Hannibal’. (*Whitehall Evening Post* [1770] [1796-08-20])²²

This and similar news pieces underlined that “the battles of Hannibal” are the only relevant event in history to which the French can relate their “rapid victories” in Italy.

The two examples above, i.e., (3) and (4), show a clear contradiction in the perception of Hannibal between the editorial commentary and the materials drawn directly from French newspapers. Understandably, to the British, the ancient warrior, as well as his contemporary embodiment, the French Hannibal, are enemies. Hence, in the commentary, it is not the perspective of a victorious campaign, but that of an ultimately failed one and the heroisation of Fabius, Hannibal’s opponent, that is adopted by the British. To the French, it is Hannibal’s successful march through the Alpine Passage that is central to the narrative of the success of their armies in Italy. For this reason, Hannibal is frequently decontextualised in French accounts, which remain silent when it comes to Fabius and the ultimate misfortune of Hannibal’s conquest.

An editorial explicitly entitled “Remarks on the present state of politics”, dating back to the days when “Hannibal battles” were all over the British dailies, provides a similar illustration in example (5). The comment closely contextualises the setback to the “hardy Africans” prepared by the Roman army of Fabius, a defeat metaphorically presented as a gathering storm, i.e., a metaphor for slow attrition war tactics. A parallel is drawn between a similar storm in Tyrol by the forces of General Wurmser “over the army of the French Hannibal”. Despite the heroic efforts and the well-deserved praise addressed to Fabius-Wurmser,²³ the storm “has burst like a bubble”, while its outcome is Bonaparte triumphant. In a new paragraph, the piece continues with the desperate: “This army was the last hope of Austria”.

(5) Editorial commentary

When HANNIBAL was overrunning the campaign country of Italy, he said he dreaded the storm that was gathering upon the mountains. That storm was the Roman army under the temporising FABIUS, which attended him on his march, and at last broke with effect upon the heads of the hardy Africans, who hoped to carry to Carthage the spoils of the capitol. In like manner a storm has been gathering in the mountains of the Tyrol, over the army of the French Hannibal; but it has burst like a bubble, and the elements of which it was composed melted into the air. Though WURMSER, like FABIUS, may by many of his military operations have deserved the surname of CUNCTATOR, he has not, like him, restored the fortunes of the country ... the triumphant BUONAPARTE [...]. (*Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 1796-08-21)

Another hopeful British commentary appears in connection to the negotiations between the French and the Papal states and is quote below in example (6). Despite the strong anti-Catholic sentiment, the piece expresses a silent hope for salvation from “Scipio to repulse the French Hannibal”. It is the Pope and his allies, apparently, who are supposed to produce such a figure. Once more, the point of the historical reference is not so much to Hannibal, as to his opponent, Scipio, a parallel appropriate to the British viewpoint. As mentioned above (Introduction), the figure of Scipio was among the most important ancient referents to the French Republic.

(6) Editorial commentary

It appears that the Pope has renounced all ideas of Negotiation with the French Republic. He transmitted a manifesto to all the Catholic Courts, in which he invited them to unite forces in defence of Religion. [...] It remains to be seen whether Catholic Rome can find a Scipio to repulse the French Hannibal. (*Whitehall Evening Post* [1770] [1796-10-29])

The next illustration in example (7) has been drawn from French papers (*Postillion des Armees*) and published in the *Star and Evening Advertiser*, thus presenting a French voice. Even though it does not involve a parallel to Bonaparte, it is considered relevant as it describes one of the military campaigns he conceived of, namely an invasion of England. The parallel with the Punic Wars is drawn, while the ancient leaders and an eighteenth-century military commander, Saxe,²⁴ are referred to as voices of authority on the prospective conquest of England.

Star and Evening Advertiser (1788) (1796-08-23).

²² For the sake of more convenient retrieval of examples, the dating schemes applied here follow the electronic repositories: the British collection uses (year-month-day), while the Polish ones (day.month.year) followed by issue number. Some British titles (as in examples 4, 6, 7) provide two different years. This serves the purpose of distinguishing publications with identical titles by different editors or from different periods.

²³ Dagobert Sigmund von Wurmser (1724-97) was an Austrian field marshal who capitulated to Bonaparte in Mantua.

²⁴ Maurice de Saxe, Count of Saxony (1696-1750) was Marshal General of France.

(7) Foreign intelligence

Much is said of the immense preparations making for an invasion of England; we must, said CATO, destroy Carthage; we shall never conquer the Romans but in Rome, said HANNIBAL and MIRTHRIDATES.²⁵ Marshal SAXE often repeated the English would never be conquered but in London [...]. (*Star and Evening Advertiser* [1788] [1796-11-08])

Similarly, to the above, the quotation below (example 8) under the title “Message from the Directory to the council of five hundred” represents a laudation to the heroism of Napoleon’s soldiers in Italy and is drawn from a longer excerpt of a speech of the President of the French Directory. The veneration of Hannibal is an important aspect of the reference; however, the comparison actually indicates that his seemingly unparalleled march has been surpassed, not so much by Bonaparte himself, but by his soldiers.

(8) Foreign intelligence

[...] The President replied to Citizen LEMAROIS – Young and valiant Warrior, the Executive Directory receives with satisfaction those glorious trophies you present, in the name of the brave army of Italy. Your generous companions, your valourous brethren in arms, conquerors of four armies, have done more than triumph over Austria; they have exceeded the renown of HANNIBAL. [...]. (*Star and Evening Advertiser* [1788] [1797-01-06])

In mid-January 1797, at least four papers published comments opening with “BOUNAPARTE has been compared to HANNIBAL” (*Oracle*, 1797-01-14, and *Morning Chronicle*, 1797-01-14); “It is not without reason that Buonaparte has been compared to HANNIBAL” and “Buonaparte has with reason been compared to Hannibal” (*Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 1797-01-15), example (9a). The explanation follows the critical British standpoint: Bonaparte is like Hannibal in that he exploits the territories he conquers for necessities and soldier wages, while the supplies he receives from France are feeble. This once more builds on the negative potential of Hannibal reference. *Oracle* continues in its commentary (example 9b below) by reading a royal allusion in a sarcastic way: “a way, which the friends of the Republic scarcely could expect”. The paucity of resources, being the basis for the comparison to Hannibal, may be detrimental to Napoleon’s army if the occupied areas refuse to pay what is demanded of them. The refusals enumerated by the comment clearly express that the British rejoice in this predicament of the French army in Italy and enable it to present Bonaparte in the eyes of the conquered to whom he remains a usurper.

(9a) Editorial commentary

BOUNAPARTE has been compared to HANNIBAL. For some time he has received but very feeble succours from France; and, like the Carthaginian General has been obliged to recruit, cloath and pay his army at the expence of the territories he occupys. (*Oracle*, 1797-01-14)

(9b) BOUNAPARTE has realised the allusion of the Monarch BARRAS,²⁶ in a way, which the friends of the Republic scarcely could expect - He is like HANNIBAL in the *paucity of reinforcement only*, which he receives. The people of *Milan* refuse the contribution he demands – and indeed its burthen is not easy to sustain, being five millions of livres, and 25,000 recruits for his army. He has made similar demands from Ferrara and Bologna – From the former he has received no answer; and from the latter a refusal. (*Oracle*, 1797-01-14)

The following examples (10a and b) are drawn from a speech of a deputy of the General in Chief of the Army of Italy addressed to the two captains-regent of the republic of St. Marino.²⁷ Although the piece is a long quote from French newspapers, it also represents a voice external to the French Republican voice, because it covers a response of the representatives of the republic to the conditions of capitulation. Still, like the French, the St. Marinians were also of the opinion that the French army achieved success that parallels that of Hannibal and went even further by stating that this outdid “every thing marvellous in antiquity”.

²⁵ Mithradates VI Eupator (died 63 BC), was the king of Pontus in northern Anatolia. He contested Rome’s hegemony in Asia Minor.

²⁶ Most likely Paul de Barras (1755-1829), fought for the French army in Sardinia and was member of the National Convention. The designation Monarch might be related to his noble family origins.

²⁷ The Republic of San Marino was granted independence by Napoleon despite its long alliance with the Papal States because it was viewed as a model republic, an ideal of the French Revolutionary wars.

(10a) Foreign Intelligence

CITIZEN REGENTS,

Liberty, which, when Athens and Thebes were in their glory, transformed the Greeks into a nation of heroes; which, while Rome was a Republic made the Romans perform prodigies; which, during the short interval when it shone on some towns of Italy, revived the arts and sciences, and rendered Florence illustrious - Liberty was almost banished from Europe. It existed only in St. Marino [...]. (*Star and Evening Advertiser* [1788] [1797-03-16])

(10b) Answer of the Republic of St. Marino to the address

We have not been able to see without the strongest exultation, the arms of the French nation recalling in Italy the glorious days of the Grecian and Roman Republics. Our love of Liberty made us feel the value of the mighty efforts of a great people resolved to be free. [...] Your soldiers following the tract of HANNIBAL, out-doing every thing marvellous in antiquity, and being conducted by a General, who to a combination of admirable qualities adds the talents that are the concomitants only of genius, have found their way to a corner of the globe, where a remnant of ancient liberty took shelter, but where the simplicity of Spartan manners prevails rather than the polish and elegance of Athens [...]. (*Star and Evening Advertiser* [1788] [1797-03-16], underline mine)

4.2 Hannibal in the Polish Sources

Sources of excerpts published in Polish press may also be divided into foreign intelligence and editorial commentary. However, editorial commentary coming directly from the Polish papers is in fact not present. Instead, there is a tendency to present editorial comments drawn from foreign intelligence as table 2 shows.

Source of references	
Foreign intelligence	Editorial commentary
Internal (French)	?
External (third party)	Foreign intelligence; external (third party)

Tab. 2 – Sources of references to Hannibal in the Polish data

The presentation of the data from Polish papers does not follow chronological order but it is constructed following the order the English examples were presented above. Thus, example 11 below is a Polish version of example (10b) – more specifically of the part underlined above.

(11) Foreign intelligence

Odpowiedź Rzpłtey *Święto Maryńskiej* pełna jest szlachetności i prostoty, i ma w sobie prawdziwą starożytności cechę.

Wasza armia (odpowiedziała ta Rzpłta Deputowanemu) postępując śladem *Annibala*, i przewyższając swoimi dziełami to wszystko co tylko najdziwniejszego dawne wślawiło wieki, które przewodniczy Rycerz Łączący ze wszystkimi cnotami talenta wielkiego geniuszu, obrociła wzrok swoy na ten kącik globu, gdzie szczątek dawney schronił się wolności, gdzie bardziej panuje prostota obyczaów *Sparty* niż przyjemność *Ateńska*. (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 24.03.1797, no. 24)

Overall, the Polish version is quite close to the English one, in particular in the reference to Hannibal where “follow the tract of” is rendered literally as “postępując śladem” whereby the nobilitation involved in this historical reference and its positive connotations are expressed. However, the subject of the first sentence “Wasza armia” (Eng. your army) is different from the English version, which has “Your soldiers”. Moreover, the counterpart of the English term “marvellous” is “najdziwniejszy” (Eng. the strangest, the oddest) and does not reflect the strongly positive tenor of this evaluative adjective. The reference to the “General” is not present in the Polish example, instead the word “Rycerz” (Eng. knight) occurs. Finally, the Polish version uses a metaphor that involves a personification of the subject, the army: “obrociła wzrok swoy na ten kącik globu” (Eng. turned their sight to this corner of the globe) as a counterpart of “have found their way to a corner of the globe”. The Polish version emphasises the agency of the army in that it personifies and individualises the subject of the clause, as the action of turning one’s eyes to something suggests a conscious choice. It needs to be added that the parenthetical clause in the first line of example 11 may be translated as “this Republic answered the Deputy thus”. It is a metatextual insertion absent from the English version which functions as a framing device that facilitates the parsing of a long relation drawn from foreign papers. The voice external to the speech of the French Deputy is thus clearly marked as such.

The following examples (12a and b) take us back in time to the proclamation that Bonaparte gave to his soldiers following the entrance to Milan in May 1796, and it is the only instance analysed in this paper that comes from him directly. A Polish version is given in (12a) and an English one in (12b). Although the pieces do not mention Hannibal directly, they evoke Scipio and Brutus – Polish in the plural, English in the singular – as well as other “great men we have taken for models”. As Bonaparte is preparing and motivating his army for the further march, he does not simply indicate Rome, but also the Capitol with its statutes, and his ambition to restore its glory and resurrect the lethargic Romans. Whether or not the Commander acknowledges the role of Scipio in the demise of the ancient Hannibal is probably irrelevant here. An interesting language point is the difference in deixis in the final clause between the Polish and English versions. The speech takes the first-person plural perspective in this sample, which is consistently followed in the Polish version: “Naszych zwycięstw” (Eng. our victories), but not in the English one which has “your victories”. Two further Polish versions (see examples 12a and 12b below) use the second person plural, like the English one. This choice may underline some distance that Bonaparte assumes to the victories, while at the same time giving more acknowledgement to his soldiers.

(12a) Foreign intelligence

Już wybiła godzina do zemsty. Wszakże lud nie ma się czego trwożyć. Jesteśmy przyjaciółmi wszystkich, a osobliwie potomków owych Brutusów, Scypionów i wielkich innych Bohaterów, którzyśmy za wzór obrali. Przywrocenie Kapitolium, chwalebne pięknych statui wydobycie z gruzów, a to na wskrzeszenie Rzymskiej od wieków [...] być musi owocem naszych zwycięstw. (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 21.06.1796, no. 50)²⁸

(12b)

the hour of vengeance and retribution is near at hand. But let the people remain tranquil; we are friends to all people, and more particularly the descendants of Brutus and Scipio, and the great men we have taken for models. Re-establish the Capitol, and place there with honour the statues of the heroes that rendered it celebrated; awaken the Roman people, debased by many centuries of slavery; such will be the fruit of your victories. (*Lloyd's Evening Post*, 1796-06-06, also in *General Evening Post*, 1796-06-04)

Example (13) below dates back to March 1797, a bit later than (12a) and (12b), but it also utilises antiquity references in connection to the invasion of Rome, which at this point was brought to a halt. The excerpt lists historical military failures in the Alpine Passage that, as it claims in the final sentence, might account for the lack of progress of Napoleon's army. On the one hand, the piece is marked as foreign intelligence (spod granic szwajcarskich; Eng. from the Swiss boundaries) and there is a clear metatextual and evidential frame: “jak niektóre pisma publiczne uważają” (Eng. as some public papers reason). On the other hand, the external point of view is not maintained throughout, thus it is not easy to determine to what extent the piece is an editorial commentary and to what extent it follows the original news sources. The way the antiquity reference is exploited here is a contextualisation of Hannibal's triumphs by his ultimate loss, thus rendering a mildly negative tenor. However, Bonaparte or his individual image is not a direct referent here, instead it is a historical framing of a stall that his army faces.

(13) *Od granic szwajcarskich dnia 23 Lutego* (foreign intelligence)

Wniście także do Rzymu, jak niektóre pisma publiczne uważają wiele trudności przynosi. ... Annibal odniósłszy sławne zwycięstwa nad rzeką Po, Trebio i Trazymenem został pod Spoletem zupełnie porażonym, i dotąd ieszcze pokazują bardzo dawną bramę *la Fuga* zwaną. (*Korrespondent Warszawski y Zagraniczny*, 17.03.1797, no. 22 + dod)²⁹

Example (13) appears to follow the political scepticism on the Italian campaign expressed in the sources from the Swiss borders. This position of mild criticism is hardly ever found in the Polish news of the period. At the same time, the intricacies of framing obscure the sources of the sentiments conveyed through the ancient reference thus blurring the negative stance of Bonaparte's opponents.

²⁸ *Gazeta Warszawska* (21.06.1796, no. 50, p. 2) and *Gazeta Krakowska* (22.06.1796, no. 49, p. 2) provide two further slightly different versions of this proclamation originally dated to 20.05.1796. The source may have been the same for *Korrespondent* and *Gazeta Warszawska*, as both indicate a gap in the text... in the same place, though the former skips more text than the latter. The gap covers “awaken the Roman people, debased by many centuries of slavery” in the English version (example 10b). *Gazeta Krakowska* does not have the omission. The Polish versions appear to be translations done independently of one another.

²⁹ Trans.: *From the Swiss borders on February 23*. Entering Rome, as some public writings consider, brings many difficulties. [...] *Hannibal*, having won famous victories on the river *Po*, *Trebio* and *Thrasimene*, was completely defeated at *Spoleta*, and the very ancient gate called *la Fuga* is still shown.

5. Discussion

Regarding the expression of evaluation, the following discussion focuses on three aspects: 1. Specific language and rhetorical devices used; 2. the marking of editorial commentary as opposed to the direct presentation of excerpts from foreign press; 3. connections between evaluation and intertextuality.

As has been suggested in the introduction and in line with secondary literature (Section 1), evaluation is expressed by a broad array of means, such as:

- metaphors, e.g. armies cut to pieces; storm gathering upon the mountains;
- parallels and comparisons with comparative adjectives, e.g. “there is no country in Europe”, “greater resistance”, “burst like a bubble”; “have done more than triumph”;
- evidentiality, e.g. “If we may believe”, “We do not see”;
- marked person reference and group reference, e.g. “the title of Maximus”, “friends of the Republic”;
- contradiction, e.g. either ... or;
- modification with evaluative adjectives, e.g. triumphant, glorious, brave, feeble, temporising, valourous, mighty, great, marvellous; other adjectives, e.g. vast, immense; adverbials, e.g. with satisfaction; and adverbs of degree, e.g. often, every, at last, only, all, any, never;
- metacomments, e.g. “what were then called”, “have deserved the surname of”;
- binomial and trinomial phrases, e.g. “young and valliant”, “recruit, cloth and pay”.

The linguistic expression of evaluation is thus both explicitly lexical (e.g. evaluative adjectives) and grammatical (e.g. modal verb *may*, used to express doubt), and implicit (e.g. metaphors, marked reference, contradiction, metacomments). The evaluative value of individual samples may only be understood as a whole comprising the overt and less obvious not easily quantifiable linguistic means. This underlines the importance of close contextualised qualitative readings in detecting evaluation and stance. In terms of methodological grounding, elaborate models of evaluation (e.g. Bendarek’s parameters 2006: 42; Martin and White’s 2005 appraisal theory) provide relevant points of reference for the list above. However, as the data sample analysed here was limited to a case-study, categorisations and analyses within these frameworks may be pursued in future studies based on a bigger and more diverse dataset.

The second issue raised above connects evaluation to evidentiality, as it focuses on the ways excerpts from external sources are marked in the press. Typically, beyond different types of framing, historical news producers used spacing, new paragraphs, typography, i.e., proto-headlines for marking foreign sources, punctuation (quotation marks for direct excerpts or speeches) and graphic marking such as capitalisation, italics to underline boundaries between different pieces of news and to emphasise some elements such as proper names and place names. Although a closer analysis of this dimension is out of the scope of this paper, an impressionistic generalisation may be made that there are considerable differences between the British and Polish sources. Overall, editorial commentary does not occur in the Polish press in the coverage of Napoleon’s Italian campaign outside of foreign intelligence. On the contrary, editorial commentary is common in British papers, hence clearly marked by headlines, spacing and typography. Evidential framing that is limited to the textual evidence exclusively poses some problems in recognising and distinguishing different voices in the Polish data.

As to the third dimension, i.e., intertextuality, a comparison of Polish and English versions of some references to antiquity drawn from French papers has shown that evaluative elements, such as the ones listed above, frequently differ according to the language in which they are expressed. Deixis reflected by personal pronouns, the use of adjectives and adjective gradation, metaphors, etc. were indicated as points of subtle, but not inconsequential alternations which affect the overall tenor and expression of attitudes (examples 11, 12 and 13).

Summary and Conclusions

Section 5 above has shown that the references to the story of Hannibal in connection to Bonaparte’s Italian campaign as presented on the pages of British periodicals in 1796-99 were interpreted in different ways by the British and by the French. The attitudes of the latter were mostly mirrored in the Polish sources. In so much as texts scooped from the French intelligence focused on the individual story of the ancient commander as a sole engineer of successful conquests and an ultimate hero, in the British accounts the reference was viewed in a broader context of his opponents who brought about his demise. Thus, the French propaganda sources relied on a very selective insight into the Hannibal story. At the same time, the British editorial commentary went beyond this. Not only did it add

complexity to the one-dimensional view promoted in revolutionary France, but it also achieved a degree of rhetorical suppression of the French Hannibal. As far as Polish sources are concerned, they did not exploit the figure of ancient Hannibal as an individual decontextualised reference to the same extent. In terms of the background of references to antiquity revealed in the Polish sources, it was not dissimilar with the British strategy, where the story of Hannibal, rather than Hannibal alone was utilised, yet it yielded a completely different evaluative outcome to the British one.

The analysis has shown that connecting evaluation, evidentiality and intertextuality in historical newspapers may reveal important aspects of the organisation of voices represented on the pages of contemporary news periodicals. Whereas in the Polish sources editorial remarks are still scarce towards the end of the eighteenth century, as the news excerpts on Napoleon suggest, the British periodical press uses them regularly. Hence, the paper has noted the presence of a range of devices that facilitate the parsing of news items and distinguishing between editorial commentary and excerpts from foreign sources. In the Polish sources, although such devices are not completely absent, their use has not been conventionalised. Hence, as was shown in example (13) above, a reader may be presented with an editorial comment from foreign papers (here: voices close to the Italian states), but because the deixis remains unchanged following the insertion of the evidential frame “jak niektóre pisma publiczne uważają” (Eng. as some public papers reason), the source of the critical commentary is difficult to identify beyond a shadow of doubt.

This case study pursued some keywords selected based on qualitative readings and existing research on the perceptions of Napoleon Bonaparte. Indeed, the figure of Hannibal occupies a profound place in the rhetoric of the General himself as well as his contemporaries, due to the geographic parallels and similarities of political ambitions. As the searches in the Polish sources did not produce as many hits as in the British ones, it is impossible to draw any general conclusions as to the scope of the references to this figure of antiquity. However, even a limited comparison of English and Polish versions of the same original sources drawn from French papers has revealed a number of issues that are interesting for the study of evaluation in historical news discourse in connection to intertextuality.

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The Dissemination of Etruscan Discoveries in Early 19th-century British Press

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Abstract

The press had a crucial role in the dissemination of news and accounts on archaeological discoveries related to Antiquity. The first Etruscan vases were bought by the British Museum in the mid-18th century and the first exhibition of Etruscan artefacts in London (1837) generated widespread interest in Etruscan antiquity and history. A specialised corpus composed of articles published in the early 19th-century British press is examined so as to understand the linguistic strategies through which Etruscan antiquities were disseminated in the news discourse of the time, combining quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis and following a corpus-assisted discourse approach. The results of the study will show recurrent linguistic patterns used to refer to the Etruscan antiquities.

Keywords: CADS, Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Etruscan Antiquity, Historical News Discourse

Introduction

Over the last few centuries, the archaeological discoveries of Italian antiquities have stimulated debate among scholars, enthusiasts, and travellers across Europe and beyond. The casual unearthing of statues and decorative marbles progressively turned into systematic excavations of Roman archaeological sites, fostered by the aristocratic fashion to decorate and embellish mansions and properties with antique marble statuary and accessories (Bowersock 1978; Parslow 1995; Özgenel 2008), particularly around the mid-eighteenth century excavations of the long-lost cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in southern Italy. The excavations of Roman ruins were also the culmination of the Grand Tour artistic pilgrimage, and rite of passage, for European aristocrats, affluent travellers and writers (Reinhold 1985; Buzard 2002). Some of them, however, moved from the traditional route and aimed at lesser-known areas where other antiquities had been unearthed dating back to pre-Roman times and populations, such as Etruscan antiquities.

Predecessors of the Roman domination over the Italian peninsula, the Etruscans awaited, and still await, some major discovery which can answer several interrogatives regarding their origins and their culture (Pellecchia *et al.* 2007; Posth *et al.* 2021). This despite the significant progress having been made since the seminal work on Etruscan studies by Pallottino (1998) and the reportages of expeditions to Etruscan archaeological sites published in the nineteenth century, such as the 1,085-page *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* by Dennis (1848). Etruscan antiquities became fashionable items to collect after the late-15th-century excavations conducted by Giorgio Vasari nearby the Tuscan city of Arezzo. Together with the leading families of the surrounding areas, the

Medici, in fact, were among the first promoters of this fashion, which was later to be called *vasimania*. To exploit the momentum gained by the Etruscans, Cosimo II de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, commissioned to the Scottish scholar and historian Thomas Dempster to provide a work that would trace back their family line to the Etruscans, the ancient civilisation that once ruled over Tuscany, so as to reinforce the Medici's right to rule as Grand Dukes centuries later (Ciampoltrini 2018).

Since the unearthing of the lost cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the excavation of antiquities in Italy has received constant international press coverage (Keeble 2019), particularly in British newspapers. This coverage has not, to my knowledge, been analysed from a linguistic perspective yet. This study is concerned with historical news discourse in English from a historical pragmatics perspective. More specifically, the investigation analyses a specially compiled corpus of early-19th-century British newspaper articles dealing with Etruscan antiquities and taken from the *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Archive*, and from the *British Newspaper Archive*.

The study aims to answer three research questions:

- Which linguistic strategies were used to disseminate the Etruscan discoveries in the news discourse of the time?
- Which recurrent linguistic patterns were used to refer to the Etruscan heritage?
- Which features of the language of evaluation were used to promote the Etruscan antiquities among the news readers of the time?

The analysis of recurrent words and phraseology related to collocational patterns, concordances, and clusters (Hunston 2002) of the key word *Etruscan* in the articles making up the corpus is part of a more extensive work in progress, of which only the preliminary findings are presented here.

1. Etruria and Britain

The civilisation of the Etruscans, or Rasenna as they named themselves, existed between the 9th century BC and the 1st century CE (Naso 2017). Of debated origins, either local or having arrived from today's Lebanon and Turkey (Posth *et al.* 2021), they were mostly known for establishing the League of the Twelve cities (Arretium, Castra, Cleusin, Curtun, Perusna, Pupluna, Veii, Tarchna, Vetluna, Velathri, Velch and Velzna), today's Arezzo, Cerveteri, Chiusi, Perugia, Populonia, Veio, Tarquinia, Vetulonia, Volterra, Vulci and either Bolsena or Orvieto (Bonfante and Bonfante 2002). Of Etruscan origins were also some of the Kings of Rome (Lucius Tarquinius Priscus c. 616-578 BC, Servius Tullius c. 578-534 BC, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus c. 534-509 BC), before the Etruscans were culturally and politically assimilated to the Roman civilisation in the 1st century CE (Pallottino 1998; Haynes 2000). Traces of the Etruscan civilisation survived the assimilation, but their rediscovery would take centuries, with Britain offering a significant contribution.

The turning point of the relation between Britain and the Etruscan civilisation was indeed the exhibition organized in 1837 by the Campanari family in London. Before that event, however, Britain had already established a crucial connection with the Etruscan legacy thanks to Thomas Dempster (1579-1625) and his *De Etruria Regali* (1723). Written in Pisa between 1616 and 1619, it was published in Florence in 1723, thanks to Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester, and to the Florentine antiquarian Filippo Buonarroti. Commissioned by Cosimo II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, it was intended as a celebration of the Medici lineage and direct link with ancient monarchic Etruria (Leighton and Castelino 1990). Dempster followed the hypothesis elaborated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus of an indigenous origin of the Etruscans. The publication sparked the interest for Etruscan archaeology in Italy and abroad, also thanks to the many illustrations of excavated Etruscan artefacts that enriched the book.

The *Etruscan Tombs* exhibition organised by the Campanari family in January 1837 at 121, Pall Mall, London was the first exhibition of its kind (Colonna 1979; Haack 2013; Bassanelli 2021). Instead of displaying individual items out of their original context, the tombs had been fully reconstructed on the exhibition site to allow visitors to experience their discovery, complete with painted walls, sarcophagi (mummy-cases), and objects hanging on the walls. Thus, the actual context of the excavated artefacts was shown. The Campanari family had indeed reconstructed an Etruscan necropolis in their garden in Tuscania (VT) with all the artefacts unearthed in their properties; those on exhibition entered the market of antiquities with greater economic value.

After the Campanari's exhibition, three publications marked the dissemination of the discovery of Etruscan antiquities in Britain, keeping alive the interest of the British public on the Etruscans: *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria in 1839* (1843) by Elizabeth Hamilton Gray (1801-87); *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* (1848) by George Dennis (1814-98); *Etruscan Places and other Italian Essays* (1932) by D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930).

Elizabeth Hamilton Gray (1801-87) was a British traveller and the first woman to explore Etruria and, most importantly, to write about her archaeological discoveries. The 1837 Campanari exhibition excited her interest

in the places where the Etruscan antiquities had been excavated and, together with her husband, she embarked on a journey through Etruria. She visited southern Etruria in 1839 and her explorations of the area resulted in the comprehensive publication *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria in 1839*, published in 1840. Attacked for being a woman conducting archaeological studies, she had to publicly excuse her “female mind” in the introduction to her work to try to prevent criticism and positioning her publication for those minds “going through a museum or visiting a ruin, wholly ignorant of its objects and history” (Gray 1843, 1).

Gray provided detailed descriptions of findings and explorations, harshly criticised by Dennis for being “far from satisfactory” in the introduction to his *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* (1848, v) that he was prompted to write following the success of Gray’s work (Pallottino 1998). George Dennis (1814-98) was a British antiquarian and the first (after Gray) modern investigator of ancient Etruria and Etruscan archaeological remains. He visited Etruria between 1842 and 1847, and his *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* was published in 1848, with illustrations of antiquities, architectural remains and plans of the larger excavation sites.

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), the English writer, novelist, short story writer, poet, and essayist, visited the Tuscan countryside in the spring of 1927; *Sketches of Etruscan Places and other Italian Essays*, also known as *Etruscan Places*, was published posthumously in 1932. The book is a collection of travelogue-essays describing the places formerly inhabited by the Etruscan civilisation, in which Lawrence often compares a more vivid Etruscan past with the shabbiness of the present Fascist rule (e.g., see the chapter on Volterra).

2. Historical News Discourse

Historical news discourse refers to the way news events and information are communicated, discussed, and analysed within a historical context. It pertains to the analysis of how events were reported at the time they occurred and how they were subsequently interpreted and discussed over time. Historical news discourse has been extensively studied over the last decades in linguistics, and it is impossible to mention all the contributions without leaving out prominent ones. A definition might be cited to clarify the domain of analysis: “the evolving news discourse constitutes a domain of language characterised by distinctive communicative functions, typical linguistic practices and features, conventionalised forms and text types, and produced increasingly by a specific (social, professional) group” (Claridge 2010, 588). Historical news discourse is analysed in terms of discourse forms, functions, and structures isolated at a specific moment in time, while also operating diachronically when studying language variation and discursive change.

Facchinetti, Brownlees, Bös, Fries (2015); Brownlees (2021 and 2023); Palander-Collin, Taavitsainen, Ratia (2017) are only a few most relevant studies on historical news discourse that were useful for this research. In particular, Facchinetti, Brownlees, Bös, Fries (2015) contributed to designing the methodological framework of this study, addressing the issues presented by the need to design a specialised corpus, as explained in the next section, and by the analysis of corpus data, that follows corpus-assisted discourse analysis in combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. While Brownlees (2021) has provided insightful reference to understand how the historical context affects language in use and its forms and functions and to attempt at a contextualization of the findings of the research, Brownlees (2023) offered a most comprehensive reference to understand the historical context and features, a significant amount of which “resonates with the present” (1). Similarly, the study by Palander-Collin, Taavitsainen, Ratia (2017) offered a variety of contributions to better contextualise the features of the language in use in historical news discourse in a variety of text types, including letters to the editor and advertisements.

In the same way historical discourse analysis can comprise an analysis of the language of evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000; Bednarek 2006), so too can historical news discourse analysis. Likewise relevant to historical news discourse analysis are concepts already associated with historical discourse analysis generally. These include an examination of how language is employed to construct meaning, express power relations, negotiate social identities, and shape ideologies in a particular historical context (Brinton 2015), as well as the focus on textual outputs rather than on interactions among speakers, even if it is understood that historical discourse analysis implies a pragmatic approach when investigating the interactions between historical texts and their recipients (Jucker 2017).

3. Corpus Construction and Data Analysis

The corpus constructed to conduct the research discussed in this study is referred to as News on Etruria (NOE). It is a finite, i.e. limited (McEnery and Hardie, 2012) and specialised corpus comprising ca. 400,000 tokens in around 260 articles and auction sale notices taken from *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Online Archive*,

and from *The British Newspaper Archive*. Both archives are complete and public, although a small fee is needed to access them both. The corpus includes broadsheet newspaper articles with both national and international coverage as well as articles taken from local newspapers, all selected with the search word *Etruscan*.

The NOE corpus is limited in time, ranging between 1800 and 1840, with a specific focus on the beginning of the 19th century, and the years immediately preceding and following the Campanari's exhibition of Etruscan artefacts in London (January 1837). Data were extracted from the corpus using WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott 2020); they were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively combining a Corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) and Corpus-assisted discourse analysis of language in context – KWIC, concordances, collocations, clusters, patterns (Partington 2004, 2015).

Key words, i.e., those words whose frequency is unusually high in comparison with some norm (reference corpus), were identified using as reference corpus the written part of the BNC XML Edition corpus (2007). The Corpus of Nineteenth-century Newspaper English (CNNE) was not available for consultation, while CLMET and ARCHER corpora did not include a significant number of news articles, if any, to be of use for the comparison. Here is the list of the key words extracted from NOE:

	Key word	Freq.	%		Key word	Freq.	%
1	etruscan	278	0,04	7	mahogany	230	0,02
2	premises	583	0,07	8	velvet	238	0,04
3	silver	597	0,09	9	ornamented	149	0,02
4	petticoat	261	0,05	10	drapery	140	0,03
5	embroidered	255	0,04	11	richly	188	0,03
6	furniture	413	0,07	12	trimmed	185	0,04

Tab. 1 – Key words of the NOE corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Key words

As it is evident in Table 1, the most frequent key words are the adjectives related to the Etruscan civilisation (*Etruscan*) and to fashionable embellishments (*embroidered*, *ornamented*, *trimmed*); lexical items related to pieces of furniture and their features (*furniture*, *mahogany*); words related to fashion or precious items (*petticoat*, *velvet*, *drapery*, *silver*); words related to auctions (*premises*); and the evaluative adverb (*richly*).

The objective extraction of lexis allowed to isolate statistically significant co-occurrence patterns in text through the results displayed in concordance lines. These were searched for non-obvious meanings through the analysis of extended portions of co-textual evidence (Partington 2004, 2015), analysing grammar words and phraseology and their related meaning in their extended co-text. According to Hunston (2011, 5), phraseology “describes the general tendency of words, and group of words, to occur more frequently in some environments than in others”.

The qualitative interpretation of the results was also based on the analysis of frequently occurring language of evaluation. Evaluation refers to “[...] the expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions [statements] that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values” (Hunston and Thompson 2000, 5).

Evaluation expresses the speaker/writer's opinions, thus reflecting their value systems and those of their community; it serves to construct relationships between speakers and readers; and it helps to organise texts (Hunston and Thompson 2000). Relevant to the study were the existing lines of research on news discourse that examine the construction of newsworthiness through the use of evaluative language (Bednarek 2006; Bednarek and Caple 2019) in the media discourse.

The qualitative analysis of the corpus allowed also to retrieve the features of the commentator voice (judgement, affect, appreciation) used to either condemn or praise (appraisal system elaborated by Martin and White in 2005) and their associated values of positivity/negativity that were also particularly useful to understand the evaluative stance of the newspapers on the reception of the Etruscan discoveries in early 19th-century Britain.

4. Findings

Out of the key word list extracted through the comparison of the NOE corpus with the BNC reference corpus, the key word *Etruscan* was selected for the first analysis to be discussed in this study of the representation of the Etruscan heritage in historical news. The organisational criterion of file names adopted while building the NOE corpus allowed the possibility to organise concordance lines also according to a chronological order of the occurrences. This criterion was adopted to allow further research studies to be conducted on the corpus to see whether the representation of the Etruscan heritage changed over time within the NOE corpus. Concordance lines were computed, and collocational patterns appeared that will be discussed further in this section, with a specific focus on grammatical and lexical co-textual occurrences following the principles of Corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington 2004, 2015).

Frequent R1 collocates of *Etruscan* are lexical words pertaining to antique artefacts and design (*vases* x79, *vase* 23x, *Etruscan-shaped* 22x, *border* 15x, *antiquities* 12x, *urns* 9x, *pattern* 9x). Frequent R2 collocates are instead the coordinator *and* (29x), the past participle *taken* (10x), and the prepositions *of* (24x) and *from* (10x). Examining left-collocates of *Etruscan*, L1 are mostly grammar words (*and* 46x, *the* 41x, *an* 33x), while most frequent L2 collocates are words pertaining to antiquity (*Grecian* 23x, *collection* 9x).

4.1 *Etruscan* + *vases*

Table 2 below shows concordance lines related to the NP *Etruscan* + *vases*:

These antiquities will make the Prince's museum Etruscan vases, found in the subterranean vaults
Successful imitations of antique Etruscan vases may be made by procuring the aforesaid jars of coarse biscuit please double check
An estimate of the sum required to be voted to enable the trustees the British Museum purchase certain Etruscan vases, part of the collection of the Prince of Canino
Madame Bonaparte Wyse, arrived yesterday from the Continent, bringing with her large portion of the celebrated Etruscan vases
CONSIGNMENT of Porcelain, comprehending rich Etruscan vases, finely painted, numerous other vases, with bushes of flowers and glass shades

Tab. 2 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan* + *vases*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer.

A closer examination of the extended co-text of NP *Etruscan* + *vases* reveals that recurrent pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates relate to archaeological findings at the beginning of the 19th century. They are mostly lists of items connected through coordination by punctuation or by coordinate conjunction (*and*), with few to no examples of evaluative language, as shown by example (1):

(1) In addition to these principal objects, there have been found within the Temple [of Phegalia] and about it, several points of lances of iron, some ornaments of bronze and of silver, a little vase of bronze, a small statue of Apollo, but clumsily executed in Egyptian style, and in addition to these, a small armour for the leg, of copper, exactly of the form which we see represented on the *Etruscan vases*. [The_Times_1815-12-26]

Example (1) seems to refer to a specific event, i.e., the excavation of the “Temple of Phegalia, dedicated to Apollo, on Mount Cotylus, in Arcadia” (Valpy and Barker 1816, 213), known today as the Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae, in the Peloponnesos. Indeed, example (1) still uses classical references to sites which changed over the centuries. Phegalia, or Phigalia, is today's village of Figaleia, while Arcadia is now known as one region of central Peloponnesus. In the example, *Etruscan vases* are mentioned to help the readers to visualise one specific item out of the list of findings. It seems interesting to notice that Etruscan antiquities, and Etruscan vases in particular, were at that time already so well known to serve as shared visual reference for the reading public of *The Times*. The only negatively evaluative lexical item (the AdvP *clumsily*) is not related to the Etruscan antiquities, rather to refer to a poorly imitated Greek sculpture of Apollo.

Another use of the NP *Etruscan* + *vases* is visible in examples (2) and (3) taken from *The Morning Advertiser*, where its pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates refer mostly to artefacts on auction or on sale. In particular,

example (2) shows how *Etruscan + vases* appears inside a list of items, connected through coordination by punctuation or coordinate conjunction (*and*):

(2) [...] library, and coffee-tables, chandelier, garderobe, wardrobes, chest of mahogany drawers, *Etruscan vases*, pistols, percussion-gun, chamber-organ, linen, china dinner-service, and other valuable effects [...] [Morning_Advertiser_1935-11-26]

The list exemplified in (2) is connoted in end-position by the positively evaluative adjective *valuable*, thus implying that all the objects previously mentioned are also intended as of intrinsic commercial and artistic value. This positive connotation is more evident in example (3), where another list of artefacts shows extremely positively connoted language directly co-occurring with *Etruscan + vases*:

(3) CONSIGNMENT of Porcelain, comprehending rich *Etruscan vases*, finely painted, numerous other vases, with bushes of flowers and glass shades, [...] [Morning_Advertiser_1933-05-25]

Example (3) shows two lexical occurrences of positive evaluative language (*rich* and *finely painted*) that express the intrinsic uniqueness and artistic refinement of the vases, thus positioning them as items of commercial value as well. Therefore, examples (2) and (3), selected among many similar concordance lines, seem to suggest that, in the first half of the 1830s *Morning Advertiser* at least, the collocation *Etruscan + vases* was mostly used to refer to valuable items in antique dealing, highlighting the value of the items on sale.

4.2 *Etruscan + vase*

Another frequent R1 collocate of *Etruscan* is *vase*. Table 3 below shows concordance lines related to the NP *Etruscan + vase*:

On opening recently an Etruscan vase, taken from the ruins of Herculaneum, the learned Abbe Facciolati
It is an Etruscan vase, surmounted with a horse, and on the neck of it are groups of dogs and fox and cubs
splendid piece of workmanship. The shape is of an Etruscan vase with suitable emblematic cover,
Antiquarians are solicited to inspect a noble Etruscan Vase, the largest hitherto known;
learned antiquary, the Abbé Facciolati on opening an Etruscan vase, recently excavated from the

Tab. 3 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan + vase*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer

Pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates are lexical words referring to either archaeological excavations or antiquities, as seen in example (4):

(4) [...] of a very handsome shape, somewhat resembling an *Etruscan vase*, with three feet. It is supposed to be of considerable antiquity. [The_Times_1816-08-09]

Similar to the use of the NP *Etruscan + vases* in (1), example (4) shows how *Etruscan + vase* is used as a shared visual referent for the readers to understand the features of the artefact being discussed. The positively connoted evaluative AdjP *handsome* and the PP *of considerable antiquity* imply that the same connotation applied to Etruscan antiquities as well.

Example (5) shows a different occurrence of the NP *Etruscan + vase*:

(5) The learned antiquary, the Abbe Facciolati on opening an *Etruscan vase*, recently excavated from the ruins of Pompeii, found an orange immersed in vinegar. It appears that the ancient Romans pickled their oranges, as we do cucumbers or onions. The orange above mentioned was in a state of perfect preservation. [Reading_Mercury_1834_09_22]

In its extended co-text, the NP collocates with positively connoted language referring to the person who opened the vase (*the learned antiquary*) and of the state of the item found inside the vase (*of perfect preservation*). The occurrence of the NP is followed by words descriptive of a historical/archaeological context to reinforce the connection with antiquity, and thus the perceived value of the item.

4.3 *Etruscan* + *-shaped*

A third most recurring R1 collocate of the key word *Etruscan* is the AdjP *-shaped*. Concordance lines are shown in Table 4 below:

with an endless variety of larger urns. Grecian and Etruscan shaped vases and ornaments for the
arabesque ornament; an immense variety of Grecian and Etruscan shaped vases, lavender bottles,
presenting to the Princess Victoria. The vase is Etruscan shaped, ornamented with raised flowers
presenting many rare, chaste, and antique stems in Etruscan shaped tureens, and sauceboats to

Tab. 4 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan* + *-shaped*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer

Its pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates are mostly items or artefacts on auction or on sale, as shown in example (6):

(6) [...] breakfast and coffee-services to correspond, together with an endless variety of large urns, Grecian and *Etruscan-shaped* vases, and ornaments for the cabinet and mantelpiece, rivalling the finest productions from the Continent. [Morning_Advertiser_1834-12-02]

Etruscan-shaped usually collocates with the AdjP *Grecian*, referring to imitation of originally antique vases (*-shaped*), and with positive evaluative language pertaining to the superlative parameter (*the finest production*). This occurrence also suggests that a trade of imitations of real antique items was in place. Concordance lines show that the identical (or mostly identical) auction sale notice in (6) is repeated over more days in the same newspaper, the *Morning Advertiser*, and similar ones are also published in other newspapers building the NOE corpus. In some articles, however, *Etruscan-shaped* right-collocates with *urns* and is followed by positive evaluative language, as shown in example (7):

(7) [...] two superb vases, similar to a pair made for the King, and valued at one hundred guineas, Canton jars, Grecian and *Etruscan-shaped urns*, of inimitable beauty, incense burners, and chimney and cabinet ornaments, quite equal to Oriental porcelain. [Morning_Advertiser_1833-12-14]

Here, *Etruscan-shaped* collocates with the PP *of inimitable beauty* in the extended co-text of the occurrence isolated for this example. The positively evaluative adjective *inimitable* reinforces the artistic value and significance of the items for sale (the *urns*), ostensibly making reference to Etruscan antiquities as a model to which artists conformed to create the finest artefacts, of which it is not said whether they were original antiques.

4.4 *Etruscan* + *antiquities*

A further recurrent R1 collocate of the key word *Etruscan* is the NP *antiquities*. Table 5 below shows concordance lines of the NP:

Government intends to purchase the collection of Etruscan antiquities, t2,000 in number
them nearly ready for the press. The new room for Etruscan antiquities has also been opened to
and very doubtful originality. An exhibition of Etruscan antiquities, part of which was before
at the extremity of the latter. One of these is devoted to Etruscan antiquities, several of which have
devoted principally to Sir William Hamilton's collection of Etruscan antiquities. With these the visitors of

Tab. 5 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan* + *antiquities*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer

Pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates in extended co-textual references are mostly other antiquity items, as illustrated in examples (8) and (9):

(8) British Museum—Within the last week two new rooms have been opened to the public, in the gallery on the west side of the building, and over the gallery of antiquities, the approach to which is from spacious stone staircase at the extremity of the latter. One of these is devoted to *Etruscan antiquities*, several of which have been removed from the room known as Sir W. Hamilton's collection and the other expressly to the monuments and records of ancient Egypt. [Bedfordshire_Mercury_1837-12-09; Hertford_Mercury_and_Reformer_1837-12-09]

(9) On Saturday there was a private view at the Western Exchange, Bond-street, of *Etruscan antiquities*, said to have been lately excavated from vaults discovered on the estate of an Italian gentleman in the ancient city of Volterra. The objects are, generally speaking, in a tolerably good state of preservation, when we consider the ancient date that, judging from their structure and style of ornament, must necessarily be assigned to many of them. [The_Times_1830_04_12]

In both examples (8) and (9), *Etruscan + antiquities* co-occurs with words descriptive of a historical / archaeological context to reinforce the connection with antiquity (*lately excavated*, *ancient city*, *ancient date*) and with the value of the Etruscan discoveries and display. In particular, example (8) mentions the opening to the public of a new room of the British Museum, entirely dedicated to *Etruscan antiquities*. Reporting news of the opening acts as further consolidation of the value assigned to Etruscan artefacts and excavations; being assigned a new room within the Museum institutionalises Etruscan antiquities as established antiquities, together with Greek and Roman ones. Significantly, this recognition of cultural value is attributed within the same year (1837) of the sensation caused by the Campanari exhibition in Pall Mall.

4.5 *Etruscan + R1 fashion-related collocates*

Other frequently occurring R1 collocates are two NP (*Etruscan + border*; *Etruscan + pattern*). Table 6 and 7 show concordance lines for *Etruscan + border* and *Etruscan + pattern* respectively:

Princess Bariatinski.—Petticoat, white crape, with deep silver Etruscan border; draperies, richly worked in real silver Oriental lame
Lady Charlotte Grenville—A petticoat rich white satin (sic.), with an Etruscan border of gold embroidery on black velvet, drapery, real gold tissue
It is composed of large Gossamer veil, with a rich Etruscan border, and is, according to fashionable report
DUCHESS OF YORK. A white crape petticoat richly embroidered silver waves, with an Etruscan border of real silver oriental lama
Lady Huntingfield —A petticoat white crape, embroidered in stripes of silver, draperies purple velvet, wreaths of silver flowers, with an Etruscan border

Tab. 6 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan + border*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer

They are of various shades of brown. The latter are bordered with an Etruscan pattern in coloured silks. Those
various shades of brown. The latter are bordered with Etruscan pattern in coloured silks. Those of cachemere (sic)
and round the collar deep border of palms, or Etruscan pattern. Witchouras begin to be laid aside, but muffs and tippets
but the most novel are the Etruscan patterns, those flowered in the large bouquets, called gardeners' nosegays.

Tab. 7 – Concordance lines of *Etruscan + pattern*. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concordancer. Repeated results were omitted

When investigating their extended co-textual reference, their pre-modifying and post-modifying collocates refer – quite unexpectedly – mostly to women fashion items or fashionable features for women dresses, as shown in examples (10), (11) and (12) below:

(10) DUCHESS OF YORK. Her Grace was dressed in a white crape petticoat, richly spangled in silver draperies of white crape, with painted velvet geraniums, *Etruscan border* colour geranium, and silver lamé, richly ornamented with silver tassels and Vandyke fringe; train of velvet geranium, silver lamé sleeves; head-dress, tiara of diamonds, with white ostrich feathers. [Chester_Courant_1805_01_29]

(11) Some new carriage Mantles have appeared, both of Cachemire (sic) and watered *Gros de Naples*. They are of various shades of brown. The latter are bordered with an *Etruscan pattern* in coloured silks. [Sussex_Advertiser_1833-03-03]

(12) We see also a great many brown or maroon cashmere, embroidered in coloured silks. Some are thickly strewed with single flowers or bouquets; others are worked at the bottom and round the collar in a deep border of palms, or in an *Etruscan pattern*. [Leamington_Spa_Courier_1833_03_09]

All the examples are taken from local newspapers, reporting on events when members of either the royal family or the aristocracy appeared in public, and providing a description as accurate as possible of their attire. The occurrence of the collocations *Etruscan + border* and *Etruscan + pattern* in news articles reporting on female fashion indicates how the fascination for the Etruscan civilisation had entered other industries, not immediately related to the historical and/or archaeological context, such as aristocratic fashion, and had become a trend to be followed when ordering new garments.

Concluding Remarks

The interest in rediscovering the Etruscan civilisation in Britain was sparked by the publication of Thomas Dempster's work in 1723 and by the exhibition curated by the Campanari family in 1837. The archaeological excavations, however, were directly related to sales of Etruscan artefacts to private buyers of antiquities, rather than contributing to the rediscovery of a pre-Roma lost heritage. This fostered the market of antiquities, which flourished over the years covered by this study.

