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## BEYOND PHILOLOGY 21/4

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LINGUISTICS





## **Icelandic-English code-switching among young people on social media**

FINNUR FRÍÐRIKSSON  
ÁSGRÍMUR ANGANTÝSSON

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### **Abstract**

This study is based on the analysis of code-switching (CS) between Icelandic and English in status updates, wall comments and Messenger conversations of Icelandic secondary school students on Facebook. Surprisingly, in light of the current concerns about the rapidly growing use of English in the Icelandic speech community, the average proportion of English in the total vocabulary is only 3%. CS is more common in closed personal chats than in the open environment of status updates and wall posts. However, the proportion of English vocabulary ranges from 0.16% in a private conversation about homework up to 30.47% in a playful chat about popular culture. The primary functions of CS are lexical need, emphasis, interjection, playfulness and promoting relationships. The two most determinant factors regarding the application of CS are the linguistic environment and the topic in question.

### **Keywords**

code-switching, computer-mediated communication, social media, youth language, conversational function of code-switching

## **Islandzko-angielskie przełączanie kodów językowych wśród młodych ludzi w mediach społecznościowych**

### **Abstrakt**

Niniejsze badanie opiera się na analizie przełączania kodów językowych (CS) między islandzkim a angielskim w aktualizacjach statusów, postach na tablicy i rozmowach na Messengerze wśród islandzkich uczniów szkół średnich na Facebooku. Zaskakującym wynikiem, biorąc pod uwagę aktualne obawy związane z gwałtownym wzrostem użycia języka angielskiego w islandzkiej społeczności językowej, jest fakt, że udział słownictwa angielskiego w ogólnym zasobie słownictwa wynosi zaledwie 3%. Zmiana kodu językowego jest bardziej powszechna w zamkniętych, osobistych czatach niż w otwartym środowisku tzn. aktualizacja statusów i posty na tablicy. Proporcja słownictwa różni się znacznie, od 0,16% w prywatnych rozmowach dotyczących prac domowych, do 30,47% w swobodnym dialogu na temat popkultury. Kluczowe funkcje zmiany kodu obejmują potrzeby leksykalne, podkreślenia, wtrącenia, żartobliwość oraz budowanie relacji. Dwoma najważniejszymi czynnikami decydującymi o wykorzystaniu zmiany językowej są kontekst językowy oraz tematyka rozmowy.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

język młodzieży, komunikacja za pośrednictwem komputera, konwersacyjna funkcja zmiany językowej, media społecznościowe, przełączanie kodu językowego

### **1. Introduction**

This article aims at investigating the digital language contact between Icelandic and English as it appears in computer-mediated communication (CMC) among students in secondary schools in Iceland. More specifically, the main concern will be to investigate the interplay between Icelandic and English as it appears in status updates, comments and personal messages from upper secondary school students on the social medium

Facebook. Code-switching in a broad sense is of special interest here; that is, when English is used to communicate words, phrases, sentences and even longer utterances in a linguistic environment where Icelandic is otherwise the main language. This is interesting in an Icelandic context as research has revealed that children and youths consider it important to attain skills in the formal use of Icelandic, mainly with regard to schooling and ambitions in Icelandic society, whereas English has considerably stronger associations with exciting prospects abroad and pleasant relaxation, such as computer games, TV programmes and pop music (Íslensk málnefnd 2020, Jónsson and Angantýsson 2018, Sigurjónsdóttir and Rögnvaldsson 2018). At the same time, the popularity of Icelandic as a school subject has dwindled while that of English, which is the first foreign language taught in Icelandic schools, is on the rise (Sigþórsson, Pétursdóttir and Jónsdóttir 2014).

In more general terms increased globalisation, rapid technological advances and an ever-increasing use of English in most aspects of modern life in Iceland, has undermined the previously undisputed status of the Icelandic language as quite central to the national psyche (see, e.g. Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson 2010, and Sigurjónsdóttir and Rögnvaldsson 2018). One recent manifestation of this is the lively debate in the Facebook group *Málsþjallið* (The language chat), which is hosted by Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson, a former professor of Icelandic at the University of Iceland. A recurrent theme on this page in the summer of 2023 was the perceived dominance of English in the Icelandic tourism industry, where there appears to be a growing tendency to use English as either the first or the only language on signs, advertisements, menus etc., much to the annoyance of certain members of the group. This example is indicative of a larger picture that is characterized by the high presence of English in Iceland, in particular in terms of informal receptive English. This in turn appears to have led to a high level of confidence among Icelanders in their English skills even though the basis for this confidence may be somewhat questionable as

their actual usage of spoken and written English on an everyday basis may not be as extensive as they believe it to be (Arnbjörnsdóttir 2018).

There has been an awareness of this development for some time, as witnessed, e.g. by the official Icelandic Language Policy which was instigated by the Icelandic Parliament in 2009 and primarily emphasizes the threat posed by English and the need for Icelanders to be able to use Icelandic in all aspects of society and everyday life (*Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti* 2009), and, all in all, the perceived purity of the Icelandic language has been somewhat tarnished lately, however unrealistic such an image of purity may be to begin with (cf. Langer and Nesse 2012).

Although the past few decades have seen considerable discussion and writing on the impact of English on the Icelandic language community (Guðmundsdóttir et al. 2019–2020), this has had but little or no effect to stimulate organised research into Icelanders' potential code switching into English. Furthermore, as far as we know, no studies have been conducted in an Icelandic context on code-switching in electronic communication and/or in the social media. Therefore, this article is for the most part heading towards unexplored Icelandic territory.

The research is based on documentary evidence from 92 upper secondary students who gave access to status updates and comments on their Facebook pages during a period of three weeks. Besides, 30 of those students provided the researchers with copies of their conversation threads after obtaining permission from relevant respondents. The main objective of this article is to determine the extent of participants' code-switching, its role in their communication and the situations in which it is most likely to occur. On this basis the following research questions emerge:

- A. How frequent is the use of words, phrases and longer utterances from English?

- B. What function does code-switching have in the discourse/chats?
- C. Under which circumstances is the code-switching most common and which appear to be the main underlying reasons (subject, chats/peer discussions; open/closed venue)?
- D. To what extent are there indications of English being used as a primary language along with or even in place of Icelandic?

From a wider theoretical perspective, our results challenge the predominant frameworks for categorizing the functions of code-switching (see, e.g. Gumperz 1982, Hoffman 2014, Saville-Troike 2003). Thus, we propose an analysis that is both flexible enough to allow for overlap between functions rather than trying to pinpoint a single functional category for each instance of code-switching, and nuanced enough to incorporate subcategories of some of the previously established functions.

The organisation of the article is as follows: The second section lays the foundation for the discussion while the third section outlines data collection and research methodology. The fourth section presents the conclusions of the research and in the final section these are summarised and placed in the context of previous studies.

## **2. Theoretical background and demarcation**

The first attempts at defining code-switching were presented by pioneers such as Gumperz (1982), Myers-Scotton (2000) and Poplack (2000), based on their research in the 1970s and 80s, and the concept is now generally thought to refer to circumstances where two or more languages (or two or more varieties of the same language) are used within one and the same conversation. Initially, spoken language was the main concern in this context, but in recent years the written form has also been investigated, especially after the advent of computer-mediated communication (CMC) which often may be regarded as a kind of conversation, in spite of being in written form, which

of course excludes the possibility of phonetic assimilation (see Backus (2003) for further discussion of insertion patterns in code-switching).