This contribution reports preliminary findings of a more extensive research project; due to its limited scope, only the most frequent R1 lexical collocates of the key word *Etruscan* were examined. Their extended co-text was analysed applying the Corpus-assisted discourse analysis methodological framework proposed by Partington (2004, 2015), which contributed to analyse their evaluative connotation. Following Martin and White (2005), it is possible to claim that the overall commentator voice emerging from the evaluative connotation of the most frequent R1 co-occurrences is extremely positive, foregrounded through instances of appreciation. This can be affirmed because most occurrences of the key word *Etruscan* in the NOE corpus relate to sale notices that praise the beauty and the refinement of the articles on sale (*Etruscan + vases*) and to fashionable embellishments of refined women dresses (*Etruscan + border* / *Etruscan + pattern*).

Therefore, the interest in the Etruscan civilisation was not limited to academic publications and archaeological studies. Etruscan discoveries had an influence over other more "worldly" areas of society (i.e., fashion), thus becoming a sort of social statement for the aristocracy. While representing a canon of beauty for antique collectibles, Etruscan antiquities inspired luxury fashion items and designs that were the expression of a well-defined social context to be disseminated through the news of the time.

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The Reporting of the Discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii in 18th-century English Newspapers (1747-99)

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Abstract:

The paper examines persuasive and popularizing strategies of news reporting in a database of 50 news items about the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii published in London newspapers from 1747 to 1799. By applying van Dijk's persuasive content features of modern journalism (1988) and integrating them with the indicators of popularization in the news identified by Umbricht and Esser (2016), the study aims to identify the major discourse strategies adopted in 18th-century news in order to disseminate specialized knowledge to the public. The qualitative analysis of the different news text-types documents a gradual change of attitude towards antiquities throughout the century.

Keywords: 18th Century, Herculaneum, London Newspapers, News Reporting, Pompeii

Introduction

At a time when archaeology did not exist as a discipline, newspapers provided a significant platform for sharing information about the discovery of antiquities and eliciting interest in classical art. The resumption of the digging in Herculaneum (1738) and the rediscovery of Pompeii (1748) under the patronage of the king of the Two Sicilies aroused great curiosity among English middle- and upper-class consumers of newspapers (Black 1987). Not only the learned English nobleman who had received a classical education and could afford an extension of the Grand Tour from Rome to Naples, but also merchants, artisans and shopkeepers developed an interest in the finds and pursued Herculaneum fashion as a marker of refined taste and socio-cultural status.

Newspapers gathered news from different sources in order to keep up with the public's demand: from letters from Naples and accounts of different or unspecified origin to letters from travellers and experts. Some accounts did not always convince the readership and editors maintained a cautious attitude when publishing the news, specifying that "this was in need of confirmation" or overtly claiming that "we are assured that". Under readers' pressure, editors also engaged in soliciting confirmation of the news from their correspondents in Naples.

Problems of credibility about discoveries which brought to light pristine artifacts of Greek and Roman times were predictable, especially in the early stage of news dissemination. While king Charles of Bourbon was trying hard

to compromise between secrecy about the finds and the need to exploit them for political propaganda, news landed periodically in England both through official and unofficial sources. Until 1758, the English government could also benefit from the favour of Camillo Paderni, an exceptional informer superintending the works at Naples who sent his letters to members of the Royal Society, partly violating the king's prohibition to share unauthorized information about the excavation progress. As the keeper of the Royal Museum at Portici, Paderni had very privileged information to share with the Royal Society which, in return, appointed him fellow in 1755 (Roberts 2015). His correspondence started very early in 1739, so one year after the king resumed the digging, and finished in 1758. After being read to the scientific community, his letters were published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, some also appeared in the specialized *Gentleman's Magazine* and three of them later appeared in newspapers several months afterwards, thus contributing to the dissemination and sharing of a vocabulary of antiquities amongst a wider community of readers (Knight 1997; D'Amore 2017, 2019).

In my paper I shall examine what text-types were reported in newspapers and the value which was ascribed to them at different points in time. By adopting a narrative approach to news, I shall focus on aspects of news reporting and editorial adjustments. The research questions which I aim to answer are the following ones:

1. What sources and text-types were published to cover the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii?
2. What strategies were used to combine specialized knowledge and entertainment in accounts which had to appear authentic and reliable to the reader?
3. Is it possible to trace any change in the content or structure of the accounts reported in the newspaper? And, if so, how can they be interpreted in terms of their impact on people's attitudes towards antiquities?

In order to answer these questions, I have built a database of 50 news items reporting the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The items were selected from the *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection* for the period from 1747 to 1799. The news items were retrieved from the archive by searching for the words "Herculaneum" and "Pompeii". Occurrences in which the keywords were used either as terms of comparison to discuss other antiquities in Britain and in Italy or on occasion of the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius were eliminated and cases in which the same news item was copied in different newspapers were counted as one in my database. Results show that the patchwork of news from different sources encoded in different text-types contributed to the construction of a macro-level narrative of discovery of the ancient past, where the language of knowledge was combined with popularizing strategies to spark interest and fascination among the 18th-century public.¹ The mixture of specialized information and fashion, sensationalism and scandalization, intellectual and domestic served to engage readers in a communicative encounter with a civilization of the past of which they could envisage themselves as legitimate heirs (Roberts 2015). The diachronic analysis of the news accounts also sheds some light on a gradual change of attitude towards the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii on the part of correspondents, experts and visitors: from the focus on antiquities as objects of interest *per se* to an emerging critical insight into the methods of the excavation, the contextualization of the finds and conservation for posterity.

1. Methodology

In order to investigate the authenticating devices adopted to make the news credible and its content and values acceptable to consumers, I draw upon van Dijk's persuasive content features of modern journalism and apply them to the 18th-century accounts of the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Van Dijk (1988, 84-85) identifies three major discourse strategies to promote the credibility of the news:

1. Emphasise the factual nature of events (e.g. through direct description of ongoing events, signals that indicate precision and exactness, using evidence from close eye-witnesses, using evidence from reliable sources).
2. Build a strong relational structure for facts (e.g. mentioning previous events as conditions or causes and describing or predicting next events as possible consequences; inserting facts into well-known situation models).

¹ As Black (1987) and Slaughter (2015) make clear, the readership of 18th-century newspapers was largely made up of middling and upper-class consumers who also read books and magazines. In 1757 the stamp tax increased and the cost of a newspaper went up to 2½d. The price represented about 5% of a London worker's weekly wage and 10% of an agricultural worker's weekly wage. In 1776 the tax rose again and the price of a newspaper reached 3d.

3. Provide information that also has an attitudinal and emotional dimension, as facts are better memorized if they involve or arouse strong emotions.

Van Dijk's appeal to the attitudinal and emotional dimension appears to be sufficiently broad to include the five indicators of audience-friendly packaging of information which were identified by Umbricht and Esser (2016, 101) in modern-day politics-related news and which will be applied to my database of 18th-century London newspapers. Since both politics and antiquities represent specialized knowledge to be disseminated among the masses, I believe that Umbricht and Esser's framework can be equally applied to 18th-century accounts of antiquities, despite the temporal gap. The five indicators of popularization of news are 1) sensationalization, 2) scandalization, 3) emotionalization, 4) common people narrative, 5) privatization of public figures. By sensationalization, Umbricht and Esser refer to stories which emphasize uncommon, extreme elements of attention-grabbing character and deviate from a rational, matter-of-fact writing style. Scandalization (often combined with problematization) is associated with stories that focus on defects, negligence and misbehaviours and that provoke indignation and sense of outrage. Emotionalization refers to narratives which amplify the reader's emotions and feelings. Stories with a common people narrative introduce "political issues into the lives of otherwise non-included citizens by likening them to their reality of life, privileging the viewpoints of ordinary people" (102). The indicator can be equally applied to other forms of specialized discourse. In the case of news about antiquities, for example, stories with a common people narrative are used to shrink the distance between past and present by introducing aspects of the life of the ancients into the pattern of 18th-century people's life. Finally, privatization of public figures focuses on personal and non-politics-related traits of a public personage, including attitudes and habits. In my database, the political figure to be represented in his personalizing traits is Charles of Bourbon, the king of the Two Sicilies, whose habits and attitudes with respect to antiquities dictated fashion and style to the British readership. In the course of the analysis, the five parameters will be examined within the emotional and attitudinal dimension outlined by van Dijk.

2. News Circulation and Variety of Text-types

London newspapers started publishing accounts of the discoveries at Herculaneum about 10 years after the resumption of the excavation by the king's order in 1738 and almost 38 years after the first excavations had been conducted by the former resident at Villa in Portici, the Austrian Prince d'Elbeuf, in 1710. The news about the Prince's finds had been published for the first time in the *Giornale dei Letterati d'Italia* in 1711 but it was only decades later (1739-58) that Camillo-Paderni began to report on the royal excavations to his influential friends in England (Moormann 2015; D'Amore 2019). News about Pompeii had followed a similar path. The excavation of the city had started in 1748 but it was only in 1755 that accounts of the finds in the *Civitas* (Pompeii) arrived in England by means of a letter of Paderni to Esq. Thomas Hollis. The letter was published in the *Philosophical Transactions* and read at the Royal Society in 1756 before making its appearance in newspapers (Knight 1997, 34).

By and large, London newspapers had their share in the delivery of news about Herculaneum and Pompeii, although only after specialized monthly periodicals had already informed their most receptive readers. Nevertheless, newspapers had the advantage of gathering information from different sources in order to ensure their coverage at shorter intervals. This determined the co-existence of different text-types. In particular, I have identified five major text-types used to provide news about Herculaneum and Pompeii in my dataset: letters/accounts/advice from Naples (LN), letters from travellers (LT), letters from experts (LE), news accounts of different or unspecified origin (NA) and specialized works (e.g. catalogues, discourse, anecdotes) (SW).² LN are the most frequent text-type with 25 occurrences, followed by LT, LE and NA which occur respectively 9, 7 and 6 times. SW feature the lowest frequency with 3 occurrences concentrated in the last decades of the century.

It is worth bearing in mind that the distribution of text-types in my dataset changes throughout the decades. From 1747 until 1755, the year of the publication of an extract from Paderni's fourth letter to Esq. Thomas Hollis in the *Public Advertiser*, newspapers mostly rely on LN (12 occurrences) and LT (3 occurrences). From 1755 to 1772, the year of the publication of extracts from the Abbé Winckelmann's letter to Count Ch. H. von

² Letters from Naples are also called "accounts" and "advices". The three terms all refer to epistolary news and are used interchangeably by editors to indicate dispatches coming from Naples, the site of the Court of Bourbon. According to Brownlees (2011, 193) the word *advice* is a calque, the literal translation of *aviso/avviso* in Italian or *avis* in French. The term is mostly found in the reporting of foreign news.

Brühl of Saxony about the latest Herculean Discoveries in the *London Chronicle*, LE and SW increase (from 1 to 5 occurrences) while LN and NA continue to provide the main coverage (14 occurrences). From 1773 to 1799, LT outnumber the other text-types with 6 occurrences (against 3 instances of LE, 3 occurrences of LN, 2 instances of SW and 1 case of NA). They contribute to keeping readers' interest alive but with some interesting changes in the attitude towards antiquity in comparison with the earlier letters.

From the perspective of the history of language, the circulation of news about Herculaneum and Pompeii coincides with the beginning of the late modern period (1750-1945). In this regard, London newspapers – and the variety of text-types contained in them – played an important role in the development of Late Modern English (LModE) (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009). In particular, the second half of the 18th century was characterised by an increasing social and geographical mobility which found in the readership of the London newspaper one of its major protagonists. As a result of the shift from land to money connected to the Industrial Revolution, different criteria were set to define social status and social mobility expanded accordingly. Membership of the gentry no longer depended solely on their position in the status hierarchy, as both wealth and education became important parameters to assess the social standing of a speaker (Smutterberg 2021, 17). Contacts between members of different socio-economic groups became more frequent owing to the regular interaction between the upper- and middle-classes who found in the newspaper a common platform of information, entertainment and education. This led middle- and even lower-class Londoners to ape the fashions, manners and interests of polite society (Langford 1992, 382).

Geographical mobility increased as well, as documented by letters from travellers often published in newspapers. Travelling for education across Europe, for example, enabled people to get in contact with different groups of speakers and acquire new cultural and artistic interests which left their mark on the English lexicon. With respect to this, excerpts taken from my database show how specialised words relating to art made their way into newspapers thus contributing to the propagation of terms which, although already attested in previous centuries, recorded a surge in usage from the 1750s onwards. The frequency of words such as *alabaster*, *antiquity*, *Bacchanalian*, *literati* reached a peak in the decades comprised between 1750 and 1800, while the usage of terms such as *bas relief*, *cabinet*, *pediment*, and *subterranean* increased in the late 18th century to peak in the 19th century, as shown in the factsheet of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Data also confirm Breban's (2014, 114) finding about the change of the adjective *several* into an unspecific quantifier which occurred in LModE, as we can see from the examples of *several* as premodifier of plural nouns indicating “a number of different; various, divers, sundry” (OED) (e.g. *several Historians* in example 4, *several Manuscripts* in example 12).

3. News-reporting: Factuality

When reporting news, the main concern of the editor is the selection and publication of reliable information to prove the factuality of the account (van Dijk 1988). In the early phase of news circulation editors relied on letters from Naples and letters from travellers. The first news about Herculaneum in my dataset comes from letters from travellers and appears in the *Whitehall Evening Post* within the London column:

(1) As we have formerly given the Publick an Account of the Discovery of a subterraneous City in the Kingdom of Naples, we have reason to expect that the two following Letters, in Confirmation of that Account will be very acceptable. The first is from a Knight of Malta and is dated the 24th of June, and runs thus [...] The second Letter was written from Rome in the month of June last, by the Abbé d'Orval, at his return from Naples and Portici, who expresses himself upon this Subject thus [...]. (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 8-10 August 1747)³

The role of letters from travellers in corroborating foreign news seems to suggest that, at least at this early stage of the discovery, a high degree of reliability is attributed to travellers' eyewitness reportage.⁴ In 1747, both the knight of Malta and the Abbé d'Orval refer to the subterranean city near Portici as Heraclea, rather than Herculaneum. The first use of the name Herculaneum occurs the following year when the same letters are reprinted in the *Penny London Post*, accompanied by a more detailed editorial preface. Whereas the news in the *Whitehall Evening Post* and the *London Evening Post* is presented as a brief item, embedded among other reports on the second and fourth pages, respectively, it is given prominent placement in the *Penny London Post*, where it appears as the lead story in the first column of the first page. The initial letter of the knight of Malta's account,

³ With minor editorial changes the same news is published in the same days on the *London Evening Post* (8-10 August 1747).

⁴ On the reliability of epistolary news as a genre, see, amongst others, Brownlees (2016) and Schneider (2005).

“I”, is embellished within an ornamental woodcut and typographic choices – including spacing, capitalization, headings and italics – are made by the printer in order to attract the reader’s attention and give more prominence to the reportage:

(2) *As we had lately an Account from Naples of some new Discoveries in relation to the ancient city of Heraclea (or Herculaneum) which was destroyed about 1600 years ago by an Earthquake, when there happened a great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius; the two following letters in confirmation of that Account cannot but be acceptable to our Readers.* The first is from a Knight from Malta, dated June 24, 1747 and runs thus [...] In the second Letter which was written from Rome in June last by the Abbé d’Orval at his Return from Naples and Portici, he expresses himself thus [...] (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

The editor of the *Penny London Post* offers a more comprehensive contextualization of the letters from the two travellers. In the preface, he reveals the name of the city and provides additional details regarding the time and circumstances surrounding the burial of Herculaneum. Another noteworthy addition is the use of the noun phrase “our Readers” in the expression “the two following letters [...] cannot but be acceptable to our Readers”, which serves to emphasize the editor’s attentiveness to the subscribers’ demand for accurate and reliable news.

Both in the news published in 1747 and in its reprint in 1748 the credibility of the two travellers is foregrounded through the reference to their professional and social standing (a knight and an Abbé). Even so, at least one of them, the Abbé d’Orval, spreads misinformation when he claims that “Heraclea was discovered two or three years ago by order of the king of Naples” (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). The proposition conceals the real origin of the finds of which the Austrian Prince d’Elebuf was the former promoter, albeit for his own personal usage (Özgenel 2008). Although this occultation of information might have been in line with the Bourbon propaganda, the error in postponing the beginning of the royal excavations in 1745 remains, along with his misnaming of Mount Vesuvius as Mount Aetna: “That which we have found most wonderful [...] is a subterranean City, overwhelmed with the ashes of Mount Aetna, under the reign of Titus” (*ibidem*). This lack of accuracy in the information appears to be justified by the early stage of news circulation. Even so, it is important to bear in mind that by the end of the century, abbés were often perceived as lower-ranking ecclesiastics with limited educational backgrounds. This might explain the presence of inaccuracies in their accounts.⁵ Overall, the editors’ caution in reporting news remains high throughout the decades.

A similar testimony of the suspicious attitude of the reader and the corresponding editorial care for authenticity is found in the *London Evening-Post*:

(3) *As many Persons doubted the Truth of what was said in our Gazette of the 17th April concerning the Ancient Manuscripts lately found in the Ruins of Heraclea or Herculaneum, we wrote to Naples for further information of this Discovery and have received the following Answer: ‘it is true that they have found at Herculaneum not only a great number of Greek Manuscripts but also some others in an unknown Character’.* (9-11 July 1754)

The example reveals that by 1754 the editor considers Naples as the official source of news about Herculaneum, capable of confirming or disconfirming information coming from other sources. The use of the inverted comma indicates the verbatim report of the content from the capital and is meant to certify to both the authenticity of the news and the reliability of the newspaper.

From 1755 onwards newspapers begin to publish letters written by experts, superintendents and esteemed antiquarians visiting the site. The reliability and authoritativeness of these sources is such that readers are no longer encoded in discourse as reluctant to accept the truthfulness of the news. If upper-class subscribers of the *Philosophical Transactions* or the *Gentleman’s Magazine* were already acquainted with the names of Camillo Paderni, Antonio Bayardi or the Abbé Winckelmann, antiquarian of the Pope, some middle-class readers of three-weeklies and dailies might have encountered these names for the first time. In the following example, the editor’s source was the *Gentleman’s Magazine* which published Camillo Paderni’s letter of October 1754 in May 1755. The *Public Advertiser* re-published the same account two months later with editorial intervention in the headline. The substitution of the initials of the addressee along with an anticipation of the content of the letter

⁵ An example of the public’s skepticism regarding the credibility of abbés in matters of antiquities can be found in the news article entitled “Ciceroni”, published in the *Whitehall Evening Post* in 1789. The article reports that: “[...] it is now become much of the fashion in Italy particularly among the English to employ such intelligent persons, who [...] are more likely to contribute to form his [gentleman’s] taste [...] than if he be conducted by an ignorant Abbé, a Valet de Place or by a Gondolier”. (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 28-30 May 1789).

were functional to the advertising purpose of the topical headline. The catchphrase “late Discoveries at Herculaneum” (6 occurrences) which framed accounts on the front page of newspapers acted as a bait for readers who were eager for the latest from the site:

(4) Extract of a Letter from Camillo Paderni, Keeper of the Herculaneum Museum, [addition: relating to the late Discoveries at Herculaneum] [omission: to T____S H____S. Esq.], dated at Naples, Oct. 18 1754. [omission: See Vol. XXIV pag. 261]. (*Public Advertiser*, 11 July 1755)

Another device which was commonly used by editors in order to enhance the factuality of the news is the reference to “accounts” and “advices” in the plural. Brownlees noticed a similar preference for the plural form in the word “letter(s)” in 17th-century news reporting. The strategy enhances credibility suggesting that more than one account/advice/letter has been received and processed before the news is considered sufficiently worthy of attention to be conveyed to the reader. In Brownlees’s words, “the published news is presented not as an account of one personal viewpoint but instead as a composite practice of assorted epistolary news” (2016, 400). Below are two examples from the *Whitehall Evening Post*:

(5) Our last accounts from Naples say that Report prevails among the Literati of that City, as if the Manuscript contained, either in whole or in part, the Roman History composed by Pliny the Elder. (3-5 December 1754)

(6) According to our last Advices from Naples, the Public may expect in due Time to have a Share in those invaluable Treasures that have been extracted out of the ruins of Herculaneum; since it is certain that no less than 150 volumes have been found. (9-11 July 1754)

As example (6) shows, numbers are a crucial truth-authenticating strategy in news reports. According to van Dijk (1988, 87) and Brownlees (2011, 78), it is not so much the exactness of these numbers that is important but rather the fact that they are given at all, since a reporter capable of providing exact figures must have had first-hand knowledge of the event. In my dataset numerical referencing is copious: it indicates the dates of the finds, the days employed to extract objects, the quantity of artifacts, their size and people working on them. In particular, the manuscript mania which pervades the macro-level narrative of the discoveries at Herculaneum since the first attestation of the Villa of Papyri provides a significant example of the use of numbers not only as markers of factuality but also as markers of evaluation.⁶ When reporting on the manuscripts found in the Villa, numbers are used either to apportion praise for the excavation progress or blame for the incompetence shown by superintendents and workmen in dealing with such an increasing amount of treasure, depending on the stance of the author. In example (5) the number of manuscripts found is given as 150 and a few months later, in the *Public Adviser* of 11 December 1754 we read that “according to advices from Naples not less than 250 volumes have been found in a wooden Chess [...] perfectly legible and well preserved”. In the extract of a Letter from Camillo Paderni written in October 1754 and published in the *Public Advertiser* on 11 July 1755, the manuscripts taken away “amounted to the Number of three hundred and thirty-seven and all of them at present incapable of being opened”. The number increases again as the excavations continue. In Winckelmann’s letter to Count von Brühl of Saxony dated 1762 and reporting the situation of the excavation 4 years earlier in 1758, the manuscripts collected were said to amount to a thousand and “no more than four rolls have been as yet entirely unfolded” (*Critical Account* 1771, 41). The same number was reported by Earl Buchan almost twenty years later in his Discourse to the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland:

(7) in the excavation of Herculaneum, there was discovered many years ago [...] a library consisting of about one thousand volumes, two hundreds of which perished before the workmen [...] and of these 800 rolls of volumes which remain, a few only have been unfolded or unrolled. (*Morning Post*, 17 January 1788)

While the increasing number of manuscripts found undoubtedly indicates progress in the digging, the use of numbers in context documents a changing attitude towards the finds throughout the years. In particular, the enthusiasm for the considerable amount of manuscripts, most of them “perfectly legible” and “well-preserved”,

⁶ Villa of Papyri was an ancient Roman villa discovered in Herculaneum in 1750. It takes its name from the thousands of papyrus scrolls that were found within it from 1752 onwards (Lapatin 2019).

which characterises the early accounts, gradually gives way to a more or less veiled disappointment/criticism for the impossibility – or incapability of the superintendents – to open them (“incapable of being opened”, “two hundreds of which perished before the workmen”, “only a few have been unfolded or unrolled”). The manuscript saga comes to a provisional end in 1795 when the first of the four manuscripts unrolled and deciphered was published and a copy sent to England.⁷ The news account reported in the *St James Chronicle* makes precise use of numbers for an accurate and ultimately self-celebratory presentation of the manuscript edited by the Literati of the Bourbon Court:

(8) It consists of 38 fragments or columns besides the title [...] In this manner it is carried on throughout, extending the whole volume, with the aid of five useful indexes to 180 pages, besides the preface of between 20 and 30. (14-16 July 1795)

4. News-reporting: Relational Structure for Facts

According to van Dijk, the credibility of the news is also determined by the way in which events are related to one another so as to sound plausible and comprehensible to the reader. When the early accounts on the discovery of Herculaneum began to circulate editors had to contextualize the event within a cause-effect relationship, in order to make it acceptable and newsworthy to the reader. This required hyper-condensed historical summaries which linked past geological events to the present discoveries. In the early accounts, the historical reconstruction is inserted within a top-down structure of the information whose use can be documented in news discourse from the 17th century (Ceconi 2009, 146). The top-down structuring of the news event envisages that what is most important in the story is told at the beginning while details of the events and its causes are given in later paragraphs (Jucker 2005, 13). In the letters from the King of Malta and from the Abbé d'Orval reprinted in the *Penny London Post* in 1748, the editorial lead foregrounds the most recent event, i.e. new discoveries at Herculaneum and postpones the historical background of the city to subordinate clauses with a clear explicatory function:

(9) As we had lately an Account from Naples of some new Discoveries in relation to the ancient city of Heraclea (or Herculaneum) which was destroyed about 1600 years ago by an Earthquake, when there happened a great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius; (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

After reporting the two letters from travellers, the editor takes care to supply readers with further background information about the Eruption of Mount Vesuvius. He devotes a paragraph to preface the account of the eruption narrated in Pliny's letter to Tacitus followed by the letter itself:

(10) The first Eruption of Mount Vesuvius of which we have any Distinct Account in History is that which happened under the reign of Titus Vespasiani, mentioned by several Historians [...] It was at this Time, very probably, that the City before mentioned was either buried under a Torrent of Ashes and combustible Matter from the Mountain or sunk in the earthquake which attended the Eruption. We have a surprising Account of both in Pliny's Letters [Book vi, Letters 15 and 20] which we shall give our Readers from the late excellent Translation of Mr. Melmoth. They are both addressed to Tacitus the Historian, and are as follows. (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748)

A similar top-down structuring of the information is found in the following news dated 1751, where the curiosities lately discovered in Herculaneum and Pompeii are put in prominent position while the historical circumstances which caused the burial of the cities are condensed in subordinate clauses at the end of the paragraph:

(11) By a Letter from a Gentleman on his Travels not at Naples, we are informed that more and greater curiosities are daily discovered among the ruins of the ancient Cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, which were buried about eight Feet under Ground, by the Ashes and Stones thrown out of Vesuvius in a violent Eruption of that Mountain, in the year 79 after Christi. (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751, my emphasis)

In the following advices from Naples, on the other hand, the contextualization of the discoveries is restricted to the present-day situation of the digging and no historical framework or reference is added:

⁷ The manuscript was written by the Epicurean Philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (c. 100 BC – prob. c. 40-35 BC) on the topic of music (Gigante 2002).

(12) The workmen, who are employed in removing the ruins at Herculaneum, have lately discovered a Marble Urn, as transparent as Alabaster; it is three foot and a half and the Bas Relief thereof is a curious Representation of a Female Bacchanalian. In that Bas Relief and the other Embellishments of the Urn, the fine Taste of some curious Sculptor who lived in Greece, when his Art was in its utmost Perfection – is plainly manifest. (*General Advertiser*, 29 May 1752, my emphasis)

(13) By a Letter from Naples, we learn that, *in digging the Ruins at Herculaneum*, they have found several Manuscripts rolled up; which excited the greater Curiosity as they were thought to relate to Ancient History. But, notwithstanding all their Art, they were unable to unroll them [...]. (*Public Advertiser*, 28 June 1753, my emphasis)

(14) The workmen, *employed in digging the ruins of Herculaneum*, have lately made an important discovery. It is a Statue of white Marble, seven feet high of exquisite Workmanship [...] half defaced on the bottom of the Pedestrial represents the famous Sibyl of Cuma [...]. (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 30 November 1760, my emphasis)

The contextual proposition is expressed in subordinate and parenthetical clauses within the script of the “sudden discovery” during the excavation. It is likely that editors are less committed to providing historical background as news readers are supposedly growing acquainted with Herculaneum and Pompeii. At the same time, we may assume that informers from Naples are much more interested in disseminating propaganda about the key role of the Bourbon Court in the finds than in supplying readers with background knowledge. In this regard the use of the *ing*-form for the material verbs “digging” and “removing ruins” highlights the continuity and intensity of the excavation process, tracing a clear cause-effect relationship between the royal patronage and the inestimable discoveries of the classical past. In the three examples above, the script of the “sudden discovery during the excavation” – encoded in discourse through the pattern *ing*-form + present perfect (+ lately) – provides the framework for the introduction and description of the find, which represents the real kernel of the news (e.g. “a marble Urn”, “Manuscripts”, “a Statue of white marble”).

5. News-reporting: Emotional/Attitudinal Dimension and Popularizing Strategies

The emotional/attitudinal dimension – and its articulation in the five indicators of popularized news outlined by Umbricht and Esser (2016) – is principally traceable in LE and LT where authors indulge in captivating and attention-grabbing descriptions of the excavations and the finds. Sensationalization, for example, characterises the letter of Abbé d’Orval originally published in the *Whitehall Evening Post* (1747) and then reprinted in the *Penny London Post* (1748). The language of wonder and abundance pervades the narrative through positive evaluative words, some of which in superlative constructions, plural nouns and quantifiers which, combined with progressive tenses, enhance the continuity of the excavation and the quantity and value of the discoveries:

(15) That which we found *most wonderful* and which will appear *most incredible to the World* is a subterranean City, overwhelmed with the Ashes [...] discovered two or three years ago by order of the King of Naples, *they have been digging it up ever since*. They have drawn from thence and *are every Day drawing* antique Statues of *inestimable value*, *the most precious kinds* of Marbles and *rich Remains of Antiquity of all kinds*. (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748, my emphasis)

A similar enthusiastic account full of quantifiers and positively evaluative adjectives is found in the extract of a letter from a gentleman at Naples to a friend of his in London. The letter favours the finds in Pompeii over those in Herculaneum.⁸ This unusual focus on the Roman city may be due to the assumption that by 1765 people had grown sufficiently familiar with the excavation progress at Herculaneum and were presumably more eager to receive news from the nearby Pompeii:

(16) The antiquities which have been found at Pompeii are very numerous and many of the Paintings, Statues and Mosaics, as capital as any than have been discovered. The chambers which were painted are preserved. None of them have windows and the light [...] was by the door which are of a very tall proportion. (*British Chronicle*, 1-3 April 1765)

⁸ For a complete study on the rediscovery of Pompeii in the 18th century and its popularization through the 19th-century Grand Tour, see Cooley (2023).

Sensationalization couples with another indicator of popularisation in the news: the common people narrative, which reanimates the past by making readers experience the life of the ancients as being very close to theirs. This sense of proximity between past and present is meant to inspire feelings of sympathetic closeness in the reader as we can see in the letter from a knight from Malta where the detailed description of common utensils used by the Romans creates a strong tie with the 18th-century reader's habits and life:

(17) This City is entire and the Furniture well preserved. I have seen everything prepared for Dinner at the time the Eruption happened as Bread, Meal, Wine &c. all very fresh, Utensils, Earthen Vessels, Tools, Fishing Nets of Silk, not very different from those now in use. (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748)

As Roberts notes, the apparent freshness of substances of perishable nature, such as food or wine, invited visitors “to think of the excavations as less an investigation into a society already dead and ossified than a reanimation of a community that for centuries had been preserved in a kind of stasis [...]” (2015, 64). The interest in the domestic life of the ancients was enhanced by the finds at Pompeii, where the comparison between past and present contributed to developing a sense of continuity and heritage:

(18) Many precious monuments of antiquity are still frequently found in the neighbourhood of the ancient city of Herculaneum. Some kettles and other vessels of copper were very lately discovered: they are not tinned within-side, like ours, but lined with silver; from whence it appears that in old times they thought more of preserving health than at present. (*Morning Chronicle*, 12 June 1772)

The fascinating power that these pieces of furniture and food which had been carbonized and were therefore unspoilt by time must have exerted on the early visitors is also traceable in the letter of Abbé d'Orval where he very modestly reports that he has “For [his] part, [he] contended [himself] with taking some Corn and some Bread of those Times which remains perfectly found in the Houses” (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). To be precise, this is not the only souvenir the Abbé takes away from the ruins, he also takes hold of “the remain of a piece of Painting [he] found in a Hall” (*ibidem*). The fashion of taking away objects from the site of discovery is recounted as being ordinary or acceptable though not necessarily legitimate. In the letter from a gentleman on his travels published in 1751, we learn that “several things had appeared abroad equally valuable with the best in the king's Possession” which caused his Majesty to double the number of Guards (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751). Taking away pieces of wall paintings as souvenirs and purchasing whatever came from the site of the excavations were common practices, not to be disjointed by the king's own custom to take mosaics and artifacts from the ruins and use them to decorate his residence and palace at Portici (Moormann 2015, 21).

Narrative incursion into the attitude and habits of the king can be interpreted as consistent with the privatization of public figures, another indicator of popularization which blends information and entertainment. The knight from Malta and Abbé d'Orval provide the first testimonies in my dataset of the king's custom of digging in order to take away objects to decorate his palace. The knight closes his letter by saying that: “the king has paved Parlours in his new Palace which is adorned with these Rarities, with Mosaicks and other Pediments taken up entirely” (*Penny London Post*, 18-20 July 1748). The Abbé from Rome, with equal candor, reports that Marbles and antiquities of all kinds “are employed by his Majesty in adorning his Palaces” (*ibidem*). The reader's imagination was stimulated further by accounts of the king “busying himself daily among the infinite Collection of Rarities, the Discovery of these ancient Cities has put in his possessions” (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 9-12 February 1751). Descriptions of the king's humour in relation to the finds equally contribute to arousing readers' curiosity about news regarding Herculaneum. The following letter written by a Spanish nobleman in Madrid is indicative of the beneficial effects that precious discoveries had on the king's spirit and how they were likely to impact on his political and military actions. Further to the capture of the Spanish frigate *Hermione* during the Anglo-Spanish war, the Spanish nobleman reports that:

(19) His Majesty is much out of humour [...] What seemed to please him most was the venerable remnant of an ancient beard lately discovered at Herculaneum and which the learned Bajardi supposes to have been the beard of Zeuxis [...] When this matter is once fully decided, orders will be given to carry on with vigour the siege of Almeida. (*London Chronicle*, 7-9 September 1762)

In the following years, accounts of the Royal Collection at Portici and the catalogues published by king's order fuelled the Herculaneum mania to the point that a commentator claimed that “anything from Herculaneum becomes ruptuous” (*Loyd Evening-Post*, 8-10 May 1765).

A turning point in the sensational and propagandistic macro-narrative of discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii is marked by the Abbé Winckelmann's letter to Count Brühl which newspapers played a significant part in disseminating. From that moment onward scandalization/problemization takes over and although self-celebratory accounts from Naples continue to feed readers' imagination with news of additional volumes of Bayardi's catalogue, attention progressively shifts from the enthusiastic accounts of treasure-hunt to aspects of the excavation methodology, with important implications in digging techniques, documentation and representation (Özgenel 2008).

In the summary of Winckelmann's letter, originally published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (June 1765) and then copied in the *London Chronicle*, the name of the engineer targeted by Winckelmann as responsible for the unforgivable errors in the early phase of the excavation, the Spanish Alcubierre, is carefully omitted. No mitigation, however, is applied to the description of the man's incompetence:

(20) In the process of the work, labourers discovered the Theatre [...] they found also another public inscription, the letters of which were of bronze and four palms high; this they shewed to the engineer who, *with a stupidity scarce to be paralleled*, ordered the letters to be torn from the wall uncopied and, throwing them all into a basket, sent them in this confusion as a present to his Majesty. (*London Chronicle*, 6-9 July 1765, my emphasis)

Although the expression "with stupidity scarce to be paralleled" is not in the original, its harshness conforms to Winckelmann's curious judgement of Alcubierre as a man "who knew as much of Antiquities as the Moon does of Lobsters" (*Critical Account*, 1771). The incompetence shown by the man is exemplified in the narrative of a case of shameful negligence. It regards the fate of a four-horse car which had been originally located at the top of the Herculaneum theatre. As we can read in the summary of Winckelmann's letter in the *London Chronicle*, very harsh expressions are used to elicit the reader's indignation:

(21) At the top of the Theatre there was a car drawn by four horses, of bronze, and a figure in the car, of bronze gilt. This was thrown down and broken by the earthquake but as all the parts remained, it might easily have been repaired. So little care, however, was taken of this curious and valuable piece of antiquity, that they threw it in fragments as they found it into a cart and sent it to Naples, where they shot it, like rubbish in a corner of the court before the castle. (6-9 July 1765)

The polarization between the highly positive semantics for describing the value of the artifact ("curious and valuable piece of antiquity", "all the parts remained") and the negatively connoted expressions referring to its ill treatment: "threw it in fragments [...] into a cart", "shot it like rubbish" and "corner of the court" exacerbates the ineptitude of the superintendence, maximising scandal and resentment.

As this was not enough to sensitize public opinion, in the *London Chronicle* of 10-12 September 1772, one year after the publication of the translation of Winckelmann's letter as *Critical Account* (1771), English readers were also informed that what remained of the statues, after a theft of the most valuable fragments, was melted down into two busts of the king and the queen:

(22) One may easily guess what has been the fate of these two pieces [the bust of the king and the queen], which I could never get a sight of. In fact they are become invisible. Care was taken to bury them in some hole, as soon as the shameful neglect of which they were the monuments came to be taken notice of. (*London Chronicle*, 10-12 September 1772)

The dissemination of Winckelmann's work appears to have impacted on travellers' reception by developing a highly critical approach where scandalization progressively replaces wonder. A case in point is the letter of a traveller recently returned from Naples in 1773:

(23) The search for antiques at Pompeia goes on but slowly about 20 men are employed there and in uncovering the Theatre at Herculaneum. *This is the more inexcusable* in a place like Naples, where it is computed that forty thousand men are without houses and lie soaking above one another in the streets and where the king has so many useless troops. There is only one man employed in unrolling the ancient manuscripts at Portici. [...] they have no sense to examine the titles or some part of the work before they proceed to unroll it and the slowness of the operation may make it 1000 years before they come to anything worthwhile; in which time Portici will probably be buried under another eruption of Vesuvius. (*General Evening Post*, 24-27 February 1773, my emphasis)

Numbers which originally underlined the abundance of the finds are now used to denounce the scarcity of people working on the ruins in relation to the quantity of antiques still lying underground. The *Discourse*

delivered by Earl Buchan to the Society of Antiquarians of Scotland published in the *Morning Post* merges the scandal/problematisation related to the slowness of the work with advice as to the methods which should be employed to optimize the results:

(24) In the excavation of Herculaneum, there was discovered [...] a library consisting of about one thousand volumes; two hundreds of which perished before the workmen, who were not aware of their nature or importance. Of these 800 rolls or volumes, a few only have been unfolded or unrolled, by a process which [...] is extremely slow and tedious. Instead of employing forty or fifty hands to perform this task and beginning by discovering the subjects or authors of the books, one or two persons only have continued to unroll books that chanced first to be opened and which have happened to be of no great value. (17 January 1788)

By 1799, when the French arrived in Naples, newspaper readers were fully aware of the problems inherent in the digging methods, the indolence of workers and their general neglect. Humour was mixed with scandal in an account published in the *Morning Chronicle* where Sir William Hamilton, archaeologist and British envoy at the Bourbon Court of Naples,⁹ comments on the slowness of the digging:

(25) This work was carried out with so much languor by the people appointed to execute it, that our Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, used jokingly to say to the King of Naples, that he should send for a hen and chickens from England, who would scratch up the City [Pompeii] sooner than his Majesty's men would uncover it. (22 March 1799)

Scandalisation also pervaded a previous account about the state of preservation in Pompeii. The news was originally reported in the *Sporting Magazine* in April 1793 and four months afterwards it appeared in newspapers:

(26) Mr Watkins, the last examiner of the buried town of Pompeii appears to have gone a step beyond his predecessors in a quarter, which there is in most towns, called the WONDERFUL. The following is part of his Description: "You may suppose the houses of Pompeii are in high preservation, when I tell you, that we saw on the Sill of a window, stains of some such liquor as coffee or chocolate, made by the bottoms of cups. (*Star and Evening Advertiser*, 10 August 1793)

Although scandal-based micro-narratives increased in the last decades of the century, partly disturbing the enthusiastic dispatches from Naples, they did not erase the interest in Herculaneum and its treasures, as we can read in one of the narratives that continued to circulate in newspapers before the French occupation:

(27) Naples, Sept. 3
On the 13th last was exposed to Public View in the King's palace a set of China representing the Grecian curiosities dug out of Herculaneum. Each piece is valued at 400 ducats. Chevalier Venuti, Director of the Royal Manufactory, as inventor of this new elegant ware, is preparing to give a full explanation [...] for the satisfaction of the lovers of antiquity and fine arts. (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 1 Nov. 1782)

At the end of the century the myth of Herculaneum and Pompeii continued to fuel people's imagination. Even so, the predominance of popularization through scandalization was indicative of the emergence of a new, more critical sensitivity towards the management and preservation of classical antiquities. In the following decades the increasing desire for antiquities and the interest in progressively more accurate methods of excavation and preservation paved the way for a more scientific approach to classical archaeology (Özgenel 2008).

Conclusion

The macro-level narrative of the discovery of classical antiquities reported in 18th-century London newspapers relies on a variety of sources and text-types, each providing an episodic insight into the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii. In particular, five text-types in order of frequency have been identified in the serialization of the coverage of the finds: letters from Naples, letters from travelers, letters from experts, news accounts of unspecified origin and specialized works. These sources stretched over a period of 50 years from 1747 to 1799 supplying the reader with a polyphonic representation of an unprecedented large-scale discovery of Greek and Roman antiquities. In order to be accepted as reliable by an increasingly demanding readership, the accounts

⁹ Studies on William Hamilton's role at the Court of Naples during the excavations can be found in Ramage (1992).

conformed to a set of truth-authenticating strategies which have been examined by combining van Dijk's model of persuasive content features of modern journalism (1988) with Umbricht and Esser's indicators of popularization in political news (2016). The results revealed the editor's need to enhance the authenticity of the news by appealing to factuality in the form of a) news attribution (with Naples being considered as the main source of reliable news about the finds); b) use of eye-witness reportage (in letters from British travelers which were also considered very precious sources of information given the amount of time required to receive more official news from Naples); c) the voice of experts in their letters and catalogues (e.g. Paderni, Winckelmann, Bayardi); d) precise description of the artifacts, especially through the use of numbers often exploited as a means to apportion praise or blame towards the sponsored digging.

The intelligibility of the news, on the other hand, was guaranteed by the construction of a strong relational structure for facts through a) editorial supply of historical background knowledge, and b) the script of the "sudden discovery" during excavation. At the early stage of news circulation, the historical contextualization was supplied by the editor after the news of the finds, according to a top-down structuring principle which prioritized the outcome of an event over its origin. In the following decades the historical contextualization disappeared while the script of the sudden discoveries continued to frame the majority of the accounts.

Authenticity and intelligibility of the news, however, would not have been sufficient to ensure the long-term interest of the readership without the simultaneous orchestration of popularizing strategies pertaining to the emotional/attitudinal dimension of the news. Results have shown that throughout the 50 years examined all the five indicators of popularization outlined by Umbricht and Esser were used in London newspapers, although with a different distribution. While sensationalism, emotionalization, privatization of public figures and common people narrative characterized the first twenty years of press coverage through a rhetoric of wonder and abundance, scandalization/problematicization about the recovery methods gained ground in newspapers after the publication of the Abbé Winckelmann's *Critical Account* (1771). The initial emphasis on the extraction of the object from the site and its value for collection purposes progressively shrank as more attention was devoted to the excavation procedure itself. The emerging sensitivity which took shape in the public platform of newspapers appeared to lay the groundwork for a different scale of values and beliefs in relation to antiquities: from a mere treasure hunt aimed at embellishing villas and palaces towards a more systematic and rational approach to excavation and preservation.

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STUDI E SAGGI



Perspectival Strategies in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

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Abstract

The essay focuses on the interplay between the authorial narrative instance and the internally focalized perspective that structures the internal movement of one of Kate Chopin's most famous texts, "The Story of an Hour" (1894). Chopin's perspectival choices offer a key to reflect upon the issue at the center of Chopin's short story, namely, women's freedom in a patriarchal society. The discrepancy between what the characters know and what readers know triggers a potentially ambivalent ethical and affective engagement which mirrors Chopin's own positioning.

Keywords: Focalization, Kate Chopin, Self-assertion, Surprise-ending, "The Story of an Hour"

"When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease – of joy that kills" (Chopin 1991, 79).¹

This is the rather famous sentence that ends Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour", the very short piece Chopin first published in the magazine *Vogue* (December 6, 1894), which belongs in the list of her most renowned stories. I have begun with the closing sentence, because it well condenses the threads – formal and thematic – on which I will focus in the following pages.²

Barbara C. Ewell in her book on Kate Chopin describes the story as "quite remarkable, ranking with *The Awakening* as one of Chopin's most memorable statements of female self-assertion" and "the first of her experimental tales" (1986, 88). Per Seyersted, the author of Kate Chopin's authoritative biography, reads in it the clear signs of the confidence the success of her just published short story collection, *Bayou Folk*, had injected in her, "freeing forces that had lain dormant" (1969, 58).

¹ All page references come from this edition and will be provided without further reference parenthetically, to keep the reading light.

² Chopin had a hard time publishing her pieces because of their unpalatable (because transgressive) situations; *Vogue*, a new magazine (the first issue was released in 1892), was headed by Josephine Redding whose independent and eccentric taste allowed some of Chopin's most audacious short stories to see the light, even if *Vogue* too, had initially rejected the short story. As for "The Dream of an Hour" it could be easily argued that the publication was not only due to Redding's eccentricity, but to the very recent success of Chopin's short story collection *Bayou Folk* (1894). It is worth mentioning that the publication (1900) of the short story collection which contained many of her most poignant stories, "The Story of an Hour" included, significantly titled *A Vocation and a Voice*, was canceled.

To contribute to the very rich conversation on the short story and on its ambivalent ending, I propose to focus on a specific formal choice. I would argue that an analysis of the interplay between the authorial narrative instance and the internally focalized perspective that structures the internal movement of Kate Chopin's very short text may shed light on the ways in which Chopin reflected on the representation of women's experience and more specifically on the complexities of the short story's ending.

I am here employing the classical handling of focalization stemming from Genette's seminal distinction between who speaks and who sees. I use the traditional approach of structuralist narratology – despite the massive debunking it has undergone – for three reasons. The first one is heuristic: the distinction is well known by everyone and manages to operate a readily available distinction. The second one is mimetic: as I will show, the perspectival shift begins precisely with a description of what the protagonist as focalizer can see. The third is thematic: having a voice and speaking as a subject and not having it and being spoken as an object touches the core of the liminality of women's experience Chopin is interested in.

I am not the first one to see in the shifting perspectives – (roughly) from authorial to internally focalized and back to authorial – a key element in the short story. Given the short story's brevity, the shift is rather conspicuous and unlikely to be missed. I nonetheless would argue that this issue is worth deepening. More specifically, my interest here lies in the ways in which Chopin's handling of focalization sets the stage for a specific – ethical and affective – readerly engagement. Furthermore, I would argue that Chopin's perspectival choices constitute another way to reflect upon the issue at the center of Chopin's short story, namely, women's freedom in a patriarchal society. What does it mean to think about women's autonomy in a world that – prescriptively – denies it?

I would like to begin by stating what might sound obvious because the obvious often constitutes the foundation of the interpretive moves readers (automatically) make when they begin reading. If, on the one hand, a narrating instance and the world it shapes are mutually interdependent, on the other, a narrating instance is the child of the social and economic (and literary) conditions of a given time and place. I think it is safe to assume that the author-figure that provides the blueprint of the authorial narrator's privileges is specifically gender and color coded (at least) in the two centuries that witnessed the establishment and the ever-increasing success of the novel (mid-eighteenth to mid-twentieth century): the discursive authority is, by default, modeled on “white, educated men, of hegemonic ideology”.³

I am not arguing that narratives that showcase an authorial narrating instance are *per se* (oppressively) patriarchal – I am absolutely convinced with Brian Richardson that “no form has any inherent essence or tendency” (2006, 73). I am, nonetheless, pragmatically acknowledging the *feel* of authoritativeness and confidence authorial voices tend to convey. I am, furthermore, convinced that once readers consider the socio-cultural context Chopin's text belongs to, their most likely interpretive move is to consider the voice showcased in Kate Chopin's short story as embodying the normative default reading of women's identities as liminal, passive, dependent and consequently not free. I will return in due time to this premise and address an associated issue that may potentially counteract what I have just said, namely, the implicit correlation between the actual author and the authorial instance (via the implied author).

Let us start at the beginning.

Kate Chopin's short story was originally published as “The Dream of an Hour”. Barbara C. Ewell suggests that the short story “was editorially titled” (1986, 88) in this way for the publication in *Vogue* on April 19, 1894. In all subsequent publications, both in collected works and anthologies, the short story appears, however, as “The Story of an Hour”. Whatever the reason for this change, it is unarguable that the two titles change the prospective emotional experience of the reader dramatically.⁴ Once we have read the piece, we could easily agree on this (or a similar) summary: the story is the realistic chronicle of a short-lived dream of freedom (one hour long) in the life of the protagonist, Mrs. Louise Mallard. And yet, the change in the title implies that Chopin wanted the juxtaposition of story and dream to be the interpretative destination of a journey in understanding, and not the ready-made indication of how to read the hour in the protagonist's life the short story deals with. The established title renders the time-frame the most notable item that attracts the reader's attention as there is not much to ponder in the generically neutral term “story”; the original title, in contrast, somewhat doubles the stakes as both the word dream and the reference to the very tight time-frame are, at least potentially, highly charged. The indeterminate “an hour” somewhat downplays its importance and, once again potentially, points

³ This wording comes from Susan Sniader Lanser's introduction to her foundational book, *Fictions of Authority* (1992, 6). I will return to her perceptive take in the following pages.

⁴ I am not aware of any well-documented reason for the title change.

to its ordinariness. It should, furthermore, be stressed that the original title mines, or, at least weakens, the effect of the surprise ending, which may be deemed untouched by the title Chopin settled for. The title is one of the reasons why the very final sentence we started off with produces such a jolt in the reader. On this issue too, I will return; here, suffice it to say that the title is a deliberate mimetic strategy that is closely associated with the dynamic interplay of voice and focalization around which Chopin's piece revolves.