Any closer definitions of code-switching have proved to be more elusive, in particular regarding its actual extent and where the boundaries between its different levels lie (cf. Gardner-Chloros 2009). People appear to agree that it is a case of code-switching to change over from one language to another in whole sentences or longer units, and separate phrases or expressions can also include code-switching. But the going gets tougher when it comes to individual words. Besides, the permitted degree of adaptation from the embedded language to the matrix language (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993) varies as to how far the sound system, inflections or sentence structure can be affected and still remain within the definition of code-switching. Thus, Poplack (2000) is of the opinion that the word *mogueen* derived from English “mug” (= “attack, rob”) cannot be regarded as code-switching in the Spanish sentence *Es posible que te mogueen* (= “they could attack/rob you”) since this word has been adjusted to Spanish as regards sentence structure, inflection and phonology. On the other hand, the word “heavy-duty” in the sentence *Las palabras heavy-duty, bien grandes, se me han olvidado* would be classified as code-switching, since it shows no sign of adaptation to the Spanish system of phonology or inflection, although its use is not in accordance with conventional word order in English. Similar distinctions can be found in Haspelmath (2009), who also claims that concepts that are frequently expressed by a word from another language should be regarded as loanwords while concepts that show great variability are to be viewed as switches. At the same time, however, he points out that the line between loanwords and single-word code-switches is not clear cut and this indeterminacy has in some cases led to certain intermediate paths having been chosen where single words and other slang terms and borrowings from the embedded language inserted into the matrix language, with or without adaptation, have been cate-

gorised as a certain variety of code-switching, frequently under the term code-mixing (Fasold 1984).

In this article, the leitmotif is to adhere to a fairly broad definition and thus categorise as code-switching both cases identified here as indisputable members of that category, as well as others commonly referred to as code-mixing. The main reason for this method is that one of the aims of the research outlined here is to add fragments to the general portrayal we already have of the extent of the usage of English in an Icelandic context. Nevertheless, certain restrictions will always be needed and in this regard the following factors were mainly relevant.

Firstly, in many instances we had to determine when words of English origin were to be included in, or excluded from, the code-switching category. It is hard to draw a sharp dividing line in this regard and in various instances our conclusions are doubtless debatable. We have, for instance, decided to exclude from code-switching several words from our database which are clearly of foreign origin and have no obvious counterparts in Icelandic, as they are now generally regarded as part of everyday Icelandic based on decades of use and have, for the most part, if not wholly, assimilated themselves to the grammatical and phonological system of Icelandic. In this category are, for example, various words relating to music and entertainment such as *djamm*, *kokteill*, *fönk* and *rokk*, as well as various types of cuisine and food items, for example *pizza*, *lasagna*, *frómas*, *naan*(-bread), *túrmerik* and *snakk*. Similarly, due to lack of comparable terms in Icelandic, a number of English names of computer games, TV series, popular songs etc., were also excluded from the category of code-switching and the same applies to named trade marks in English such as *Nike* and *Converse*(-shoes). The remainder is composed of a diverse assemblage of words such as *reddi*, *plís* and *fuck/fucking/fuckanum* which generally have existed in Icelandic for some length of time and been adapted to a considerable degree and are therefore doubtful members of the code-switching category. It is noted here, nevertheless, that those words have obvious Icelandic

parallels (*reddi* = *tilbúin/n*, *plís* = *gerðu það/vinsamlegast*, *fuck* = *andskotinn/helvíti/...*) and thus users have a choice, although in many cases they are no doubt mostly unaware of other options, and on this basis these words are included in our analysis.

Secondly, we decided to disregard so-called hashtags which serve the function of a key to a discussion on a certain theme or issue on the social media. To be sure, participants use both English and Icelandic hashtags, but each hashtag only provides access to one language, thus excluding the option of code-switching.

Finally, participants' English-speaking friends occasionally respond to their status updates by adding a question or some other feedback to comments relevant to the updates, resulting in a subsequent conversation in English. It is a well-known phenomenon from code-switching research that participants switch from one dialect or language to another when called for by circumstances – as for example the addition of a new participant. But usually this applies in a situation where both (or all) participants in the conversation or communication in question have at least some skill in the use of the relevant languages or dialects; that is, the participants have a choice as to which language or dialect they use. A comparable option does not exist on the Facebook threads under consideration; if the conversation is to proceed the owner of the Facebook page has to switch over to English as there are no indications that the participants' English-speaking friends speak any Icelandic. Thus, we are of the opinion that the use of English in this context, despite constituting a switch from the use of Iceland in the original status update, cannot be classified as code-switching from Icelandic to English per se.

The perspective in this article is sociolinguistic rather than formal, i.e. our emphasis is on analysing the role of code-switching in human communication in order to gain an impression of the role played by English in the exchanges of social media participants. The origin of the above-mentioned



role perspective is often traced to research by Blom and Gumperz, dealing with code-switching between a literary form of Norwegian, known as *bokmal*, on the one hand, and the local dialect of the inhabitants of Hemnesberget, a village in northern Norway, on the other. Based on their research, Blom and Gumpers divided code-switching into two main classes; that is, situational code-switching, relating to the fact that code-switching tends to arise as the conversational situation changes, for example when a new participant enters the conversation (cf. discussion above), or a new topic is introduced, or, on the other hand, metaphorical code-switching which occurs when a current speaker switches from one language to another to illustrate his attitude, emphasise a point, contribute a touch of humour or cite the words of another person (Blom and Gumperz 2000).

This basic classification has for the most part endured the passing of time, although being developed further, both by Gumperz (1982) himself and others (see, e.g. Hoffmann 2014; Saville-Troike 2003), so that the role of code-switching has now been subdivided into further branches. Some of those, such as added emphasis and citing others, have already been mentioned. Nevertheless, further contextual variations have been identified; for example, code-switching often appears to be used to further explain certain messages, to emphasise the relationship with the person one is talking to, or when a speaker cannot find a word or phrase in the first language to communicate effectively. In our analysis we will develop a three-fold sub-categorization of instances of this last kind, i.e. where lexical need sparks the use of English. We are aware that what we regard as pure lexical need (Lexical need A, see section 3) is by some researchers (Myers-Scotton 1993) viewed as instant borrowing rather than code-switching. As explained above, however, we here adhere to an open definition of code-switching in order to get as broad an overview as possible of the extent of the usage of English in an Icelandic context. It has also been pointed out that code-switching does not always serve a de-

finitive purpose, but may apparently occur in a random manner, perhaps being sparked by certain words or circumstances relating to the context of an utterance, leading to subconscious associations of ideas which activate the code-switching (Riehl 2005).

As was perhaps to be expected, the code-switching classification is to some extent determined by linguistic circumstances, some of which have been looked into in this context such as the relationship between salesmen and customers (Long and Ting 2014, Pan 2000), teachers and students (Cahyani, de Courcy and Barnett 2018, Greggio and Gil 2007) as well as technical discussions, for example in relation to computers (Riney 1998). Furthermore, in recent years communication in an electronic environment, especially on social media has attracted increasing attention. In most cases, English is the language most frequently switched to, as most social media are based on an English-speaking back-ground and English is widely used as a kind of “lingua franca” of our times (Kowner and Rosenhouse 2008) although various languages have served the function of a matrix language such as Danish and Lithuanian (Jakelienė 2018), Nepalese (Sharma 2012), Chinese, Malay (Ting and Yeo 2019) and Filipino (Caparas and Gustilo 2017).

The conclusions of these observations, generally indicate that despite a certain inherent distinction between oral and electronic communication the roles played by code-switching is for the most part identical or comparable in both types of transmission (Androutsopoulos 2011), although there are some indications that code-switching is not particularly frequent in electronic interchanges (Ting and Yeo 2019).

### **3. Methods, data and analysis**

The data being processed here was collected within the framework of a larger research project which was meant to provide insight into the image Icelandic upper secondary school

students create of themselves on Facebook. One aspect of this image is young people's language use on status updates and comments on their Facebook pages and in the messages they exchange through Messenger, the chatline attached to Facebook. Here the focus is on youth language use in those interchanges and the language switching that occurs.