Let me add a final thought on the title: such a generic term as story may attract our attention to itself, that is to say, to the act of telling. This implies that we are explicitly invited to pay attention to that hour as the characters lived it and as it is accounted for. This is obviously *always* the case, but I will demonstrate that here the pair happening/telling acquires a weighty thematic relevance: the lingering aftertaste the short story produces depends crucially on the difference between the characters' (diegetic) knowledge and the readers' (extradiegetic) one. This misalignment is likewise a key element of the perspectival strategies I intend to illuminate.

For the sake of the argument, I will proceed by close-reading the three sections of the short story with a specific focus on perspectival choices. The three sections do not exist – graphically – in the actual text, which is undivided; they emerge clearly once we concentrate on the perspectival shift.

"Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death" (76). The hour the short story promises to cover begins when Mrs. Mallard's sister Josephine tells her in the best way possible that her husband died in a railroad accident. The reason for this extra attention that takes the form of indirection ("veiled hints", *ibidem*) is due to the protagonist's health condition. The very first sentence (and paragraph) of the short story goes a long way in establishing the narrator's privilege in the narratological sense of free and indiscriminate access to information that belongs to other places and times and to the characters' interiorities. The narrator in charge "knows". The second paragraph adds to the knowledge concerning the motivation of the characters' actions, the details concerning the piece of tragic news' travelling from the local newspaper office to the Mallards' house via the intervention and careful handling of the dead husband's friend, Richard. The short story, thus, opens on textual materials that convey the audible presence of an authorial narrating instance. The expository move providing the relevant temporal and spatial coordinates typical of nineteenth century novels is absent, but its vestiges are recognizable in the form of a preamble, which, its brevity notwithstanding, sets the stage for the characters to act and move in an immediately comprehensible way. In a readerly friendly fashion, the authorial narrator provides the information concerning Mrs. Mallard's condition and her husband's friend's actions technically transgressing the hour's tight frame; the ending too, with the sentence that opens this piece, does the same.

The breaking of the literal precincts of "the hour" constitutes a violation only superficially: for that hour to be meaningful, in fact, it must have a teleological, rather than a merely chronological, import. Thus, the initial specifications concerning Mrs. Mallard's heart trouble and the details concerning Richard's making sure of the truthfulness of Brently's killing, on the one hand, and the time needed for the doctors to arrive and offer an explanation of Mrs. Mallard's death, on the other, provide the necessary frame to allow readers to reflect on the story's meaning. After all, (narrative) temporality finds its most profound *raison d'être* in teleology as Meir Sternberg's "Telling in Time", a classic in narrative theory, masterfully demonstrates.

It is worth noticing the way in which the protagonist is presented: not only is her individuality reduced to the mere fact that she is a married woman, obviously bearing her husband's name, but she is the subject of a passive verb, which is to say, she is not truly a subject. Mrs. Mallard enters the stage of the short story as the passive victim of an affliction.⁵ These two initial elements contain synecdoche-like the protagonist's reality: she is a wife and she is ill.⁶ The two conditions convey a strong intimation of confinement to the domestic realm: she is, in all respects, a weak subject. The absence of the protagonist's first name and her consequent depersonalization is, furthermore, amplified by the spelling out of the first name of her sister Josephine.⁷

⁵ For an interesting stylistic reading of Chopin's short story which gives an important role to passivization and, more broadly, to transitivity, see Sabbagh and Mehri 2014.

⁶ As Ewell perceptibly suggests, Mrs. Mallard's heart disease is not only "the loaded gun of melodrama" but an ingredient that progressively develops into "a deeply spiritual problem" (1986, 89).

⁷ One could easily argue that *both* women are reduced – if differently – to their familial roles of wife and sister. For a fascinating reflection on names, and naming, in Chopin's short story, see Dolloff. I find particularly interesting his interpretation of the surname Mallard: "the first syllable translates as the familiar French noun for 'illness' (mal), while the second syllable, 'ard', easily suggests the French noun ardeur (English equivalent: 'ardor'), denoting 'fervour' or 'strenuousness'. Thus, packed into Louise's surname, 'Mallard', we may arguably find a lexical diagnostic not only for the initially veiled emotional affliction of her marriage, from which, along with her cardiac problem, she already suffers at the story's start, but also for the fateful ebullience that contributes to her death at the story's end" (Dolloff 2014, 581).

The first sentence (and paragraph) ends with the news of the death of the man who gives the protagonist her identity. The opening of the short story, thus, contains the existential question that Chopin wants to address: what happens to a married woman once the center of the definition of who she is isn't there any longer? Significantly, as we will see, readers do learn about her given name, Louise, after they have gained access to her interiority – that part of her that makes of her a singular individual.

The third paragraph wraps up the first part of the story marked by an authorial narrator which comes to us with the usual array of knowledge and non-focalized considerations. Here too a broad knowledge is displayed both contextual – “she did not hear the story as many women have heard the same” (76) – and specific to the protagonist's interiority – “she would have no one follow her” (77).

Before analyzing the second section and the perspectival shift it stages, I would like to reflect on an important detail that lies beneath the surface of what I presented so far in view of the short story in its entirety. As we have seen, Brently's death is at the center of the opening paragraphs: this hour pivots on the truth of his death which is mentioned explicitly in reference to Richard's extra care – “he had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth” (76). Well, given that Brently is *not* dead, we cannot but conclude that the narrator, despite the display of knowledge, is reticent. It is not a matter of the narrator's limitation – there are no limitations to an authorial narrator's knowledge – but a matter of the careful, authorial (this time Chopin's) handling of his perspective which must play cunningly with the mimetic level privileging the chronological order of discovery. Apparently, Chopin deemed it necessary to have it both ways – knowledgeable and limited. The first limitation she imposes on her narrator is an alignment with the characters' experiencing frame in terms of sequential chronology. The second is more overtly perspectival and concerns the second section of the short story which begins with the protagonist's going “away to her room alone” (77). This shift concerns the main focus of these pages.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul. She could see in the open square [...] the tops of trees. [...] In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her distantly. (*Ibidem*)

The change in perspective is made unmistakably clear by the positioning of the origo of the description that follows: a roomy chair facing an open window. Windows are the famous metaphor that Henry James employs to describe the house of fiction in the preface to his *Portrait of a Lady* (1881). The well-known quote is worth repeating as it condenses the correlation between the framing of a given window and the perspective that governs the description that follows:

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million [...] every one of which has been pierced [...] by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures [...] have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. (James 2011, 632)

More recently, Mieke Bal reminds us that we should not consider descriptions as textual places in which the plot is suspended and we are given contextual details neutrally: “the ‘natural’ form of description” Bal maintains, “is focalized on the character's perception” (2002, 195, my translation). Chopin structures this second section precisely along these lines detailing the distinct impression of what the protagonist *could* see and hear given her position. Everything in this and in the following paragraphs is limited both perceptually (“faintly”, “distant” “distantly” “off yonder” “patches of blue sky”) and cognitively (“someone”). The shift is signaled by another important detail: the deictic indicating the armchair is the proximal “this” which conveys the sliding toward the protagonist's perceptual embodied position. It is worth noticing that the armchair is the item that opens this section – a masterful move that foregrounds Louise as a weak subject.

These elements notwithstanding, the short story's movement is much more subtle: it is not the fluid shift from authorial/all-encompassing to limited/internal and back to authorial. The narrator keeps being audibly present in the room with Mrs. Mallard.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes [...]. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought. (77)

This description demonstrates that we are still distant from the high-modernist strictly-focalized text *à la* Hemingway and that the authorial narrator still keeps the protagonist on a short leash. The access to the protagonist's interiority and the opening up of a space in which we are granted the possibility to get in touch with her emotional landscape as it takes shape in the moments that follow the news of her husband's death is heavily framed by the narrator who makes clear that the path that leads to Louise's highly idiosyncratic version of self-assertion is not rooted in reflection but in "a suspension of intelligent thought", that is to say *not* in higher order faculties. The description thus hides beneath the surface of factuality a preemptive idea concerning women, their too emotional way of being in the world. Louise is read into a double-edged stereotype that precedes her: repression and irrationality. But who lies behind these authorial reading moves (of Louise's looks) which cannot but be – given their intrinsic authority – guiding invitations to read what follows along these lines?

To answer this question in view not only of Chopin's short story but of her broader literary project, I cannot but return to Susan Lanser's foundational book and recall her introductory reflections on the enmeshment of (textual) authority and social power. Lanser maintains that

One major constituent of narrative authority [...] is the extent to which a narrator's status conforms to this dominant social power. [...] I believe, however, that even novelists who challenge this authority are constrained to adopt the authorizing conventions of narrative voice in order, paradoxically, to mount an authoritative critique of the authority that the text therefore also perpetuates. (1992, 6-7)

I would argue that the naming of the two traits Louise's face allegedly manifests refers to the two strains Lanser associates with discursive narrative authority: one conforming to the stereotypical reading of women as irrational, the other subtly challenging the dominant authority by conjuring up the term that condenses the consequences of patriarchal chastising of female desire – repression. According to this possible reading, behind the same authorial voice would lie *both* the hegemonic ideology *and* its potential breach. In naming repression, which is, plot-wise, the term motivating the return of the repressed that follows, Chopin creates a space to interrogate what is discursively dominant. The fact that this is not much of a challenge is, in itself, part and parcel of the situation the short story thematizes. What happens while Louise is alone is presented through her own focalizing perspective, even if dutifully framed.

This reading touches upon the core of Chopin's story, (almost) unanimously considered a story of female self-assertion, an example of those works by Chopin in which she "offers concentrated descriptions of moments that shatter social complacency, that quickening of consciousness which gives birth to self-desire, self-recognition" (Papke 1990, 60). It is, thus, necessary to dwell on its implications more thoroughly, and respond to the most trenchant debunking of any interpretation which moves from more or less overt feminist underpinnings, Lawrence I. Berkove's:

in the text of this very short story there is no hard evidence whatsoever of patriarchal blindness or suppression, constant or selfless sacrifice by Louise, or an ongoing struggle for selfhood. These positions are all read into the story from non-textual assumptions. [...] [The text] does not supply us with any information about the truth of her life except her perceptions, and these [...] are unreliable and, insofar as they are taken as the statements of the story's omniscient narrator, misleading and contradicted by other textual evidence. (2000, 153)

Berkove's reasoning is not conducted in an abstract way, but founded on a tight close-reading of Louise's "unreasoning self-centeredness" and her "distorted view of love" (154). He takes great pain in demonstrating that the objectivity, or to put it in more precise perspectival terms, the absolute restriction to the protagonist's perceptual and cognitive apprehension of the situation, consigns to the reader a woman that dubs "illumination" her "dark and twisted fantasies that reflect a confused and unhealthy mind" (156). Louise's thinking is "arbitrary and whimsical", "extravagant and unrealistic" (155, 154), in short, she "is sick, emotionally as well as physically" (156) and she "is not thinking clearly" (157).

The quote above finds, furthermore, specific fault with the word "repression", the same word I proposed to read as a key term to access the perspectival strategies I am trying to illuminate. Berkove insists that the generally acknowledged theme, nicely summarized by Steven Dolloff as "the unhealthy repression of a woman's natural sense of individual self-worth by conventional sexist expectations of late nineteenth-century matrimony" (2014, 580), is not present in the story but is projected upon it.

To address Berkove's biting critique of the protagonist of "The Story of an Hour", it is important to liberate Chopin from the constriction of labels and the expectations that they entail. She was never part of the feminist movement as it was developing in her time and she did not use the term feminist to describe

herself. She was however interested in reacting against the idea that women's writings belong in two well-defined genres – sentimental fiction and regionalist fiction. As Mary Papke puts it: Chopin's work together with Edith Wharton's is "the first modern female literary discourse in America, one in which women's experience is given centrality and expression" (1990, 4).

It is important to clarify that Berkove does not dispute Chopin's greatness; I would, nonetheless, claim that Berkove's interpretation dismisses too hastily the perspectival dynamics at work here and its consequences. I suggest viewing this dynamic as Chopin's way of conveying *formally* the stakes of putting women's experience center stage – no one can obviously question the *thematic* centrality of women in Chopin's oeuvre. Chopin chooses not to grant her female protagonist a voice;⁸ she chooses to employ her authority as a writer *both* reinforcing *and* problematizing the authority of her authorial narrator to stage formally the fact that there are no easy fixes to undo the hegemonic interpretation of women's lives, that there is no point denying their stereotyping, nor their liminality. Chopin works from within challenging the discursive underpinnings of men's authority over them by exploring fictionally the possible trajectory the very vocabulary that defines women sets in motion.

Chopin knows very well that the road that would allow a transition from self-abnegation to self-assertion is paved with many compromises. Chopin stages here – Berkove's reading is (partially) valid – a woman who experiences such an inebriation at her prospective freedom as to paint it in too radically absolute terms ("a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely", 78). This reaction is itself part and parcel of expressing women's experience as it is, that is to say, (maybe inevitably?) equal, opposite and inversely proportional to the weight of dispossession of one's self they had to endure.

It is easy to argue, as Berkove himself does, that this inebriation makes her even more ill. In commenting her descending the stairs after her time alone in her room, Berkove focuses on the term "unwittingly" – "she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory" (79) – and writes: the adverb, "with its connotation of the absence of reason, reinforces the idea that Louise's fever has triumphed", her fancy, "with its connotation of fantastic and capricious imaginings" (2000, 157) and not her reason has won.

Yes, Louise may be said to somewhat reinforce the stereotypical idea that women handle situations too emotionally. The story of Louise's hour of freedom is indeed a dream, the "untenable representation of a particular individual case" (Papke 1990, 6), but in the folds of Chopin's formal choices, what we may call the how of this representation, lies Chopin's trenchant critique to the social structures that confine women's experience *despite* the fact that Chopin may well disagree with Louise's radicality.

Elissa Marder's words voice the problem Chopin had to face poignantly: "if there is no experience 'outside' of patriarchal structures, and no discrete language 'outside' of patriarchal discourse, in what terms can this experience be spoken?" (quoted in Hayes-Brady 2016). According to the reading I am here proposing, Chopin's answer to Marder's "in what terms?" question is the following: firstly by overtly granting center stage to her perceptions, the merely perceptual ones belonging to the external world (what she could see and hear while sitting in her armchair), then the more specifically emotional ones emerging from within, sick as they may be. This shift, in itself, does not, technically speaking, assign a voice to the protagonist; it constitutes, however, a subjectivizing move as it magnifies the embodied positioning and consequent coloring of what is narrated. Secondly, Chopin answers by letting Louise's emotions take the distorted form they subjectively take while framing them authorially, because this (stereotypical) framing *and* Louise's rebellious reaction are the most precise snapshot of how things are as far as the precarious and still embryonic shape an autonomous woman may take. And, last but not least, by putting the reader in the position to reflect on the final interpretation of Louise's cause of death from the privileged position of knowing which emotions Louise harbored in her heart.

Thus, Berkove's point that "[the text] does not supply us with any information about the truth of her life except her perceptions" fails to acknowledge that this is exactly the point: a partial silencing of the authorial instance alongside the (only apparently paradoxical) maintenance of its demoting vocabulary. There is no unreliability here, nor are there misleading moves: the reader is in the position *not* to take them "as the statements of the story's omniscient narrator" (2000, 153).

The enmeshment of the dominant vocabulary and the still inchoate language to speak outside of patriarchal discourse is evident in the tentative way the consequences of the Victorian ideal of marital self-sacrifice are

⁸ As far as I know, none of Kate Chopin's most renowned short stories employed character-narration, or, in other terms, a first-person narrative voice.

addressed. In other words, the tentativeness relates to the "cult of true womanhood, a cultural signifier central to early twentieth-century American literature" (Papke 1990, 3).⁹ Here we can see the rather convoluted way in which Louise manages to eventually name "this thing" (77) she feels:

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. [...] She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will [...]. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. [...] 'free, free, free!' She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. (77-78)

The word that articulates the tumultuous feeling and the concept it embodies reaches Louise despite her resistance.¹⁰ The authorial narrator's voice becomes again audible with an intrusion doing what it had done before, namely, reminding the boundaries of the dominant world view. This kind of joy should be repressed (to return to the other key term we have already touched upon) and the very fact that Louise dismisses her own suggestion, which we are invited to connect to the inner resistance she had felt, confirms that Chopin accepts to present a woman who radicalizes the dominance of her emotional side. What enables her to "dismiss the suggestion as trivial" is the clarity of her perception. She feels (the "suspension of intelligent thought" is still in place) with clarity, but this feeling is exalted and thus bypasses the moral question and trespasses into potentially immoral territory.

Once again, we might wonder: where does Chopin stand? I think Chopin is behind the adjective "monstrous" as well. As with the word "repression", she has her protagonist face the most obvious interpretation of feminine self-assertion as the poisonous fruit of unthoughtful exaltation. What Chopin is doing here goes well beyond what may be deemed her opinion as far as Louise's version of female self-assertion. It could actually be argued, as Dan Shen convincingly does, that Chopin's living in loving memory of her husband and "her other narratives affirming the bereaved wife's contented life devoted to the dear, dead husband" (2009, 128) may be the contextual reason for Chopin's ironically ambivalent handling of Louise's story. Here Chopin weaves her broader project exploring the pitfalls of handling a prospective autonomy which tends to be programmatically denied. The movement from silence to voice passes through articulations which may turn out to be (too) daring and audacious. Chopin not only alternates authorial and internally-focalized narration "as a realistic evocation of the subject/object problem" (Peel 2016, 87) so central to feminist discourse, but inhabits herself the authorial hegemonic vocabulary testing its narrative consequences.

We are now ready to confront the final sentence with which I chose to open this reflection on Chopin's short story. Here it is, again: "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease – of joy that kills" (79). The authorial narrator, back in charge to frame the story of Louise's hour would seem to neutrally report the doctors' interpretation of Louise's heart failure, an interpretation which is perfectly in keeping with the stereotypical view of women's identity. Louise is, thus, told (and written) into the only legitimate place she can belong to, that of the devoted wife who cannot but be overjoyed at her husband's return after she believed she had lost him. That joy is too much for Louise's frail heart and kills her. The doctors voice (and the authorial narrator reports) the only reading available to the characters of the short story who have not crossed the threshold of Louise's room. In thus doing, the authorial narrator who has witnessed (almost) in silence and reported (almost) dutifully Louise's emotional exaltation, intruding to exercise his framing role, silences the radical form Louise's mourning has taken.

We are definitely facing a surprise ending, the fruit, according to Richard Fusco, of Chopin's following in the steps of Guy de Maupassant's poetics. Readers are confronted with a sudden and unpredictable change of direction: the news of Brently's death is not true after all and Brently is back home. If we follow Richard Fusco's categories, the ending of "The Story of an Hour" could be said to straddle two typologies – "the ironic coda" and "the surprise-inversion story". Here, in fact, the author *both* "leads [her] readers along what appears to be a linear plot; but [...] in the last sentence [s]he unexpectedly introduces a twist" (1994, 21) *and* adds a brief coda, which takes "place after the time frame of the primary story, long enough so that characters can view a significant event more reflectively than emotionally" (17).

⁹ For a brief but perceptive presentation of true womanhood ideology, see Papke 1990, 9-19.

¹⁰ Daniel Deneau points interestingly to the underlying web of interrelated concepts of "fear, force and sex [...] anticipation, pleasure and ultimately enlightenment" of this passage which marks Louise's transformation, mobilizing "a combination of a rape, a visitation by the Holy Spirit, and a sexual union" (2003, 212).

Many scholars have commented on the irony of this ending: it is definitely there both diegetically (the doctors may be said to be ironic in assuming joy as the cause of Louise's death), and extradiegetically (readers may deem the ending ironic considering that all the characters think that she has died of (unspecified) joy, while she has actually died because she has lost her freedom). Along these lines, readers' next interpretive step could thus be the acknowledgment that a woman who breaks patriarchal identity rules must pay – once again – with her life.

And yet, intermingled with this undisputable truth, there lies the most enduring surprise which concerns the ambivalence of the space Chopin has created – graphically conveyed by the dash. In that space, the word “monstrous” resounds. There are many reasons for its absence: Louise's death has brought down the curtain of her profoundly subjective experience of her husband's alleged death. The authorial narrator wants, so to speak, to turn this unacceptable page reinstating the narrative that confirms the status quo concerning a woman's role and her appropriate feelings. I would argue that the word monstrous is absent not simply because Louise's focalizing perspective isn't available any longer but because it is now the reader's turn to decide what to make of it – how far (or how close) Louise's inebriation approximates the destination of finding an autonomous voice.

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La sofferenza fatta roccia Un racconto per ragazzi di Idolina Landolfi

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Abstract

I litosauri by Idolina Landolfi has long been overlooked by critics, yet it stands as a significant work deserving of scholarly attention. This article presents a close reading of the text, focusing on its underlying ecopedagogical substratum and exploring the intertextual, figurative, and cinematic references embedded within the narrative. Landolfi's portrayal of *I litosauri* not only offers a captivating story, but also serves as a poignant reflection on ecological concerns and human-nature relationships. By delving into the intricacies of Landolfi's prose and uncovering its rich intertextual tapestry, this analysis seeks to shed light on the literary merits of *I litosauri*, aiming to reclaim its place in contemporary discourse in children and young adult literature.

Keywords: Children Literature, Comparative Literature, Ecopedagogy, *I litosauri*, Idolina Landolfi

1. Un libro, la Terra, un corpo

È il 1999 quando Idolina Landolfi¹ approda al mondo della narrativa per ragazzi con il racconto lungo *I litosauri*, uscito per i tipi della Laterza nella collana "Narrativa per la Scuola". Un libro sovente liquidato con fare sbrigativo dall'autrice e che tuttavia si pone a valle di una genesi assai complessa, in cui confluiscono lo spirito animalista della figlia di Tommaso Landolfi, nonché la sua straordinaria *vis* affabulatoria, pronta a tradursi in uno *storyworld* di mondi compensativi: di universi fittivi che si dissolvono l'uno nell'altro, sotto le spinte di una *rêverie* dell'istante. In seconda battuta, mette conto specificare che la marca di genere "letteratura per ragazzi" male si adatta a un libro come *I litosauri*, vuoi perché l'opera è estendibile a un bacino di ricezione più ampio, vuoi perché la scrittura – all'apparenza agile e a grandi falcate – è essenzialmente iperletteraria, nutrita da un ipotesto che, per quanto mimetizzato nelle pieghe diegetiche, non manca di rivelarsi in più zone del libro.

Un testo, *I litosauri*, ingiustamente dimenticato e ormai divenuto introvabile, eppur destinato a entrare, *mutatis mutandis*, nel canone *green* della letteratura italiana per ragazzi, segnatamente a quel filone di opere che si prefiggono

¹ Per un quadro generale su Idolina Landolfi, cfr. Pellegrini e Salvadori 2018.

un'alfabetizzazione ambientale dei lettori più giovani con un intento ecopedagogico.² Non diversamente dagli *juveniles* di Gilda Musa (penso a *L'arma invisibile* del 1982), Idolina Landolfi si è posta inconsapevolmente in quel solco tracciato da una letteratura per ragazzi di tipo eco-centrato, vertebrata da una più o meno esplicita coscienza ecologica. Lo si arguisce, d'altronde, dai vari personaggi costellanti una narrazione eleggibile a teodicea ed esperienza iniziatica, dove quattro giovani adolescenti intraprendono un viaggio (prima reale, ma poi rivelatosi onirico) all'interno delle viscere della Terra.



Fig. 1 – Piramide di San Cristóbal, Messico, Wikimedia Commons

Opereremo pertanto una lettura *in itinere* e per tasselli citazionali, col duplice intento di restituire la tensione ecologica sottesa al libro, nonché fare luce sui riferimenti letterari che ne strutturano la partitura. Tutto ha inizio in Messico, nei pressi della Piramide di San Cristóbal (fig. 1), dalla cui sommità i quattro giovani protagonisti si ritroveranno letteralmente nelle profondità del pianeta Terra: un pianeta vivo, popolato al suo interno, e da subito destinato a farsi ricettacolo proiettivo, perché è nelle sue tumescenze che è possibile intercettare le tragiche conseguenze della *hybris* umana. Non è un caso che il Guardiano della Terra, il primo nume a presidiare il ventre del globo, esibisca uno specchio pronto a riflettere, cito:

Ogni efferatezza compiuta dall'uomo dal principio della sua storia: contro i suoi simili e contro gli animali, i suoi compagni del pianeta, e contro le montagne, le foreste, i mari. Sembra davvero che il suo unico scopo sia sempre stato quello di distruggere: in primo luogo sé stesso, e poi tutto il resto. A noi di quaggiù riesce difficile comprendere i motivi delle sue azioni, e perché mai la parola pace gli sia sempre stata sconosciuta... Lui mi ha chiesto di mostrarvi alcune cose, affinché raccontiate a quelli di sopra ciò che avete visto. (Landolfi 1999, 18)

Lo spazio cerca di fare il vuoto, in un'alternanza deittica ("noi di quaggiù", *ibidem*) che nel tracciare una linea di demarcazione col mondo di superficie finisce per esibirlo in tutta la sua sofferenza, in un regime di specularità rovesciata. Nondimeno, l'ermeneutica del sottosuolo è finalizzata a una presa di consapevolezza ("affinché raccontiate a quelli di sopra ciò che avete visto", *ibidem*) che necessita di essere rivelata al fine di porre rimedio alla crisi ecologica in corso. Landolfi porta sulla pagina una zona liminale, di soglia, cui si perviene per un cunicolo da cui pendono "bianche formazioni calcaree, dalle forme bizzarre e talvolta raccapriccianti" (17). Il tutto si risolve in

un ambiente d'immani proporzioni: non se ne distingueva la volta, sotto cui aleggiava una spessa nube di vapore luminoso, che costituiva appunto la fonte di luce. Le pareti apparivano in una lontananza remota, simili a poderosi bastioni che proteggesero una città. Nel mezzo era un roccione grigio e lucido come la pirite, il quale, tagliato in maniera irregolare ma, sembrava, secondo un determinato disegno, in molte delle innumerevoli sfaccettature recava imprigionato il riflesso di un volto. Riflesso che non apparteneva a nessuno: nella caverna, infatti, non c'era anima viva. Solo, il vapore si addensava a tratti in figure; senza, però, che si avesse il tempo di distinguere i contorni, esse nuovamente venivano riassorbite nella coltre impenetrabile. (*Ibidem*)

² L'ecopedagogia è ascrivibile al campo della pedagogia ambientale (*Environmental Pedagogy*), la quale include a sua volta l'educazione ambientale (*Environmental Education*) e l'educazione per uno sviluppo sostenibile (*Education Sustainable Development*). L'ecopedagogia si prefigge tre finalità educative: alfabetizzazione ambientale; ecoalfabetizzazione culturale, atta a propiziare lo sviluppo di una visione critica delle culture non sostenibili; critica degli effetti anti-ecologici del capitalismo, del colonialismo e dell'imperialismo industriali (cfr. Gaard 2006). Per un approfondimento in merito all'ecopedagogia, cfr. Misiaszek 2020 e 2022.

Se da un lato, il passo intensifica la leggibilità del *lithos* (“un roccione grigio e lucido come la pirite”, *ibidem*); dall’altro, la narrazione propizia uno sguardo dinamico, simultaneo, multifocale, tale da incrementare l’immersività nel tessuto diegetico nonché nelle immagini restituite dal già citato Specchio della Terra. Anzi, per certi aspetti, è la scrittura stessa a simulare *per verba* tale fusionalità e suggerire un’interazione incorporata tra spettatore e oggetto rappresentato:

Focalizzandovi l’attenzione, era come se la liscia superficie inglobasse lo sguardo, che in tal modo riusciva a vedere al di là, dove si dispiegava un mondo in movimento che aveva tutte le caratteristiche della realtà. *Vi è mai capitato di immaginare di poter penetrare nel paesaggio dipinto in un quadro?* Ecco, era un procedimento dello stesso tipo: e i quattro ragazzi si ritrovarono a vivere scene diverse ma sempre angosciose. (19, corsivo mio)

L’intrusione del narratore e il suo interpellare il polo del narratorio – (“vi è mai capitato di immaginare”, *ibidem*) – aumentano il tasso immersivo, facilitando altresì lo slittamento deittico, e cioè “il modo in cui i fruitori di una storia spostano il loro ‘centro deittico’ dal mondo reale al mondo narrativo” (Bernini e Caracciolo 2014, 38). Nondimeno, l’estratto citato chiarisce l’*emplotment* fluido, e per certi aspetti “plastico”, de *I Litosauri*, da intendersi alla stregua di un racconto per via simultanea: il dispiegarsi di universi paralleli (e chiaro è il riferimento alla teoria di Hugh Everett III)³ che si risolvono in uno spazio a prospettico, ubiqou, ma oltremodo discreto e omogeneo (Calabrese 2011, 18).⁴ Il libro è allora superficie proiettante e proiettiva, mentre lo Specchio è eleggibile a membrana translucida, osmotica, tale da offrire ai personaggi – ma oltremodo al lettore – una vera e propria esperienza in realtà aumentata (“si ritrovano a vivere?”, Landolfi 1999, 19, corsivo mio):

Qui era una bianca landa deserta, sulla cui neve immacolata s’intrecciavano scie di sangue. Di lato degli uomini, arti e corpulenti e con dei berretti di pelo, si accanivano, colpendoli con nodosi bastoni, contro degli esseri piccoli e soffici, dei cuccioli di foca: e non smettevano finché essi non restavano immobili sulla neve. Allora li prendevano e li spogliavano delle loro pellicce, staccandole dalle carni con dei coltelli dentati. Le pellicce andavano ad ammonticchiarsi su una slitta di legno, lì vicino. Fu un lampo: ai quattro amici parve di vedere al posto dei dolci cuccioli di foca dei bambini: li videro mentre venivano uccisi a bastonate da qualcuno di infinitamente più grande di loro, li videro mentre venivano spogliati della pelle, e quindi abbandonati sul terreno, ammasso informe e sanguinolento, gli occhi sbarrati verso un cielo privo di luce. D’altra parte, c’erano ancora bambini: alcuni avevano i volti lacerati o coperti di bolle piene di pus, ad altri mancavano gambe o braccia. Una bimba dagli occhi a mandola sorrideva, appoggiandosi a due bastoni perché le mancava il piede destro [...]. I ragazzi vedevano tutto questo, ma non potevano in alcun modo intervenire. Poi si ritrovarono in un mare dal colore d’inchostro: l’acqua non era più acqua, ma aveva una consistenza oleosa, su di essa galleggiavano cadaveri di uomini e di animali [...]. La foresta s’era accesa di fiamme altissime; i suoi abitanti cercavano scampo come meglio potevano, ma il fuoco raggiungeva e li inceneriva. Al posto della vita subentrò la morte; sulla distesa annerita non cresceva un solo filo d’erba. Gruppi di uomini prendevano accordi, ridevano; denaro correva dall’una all’altra mano. (19-20)

Si tratta di passaggio importante, soprattutto perché sollecita un inevitabile interrogativo: può una scena così cruenta, a tratti *splatter*, essere destinata a dei giovani lettori? Chi ebbe modo di affiancare e di confrontarsi con Idolina Landolfi durante la stesura de *I Litosauri* ricorda bene come il testo rispecchiasse l’indole animalista dell’autrice e il suo rispetto quasi sacro per l’animale non umano; ma resta il fatto che tali immagini, pronte a dipanarsi come dei veri e propri *tableaux vivants*, rendono percepibile, e a tratti udibile, la sofferenza (prima animale e poi umana) riconducibile allo slancio prometeico dell’*Homo Sapiens*. Nondimeno, mette conto rilevare, specie all’inizio dell’estratto, la modalità con cui la scrittura costringe il lettore ad assumere una postura allocentrata, in virtù di una dislocazione di referenti (dalle violenze sui cuccioli di foca, fino allo scuoiamento dei bambini). La visione in più tempi, che attinge altresì ad alcuni disastri ecologici del passato (dai naufragi delle petroliere, allo sgancio della bomba atomica), permette dunque un avvicinamento, e infine la sovrapposizione, di due soggettività distinte: i protagonisti si fanno consapevoli della loro appartenenza al pianeta Terra e ne constatano, infine, l’irrimediabile crisi. Derivativa è la tensione ecocentrica, mediata dalle presenze animali del libro, tra cui spicca Muzza, “il Gatto dei Gatti” (22), sovrano del regno sotterraneo e qui destinato assumere “un

³ Cfr. Landolfi 1999, 44-45: “Esistono degli universi paralleli, vale a dire qualcosa di simile a delle copie, dei doppioni di intere galassie, solamente spostati in una diversa dimensione”.

⁴ Mutuo la definizione dal *pensum* lanciato da Stefano Calabrese in merito ai racconti di fiabe: “[quello delle fiabe è uno spazio] *aprospettico* poiché tutto vi è ritradotto in un codice bidimensionale privo di profondità; [...] *ubiqou* e *discreto* in quanto un luogo può trovarsi dove è ma anche altrove, *omogeneo* perché, al contrario degli stili realistici, i margini siluettistici di ciascuna figura – tendenzialmente monocroma – non vengono mai offuscati da informazioni contrastanti iscritte al loro interno” (2011, 18, corsivo in originale).

ruolo universale [...], [come] una specie di simbolo” (*ibidem*). L’animale è modellato su una delle tante presenze feline che hanno popolato la vita dell’autrice, diviene *totem*, vieppiù è destinato a farsi creatura *loquens* – l’animale risponde, volendo far eco all’interrogativo di Derrida, “Et si l’animal répondait?” (Derrida 2006, 163) – nell’atto di condannare le violenze antropiche inferte al Pianeta Terra. L’altro di specie, insomma, si fa creatura divinatoria, rivelando ai protagonisti una visione di un futuro non troppo lontano:

Bastò un minimo cenno della zampa, ed ecco materializzarsi al centro della caverna uno schermo tridimensionale, su cui lentamente affiorarono paesaggi e figure. Prima comparve una spiaggia sconfinata e deserta: la sabbia vi aveva un colore rossastro, il mare tremolava appena, come una massa di mercurio. Sullo sfondo si scorgevano rovine fumanti di città, grattacieli dimezzati, un grande ponte spezzato e con i due monconi immersi nel mare. Ma l’immagine più impressionante era quella del sole: il quale si distingueva tra le cortine di fumo, se ne vedeva l’alone d’un viola smorto, come la fluorescenza che talvolta si forma attorno ai cadaveri. (23-24)

Landolfi ricrea sulla pagina un paesaggio che s’inserisce nella tradizione post apocalittica inaugurata dal *The Last Man* di Mary Shelley (1826), financo a lambire scenari distopici mutuati dalla letteratura coeva – si pensi al *Pianeta irritabile* (1978) di Paolo Volponi o a *Lo smeraldo* di Mario Soldati (1974) – nonché il cinema catastrofico-fantascientifico. Una terra al crepuscolo, verrebbe da dire, che nella prima parte non manca di attingere alla conformazione di altri pianeti, soprattutto in quel deserto rossastro che non può non far pensare alle terre marziane, dove gli “ultimi uomini” sono

creature simili piuttosto a coccodrilli, coperte di squame ma pur con gambe e braccia chiaramente visibili, si trascinarono penosamente per strade fangose, su cui era ancora qualche traccia d’asfalto. Strisciavano sui ventri, fermandosi di tanto in tanto a bere in luride pozze. Non avevano più volti ma musì, lunghi musì che terminavano a becco. Gli occhi erano vitrei, e fatti anch’essi di una carne coriacea. In tali esseri non un centimetro di pelle era a nudo, ma sull’intero corpo era cresciuta una corazza di lamelle durissime. (Landolfi 1999, 24)



Fig. 2 – Kukulcán, il dio serpente piumato della mitologia Maya, Wikimedia Commons



Fig. 3 – Busto di Sobek, Oxford Museum, Wikimedia Commons



Fig. 4 – Frame da *Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954, Jack Arnold) Wikimedia Commons

La conformazione anatomica delle creature risente di molteplici suggestioni: dal *pantheon* precolombiano – nello specifico, quello Maya e la figura di Kukulcán (fig. 2), divinità metà uomo e metà serpente – a quello egizio – si pensi a Sobek (fig. 3), dalla testa di coccodrillo e il corpo di essere umano – financo a lambire l’universo cinematografico e, nello specifico, il film *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (fig. 4), diretto nel 1954 da Jack Arnold, dove indiscusso protagonista è “l’uomo-branchia” (un terrificante – almeno per l’epoca – essere umanoide dal corpo ricoperto di squame). Landolfi, quindi, sfrutta un ipotesto multiplo e variegato, al fine di riunire l’intera umanità sotto l’ombrello di un comune destino di cenere, come testimoniato dalle parole di rimprovero dello stesso gatto parlante:

‘Vedete come vi siete ridotti?’ disse Muzza, con tono di trionfo [...]. ‘In questo futuro non troppo lontano la superficie del pianeta Terra è stata da voi completamente distrutta’ continuò. ‘Distrutti i boschi e le foreste e trasformati in terreni su cui costruire lussuosi edifici, da vendere a caro prezzo. Inquinati il cielo e il mare, diventati la discarica delle industrie. Ma soprattutto vi siete colpiti a vicenda, avete inventato armi così orribili, così devastanti che, nel corso dei secoli, siete stati costretti a mutare, se volevate sopravvivere. Così la vostra pelle si è ispessita, è diventata una vera e propria armatura per proteggervi dalle radiazioni letali; e a poco a poco avete smesso di camminare, cominciando a strisciare alla ricerca di qualche

rivolo d'acqua, di qualche filo d'erba. Il brutto è che vi siete talmente abituati all'aria e alla terra cariche di veleni da non poterne più fare a meno: vi nutrite di essi e con essi soltanto vi fortificate. Una bella sorte, non c'è che dire, per una razza che procedeva orgogliosa a testa alta, che si divertiva a schiacciare noi, più piccoli e deboli (e per noi intendo tutti gli animali), e che dichiarava che avrebbe conquistato tutto l'universo!'. (24-25)

La requisitoria dell'animale non solo si fa tristemente profetica e, ahinoi, tragicamente attuale, ma soprattutto dischiude il fallimento delle logiche di dominio – da qui la portata ecopedagogica del testo – unitamente all'istinto autodistruttivo del genere umano, che si è abituato “alla terra e all'aria cariche di veleni da non poterne più fare a meno” (*ibidem*). Va da sé che a una tensione etica, di stampo quasi leopardiano, risponda l'altro di specie, e cioè l'animale non umano, pronto a rivelare quella che è la sua visuale eccentrica proprio attraverso l'ausilio di una parola che, almeno inizialmente, si carica di revanchismo, in quanto il felino incarna – proprio perché simbolo – tutti gli animali caduti vittime dell'uomo. C'è quindi un senso di urgenza, di crisi ormai in atto cui è giocoforza rispondere maturando una consapevolezza e un'etica ecologicamente orientate. Ed è adesso che il racconto si fa viaggio iniziatico: un avvicinarsi di realtà parallele che tuttavia non mancano di rivelare lo stato d'allarme del pianeta. Del resto – ed è il titolo stesso a rivelarlo – i litosauri altro non sono che la concrezione geologica della sofferenza del pianeta:

Lo sguardo spaziava a perdita d'occhio: di quel luogo non si distingueva l'orizzonte, sembrava non avesse confini. Né vi era null'altro se non mastodontiche concrezioni geologiche, costituite di tutti i filoni metalliferi presenti all'interno del globo terrestre. La pietra era formata di strati sovrapposti, ciascuno di un colore diverso: bianchi, gialli, marroni, viola persino. Ai ragazzi, che li osservavano attoniti e confusi, vennero in mente i dinosauri, o i tirannosauri, o altri animali preistorici. E non a caso ho detto animali: i mostruosi macigni, infatti, apparivano a tutti gli effetti creature viventi. Sembrava respirassero con infinita lentezza, e aumentavano impercettibilmente di volume, ogni minuto che passava. (58)

La litosfera diviene leggibile e al tempo stesso vitale, eleggendosi a spazio metonimico in piena regola proprio perché comunica a livello visivo la malattia del pianeta. I litosauri, dunque

non sono rocce bensì esseri viventi, esseri che soffrono pene tremende. In essi è concentrato tutto il dolore del mondo. Ogni cattiva azione, ogni crimine che l'uomo compie contro sé stesso o contro altri uomini, contro la natura o gli animali si trasforma in un frammento di pietra, più o meno grande a seconda della gravità dell'azione di cui si tratta. E questo frammento va ad accrescere la massa, che diviene sempre più enorme, finché non soffocherà la terra dall'interno [...]. La Terra è un organismo vivo, e i Litosauri la sua malattia [...]. (59)

Il globo terrestre diviene un organismo vitale, ragion per cui Idolina Landolfi attinge a un ipogeo filosofico che dal neoplatonismo (si pensi al concetto di *anima mundi*) arriva fino a James Lovelock e all'ipotesi Gaia (formulata intorno alla metà degli anni Sessanta), secondo cui “there is no clear distinction anywhere on the Earth's surface between living and nonliving matter. There is merely a hierarchy of intensity going from the “material” environment of the rocks and the atmosphere to the living cells” (Lovelock 2000, 40). Evidenti sono i rimandi al mito della terra cava e, indubbiamente, a quelle letture di cui l'autrice si era nutrita anche per via paterna,⁵ ma l'intima rispondenza tra lo spazio interno (della Terra) e quello di superficie (abitato dagli esseri umani) permette di leggere il passo appena citato anche alla luce del nesso, massa rocciosa-massa tumorale, il cui accrescimento è direttamente proporzionale all'inquinamento e alle vessazioni cui va incontro il tessuto biosferico. Volendo chiamare in causa la prima legge dell'ecologia (“Everything is connected to everything else”, Commoner 1971, 16), è innegabile come Landolfi avanzi l'idea di un pianeta interconnesso, poroso, capillarmente comunicante, le cui viscere sono malate alla stregua di un corpo contaminato e, di conseguenza, destinato a sviluppare delle forme neoplastiche: si noti il rimando, seppur *in tralice*, alla diagnostica medica, in quel “va ad accrescere la massa” (Landolfi 1999, 59), senza contare la natura litica di alcune forme tumorali.

Il sottotesto ecologico, di conseguenza, rivela le sofferenze del pianeta e proprio nel porre i quattro protagonisti in una prospettiva non più egocentrata – ho parlato, paragrafi addietro, di allocentrismo – veicola una alfabetizzazione ambientale che si traduce, almeno a livello narrativo, in un agire concreto, a riprova di come i giovanissimi – come vogliono anche le considerazioni di Carla Benedetti – possano essere una delle vie di fuga da quella che si sta profilando come la sesta estinzione di massa, perché “la giovinezza li rende meno soggetti al

⁵ Da Edgar Allan Poe e *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (2008 [1838]) al *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (1999 [1864]) e *Le Indes noires* (1877) di Jules Verne, passando per *The Mound* (1940) di Howard Philips Lovecraft e, con tutta probabilità, l'*Icosaméron* di Giacomo Casanova (1798).

ferrei utilitarismo della razionalità strumentale, alla ghigliottina della logica del profitto, alla onnipresente polizia della razionalità economica e di quella, altrettanto pervasiva, che disciplina i saperi moderni” (2021, 100). Una forza, questa, cui l’epilogo dei *Litosauri* sembra attingere a piene mani:

‘Appena tornati, studieremo un piano di attacco, impediremo alla gente di guastare tutte le cose belle che abbiamo ricevuto in sorte, di aggredirsi gli uni con gli altri. E otterremo ad ogni costo questo scopo: promesso?’ ‘Promesso!’ fu la risposta generale. Non ci sarebbe stata, per loro, impresa più faticosa, al cui confronto le trascorse avventure avrebbero potuto considerarsi una passeggiata: ma erano ragazzi, e sarebbero divenuti dei giovani coraggiosi e leali; per molto tempo la parola ‘impossibile’ non avrebbe trovato posto nel loro vocabolario. (Landolfi 1999, 60)

2. Spazi, stazioni, due traiettorie... Cinetiche testuali

Proprio perché viaggio iniziatico, *I litosauri* è strutturato per un susseguirsi di tappe, ciascuna scandita dal volgere dei capitoli e dal passaggio di una specifica soglia. Il libro si fa metafora del continuo attraversamento e ogni capitolo assurge a stazione diegetica, atta a consegnare ai quattro protagonisti il viatico per proseguire in questa esperienza tra più mondi possibili, sette in tutto e marcati da due traiettorie distinte. La prima si snoda per cinque dimensioni specifiche: si va dall’interno della piramide (presidiato dal guardiano della Terra) al trono del gatto Muzza; dalla Terra del futuro (dove gli umani si sono ridotti a *cyber-golem*)⁶ al Regno delle nuvole in cui l’*Homo Sapiens* è passato allo stato gassoso – e i quattro protagonisti sono qui scortati dall’Uomo-Nuvola (chiaro rimando al Perelà palazzeschi). Segue, infine, il Regno dell’invisibile, pervaso dalla carica dispersiva di un infinito ultrasfisco e interstellare.⁷ Un regno, quest’ultimo, dove ha modo di profilarsi “un’architettura impossibile [...] [che] poteva ricordare un comune palazzo a più piani, con scale, loggiati e terrazze; ma ciascuna scala ritornava su sé stessa, in modo tale che non c’era verso di seguire un percorso che portasse da qualche parte” (Landolfi 1999, 51), e chiaro è il rimando alla struttura labirintica e all’inganno prospettico delle *Carceri* di Giovan Battista Piranesi (ma si potrebbe, specie per quanto riguarda il fitto sistema di cunicoli interni alla piramide, guardare anche al Voreux del *Germinal* di Zola, 1885). Oppure, si pensi alla chiusura del nono capitolo, là dove lo specchio, divenuto superficie attraversabile, richiama in tralice alcune scene di *Orfée*, il film realizzato da Jean Cocteau nel 1950:

Esso non rimandava alcun riflesso, poiché non era uno specchio ma una porta. Ed esitarono, prima di varcarlo: temevano di battere una testata memorabile. Invece la materia di cui era costituito lo specchio si rarefece a contatto coi loro corpi, ed essi passarono dall’altra parte con la stessa semplicità con cui si supera una soglia scostando la tenda. (Landolfi 1999, 54)

Luoghi, insomma, entro cui la reminiscenza letteraria contribuisce alla loro strutturazione spaziale (ma altresì biografica, tanto che San Cristóbal sarà evocata in un parallelismo coi paesini del Meridione italiano). Con la seconda traiettoria, viceversa, i quattro tornano al punto di partenza, giacché il viaggio avrà termine nel regno dei Litosauri, cui tuttavia si accede solo attraversando lo Scudo di Fos, “dov’è racchiuso lo scibile degli universi conosciuti [...] oltre il quale il tempo”, dirà il guardiano, “non ha principio e non ha fine” (56). Una sorta di finestra sul futuribile, da Idolina Landolfi accostata allo scudo di Achille:

Vi erano descritti moltissimi eventi, alcuni enigmatici, altri più decifrabili. Vi videro astronavi che atterrarono su un pianeta, enormi rettili sgominati da individui in scafandro, muniti di armi strane; e ancora esplosioni di stelle, una cometa grande dieci volte il nostro sole che solcava i cieli con la sua coda bipartita. Vi videro un tranquillo viale di una qualsiasi città, con i cani che giocavano sul prato e un gatto alla finestra di una casa, tra due tendine di pizzo. ‘Questo è lo scudo di Fos’, disse la guida ‘oltre il quale il tempo non ha principio e non ha fine. A me non è concesso il superarlo: i nostri destini

⁶ I *cyber-golem* hanno un *floppy-disc* inserito nella bocca, rispetto ai *golem* tradizionali che invece recavano un cartiglio.

⁷ “Era come se fossero all’interno di una sfera smisurata, che sembrava avesse la facoltà di potenziare le emozioni: così la loro paura divenne terrore cosmico, e la nostalgia dei luoghi familiari profondissima angoscia. Non vedevano né sentivano nulla, cercavano di parlare ma la voce non usciva dalla loro gola, o forse il suono non si propagava per qualche misteriosa ragione. Si presero tutti e quattro per mano, a formare una catena che li rendesse più forti. Avevano la sensazione di fluttuare nello spazio e nello stesso tempo di essere saldamente ancorati al suolo. Ancora una volta, crederono di essere morti. A un certo punto ebbero la netta impressione di non esser soli. Cominciarono a udire accanto, alle spalle, un lieve respiro, a percepire rumori come di oggetti che venissero spostati, e anche, sul viso, l’aria derivante da tali spostamenti. Distinsero le ombre, quindi delle *silhouettes* luminose si disposero loro innanzi, quasi a volerli guidare. Le seguirono docili, e furono condotti nel luogo più fantastico che potessero concepire” (Landolfi 1999, 50-51).

si dividono qui. Buona fortuna! I ragazzi salutarono commossi il guardiano, ora per l'ultima volta. Poi gli domandarono in che modo avrebbero potuto sorpassare lo scudo di Fos, e lui rispose che non dovevano far niente, assolutamente niente. Infatti si produsse un lampo accecante, e i quattro amici furono di botto in un ambiente del tutto nuovo. (57)

Nuovamente abbiamo a che fare con una superficie proiettiva: un *medium* divinatorio pronto a sussumere quella polimorfia che anima *I Litosauri*, pervasi dall'ibridismo e dalla con-fusione interspecie. Perché accanto alle visioni profetiche sul destino del mondo, Idolina Landolfi insiste anche su quello che definirei come potenziale postumano, scaturito cioè dalla contaminazione tra più regni biologici e reso possibile dalla natura aliena delle creature che s'incontrano nel corso del testo. Si prenda, ad esempio, la nascita di Nur, incontrato dai quattro adolescenti nel sesto capitolo del libro, ambientato nella Terra del futuro dominata dai *cyber-golem*. La creatura, come si evince dal passo che andremo a citare, viene al mondo uscendo da un utero artificiale, richiamando in tralice il *Brave New World* (1932) di Aldous Huxley:

L'uovo non mostrava apertura di sorta. Solo da un lato c'era un piccolo oblò [...]: non si vedeva nulla, se non un biancore di latte, come quando la foschia, più simile all'ovatta, avvolge la città [...]. Con grande lentezza l'involucro si scopercchiò: per alcuni minuti ne fuoriuscirono ondate di fumo gelido, quindi apparve una figura in una tuta luccicante. Più che una tuta era una specie di sacco, per cui era impossibile distinguere le fattezze di chi, o di cosa, essa celava [...]. In quel momento il sacco si deformò [...] finché [...] non si svuotò del suo contenuto. Poteva ricordare un pesce; anzi, era una combinazione di vari pesci e molluschi. Aveva le pinne e una coda rigida, sulla quale riusciva a stare in equilibrio; e sul capo una cresta di tentacoli come quelli del polpo. Non si sarebbe potuto parlare di faccia: però gli occhi li aveva, tre occhi sistemati a triangolo giusto sotto i tentacoli, mentre il terzo era una superficie liscia e gommosa. (Landolfi 1999, 29-30)

C'è una combinatoria delle esistenze, un *melting-pot* di tratti anatomici divergenti: chi scrive trapianta e assembla nel vero senso del termine, ridefinendo in tal modo quelle che sono le ontologie di partenza. E una simile ri-composizione è autorizzata, appunto, dall'Altro animale, alla cui grammatica l'autrice attinge a piene mani, sfruttandone in tal senso la carica eccentrica, nonché la spinta propulsiva che sovverte le logiche e i valori acquisiti, fino alla commistione, tra le pagine finali, con quella che è la fisionomia corporea dell'essere umano:

Andarono ancora per un buon tratto; di tanto in tanto, in fondo a un cunicolo che si apriva di lato a quello che stavano percorrendo, intravedevano qualcosa, delle ombre in movimento, o le fiamme di un fuoco. Talvolta un essere mirabolante, magnifico o deforme, attraversava loro il cammino, ma così in fretta da lasciare soltanto una fugace impressione. Erano soprattutto animali, ma animali che non esistono in natura, con artigli e grifi senza essere uccelli, con pellicce, larghe orecchie e code senza essere mammiferi. Non di rado erano creature ibride, a metà tra l'uomo e l'animale: ne notarono alcune che trascinavano corpi esanimi di individui della razza umana, altre che conducevano, sferzandoli e pungolandoli impietosamente, schiere di uomini e donne incatenati. (56)

Per quanto il risultato di tali "innesti" sia tutt'altro che rassicurante alla vista, resta il fatto che la corda postumana sottesa al libro intacca la visione antropocentrica di partenza, e oltremodo sovverte le rassicuranti coordinate esistenziali per approdare a un'ontologia fluida e dell'indistinto. Nel perseguire l'alterità, la scrittura dei *litosauri* la legge a elemento trasformativo, consegnandoci un testo che, costantemente, cerca sé stesso. Volendo prendere a prestito una formula di Tzvetan Todorov in merito alla letteratura fantastica, il libro di Idolina Landolfi occupa il lasso di tempo dell'incertezza tra realtà e immaginazione (1970, 29), perché è sull'indecidibile che la partita di questo eccentrico testo si gioca, in un'esitazione irrisolta e sempre portata all'estremo.

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“Weihnachten war doch wohl schon vorüber?” Le traduzioni della particella modale epistemica *wohl* nelle versioni italiane della *Metamorfosi* di Franz Kafka

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Abstract

This paper examines, quantitatively and qualitatively, the translation strategies adopted by the authors of fifteen Italian versions of Franz Kafka's famous short story *Die Verwandlung*, published between 1934 and 2024, in order to render the epistemic modal particle *wohl*. In a first part, the German modal particles and their minor variant in Italian are presented. The subsequent analysis of the occurrences is accompanied by a brief illustration of the epistemic modality and by contrastive and translinguistic considerations, also on a diachronic scale. The third and fourth parts of the essay summarise the results, highlighting the most relevant aspects as a starting point for possible future research.

Keywords: Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung*, Modal Particles, Translation, *Wohl*

Introduzione

Una delle caratteristiche per cui la lingua tedesca si distingue da molte altre è il gran numero di particelle modali (*Modalpartikeln*) di cui fa largo uso, soprattutto nel parlato. Si tratta di un insieme piuttosto ampio di parole la cui composizione varia da autore ad autore e il cui nucleo comprende *aber, auch, bloß, denn, doch, eben, etwa, halt, ja, mal, man, nicht, nur, schon, vielleicht, wohl, eh, eigentlich, einfach, erst, ruhig e überhaupt* (Müller 2014, 1-2). Altri autori aggiungono *schließlich, schlicht, irgendwie, natürlich, allerdings, freilich, dabei, immerhin, nämlich, zufällig, langsam, gleich, hübsch, übrigens, so, sowieso, gefälligst, fein, jetzt, wieder e man* (Blume 1988; Burkhardt 2001, 56; Pittner 2009; Müller 2014, 1-2).

A questa classe di parole gli svariati studi condotti negli ultimi decenni, in base al tipo di approccio teorico-metodologico, hanno attribuito diverse denominazioni: *Abtönungspartikeln, modale Partikeln, Satzpartikeln, Existimatoren, kommunikative Partikeln, emotional-expressive Partikeln e Einstellungspartikeln* (cfr. Weydt 1969; Öhlschläger 1985, 350; Masi 1996, 180-90; Diwald 2007,

118; Müller 2014, 1).¹ Comune a tutte le posizioni è la funzione che viene loro ascrivita, quella di descrivere la posizione e l'atteggiamento di chi parla nei confronti di ciò che viene detto:

Modalpartikeln drücken differenziert Wissen, Einstellungen, Annahmen, Bewertungen und Erwartungen der Sprecher zum ausgedrückten Sachverhalt aus, teilweise auch ihre Erwartungen an die Hörer. Da die Sprechereinstellung als ein Typ von Modalität betrachtet wird, hat sich der Terminus 'Modalpartikel' für diese Ausdrücke etabliert. (Wöllstein, Dudenredaktion 2022, 842)

Le caratteristiche delle particelle modali sono essenzialmente otto: 1. non possono essere flesse, ovvero si presentano come morfologicamente invariabili; 2. nella maggior parte dei casi su di esse non cade l'accento; 3. non possono essere costituente frasale a sé stante; 4. non sono coordinabili – non possono cioè mai essere unite da una congiunzione –, ma sono comunque combinabili con altre loro simili (come *doch ruhig* nella frase *Frag doch ruhig!*); 5. non potendo essere costituente frasale, non possono mai trovarsi nel *Vorfeld*, ma solo nel *Mittelfeld*; 6. il loro significato non è prestabilito, dipende dal contesto, sono quindi parole sinsemantiche; 7. diversamente dagli avverbi modali, la loro funzione si riferisce all'enunciato o all'intera frase, non solo al componente frasale che le segue; 8. non possono essere negate e perciò si trovano sempre prima della negazione *nicht* (cfr. Müller 2014, 16-29; Cognola, Moroni 2022, 17-43).

Un'ulteriore peculiarità di questa classe di parole riguarda il fatto che tutte hanno un omonimo in altre classi. Si pensi alle due frasi: *Ja, Angela Merkel ist in der DDR aufgewachsen* e *Angela Merkel ist ja in der DDR aufgewachsen*. Nel primo caso *ja*, all'interno di una frase che con grande probabilità segue una domanda, è una *Antwortpartikel* che esprime una risposta affermativa; nel secondo caso *ja* è una particella modale ed esprime la consapevolezza del parlante che anche a chi ascolta è noto il fatto che Angela Merkel è cresciuta nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca (Wöllstein, Dudenredaktion 2022, 843).

Il presente contributo si concentra in particolare sull'analisi di *wohl*, particella che presenta particolari caratteristiche semantiche e pragmatiche. Quanto alle prime, Weydt e Hentschel attribuiscono il suo valore semantico all'area della supposizione (*Vermutung*):

Die unbetonten Formen von *wohl* könnten unter der Kategorie 'Vermutung' zusammengefasst und erklärt werden. (1983, 17-18)

Asbach-Schnitker ne mette poi in evidenza il contributo pragmatico:

Die pragmatische Funktion von *wohl* wird – wie bereits oben erwähnt – in der Regel dadurch charakterisiert, dass ein Sprecher durch die Verwendung von *wohl* indiziert, dass er die Richtigkeit der von ihm gemachten Aussage über das Bestehen eines Sachverhalts, das Zutreffen eines Ereignisses, das Sich-Abspielen eines Vorgangs nicht behauptet, sondern als sehr wahrscheinlich vermutet. (1977, 41)

Helbig, oltre a sottolineare l'appartenenza alla sfera semantica della supposizione, precisa che la particella modale *wohl* esprime un'ipotesi molto probabile, sostenuta da uno sfondo discorsivo ricco di evidenze che tuttavia, essendo solo presuppota, non può essere né contestata né confermata:

[die Modalpartikel *wohl*] signalisiert, dass der Sprecher die Richtigkeit der von ihm gemachten Aussage über das Zutreffen eines Sachverhalts nicht behauptet, sondern als sehr wahrscheinlich vermutet, kennzeichnet die Aussage durch den Bezug auf einen (evidenzreichen) Redehintergrund als Hypothese (die – da sie nur vorausgesetzt ist – weder bestritten noch bestätigt werden kann); drückt eine hypothetische Einstellung des Sprechers zur Aussage aus. (1988, 238)

Malte Zimmermann analizza nel 2004 la portata semantica in termini epistemici della particella *wohl* in funzione del tipo di frase in cui essa compare, e scrive:

Wohl wird bevorzugt verwendet, um hypothetische Aussagen zu machen. *Wohl* drückt ein gewisses Maß an epistemischer Unsicherheit über den ausgedrückten Sachverhalt (die deskriptive Bedeutung) aus und schließt somit absolute Sicherheit aus. (4)

¹ Gli studi sulle *Modalpartikeln* della lingua tedesca rappresentano un filone di ricerca che inizia poco più di mezzo secolo fa: il lavoro che rappresenta il primo esempio di riflessione approfondita su questa classe di parole è la monografia del 1969 di Harald Weydt intitolata *Abtönungspartikel. Die deutschen Modalwörter und ihre französischen Entsprechungen*. Lo stesso titolo del saggio di Weydt indica che la riflessione su questo fenomeno linguistico tipico del tedesco parte da una prospettiva contrastiva, nello specifico sulle differenze e (soprattutto) sulle analogie tra lingua tedesca e lingua francese.

L'analisi di Zimmermann è preziosa nell'ambito degli studi rivolti alla particella modale al centro di questo lavoro poiché collega il contributo semantico epistemico di *wohl* alla sua presenza all'interno di una frase dichiarativa o di una interrogativa: nella prima – afferma Zimmermann – la particella modale limita la certezza epistemica di ciò che il parlante sa, nella seconda la riduzione della certezza riguarda le conoscenze del solo interlocutore, o del parlante e dell'interlocutore insieme, ma mai quelle del solo parlante (4-8).² Le domande *Wer hat das wohl geschrieben?* (Chi l'avrà scritto?) e *Kommt er wohl noch?* (Verrà?) portano con sé atti linguistici indiretti, ossia domande rivolte sia a chi le pronuncia sia all'interlocutore. Quest'ultimo, con tutta probabilità, non risponderà positivamente o negativamente (chi parla dubita che l'interlocutore sia in grado di dare una risposta), ma potrà esternare il suo parere sulla situazione (Weydt, Hentschel 1983, 17-18; Thurmair 1989, 143-45). La presenza di *wohl* nelle frasi interrogative porta dunque con sé anche un tono monologico, riflessivo e retorico.

A prescindere dal diverso approccio teorico dei lavori che la analizzano, tutte le definizioni di *wohl* tendono a metterne in rilievo la funzione di trasmettere incertezza, ovvero il valore epistemico. La modalità epistemica a cui ci riferiamo è quella discussa da Lyons (1977), Palmer (2013), Müller e Reis (2001) e Pietrandrea (2005), che si concentrano in gran parte sui verbi modali inglesi, tedeschi e italiani:

The term 'epistemic', like 'epistemology', is derived from the Greek word meaning 'knowledge'. Whereas epistemology is concerned with the nature and source of knowledge, epistemic logic deals with the logical structure of statements which assert or imply that a particular proposition, or set of propositions, is known or believed. (Lyons 1977, 793)

Linguists have used the term 'epistemic' to refer to the use of the modal auxiliaries MAY and MUST, as in *He may be there, He must be there* [...] epistemic modality in language is usually, perhaps always, what Lyons calls 'subjective' in that it relates to an inference by the speaker, and it is not simply concerned with 'objective' verifiability in the light of knowledge. Epistemic necessity, indicated by MUST, is thus not to be paraphrased as 'in the light of what is known it is necessarily the case that...', but by something like 'From what I know the only conclusion I can draw is...'. (Palmer 2013, 7)

La modalità epistemica misura la certezza del parlante relativa a ciò che dice, e il suo livello di confidenza (la fiducia nella verità di ciò che dice sulla base di una deduzione, come spiega Palmer, da ciò che sa e che percepisce).

L'analisi al centro del presente saggio si basa su un corpus costituito dal celebre racconto *Die Verwandlung* di Franz Kafka (1915)³ e da quindici sue traduzioni italiane pubblicate tra il 1934 e il 2024.⁴ Lo scopo è individuare le soluzioni traduttive utilizzate nell'arco di quasi un secolo dai traduttori di *Die Verwandlung* per rendere in italiano l'apporto semantico, in termini di modalità epistemica, della particella *wohl* nel testo kafkiano, soprattutto a livello di "certezza/incertezza". Il lavoro si struttura in altri due sezioni: il primo si concentra sulla modalità epistemica espressa da *wohl* mostrando alcuni esempi traduttivi tratti da un corpus di traduzioni italiane degli ultimi novant'anni. Successivamente si tenta di tirare un bilancio dell'analisi da un punto di vista quantitativo e qualitativo. Chiude il lavoro una nota conclusiva.

Questo saggio si prospetta come il primo di una serie di indagini sull'espressione della modalità nelle opere di Franz Kafka. E vuole offrire uno spunto per altre ricerche, che potrebbero approfondire l'uso di altre *Modalpartikeln* nei testi del boemo. Quanto a *wohl*, una riflessione sulla modalità epistemica può essere preziosa anche per l'analisi letteraria, soprattutto riguardo all'atteggiamento del narratore nelle *Erzählungen* e nei romanzi kafkiani. Rodolfo Paoli, primo traduttore della *Metamorfosi*, nella sua breve nota del 1934 parlava di "ambiente allucinato", di "luce di sogno" (Kafka 1934, 36). E ogni marcatore linguistico dell'incertezza, dell'indeterminatezza e del dubbio contribuisce senz'altro all'atmosfera irrealista di una storia in cui, un mattino, un uomo si risveglia trasformato in una creatura mostruosa.

² Malte Zimmermann fa questi due esempi: 1 – A e B si perdono. Né A né B sanno come ritrovare la giusta via. A indica a B una delle tante strade che possono imboccare e chiede: *Ist dies wohl der richtige Weg?*; 2 – il professore (che sa la risposta) chiede a un suo studente: *Was ist wohl die Hauptstadt von Papua Nuova Guinea?*. Zimmermann aggiunge poi che, nella situazione in cui un viaggiatore (che non conosce l'orario) chieda informazioni a un operatore della compagnia aerea con cui volerà, la domanda **Geht der Flug wohl um 17.10 Uhr?* non è possibile. Nell'esempio 1 tanto chi parla quanto chi ascolta non ha idea di quale sia la strada giusta; nell'esempio 2 a poter non conoscere la risposta è soltanto chi ascolta (lo studente), mentre nel terzo esempio, in cui *wohl* non può essere usato, limitata è solo la conoscenza di chi parla, mentre l'interlocutore sa sicuramente la risposta (Zimmermann 2004, 5).

³ Nel presente saggio si cita un'edizione Fischer del 1971 che ripropone nella medesima stesura il testo originale (Kafka, Franz. 1915. *Die Verwandlung*. Leipzig: Kurt Wolff).

⁴ Kafka 1934, trad. di Rodolfo Paoli; Kafka 1935, trad. di Anita Rho; Kafka 1953, trad. di Henry Furst; Kafka 1957, trad. di Giorgio Zampa; Kafka 1966, trad. di Emilio Castellani; Kafka 1972, trad. di Luigi Coppé; Kafka 1980, trad. di Giulio Schiavoni; Kafka 1986, trad. di Franco Fortini; Kafka 1991, trad. di Andreina Lavagetto; Kafka 1993, trad. di Patrizia Zanetti; Kafka 2010, trad. di Arturo Generali; Kafka 2011, trad. di Paola Capriolo; Kafka 2012, trad. di Enrico Ganni; Kafka 2018, trad. di Manuela Boccignone; Kafka 2024, trad. di Anita Raja.

1. La modalità epistemica di *wohl* in *Die Verwandlung*

Un'ulteriore caratteristica di *wohl* è quella di presentare omonimi in altre classi di parole: nella classe degli avverbi, in cui *wohl* è sinonimo di *gut*, come nella frase *Ich fühlte mich nicht wohl* (Non mi sentivo bene), oppure nel residuo dell'antica forma *wohl... doch*, come nella frase *Wohl schien er besänftigt, doch im Inneren sann er auf Rache* (Sembrava essersi calmato, ma dentro di sé pensava alla vendetta), simile alla forma più attuale *zwar... aber*. Infine, nella classe delle particelle responsive, in espressioni come *jawohl* o *sehr wohl*, deputate a esprimere risposte affermative (Helbig 1988, 238).

Tornando al testo in esame, se la parola *wohl* compare in *Die Verwandlung* 33 volte, buona parte di tali occorrenze riguarda i suoi omonimi. Prendendo come punto di partenza la trattazione di Weydt e Hentschel, in molti casi *wohl* non è una *Modalpartikel*. Si consideri il seguente esempio:

Gregor fühlte sich tatsächlich, abgesehen von einer nach dem langen Schlaf wirklich überflüssigen Schläfrigkeit, ganz *wohl* und hatte sogar einen besonders kräftigen Hunger. (Kafka 1971, 21)

In questo caso *wohl* è un avverbio riferito al riflessivo *sich fühlen*: delle 33 occorrenze di *wohl*, dunque, soltanto in 15 abbiamo una particella modale.

Una volta resosi conto della sua orribile trasformazione, Gregor Samsa sente per la prima volta la propria voce. La prima occorrenza in cui la particella modale *wohl* si presenta nel testo di *Die Verwandlung* è nel passo riportato di seguito insieme alle sue traduzioni. Per motivi di spazio, verranno esaminati solo i segmenti più significativi:

Infolge der Holztür war die Veränderung in Gregors Stimme draußen **wohl** nicht zu merken, denn die Mutter beruhigte sich mit dieser Erklärung und schlürfte davon. (22)

La porta di legno impediva **certamente** che si notasse il cambiamento nella sua voce [...]. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 45)

Attraverso la porta di legno il mutamento della voce di Gregorio non fu **evidentemente** percettibile [...]. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 74)

Per via della porta di legno il mutamento avvenuto nella voce di Gregor non fu **certo** percettibile nell'altra stanza [...]. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 10)

Traverso l'uscio, la voce non **dové** sembrare diversa dal solito [...]. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 78)

Evidentemente la porta di legno non permise che di là ci si accorgesse della voce mutata [...]. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 35)

La porta chiusa impediva che fuori si notasse il cambiamento nella voce di Gregor [...]. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 98)

Per via della porta di legno non fu possibile accorgersi, di là, che la voce di Gregor era mutata [...]. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 127)

Attraverso il legno della porta, dall'esterno non si avvertiva **affatto** il mutamento della sua voce [...]. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 62)

Per via della porta di legno, **evidentemente**, da fuori non si notava il cambiamento nella voce di Gregor [...]. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 76)

Attraverso la porta di legno il cambiamento della voce di Gregor **evidentemente** non fu percettibile [...]. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 13)

Evidentemente la porta di legno non permise che di là ci si accorgesse della voce mutata [...]. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 36)

Là fuori, grazie alla porta di legno, il mutamento nella voce di Gregor non **doveva** essere percepibile [...]. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 37)

Era evidente che attraverso la porta di legno, fuori non ci si accorse che la voce di Gregor era mutata [...]. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 6)

Per via della porta di legno il mutamento nella voce di Gregor non **doveva** essere avvertibile fuori dalla camera [...]. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 12)

Per via della porta di legno il cambiamento nella voce di Gregor **evidentemente** non si percepì all'esterno [...]. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 15)

Le reazioni dei traduttori alla particella modale *wohl*, in questo caso, sono abbastanza diversificate e possono essere suddivise in quattro gruppi: il primo, che equivale al 46,7 per cento dei casi (7 su 15), rende la supposizione con l'avverbio "evidentemente" o, in un caso, con il predicativo "era evidente che"; il secondo (3 casi su 15, pari al 20 per cento) con il verbo modale "dovere"; il terzo (2 casi su 15, pari al 13,3 per cento) con l'avverbio "certamente"; il quarto, infine (2 casi su 15, pari al 13,3 per cento) comprende i casi in cui *wohl* non ha un traducevole specifico. L'ultimo caso, isolato, è costituito dalla traduzione di Franco Fortini del 1986, che sceglie addirittura di rafforzare, anziché relativizzare, la negazione con l'avverbio "affatto".

Der Rücken schien hart zu sein; dem würde **wohl** bei dem Fall auf den Teppich nichts geschehen. (Kafka 1971, 24).

La schiena sembrava essere dura, e cadendo sul tappeto non si sarebbe **forse** danneggiata. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 52)

La schiena pareva solida e la caduta sul tappeto non le farebbe alcun male. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 78)

La schiena gli pareva dura; **probabilmente** cadendo sul tappeto quella non arrischiava nulla. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 12)

Il dorso sembrava duro: cadendo sul tappeto, non gli sarebbe successo nulla. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 80)

La schiena sembrava dura: battendo sul tappeto non avrebbe sofferto. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 38)

La schiena pareva dura; **certamente** non avrebbe subito alcun danno cadendo sul tappeto. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 100)

La schiena sembrava coriacea, per cui battendo sul tappeto sarebbe **sicuramente** rimasta illesa. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 129)

La schiena sembrava dura; cadendo sul tappeto, **di certo** non avrebbe subito danni. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 65)

La schiena sembrava esser dura; cadendo sul tappeto non le sarebbe accaduto nulla. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 79)

La schiena sembrava solida e la caduta sul tappeto non l'avrebbe lesa. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 15)

La schiena sembrava dura: battendo sul tappeto non avrebbe sofferto. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 39)

La schiena sembrava dura: cadendo sul tappeto, non avrebbe riportato alcun danno. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 40)

Il dorso sembrava duro: **era prevedibile** che cadendo sul tappeto non avrebbe subito danni. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 9)

Il dorso sembrava duro, quindi non gli sarebbe successo nulla cadendo sul tappeto. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 16)

Il dorso sembrava duro; **con ogni probabilità** cadere sul tappeto non gli avrebbe fatto niente. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 15)

Gregor Samsa valuta la possibilità di gettarsi fuori dal letto, e i traduttori italiani traducono *wohl* in maniera differente dal caso precedente. A sottolineare la modalità epistemica della frase vi sono infatti tanto un verbo al *Konjunktiv II* con *würde* (con valore condizionale) quanto la particella modale *wohl*. Spesso i traduttori considerano ridondanti i due elementi epistemici e ne eliminano uno, ossia la particella modale. Il solo condizionale passato (compresa la curiosa forma di condizionale presente di Anita Rho, ancora in uso negli anni '30 del Novecento) si presenta infatti in ben 8 traduzioni su 15 (il 53,3 per cento del totale). Le altre 7 traduzioni utilizzano avverbi come “di certo/certamente/sicuramente” (in tre casi, pari al 20 per cento), “forse/probabilmente” (due casi, pari al 13,3 per cento), “con ogni probabilità” e la perifrasi “era prevedibile che” (entrambi al 6,7 per cento ciascuno).

Sie war **wohl** erst jetzt aus dem Bett aufgestanden und hatte noch gar nicht angefangen sich anzuziehen. (Kafka 1971, 24)

Forse era appena scesa dal letto e non s'era ancora cominciata a vestire. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 60)

Forse si era appena alzata e non aveva ancor cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 81)

Probabilmente si era appena ora alzata dal letto e non aveva ancora nemmeno cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 15)

S'era **certo** alzata in quel momento e non aveva cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 82)

Certo si era appena alzata, e non aveva ancora iniziato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 41)

Probabilmente si era appena alzata e non aveva ancora cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 102)

Forse si era appena alzata e magari non aveva ancora cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 132)

Di certo era appena uscita dal letto e non aveva neanche incominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 69)

Probabilmente si era appena alzata dal letto e non aveva ancora cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 81)

Forse si era appena alzata e non aveva ancora cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 17)

Senza dubbio si era appena alzata, e non aveva ancora iniziato a vestirsi. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 42)

Certo era appena uscita dal letto e non aveva ancora neppure cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 44)

Probabilmente si era appena alzata e non aveva ancora iniziato a vestirsi. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 13)

Certo si era appena alzata dal letto e non aveva ancora cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 20)

Probabilmente si era alzata soltanto adesso e non aveva nemmeno cominciato a vestirsi. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 27, 29)

Nel breve passo in esame Gregor Samsa, ancora chiuso nella sua stanza, si chiede cosa faccia la sorella Grete, che non ha raggiunto i genitori e il rappresentante della ditta. In questo caso tutti i traduttori italiani conservano la modalità epistemica di *wohl* mediante avverbi o locuzioni avverbiali, ma con gradi di certezza differente. Nello specifico, in 9 casi su 15 (60 per cento) con avverbi epistemici a basso grado di certezza (“forse” e “probabilmente”), in altri 6 su 15 (40 per cento) con avverbi ad alto grado di certezza e/o confidenza (“certo/di certo/senza dubbio”).

Oltre che in frasi dichiarative, la particella *wohl* si presenta anche nel discorso diretto, e nelle frasi interrogative, come nel seguente esempio:

„Haben Sie auch nur ein Wort verstanden?“, fragte der Prokurist die Eltern, „er macht sich doch **wohl** nicht einen Narren aus uns?“. (Kafka 1971, 29)

[...] “Non si **farà** beffa di noi?”. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 66)

[...] “Non ci piglia **poi** in giro?”. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 84)

[...] “Non ci **prenderà** in giro?”. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 18)

[...] “Non ci sta menando per il naso?”. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 85)

[...] “**Che stia prendendosi** gioco di noi?”. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 44)

[...] “Non ci sta prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 104)

[...] “Non **starà mica** prendendosi gioco di noi?”. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 134)

[...] “Non **starà magari** prendendoci tutti in giro?”. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 71)

[...] “Si prende gioco di noi?”. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 83)

[...] “Non ci sta prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 19)

[...] “Non ci **starà** prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 44)

[...] “Non sta prendendosi gioco di noi?”. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 47)

[...] “Non ci **starà forse** prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 15)

[...] “**Non è che** ci sta prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 24)

[...] “Non ci **starà** prendendo in giro?”. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 33)

In questo caso specifico il *Prokurist* intende condividere con i familiari di Gregor il sospetto di sentirsi burlato ma il tatto e il rispetto per questi ultimi lo spinge a utilizzare un’interrogativa negativa e la “particella della supposizione” *wohl*. Si tratta dell’unico esempio di discorso diretto in cui quest’ultima compare.

Possiamo suddividere le scelte traduttive relative alla *Modalpartikel* in due grandi gruppi. Il fatto che ci si trovi di fronte a una frase interrogativa fa sì che, in un sostanzioso sottoinsieme di casi (pari al 33,3 per cento del totale), i traduttori italiani omettano di tradurre *wohl* e rafforzare ulteriormente la connotazione di incertezza. In 7 traduzioni (il 47 per cento del totale) la scelta traduttiva è il futuro epistemico. All'interno di quest'ultimo sottoinsieme da notare l'aggiunta, in 3 casi, di avverbi ("mica", "magari", "forse")⁵. In un altro caso la particella "poi" si presenta senza futuro epistemico. Da evidenziare le scelte differenti di Castellani (Kafka 1966) e Boccignone (Kafka 2018): nella prima si enfatizza la modalità epistemica con un'interrogativa ottativo-dubitativa, mentre nella seconda si ottiene lo stesso risultato utilizzando la locuzione "non è che" seguita dall'indicativo presente.

Man hörte gar nicht die Türe zuschlagen; sie hatten sie **wohl** offen gelassen, wie es in Wohnungen zu sein pflegt, in denen ein großes Unglück geschehen ist. (Kafka 1971, 29)

[...] l'avevano **evidentemente** lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 67)

[...] **certo** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 84)

[...] **probabilmente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 18)

[...] **dovevano** avere lasciato l'uscio aperto [...]. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 85)

[...] **evidentemente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 45)

[...] **probabilmente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 105)

[...] **evidentemente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 134)

[...] lo avevano lasciato spalancato [...]. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 72)

[...] **probabilmente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 83)

[...] **di sicuro** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 20)

[...] **evidentemente** l'avevano lasciata aperta [...]. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 45)

[...] **certo** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 47)

[...] **evidentemente** l'avevano lasciata aperta [...]. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 16)

[...] **evidentemente** l'avevano lasciata aperta, [...]. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 24)

[...] l'avevano **probabilmente** lasciata aperta [...]. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 35)

Il narratore afferma che nessuno sentì il rumore della porta che si chiudeva dopo l'uscita delle domestiche (il *wohl* successivo fa capire che non si tratta di un narratore onnisciente). La portata epistemica della particella viene quantificata in maniera diversa dai traduttori italiani. Questa diversa quantificazione influenza anche il contrasto tra "inferenza" (un dato di fatto viene ipotizzato per deduzione, a partire da altri elementi) e "confidenza" (chi parla crede nella verità di quanto afferma). I gradi di certezza in questo caso sono tre: in 4 versioni su 15

⁵ "Magari" e "forse" pongono di per sé l'accento sull'incertezza e sulla supposizione, mentre "mica", che nelle frasi affermative rafforza la negazione, nelle frasi interrogative indica un sospetto del parlante, rappresentando dunque un importante elemento modale.

(pari al 26,7 per cento dei casi) possiamo parlare di elevata “confidenza” della voce narrante rispetto al fatto che la porta sia stata lasciata aperta, con avverbi o locuzioni avverbiali come “certo”, “di sicuro” e, in un caso (Fortini), con la completa assenza di avverbi, il che trasforma l’enunciato in un’affermazione che il lettore percepisce come “indubitabile”; in 7 versioni su 15 (pari al 46,7 per cento dei casi) prevale invece l’aspetto inferenziale, con l’utilizzo dell’avverbio “evidentemente” e in un caso del verbo modale “dovere” (Zampa); l’ultimo gruppo è composto da 4 traduzioni (pari al 26,7 per cento del totale) in cui il grado di certezza è minore, e l’avverbio usato è “probabilmente”.

Er erkannte daraus, daß ihr sein Anblick noch immer unerträglich war und ihr auch weiterhin unerträglich bleiben müsse, und daß sie sich **wohl** sehr überwinden mußte, vor dem Anblick auch nur der kleinen Partie seines Körpers nicht davonzulaufen, mit der er unter dem Kanapee hervorragte. (Kafka 1971, 52)

[...] **forse** la sorella doveva già fare un grande sforzo per non scappare via alla sola vista di quella piccola parte del suo corpo che sporgeva dal canapé. (Kafka 1934, trad. di Paoli, 113)

[...] e che ella doveva farsi una gran forza per non scappare anche soltanto alla vista della piccola parte del suo corpo che spuntava fuori del divano. (Kafka 1935, trad. di Rho, 105)

[...] e che ella doveva farsi violenza per non sfuggire alla vista di quella parte, sia pur piccola, del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il sofà. (Kafka 1953, trad. di Furst, 36)

[...] che la ragazza, anzi, doveva dominarsi, per non fuggire alla vista delle parti rimaste fuori dal divano. (Kafka 1957, trad. di Zampa, 100)

[...] **indubbiamente** le era necessario farsi gran forza per non fuggire al solo scorgere la piccola parte del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il divano. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 67)

[...] Ella doveva dominarsi per non fuggire se vedeva la pur minima parte del corpo di Gregor sporgere sotto al divano. (Kafka 1972, trad. di Coppè, 120)

[...] e che ella doveva fare grandi sforzi per non fuggire alla sola vista di quella piccola parte del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il divano. (Kafka 1980, trad. di Schiavoni, 151)

[...] e che sua sorella doveva **proprio** dominarsi per non fuggire alla vista di quella piccola parte del corpo di lui sporgente da sotto il divano. (Kafka 1986, trad. di Fortini, 91)

[...] e che **senz’altro** ella faceva uno sforzo immenso per non fuggire scorgendo anche solo quella piccola parte del suo corpo che spuntava dal canapé. (Kafka 1991, trad. di Lavagetto, 98)

[...] e che doveva fare un grande sforzo per non scappare anche solo vedendo un pezzetto del suo corpo che spuntava dal canapé. (Kafka 1993, trad. di Zanetti, 34)

[...] **indubbiamente** le era necessario farsi gran forza per non fuggire al solo scorgere la minima parte del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il divano. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 63)

[...] e che lei doveva compiere un grande sforzo su se stessa per non fuggir via scorgendo anche solo la piccola parte del suo corpo che sporgeva di sotto il divano. (Kafka 2011, trad. di Capriolo, 71)

[...] E che **evidentemente** doveva dominarsi molto per non fuggire alla vista della minuscola parte del corpo che spuntava da sotto il divano. (Kafka 2012, trad. di Ganni, 36-37)

[...] e che Grete doveva sforzarsi molto per dominarsi e non fuggire anche davanti a quella piccola parte del suo corpo che spuntava da sotto il divano. (Kafka 2018, trad. di Boccignone, 50)

[...] e che **probabilmente** al solo vedere il canapè, lei, per non fuggire, doveva esercitare un forte dominio su sé stessa. (Kafka 2024, trad. di Raja, 77)

Oltre al *Konjunktiv II* con significato condizionale, anche la presenza contemporanea di verbi modali epistemicici e particella modale *wohl* spinge i traduttori italiani a eliminare quest'ultima conservando i primi. Nel passo appena analizzato Gregor Samsa commenta il comportamento sfuggente della sorella Grete. Nella frase secondaria coordinata tedesca il modale (epistemicico) *müssen* si aggiunge a *wohl*: le versioni italiane vedono in più della metà dei casi soltanto il verbo modale italiano *dovere*. Per la precisione, l'apporto semantico "ridondante" di *wohl* viene eliminato in 8 traduzioni (il 53,3 per cento dei casi). Avverbi epistemicici vengono aggiunti al verbo servile italiano in 5 casi (il 33,3 per cento). In altri due casi (pari al 13,3 per cento) Rodolfo Paoli e Franco Fortini aggiungono avverbi non epistemicici, rispettivamente "già" (nel senso di "in aggiunta") e il rafforzativo "proprio" (con il significato di "veramente"). Da notare come, in ulteriori due versioni, di cui accenneremo a breve, venga meno addirittura il modale *dovere*.

2. Un tentativo di bilancio

Dall'illustrazione degli esempi emergono tendenze piuttosto chiare, che vorrei sintetizzare in quest'ultima parte del contributo. La seguente tabella illustra la distribuzione della particella modale *wohl* nel testo di *Die Verwandlung*:

Occorrenze totali di <i>wohl</i>		
15		
In proposizioni principali affermative o negative	In proposizioni secondarie affermative o negative	In proposizioni interrogative
10	2	3
Da sola	Con 1 elemento epistemicico	Con 2 elementi epistemicici
8	6	1

La presenza di altri elementi che esprimono la modalità epistemicica influenza la possibilità che venga scelto un traduttore apposito anche per la particella modale *wohl*. Tuttavia questi elementi non sono sempre gli stessi:

Compresenza di <i>wohl</i> con altri elementi epistemicici		
8		
<i>Konjunktiv II</i> condizionale	Verbi modali	Frase interrogativa
4	1	3

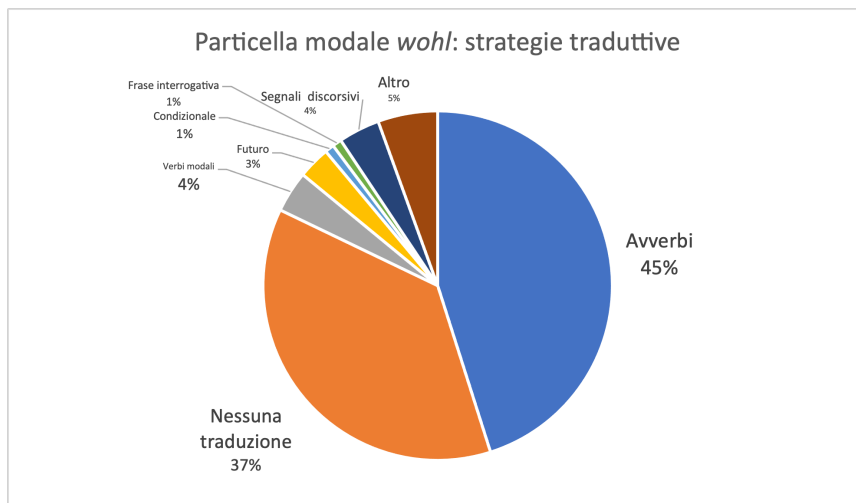
Nel testo di Kafka, *wohl* si presenta nelle frasi principali affermative o negative (66,7 per cento dei casi), da sola (53,3 per cento dei casi) o con un altro elemento che esprime la modalità epistemicica (40 per cento dei casi). In questo secondo scenario, nella maggior parte dei casi si tratta di *Konjunktiv II* o frase interrogativa.

La prossima tabella illustra invece cumulativamente le soluzioni scelte da tutti i traduttori per rendere in italiano le 15 occorrenze della particella modale *wohl*. Gli asterischi indicano l'eventuale presenza di altri elementi che esprimono la modalità epistemicica (indicati con "presente" anche nelle colonne corrispondenti).

MP <i>wohl</i>	Avverbi (non epistemici)	Verbi modali	Futuro	Condizionale (<i>Konj II</i>)	Frase interrogativa	Segnali discorsivi	Non tradotta	Altro
1	10 (1)	3	-	-	-	-	2	-
2*	7 (-)	-	-	presente	-	-	8	-
3	15 (-)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4*	4 (1)	-	7	-	presente	-	4	2
5	13 (-)	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
6	7 (-)	2	-	2	-	-	6	-
7**	-	-	-	presente	presente	-	14	1
8	4 (1)	-	-	-	-	-	11	-
9	4 (2)	-	-	-	-	-	11	-
10*	7 (2)	presente	-	-	-	-	8	-
11*	10 (5)	-	-	presente	2	-	5	-
12	4 (-)	2	-	-	-	-	9	-
13	11 (-)	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
14*	3 (3)	-	-	presente	-	-	6	8
15*	7 (1)	-	-	-	presente	9	1	-
Totale	106 (16)	9	7	2	2	9	87	13

Lo scenario è molto chiaro e indica che i traduttori prediligono nettamente due strategie: rendere la particella modale *wohl* con un avverbio epistemico, oppure non tradurla. Da notare come la presenza di altri elementi epistemici nella frase (verbi modal, frase interrogativa, *Konjunktiv II*) accresca la probabilità che la *Modalpartikel* non venga tradotta in italiano. Se calcoliamo la frequenza media dei casi in cui, in presenza di altri elementi epistemici, la particella non ha un traduce diretto, essa è pari a 6,57. In assenza dei suddetti, invece, la tendenza a non tradurre in italiano *wohl* diminuisce, tanto che la media dei “Non tradotta” si riduce del 21 per cento, scendendo a 5,12.

Pressoché irrilevanti risultano le strategie di rendere il *wohl* epistemico con una frase interrogativa e il condizionale (entrambe all’1 per cento), mentre sono molto marginali anche le traduzioni con il futuro epistemico (3 per cento), con verbi modal e con segnali discorsivi (entrambe al 4 per cento).



Dalle proporzioni qui descritte, la prima analisi va effettuata sugli avverbi epistemicici: qual è la lettura prevalente che i traduttori italiani dagli anni Trenta a oggi danno della particella *wohl*? Un problema interpretativo e traduttivo che gli avverbi epistemicici portano con sé, rispetto alla particella modale tedesca, è il fatto che tutti esprimano un maggiore o minor grado di certezza. Dunque la domanda che ci si pone è: quale grado di certezza epistemica viene assegnato agli avverbi epistemicici italiani? Una quantificazione sommaria produce i seguenti valori:

Ad alto grado di certezza (certamente, sicuramente, indubbiamente ed equivalenti)	A medio grado di certezza (evidentemente ed equivalenti)	A basso grado di certezza (forse, probabilmente ed equivalenti)
25	26	36

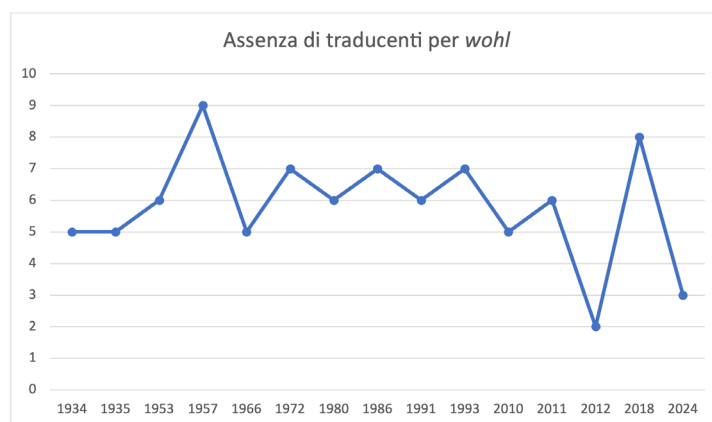
Gli avverbi più frequenti sono quelli a basso grado di certezza, mentre le modalità epistemiche legate a valutazione inferenziale (tipica soprattutto degli avverbi a medio grado di certezza) e alla cosiddetta “confidenza” (che caratterizza gli avverbi ad alto grado di certezza) sono più o meno ugualmente rappresentate (cfr. Pietrandrea 2004).

Se volessimo scomporre questo dato nella sua dimensione diacronica, cercando di capire se la tendenza osservata si modifichi nel corso dei decenni, possiamo suddividere il corpus in tre subcorpora composti ciascuno da cinque versioni di *Die Verwandlung* che comprendono rispettivamente le traduzioni italiane che vanno dagli anni Trenta agli anni Sessanta compresi (1930-69), dagli anni Settanta agli anni Novanta (1970-99) e quelle degli anni Duemila (2000-24).

	Alto grado di certezza (certamente, sicuramente, indubbiamente ed equivalenti)	Medio grado di certezza (evidentemente ed equivalenti)	Basso grado di certezza (forse, probabilmente ed equivalenti)	Totale
1930-69	10	6	11	27
1970-99	10	3	12	25
2000-24	5	17	13	35

La lettura della particella modale *wohl* come marcatore di grado intermedio della certezza epistemica è minoritaria nelle traduzioni italiane di *Die Verwandlung* pubblicate tra l’inizio degli anni Trenta e la fine degli anni Sessanta, e si riduce ulteriormente nel trentennio 1970-99, mentre l’uso degli avverbi epistemicici ad alto e a basso grado di certezza rimangono costanti. Si nota però una vera e propria esplosione delle traduzioni di *wohl* con avverbi a medio grado di certezza epistemica nelle versioni degli anni Duemila, a discapito soprattutto di quelli ad alto grado, che si dimezzano. Emerge inoltre, nell’ultimo periodo, una maggiore propensione (+35 per cento circa rispetto alla media 1930-99) a tradurre *wohl* con avverbi epistemicici.

L’altra tendenza evidente è omettere la traduzione della particella *wohl*: se volessimo visualizzare la frequenza di tale omissione in tutte le traduzioni, in ordine cronologico, avremmo il seguente grafico:



Emerge chiaramente come la tendenza a non tradurre *wohl* sia in crescita nel primo trentennio di traduzioni (1934-66), con un picco che corrisponde alla traduzione di Zampa (Kafka 1957) e un valore medio pari a 6, che sale a 6,6 nel ventennio successivo (1972-93), pur in assenza di picchi analoghi, mentre scende a 4,8 nel primo quarto di secolo del nuovo millennio, ma con grandi differenze da traduttore a traduttore.

Nell'analisi delle traduzioni vi sono anche fenomeni che, seppur marginali, meritano attenzione: uno di questi riguarda la traduzione delle strutture con verbo modale e particella modale *wohl*. Di seguito un passo di *Die Verwandlung* e le traduzioni di Castellani del 1966 e di Generali del 2010:

Er erkannte daraus [...] daß sie sich **wohl** sehr überwinden mußte, vor dem Anblick auch nur der kleinen Partie seines Körpers nicht davonzulaufen, mit der er unter dem Kanapee hervorragte (Kafka 1971, 52).

[...] indubbiamente le **era necessario** farsi gran forza per non fuggire al solo scorgere la piccola parte del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il divano. (Kafka 1966, trad. di Castellani, 67)

[...] indubbiamente le **era necessario** farsi gran forza per non fuggire al solo scorgere la minima parte del suo corpo che sporgeva da sotto il divano. (Kafka 2010, trad. di Generali, 63)

Una delle analogie tra il tedesco *müssen* e l'italiano *dovere* sta nella loro capacità di esprimere, al presente indicativo, tanto la modalità epistemica, ossia il dubbio, l'ipotesi, la *Vermutung* con medio-alto grado di certezza ("Dev'essere arrivato a casa da poco" – *Er muss erst kürzlich nach Hause gekommen sein*) quanto la modalità deontica, la necessità, la *Notwendigkeit* ("Domani deve partire molto presto" – *Morgen muss er sehr früh abreisen*). Quest'ultima può essere espressa anche con la locuzione "essere necessario", pertanto in questi passi Castellani e Generali cancellano qualsiasi portata epistemica espressa dal verbo, rimpiazzato con una perifrasi deontica, lasciando tutto il peso della modalità sulle spalle dell'avverbio ad alto grado "indubbiamente". Tutte le altre versioni del passo ricalcano invece l'ambiguità semantica del verbo modale potenzialmente epistemico e deontico *dovere*.

Conclusioni

Nel presente contributo si è preso in esame l'uso della particella modale epistemica *wohl* nel celebre racconto di Franz Kafka *Die Verwandlung* e, in particolare, la sua resa in 15 traduzioni italiane.

In ottica traduttiva è evidente come le due tendenze più frequenti siano quella di rendere la particella con un avverbio epistemico di vario grado di certezza da una parte e, dall'altra, quella di omettere del tutto la traduzione di *wohl* arrivando a eliminare, in una minoranza – ma cospicua – di casi (il 18,2 per cento), qualsiasi modalità epistemica in italiano, oppure affidando tale modalità agli altri mezzi già presenti nel testo originale (verbi modali, condizionale, frase interrogativa, ecc.).

L'italiano è una lingua che dispone anch'essa di particelle modali, tuttavia in quantità sensibilmente minore. Trattandosi di una classe di parole poco usata nella nostra lingua, in molti casi nella traduzione dal tedesco a essa viene a configurarsi un "vuoto": quello di individuare strategie linguistiche che permettano di veicolare con precisione il tipo di modalità espresso dal tedesco *wohl*. Dato che la tendenza maggioritaria sarà quella di tradurre la particella con un avverbio epistemico, il traduttore risconterà nell'originale la "mancanza" del grado di certezza epistemica da assegnare alla *Modalpartikel*. Gradazione che andrà necessariamente "dosata" da chi traduce.

Quanto ai dizionari, il *Nuovo dizionario di Tedesco* Zanichelli, indica la particella *wohl* come sinonimo di *wahrscheinlich* e la traduce con l'italiano *probabilmente* (avverbio a medio grado di certezza), menziona la possibilità che talora non venga tradotta, che sia possibile renderla nelle frasi interrogative con la perifrasi *chissà se* e ne prospetta anche una possibile traduzione con il futuro epistemico (Giacoma, Kolb 2019, 1314-15).

L'analisi delle traduzioni di *wohl* in *Die Verwandlung* ha permesso di individuare sì le tendenze prevalenti, ma anche spunti interessanti tra quelle minoritarie, come l'uso dei segnali discorsivi ("O Natale era già passato?"), dei *question tags* ("Ché era passato Natale, no?") e della congiunzione/avverbio "dunque" ("Natale era dunque già trascorso?") per tradurre il *wohl* epistemico nelle frasi interrogative. Mezzi che, seppur diversi da *wohl*, danno modo a chi traduce di esprimere la modalità epistemica senza dover assegnare, come con gli avverbi, un grado di certezza. Emergono, inoltre, l'inclinazione da parte di tutti i traduttori a ridurre la ridondanza di elementi epistemici razionalizzando il testo di arrivo, così come la difficoltà dei dizionari bilingue a intercettare la grande gamma di possibili strategie per tradurre il *wohl* epistemico.

A sottolineare i problemi che nascono dall'incontro tra una lingua ricchissima di particelle modali come il tedesco e un'altra, l'italiano, costretta talora a usare i suoi mezzi e a "esplicitare" la modalità che esse esprimono, e a far uscire il traduttore da quella doverosa invisibilità sulla quale la scienza della traduzione disquisisce da sempre.

Riferimenti bibliografici

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Il tedesco austriaco tra percezione e uso nel contesto scritto standard Analisi di uno studio pilota condotto su studenti madrelingua

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Abstract

This study describes a linguistic experiment focused on Austrian German and conducted among Austrian university students in Innsbruck. The goal of the experiment is to understand Austrian German native speakers' perception of their language variety and their use of typically Austrian structures in standard written language. The paper first outlines the scientific-methodological approach and linguistic status, including the identification of Austrian written standard and its grammar peculiarities. Then data collected from the participants' are discussed using a sociolinguistic approach. Their perception of Austrian language structures is then investigated, and their use of these structures in standard written context is eventually examined. Results and possible further research are then discussed to conclude the work.