In order to collect data two upper secondary schools were contacted in spring 2015, on the one hand a school offering traditional academic education, and on the other, a school offering both academic studies and a variety of vocational courses. This was done to ensure a maximum breadth in the student population. Permission was obtained to visit the schools during term-time and briefly visit lessons in classes and study groups in order to introduce the project and ask interested students to participate. Those who volunteered, subsequently received an introductory letter and signed a declaration of their informed consent. Special care was taken to ensure that the students originated from as many study paths or programmes as possible in order to ensure a certain level of diversity. Otherwise, however, their background was not taken into special consideration, apart from the fact that only students who had attained the age of majority were approached; that is, 18 years of age. By those means a total of 92 student participants were obtained; 48 students from one of the two schools and 44 from the other, and the gender division was the same; that is, 48 girls and 44 boys.

For the purpose of data collection, a special Facebook page was prepared in the name of the project and when the students had agreed to participate a friend request was submitted to them from this page. Subsequently, when the friend request had been accepted, all of the students' status updates and comments were monitored and recorded for three weeks. During this three-week period the students published a total of 474 status updates, or an average of 5.15 and 321 comments, or an average

of 3.491. It should be made clear, however, that the students' level of activity varied significantly. Thus, a total of 19 students wrote no status updates during the period in question while the two most active students, published, on the one hand, 23 and, on the other, 39 such entries. By far the largest number of students, however, or 56, published one to ten updates. It ought to be mentioned, furthermore, that the level of activity was to some extent gender-based; girls published an average of 6.23 updates during the period in question whereas boys published 3.98 – a pattern for the most part repeated in the comments section. The two most active students (not the same two as those who were most active in status updates) wrote, on the one hand, 28 and on the other, 44 comments while 32 students wrote no comment at all. 50 students wrote from one to ten comments. There is also a gender difference in this regard as the girls wrote on average 4.71 comments, compared to the boys' 2.16. The students' status updates consist of 5,983 words and they make up a total of 4,084 words. It should be noted that the students' activity, whether it is in terms of its amount or content, can of course have been affected by their awareness of their status updates and comments being observed. However, there are no clear indications of this in the collected material and when the students taking part in focus group interviews that were carried out, and will be discussed in greater detail below, were asked whether they had in any way changed their Facebook behaviour due to them being observed they all said that they had simply forgotten all about this after the first two or three days.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Messenger exchanges between students were also investigated. Those messages are not directly displayed on students' Facebook pages so they had to be specifically asked to send the researchers samples of those pages. No special instructions were issued with regard to the nature and content of those messages, which may

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<sup>1</sup> Comments were only collected from the participants' own Facebook pages, i.e. they are comments that they made to their own status updates or made in response to comments made by their Facebook friends.

be regarded as roughly comparable to written chats. Rather, it was left to the students themselves to determine what they wanted the researchers to see, if they were at all prepared to contribute materials of this kind. Care was taken, however, to instruct them to gain permission from their fellow chatters to release the material and they were also asked to remove the names of the chat friends concerned. A total of 30 students submitted examples of this type of writing, consisting of fragments of highly varying length from longer chats they had with their friends or schoolmates. The shortest specimen is only 78 words and the longest one is 3,580 words. Altogether those chat samples make up a total of 17,408 words, averaging a length of about 580 words. The topics of conversation also differ significantly from one sample to another, ranging from school assignments to pleasures and partying. It is also fairly common to wander from one topic to another within the same thread of conversation.

As a follow-up, after the completion of fundamental data processing, focus group interviews were conducted for the purpose of further elucidating some aspects of the data which were thought to be particularly noteworthy. In each of the two schools, one interview was conducted, involving a total of six participants at a time who had all contributed materials during earlier stages of data collection. Each of the two groups had equal gender balance. In those interviews, questions did not deal with code-switching per se; the focus was rather on the students' general language performance, including the use of English and their awareness thereof.