Keywords: Perception and Use of Austrian German, Pluricentricity, Standard, Written Language

Introduzione

A partire dagli anni '40 e '50 del secolo scorso, l'area geografica di lingua tedesca è diventata oggetto di un acceso dibattito accademico sulla percezione della lingua tedesca e delle sue varietà. In germanistica si sono delineati diversi approcci all'interno della comunità scientifica, nella quale il dibattito tra il monocentrismo e il pluricentrismo è ancora aperto. Mentre il primo riconosce nel tedesco della ex Repubblica Federale Tedesca la norma linguistica e declassa tutte le altre varietà tedescofone come secondarie, il secondo afferma un riconoscimento paritario delle diverse varietà di tedesco. "Der Terminus [Plurizentrik] impliziert, daß [...] Sprachen auf mehrere Zentren [...] verteilt sind, die bis zu einem gewissen Grad unterschiedliche Formen der jeweiligen Sprache ausgebildet haben" (Ammon 1997, 4). La pluricentricità linguistica si basa sul principio che ogni centro tedescofono, in quanto parte di una sfera linguistica comune, sviluppi le proprie forme linguistiche specifiche definite varietà nazionali che sono "per definitionem Standardvarietäten" (*ibidem*). Questi centri linguistici, definiti in letteratura come "Vollzentren" (*ibidem*), sono l'Austria, la Germania e la Svizzera tedesca. Rispetto a questi, de Cillia e Ransmayr sostengono "dass sprachliche Besonderheiten [dieser] Zentren des Deutschen [...] als gleichberechtigt nebeneinander bestehende

standardsprachliche Ausprägungen des Deutschen [gelten]" (2019, 26) e si parla di austriacismo per la variante austriaca, di elvetismo per la variante svizzera e per la denominazione di peculiarità linguistiche della Germania si utilizza il termine teutonismo.¹ Quando si tratta il tedesco in ottica pluricentrica, sono importanti due considerazioni. In primo luogo, Clyne (1995a) osserva che queste varietà e varianti linguistiche si influenzano a vicenda in modo disomogeneo tra loro e, in secondo luogo, che le differenze linguistiche tra di esse non devono essere troppo grandi. Il modello pluricentrico è criticato dai sostenitori del modello pluriareale. Questi ultimi promuovono il principio di pluriarealità² caratterizzato da una spazialità del tedesco, divisa tra aree linguistiche che non rispettano i confini politici statali e ammettono l'esistenza di diversi centri regionali responsabili della formazione di varietà standard regionali. La critica ha posto le basi per un modello pluricentrico moderato, che mette d'accordo la fazione pluricentrica e quella pluriarealista. Esso riconosce l'intersezione e la subordinazione dei confini varietali nazionali attraverso la variazione regionale. In questo contesto, il *Varietätenwörterbuch des Deutschen* di Ammon (2016) attesta il mutamento standard nazionale e regionale della lingua tedesca. Tale approccio è adottato anche nel presente contributo, il cui oggetto di studio è il tedesco austriaco. Lo *status* linguistico di questa varietà rappresenta una questione incerta e spinosa in germanistica. L'attribuzione del concetto di standard inteso come unificazione sovragregionale alla varietà austriaca risulta problematico, poiché quest'ultima è caratterizzata da variazioni regionali, accanto a quella nazionale (cfr. Ammon 1995). Il discorso è connesso all'attuale complessa situazione linguistica all'interno del Paese, descritta dalla triade "Dialekt – Umgangssprache [oder Regionalsprache] – Standardsprache" (Mentrup e Kühn 2011, 528), che registra una continua transizione fluida tra i diversi livelli di questo *continuum* che porta a una poliglossia a più livelli. Il diasistema austriaco è caratterizzato da sovrapposizioni, interferenze e persistenza di alcune caratteristiche in tutti gli strati e attraverso i confini statali. Rispetto al *continuum*, il tedesco austriaco sembra trovarsi in un punto controverso del confine tra lingua regionale e lingua codificata, mentre la situazione del tedesco federale è più chiara in quanto pienamente parte dello standard. La codificazione del tedesco austriaco è un altro elemento che fissa il suo *status* linguistico tra standard e non standard, poiché essa dipende dall'asimmetria tra Germania e Austria. La varietà è codificata sia a livello endonormativo che esonormativo: mentre lo *Österreichisches Wörterbuch*³ detta la norma austriaca interna e parziale (cfr. Markhardt 2005), il *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* e *Wie sagt man in Österreich? Wörterbuch des österreichischen Deutsch* di Ebner (2009) si occupano della codificazione esterna. L'ambiguità nello *status* di questa varietà è visibile nella classificazione che questi dizionari fanno di alcune varianti austriache: se il dizionario austriaco le codifica come standard, per il *Duden* (2006) questo non è sempre il caso.

Anche la lingua scritta standard in Austria rappresenta una questione complessa. Nell'area tedescofona, lo *Standardhochdeutsch*⁴ rappresenta la norma (cfr. Löffler 2008) e viene definito da Muhr come un "verkappt-monozentristischen Zirkelschluß" (1995, 104), perché la descrizione dello standard scritto ruota intorno allo *status quo* stabilito. Questa concezione non conferisce lo stesso *status* linguistico alle altre varietà tedescofone e lega la varianza a una concezione specifica della lingua scritta, escludendo in larga misura ampie aree del linguaggio quotidiano. L'esistenza di un solo standard scritto fa sì che tutte le altre varietà scritte e orali esistenti vengano relegate in una posizione subordinata ad esso. La visione monocentrica non sembra aderire perfettamente al contesto austriaco, in quanto essa rappresenta la norma solo per un numero limitato di situazioni pubbliche e formali, mentre la lingua regionale viene usata molto più frequentemente per la comunicazione personale e quotidiana (cfr. Muhr 1997). Inoltre, l'influenza della lingua orale contaminata da elementi regionali e la presenza di una comunicazione quotidiana in registri non standard favoriscono il passaggio di espressioni tipicamente austriache dalla lingua orale regionale a quella scritta codificata (cfr. Muhr 2001). Wiesinger definisce questa lingua scritta come "die deutsche Schriftsprache in Form des österreichischen Deutsch" (1990, 223), aggiungendo che non esiste uno standard d'uso uniforme a livello scritto nazionale, ma che esistono differenze regionali soprattutto a livello lessicale, ovvero sul piano linguistico più evidente per la differenziazione del tedesco austriaco scritto. Includendo numerosi termini regionali soprattutto provenienti dall'Austria orientale, si è cercato di creare una norma austriaca abbassando deliberatamente lo standard dell'uso della lingua scritta abituale in modo da orientarne la politica linguistica del Paese (cfr. Wiesinger 1983).

¹ In letteratura esiste sia il termine *Deutschlandismus* che *Teutonismus* per definire una variante linguistica tipica della Germania. Nel presente lavoro si utilizza il termine *teutonismo*.

² Il concetto di (pluri)arealità sembra esistere solo nella linguistica tedesca. A tal proposito de Cillia e Ransmayr (2019) affermano che questo può essere legato alla natura chiusa del territorio di lingua tedesca, poiché gli Stati tedescofoni sono tutti confinanti.

³ Lo *Österreichisches Wörterbuch* è il dizionario austriaco.

⁴ Con il termine *Standardhochdeutsch* (o standard della Germania) si intende, in questo articolo, la lingua standard scritta comune a tutti i Paesi di lingua tedesca.

Il tedesco austriaco presenta aspetti grammaticali propri che caratterizzano lo standard all'interno del Paese. La sfida è determinare quali elementi linguistici possano rappresentare la norma scritta. Per ogni categoria grammaticale è possibile identificare peculiarità tipicamente austriache. In riferimento ai sostantivi, tra tedesco austriaco e standard della Germania, si registra un uso diversificato del genere. Ne sono esempio österr.⁵ *der Gehalt* (vs. Stdhochd. *das Gehalt*) (cfr. Clyne 1995b, 39) o l'uso di generi diversi per uno stesso sostantivo, come nel caso di österr. *der/das Monat* (vs. Stdhochd. *der Monat*) (*ibidem*). La costruzione di composti nominali tipica del tedesco austriaco prevede l'aggiunta del *Fugemorphem -s* dopo le consonanti velari [g], [k], [x] (cfr. Englert 2021) come österr. *Gepäcksaufgabe* (vs. Stdhochd. *Gepäckaufgabe*) (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 277). Per la categoria verbale, si registra la formazione di verbi con preposizione come prefisso secondo combinazioni differenti. Nella prima, la radice del verbo viene combinata con un prefisso diverso nel tedesco austriaco rispetto al tedesco standard, ma il significato rimane invariato come in österr. *einheben* (vs. Stdhochd. *erheben*) (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 196). La seconda ammette lo stesso prefisso combinato con una radice verbale diversa che non ne varia il significato (cfr. Muhr 2016, 68), ad esempio österr. (*die Tür*) *absperren* (vs. Stdhochd. *abschließen*). Infine, due ulteriori peculiarità sono fondamentali se si parla di standard scritto in Austria. La prima riguarda la formazione del *Perfekt* di diverse voci verbali, soprattutto quelli di movimento come *sitzen*, che in tedesco austriaco sono costruite attraverso l'uso dell'ausiliare *sein* e non *haben* come nello *Standardhochdeutsch*. La seconda caratteristica (tipicamente austriaca) riguarda l'ordine degli elementi verbali nel *Nachfeld*⁶ della frase. Nelle frasi subordinate con un predicato costituito dall'ausiliare *haben* e dagli infiniti di un verbo lessicale e modale, l'Austria sviluppa la sequenza verbo lessicale (all'infinito) + (forma finita del verbo) *haben* + verbo modale (all'infinito), mentre in Germania *haben* occupa la prima posizione della struttura verbale come nel caso di (*Eine Stimme, die ich ohne weiteres als eine allererste*) österr. *bezeichnen hätte können* vs. / Stdhochd. *hätte bezeichnen können* (cfr. Wiesinger, 2010). La categoria lessicale è la più esemplificativa del tedesco austriaco e tratta gli austriacismi come varianti tipiche di questo centro linguistico. Il loro carattere tipico è l'intenso contatto linguistico con le varietà vicine e non (cfr. Pohl 2009, 4-5) come *Fogosch* (Stdhochd. *Zander, Schill*) dall'ungherese, *Stampiglie* (Stdhochd. *Stempel*) dall'italiano o *Powidl* (Stdhochd. *Pflaumenmus*) dal ceco.

Strutture di questo tipo sono oggetto dell'indagine descritta nel presente contributo che mira a studiare il tedesco austriaco nel contesto scritto standard. In particolare, esso si pone come obiettivo lo studio della percezione, della valutazione e dell'uso di austriacismi e di alcune caratteristiche grammaticali tipiche di questa varietà da parte di studenti universitari austriaci. Lo scopo è determinare la loro percezione rispetto alla propria varietà e capire quali strutture tipicamente austriache si utilizzano nello standard scritto. A tal fine è stato condotto uno studio pilota diviso in tre fasi che ha coinvolto la partecipazione di 24 studenti austriaci, tra i 18 e i 26 anni, iscritti a diverse facoltà scientifiche e umanistiche,⁷ triennali e magistrali, dell'Università di Innsbruck. In una prima fase sono state somministrate domande aperte utili alla raccolta di metadati e informazioni preliminari riguardanti la popolazione di studenti indagata (cfr. par. 1). Nella seconda e terza fase sono state somministrate due esercitazioni di carattere grammaticale. La prima indaga la percezione degli studenti attraverso la loro valutazione di quattro frasi composte da elementi austriaci, che possono essere classificate, secondo la scala di Likert, su un *continuum*, dove agli antipodi si trovano standard e non standard (cfr. par. 2). La seconda, composta da sette frasi in formato di *cloze test* a scelta multipla mira, invece, a determinare la frequenza d'uso di strutture tipicamente austriache. Allo studente è data la possibilità di selezionare la variante che ritiene più adeguata: austriaca o tedesca standard oppure entrambe (cfr. par. 3). Per la classificazione delle varianti, viene utilizzato il modello proposto da Ammon (1996) basato sul confronto con gli altri *Vollzentren* tedescofoni. Esso si fonda su due criteri. Innanzitutto, il grado di utilizzo di queste varianti linguistiche determina la divisione delle stesse in due gruppi: varianti nazionali e varianti di una sottoregione. Le prime hanno un valore maggiore rispetto alle seconde. Oltre a ciò, Ammon (1996) distingue tra varianti nazionali di un singolo centro definite come "specifiche" e quelle valide contemporaneamente in più centri linguistici chiamate "non specifiche". Tra i due tipi di varianti nazionali, quelle specifiche sono più rilevanti di quelle non specifiche. Le varianti nazionali non specifiche possono essere ulteriormente suddivise, a seconda del loro uso, in una sottoregione, in un centro pieno o in entrambi in modo combinato. Le sottotipologie importanti per l'area tedescofona descritte da Ammon (1996) sono:

⁵ österr. sta per *Österreichisches Deutsch* e identifica la varietà di tedesco austriaco.

⁶ Il *Nachfeld* è l'elemento della sintassi tedesca che si riferisce all'area dopo la seconda parte della parentesi di una frase, cioè a tutto ciò che si trova dopo il V2.

⁷ Il 12,5% (3 intervistati) del campione studia materie scientifiche come biologia, matematica e architettura. La maggioranza data dall'87,5% (21 intervistati) appartiene al ramo umanistico: scienze della formazione, culture comparate e filosofia sono le facoltà più frequentate.

Tipo (a): Proprio centro pieno A + altro centro pieno B.

Tipo (b): Proprio centro pieno A + sottoregione di un altro centro B.

Tipo (c): Sottoregione del proprio centro pieno A + altro centro pieno B.

L'ipotesi di partenza è che la valutazione delle frasi in tedesco austriaco da parte dei partecipanti al test tenda verso il non pienamente standard, ma che rimanga vicino ad esso. Rispetto all'uso di elementi austriaci nel contesto scritto formale, l'aspettativa è meno prevedibile, dato che, secondo la letteratura scientifica in materia, la popolazione più giovane sarebbe responsabile della lenta estinzione della varietà del tedesco austriaco e delle sue specificità linguistiche. A tal proposito essa cercherebbe di sostituire sempre più spesso le forme specificamente austriache con quelle federali a causa dell'asimmetria tra le due nazioni. L'abbandono graduale delle proprie specificità linguistiche viene percepito come un normale processo di sviluppo e non come una minaccia alla loro identità (cfr. Englert, 2020). I risultati sono sintetizzati nelle conclusioni.

1. Dati sociolinguistici e conoscenza del tema "tedesco austriaco"

Attraverso le domande poste nella prima fase, gli studenti sono stati sollecitati a fornire dati di carattere sociolinguistico e ad autovalutare le proprie competenze e conoscenze linguistiche, sia dialettali sia standard. Nello specifico, sono state poste cinque domande: 1) Da quale stato federato proviene? (*Aus welchem Bundesland kommen Sie?*); 2) Parla o scrive in dialetto? (*Sprechen oder schreiben Sie im Dialekt?*); 3) Ha mai sentito parlare durante lo studio universitario del tedesco come lingua pluricentrica? (*Haben Sie in Ihrem Studium schon von Deutsch als plurizentrische Sprache gehört?*); 4) Ha mai sentito parlare durante lo studio universitario di tedesco austriaco? (*Haben Sie in Ihrem Studium schon von österreichischem Deutsch gehört?*); 5) Ha mai sentito parlare di austriacismi? (*Haben Sie in Ihrem Studium schon von Austriazismen gehört?*). Dall'indagine dei dati sociolinguistici emerge uno spettro di intervistati relativamente variegato (cfr. fig. 1):

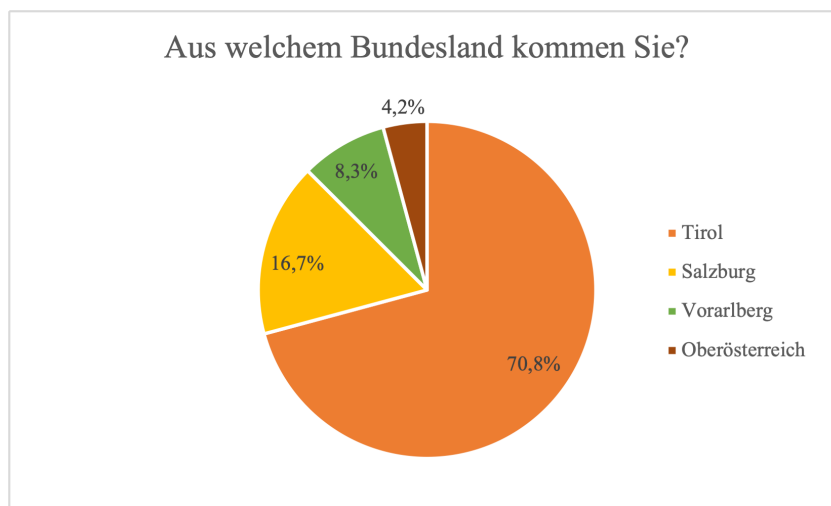


Fig. 1 – Provenienza degli intervistati

La maggioranza degli studenti (70,8%; 17 intervistati), è di origine tirolese, mentre il 16,7% (4 intervistati) proviene dalla regione di Salisburgo. Solo una minoranza viene da altre regioni: due studenti (8,3%) da Vorarlberg e uno studente (4,2%) dall'Alta Austria.

In riferimento alla seconda domanda, i risultati mettono in evidenza una generale buona conoscenza del dialetto (cfr. fig. 2):

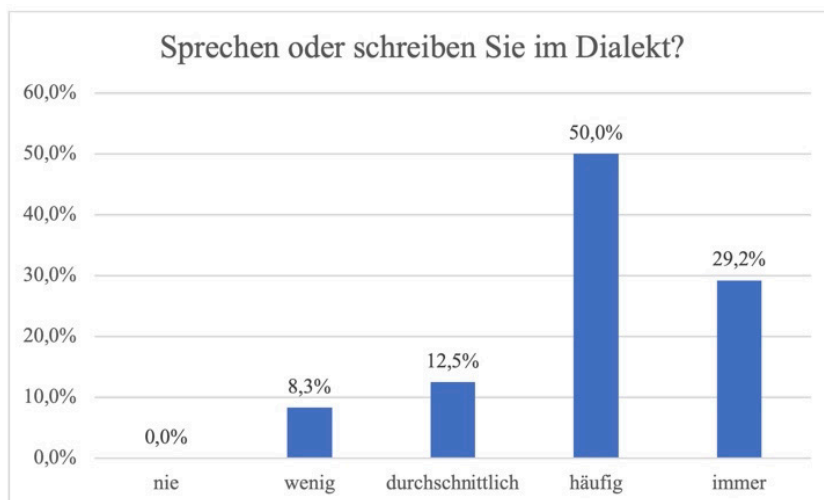


Fig. 2 – Autovalutazione della competenza dialettale degli intervistati

Come mostra fig. 2, il 29,2% (7 intervistati) afferma di parlare e scrivere sempre in dialetto, mentre un altro 50% (12 intervistati) molto spesso. Il 12,5% (3 intervistati) ritiene di avere sviluppato competenze intermedie nell'uso di questo registro non standard. Solo una minoranza composta dall'8,3% (2 intervistati) degli studenti lo usa poco. Nessuno afferma di non usarlo mai.

Diversamente, la domanda relativa alla conoscenza del tema della pluricentralità del tedesco rileva un panorama tendenzialmente negativo (cfr. fig. 3):



Fig. 3 – Conoscenza del tema del pluricentrismo linguistico

La maggior parte degli studenti, pari al 62,5% (15 intervistati), non ha mai sentito parlare di questo argomento: solo il 33,3% (8 intervistati) dichiara di conoscerlo. Un solo studente (4,2%) dichiara addirittura di non sapere. I dati raccolti attestano la necessità di una maggiore sensibilizzazione rispetto a questo tema, per promuovere una maggiore consapevolezza rispetto alle varietà di tedesco tra gli studenti, i quali ne sono solo parzialmente consapevoli.

Tendenza opposta mostrano i risultati ottenuti sulla terza domanda. Se, da una parte, la maggioranza degli studenti austriaci coinvolti in questa indagine afferma di non conoscere il modello pluricentrico, dall'altra dichiara di aver già incontrato il tema del tedesco austriaco durante il percorso di studi (cfr. fig. 4):

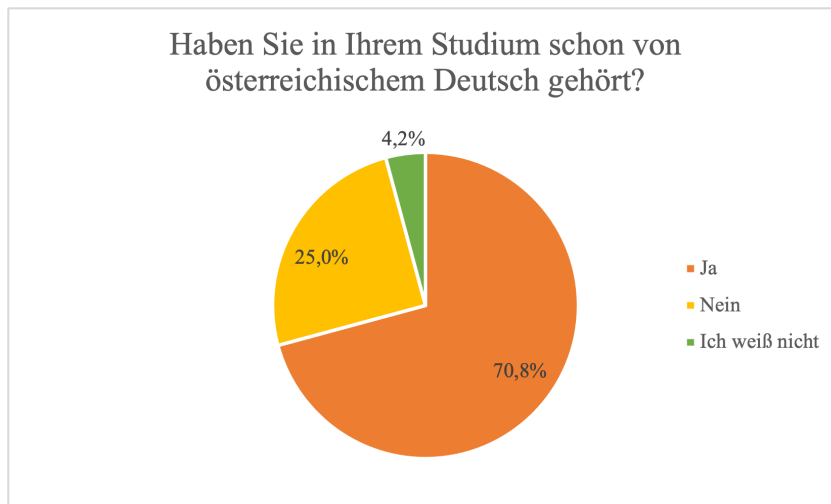


Fig. 4 – Conoscenza del tema del tedesco austriaco

Come emerge da fig. 4, il 70,8% (17 intervistati) ha già affrontato questo argomento, mentre solo il restante 25% (6 intervistati) non l'ha mai trattato. Un solo studente (4,2%) dichiara di non sapere. Tali dati vanno a opporsi a quelli relativi alla conoscenza degli austriacismi (fig. 5):

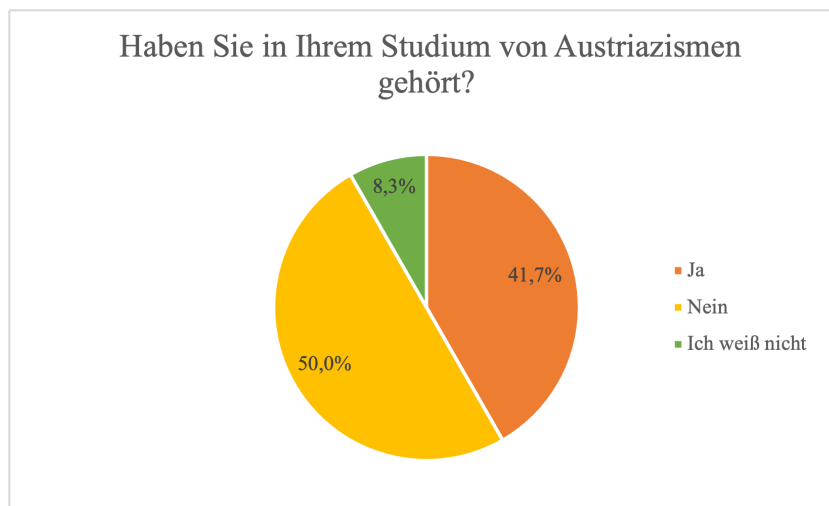


Fig. 5 – Conoscenza del tema degli austriacismi

Metà del campione (12 intervistati, 50%) non ne ha mai sentito parlare. Al contrario, il 41,7% (10 intervistati) degli studenti conosce la tematica. L'8,3% (2 intervistati) si dimostra incerto rispetto alla domanda. I risultati ottenuti attestano una limitata consapevolezza degli austriacismi come elementi tipici della propria varietà di tedesco, nonostante essi vengano utilizzati quotidianamente in contesti formali e informali a livello sia scritto sia orale.

2. Valutazione e percezione delle strutture tipicamente austriache

Per la valutazione e la percezione di strutture linguistiche prettamente austriache sono state fornite due frasi (una in *Standardhochdeutsch* e una in tedesco austriaco) ed è stato chiesto agli studenti di valutare le varianti come dialettali, lontane dallo standard, neutrali (intese come a metà tra standard e non standard), vicine allo standard oppure pienamente standard. Nel primo esercizio (1) sono state somministrate le seguenti frasi:

- (1) a. (Stdhochd.) *Ich habe an meinem Schreibtisch gesessen und mein E-Mail-Postfach geöffnet, um auf eine E-Mail zu antworten.*
 b. (SöD)⁸ *Ich bin am Schreibtisch gesessen und habe mein E-Mail-Postfach geöffnet, um auf ein E-Mail zu antworten.*

In (1b) sono state selezionate le seguenti strutture grammaticali tipicamente austriache:

- a) *Ich bin...gesessen*: in tedesco austriaco, il verbo di movimento *sitzen* costruisce il tempo perfetto con l'ausiliare *sein*, mentre in tedesco standard è utilizzato l'ausiliare *haben* (cfr. Kellermeier-Rehbein 2014).
 b) *Das E-Mail*: questo è il caso di alcuni sostantivi che in tedesco austriaco possono avere un genere diverso. Tuttavia, il termine *E-Mail* è accettato anche al femminile in Austria e quindi ha un doppio genere, *die/das E-Mail* (*ibidem*).

In generale, i risultati dell'analisi mettono in evidenza una percezione delle strutture tipicamente austriache come tendenzialmente vicine allo standard (cfr. fig. 6):

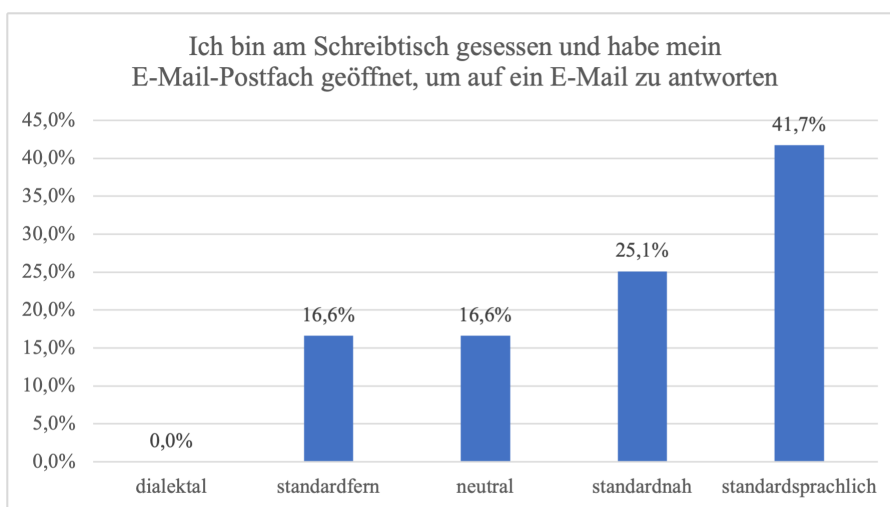


Fig. 6 – Valutazione della frase n.1 da parte degli intervistati

La maggioranza composta dal 66,8% dei partecipanti (16 intervistati), ha valutato la frase come standard o molto vicina allo standard. Il 16,6% (4 intervistati) ne ha una considerazione neutra (tra standard e non standard), mentre l'altro 16,6% (4 intervistati) l'ha definita come vicino al non standard. Nessun partecipante ha avuto la percezione che la frase fosse lontana dalla norma. Questo permette di affermare che la costruzione del *Perfekt* con l'ausiliare *sein* e la scelta del genere neutro del termine *das (E-mail)* sono generalmente percepiti come vicini allo standard. Il fatto che queste peculiarità linguistiche analizzate non siano pienamente considerate come parte della norma non rappresenta un problema, poiché la loro percezione potrebbe essere influenzata dal confronto tra la varietà austriaca e lo *Standardhochdeutsch* che rappresenta la norma scritta in tutti i Paesi di lingua tedesca.

⁸ SöD sta per *Schriftsprache in Form des österreichischen Deutsch* e identifica l'influenza linguistica del tedesco standard a livello scritto in Austria, causata dalla penetrazione di peculiarità lessicali e grammaticali austriache tipici della lingua orale.

Nell'esercizio (2), gli studenti sono stati posti di fronte alla questione della posizione degli elementi verbali nella frase secondaria con una forma verbale composta da modale, infinito e forma finita. (2a) mostra la forma tipica dello *Standardhochdeutsch* con sequenza verbo finito, infinito e modale (*hätte sprechen wollen*); (2b) la forma tipica dell'austriaco con sequenza infinito, finito e modale (*sprechen hätte wollen*) (cfr. Wiesinger 2010):

(2) a. (Stdhochd.) *Es hätte mich gewundert, wenn Herr Piecyk jetzt nicht für drei Minuten hätte sprechen wollen!*

b. (SöD) *Es hätte mich gewundert, wenn Herr Piecyk jetzt nicht für drei Minuten sprechen hätte wollen!*

Dai risultati emerge una percezione piuttosto differenziata (cfr. fig. 7):

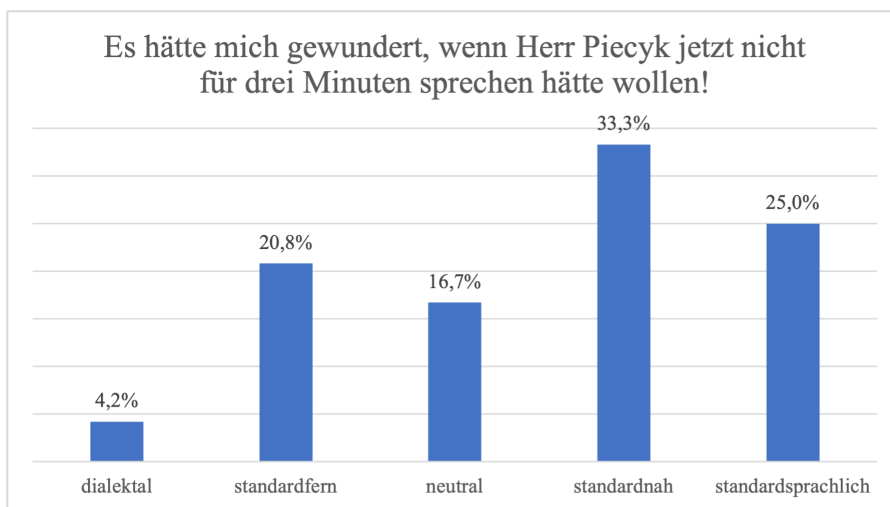


Fig. 7 – Valutazione della frase n.2 da parte degli intervistati

La maggioranza degli studenti coinvolti nell'indagine, composta da 58,3% (14 intervistati) si è espressa a favore di una valutazione di questo enunciato come standard o molto vicina ad esso. Al contrario, la minoranza composta dal 25% (6 intervistati) la percepisce come tendente al non standard. Più specificatamente, il 20,8% (5 intervistati) la considera come lontano dalla norma codificata, mentre solo uno studente (4,2%) la classifica come non standard. Il restante 16,7% (4 intervistati) ne dà un giudizio neutrale, a metà tra lo standard e il non standard.

Se si considerano le frasi (1b) e (2b) si può notare una differenza nella valutazione delle due proposizioni. Mentre per la (1b) si può riconoscere un giudizio chiaramente più tendente verso lo standard, così non avviene per la (2b), dove si registra, anche a livello grafico, uno schema crescente verso lo standard meno omogeneo. Questo potrebbe essere dato dal fatto che, nella frase (1b) sono valutati elementi grammaticali e lessicali tra cui l'uso differenziato del genere di (*das*) *E-mail* e la costruzione del *Perfekt* con *sein*; nella proposizione (2b) l'elemento analizzato è puramente sintattico e riguarda la diversa posizione dei costituenti verbali nella subordinata in *Nachfeld*. Il cambiamento nell'ordine dei costituenti della frase (2b) sembra essere percepito come meno standard rispetto alla variazione grammaticale e lessico-grammaticale della frase (1b).

Questo dato pare, tuttavia, non confermato se si osservano i risultati della valutazione dell'esercizio (3) in cui sono stati selezionati elementi lessicali:

(3) a. (Stdhochd.) *Es war jetzt meine Absicht, nach dem Abitur die Aufnahmeprüfung für das Reinhardt-Seminar zu machen.*

b. (SöD) *Es war jetzt meine Absicht, nach der Matura die Aufnahmeprüfung in das Reinhardt-Seminar zu machen.*

In (3b) sono contenuti due austriacismi. Il primo è *Matura (Abitur)* e viene classificato da Ammon (1996, 163) come specifico, in quanto il suo uso è limitato solo all’Austria. Il secondo è il sostantivo composto *Aufnahmsprüfung* (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 58), che presenta come tipico del tedesco austriaco l’uso del *Fugenmorphem -s* al posto del morfema *-e* dei composti tedeschi con determinante verbale.

Dalle risposte fornite dagli studenti emerge ancora una volta una percezione piuttosto variegata (cfr. fig. 8):

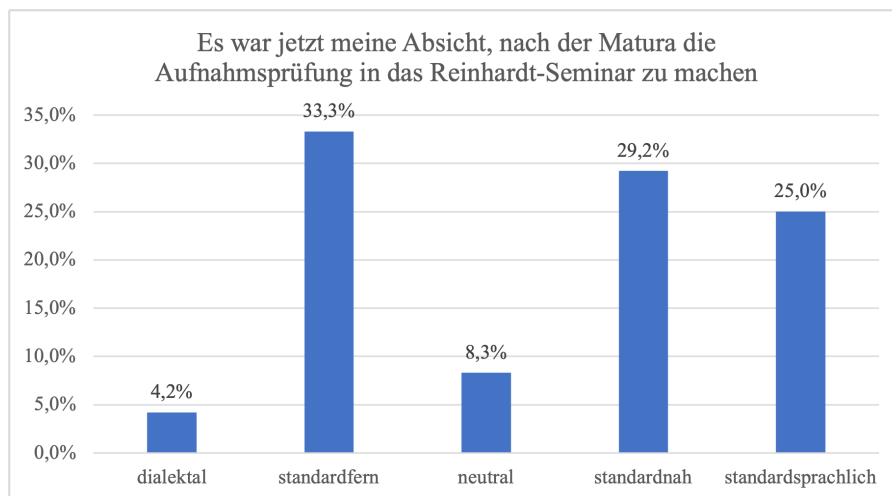


Fig. 8 – Valutazione della frase n.3 da parte degli intervistati

Secondo i risultati ottenuti in riferimento alla frase (3b), la maggior parte degli intervistati, il 54,2% (13 intervistati), ha segnalato questa frase come standard o molto vicina ad esso. Invece, il 37,5% (9 intervistati) l’ha classificata come generalmente poco o per nulla in linea alla norma. Il restante 8,3% (2 intervistati) degli studenti ne ha dato una valutazione neutra tra standard e non standard. Rispetto alla frase (1b), ma similmente alla (2b), si registra anche in (3b) una tendenza generale poco chiara che non ascrive questa proposizione totalmente allo standard. La variazione strutturale morfologico-grammaticale di *Aufnahm[s]prüfung*, rispetto al corrispettivo *Hochdeutsch Aufnahm[e]prüfung*, potrebbe giustificare la deviazione dell’austriacismo dalla norma a livello scritto standard e, di conseguenza, portare alla considerazione del composto austriaco come caso ambiguo o più vicino al non standard.

Il quarto quesito pone, invece, l’accento su questioni morfologiche e lessicali del sostantivo e della formazione verbale:

(4) a. (Stdhochd.) *Der Prospekt wird öffentlich ausliegen.*

b. (SöD) *Das Prospekt wird öffentlich aufliegen.*

Gli elementi austriaci importanti nella frase (4b) sono:

a) *Das Prospekt* (cfr. *Österreichisches Wörterbuch* 2022, 530): il termine, nell’accezione di opuscolo pubblicitario (*Werbeschrift*), può adottare in tedesco austriaco il genere neutro *das [Prospekt]*, insieme al maschile *der [Prospekt]* come in tutti i Paesi di lingua tedesca.

b) *aufliegen* rappresenta il caso del tedesco austriaco, in cui alcuni verbi si combinano con prefissi diversi rispetto allo *Standardhochdeutsch*. Qui la voce verbale *liegen* si combina con il prefisso *auf-*, mantenendo invariato il significato (cfr. Markhardt 2005).

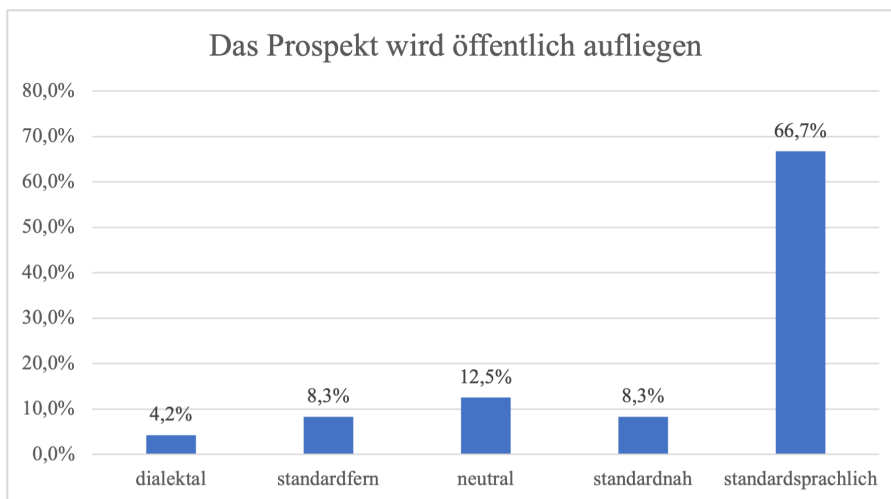


Fig. 9 – Valutazione della frase n.4 da parte degli intervistati

Rispetto ad una valutazione complessiva della frase (4b), si può affermare che la netta maggioranza degli studenti coinvolti in questo studio, rispettivamente il 75% del campione, (18 intervistati) ha categorizzato l'enunciato come standard o molto vicino ad esso. D'altra parte, uno scarso 12,5% (3 intervistati) l'ha definito come poco o per nulla vicino allo standard. Il restante 12,5% (3 intervistati) ha valutato la frase come neutra tra standard e non standard. Come in (1b) anche in (4b) la tendenza rispetto alla considerazione generale di questa frase va chiaramente in direzione dello standard. Come in (1b) anche in questa proposizione si trovano elementi lessicali e grammaticali come l'uso austriaco di *das (Prospekt)* e l'utilizzo della preposizione *auf-* che si combina con *liegen* in questa varietà di tedesco. A differenza della frase (2b), la (4b) non contiene una variazione sintattica; rispetto a (3b), nessun sostantivo presenta variazioni morfologiche-grammaticali a livello strutturale in (4b).

3. *Uso delle strutture tipicamente austriache*

Per valutare l'uso di strutture linguistiche tipicamente austriache da parte dei parlanti intervistati nello scritto standard sono stati somministrati sette esercizi in formato *cloze test*, incentrate su questioni di vario tipo: lessicale, sintattico e morfologico. Le prime quattro proposizioni sono incentrate su questioni lessicali. In (1) viene chiesto di scegliere tra la variante austriaca *Marille* (cfr. Ammon 1996, 162) o la variante standard *Aprikose* (*ibidem*) che è utilizzata anche nella Svizzera tedesca:

1) *Ich hob die Hand und pflückte eine große _____.*

- *Marille*
- *Aprikose*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

Dalle risposte fornite dagli studenti emerge una tendenza spiccata all'uso dell'austriacismo (cfr. fig. 10):

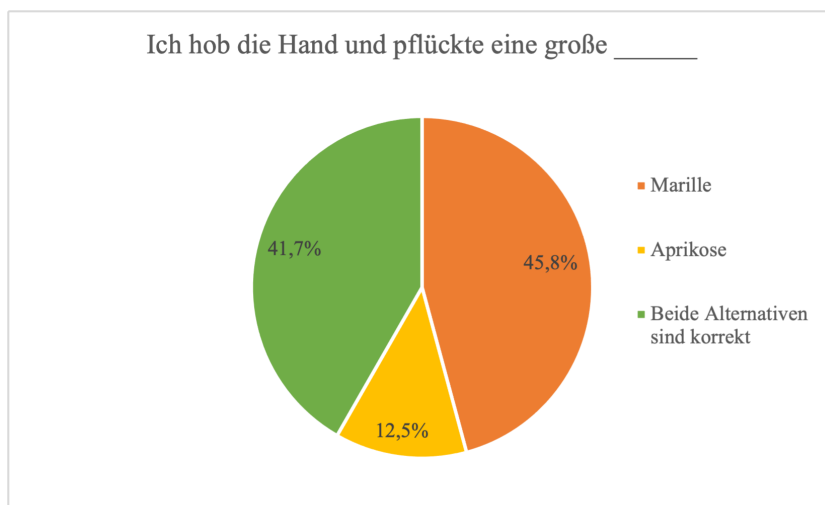


Fig. 10 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.1

Quasi metà degli studenti (45,8%; 11 intervistati) utilizzerebbe l'austriacismo *Marille* in un contesto scritto standard, mentre uno scarso 12,5% (3 intervistati) preferirebbe al suo posto la variante non specifica *Aprikose*. Il restante 41,7% (10 intervistati) li utilizzerebbe entrambi indistintamente.

Il secondo esercizio propone la scelta tra la variante linguistica *Fasnacht* dell'Austria occidentale e l'austriacismo *Fasching* (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 225). *Fasnacht* viene classificata come variante non specifica di tipo (c) secondo Ammon (1996, 163) ed è utilizzata sia in Austria occidentale sia nella Svizzera tedesca. Non è possibile definire con certezza se si tratti di un austriacismo o meno, poiché il principale contesto d'uso sembra essere l'area elvetica, per la quale si può parlare chiaramente di elvetismo. *Fasching*, invece, può essere ordinato come una variante non specifica di tipologia (b), in quanto è utilizzato in tutta l'Austria e ha valore di austriacismo, mentre il suo uso è registrato nella sottoregione della Germania ad esclusione del nord e del centro-ovest (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016). Questo esempio è stato pensato appositamente per valutare il comportamento linguistico di studenti provenienti dell'Austria occidentale dell'Università di Innsbruck, che sono costretti a dover scegliere tra una variante austriaca regionale e una nazionale.

2) *Es ist kein Wunder, dass _____ besonders in Tirol so intensiv, unbändig, fanatisch und so wild erfolgt.*

- *die Fasnacht*
- *der Fasching*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

Le risposte fornite dagli studenti mettono in evidenza una forte predilezione per la variante nazionale (cfr. fig. 11):

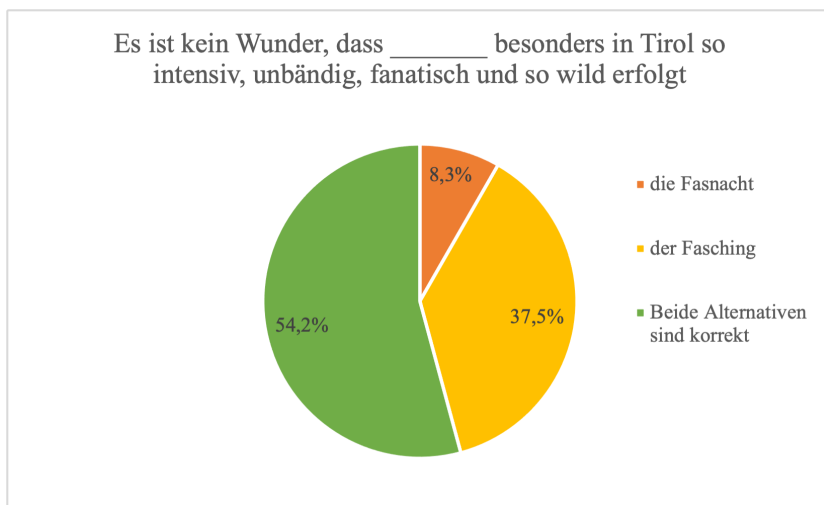


Fig. 11 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.2

Secondo i dati raccolti, il 37,5% (9 intervistati) del campione studiato preferirebbe l'uso della variante nazionale *Fasching* rispetto a quella occidentale *Fasnacht*, che verrebbe usata solo dall'8,3% studenti (2 intervistati). Importante qui è il 54,2% (13 intervistati) degli austriaci partecipanti che userebbe indistintamente entrambe le varianti per completare la frase a livello scritto formale. Quest'ultima percentuale è importante perché attesta l'uso di termini regionali in Austria. Se si considera il filtro dell'origine del campione come criterio di analisi, si osserva chiaramente che la maggior parte degli studenti del Tirolo, rispettivamente il 64,7% (11 intervistati) e tutti gli studenti del Vorarlberg (2 intervistati o 100%) userebbero entrambe le varianti indistintamente a livello scritto. Inoltre, il 25% (1 intervistato) degli studenti della provincia di Salisburgo utilizzerebbe il termine regionale *Fasnacht* a livello scritto formale e, probabilmente, provenendo dalla parte occidentale della regione, potrebbe subire le stesse influenze linguistiche del Tirolo e del Vorarlberg. L'uso diatopico regionale occidentale del termine *Fasnacht* è evidente se si considerano dettagliatamente i dati raccolti dal questionario: mentre in Tirolo, Vorarlberg e nella parte occidentale della provincia di Salisburgo si registra un uso regionale di questa parola, lo studente dall'Alta Austria e il 75% (3 intervistati) dei partecipanti originari del *Bundesland* di Salisburgo lo rifiuterebbero, scegliendo al suo posto l'austriacismo *Fasching* come completamento adatto per questa frase. La scelta della variante *Fasnacht* per il completamento di questa frase da parte di studenti austriaci occidentali attesta la peculiarità del tedesco austriaco, caratterizzato da variazione linguistica regionale.

Il terzo esercizio propone la scelta tra un teutonismo considerato da Ammon (1996) una variante nazionale della sottoregione della Germania utilizzata ovunque tranne che nel sud-est (*Klassenarbeit*) e un austriacismo comune a tutta la regione austriaca (*Schularbeit*) (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 390):

- 3) *Er muss heute den ganzen Nachmittag lernen, weil er morgen eine _____ schreibt.*
- *Klassenarbeit*
 - *Schularbeit*
 - *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

Ancora una volta, la preferenza va in direzione dell'austriacismo nazionale (cfr. fig. 12):

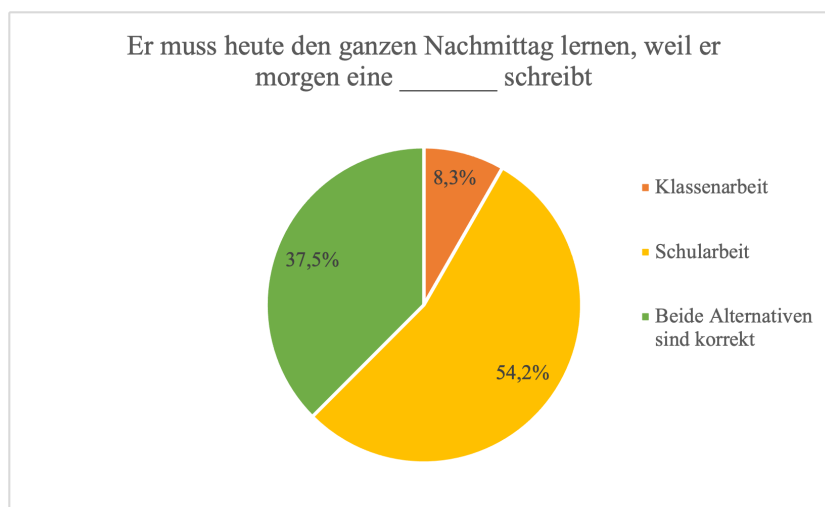


Fig. 12 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.3

Il 54,2% degli studenti (13 intervistati) utilizza *Schularbeit* per completare l'enunciato. Al contrario, la variante standard non pienamente rappresentativa *Klassenarbeit* è scelta solo dall'8,3% (1 intervistato). Tuttavia, il 37,5% (9 intervistati) utilizzerebbe entrambe le alternative in egual modo.

Una questione lessicale piuttosto interessante è posta nell'esercizio (4). Nello specifico, si propone la scelta tra il termine *Umfahrungsstraße* (cfr. *Varietätenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 765), che per Ammon (1996, 163) è una variante non specifica di tipo (b), utilizzata sia in Austria come austriacismo valido a livello nazionale sia nella Germania meridionale come variante subregionale e *Umgehungsstraße* (cfr. *Varietätenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 766) che, invece, è un teutonismo comunemente utilizzato in tutta la Germania.

4) Der Bau der _____ in Wien führt zu mehr Stau in der Innenstadt.

- *Umfahrungsstraße*
- *Umgehungsstraße*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

In questo caso, non solo la predilezione è spiccata per l'austriacismo, ma addirittura la sola opzione *Umgehungsstraße* non viene scelta da alcuno studente (cfr. fig. 13):

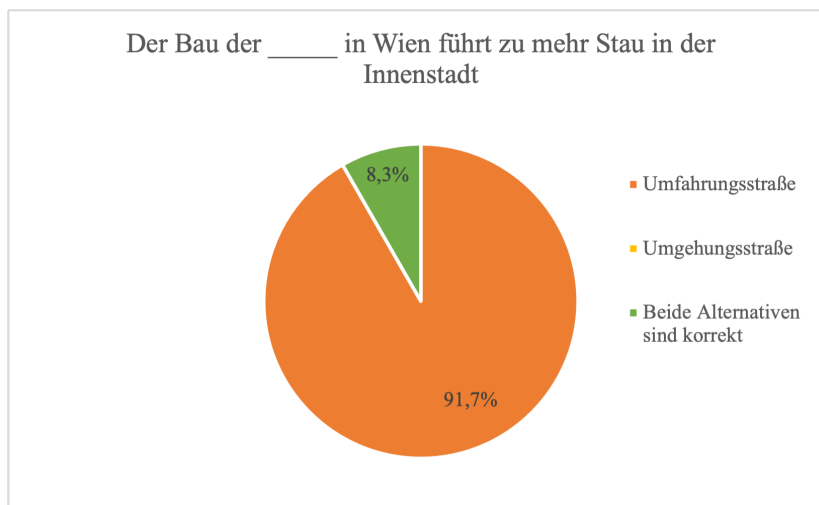


Fig. 13 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.4

22 intervistati, pari al 91,7%, optano per la scelta dell'austriacismo non specifico *Umfahrungsstraße*. L'equivalente federale *Umgehungsstraße* non sarebbe utilizzato da nessuno studente, anche se il restante 8,3% (2 intervistato) lo utilizzerebbe indistintamente con la variante austriaca.