Anonymity was ensured in the registration of all data. Thus, each participant was allocated a personal code when registered and all names of fellow communicators and other individuals were removed. It was also attempted, as far as possible, to remove other registered information which could lead to the identification of specific individuals. It is worth emphasising that this data, gathered in spring 2015, is not exactly up to date, especially in the context of an ever-changing electronic environ-

ment. Nevertheless, no significant changes have occurred in the organisation of status updates and comments, neither with regard to Facebook nor the Messenger software, during the above-mentioned period. Thus, the conclusions presented here should give a fairly clear picture of current Facebook exchanges, as well as providing opportunities for comparison with newer data.

In the data analysis, all code-switching, as defined within the framework of this article (cf. discussion in Section 2) was classified on the basis of the role or purpose it seemed to serve on each occasion. In this classification, previous research in this field was taken into account such as that by Gumperz (1982) outlined above, although the main emphasis was on research by Caparas and Gustilo (2017) focusing on code-switching by Filipino students on Facebook. Their classification, in turn, is based on the works of Hoffmann (2014) and Saviile-Troike (2003). Caparas and Gustilo examined 200 status updates and 100 wall posts from 50 Facebook accounts with regard to multilingual code-switching between English, Filipino and regional languages in the Philippines. In their analysis, they identified 16 different functions or motives for code-switching. The most common of these were lexical need, clarification of content and emphasis. Given the resemblance between Caparas and Gustilo's study and the work presented here, as regards the nature of the data, this was judged to be a natural point of departure. Most of the functional categories they identified were also found in our data. However, some adjustments had to be made due to the nature of examples gathered in this research, and a few categories were either added or removed depending on the character of specific examples. Thus, a specific category of captions is added here; that is, texts accompanying pictures or links which the language user in question includes in a status update. It is of course questionable whether this can be regarded as a function per se, but it nonetheless seemed clear to us that using English rather than Icelandic in this context served a certain purpose as a "frame-setter" for the message delivered

by the pictures or links. Besides this, we decided to divide the category “lexical need“ into three subgroups as there were some inherent differences in the way this lack emerged.

We are aware that there is little general consensus on what the functional categories of code-switching are, or how they can be either grouped together or divided further into sub-categories. Furthermore, all definitions of these categories tend to be somewhat fuzzy and the lines between e.g. motivations of code-switching, such as lexical need and playfulness, and situations where code-switching is likely to occur, such as in interjections, are less than clear. However, as Almoaily (2023) points out it is seemingly impossible to avoid listing these functions in some way to be able to understand the reasons for code-switching in various contexts.

To this discussion it should be added that research working with categories of this kind mostly appears to assume that each instance of code-switching can only fall into one functional category. In our analysis, on the other hand, we were convinced that code-switching could serve more than one function at a time. Thus, even though each example given in Table 1 below represents only one category, several of them find their way into one or even more further categories, as further outlined in the next section. Finally, we were left with the following functional categories.

**Table 1**  
Function categories of code switching

Function	Explanation	Example
Emphasis	Switched to English in order to emphasise a special part of utterance.	Ja get ekki <b>fucking</b> beðið [Yeah can't <b>fucking</b> wait]
Interjection	English is used in an interjection; that is, to swear or express strong surprise, shock, joy etc.	<b>omg</b> þarf að segja þer [Nafn] systir er ÓLÉTT [ <b>omg</b> need to tell you [Name] sis is PREGNANT]