Anche in (5) è proposta la scelta tra la forma verbale *absperrt* (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 12) che da Ammon (1996, 163) è classificata come una variante non specifica di tipo (b), poiché utilizzata in tutta l'Austria e nella sottoregione della Germania meridionale, e la forma verbale *abschließt* (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 12) che può essere classificata come un teutonismo, ma non pienamente rappresentativo in quanto è usato in tutta la regione tedesca, tranne che nel sud:

5) *Tom lebt in einer kleinen Stadt, wo niemand die Tür _____.*

- *absperrt*
- *abschließt*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

Diversamente che per i sostantivi, per i verbi la tendenza che si profila è la predilezione per la forma standard (cfr. fig. 14):

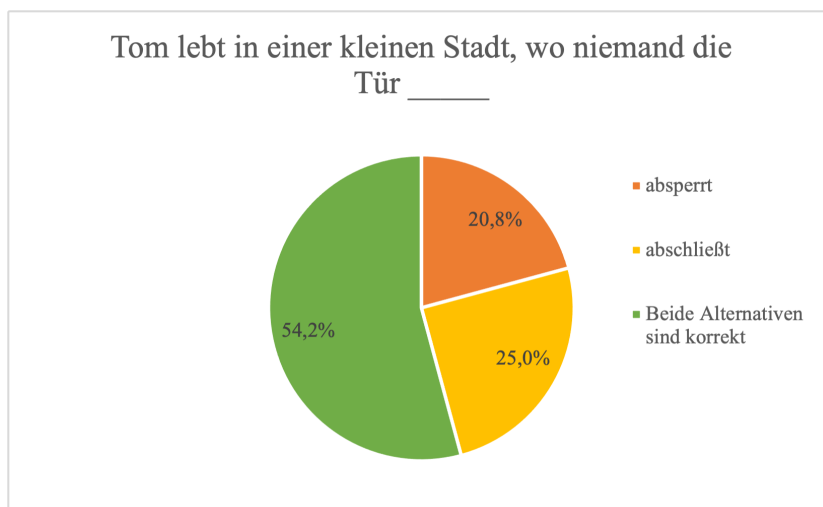


Fig. 14 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.5

Mentre il 20,8% (5 intervistati) degli studenti sceglierebbe la variante non specifica *absperrt*, il 25% (6 intervistati) userebbe la variante federale non specifica *abschließt*. Tuttavia, il 54,2% (13 intervistati) userebbe entrambe indistintamente. Nonostante una preferenza per l'uso della variante federale rispetto a quella austriaca, il distacco percentuale che determina la preferenza della prima rispetto alla seconda è minimo.

Il sesto esercizio propone, invece, la questione sintattica dell'ordine delle parti verbali nella frase secondaria:

6) *Mir wurde gesagt, dass sie keine Kredite _____.*

- *hätten gewähren dürfen*
- *gewähren hätten dürfen*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

Anche in questo caso emerge una netta preferenza per la variante austriaca (cfr. fig. 15):

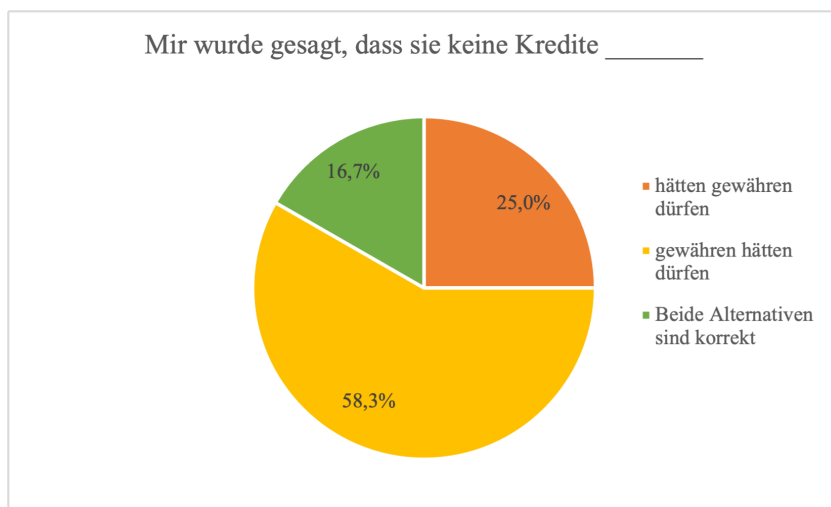


Fig. 15 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.6

La maggioranza degli studenti (58,3%; 14 intervistati) intervistati utilizzerebbe la tipica sequenza verbale austriaca *gewähren hätten dürfen* nella subordinata in *Nachfeld* a livello scritto formale per completare la frase. Il 25% (6 intervistati) sceglierebbe invece la sequenza dello *Standardhochdeutsch hätten gewähren dürfen*; il 16,7% (4 intervistati) riterrebbe invece appropriato l'uso di entrambe. Come nella proposizione precedente (1), anche per questo esempio, la maggioranza dei partecipanti utilizzerebbe la struttura tipicamente austriaca.

Infine, il settimo e ultimo esercizio propone la questione morfo-sintattica della *s-Fuge*, ovvero la scelta tra *Gepäckaufgabe* che è una variante non specifica di tipologia (a), in quanto è diffusa in Germania come teutonismo e nella Svizzera tedesca come elvetismo, e *Gepäcksaufgabe* (cfr. *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* 2016, 277) che è una variante specifica austriaca, ovvero austriacismo con un uso nazionale (cfr. Ammon 1996, 163):

7) Die _____ findet in der Regel beim Check-in statt.

- *Gepäckaufgabe*
- *Gepäcksaufgabe*
- *Beide Alternativen sind korrekt*

In questo caso, si viene a configurare una netta predisposizione per la variante non austriaca (cfr. fig. 16):

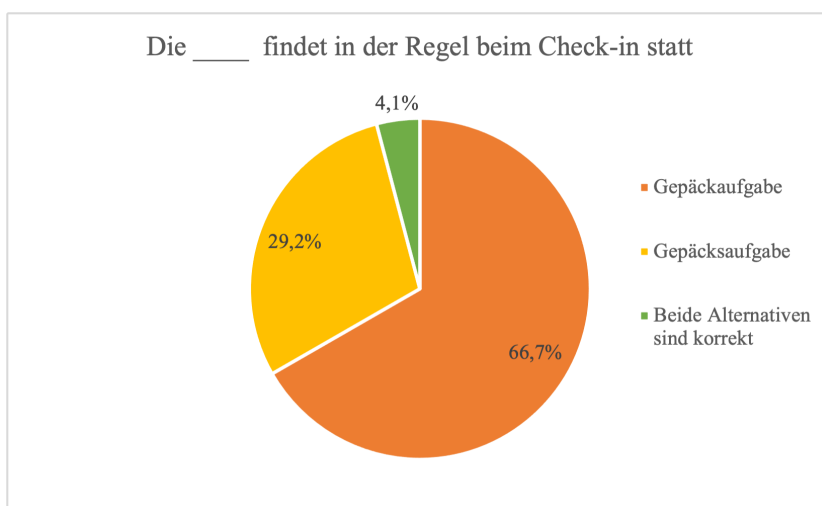


Fig. 16 – Risultati delle preferenze degli intervistati per la frase n.7

La maggior parte degli intervistati, composta dal 66,7% (16 intervistati) dei casi totali studiati, risulterebbe d'accordo nella scelta dell'uso della variante federale non specifica *Gepäckaufgabe* rispetto all'equivalente austriacismo *Gepäck[s]aufgabe*, che verrebbe utilizzato solo dal 29,2% (7 intervistati) in un testo standard. Il restante 4,1% (1 intervistato) userebbe entrambe le varianti indistintamente. Questo esempio rappresenta un caso particolare, lo stesso di *Aufnahm[s]prüfung* nella frase (3b) dell'esercizio precedente. Il sostantivo composto *Gepäck[s]aufgabe* viene formato attraverso l'aggiunta del morfema *-s*. Questa sua variazione interna strutturale di tipo morfologico-grammaticale riduce la considerazione del suo *status* linguistico che viene legato al non standard e determina una scelta maggiore del corrispettivo svizzero e federale *Gepäckaufgabe* come più adatto ad un contesto formale in Austria. Questo avviene probabilmente perché l'aggiunta del morfema *-s* tipico del tedesco austriaco potrebbe essere considerato o come forma dialettale o come errore da chi non conosce questa varietà di tedesco.

Conclusioni

In questo contributo si è descritta la varietà del tedesco austriaco secondo il modello pluricentrico moderato formulato negli studi di linguistica tedesca. Questa varietà in Austria viene considerata standard per definizione, in quanto è lingua del relativo *Vollzentrum* tedescofono e sviluppa, di conseguenza, caratteristiche linguistiche

proprie. L'accezione classica di standard, intesa come "unificazione sovregionale", non può essere pienamente applicata al tedesco austriaco a causa della presenza di variazioni regionali interne, accanto a quella nazionale.

L'analisi linguistica condotta si è incentrata sullo studio di austriacismi e alcuni fenomeni linguistici specifici dell'idioma orale austriaco che, a causa di una complessa situazione linguistica all'interno del Paese data dall'esistenza del *continuum* dialetto, lingua colloquiale e lingua standard, penetrano nel contesto scritto formale, focus di studio del presente elaborato. La metodologia di ricerca fa riferimento a un test linguistico, somministrato a studenti universitari austriaci, utile a indagare il duplice obiettivo di questa analisi: da una parte, la comprensione rispetto alla percezione che essi hanno della propria varietà, dall'altra, lo studio delle peculiarità linguistiche austriache che gli intervistati utilizzano nel contesto standard scritto.

A livello generale lo studio effettuato nella lingua scritta standard in Austria attesta un uso linguistico talvolta diversificato e tipicamente austriaco che si discosta dallo *Standardhochdeutsch*. Rispetto a ciò è di primaria importanza affermare che a causa del numero esiguo dei partecipanti e della limitazione geografica dell'area studiata, il Tirolo, i risultati ottenuti devono essere letti e interpretati esclusivamente come dati generali rispetto ad un'accettazione delle varianti austriache che possono entrare a far parte della norma scritta standard in Austria. Per ottenere previsioni più oggettive sulla vitalità del tedesco austriaco è necessario interrogare un campione più ampio sia per numero sia per regione.

Rispetto alle premesse e in riferimento a una valutazione complessiva delle scelte compiute dai partecipanti al test in relazione alle caratteristiche della varietà di tedesco austriaco, tutte e quattro le frasi analizzate del primo esercizio proposto sono state valutate dalla maggioranza degli studenti coinvolti all'esperimento come standard o vicine ad esso. Questo significa che la percezione generale che gli studenti madrelingua hanno della propria varietà ruota tendenzialmente attorno al concetto di "standard" e non si distacca troppo da esso. Un'altra considerazione riguarda i dati percentuali e grafici che risultano disomogenei. Ciò definisce la percezione degli intervistati come non sempre uniforme: per ogni quesito si osserva almeno uno studente che classifica ogni frase proposta come standard e almeno un altro che la considera come dialettale o lontana dallo standard. La loro percezione opposta giustifica l'incertezza nella valutazione dello *status* linguistico del tedesco austriaco.

In relazione all'uso di elementi tipici del *Vollzentrum* austriaco nel contesto standard scritto, sono stati analizzati sia un gruppo di austriacismi, elementi lessicali tipici di questo centro linguistico, sia le peculiarità grammaticali più salenti di questa varietà linguistica. Rispetto ai primi, i risultati ottenuti attestano un uso di questi nel contesto scritto formale in Austria, come nelle frasi (1), (3) e (4) del secondo esercizio. A tal proposito è necessario fare una precisazione: le varianti tipicamente austriache che vengono scelte sono quelle puramente lessicali come *Marille* o *Fasching*. Inoltre, è di primaria importanza sottolineare che la variante regionale *Fasnacht* viene utilizzata, seppur da un numero minore di studenti, per completare la frase. Questo dato è fondamentale perché dimostra la connessione tra tedesco austriaco e variazione regionale nel contesto scritto standard in Austria. Al contrario, le varianti che non vengono utilizzate sono di tipo lessicale con variazione morfologica-grammaticale interna strutturale, come il caso di sostantivi composti che utilizzano specifici morfemi austriaci compositivi come nel caso di *Gepäcksaufgabe* o *Aufnahmsprüfung*. La stessa analisi effettuata in riferimento a caratteristiche grammaticali tipiche di questa varietà di tedesco in Austria ha dato risultati interessanti. Le valutazioni di queste come vicine o lontane dallo standard, spesso non ne influenza il loro uso nella lingua scritta formale. Dai risultati si può affermare che gli studenti austriaci utilizzano nello scritto standard elementi linguistici tipici della propria varietà, anche se essi non vengono considerati come pienamente parte dello standard. A livello generale, un primo elemento considerato come vicino alla norma è la variazione grammaticale strettamente legata a elementi lessicali puri come l'utilizzo di un genere specificatamente austriaco di un sostantivo, che si differenzia dalla norma standard come il caso di *das Prospekt*. Allo stesso modo, anche la costruzione di forme verbali secondo canoni propriamente austriaci risulta essere ampiamente accettata a livello scritto nonostante la sua non piena aderenza alla definizione di standard. I due casi analizzati sono, da una parte, la combinazione dello stesso prefisso con una radice verbale diversa in tedesco austriaco e in tedesco standard come *abschließen* vs. *absperren*; dall'altra, la formazione di un verbo attraverso la composizione della radice verbale con un prefisso diverso in Austria rispetto allo *Standardhochdeutsch* come in *aufliegen* vs. *ausliegen*. Oltre a ciò, esistono casi nei quali, strutture del tedesco austriaco, considerate come più lontane dallo standard vengono comunque utilizzate nello scritto formale. Un esempio è il cambiamento sintattico tipicamente austriaco relativo alla posizione dei sintagmi verbali complessi in frasi subordinate secondo la sequenza austriaca infinito, finito e modale come in *gewähren hätten dürfen* che è stata scelta nella frase (6) del secondo esercizio come alternativa per il completamento della proposizione da più della maggioranza degli studenti.

Infine, i risultati di questa analisi sono positivi anche per il futuro del tedesco austriaco connesso al suo graduale abbandono da parte della fascia più giovane della popolazione austriaca, visto che, sulla base dei dati

raccolti, esso non sarebbe a rischio di estinzione. Le influenze provenienti dalla Germania non causano una sostituzione delle forme tipicamente austriache con quelle federali, ma nella maggior parte dei casi portano semplicemente a una coesistenza di entrambe.

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“Das Momentane wird momentan gegeben” Il profilo semantico del connettivo *nun* nello *Zeitroman* di Hans Fallada *Kleiner Mann – was nun?*

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Abstract

The article deals with the semantics of the German connective *nun* on the basis of its instances in the novel *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* (1932) by Hans Fallada. In both grammar and lexicography, the connective *nun* is typically categorized either as time adverb or as discourse particle. The aim of the analysis is to refine and potentially enrich the spectrum of meanings and functions that *nun* can take on, drawing on its high frequency in the novel as well as the wide variety of linguistic uses inherent in the literary text. Some insights are also given into the possible role of *nun* in expressing the narrative perspective and fostering the readers' identification with the characters.

Keywords: Deixis, Hans Fallada, Literary Language, *Nun*, Semantics of Connectives

Introduzione

Il connettivo¹ tedesco *nun* è un'antica parola di origine indoeuropea con significato primariamente temporale che ha ampliato nel corso del tempo il suo profilo semantico e funzionale fino all'uso pragmatico di particella discorsiva.

Dal punto di vista etimologico, *nun* deriva dalla parola *nu*, che risale probabilmente alla radice pronominale germanica *na*, e presenta forme analoghe in altre lingue indoeuropee, dal sanscrito *nu*, *nū* e *nūnam*, al greco antico *vū*, *vūv*, al latino *nun-c* (Grimm e Grimm 1889, 983). La parola *nun* è attestata dal XIV secolo e si è affermata con la lingua letteraria nel XVII secolo; un suo ampliamento semantico a partire dal valore temporale è descritto già in testi dell'alto tedesco antico e medio, in cui *nun* compare come possibile segnale della progressione temporale del discorso e come marcatore di una relazione di tipo causale (*ibidem*).

¹ I connettivi (ted. *Konnektoren*, *Junktoren*, *Satzverknüpfen*) costituiscono un'ampia categoria funzionale di mezzi espressivi che servono a mettere in relazione diverse unità linguistiche a livello sia sintattico sia semantico, svolgendo un ruolo fondamentale sul piano testuale quali elementi promotori di coerenza e segnali utili all'interpretazione delle espressioni linguistiche (cfr. “Konnektoren” in *Systematische Grammatik Grammis*, Grammatisches Informationssystem grammis, <<https://grammis.ids-mannheim.de/systematische-grammatik/1182>>, 04/2024).

Nonostante l'elevata frequenza d'uso che *nun* presenta ancora oggi nella lingua comune,² questa *unscheinbare*[s] *Wörtchen* (Rehbock 2009, 239) è stata raramente oggetto d'indagine nell'ambito della ricerca linguistica. Nelle odierne descrizioni grammaticali *nun* viene tipicamente menzionato come avverbio temporale e come particella, senza che sia riportata una chiara definizione delle specifiche funzioni assunte e dei diversi contesti d'uso (cfr. Wöllstein e Duden 2016; Eisenberg 2020). Nel campo della ricerca sui connettivi, *nun* è menzionato nel primo dei due volumi dello *Handbuch der deutschen Konnektoren* entro la categoria dei *nicht positionsbeschränkte Adverbkonnektoren* (Pasch et al. 2003, 518, 550 e 719), ossia tra i connettivi avverbiali sintatticamente integrati che possono occupare diversi tipi di posizione nella frase senza particolari restrizioni, mentre nel secondo volume è inserito nella sottoclasse degli *Zeitpunktspezifizierende Temporalkonnektoren* (Breindl, Volodina e Waßner 2014, 297s.). L'analisi linguistico-semantiche condotta da Ballestracci e Ravetto (2015) sull'uso dei connettivi *also*, *dann* e *nun* nel romanzo *Der Prozess* di Franz Kafka ha inoltre descritto l'impiego di *nun* in diverse accezioni temporali, nonché sue attestazioni con valore epistemico conclusivo o pragmatico di connessione tra atti illocutivi, evidenziando uno spettro di usi più ampio e articolato rispetto ad altri generi testuali e a alle descrizioni presenti nei codici grammaticali.

Nel presente lavoro lo studio degli usi di *nun* è svolto a partire da un testo letterario, il romanzo *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* (1932) dell'autore tedesco Hans Fallada. Pubblicato inizialmente a puntate sul quotidiano berlinese *Vossische Zeitung* e uscito poi in volume per la casa editrice Rowohlt, questo *Zeitroman* offre un vivido spaccato della crisi economica e sociale che attraversa la Repubblica di Weimar negli anni immediatamente precedenti l'avvento del nazismo. Il protagonista, il *kleiner Mann* Johannes Pinneberg, è un giovane impiegato di provincia che, fresco di nozze, si trasferisce a Berlino nella speranza di garantire maggiore stabilità alla sua famiglia; nella metropoli si trova invece a subire una crescente incertezza materiale, fino alla disoccupazione e al conseguente declassamento sociale. Al suo fianco resta la consorte Emma, la quale – a dispetto del tenero soprannome “Lämmchen” – dimostra la capacità di far fronte ai continui rovesci della sorte: è in lei, e nel figlio nato nel frattempo, che Pinneberg trova sostegno e riparo, in quella sfera degli affetti familiari che sembra rimanere l'unica vera ragione per cui continuare a vivere. In virtù della sua capacità di cogliere pienamente lo spirito del tempo (Liersch 1993, 241), l'opera riscuote subito un enorme successo in Germania ed è tradotta in numerose lingue³, inserendosi al centro del dibattito culturale dell'epoca (Fritsch 1995).

Dal punto di vista stilistico il romanzo presenta una scrittura asciutta, precisa e fattuale – *neusachlich* –, con una modalità espressiva che ricorda le emergenti tecniche fotografiche e cinematografiche (Prümm 1995, 258) e tende ad annullare nel lettore la percezione della finzionalità del testo narrativo: “Es ist eigentlich kein Stil, sondern ein beständiger Wechsel von Mitteln: Das Momentane wird momentan gegeben, mit einer aufmerksamen Reaktion in jedem Moment, bei fast völliger Distanzlosigkeit, dabei steht Fallada jede Fähigkeit und Fertigkeit augenblicklich zur Verfügung” (Suhkamp 1934, 751).

La forma interrogativa *was nun?* che compare nel titolo rappresenta un primo, emblematico esempio del duplice contatto che l'autore cerca di stabilire con il *kleiner Mann* della finzione narrativa e con il pubblico dei lettori che si identificano nella sua condizione di abbattimento e frustrazione. Da una parte, *nun* fornisce un'indicazione di tempo puntuale (*Zeitpunkt*, Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 587) riferita al presente dell'enunciazione; dall'altra, può essere letto nell'accezione descritta in alcuni dizionari (cfr. “nun Adverb” in *Duden online*) di *unter diesen Umständen*, secondo cui l'avverbio temporale si riferisce al presente sullo sfondo di circostanze o eventi passati che hanno una ripercussione sulla situazione attuale: sulla base di tale significato, *nun* sembra alludere allo smarrimento e al senso di impotenza provati da ciascun ‘uomo qualunque’ travolto dalle sconfitte quotidiane, e lascia emergere l'amara constatazione di non potersi affrancare da un destino di subalternità.

Ai fini dell'analisi, il romanzo è stato selezionato per la frequenza elevata del connettivo (409 attestazioni su 106.931 parole totali, titoli compresi, pari allo 0,38% delle parole totali del testo), 3,5 volte superiore a quella riscontrata in un corpus costituito da 154 testi di letteratura di consumo del XX e XXI secolo (10.081 occorrenze su 9.460.987 parole, pari a una frequenza dello 0,11%) estratto dal corpus della lingua tedesca scritta *Deutsches Referenzkorpus – DeReKo*.⁴ È poi da notare come *nun* sia impiegato nel romanzo di Fallada con una frequenza doppia rispetto all'avverbio temporale *jetzt* (293 attestazioni, pari allo 0,17%), a suggerire una gamma più ampia dei suoi usi rispetto all'originario significato temporale. La scelta di condurre l'analisi a partire da

² Cfr. “nun” nel sistema di informazione lessicale DWDS (*Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. <<https://www.dwds.de/wb/nun>>, 11/2024).

³ *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* esce in Italia nel marzo 1933 con il titolo *E adesso, pover'uomo?* nella traduzione di Bruno Revel per Mondadori e ottiene un notevole successo, con cinque edizioni e quasi ventimila copie in quattro anni (Decleva 1993, 189s). Nel 2008 il romanzo è riproposto dall'editore Sellerio in una nuova traduzione a cura di Mario Rubino.

⁴ Cfr. <<https://www.ids-mannheim.de/digspra/kl/projekte/korpora/>> (11/2024).

un testo letterario si basa sulla constatazione, già ampiamente riportata nella letteratura scientifica di ambito germanistico (cfr. Ballestracci e Ravetto 2015; Foschi Albert 2015; Ballestracci 2016, 2019), che la lingua letteraria, per l'elevata creatività e la grande potenzialità espressiva che la contraddistinguono, costituisce un campo d'indagine privilegiato della ricerca linguistica. Il testo narrativo contiene tipicamente sezioni descrittive e parti dialogiche, ognuna delle quali richiede all'autore di ricorrere a modalità comunicative diverse e, con ciò, a una grande varietà di usi linguistici. A questo proposito, il romanzo *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* è contraddistinto da un'elevata componente dialogica, pari a circa due terzi del testo (Rothenbühler 2015, 64), e realizza un esempio della cosiddetta *fingierte Mündlichkeit* (Koch e Oesterreicher 2011, 31), definita dalla critica come una forma di oralità fittizia e "literarisch stilisiert" (*ibidem*) che consiste nella riproduzione della parola parlata attraverso il *medium* scritto: a questa scelta narrativa possono quindi corrispondere non solo una commistione di mezzi linguistici tipici della lingua scritta e parlata, ma anche diverse modalità d'impiego di una stessa parola, specialmente nel caso di elementi polifunzionali come i connettivi.

Il lavoro consta di altri tre paragrafi. Dopo l'illustrazione del modello semantico di riferimento (par. 1), nel paragrafo 2 è proposta l'analisi linguistica di una selezione di brani. Chiudono il lavoro alcune riflessioni riguardo alla poliedricità semantica e funzionale di *nun* e alla sua possibile valenza stilistica nel testo di Fallada.

1. Modello semantico

Per lo studio del profilo semantico di *nun* ci si avvale di un modello teorico elaborato in ambito germanistico nel campo della ricerca sui connettivi (Blühdorn 2008, 2010, 2012; Blühdorn e Lohnstein 2012) e ampiamente recepito anche dalla linguistica tedesca italiana (cfr. Ravetto e Ballestracci 2013; Ballestracci e Ravetto 2015; Ballestracci 2019). Secondo tale modello, la funzione semantica comune a tutti i connettivi consiste nel descrivere relazioni che occupano tipicamente due posizioni (*zweistellige Relationen*, Blühdorn 2012), creando un nesso tra strutture linguistiche di diversa tipologia sintattica e di varia estensione (da sintagmi nominali a frasi a blocchi di testo più ampi) dette relati o parti di nesso. Per descrivere il tipo di relazione, il modello ricorre alla combinazione di tre tratti semantici distintivi (\pm asimmetrico, \pm dinamico, \pm certo), la cui molteplice combinazione dà luogo a quattro classi di relazioni, ordinate secondo una crescente complessità cognitiva: relazioni di similitudine (*Ähnlichkeitsrelationen*); relazioni di contestualizzazione (*Situierungsrelationen*); relazioni condizionali (*Bedingungsrelationen*); relazioni causali (*Verursachungsrelationen*), come illustrato in Tabella 1:

	[\pm simmetrico]	[\pm dinamico]	[\pm certo]
Relazioni causali	+	+	+
Relazioni condizionali	+	+	–
Relazioni di contestualizzazione	+	–	–
Relazioni di similitudine	–	–	–

Tab. 1 – Relazioni e tratti semantici distintivi secondo il modello di Blühdorn (modificato da Ballestracci 2019, 66)

Oltre a suddividere le relazioni semantiche secondo i tre tratti distintivi descritti sopra, il modello di riferimento le distingue anche in base al tipo di relati e individua quattro classi di oggetti semantici; ognuna di queste è espressa mediante determinate strutture linguistiche e definisce a sua volta un corrispondente dominio concettuale:

- (i) gli oggetti semantici costituiti da entità fisiche (cose o persone), espressi tipicamente da sintagmi nominali, appartengono al dominio spaziale (*Raumdomäne*) e sono valutabili in base al loro essere esistenti o non esistenti nello spazio (es.: [il libro] *su*[l tavolo]);

- (ii) gli oggetti semantici costituiti da stati, eventi o circostanze, espressi da frasi o forme verbali, appartengono al dominio temporale (*Zeitdomäne*) e possono essere interpretati sulla base del valore di effettività, ossia del loro verificarsi o non verificarsi (es.: *Quando* [uscii], [inizio a piovere]);
- (iii) gli oggetti semantici costituiti da oggetti della conoscenza e della volontà si configurano rispettivamente come proposizioni legate da relazioni logiche (iiia) o pragmatiche (iiib): queste appartengono al dominio epistemico (*epistemische Domäne*) o a quello deontico (*deontische Domäne*) e sono valutabili in relazione al loro valore di verità (veri o non veri) (es.: *Dato che* [non lo vedevo arrivare], [iniziai a preoccuparmi]) o di auspicabilità (desiderabili o non desiderabili) (es.: [Che cosa faresti], *se* [tu vincessi alla lotteria?]);
- (iv) gli oggetti semantici del discorso, ossia espressioni con elevata valenza pragmatica, corrispondono agli atti illocutivi e appartengono al dominio illocutivo (*Sprechaktedomäne*). Essi hanno valore in quanto espressi o non espressi in un contesto interattivo (es.: A: [Vorrei proprio raccontarti tutto.] B: *Allora*, [che aspetti?]).

Riassumendo, la Tabella 2 mostra la distribuzione e la complessità crescente delle relazioni sopra descritte in riferimento ai quattro domini semantici e ai relativi oggetti semantici:

	Relazioni di similitudine	Relazioni di contestualizzazione	Relazioni condizionali	Relazioni causali
(iv) Dominio illocutivo (atti illocutivi)	Similitudine illocutiva	Localizzazione illocutiva	Contestualizzazione illocutiva	Causa illocutiva
(iiib) Dominio deontico (proposizioni)	Similitudine deontica	Localizzazione deontica	Contestualizzazione deontica	Causa deontica
(iiia) Dominio epistemico (proposizioni)	Similitudine epistemica	Localizzazione epistemica	Contestualizzazione epistemica	Causa epistemica
(ii) Dominio temporale (stati o eventi)	Similitudine temporale	Localizzazione temporale	Contestualizzazione temporale	Causa temporale
(i) Dominio spaziale (entità fisiche)	Similitudine spaziale	Localizzazione spaziale	Contestualizzazione spaziale	Causa spaziale

Tab. 2 – Relazioni, domini e oggetti semantici (modificato da Ravetto e Ballestracci 2015, 127)

La freccia orizzontale e la freccia verticale in Tabella 2 rimandano a due aspetti fondamentali nella definizione dei connettivi: in primo luogo indicano il grado di complessità crescente che caratterizza le relazioni e gli oggetti semantici; in secondo luogo segnalano che i connettivi possono sviluppare cambiamenti nel loro profilo semantico e divenire più complessi sia con il passare del tempo (processi diacronici) sia attraverso una reinterpretazione del significato a livello sincronico (Ballestracci e Ravetto 2015, 127).

2. Analisi semantica del connettivo *nun* nel romanzo *Kleiner Mann – was nun?*

Il romanzo *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* è stato reperito in formato digitale sul portale Projekt Gutenberg-DE e convertito in documento Word per consentire l'esecuzione delle ricerche linguistiche. Nel romanzo *nun* compare 407 volte nel corpo del testo e due volte in porzioni paratestuali, rispettivamente nel titolo dell'opera e in quello

di un capitolo dello *Zweiter Teil*. Data l'elevata frequenza con cui la parola ricorre nel testo, l'analisi empirica è stata condotta sulla metà delle occorrenze totali, ossia su 205 attestazioni, ripartite in 16 casi nel *Vorspiel*, 72 nello *Erster Teil*, 72 nello *Zweiter Teil* e 45 nel *Nachspiel*; in particolare, si sono analizzati tutti i casi presenti nel *Vorspiel* e nel *Nachspiel*, mentre le restanti attestazioni sono state raccolte in successione e in equal numero a partire dalla prima pagina di ciascuna delle più corpose sezioni centrali.

Nun compare nel corpus analizzato con una frequenza leggermente maggiore nelle sequenze dialogiche (108 casi, 52,68%) rispetto a quelle narrative (97 casi, 47,32%), in linea con l'elevata componente di discorso diretto che caratterizza l'opera. Lo studio della distribuzione del connettivo nelle diverse tipologie sintattiche frasali ha rilevato: 144 attestazioni in frasi dichiarative (*Aussagesätze*), 22 in esortative (*Aufforderungssätze*), 17 in interrogative (*Fragesätze*) e 6 in esclamative (*Ausrufesätze*); a tale ripartizione si aggiungono 16 occorrenze in frasi prive di predicato verbale ovvero in espressioni ellittiche (Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 905s.). L'analisi dei valori semantici del connettivo, eseguita secondo il modello sopra descritto, consente innanzitutto di distinguere un primo gruppo numericamente più consistente di 129 attestazioni (62,93%) in cui *nun* assume un solo significato, e un secondo gruppo di 76 casi (37,07%) che consentono due o più interpretazioni semantiche tra quelle temporali, epistemiche, deontiche e illocutive. Tra le occorrenze monosemantiche si contano 95 attestazioni con valore temporale e 34 con valore illocutivo, mentre in nessuno dei casi analizzati il connettivo individua legami monosemanti di natura epistematica o deontica (cfr. tab. 3):

	TEM	EPI	DEO	ILL	polisemantico	TOT (%)
<i>nun</i>	95 (46,34%)	0	0	34 (16,59%)	76 (37,07%)	205 (100%)

Tab. 3 – Relazioni semantiche espresse da *nun* (TEM = temporale; EPI = epistematico; DEO = deontico; ILL = illocutivo)

Tra le attestazioni con polivalenza semantica, le diverse letture presentano varie combinazioni secondo la distribuzione riportata in tabella 4:

	TEM/ EPI	TEM/ DEO	TEM/ ILL	E P I / ILL	DEO / ILL	TEM / E P I / DEO	TEM / E P I / ILL	TEM / DEO / ILL	E P I / DEO / ILL	TEM / E P I / DEO / ILL	TOT
<i>nun</i>	11	1	17	13	5	1	10	15	1	2	76

Tab. 4 – Relazioni polisemantiche espresse da *nun*

Tabella 5 offre una panoramica della distribuzione del connettivo tra le quattro letture semantiche, ripartite tra casi monosemanti, polisemanti e loro somma (*nun tot*):

	TEM	EPI	DEO	ILL	TOT
<i>nun mono</i>	95	0	0	34	129
	73,64%	0,00%	0,00%	26,36%	100,00%
	62,50%	0,00%	0,00%	33,05%	41,35%
<i>nun poli</i>	57	38	25	63	183
	31,15%	20,77%	13,66%	34,43%	100,00%
	37,50%	100,00%	100,00%	64,95%	58,65%

	152	38	25	97	312
<i>nun</i> tot	48,72%	12,18%	8,01%	31,09%	100,00%
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Tab. 5 – Frequenza delle singole letture temporali, epistemiche, deontiche e illocutive all’interno dei casi monosemantici, di quelli polisemantici e della loro somma

L’analisi condotta sulle 312 letture semantiche totali ascrivibili a *nun* mette in evidenza la generale prevalenza del valore temporale, che interessa quasi la metà (48,72%) della somma delle letture mono- e polisemantiche; riferendosi invece al totale delle 205 attestazioni prese in esame, i casi con valore temporale ammontano a circa tre quarti (74,14%). *Nun* realizza un legame illocutivo in quasi un terzo (31,09%) del totale delle letture semantiche; a differenza di quanto osservato per la valenza temporale, la maggior parte delle letture illocutive si riscontra in attestazioni con polivalenza semantica (63 casi) e solo in misura minore (34 casi) in quelle monosemantiche. Come già accennato, le interpretazioni epistemiche e illocutive sono descritte sempre in associazione con altre letture e interessano rispettivamente la metà e un terzo dei 76 casi polisemantici, pari al 12,18% e 8,01% del totale delle letture semantiche.

Nell’insieme dei 95 casi (67 in parti narrative e 28 in sequenze dialogiche) in cui il connettivo veicola un significato monosemantico temporale (cfr. tab. 3), *nun* è impiegato nella maggior parte dei casi (84 attestazioni) come avverbio temporale con valore assimilabile all’avverbio *jetzt* (“ora”, “adesso”), mentre in 10 casi il connettivo è usato in accezione temporale con sfumature semantiche differenti, e in un solo caso fa parte del sintagma preposizionale complesso *von nun an*. In veste di avverbio temporale, il connettivo *nun* fornisce tipicamente un’indicazione puntuale di tempo (*Zeitpunkt*, Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 587) e formalizza la relazione tra due stati o eventi (*Sachverhalte*) esprimendone sovrapposizione parziale o sequenzialità (Ballestracci e Ravetto 2015, 139). Nel testo preso in esame tale funzione offre agli eventi una collocazione e un ancoraggio entro la dimensione temporale della narrazione intesa come atto comunicativo: facendo riferimento al momento in cui l’enunciato è pronunciato/narrato, tale espressione codifica di conseguenza una relazione tra lingua e contesto riconducibile al fenomeno della deissi (dal greco *δείκνυμι*, ‘indicare’), secondo cui “la comprensione del significato di alcune espressioni o costruzioni linguistiche dipende dal contesto” (Domaneschi 2016, 106; cfr. anche Bazzanella 2008, 125s.). In particolare, *nun* come avverbio deittico temporale può individuare un momento presente, un futuro imminente o un passato recente rispetto a quello dell’enunciazione/narrazione (Paul 1992, 622), oppure può codificare l’inclusione del tempo dell’enunciazione nel tempo indicato dal connettivo stesso (Salvi e Vanelli 2004, 326). In (1) un esempio in cui *nun* esprime una relazione di contemporaneità rispetto alla realtà narrata:

- (1) Der Zug, der um 14 Uhr 10 an diesem August-Sonnabend von Platz nach Ducherow fährt, befördert in einem Nichtraucherabteil dritter Klasse Herrn und Frau Pinneberg, [...]. Der Zug verläßt eilig die große Stadt Platz, am Bahnhof war keiner, die letzten Vorstadthäuser bleiben zurück, *nun* kommen die Felder. Eine Weile noch geht es an dem Ufer der glitzernden Strela entlang, und *nun* Wald, Birken an der Bahn entlang. (KM, 35)⁵

La prima attestazione di *nun* occupa il *Vorfeld*⁶ dell’ultima di quattro proposizioni coordinate per asindeto, la seconda è collocata oltre la parentesi verbale destra (*entlang*) entro una forma di espansione introdotta dalla congiunzione *und* (*konjunktionale Fortsetzung*, cfr. Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 1227), ossia in un’espressione elittica che dà luogo a un’aggiunta di informazione o *Nachtrag* (Fiehler 2016, 128). La relazione temporale qui

⁵ Per le citazioni tratte dal romanzo viene utilizzata la sigla KM (cfr. Fallada 2018).

⁶ Il modello descrittivo detto *Topologisches Modell* suddivide la frase tedesca in campi sintattici (*Felder*) individuati dalla discontinuità del complesso verbale e caratterizzati da determinate regole sintattiche. In una frase principale, la posizione a sinistra della parte finita del verbo è detta *Vorfeld* e può essere occupata da un unico costituente; quella compresa tra le parti finita e non finita del verbo è detta *Mittelfeld* e può contenere da zero a un numero potenzialmente infinito di costituenti; a destra della parte non finita del verbo si trova il *Nachfeld*, occupato tipicamente da secondarie. Per una trattazione dettagliata del modello topologico cfr. Tomaselli 2003 o Wöllstein 2014.

codificata dal connettivo è solo in apparenza semplice e consente una lettura su due diversi livelli: da una parte, il connettivo demarca sul piano temporale il cambiamento del paesaggio da cittadino a campestre a fronte del movimento del treno, e il suo uso contribuisce a trasmettere la sensazione dello scorrere del panorama fuori dal finestrino nell'ambito di una sequenza descrittiva; dall'altra, le due attestazioni di *nun* inseriscono la frase in un contesto di prossimità con il punto di vista del parlante, ossia svolgono una funzione temporale deittica "prossimale" (*proximal deixis*), secondo la definizione proposta da Deborah Schiffrin (1988, 244s.) per l'avverbio inglese *now*, corrispondente etimologico del tedesco *nun* (cfr. "nun" in *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*). L'impiego di *nun* consente infatti al narratore di ridurre la distanza dagli eventi narrati e di inserirsi, con ciò, nel flusso del racconto per descrivere da una prospettiva molto vicina a quella dei personaggi ciò che cade sotto il loro sguardo. L'impiego di questa forma di deissi prossimale nell'ambito di una situazione narrativa autoriale (Stanzel 1979) determina un punto di vista molto vicino a quello del personaggio, ma non coincidente con esso. In questo senso, la resa di tale prospettiva rimanda all'espressione *vision par derrière* (lett. "visione dalle spalle" o "retrovisione"), formulata da Jean Pouillon in *Tempo e romanzo* (1946) e recentemente ripresa da Talamo che, rifacendosi al lessico cinematografico, la accosta alla ripresa *in semisoggettiva*, ossia a quell'inquadratura "che nel cinema è usata principalmente nelle scene di campo-controcampo in cui la macchina da presa è posta in un punto dietro il personaggio in modo da vedere sia *lui*, di spalle, *par derrière*, sia ciò che gli sta davanti" (Talamo 2018, 168).

Similmente a (1), anche nel prossimo passo testuale le attestazioni di *nun* svolgono una funzione deittica prossimale, lasciando tuttavia aperta l'interpretazione sul punto di vista adottato nella narrazione:

- (2) Pinneberg macht drei Schritte gegen die Tür – was ist das? Was kann da sein? Man hat schon gehört, daß solche Ärzte schreckliche Wüstlinge sind ... Aber *nun* spricht Doktor Sesam wieder, nichts zu verstehen, und *nun* klappert wieder das Instrument. Und dann lange Stille. (KM, 12)

Da un lato è possibile leggere le due frasi contenenti *nun* come un altro esempio della *vision par derrière*; dall'altro, non si può escludere l'interpretazione del passo come formulazione diretta del punto di vista del personaggio nell'ambito di una situazione narrativa non più autoriale, ma personale, riconducibile a una *vision avec* (lett. "visione con") secondo il citato modello di Pouillon. In entrambi i casi il valore deittico prossimale di *nun* rende più vivida e immediata la tensione crescente provata dal personaggio, cui si contrappone il passaggio al prolungato silenzio descritto nella frase seguente ("Und dann lange Stille"), nella quale l'avverbio deittico distale *dann* segna il ritorno a una chiara prospettiva autoriale. In ultima analisi, l'uso di *nun* consente di introdurre un sottile, ma comunque percettibile, scarto tra punti di vista esterno e interno alla narrazione, che sembrano portati qui a confondersi – o a sovrapporsi –, rimarcando l'estrema prossimità tra narratore e personaggi. Tale uso linguistico ricorre nell'intero romanzo e conferisce alla prosa un tratto stilisticamente marcato e allo stesso tempo alla narrazione una prospettiva in cui si palesa lo sguardo del narratore, aspetto su cui si è già concentrata la critica letteraria:

Von den ersten Zeilen an macht Fallada dem Leser klar, daß er einen Abstand zu seinen Akteuren nicht zuläßt. Zwar spricht ein auktorialer Erzähler, aber er ist sofort neben den Figuren [...]. Wahrnehmung der Figuren und Erzählung fallen früh zusammen, Innen und Außen sind eins. So entsteht eine absolute Parteilichkeit mit den Protagonisten als Identität des Blicks. (Prümm 1995, 259)

Ancora nell'ambito delle attestazioni del connettivo con valore semantico temporale, l'analisi mette in evidenza alcuni casi in cui il valore deittico temporale di *nun* si esplica non tanto situando gli eventi narrati nel tempo, quanto piuttosto segnalando la progressione del discorso narrativo: questo tipo di funzione indicale riferita al testo, secondo cui è il testo stesso a farsi centro deittico di un evento comunicativo, dà luogo a forme di deissi del discorso (o deissi testuale, Salvi e Vanelli 2004, 329; Domaneschi 2014, 115):

- (3) Die Spezialität der Firma Himmlisch waren Schlafzimmer, die Firma schien Wert auf diesen Umstand zu legen, auf ihrem Firmenschild nannte sie sich: »Betten-Himmlisch. Spezialität moderne Schlafzimmer.« In deren Schaufenster stand *nun* schon seit Wochen ein Schlafzimmer, gar nicht so teuer, siebenhundertfünf- undneunzig einschließlich Auflegematratten und echtem Marmor. [...] Dies also ist *nun* das Schaufenster mit dem Schlafzimmer und hier an der Seite steht die Frisiertoilette. (KM, 167)

In (3), la prima attestazione del connettivo marca la prosecuzione del discorso, mentre la seconda funge da segnale di ripresa del filone narrativo principale dopo una divagazione, uso quest'ultimo che accosta *nun* al ruolo di elemento "retrattivo", "termine utilizzato nell'analisi conversazionale per indicare un connettivo con funzione

di ripresa del discorso, sia esso dialogico o monologico, a seguito di un'interruzione" (Ballestracci e Ravetto 2015, 133; cfr. anche Auer 2000). Ambedue le attestazioni di *nun* non codificano dunque un legame temporale sul piano dei contenuti e della realtà narrata, bensì fungono da elementi di organizzazione e collegamento tra le diverse parti del discorso, traslando il loro significato temporale sul piano metatestuale al fine di segnalare con maggiore chiarezza al lettore la successione degli eventi di cui si compone il racconto.

- (4) »Fünf Liter – und ein halbes Pfund Erbsen. Ich glaube, Lämmchen«, sagt er geheimnisvoll, »es liegt an dem Wasser. Das Wasser ist zu dünn.« [...] Er probiert noch mal. »Nee, entschuldige, Lämmchen, es ist wirklich nur heißes Wasser.« »Ach, mein armer Junge, hast du schrecklichen Hunger? Was mache ich *nun*? Soll ich ganz schnell ein paar Eier raufholen und uns Bratkartoffeln und Spiegeleier machen?« (KM, 83)

Premesso che risulta possibile attribuire all'occorrenza di *nun* in (4) anche il significato di "ora"/ "adesso", in questo brano il suo uso non sembra esaurirsi all'espressione deittica di tempo, ma rimandare piuttosto a uno sfondo di eventi già accaduti, le cui conseguenze si ripercuotono sul momento presente: è questo il caso in cui *nun*, usato ancora in veste avverbiale, assume il senso di *unter diesen Umständen* ("in queste circostanze", "per come stanno le cose"), che innesta sul significato temporale una sfumatura causale (Paul 1992, 623), e suggerisce per quest'uso una possibile tangenza con le relazioni logico-semantiche epistemiche, in particolare di tipo conclusivo.

Come già menzionato, in 34 delle 129 occorrenze monosemantiche *nun* esprime un legame illocutivo (30 in sezioni dialogiche e 4 in parti narrative). Secondo il modello semantico di riferimento, le relazioni di tipo illocutivo hanno per oggetto gli atti che un parlante esercita nei confronti del suo interlocutore in un contesto interattivo. Una parte dei connettivi che realizzano relazioni semantiche nell'ambito del dominio illocutivo sono ascrivibili all'eterogenea categoria delle particelle discorsive (*Gesprächspartikeln*, Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 606s., 1232), dei marcatori del discorso (*Diskursmarker*, Blühdorn, Deppermann, Helmer e Spranz-Fogasy, 2017) o dei segnali discorsivi (Renzi, Salvi e Cardinaletti 2001, vol. 3, 225s.), secondo alcune delle numerose "etichette" (Bazzanella 2001, 43) adottate nell'ambito della ricerca incentrata su questi elementi linguistici: si tratta di una classe "trasversale rispetto alle altre classi grammaticali" (42), non morfologica o lessicale ma funzionale, la cui caratteristica cruciale è la multifunzionalità connessa strettamente con le diverse realizzazioni dipendenti dal contesto linguistico, extralinguistico e interazionale in cui tali elementi sono di volta in volta inseriti (55). Nei due esempi testuali che seguono, tratti da scambi dialogici, l'uso di *nun* si può ricondurre a quello di *Gesprächspartikel*:

- (5) »Sehr, Heilbutt, ganz mächtig beschleunigt hat es!« »Nein, aber das Entscheidende war, daß Sie nie gekränkt waren. Wir haben Kollegen«, sagt Heilbutt und läßt seine dunklen Augen durch den Raum schweifen, bis sie den Gesuchten gefunden haben, »... die sind immer gleich beleidigt. [...] Sie sind nicht so, Pinneberg ...« »*Nun*, meine Herren«, sagt der eifrige Substitut, Herr Jänecke. Ein kleines Palaver? Schon fleißig verkauft?« (KM, 163-64)
- (6) »Aber schön ist dies doch«, sagt Pinneberg bewundernd. »Ich finde es fabelhaft. Alle diese Bücher ...«. »Ja, weißt du, mit den Büchern ...«, fängt Heilbutt an. Aber er überlegt es sich anders. »*Nun*, kommt ihr draußen zurecht?« (KM, 386)

In (5) l'uso di *nun* è collocabile entro la categoria dei segnali discorsivi con funzione interazionale (Bazzanella 2008, 224s.), utilizzati per marcare aspetti o momenti particolari dell'interazione in corso (Sansò 2020, 16). Il connettivo si trova in apertura di un'espressione ellittica interrogativa e funge da *Startsignal* (Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 606), in quanto segnala la presa di turno del parlante: il ricorso a *nun*, associato al vocativo *meine Herren*, serve a interrompere la conversazione in corso tra Pinneberg e Heilbutt e a richiamarli al loro dovere di commessi. Nel passo (6) il connettivo è caratterizzato da disintegrazione sintattica (*syntaktische Desintegration*, Pasch, Brauß, Breindl e Waßner 2003, 74 e 264-266): esso si trova nel *Vorvorfeld*⁷ (campo esteriore sinistro, ossia campo anteriore al *Vorfeld*) di una frase interrogativa, da cui è separato per mezzo della virgola. Dal punto di vista pragmatico, *nun* marca un cambio di argomento da parte del parlante e segnala, con ciò, una relazione incoerente (*inkohärente Verknüpfung*, Ravetto e Ballestracci 2013, 353). Secondo tale uso, il connettivo rientra nel sottogruppo dei segnali discorsivi metatestuali, in particolare tra quelli detti "di gestione del topic" (Sansò 2020, 20s.), volti ad anticipare all'interlocutore le intenzioni del parlante.

⁷ Cfr. nota 6.

- (7) »Ja, weißt du«, sagt er etwas pikiert, »möbliert ist natürlich nie so wie eigen.« »Aber sag selbst, wie findest du das? Gefällt dir das? Möchtest du hier leben? [...]« »Ich finde was Besseres. Verlaß dich drauf. Wann können wir kündigen?« »Am ersten September. Aber ...« »Zu wann?« »Zum dreißigsten September. Aber ...« »Sechs Wochen«, stöhnt sie. »*Nun*, ich werde es überstehen«. (KM, 48)

In (7) il connettivo non svolge una funzione interazionale né metatestuale, bensì è pronunciato dal personaggio per sfumare espressivamente l'enunciato seguente. *Nun* si associa al verbo *stöhnt* per conferire alla frase un senso di accettazione venato di concessione (*Einräumung*, cfr. Paul 1992, 623), presentando un valore riconducibile alla sfera dei sentimenti e delle emozioni che lo avvicina alla categoria lessicale delle particelle espressive (*Ausdruckspartikel*, Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 609), tipica della lingua parlata.⁸

Il passo testuale che segue fa parte di un'ampia sequenza monologica, in forma di discorso indiretto libero, in cui Pinneberg riflette, non senza amarezza, sulla sua condizione di uomo da poco sposato che ha appena perso il lavoro:

- (8) Es ist herrlich, wenn man jemand hat, für den man arbeiten und sorgen kann, *nun* ja, meinethalben auch sorgen und arbeitslos sein. Es ist herrlich, wenn man jemanden hat, der sich von einem trösten läßt. (KM, 115)

Nun si associa alla particella *ja* per dare luogo a un'espressione incidentale in *Nachmachfeld* (campo esteriore destro) posta tra la subordinata relativa di secondo grado "für den man arbeiten und sorgen kann" in *Nachfeld* e la struttura ellittica "meinethalben auch sorgen und arbeitslos sein" e assimilabile a un *Nachtrag*, che riprende con qualche variazione gli elementi lessicali della relativa precedente (*arbeiten - sorgen - sorgen - arbeitslos sein*) per dare luogo alla figura del chiasmo. È inoltre da notare che i due periodi di cui consta (8) presentano la ripetizione della struttura "Es ist herrlich, wenn man" nel medesimo segmento sintattico a inizio di frase secondo l'artificio retorico dell'epanalessi: l'elevato grado di elaborazione stilistica del brano contribuisce all'amplificazione emozionale del discorso, così da accrescerne la tensione comunicativa e favorire l'immedesimazione di chi legge con lo stato d'animo del personaggio. Nell'economia dell'intero periodo, la formula *nun ja* svolge un ruolo importante nella modalità di distribuzione e strutturazione dell'informazione (Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 1136s.), in quanto costituisce lo 'snodo' tra le due parti dell'enunciato portatrici del contrasto semantico "lavorare" / "essere senza lavoro", nonché l'incrocio tra le due componenti della struttura chiasmica. Per quanto riguarda la funzione pragmatica, *nun ja* può essere letto come un segnale discorsivo di riformulazione (Bazzanella 2008, 224s.): Pinneberg, riflettendo su quanto appena asserito, esprime mediante *nun ja* un ripensamento che lo induce a riformulare la frase sulla base della sua reale condizione di vita; la costruzione stessa di questo enunciato - quasi come fosse un gioco di parole - sembra inoltre esprimere sottotraccia una sorta di amara autoironia da parte del personaggio, un tentativo di esorcizzare con le parole le proprie difficoltà.

In questa panoramica dell'ampio spettro di funzioni e significati del connettivo, si prende ora in esame una selezione di casi con polivalenza semantica, estendendo così l'analisi anche alle letture di tipo epistemico e deontico:

- (9) »Die Marie ist ganz tüchtig bei so was. Ist überhaupt ein tüchtiges Mädchen. Nicht grade 'ne Schönheit, aber tüchtig ist sie.« »Gewiß, Herr Kleinholz.« Da sitzen sie beide, einander gegenüber. Es ist gewissermaßen eine Pause im Gespräch. Herr Kleinholz will, daß seine Worte etwas wirken, sie sind sozusagen der Entwickler, wird sich ja *nun* zeigen, was für ein Bild auf der Platte ist. (KM, 77)
- (10) Er [der Arzt] sieht zu ihr [Lämmchen] hoch. Sie hat sich ein bißchen ausgezogen, nur so angefangen, die Bluse und den Rock. Mit ihren schlanken Beinen steht sie sehr groß da. »*Nun*, gehen wir einmal rüber«, sagt der Arzt. »Die Bluse hätten wir *nun* dazu nicht auszuziehen brauchen, kleine junge Frau«. (KM, 11)

In (9) il connettivo si trova nel *Mittelfeld* di una frase caratterizzata da *Verbspitzenstellung* per l'elisione del pronome impersonale *es* (Wöllstein e Duden 2016, 834) ed è immediatamente preceduto dalla particella modale *ja*. In primo luogo, *nun* codifica una relazione temporale di ancoraggio deittico al presente della narrazione all'interno di un nesso con verbo al futuro semplice (*wird zeigen*), realizzando una forma di futuro detto modale o

⁸ Dallo studio delle attestazioni di *nun* nell'ambito di una dimensione interattiva emerge come il suo impiego non comporti una modifica dello *Sachverhalt*, ma contribuisca piuttosto a collegare in vario modo la prospettiva del parlante alla situazione comunicativa: tale uso dà luogo a un fascio di valori pragmatici molto eterogeneo e con possibili punti di tangenza con le funzioni della classe delle *Modalpartikeln* (riguardo a *nun* quale mezzo di espressione della modalità cfr. Mérich e Faucher 2009, 657-61).

epistemico (*modales/epistemisches Futur*, *ivi*, 520s.): attraverso quest'uso il parlante segnala il proprio atteggiamento rispetto al contenuto della frase, qualificandolo come una supposizione ritenuta altamente probabile. La lettura epistemica presenta un valore conclusivo: sullo sfondo della similitudine realizzata dall'accostamento dei termini *seine Worte e der Entwickler*, il connettivo stabilisce un legame di tipo logico-deduttivo tra la proposizione che rappresenta una premessa esplicita ("sie sind sozusagen der Entwickler") e la relativa conseguenza logica ("wird sich ja nun zeigen, was für ein Bild auf der Platte ist"). Inoltre si può assegnare al connettivo anche una valenza deontica estesa all'intero periodo, poiché esso marca il legame tra la prima parte della frase, chiaro oggetto della volontà per mezzo del modale *wollen*, e la seconda che lo contiene, in cui l'uso del futuro epistemico pertiene l'ambito dell'auspicabilità e rimanda anch'esso alla sfera della volontà del personaggio.

In (10) si attribuiscono alla prima attestazione le valenze deontica e illocutiva: l'una è postulabile a partire dall'espressione di tipo imperativo/esortativo con cui il medico invita la protagonista a seguirlo per svolgere la visita; l'altra segnala l'introduzione di un nuovo *topic* entro lo stesso turno di parola del medico per marcare pragmaticamente l'inizio della visita vera e propria. Inoltre, l'uso illocutivo del connettivo sembra esprimere qui una sfumatura di incoraggiamento, secondo una funzione attestata in alcuni dizionari (*begütigender Zuspruch*, cfr. "nun" in DWDS). La seconda attestazione in (10) si colloca in campo mediano della frase dichiarativa che chiude la battuta del medico e codifica una relazione monosemantica di tipo illocutivo. *Nun* svolge in questo contesto una particolare funzione di segnale discorsivo interazionale, rientrando nel gruppo dei cosiddetti fatismi (Sansò 2020,17), cioè quelle espressioni che "sottolineano la conoscenza condivisa, vale a dire l'insieme di conoscenze comuni al parlante in corso e agli interlocutori, relativamente sia al contesto situazionale e linguistico, che a fatti del mondo" (Renzi, Salvi e Cardinaletti 2001, vol. 3, 237): nelle parole del medico quest'uso di *nun* serve a evidenziare l'ovvietà dell'osservazione rivolta alla protagonista, con cui sottolinea l'inappropriatezza del gesto da lei compiuto, rimarcando, in ultima analisi, la distanza socio-culturale (variazione diastratica) che lo separa dalla paziente.

Le quattro letture semantiche temporale, epistemica, deontica e illocutiva sono possibili per l'attestazione di *nun* nel passo (11):

- (11) Doktor Sesam sucht auf seinem Schreibtisch nach dem Brief. »Sie haben mir geschrieben, Herr Pinneberg, Sie können noch keine Kinder brauchen, weil das Geld nicht reicht.« »Ja«, sagt Pinneberg und ist schrecklich verlegen. »Machen Sie sich immer schon ein bißchen frei«, sagt der Arzt zu Lämmchen und fährt dann fort: »Und *nun* möchten Sie einen ganz sicheren Schutz wissen. Ja, einen ganz sicheren ...« Er lächelt skeptisch hinter seiner goldenen Brille. (KM, 10-11)

In (11) l'uso del connettivo funge da collegamento con la frase precedente "Sie können noch keine Kinder brauchen, weil das Geld nicht reicht": l'espressione *und nun* non serve tanto come ancoraggio temporale al presente dell'enunciazione, quanto a marcare la ripresa e la prosecuzione del discorso a livello metatestuale; risulta inoltre funzionale al parlante per instaurare un nesso tra una premessa (non poter avere figli per denaro insufficiente) e la sua conseguenza logica (necessità di un mezzo contraccettivo sicuro), suggerendo un'interpretazione epistemica di tipo conclusivo. La relazione di tipo deontico è individuata mediante la collocazione di *nun* in una frase che corrisponde a un oggetto della volontà; sul piano pragmatico, infine, il connettivo marca la ripresa del turno di parola da parte del medico entro lo scambio dialogico tra i due personaggi, fungendo anche in questo caso da elemento "retrattivo", per riprendere un discorso interrotto da una digressione.

Conclusioni

Nel presente contributo ci si è proposti di approfondire la semantica del connettivo tedesco *nun* sulla base di un ampio corpus di sue attestazioni reperite in un testo letterario, il romanzo di Hans Fallada *Kleiner Mann – was nun?*. La presa in esame dei diversi impieghi di *nun* ha evidenziato come la bipartizione dei suoi usi tra avverbio temporale e particella discorsiva non esaurisca le possibili interpretazioni (con)testuali del connettivo, facendo emergere la sua poliedricità funzionale: a partire dal nucleo semantico originario di deittico temporale *nun* può sia estendere la propria funzione indicale alla dimensione metatestuale come deittico del discorso, sia ampliare il suo spettro di significati come marcatore di relazioni cognitivamente più complesse di natura conclusiva, fino alla perdita (perlomeno apparente) della funzione deittica nell'acquisire quella pragmatica di particella discorsiva o espressiva. Nell'introduzione al volume *Wenn Deiktika nicht zeigen* (2010), Christiane Maaß e Angela Schrott descrivono il processo di "semantische Ausbleichung und Funktionswandel" (10) dei deittici rifacendosi al termine inglese *bleaching* (lett. "sbiancare, scolorire"): questa espressione, utilizzata in linguistica in riferimento ai

processi di grammaticalizzazione, si può prestare a descrivere in maniera efficace anche la complessa stratificazione semantica riscontrata in alcune attestazioni del connettivo analizzate, nelle quali la valenza temporale sembra perdere la sua centralità in favore di altri significati e usi, permanendo tuttavia ‘in sottofondo’.

Rifacendosi ai concetti di *Bedeutungsmaximalismus* (“approccio massimalista”) e *Bedeutungsminimalismus* (“approccio minimalista”) proposta da Posner (1979) nell’ambito degli studi sulle particelle modali, si può ipotizzare che il profilo polisemantico di *nun* ricomprenda un insieme di significati distinti, seppure collegati fra loro in modi e gradi diversi, e applicabili di volta in volta nei diversi contesti comunicativi – secondo l’approccio massimalista, analitico e classificatorio, che trova applicazione nella lessicografia –, oppure che sia identificabile un nucleo semantico basilare e invariante del connettivo (*Grundbedeutung*), da rintracciare in maniera sistematica nelle sue diverse realizzazioni al di là della variabilità contestuale – ipotesi corrispondente all’approccio massimalista. Secondo quest’ultima prospettiva, le molteplici interpretazioni del connettivo (temporale, epistemica, deontica e illocutiva) sembrano dunque poter coesistere in una stessa attestazione come letture alternative, tra le quali l’interprete può scegliere, senza escludersi a vicenda, bensì condividendo un riferimento esplicito o implicito alla dimensione temporale, ovvero cronologica (Métrich e Faucher 2009, 660) variamente declinato nei diversi contesti d’uso.

Sul piano stilistico, infine, l’analisi linguistica condotta su questa “piccola parola” sembra offrire alcuni spunti per l’interpretazione dell’intenzione autoriale: sia la funzione deittica di *nun* quale richiamo allo *hic et nunc* del tempo della narrazione, sia la varietà e la ricorrenza dei suoi usi illocutivi come mezzo di stilizzazione della lingua parlata sono ascrivibili a un insieme più ampio di strategie strutturali e linguistiche volte a ridurre, se non ad annullare, la distanza tra personaggi, narratore e lettori e a favorire, in tal modo, l’immedesimazione e la partecipazione emotiva alle vicende narrate, fattori chiave per la grande popolarità riscossa dal romanzo (Prümm 1995). A questo proposito, già l’editore Peter Suhrkamp notava sulla “Neue Rundschau” nel 1934: “im Erzählen sind Fallada auch seine Zuhörer nahe, er nimmt, möchte man sagen, seine Worte aus ihren Ohren” (Suhrkamp 1934, 751).

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The Fine Line of Gendered Queer “Obscenities” A Modern Exploration of Kiss & Tell Collective’s *Drawing the Line**

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Introduction

What makes content obscene? Furthermore, if content is found to be obscene, who has the right to define when it should be censored? In 1992, the Supreme Court of Canada sought to answer these questions with the *R v. Butler* case; Donald Butler had been convicted on several counts of the possession and distribution of obscene materials. The materials in question had come from Butler’s Manitoba video store, where he sold pornographic videotapes, magazines, and paraphernalia (Bell and Cossman 1997, 3). This is an imperative moment in Canadian history as it marks the first instance where the Supreme Court of Canada had been required to revisit s. 163, otherwise known as Canada’s obscenity laws. More specifically, this is an imperative moment in queer Canadian history, as the conviction had enabled the state to crackdown on content they deemed obscene; the state’s attacks on obscene materials specifically targeted queer literature and pornography (Bell and Cossman 1997).

Prior to the *R v. Butler* case, the debate on pornography and censorship had been running rampant amongst lesbian feminist collectives. The debate allowed no room for inconclusive opinions – either you were anti-pornography, or you weren’t a feminist. Two years prior to *R v. Butler*, Kiss & Tell Collective’s 1990 interactive photography exhibit, *Drawing the Line*, had sought to nuance these stances by displaying 100 photographs on a blank wall. The content of the images ranged from mild and suggestive sexual content to more intense, BDSM-related acts. Through this exhibit, one that would go on to travel the world after its debut in Vancouver, Persimmon Blackbridge, Lizard Jones, and Susan Stewart had sought to probe audiences to decipher where individuals draw the line in regard to sexually explicit material. Quite literally, the female participants had been instructed to draw a line where they felt the content had become too obscene for them, where they figured it needed some form of censorship – male participants eventually asked the same question had been designated to document their opinions in a book rather than on the wall. However, rather than simply drawing a line, many female participants flooded the walls with comments expressing an array of strong emotions: joy, pleasure, anger, disgust, to name a few.

* All the images included in this essay are published with the permission of Susan Stewart.

In this modern exploration of *Drawing the Line's* archival materials, I seek to engage in a close reading and analysis of a selection of these comments in tandem with photographs from the *Drawing the Line* exhibit. I will consider the obscenity laws of 1990 and how they acted as a homophobic, state-sanctioned censorship, as well as how Kiss & Tell Collective acted as a necessary act of female queer rebellion before and after *R v. Butler*. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, I seek to understand how an exhibit such as *Drawing the Line* could exist in 2024, why it would be necessary, and how the mechanics of it would shift or be complicated by a modern gaze. In a time where the Internet has made sexual liberty both validating and terrifying, I wonder if there's still even a line to draw.

1. Feminist Division amidst the Canadian Sex Wars

Before exploring the content and themes of the *Drawing the Line* exhibit, it is imperative to establish the contextual framework of the late twentieth century when it comes to the sex wars. As Brenda Cossman and Shannon Bell make clear, "Canada has had a long and illustrious history of regulating and repressing sexual images" (1997, 7). While these obscenity and censorship laws have operated under the guise of protecting children, they disproportionately affect queer content and queer individuals. One only has to look at the effect *R v. Butler* had on queer individuals, collectives, and content in the years following to see the blatant state targeting of queer culture. Gay and lesbian magazines had been seized in large quantities at the border, different art groups had funding threatened or revoked entirely (including one that Kiss & Tell Collective had performed at in Banff, Alberta), and libraries and schools had been given the sole responsibility to make decisions about how certain content would be circulated (5-6). The aftermath of *R v. Butler* had led to a state-sanctioned homophobic attack on the queer imaginary. As Cossman and Bell make clear, this decision had been widely considered a victory in feminist circles. However, as many queer feminists articulate, the divide amongst feminist circles in regard to pornography and censorship had been anything but simple.

As Lizard Jones explains in *Her Tongue on my Theory*, there had been a strong divide amongst sex radicals and anti-pornography feminists long before 1992: "by the late eighties, the split was there, the sex radicals vs. the feminists, the male-identified vs. the prudes" (1994, 10). Ironically, Jones and her future fellow Kiss & Tell members – Persimmon Blackbridge and Susan Stewart – had been active in anti-pornography campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s: "we were all three anti-porn activists at one time or another. We picketed porn shops by day, and spray-painted them with anti-porn slogans by night" (*ibidem*). The contradictions of participating in anti-pornography dominated feminist groups while also being anti-censorship is not lost on any of the Kiss & Tell members. In fact, Blackbridge makes it clear that the feminist movement both saved her and made her feel as though she were still in an oppressive space: "the feminist movement gave me [...] hope, pride, work, a place to stand. But sometimes it seemed no different from where I grew up. You had to pretend and not notice you were pretending" (7). Existing in this limbo between the ideologies of sex-positive queers and anti-pornography feminists had been a difficult space to navigate for all three Kiss & Tell members. Blackbridge, Jones, and Stewart express being torn between two subsections of their community when they write:

part of our community is fighting *for* state censorship of sexual imagery, in the form of anti-porn legislation, and part of our community is struggling *against* homophobic suppression of gay and lesbian sex. Sometimes both parts are in the same person. (10)

Stewart also admits that she had been leading anti-pornography rallies while secretly enjoying and creating pornography herself (13). Through these testimonies, it begins to become clear why these three artists became drawn to one another, and how their mission for *Drawing the Line* was born.

2. The Birth of Drawing the Line

Inspired by the outrage at a set of lesbian sexual photographs printed in Vancouver's gay, lesbian, and bisexual journal, Kiss & Tell Collective began work on their first collaborative exhibit, *Drawing the Line*. Infatuated with the range of comments from feminist collectives in response to these sexual photographs, Kiss & Tell began to ask questions that would inspire the motive for their own exhibit: "which woman was right about the meaning of the photo? Is it possible to honour both the one woman's joy and the other woman's fear?" (17). Stewart had acted as the photographer, and Jones and Blackbridge as the models. Collectively, they created 100 photographs ranging from suggestive sexual encounters, often in nature, to more kink-focused depictions: bondage and voyeurism

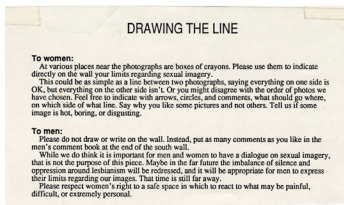


Fig. 1 – Instruction for the exhibit

to autonomously express their own feelings. On a recent trip to Simon Fraser University's archives to analyze their Kiss & Tell fonds, I found that the comments themselves are what intrigue me the most. In the sections that follow, I separate and analyze the comments through a gendered framework to better understand how they materialize a gendered, feminist, and sexual divide among both male and female participants.

3. Where Do Women Draw the Line?

Though the female participants had been tasked with writing their own feelings on the wall in response to the photographs, what emerged on the blank walls of *Drawing the Line* became more of an ongoing conversation amongst a divided collective of women. On certain images, mosaics of arrows, underlines, and exclamation marks clamour the walls in a display that shows the multileveled reality of sexual imagery during this time. However, the more suggestive images had also sparked divide and conversation, and I see them as a fitting starting point for this exploration.

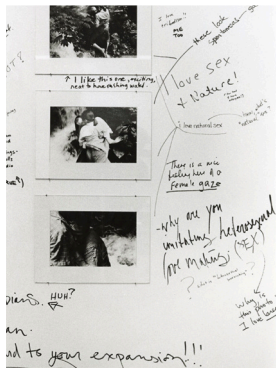


Fig. 2

In figure 2, there is a set of three images depicting the subtle suggestion of forthcoming sex; the comments on these images show the type of interactions happening on the walls of the exhibit. One participant writes, “I love sex + nature!”, while another writes, “why are you imitating heterosexual love making (sex)”. These comments, even on some of the earlier, more tame photographs in the exhibit, display the complex relationship happening between individual participants. The former comment can be read as one of innocent joy – a proclamation perhaps stemming from personal relation to the material. The latter comment, however, is a distinct and intense feminist stance.

One of the hallmarks of the anti-pornography revolution, especially for lesbian feminists, had been the idea that heterosexual pornography reinstates and strengthens toxic power dynamics evident in a patriarchal society (see Comella 2015). Because of this, many lesbian feminists of the time, even if not anti-pornography, would have rejected any relation or reference to heterosexual sex as a rejection of the patriarchy as a whole. In “Revisiting the Feminist Sex Wars”, Lynn Comella provides context to understanding why heterosexuality had been a strong trigger for many second-wave feminists:

[...] there was another development that would greatly influence the anti-pornography movement: a political analysis of het[er]osexuality that encompassed a growing awareness of male power and violence, including rape and battering. As women [...] shared intimate details about their personal lives and relationships, many women opened up [...] about their experiences with sexual assault, rape, and coercion. The stories were widespread and prompted feminist responses [...] (443)

Within this important sociopolitical contextual framework, it becomes clear why an image of two women engaging in a rather straightforward sexual encounter would cause some women to have visceral reactions. While what that participant identified as heterosexual is unclear, her sentiments toward the recreation of the power dynamic within heterosexual pornography are an important factor to consider when analyzing the rest of the exhibit.

As Comella (2015) notes, many feminist individuals and collectives had operated on a completely anti-male ideological



Fig. 3 – Lizard Jones wearing a bra, bowler hat and moustache

platform during the late twentieth century. This rejection of male presence and embodiment becomes clear through the comments on two images, in particular from *Drawing the Line*. In figure 3, Jones stands in a lacy, socially-deemed feminine bra while wearing a bowler hat and a fake moustache – items socially-deemed masculine. As she stares directly into the camera, the photograph takes the viewer on a genderqueer journey that speaks decades before its time. However, the comments on the photograph reinforce the ideologies of anti-male as anti-patriarchy ripe within feminist circles. In Sydney, one participant writes, “I like the playfulness of this gender-fuck”, while another participant responds, “No, too scary. This is a real turn-off to me” (Kiss & Tell, “On the Wall”, n.p.). The relationship between these two comments stands as an example of the relationship between many feminists and men.

Through a modern gaze, the anti-male feminists present throughout the *Drawing the Line* exhibits seem narrow-minded; their refusal to realize that the full social exclusion of men does not serve their mission of female equality is glaring from a 2023 perspective. However, at the time, the rejection of men from the conversations regarding society, culture, art, and resistance had been imperative – especially for lesbians. As Kiss & Tell notes, “for lesbians, invisibility has been our safety and our trap” (1994, 12). Lesbian content in the late twentieth century had been few and far between; often, work revolved around stereotypes, misconceptions, or prejudice against lesbian individuals and collectives (see Comella 2015). In producing and showcasing an image such as figure 3, Kiss & Tell subverts the stereotyped image of a lesbian. One participant writes on this image, “Butch or femme? You decide” (Kiss & Tell, “On the Wall”, n.p.). However, this image is rejecting that decision entirely; there is no need to decide, as there is no singular image of what it means to be a lesbian. In rejecting the “feminine” stereotypes of a femme and the “masculine” expectations of a butch, Kiss & Tell is presenting a modern lesbian image that extends beyond this heteronormative gendered binary, an image that the participant’s comments prove is decades ahead of its time.

The sexual dynamics and oppression of women becomes clear in many of the comments from *Drawing the Line*. Reference to sexual assault from the participants in *Drawing the Line* comes up frequently; unsurprisingly, these comments speak to the overarching problems facing women inhabiting a patriarchal society. In particular, the images in the exhibit that contain more graphic or sexually suggestive photographs have brought on more responses referencing sexual trauma. Comella makes clear that it was “the issue of violence, not sex, in the media, that initially galvanized feminists into action” (2015, 445). However, what about sadomasochism – the combination of violence and sex? One of the most polarizing sets of photographs that I discovered at the SFU archives was this set of four photographs depicting suggestively shameful, potentially coercive, and violently kinky interactions between the two women (fig. 4).

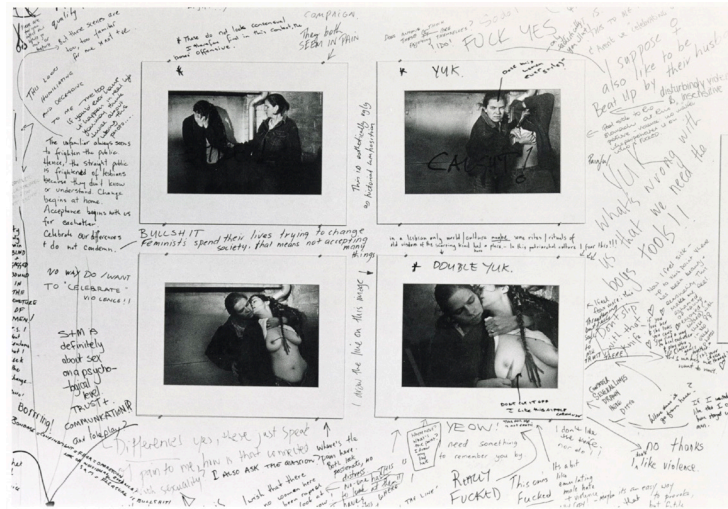


Fig. 4 – A set of images, involving polarizing acts of sex

Figure 4, from which the city of origin is unknown, has one of the largest counts of comments surrounding it – participants marked up the walls so extensively that they began to write over the images themselves. Comments on these images range from simple “double yuck” or “really fucked”, to more philosophical, with one participant writing: “unfamiliar always seems to frighten the public, hence the straight public is frightened

of lesbians because they don't know or understand [...] Acceptance begins with us for each other. Celebrate our differences and do not condemn". The response to this philosophical and seemingly well-intentioned stance had been "BULLSHIT! Feminists spend their lives trying to change society. That means not accepting many things". I am deeply intrigued by the duality of the comments on this set of images. Initially, I had been taken aback by the content of these photographs; in particular, I had been struck by the fourth image depicting a woman with a knife placed at someone's nipple. However, upon further reflection and the privilege of inhabiting a more sexually positive modern culture, I found myself relating more to the philosophical comment regarding judgement and acceptance. Nonetheless, of the female comments I have analyzed for this project, the conversations being had on this set of images most starkly reveal the divide within lesbian and feminist communities during this time.

4. *Should Men Be Able to Draw the Line?*

When outlining my intentions for this archival exploration, I had gone back and forth about including a subsection regarding the male participant's comments. Much of the space at the Kiss & Tell fonds at SFU had been taken up by the male comments; however, in the spirit of this exhibit, I struggle with the concept of taking up too much space to amplify male voices. That being said, I would find this project unjust and unfinished should I not touch on some of the social and cultural implications present within the men's *Drawing the Line* comments.

Interestingly, the male comments from *Drawing the Line* display a similarly polarized view of the exhibit. One Toronto participant writes, "I'm delighted to see such positive sexual images from, by and of women" (Kiss & Tell Fonds, MsC 161.1). Another participant from the same show writes, "You people are sick. This is NOT art" (Kiss & Tell Fonds, MsC 160.9). In these comments alone, there is a clear divide amongst men that echoes the divide amongst women. However, there are distinctly vitriolic patriarchal responses from the male participants that are not evident in the female ones – for obvious reasons.

One common theme that comes up in the transcribed male comments is the idea of "penis envy" (Kiss & Tell Fonds, MsC 160.8). Men seem to believe that the women depicting male images in the style of figure 3 are trying to become men, trying to erase men, or trying to mock men. However, this focus completely reinforces the reasoning for excluding men from writing on the walls in the first place. The book with the men's comments contains fetishization, degradation, and mockery of the images from both self-identifying gay and straight men. While I don't intend to highlight or platform these comments, as I have found them incredibly unsettling, I seek to point them out in order to prove the need for *Drawing the Line* in the first place. The comments left by the male participants show a lack of understanding into both queer issues, gender privilege, and intersectional identities. One of the male participants puts my feelings of these comments perfectly, as he writes, "I'm amazed at how frightening this show was to a lot of men. We've got a long way to go, fellas" (Kiss & Tell Fonds, MsC 160.4).

5. *Drawing the Line in 2023*

From a modern and personal perspective, I struggle to understand *why* the sexual kinks or avenues of pleasure explored by another would cause such disdain from those witnessing it. However, I also am privileged to inhabit a world in which technology and the Internet have made sexuality more accessible – a development that brings both positive and negative repercussions. One of the positive developments, I argue, is the evolution of thought regarding the importance of consent. I mention this in light of the sentiments expressed by participants at figure 4 in the previous section – in particular, I wonder how the general cultural conception of BDSM, S&M, and consent has evolved since *Drawing the Line's* time.

As Robin Bauer notes in his study on queer BDSM practices, "consent has gained the status of dogma in the BDSM community" (2014, 75). Bauer makes clear that lesbian feminists had begun the conversation around consent in the 1970s, but that its ideas in the BDSM community had not been fully realized until the 1990s – and, I would argue, BDSM consent continues to be stigmatized in heteronormative, and homonormative, societies (76). While *Drawing the Line* makes clear in their artist statement that all of the artists involved have known each other for years and the acts are all consensual, I wonder how participants would react to the BDSM photographs in modern day. Would the photographs

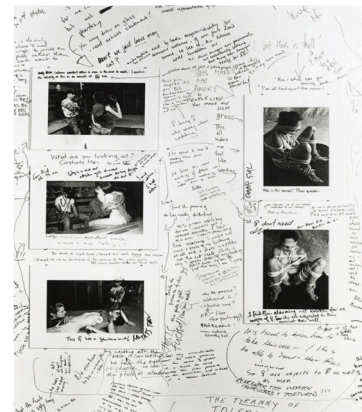


Fig. 5 – BDSM rope-play

in figure 4 or figure 5 still receive such strong and vitriolic reactions? As seen in figure 5, the comments read from “poor girl” to “how is this sexual?”. Though consent had been established by the collective at the beginning of the exhibit, there is a continued bias toward BDSM practices that prevent the participants from even being able to fathom them as consensual. Kink-shaming, as noted by Bauer, is a consistent experience for those involved in BDSM or other sexual kinks; however, it intrigues me that a queer community that wants to deviate away from the hegemonic and heteronormative would reject alternative techniques of pleasure. While we do remain within a patriarchal and heteronormative society, the advent of the Internet has made the ideas of consent and sexual liberty expand to a general knowledge among progressive individuals. Therefore, I am not entirely confident that these images would receive as much pushback now as they did then.

One of my interests in exploring *Drawing the Line*'s limitations within a modern framework came from the realization that only two models had been used for the exhibit. Kiss & Tell explains their reasoning for only using two recurring bodies in their artist statement:

we had several reasons for deciding to use only two models. Since we were asking the audience to make judgements and to write them in a public space, we wanted the judgements to be about sexual representation, not about whether viewers find a particular size, shape or colour of woman attractive. (Kiss & Tell, “On the Wall”, n.p.)

While I understand that Kiss & Tell did not want to have the exhibit muddled with racial bias, fatphobia, and other politics surrounding identity, there is a definite lack of inclusive practices within *Drawing the Line*. From a modern gaze, the inclusion of identity into the conversational pulse of the exhibit would perhaps even bolster the messaging of censorship and obscenity: what types of bodies would be seen more often as obscene?

One participant during the original *Drawing the Line* exhibit seemed to have shared my sentiments of disappointment at only two white, socially-deemed beautiful models when they wrote on the walls: “STILL NO FAT DYKES”, accompanied by a drawing of a plus-size body (fig. 6). A nearby comment echoes the acknowledgment of one singular identity by writing, “ALL I SEE IS WHITE”. The revolution of body positivity and the need for racial equity in media is relatively new in the modern cultural conversation – fat and racialized bodies have often been censored or viewed as obscene and disgusting for years (Friedman, Rice, Rinaldi 2019). Through a

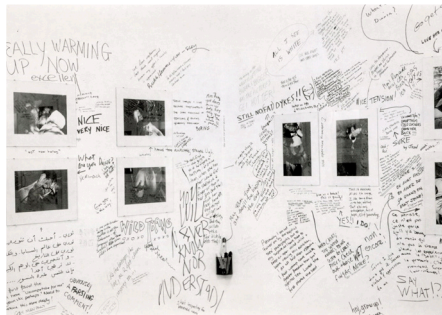


Fig. 6

modern gaze, this stands out as one of the largest limitations to Kiss & Tell's exhibit and overarching mission – one that the collective appears to be cognizant of in their reflections on the exhibit, as they write, “before long it became very clear that the notion of any single, unified account of what a lesbian body was or could be was an utter impossibility” (1994, 18). Indeed, the ability to depict every possible representation of lesbian, or feminist, identity in the exhibit is impossible – even more so in a modern context. However, that reality does not discredit the need for an expansion of intersectional representation that *Drawing the Line* does not utilize; while not *all* lesbian identities can be represented, surely we can represent more than two.

6. *Is There Still a Line to Draw?*

Part of my inspiration for exploring the Kiss & Tell fonds at SFU stems from a class interview of Lizard Jones and Susan Stewart at McMaster University in 2021. In the interview, Stewart reflects upon a question about how an exhibit such as *Drawing the Line* could exist in the modern scope:

I don't know what is going to work right now [...] but what I do know is that we need activism. The need has not gone away [...] I think it has gotten even more complicated around things like sexual imagery with the Internet and also the dynamics of being a young woman, a young scholar, a young activist right now [are] so complex given the online environment. (Kiss & Tell, Interview, 25:04)

As I continue to ponder the question of what *Drawing the Line* would look like in 2024, I remain perplexed at how the relationship of the Internet would play an imperative or debilitating role. The best answer that I can ascertain through my research is that the Internet would work to both bolster and hinder an exhibit like

Drawing the Line. In the age of oversharing and nonstop access, sexual liberty has taken on new, revolutionary, and terrifying forms. As Angela Jones notes in her exploration of plus-size cam girls (digital sex workers), she displays the liberating and self-sufficient power and autonomy that can come from engaging in sex work at your own discretion (2019, 280). Sexual representation in the media has come a long way from the late twentieth century; however, many representations still curate and distribute stereotypes about plus-size, racialized, and queer bodies (Friedman, Rice, Rinaldi 2019). Additionally, there is the added nuance of online trolling and harassment to consider when securing consent of models to participate in an exhibit that exposes them on such vulnerable levels. Through my archival exploration and research, it is clear that an exhibit such as *Drawing the Line* has the potential to push the needle of social understanding forward and expose the dark ideologies of many intersectional individuals; although, in 2023, perhaps the line is too blurry to draw in the first place.

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Primo medium elettrico del XX secolo, la radio segna il ritorno dell'oralità nei sistemi comunicativi imponendo alla letteratura, ineluttabilmente inserita nel "reticolo mediale" – secondo la felice formula di Gabriele Frasca –, di rimodulare, una volta di più, il proprio statuto. In maniera apparentemente paradossale, nell'era del trionfo della tecnologia, l'arte del discorso si rivolge così alle proprie origini, secondo quel fenomeno indicato, com'è noto, come "oralità di ritorno" o "secondaria", definitosi attraverso una tradizione di studi oramai consolidata che fa perno su Havelock, McLuhan, Zumthor, Ong e molti altri, fino ad arrivare almeno al già menzionato Frasca.

Su tale tradizione fa affidamento Giuseppe Episcopo nel suo recente volume, *Radiotelling. Forme radiofoniche e arte del racconto*, che si origina dalla messa a sistema di una serie di interventi, nati in occasione di convegni o pubblicati precedentemente in rivista, dedicati al rapporto tra romanzo e radio.

Se le diverse forme mediali si trovano ineluttabilmente in concorrenza tra loro, sappiamo bene come queste siano in realtà in rapporto di osmosi reciproca e come, in tal senso, le tecniche del romanzo siano trasigrate sistematicamente verso altre arti e media, fagocitate e rielaborate per trasformarsi, talvolta, in altro da sé. In questa prospettiva, il primo capitolo del volume di Episcopo – "L'arte elettrica del racconto" – presenta un breve excursus storiografico, un piccolo scorcio sul territorio potenzialmente sterminato dei modi di assimilazione del romanzesco da parte di altri dispositivi narrativi, prendendo a esempio tre forme differenti nella loro evoluzione: le serie televisive, che cannibalizzano il romanzo prima di acquisire una discreta autonomia; il graphic novel, forma che mostra invero una propria specificità sin dagli esordi, e il radiodramma, su cui, a seguire, si focalizzerà il discorso dell'autore.

Più pertinente e efficace, nell'economia del volume, risulta il secondo capitolo – "Il mare dell'epica e le onde della radio" –, con il quale Esposito[Episcopo] entra nel vivo dell'argomento e presenta l'impalcatura teorica del proprio discorso, adottando un taglio socio-antropologico dato dall'utilizzo degli studi sulla comunicazione, e sulla radio in particolare, con riferimenti che poi ricorreranno più volte nel corso del testo quali Adorno, Arnheim, Ortoleva, in primo luogo, senza tralasciare Benjamin e i già citati studi sull'oralità secondaria. Dopo aver ripercorso quel momento spartiacque in cui, in relazione alla prima diffusione del mezzo radiofonico, l'istanza orale comincia a pervadere la prosa narrativa conducendo a una ripresa dell'epos nelle maglie del romanzo, l'autore sottolinea come certe istanze epiche abbiano animato anche *Il volo oceanico* di Bertold Brecht, dramma didattico eseguito per la prima volta nel corso di una trasmissione radiofonica nel 1929, che Episcopo sceglie per incorniciare cronologicamente il proprio discorso assieme a, termine *ad quem*, *The Raft of the Medusa* di Simon Armitage, del 2015.

Attraverso alcuni imprescindibili casi di studio, Episcopo procede poi con l'analisi di tre differenti modalità di rapporto tra radio e romanzo: i modi in cui la radio è presente a livello tematico nell'opera letteraria, le trasposizioni dal cartaceo alla radio, infine la restituzione dei caratteri del romanzo nel radiodramma.

Le sue norme per la comunicazione radiofonica hanno fatto sì che il nome di Gadda, nella cerchia dei letterati, divenisse uno di quelli più frequentemente associati alla radio, tuttavia, le tracce da questa lasciate nella sua opera letteraria risultano alquanto scarse. In tal senso, nel capitolo "La voce incessante della radio", in cui la figura di Gadda è protagonista, Episcopo mette in rilievo come, a dispetto delle apparenze, la radio costituisca una presenza importante, per quanto discreta, così come si evince dal racconto *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi*, del 1931, in cui il focus dell'autore ricade sui modi della fruizione e sulla pervasività della voce radiofonica nelle abitudini quotidiane delle nuove masse, in rapporto agli sviluppi dell'industrializzazione e della proto-società dei consumi. Uno sguardo doveroso ricade poi sulla cospicua produzione per la radio da parte di Gadda che si sviluppa a partire dai primi anni Cinquanta e a cominciare dal riadattamento dello stesso *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi*, del 1951, cui seguirà una nutrita serie di riadattamenti, tra cui le due anticipazioni del *Pasticciaccio*, *I carabinieri al Torraccio* e *La sarta*. A esemplare l'attenzione di Gadda per lo specifico del mezzo radiofonico, Episcopo si sofferma poi in particolare sul riadattamento di *Prima divisione della notte*, in cui "Gadda traspone l'intera gamma degli elementi intorno ai quali il suo racconto è organizzato, nelle componenti di una scrittura per l'orecchio, di una pagina sonora" (113-14), giacché *fabula*, intreccio e digressioni sembrano occupare ciascuno un suo diverso "spartito", "per ognuno di essi c'è una voce che se ne fa interprete" (114).

Lo stesso movimento, dalla radio nel romanzo al riadattamento del racconto per la radio, si riscontra nel successivo capitolo, "Il libro e il nastro di magnetofono", dedicato alla figura di Primo Levi. Dalla "babele radiofonica della guerra" (120) di cui l'autore parla in uno dei racconti de *Il sistema periodico*, in cui dunque la radio è oggetto del racconto, Episcopo si muove a esplorare gli "itinerari [di] diffusione" di *Se questo è un uomo*, tra traduzioni e rimediazioni – con particolare riguardo alla traduzione in tedesco su cui Levi si sofferma in *I sommersi e i salvati* –, per evidenziare come all'autore interessasse in primo luogo, nel processo di transcodifica da una lingua all'altra così come da un medium all'altro, preservare la qualità acustica, la materia sonora, del proprio discorso, ovvero quella tensione orale propria della scrittura leviana, che sembra poi trovare sfocio naturale nel riadattamento radiofonico del romanzo cui Levi stesso mette mano nel 1964.

Grazie a una originale triangolazione tra il testo, il riadattamento del 1964 e la lettura integrale del testo andata in onda su Rai Radio 3 nel 2004, messi tra loro a confronto, emerge come l'utilizzo del codice radiofonico, che si verifica nel riadattamento, metta in risalto meglio della semplice lettura, per quanto performata, la qualità intrinseca del testo stesso. Tenendo conto della specificità del linguaggio radiofonico, il riadattamento si pone infatti come "una vera e propria traduzione tra codici" (131) e inoltre arriva, non solo a rispettare la qualità orale precipua del testo di partenza, ma anche a esaltare al meglio il valore testimoniale del racconto – ulteriore declinazione di quell'istanza epica, nota Episcopo, da cui di fatto parte il suo volume – che proprio dalla sonorità della parola era restituito. Dialoghi e suoni concorrono infatti a creare un effetto di "superrealismo" (129), facendo perno su quello che possiamo definire – per ri-utilizzare Barthes – l'effetto di reale tipico della radio che ha il potere di presentificare la realtà immaginaria del testo.

In coda al capitolo uno sguardo è rivolto anche ai racconti di *Storie naturali* riadattati per la radio alla fine degli anni Sessanta, con al centro il caso particolare di *Trattamento di quiescenza*, che riconferma l'attenzione di Levi al mezzo radiofonico e ai suoi effetti. Il racconto verte sull'esistenza di una macchina che collegandosi direttamente ai neuroni permette al fruitore di vivere sensazioni e situazioni fittizie; attraverso un particolare trattamento del materiale sonoro, "Nel momento stesso in cui la rivoluzionaria macchina è indossata dal suo 'fruitore' nella diegesi del racconto, il radiodramma diventa a sua volta per l'ascoltatore reale la narrazione incarnata dell'esperienza registrata dalla macchina" (144), la radio, insomma, favorisce l'identificazione tra personaggio-fruitore del racconto e fruitore-ascoltatore reale, agendo come simulatore immersivo tanto quanto la macchina del racconto stesso.

È questo, probabilmente, il capitolo più completo, in cui l'analisi dello specifico letterario si lega, in maniera meglio articolata e argomentata, a quella dello specifico radiofonico, analisi che, tuttavia, avrebbe potuto essere arricchita – così come altri luoghi del lavoro – con un ampliamento della bibliografia critica, nel caso in questione tenendo da conto, ad esempio, il recente *Storie da ascoltare nell'Italia del boom* (Carocci 2023) di Nicola Turi e Rodolfo Sacchetti, che proprio a Levi dedica ampio spazio.

Chiude il volume un capitolo – "Spazio aurale e affabulazione elettrica" – dedicato a opere appositamente scritte per la radio, veri e propri radiodrammi insomma, benché il capitolo cominci con il celebre caso di *The war of the worlds* riadattato per la radio da Orson Welles, per evidenziare come nella costruzione narrativa del dramma

vengano immesse le stesse abitudini dell'ascolto radiofonico, simulando i toni del radiogiornale, raggiungendo così un massimo di verosimiglianza, tanto da indurre migliaia di americani a credere in un'avvenuta invasione aliena; si tratta di un contraltare, si potrebbe notare, di quel "superrealismo" che per Levi assume valore storico-morale, giacché mostra al contrario il profondo potere di persuasione del "sortilegio" radiofonico.

Episcopo conclude analizzando le funzioni della "grammatica" della radiofonia, ovvero dell'alternanza tra rumori e silenzio, dell'utilizzo di musica, suono e parole nei due casi peculiari di *The Revenge* di Andrew Sachs, del 1978, un thriller di soli suoni dove la spazialità ricreata dal sonoro diventa diegesi, e di *In un luogo imprecisato* di Giorgio Manganelli, datato 1974 – performato alla radio da Carmelo Bene – in cui invece la parola, unica protagonista di una scena sonora senza suoni o rumori, ha il compito di annullare qualunque illusione di spazialità oltre che di temporalità.

Quello che è qui opportunamente messo in questione, ritornando al rapporto romanzo-radio, è la capacità del radiodramma di ricreare quei marcatori spazio-temporali che definiscono la diegesi romanzesca, e dunque la capacità fabulativa del radiodramma stesso, ma facendo appello a due casi peculiari in cui gli strumenti propri del mezzo radiofonico vengono di fatto utilizzati in senso sperimentale come per saggiare a fondo, in tal senso, le possibilità del mezzo stesso. Il primo, quello di Sachs, si pone difatti come una sfida alle capacità mimetiche della parola, in concorrenza con essa, estromettendola dalla rappresentazione e dunque in concorrenza con il romanzo stesso; nel secondo, quello di Manganelli, l'autore si allontana al massimo grado dall'istanza mimetica e dunque da un certo prototipo romanzesco. Si tratta invero, in quest'ultimo, di un caso ancor più particolare, a cominciare dal fatto che l'interesse dell'autore parte, ed è in fondo diretto, all'ambito propriamente letterario e l'esperienza radiofonica andrebbe messa in relazione al programma di contestazione della mimesi che sempre anima la scrittura manganelliana. Il discorso intorno alla radio non può insomma prescindere, così come verificato nel caso di Levi, da uno sguardo complessivo sulla poetica autoriale. Con ciò, tuttavia, abbiamo percorso una delle tante linee di fuga, di possibilità di prolungamento del discorso critico suggerite dal volume stesso.



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Il terzo volume della serie *Romantic Studies. Theories and Practices*, a cura di Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Serena Baiesi e Carlotta Farese, celebra il bicentenario della rivista *The Liberal. Verse and Prose from the South*, concepita a Pisa da Percy Bysshe Shelley, Leigh Hunt e George Byron e uscita a Londra in quattro numeri fra il 1822 e il 1823. Si tratta di “celebrazione” (17) e critica nel migliore dei sensi: composta da un’introduzione storica e da nove saggi, la raccolta presenta un’ampia varietà di prospettive originali su *The Liberal* (da qui in poi *TL*) che spaziano dalle considerazioni sull’impianto generale della rivista a commenti sui contributi dei singoli autori, fornendo al contempo un ottimo mezzo per un primo approccio allo studio della rivista.

A una lettura complessiva, il volume appare coeso ed esibisce motivi ricorrenti. Benché le autrici e gli autori facciano riferimento a una vasta bibliografia, molti brani tratti dai documenti coevi a *TL* – la corrispondenza del cosiddetto “triumvirato” e di Mary Shelley, le principali recensioni dell’epoca, per dirne alcuni – sono citati a più riprese. Questo consente di acquisire dimestichezza con la documentazione e di apprezzare al contempo le conclusioni originali che ciascun contributo ne trae. Ne risulta una trama fitta di impliciti rimandi intratestuali, percorsa da diversi fili conduttori. Il più importante ed evidente di essi emerge dal confronto con lo studio seminale di William H. Marshall (1960): se da una parte molti dei contributi dichiarano il loro debito nei suoi confronti, dall’altra sottolineano la necessità di rivalutarne certi giudizi troppo severi verso *TL*, di cui i saggi in questione svelano nuovi connotati di organicità, coerenza e impegno politico.

Con “Introduction: Historical and Social Environment of *The Liberal*”, Crisafulli porta subito l’attenzione sul progetto politico-sociale che attraversa i quattro numeri di *TL*. La densissima introduzione fornisce le coordinate del contesto italiano, toscano e pisano che vide la composizione di *TL* e dimostra che tanto le tensioni politiche quanto la letteratura e la storia italiane, del passato e del presente, furono cruciali nel definire l’orientamento politico della rivista. Crisafulli rappresenta il contesto come insofferente nei confronti della Restaurazione e del ritorno degli austriaci. Negli ambienti frequentati dal gruppo pisano, a seguito dell’esperienza napoleonica, l’Italia unita esisteva già come “imagined community” (17) ed era promossa tramite l’arte e la lettura dei classici – soprattutto Dante e Machiavelli – con la consapevolezza che l’unità sarebbe passata dall’unificazione della lingua. Di seguito, l’autrice rintraccia una presenza così forte del “triumvirato” nei salotti letterari, negli ambienti accademici e liberali

pisani da attirare su *TL* le attenzioni delle spie austriache. In definitiva, Crisafulli dimostra che i Tre si integrarono pienamente in un contesto di esuli da altri paesi ma anche dal resto di un'Italia "che ancora non c'era" (33) e come da lì, non a caso, rivolsero la loro critica all'idea reazionaria di "Britishness". Scrivere dall'Italia all'Inghilterra significava lanciare un attacco dalle tinte transnazionali al cieco patriottismo insulare post-Restaurazione. A questo si aggiunge che ogni numero di *TL* pubblicò letteratura italiana ed europea in traduzione, oltre ad affermare a ogni occasione il debito della grande letteratura inglese nei confronti dei classici italiani. Fu proprio quest'ottica internazionale sotto il profilo politico e artistico che valse a *TL* la feroce ricezione da parte della stampa Tory e dei detrattori britannici che, secondo Crisafulli, ne determinò il prematuro fallimento.

La ricezione di *TL* è al centro del contributo di Franca Dellarosa, "Cockney Imprint: *The Liberal* and its Reception, 1822", che esamina due aspetti delle critiche che accolsero la rivista in patria: le connotazioni del termine "liberal" e la presunta impronta "Cockney" degli interventi di Hunt, scandalosa per lettori e letterati gentiluomini. Uno dei meriti del saggio di Dellarosa sta nel dimostrare, con un elegante ragionamento circolare, che le due questioni sono intimamente collegate. In primo luogo, si stabilisce la differenza fra l'accezione del termine "liberal" della "Preface" di Hunt, documento programmatico di poetica e politica della rivista, e quella delle recensioni di periodici conservatori come *Blackwood's*, *The Council of Ten* e *The Quarterly Review*. Il primo rivendica come scopo della rivista la diffusione di una "liberal knowledge" non politica, o meglio, non privata e non partitica, ma anticlassista e collettiva; politica, quindi, in senso "alto", nella misura in cui si rivolge all'intera "human race" (Hunt 1822, x). I detrattori, invece, fanno del "liberalism" del gruppo pisano l'esatto opposto del decoroso "liberalism" in senso tradizionale e privato, associandolo poi con ovvia indignazione al Giacobinismo e ai "Liberales" spagnoli.