Repetition	English is used to repeat the content of an utterance, or part thereof, in order to emphasise or explain its message.	algjörlega top maður <b>top notch</b> <b>entertainer</b> <b>entertains his</b> <b>entertainment is</b> <b>a way of life</b> [an absolute top guy <b>top notch</b> <b>entertainer</b> <b>entertains his</b> <b>entertainment is</b> <b>a way of life]</b>
English for attention	English is used to support or ensure that a certain comment attracts a recipient's attention to the desired degree.	Hver í <b>fuckanum</b> er þetta? [Who the <b>fuck</b> is that?]
Playfulness	English is used for a dramatic and/or playful purpose.	...reyndar eins og allir tónlistarmenn fæddir eftir 92' kyndilberar klámkynslóðarinnar <b>but first let me take a geiri</b> [... actually like all other musicians born after '92 torchbearers of the porn generation <b>but first let me take a geiri]</b>
Group identity	English is used to express warmth or otherwise emphasise a direct connection between communicators.	Frábær mynd! Takk elsku besta blóm! <b>Love you baby!</b> Sé þig á morgun [Great picture! Thanks my dearest flower! <b>Love</b>



		<b>you baby!</b> See you tomorrow]
Softening/ strengthening	English is used either to reduce or emphasise the strength of a statement, instruction, wish etc.	...ef það eru athugasemdir um þáttinn þá <b>plís</b> gagnrýnið hann... [...if there comments on the program then <b>please</b> criticize it...]
Message demarcation	English is used to further explain the content of preceding utterance(s).	Þetta er alltaf fyndið! <b>Never gets old.</b> [This is always funny! <b>Never gets old.</b> ]
Specific topic	Specific topics can call for a switch from English to Icelandic, especially with reference to a previous discussion.	<b>Hoopin with the lil one!</b> (basketball reference)
Lexical need A	Pure need: A specialised topic, for example relating to computer games or pop culture calls for the use of English.	... þá er þetta fint á <b>next-gen</b> vélunum [...then this is great on the <b>next-gen</b> machines]
Lexical need B	Convenience/informality: English is used to avoid a longer and more complicated form of expression in Icelandic or to reduce the formality or stiffness of what is being said.	Mögulega besta <b>combo</b> sem hefur komið saman [Possibly the greatest <b>combo</b> ever]
Lexical need C	Coincidence: English (usually single words or phrases) is inserted into the discussion in a haphazard manner,	hvað ertu lengi að <b>withdrawa</b> pening frá 365? [how long does it take you to

	apparently because the word or phrase in question is, for some reason, quicker to turn up in the language user's mind on a particular occasion.	<b>withdraw</b> money from 365?]
Addressee specification	English is used to directly address an interlocutor, whether this be in a chat between two individuals or to single out one or more persons in a more open communication (in status updates or comments).	heyyyyy <b>love</b>
Quotation	A direct citation from known sayings, expressions or proverbs or a specific subject that exists in the students' conversational environment, for example study materials, sources, pop music texts etc.	Veit einhver hvað " <b>nymphal gills</b> " eru á íslensku? [Does anyone know what " <b>nymphal gills</b> " is in Icelandic?]
Caption	English is used, in part or whole of a text accompanying pictures or links the language user shares in a status update.	<b>dis gurl is my bestie</b>

It should be kept in mind that a classification of this kind will always be subjective to a significant degree and that borderlines between categories can be somewhat flexible as is probably noted above. As already mentioned, the data was not gathered with code-switching as a specific objective in mind. Thus,

questions on these have, for example, not been specifically asked in focus group interviews although it would have been useful to have access to the perspective of the participants as to the functions of their code-switching. However, the authors attempted to counterbalance this situation as far as possible by each author first classifying the functions separately and then jointly revising the result, focusing on controversial issues that arose.

#### **4. Results: The functions and extent of code-switching**

This section contains the conclusions of the research. First, a statistical overview of the extent of English usage in our database will be presented, followed by a general survey of the way code-switching is divided into the categories described in the previous section. Then, in Sections 4.2.1–4.2.3 examples will be shown, accompanied by a discussion of the way code-switching appears within each of the three relevant types of text; that is, status updates, comments and messages or chats in order to provide as inclusive an impression of young people's Facebook communication as this brief article allows. This threefold division of the database is adhered to as far as possible in all subsequent coverage, since the distinctive character of the three text types will probably lead to differences between them regarding the extent and function of code-switching.