Successivamente, si prendono in analisi le feroci recensioni ricevute da "The Florentine Lovers" di Leigh Hunt, ridicolizzato come lo sgraziato approccio di un Cockney alla letteratura amorosa. Dellarosa impiega queste recensioni per localizzare il compromesso fra politico e non politico dell'accezione editoriale del termine "liberal". Lo scritto di Hunt suscita scandalo perché "no Cockney has a right to *culture*, of which Italy is routinely seen as the quintessential embodiment" (46). Facendo dell'amore una questione di classe e della letteratura amorosa un terreno sacro in cui nessun Cockney ha diritto ad avventurarsi, i detrattori di Hunt svelano ai nostri occhi quanto di politico c'è in una storia apparentemente e dichiaratamente non politica e, per estensione, in *TL*. Hunt, infatti, scrive con intento e tono anticlassista, cercando di rendere praticabile e godibile per tutti la letteratura amorosa. Per dirla con lo Shelley di *A Defence of Poetry*, che nelle intenzioni di Mary Shelley avrebbe dovuto trovare spazio in *TL*, la poesia di "The Florentine Lovers" è "the poetry of life" (2002, 530).

Il secondo saggio di Crisafulli, "What's in a Name? Shelley, the South, and *The Liberal*", è una ricca e utile ricognizione del destino di *TL* alla luce delle intenzioni autoriali, della genesi e gestazione della rivista e dei motivi politici alla radice del biasimo dei detrattori. L'autrice propone una documentazione interessante e polifonica accanto alla principale letteratura critica e ricostruzioni storiche esistenti attorno a *TL*. Si concentra poi sui contributi specifici dei tre curatori, con particolare attenzione a Percy Shelley e al suo ruolo di guida. L'introduzione riprende quanto detto nei primi paragrafi di altri saggi del volume: Crisafulli si affianca a Dellarosa nel discutere i duri attacchi subiti da *TL* sin da prima della sua pubblicazione, e concorda sulla loro causa: i tre principali autori di *TL* scrivevano dal "sud" asservito rivolgendosi al "nord" egemone, nel tentativo di "decolonize British hegemonic culture, and undermine the conservative ethos of their home country through a rethinking of the relations between North and South" (64). L'autrice prosegue ricostruendo le vicende che portarono all'associazione fra Byron, Shelley e Hunt, presentandone le rispettive motivazioni. Il ruolo di punto di riferimento è conteso da Hunt e Shelley: il primo fu attratto dal progetto e dalla prospettiva di trasferirsi in Toscana per questioni familiari, economiche e di salute ma, nonostante la "magnetic ability" di Hunt, fu Shelley, secondo Crisafulli, a dare una vera possibilità di esistere a *TL*. Quanto di più vivo c'è nella rivista è animato dallo stile o dal ricordo di Shelley, morto poco prima della pubblicazione del primo numero. Se *A Defence of Poetry* fosse stato pubblicato su *TL* come Mary Shelley auspicava, avrebbe certamente contribuito alla sua qualità percepita e, quindi, alla sua sopravvivenza. Fra le motivazioni di Shelley, Crisafulli evidenzia il suo sogno di "renewed literature, liberal thought and reformist policy" (71); la speranza di disperdere l'aura di scandalo e censura che circondava i suoi scritti in patria; la volontà di operare una scelta di responsabilità attiva e creativa di fronte a questi pettegolezzi e attacchi personali, una via alternativa all'esilio volontario. Per quanto riguarda Byron, infine, egli si associò al progetto non senza qualche esitazione – esitazioni crescenti dopo la morte di Shelley – ma lo finanziò e forse ne scelse il nome. In *TL* vedeva la possibilità di pubblicare del materiale invisibile al proprio editore Tory, John Murray, con il quale rivolgersi ai suoi detrattori reazionari britannici. A unire i tre, era la visione politica, il rispetto per i principi rivoluzionari, il disprezzo per la Chiesa e l'establishment britannico di personaggi come Wellington e Castlereagh.

Dal saggio di Crisafulli emerge un altro degli importanti fili conduttori nella trama del volume, ossia la sensibilità postcoloniale. *TL* alimenta infatti un “cult of the South” – Italia, Spagna, Grecia – che ne esalta le radici classiche e la lotta per la libertà, ma che risente anche – soprattutto negli interventi di Hunt – di un paternalismo stereotipato e xenofobo visibile in tante guide per viaggiatori dell’epoca. Dello stesso avviso, a questo proposito, è Serena Baiesi, autrice del contributo successivo dedicato interamente a Leigh Hunt e alle sue precedenti esperienze editoriali. In “Politics, Literature, and Leigh Hunt’s Editorial Spirit in *The Liberal*”, Baiesi effettua una preziosa analisi degli spazi di continuità e discontinuità di *TL* rispetto a *The Examiner*, *The Reflector* e *The Indicator*. Le riviste curate da Hunt, diverse per durate e sorti, furono accomunate da un intento: “to popularise collective literary practices and liberal ideals so as change society for the better, fostering and strengthening community spirit” (90). Inoltre, nei tre periodici, con equilibri variabili, è costante il legame fra politica, arte e letteratura: esse si bilanciano in *The Examiner*, la politica e il riformismo prevalgono in *The Reflector* e infine l’arte è veicolo di politica in *The Indicator*, che nasceva per dare spazio ai giovani poeti come Keats.

Quanto alle novità di *TL*, Baiesi sottolinea che il rapporto fra politica, società e arte che si instaura nella rivista riguarda non solo il contesto britannico, ma soprattutto quello internazionale ed europeo, in cui è preponderante il modello italiano. L’autrice si inserisce infine nel dibattito critico riguardante la valutazione dei meriti di *TL* e, in definitiva, ne dà un giudizio positivo: “*The Liberal* was an experimental project in which its leaders kept their promises in terms of content and political orientation up to the fourth and final issue”; e ancora, “we ought to acknowledge it as a powerful instrument that, infused with English liberalism and Italian culture, disseminated ideas of reform and social equality” (104, 111).

Al centro del contributo di Timothy Webb, “‘Letters from Abroad’: Leigh Hunt and the Traveller’s Epistle”, è ancora una volta Leigh Hunt, in particolare in quanto autore della serie “Letters from Abroad”. Presenti in ognuno dei quattro numeri di *TL*, le “Letters” di Hunt si basano su vera corrispondenza, il che risulta in un intimismo e una semplicità forse eccessivi. Queste caratteristiche valsero alle “Letters” il consueto repertorio di ingiurie da parte dei detrattori, che vi lessero un ingenuo entusiasmo da “simple-minded cockney abroad” (130) e ne criticarono l’assenza dello spessore culturale che ci si sarebbe aspettati da un epistolario scritto dall’Italia. Diversamente, pur ammettendo che l’esperienza italiana di Hunt fu meno ricca di un Grand Tour per ragioni economiche, familiari e di salute, Webb sottolinea diversi aspetti d’interesse delle “Letters”, primo fra tutti l’influenza del panorama epistolare del gruppo pisano. Le “Letters” conservano la dimensione collettiva e condivisa del “letter reading” coevo, la consapevolezza degli autori di leggersi a vicenda e l’aspettativa di essere letti da altri rispetto al destinatario originario. In secondo luogo, le “Letters” si inseriscono in tradizioni letterarie consolidate, come il *travel writing* o, nel caso della lettera a Novello (Hunt 1823, 251-52), l’*invitatio* in prosa, genere già frequentato da illustri autori inglesi. Webb rivaluta con grande sensibilità l’atteggiamento di Hunt verso le amicizie, specie quella con Shelley, fonte di passaggi intimisti ma non privi di grazia. Infine, Webb rende anche merito alle qualità intrinseche degli scritti di Hunt, fra cui gli evidenti ideali liberali, la tolleranza nei confronti del cattolicesimo italiano, l’acutezza e la freschezza di certe osservazioni spontanee. In definitiva, il saggio di Webb si armonizza con il libro in quanto fa emergere come l’entusiasmo della scrittura di Hunt sia ascrivibile a quel liberalismo anticlassista in arte che *TL* promuoveva programmaticamente.

Segue il saggio di Gioia Angeletti, che per prima nel volume considera l’esperienza di *TL* dal punto di vista esclusivo di George Byron. Se, come sembra, il titolo del contributo, “*Domestica facta* Recollected in Italy: Byron and *The Liberal*”, si richiama alla celebre formula coniata da Wordsworth nella prefazione alle *Lyrical Ballads* – “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 2013, 111) – non lo fa in maniera inopportuna. Fra i giudizi negativi che *TL* incontrò in Inghilterra ancor prima della pubblicazione, vi fu proprio quello di Wordsworth, rivolto a una rivista che prometteva di minacciare il decoro morale, religioso, politico e letterario. E furono proprio giudizi simili a determinare, secondo Angeletti, l’abbandono di Byron del progetto di *TL*. Ma che la partecipazione iniziale non fu una decisione casuale o una battuta d’arresto, bensì una scelta radicata nel contesto degli ultimi anni di Byron, l’autrice lo dimostra in questo saggio ben documentato e in dialogo con la critica più recente.

Gli anni dal 1819 videro un duplice sforzo di Byron per riguadagnare credibilità, popolarità, persino uno status eroico in patria, almeno fra i liberali, e conseguire una nuova “acculturation” (143) italiana, tramite l’avvicinamento ai liberali e ai moti Carbonari. Qui si inserisce l’esperienza di *TL*: per Byron, potenzialmente, un mezzo per rispondere alle dure critiche Tory e un periodico da finanziare per opporsi alla stampa conservatrice. Entrambi i tentativi di difendere la libertà con parole e fatti si conclusero nella disillusione, ma furono scelte deliberate e, almeno inizialmente, promettenti. Angeletti sostiene che il rapporto con Hunt, in costante deterioramento dopo la morte di Shelley, non sarebbe stato motivo sufficiente a far concludere l’esperienza di *TL*.

Il fatto che i suoi contributi alla rivista siano legati a *domestica facta*, questioni interne britanniche – compresa la traduzione del *Morgante Maggiore* di Pulci, come spiegherà Maria Schoina – suggerisce che Byron intendesse rinegoziarle dalla distanza esotica dell'Italia, nel tentativo di forgiare una nuova identità anglo-italiana e così affermare il “transhistorical and transnational value of liberty” (152). Al contrario, *TL* contribuì ad avvicinarlo, agli occhi dei detrattori politici, a quel giacobinismo e a quelle posizioni radicali per cui, invece, Byron non aveva mai simpatizzato. Pertanto, invece di cavalcare la critica, Byron abbandonò il progetto e si imbarcò nell'impresa greca, sperando di acquisire uno status di uomo d'azione. Similmente, il suo avvicinamento alla Carboneria gli aveva permesso di tentare di conciliare attivamente le origini nobili e il liberalismo, dato che molti carbonari erano aristocratici che abbracciavano idee liberali e radicali. Tentativo, anche questo, finito in disaffezione. Vista l'attenzione dedicata da Angeletti alla ricezione britannica dell'esperienza italiana di Byron, ci si sarebbe aspettata qualche parola più specifica sull'altra “faccia” del “two-faced process” di quegli anni, ossia sul legame di Byron con i carbonari, ma l'autrice dimostra comunque la sua tesi efficacemente. Per concludere, anche Angeletti è consapevole del grado di stereotipato “Mediterraneanism” che accompagna il progetto liberale di *TL*, ma giustamente afferma che ciò non compromette “the significance of comparative approaches meant to encourage transcultural and transnational exchanges, which Byron saw as the bedrock of literary and political cosmopolitanism” (157).

Una volta discusse le motivazioni dell'adesione e del distacco di Byron da *TL*, l'attenzione si sposta sul contributo di cui l'autore andava forse più fiero, ossia la traduzione del primo canto del *Morgante Maggiore* di Luigi Pulci. Il saggio di Maria Schoina, intitolato “‘With flowing rhymes, a pleasant style and free’: Byron’s Translation of Pulci’s *Morgante Maggiore*”, giustifica il posizionamento di quest'opera, già apprezzata dalla critica recente, nel periodico del gruppo pisano e sottolinea come essa si armonizzi con il “new aesthetic paradigm that was gestating in the journal’s pages. [...] Byron’s *Morgante* exemplifies powerfully the journal’s ideals and justifies *The Liberal’s* reformist programme for freedom and tolerance on an aesthetic, intellectual, political, and religious level” (162). Dopo aver fatto risalire l'interesse di Byron per Pulci e l'ottava rima almeno al 1814, Schoina afferma che lo stile autentico, diretto e non poetico del modello italiano influenzò *Don Juan* e permise a Byron di superare il manierismo romantico delle prime opere. Traducendo Pulci, Byron si prese la paradossale “libertà” di importare “parola per parola” un paradigma stilistico interamente nuovo nella letteratura inglese. Quest'ampia diffusione di Pulci era temuta dai conservatori in quanto sottraeva l'ottava rima agli studi dei pochi colti, che potevano renderla innocua bollandola come “quaint”, per consegnarla alla cultura popolare dell'epoca. Il che, peraltro, si accordava perfettamente con il programma politico-letterario di *TL*, “advancing cosmopolitanism, multi-lingualism, intellectual community, sociability, a dialectical relationship with continental sources, and translation as the new international aesthetic” (170).

Successivamente, Schoina sposta l'attenzione su come il pensiero politico di Byron si armonizzasse con il sottotesto del *Morgante Maggiore*, attirando così le ire della critica Tory. In primo luogo, lo scetticismo nei confronti della religione e dei suoi dogmi rese l'autore facile bersaglio delle istituzioni clericali. In secondo luogo, l'ironia nei confronti della conversione di Morgante che rinnega la fede e i fratelli, tagliando loro le mani per farsi accogliere dai monaci, sarebbe stato un chiaro riferimento al voltafaccia politico di Robert Southey, dei Lake Poets e, più in generale, una stoccata a chi ostacolava le riforme sostenendo un establishment corrotto. Ancora una volta, infine, si sottolinea come la scelta di una traduzione dall'italiano di tale portata politica equivallesse a un attacco alle convenzioni letterarie insulari e a una ricerca di indipendenza negli spazi liberali e in corso di liberazione delle culture Europee.

Gli ultimi due contributi direttamente interessati alle vicende di *TL* del 1822-23 riguardano rispettivamente gli scritti e il coinvolgimento di William Hazlitt e di Mary Shelley. Il significato della partecipazione di Hazlitt a *TL* – nella forma di cinque essays – è difficile da valutare; ma Elena Spandri, autrice del sofisticato saggio “William Hazlitt and the Ironies of Liberalism”, lo trova tanto più interessante in quanto Hazlitt non aderì mai senza riserve al programma liberale. L'autrice sostiene perspicacemente che “On the Spirit of Monarchy” e “My First Acquaintance with Poets” sono “sceptical interventions on the viability of liberalism in the 1820s which could only be articulated in a truly liberal and independent journal” (180). Hazlitt rivolse, nei suoi scritti pubblicati su *TL*, moniti riguardanti le possibili derive del liberalismo in patria e promosse sempre un ordine sociale meritocratico, contrario tanto alla monarchia ereditaria quanto all'egualitarismo rivoluzionario.

A dispetto della sfiducia nell'aristocratico Byron, Hazlitt vide in *TL* uno spazio letterario meritocratico al sicuro dalla collusione tra politica e stampa. Questo spazio Hazlitt lo usò per proseguire la sua discussione sul possibile rapporto fra genio e potere. In primo luogo, in *The Spirit of Monarchy*, “royalism involves a form of reverse sympathy that prompts the subjects to sympathize with the monarch because they unconsciously project themselves into his undeserved condition of privilege, receiving vicarious gratification” (186). Questa “reverse

sympathy” rischia di tenere sempre sotto scacco l’amore per la libertà, ma il saggio non si può definire retrogrado: è ironico, pessimista e rimpiange che lo spirito della monarchia stia sopraffacendo il genio, ma contempla la possibilità del liberalismo. Spandri riassume poi le contraddizioni che abitano la visione politica di Hazlitt: da una parte, l’idea del popolo come “body politic” dotato di ragione, intelletto e “agency”, con la possibilità di realizzare utopie; dall’altra, un animale dalle facoltà limitate e gli infiniti desideri. L’autrice concilia brillantemente i due aspetti affermando che la presenza di Hazlitt in *TL* ricordava ai lettori che una società liberale richiedeva provvedimenti politici democratici, tanto quanto la consapevolezza dei desideri istintivi del popolo. Il liberalismo doveva tenere in considerazione la “sympathy” collettiva.

In secondo luogo, in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*, Hazlitt ricerca le ragioni dell’apostasia dei Lake Poets, contrapponendo il loro presente “Tory” a un idealizzato passato giacobino e rurale. Il nucleo ideologico dell’intervento di Hazlitt è ancora una volta il rapporto fra genio e potere. L’effettiva e innegabile caduta dei poeti dal radicalismo al conservatorismo è mitigata dall’ammissione che il genio è alleato naturale del potere e ha una sete inestinguibile di fama e riconoscimento. Ancora una volta, il nemico è l’istintiva “sympathy”. Ne risulta una nostalgia verso quella relazione onesta e orizzontale dei primi incontri coi poeti prima della caduta. Pertanto, il saggio è anche un caveat sulla possibile apostasia di Byron, della cui onestà nell’associazione a *TL* Hazlitt aveva sempre dubitato. La caduta dei Lake Poets può essere anche quella dei sedicenti Liberals e in particolare dell’aspirante eroe. La storicizzazione attuata da Hazlitt è uno sguardo storico che può fare da antidoto ai peggiori istinti corruttivi.

In “The ‘united voice of Italy’: *The Liberal* and Mary Shelley’s ‘A Tale of the Passions’”, Fabio Liberto presenta il caso studio della short story di argomento italiano pubblicata da Mary Shelley su *TL*. A dispetto della discontinuità in qualità e intenzione filosofico-politica dei quattro numeri di *TL*, l’articolo di Liberto – così come il libro di cui fa parte – inizia evidenziando le linee di continuità nel programma politico della rivista e sottolineandone l’intento di denunciare le iniquità delle istituzioni politiche britanniche. *TL* si colloca consapevolmente – e con scarsa fortuna – in un contesto editoriale bellicoso, in cui i periodici lottano per “questions of hegemonic representations of national character and identity” (205). In questo contesto, l’Italia viene presentata come modello ricco di potenzialità, ma fa anche da avamposto letterario da cui perseguire provocatoriamente la causa della libertà. Nell’internazionalismo europeista di *TL*, l’Italia – o l’idea, il *topos* dell’Italia – ha un ruolo privilegiato nella lotta alla mentalità conservatrice britannica, contro cui gli autori di *TL* dirigono “a set of specific and at times radically alternative ideological, geographical and historical demarcations” (208). Liberto effettua poi un’acuta analisi testuale di “A Tale of the Passions”, ambientato nella Firenze contesa fra Guelfi e Ghibellini due anni dopo la morte di Manfredi nel 1268. Tre sono le tematiche individuate: il sogno latente dell’unità d’Italia; la condanna del frazionismo politico che invade la sfera familiare e sentimentale; la forzata passività delle donne, la cui esistenza politica resta confinata alle mura domestiche, in relazione al loro desiderio di “agency” e alla violenta attività politica degli uomini. Shelley non è interessata al realismo; il suo multilinguismo è approssimativo e spesso scorretto, ma si accorda con il tentativo di creare una rappresentazione del paese iperreale dalla quale opporsi all’egemonia linguistica britannica.

Liberto sostiene che il racconto si inquadra coerentemente in *TL* sotto più punti di vista. In primo luogo, il modello italiano è tipico di *TL* e in linea col suo tema. In secondo luogo, il racconto condivide con altri contributi diversi riferimenti alla poetica di Percy Shelley, in particolare a *Adonais*. Infine, Liberto identifica rimandi a Leigh Hunt, sia come personaggio di *Adonais*, sia come autore. Quanto al programma politico, i liberali inglesi guardavano con dolore alle divisioni dell’Italia, e l’utopica unità era auspicata da molti, compresa Mary Shelley. Nel suo racconto, Liberto legge la frustrazione per le divisioni post-napoleoniche, la restaurazione degli austriaci, i fallimenti dei moti carbonari, la posizione “Dantista” di Shelley nei confronti dell’unificazione. In conclusione, Liberto giustifica le imperfezioni estetiche del racconto e del finale sul piano politico, come sacrifici fatti all’intento etico: il successo postumo della protagonista femminile nel redimere il tiranno, che dopo averla messa a morte si ritira in un eremo, potrà essere l’elemento meno ingegnoso della trama, ma rivela al contempo che l’intento politico, sociale, ideologico era più forte delle aspirazioni estetiche.

Il volume si chiude con l’originale contributo di Carlotta Farese, “Back to the Future: *The Liberal* from Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Interview with Benjamin Ramm”. L’autrice inizia con un ulteriore resoconto dei pareri negativi della critica coeva a proposito di *TL*, per poi ricordare da quali prospettive i contributi di “Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in *The Liberal*” hanno rivalutato l’unitarietà e il valore del progetto. Quella di Farese è la prospettiva del presente, dato che l’articolo contiene un’intervista al giornalista Benjamin Ramm, fondatore di un contemporaneo *The Liberal* (2004-12), tentativo di rivitalizzare e rendere attuale l’originario progetto di “Romantic Liberalism” del gruppo pisano. Dall’intervista emerge l’interessante prospettiva “dall’in-

terno” sull’importanza odierna di certi nuclei tematici dell’originale, sulle relazioni fra le due riviste e sulle cause dei rispettivi “fallimenti”. I dodici numeri, stampati o online, di *The Liberal* si promettevano di rinvigorire la tradizione letteraria romantica e di contribuire al moderno dibattito liberale, al tempo stesso opponendosi agli antiliberali Conservatori di Michael Howard e al New Labour di Tony Blair. D’accordo con lo spirito antiutilitarista di *TL*, la poesia aveva un posto d’onore nelle pagine della rivista. Puntando a rivivificare temi e categorie dell’originale, il nuovo *The Liberal* riproponeva sezioni come “Letters from abroad” ma, come l’originale, cessò presto di esistere. I principali punti fermi di *The Liberal* che emergono dall’intervista sono il rifiuto dell’approccio utilitarista alla cultura, del liberalismo economico, la fede in un liberalismo radicale e progressivo e nel rapporto fra cultura e politica, la prospettiva internazionale e cosmopolita. La questione europea non figurava nel nuovo *The Liberal* quanto in quello vecchio, dato che lo sguardo del primo era rivolto soprattutto al di fuori dei confini europei. Ma, come la Brexit ha dimostrato in seguito, il problema di un’identità europea era tutt’altro che inattuale e pacificato nel 2012.

L’intervista di Farese fornisce la prospettiva editoriale su temi e dinamiche della rivista, sulla *cancel culture*, sul populismo di destra. Ma il momento forse più interessante è quello in cui Ramm smonta il meccanismo della “rilevanza” di arte e poesia per la politica. Esse non dovrebbero essere valutate in quanto politicamente o economicamente funzionali, ma semmai i governi dovrebbero promuovere politiche orientate alla cultura e all’arte. *The Liberal* si scagliava proprio contro una politica che sovvenzionava la cultura pubblica solo nella misura in cui essa poteva avere un’utilità economica. Peraltro, un atteggiamento in cui cadevano gli stessi lettori Libdem a cui si rivolgeva la rivista, afferma Ramm, la cui delusione nei confronti del proprio pubblico è evidente nel corso dell’intervista. Quei Libdem sembrano aver assunto i vizi di campanilismo, insularismo e utilitarismo che caratterizzavano i Tory. Il che fu senz’altro fra le ragioni della chiusura del nuovo *The Liberal*, che riceveva attenzioni solo dagli accademici quando si avventurava al di fuori del monolinguisimo anglofono. È indicativo, a questo riguardo, che Ramm attribuisca la Brexit anche all’assenza di “poesia” nella campagna dei Remain, caratterizzata solo da “economic prose, and poorly-written prose at that” (252). Ramm chiude l’intervista con una professione di fede cosmopolita e di comunione coi membri del gruppo pisano, affermando che “Byron and Shelley, like Keats and Hunt, never left their spiritual home, which was in the English poetic imagination. The notion that, by leaving an embittered island, they became ‘citizens of nowhere’, as Theresa May put it, is absurd and lamentable” (256).

Considerato nel suo complesso, il volume curato da Crisafulli, Baiesi e Farese risulta coeso e armonioso, la documentazione storica dei contributi è esauriente senza essere faticosa e mantiene un interessante equilibrio con i momenti di effettiva critica testuale. Il libro è percorso da più fili conduttori, fra i quali l’onesto riscontro dei limiti di *TL* parallelamente alla sua rivalutazione. Questa avviene alla luce di vere qualità artistiche, ma soprattutto del coerente programma politico: l’aspirazione del gruppo pisano ad avere un impatto sulla realtà sociale europea e britannica e a migliorarla, scardinando privilegi e convenzioni degli anni della Restaurazione.

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L'opera di David Foster Wallace è uno spazio intersezionale tra più modalità discorsive che, per essere compreso a fondo, richiede, anzitutto, di sviscerare e illustrare i meccanismi più profondi della dimensione filosofica che lo informa e di cui si nutre. È proprio da tale necessità che nasce *Reading David Foster Wallace Between Philosophy and Literature*, a cura di Allard den Dulk, Pia Masiero, e Adriano Ardivino. Pubblicato nel 2022 dalla Manchester University Press e riedito in formato paperback nel 2023, il volume è una straordinaria esplorazione dell'universo intellettuale di Wallace che coinvolge chi legge in un itinerario che, talvolta, tocca terre in parte già conosciute dalla critica, talaltra, scopre continenti fino ad allora rimasti selvaggi e inesplorati. L'estesa osservazione critica portata avanti nel volume non si limita ai lavori wallaciani più celebri, ma legge e indaga dettagliatamente più testi della sua opera, spaziando dai romanzi principali, ai singoli racconti tratti dalle raccolte fino alla saggistica. Poggiando su uno sconfinato universo bibliografico che comprende studi di varia tipologia, tra cui le posizioni di eminenti filosofi postmoderni e non, illuminanti indagini condotte nell'ambito della critica letteraria contemporanea, nonché analisi critiche sociologiche nel campo dei Cultural e Gender Studies, la monografia curata da Dulk, Masiero e Ardivino decostruisce i piani del grattacielo intellettuale edificato da Wallace e fornisce stimolanti interpretazioni del pensiero dello scrittore circa le problematiche sociali, filosofiche e culturali della contemporaneità con cui Wallace fa i conti fuori e dentro le sue opere. Ad accrescerne il valore è, senz'altro, la molteplicità di angolazioni attraverso le quali, nell'itinerario che il volume offre, il lettore può osservare e approfondire il panorama wallaciano. L'approccio multidisciplinare e la varietà delle tematiche trattate sono espressione della polifonia delle voci che, nel volume, si confrontano con l'opera di Wallace nell'ambito di una collaborazione internazionale. *Reading David Foster Wallace Between Philosophy and Literature* si articola su una struttura tripartita in forza della quale tutti gli scritti contenuti nel volume sono riuniti in tre sezioni tematiche. La prima parte del volume, intitolata *General Perspectives*, fornisce una visione d'insieme dell'opera di Wallace, affrontandone sin da subito la dimensione filosofica. Il saggio di apertura, *Absorbing Art: The Hegelian Project of Infinite Jest*, di Adam Kelly, sottolinea come il pensiero hegeliano possa chiarire alcuni principi estetici fondamentali di *Infinite Jest* (1996). Fra questi, Kelly individua quello dell'assorbimento - una totale immersione dell'osservatore nell'opera d'arte - che diviene, per Wallace, una risposta alla crisi contemporanea della sincerità. Lo studioso approfondisce il concetto confrontandosi con le teorie di Michael Fried, storico dell'arte hegeliano, per

poi osservare come Wallace esplori tale idea in *Infinite Jest*: soffermandosi sulla visione, da parte di Joelle Van Dyne, della pellicola *Pre-Nuptial Agreement*, di James Incandenza, e classificandola come “assorbimento rifrattivo”, Kelly riconosce in tale principio l’esperienza curativa che Wallace, col suo *Infinite Jest*, intende fornire al lettore, ovvero una forma di immersione che permetterebbe la trascendenza delle polarità tra soggetto e oggetto. Lo scrittore americano assume i tratti di un “filosofo-drammaturgo” nel saggio successivo *Stages Socrates and the Performer Stripped Bare: David Foster Wallace as Philosopher-dramatist*, in cui Jeffrey Severs, segnalando la ricchezza di metafore performative all’interno delle opere di Wallace, nota come, in esse, le questioni filosofiche vengano spesso esposte mediante una drammatizzazione in scene che rimandano alle opere dei dialoghi platonici. Anche per Severs la crisi contemporanea della sincerità è un tema centrale e, in virtù di ciò, individua nella raccolta *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999), in particolare nel racconto *Octet*, una riflessione sulla figura del “performer nudo”, un personaggio che, metaforicamente o letteralmente spogliato da Wallace, rivela le proprie vulnerabilità. Come dimostrato da Severs, Wallace ci mette di fronte ad una verità: la performance è un elemento ineludibile della nostra esistenza e il palco è uno spazio in cui indagare le tensioni tra l’autenticità e i ruoli precostituiti che la società ci impone. Gli aspetti narratologici occupano, poi, le pagine del terzo saggio della monografia: steso a quattro mani da Pia Masiero e Adriano Ardovino, *A Matter of Perspective: “Good Old Neon” Between Literature and Philosophy* decostruisce la struttura dell’impianto narratologico del racconto, contenuto in *Oblivion* (2004), prendendo in esame gli spostamenti pronominali della narrazione ed esplorandone accuratamente i tre livelli: il primo è costituito dalla voce di Neal, il secondo livello, invece, introduce la figura fittizia di David Wallace, la quale, immaginando le motivazioni alla base del suicidio di Neal, svolge un atto di immaginazione compassionevole che rappresenta, secondo i due studiosi, il tipo di letteratura a cui Wallace aspira. Il terzo livello narrativo è, infine, costituito dall’autore reale, David Foster Wallace, che orchestra e immagina i primi due livelli narrativi. Nell’interpretazione di Masiero e Ardovino, *Good Old Neon*, oltre a rappresentare una meditazione profonda sulla natura dell’autorialità, assume il carattere di una riflessione sull’immaginazione letteraria, riflessione proposta, da Wallace, come mezzo per superare l’alienazione e la complessità esistenziale. Chiude la prima parte del volume il saggio *The Influence of Christopher Lasch’s “The Culture of Narcissism” on David Foster Wallace*, nel quale Paolo Pitari individua forti parallelismi tra le tesi avanzate da Lasch e quelle di Wallace nel saggio *E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction* (1993): dall’idea comune della pervasività dell’ironia come aspetto caratteristico della cultura narcisistica contemporanea, alla visione critica condivisa di autori come Norman Mailer e Philip Roth, per Wallace emblematici di una scrittura solipsistica e autoreferenziale. Infine, Pitari enuclea gli elementi di convergenza filosofica che corroborano la profonda connessione tra Lasch e Wallace, nello specifico rispetto a temi come l’illusione dell’autosufficienza, la critica alla psicoterapia, il primato dell’individualità e il rapporto tra sé e l’altro. La seconda parte del libro, *Consciousness, Self, and Others*, la quale si addentra nel tema della coscienza e dell’alterità, si apre con un saggio firmato da Allard den Dulk, *“What All She’d So Painfully Learned Said About Her”: A Comparative Reading of David Foster Wallace’s “The Depressed Person” and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s “Notes from Underground”*, che fornisce una lettura del racconto *The Depressed Person*, tratto da *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, e del romanzo *Memorie dal sottosuolo* (1864), di Fëdor Dostoevskij. Il saggio si propone di rintracciare temi e aspetti formali comuni che ne evidenziano l’affinità, intesa, in primo luogo, in termini di critiche culturali proposte e, in secondo luogo, nella modalità parallela dei due scrittori di adattare le idee critico-filosofiche al mezzo letterario. Nonostante il fatto che, in entrambi i testi, i protagonisti siano caratterizzati da un’iperconsapevolezza che li porta a diffidare della comunicazione e della possibilità di esprimersi con successo, Dulk interpreta *Memorie dal sottosuolo* e *The Depressed Person* come due opere accomunate, in realtà, dal fine di favorire la comunicazione e suscitare l’empatia nel lettore. *Infinite Jest*, successivamente, si configura come uno spazio nel quale particolari concetti joyciani e le teorie wittgensteiniane possono incontrarsi e offrire soluzioni per complessi temi filosofici: è questa l’idea che muove l’analisi di Dominik Steinhilber intitolata *Infinite Jest’s “Trinity of You and I into We”: Wallace’s “Click” Between Joyce’s Literary Consubstantiality and Wittgenstein’s Family Resemblance*. Partendo dall’esplorazione del concetto joyciano di consustanzialità in *Ulysses*, Steinhilber ne indaga il recupero da parte di Wallace ed evidenzia come, in *Infinite Jest*, esso si traduca in un uso privato del linguaggio che esclude la connessione interpersonale. Tuttavia, lo studioso nota che Wallace, integrando tale principio con la nozione di gioco linguistico pubblico di Wittgenstein, riabilita una trinità che coinvolge l’autore – di nuovo in vita dopo essere stato dichiarato morto dai post-strutturalisti – il lettore e il testo. In tal modo l’opera letteraria si afferma come “gioco linguistico pubblico” capace di fornire una risposta alla decostruzione solipsistica, per Wallace, radicata nella cultura americana. Il solipsismo e le teorie wittgensteiniane sono aspetti affrontati anche nel saggio di Guido Baggio, dall’eloquente titolo *Solipsism, Loneliness, Alienation: David Foster Wallace as Interpre-*

ter of Wittgenstein, in cui vengono analizzati sia la recensione di Wallace del romanzo di David Markson *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988), sia il racconto *Suicide as a Sort of Present*, contenuto in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*. Mettendo in discussione l'interpretazione della critica secondo cui Wallace sarebbe riuscito a risolvere il problema del solipsismo e analizzando degli estratti di *Infinite Jest*, Baggio evidenzia come lo scrittore non abbia oltrepassato il rischio connesso alle conseguenze di tale prospettiva filosofica e mette in luce la stretta connessione, nell'opera narrativa di Wallace, tra il solipsismo come posizione metafisica e la solitudine, nonché l'alienazione, come dramma esistenziale. La riflessione sulla coscienza, sul sé e sull'alterità si intreccia con il concetto di sfera pubblica nel saggio di Daniel South "*This is Just My Opinion*": *Modelling a Public Sphere in The Pale King*. Qui, focalizzandosi sul romanzo postumo *The Pale King* (2011) e riferendosi agli studi di Robert Asen riguardanti l'ideale di sfera pubblica del neoliberismo, South mostra come Wallace non solo manifesti una posizione opposta, ma tenti anche di fornire una soluzione all'iperinformazione che caratterizza la contemporaneità: per tale scopo l'atto della lettura diviene, per Wallace, una potente risorsa. L'analisi di *The Pale King* si rivela decisiva nel suggerire come il modello di sfera pubblica proposto da Wallace si avvicini molto più alla concezione bakhtiniana che a quella di Jürgen Habermas. Nel saggio successivo, "*Pioneers of Consciousness*": *Hypothesis for a Diptych*, Lorenzo Marchese analizza i racconti *Incarnations of Burned Children* e *Another Pioneer*, contenuti in *Oblivion*, a suo avviso, caratterizzati da una comunanza di aspetti tematici e filosofici che ne permetterebbero una lettura nei termini di un dittico narrativo esemplificativo delle modalità di Wallace di trattare la relazione tra la coscienza del sé e i limiti della comunicazione. Fra le affinità individuate, vi è la tendenza dei due testi a sviluppare narrazioni vicine alle riflessioni postmoderne di Jacques Derrida o alle questioni pragmatiste e post-analitiche, con particolare attenzione alle idee di Thomas Nagel e Richard Rorty. In ultima analisi, Marchese approfondisce la qualità della produzione di Wallace, definendola come una narrazione filosofica piuttosto che una filosofia narrativa. La seconda sezione di *Reading David Foster Wallace Between Philosophy and Literature* si esaurisce con il saggio *The Problem of Other Minds in Good Old Neon*. Analogamente a Masiero e Ardovino, Matt Prout si concentra su tale racconto enfatizzandone, tuttavia, aspetti differenti: qui viene letto alla luce della filosofia della mente di Ludwig Wittgenstein. Nel testo, la figura di David Wallace affronta il problema di colmare il divario tra le apparenze esterne e le realtà interne, mentre la narrazione di Neal è una forma di scetticismo che esclude la comprensione reale dell'altro, un tema centrale che Prout contestualizza mobilitando il concetto di "verità dello scetticismo" di Stanley Cavell. Per lo studioso, quello esposto in *Good Old Neon* è un paradosso filosofico: da un lato si cerca di superare la questione della mente altrui, dall'altro si svelano i limiti del linguaggio nel permetterne una conoscenza autentica. La terza e ultima parte del libro, *Embodiment, Gender, and Sexuality*, propone riflessioni critiche sulle strutture socioculturali che modellano l'esperienza corporea e sessuale. La sezione è inaugurata dall'illuminante saggio di Clare Hayes-Brady intitolato "*I Am in Here*": *David Foster Wallace and the Body as Object*, il cui epicentro è un' esplorazione del ruolo del corpo come fondamento dell'esperienza linguistica. La studiosa mostra come Wallace ricorra all'esperienza incarnata contrapponendosi alla visione di Jacques Derrida sulla metafisica della presenza e come, per lo scrittore, la dimensione corporea influenzi e spesso ostacoli l'atto linguistico. Attraverso la lente della Affect Theory, Hayes-Brady osserva la tensione che governa il rapporto mente-corpo, già ispirata dalle idee di Schopenhauer, che emerge dalle difficoltà di personaggi come Hal e Orin Incandenza nel tradurre l'esperienza interiore in linguaggio. Nel saggio che segue, "*The Interstices of Her Sense of Something*": *David Foster Wallace, the Quest for Affect, and the Future of Gendered Interactions*, Mara Mattoscio indaga la rappresentazione, da parte di Wallace, delle dinamiche di genere e degli affetti. Focalizzandosi su *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* e facendo riferimento al concetto di "ottimismo crudele" della teorica Lauren Berlant, Mattoscio suggerisce che quella adottata da Wallace nella sua raffigurazione delle relazioni di genere, in particolare in *Datum Centurio* e *Octet*, sia una posizione di "pessimismo ironico". Nei due racconti emergerebbe la violenza strutturale intrinseca alle interazioni di genere, oltre ad una critica degli squilibri di potere e le difficoltà comunicative, profondamente radicate, tra uomini e donne. Il volume prosegue dando voce ad un altro tema trascurato dalla critica letteraria wallaciana, ossia quello della razza. È questo lo scopo di "*You Are Loved*": *Race, Love, and Language in Early Wallace*, con cui, prendendo in considerazione anche i temi della comunicazione e dell'amore, Lola Boorman osserva come tali questioni, a suo avviso implicite soprattutto nelle opere *Girl with Curious Hair* (1989) e *Signifying Rappers* (1990), assolvano un ruolo cruciale ai fini dello sviluppo di una "logica della distanza". L'attenzione di Boorman si concentra, dapprima, sul racconto eponimo *Girl with Curious Hair* e su *Lyndon*, contenuti nella medesima raccolta, e, dopo aver fatto riferimento alle idee di James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), prende, poi, in esame il testo *Signifying Rappers*. Se da un lato Wallace ricorre all'amore per superare le divisioni sociali, la sua "whiteness" può complicare tale scopo, portando alla potenziale

cancellazione della differenza razziale in nome dell'universalità. Una prospettiva completa riguardo alla posizione di Wallace sui temi legati al corpo, al genere ed alla sessualità non può certo escludere una discussione approfondita sulla pornografia, tematica affrontata da Wallace sia nella narrativa, sia nella saggistica. Chiara Scarlato, in *"They Remain Just Bodies": on Pornography in David Foster Wallace* dedica particolare attenzione proprio a tale aspetto. L'analisi del saggio commissionato allo scrittore dalla rivista *Playboy*, del 1989, e di opere narrative e saggistiche, rispettivamente *Infinite Jest*, i due racconti *Adult World (I)* e *Adult World (II)*, e il saggio *Big Red Son*, tratto da *Consider the Lobster* (2005), permette a Scarlato di mettere in luce come il tema rappresenti per Wallace una lente critica per confrontarsi con argomenti filosofici contemporanei: la dipendenza, l'intrattenimento e, nella fattispecie, le conseguenze della pornografia sulle relazioni umane. A tal proposito, Scarlato dimostra come, nella narrativa wallaciana, la scrittura, presentandosi come una sorta di conversazione fra autore e lettore, divenga un'alternativa all'estetica pornografica. Wallace concepisce quest'ultima come una forma di "intrattenimento fallimentare" che, anziché offrire piacere, esacerba la solitudine e l'alienazione, fortificando quel legame tra dipendenza e intrattenimento che lo scrittore approfondisce costantemente nelle sue opere. Il saggio conclusivo del volume si concentra sui temi dello sguardo e della visualità: Angelo Grossi, in *"Something Staring Back at You": An Anamorphic Reading of Infinite Jest*, osserva come David Foster Wallace metta in discussione la nozione cartesiana di soggetto razionale e autonomo evocando i modelli di visualità del prospettivismo rinascimentale e del barocco. A riguardo, è fondamentale il concetto di sguardo di Jacques Lacan, al quale Grossi attinge per mostrare la riflessione wallaciana sull'illusione dei personaggi di padroneggiare l'ambiente circostante, suggerendo, invece, che essi non posseggano il pieno controllo di ciò che vedono o di come interagiscono con il mondo. Individuando nella nota 129 di *Infinite Jest* l'emblema dello sguardo anamorfico del romanzo, Grossi ritiene che le metafore visive affrontate siano, per Wallace, uno strumento volto alla critica delle soggettività autosufficienti e solipsistiche promosse dall'ideologia capitalistica moderna. Il volume curato da Dulk, Masiero e Ardovino costituisce un contributo di notevole impatto sui *Wallace Studies*: dimostra la necessità di più lenti investigative per l'ampliamento della conoscenza critica di uno scrittore poliedrico e intersezionale come Wallace, un intellettuale che sfida e ispira studiosi e lettori di tutto il mondo. Il lato oscuro dell'*American way of life*, se così si può dire, problematizzato da Wallace è qualcosa che ormai, più o meno direttamente, riguarda tutti: per i lettori, leggerne le opere alla luce delle teorie esposte in *Reading David Foster Wallace Between Philosophy and Literature* è un'occasione non solo per conoscere la profondità dei suoi testi, ma anche per cogliere le problematiche filosofiche e sociali intrinseche alla contemporaneità e, di conseguenza, comprendere sé stessi.



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Dalla classe alle classi.
Andrea Scibetta (a cura di),
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e per l'università, Torino, UTET 2024, pp. 212

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Il volume *Tecniche didattiche per la lingua cinese. Proposte operative per la scuola secondaria di II grado e per l'università*, curato da Andrea Scibetta, arricchisce il panorama delle pubblicazioni italiane sul tema attraverso un lavoro agile e con un taglio applicativo. Nell'introduzione, il curatore stesso specifica che l'idea del volume è "impostare una riflessione teoretico-pratica, corredata da numerosi esempi, intorno alle tecniche didattiche per la lingua cinese" (3). Come sottolineato nella prefazione a cura di Frine Beba Favoloro, si avverte come questo lavoro sia frutto del dialogo tra il mondo della ricerca e quello della pratica didattica quotidiana. Il dialogo è anche tra gli autori, che scrivono partendo da esperienze diverse – docenti di scuola secondaria e docenti universitari, docenti italiani e docenti cinesi – restituendo una immaginaria fotografia della didattica odierna del cinese in Italia. Oltre al curatore, che ha redatto alcune delle tecniche, la pubblicazione coinvolge altri dieci docenti tutti – operanti in Toscana – che propongono 28 tecniche didattiche e una sezione per la didattica accessibile con ulteriori proposte specifiche.

Il libro si compone di 7 parti, ognuna delle quali contiene dai 3 agli 8 capitoli. Ogni capitolo è dedicato ad una tecnica, provvista di una scheda sintetica, di una descrizione con riferimenti anche teorici ed esempi d'uso corredata da immagini. Ogni sezione ha inoltre espansioni online, scaricabili attraverso QR code, con ulteriori materiali, autentici o adattati per la didattica.

Le pubblicazioni di ambito nazionale sulla didattica del cinese si possono dividere in tre grandi gruppi: le pubblicazioni con un taglio teorico, frutto della ricerca accademica; i manuali destinati ai corsi di lingua in scuole o università; i volumi centrati su proposte operative focalizzate su un solo aspetto dell'apprendimento linguistico, ad esempio i caratteri, le strutture o lo studio della fonetica. Questo volume ha quindi il pregio di presentare insieme tecniche diverse che guardano ad aspetti complementari dell'apprendimento: pronuncia, prosodia e intonazione; apprendimento e memorizzazione dei caratteri; studio dei radicali; produzioni di testi; tecniche per interazione e gestione della multimodalità; promozione di una didattica accessibile.

Il libro è costruito per essere consultato dal docente secondo le sue necessità, con una chiara connotazione applicativa. Scorrendo le tecniche proposte nell'indice, ad ogni docente, verranno quindi in mente situazioni reali della vita della classe e problemi didattici a cui è chiamato a dare risposta. Il libro, quindi, può essere pensato come la classica *cassetta degli attrezzi* da utilizzare sin da subito

dentro i propri percorsi didattici. Il volume lascia al docente che lo avrà a disposizione il compito di dare coerenza tra l'approccio, il metodo e la tecnica presentata (Wang 2020). Non dà ricette da seguire, ma invita l'insegnante a elaborare ulteriormente le stesse proposte. Già questo è segno che esse provengono da esperienze didattiche concrete, in cui ogni gruppo di apprendenti ha una storia, una personalità, un percorso diverso dagli altri.

Le tecniche fanno riferimento ad attività glottodidattiche comuni ad altre lingue o specifiche per la lingua cinese: sono comunque sottolineate la specificità della lingua cinese e le possibili difficoltà degli apprendenti italofoni. In generale le proposte del volume sottolineano ancora una volta come l'approccio comunicativo orientato all'uso della lingua possa essere utilizzato anche con la lingua cinese a tutti i livelli di competenza. La maggior parte delle attività sono di tipo ludico e creativo, adatte ad un setting laboratoriale e non frontale. In questo senso appaiono più destinate alla didattica della scuola che all'università, ma non per la natura delle tecniche proposte. Si pensi, ad esempio, alle aule universitarie, la maggior parte delle quali sono state progettate per un apprendimento frontale; o si pensi al numero di studenti per classe che, specialmente nei primi anni di corso, non sempre permette una didattica laboratoriale. In questo senso, le proposte del volume confermano che anche all'università la glottodidattica può rappresentare un apripista anche per altre discipline.

L'approccio linguistico-comunicativo e orientato alle funzioni pragmatiche della lingua, che fa da sfondo al volume, si lega anche ai riferimenti sparsi alla dimensione interculturale dell'apprendimento linguistico e, in alcuni casi, alla mobilità cinese in Italia, tematiche della quotidianità che si pongono agli studenti ben prima di entrare in classe.

Merita un'attenzione a parte la sezione dedicata alla didattica accessibile e inclusiva. Il tema è centrale perché l'aumento degli studenti con disturbi specifici dell'apprendimento è osservabile in ogni ordine di scuola e anche all'università. Le autrici della sezione dedicata fanno opportunamente riferimento alla cornice della *Universal Design for Learning*: pensare le attività didattiche a favore dell'accessibilità significa ripensare la didattica in generale che, in altre parole, è tale solo se è accessibile per tutti i diversi stili e bisogni di apprendimento. Il volume quindi integra le pubblicazioni sulla didattica del cinese riunendo un ventaglio di tecniche flessibili e in linea con gli orientamenti più recenti.

L'uscita del volume *Tecniche didattiche per la lingua cinese* richiama nel titolo la pubblicazione del 1961 *Le nuove tecniche didattiche* di Bruno Ciari, maestro del Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa, riflessione fondamentale per generazioni di insegnanti di ieri e di oggi. A dire il vero sono numerosi i volumi che hanno come oggetto le tecniche didattiche degli insegnanti, ma il richiamo alle "tecniche" e alla "lingua cinese" è evocativo di un rapporto speciale tra questi due termini. Le tecniche didattiche assumono senso nella classe e nelle relazioni con il mondo. Qualsiasi tecnica didattica, infatti, non può ignorare il mondo che gli studenti portano in classe e che si trasforma ogni giorno con gli altri studenti, con l'insegnante, con i contenuti dell'apprendimento. Forse i tempi sono maturi per pensare che il compito dell'insegnante di cinese sia guidare gli studenti ad apprendere il cinese e allo stesso tempo guidarli ad apprendere *attraverso* il cinese.

Scriveva Ciari:

Il primo incontro con la scuola e con l'insegnante è decisivo. C'è nel fanciullo una aspettazione trepida, fuorviata spesso dai discorsi familiari che dipingono la scuola e il maestro in modo poco allettante. E il fanciullo arriva, il grembiolino lustrato, il fiocco colorato sul colletto candido, quasi prigioniero di questa sua divisa, e guarda con occhi ansiosi. Ecco: la mamma si allontana; siamo in classe, che succederà ora? (2012, 17).

Mutatis mutandis, immaginiamo le nostre classi: il primo incontro a scuola con la lingua cinese e con l'insegnante di cinese è decisivo. Aspettative, pregiudizi, timori, curiosità, ansie. Gli studenti si siedono. Che succederà ora?

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