##### **4.1. Extent of English usage**

Table 2 provides an overview of the use of English in the database as a whole; that is, the number and ratio of words we classify as mixing and switching in status updates, comment threads and chats. Each English word is counted independently, whether it stands on its own or within a phrase or sentence in English.

**Table 2**  
The use of English in different text categories

Text categories	Number of instances (words)	Total number of words	Ratio of English
Status updates	127	5,983	2.12%
Comments	115	4,084	2.82%
Chats	589	17,408	3.38%

It may come as a surprise that the ratio of English is generally rather low, or 3.02% on average. The lowest use of English, just over 2%, is found in general status updates on the so-called Facebook wall which all the friends of the user in question can see. Comments on status updates and subsequent discussions are also visible to all friends, but in those cases remarks are more likely to be directed to only one or few recipients. The language of the comments has significantly more English insertions than the status updates, or just under 3%. In chats between two friends the ratio of English approaches 3.5%. It can be assumed that the status updates are the most formal language environment, then the comments and, finally, chats. Those total figures agree well with the idea that speakers are generally more likely to switch to English under informal circumstances (Hilmisdóttir 2018). This, then, can be further confirmed in the focus group interviews. When student interviewees were asked how conscious they were of their language use when writing on Facebook, they responded that if they shared something on Facebook; that is, in a status update, they tried to keep everything “grammatically correct, google all spelling and so on” and that they only used English when joking, or for fun, “bara í djóki“. But as the group receiving the messages became more closed, the lines between languages and their use became more blurred; “in the private chats one almost feels free to shift suddenly from one language to another and I can use Icelandic, English and German as best fits in with the flow of ideas.”

But the averages listed above do not tell the whole story. If we focus on the chats, we find, for example, that in some of them English is hardly used at all, down to 0.16% in a chat on a home assignment (3 words of a total of 1,875). On the other hand, the ratio of English climbs to its greatest height, 30.47%, in a somewhat high-spirited chat between two boys. In other chats the ratio is closer to the average. In this connection, the chat topic also matters, as will be dealt with in more detail below.

#### **4.2. The function of code-switching**

Let us, then, turn to the functions of the code-switching. Table 3 shows a survey of a total of 15 different functions of English usage in status updates, comments and chats (ratios over 15 in bold). It is worth keeping in mind that the same example could receive more than one analysis, as referred to before. It should also be mentioned that here the number column refers to the number of instances of code-switching within each function category; each instance may represent from a single word up to phrases, sentences or even longer units.

When surveying the totals of individual categories (vertical) we note that English is often used in combination with pictures in status updates but this function does not appear in the other categories. The main reason for this is probably to be found in the focus group interviews where it is revealed that students hardly ever write “plain status updates” but usually combine these with pictures or links, together with a brief caption which quite often contains some English as in the “djók” above.

**Table 3**  
Function of code switching in different text categories

Function	Status updates		Comments		Chats	
	No	Ratio	No	Ratio	No	Ratio
Emphasis	4	3.45%	17	16.50%	56	12.81%
Interjection	7	6.03%	24	23.30%	37	8.47%
Repetition	2	1.72%	3	2.91%	7	1.60%
English for attention	7	6.03%	3	2.91%	9	2.06%
Playfulness	17	14.66%	3	2.91%	64	14.65%
Group identity	4	3.45%	27	26.21%	7	1.60%
Strengthening/ softening	1	0.86%	2	1.94%	27	6.18%
Message demarcation	6	5.17%	3	2.91%	8	1.83%
Specific topic	3	2.59%	0	0	8	1.83%
Lexical need A	15	12.93%	11	10.68%	73	16.70%
Lexical need B	13	11.20%	5	4.85%	49	11.21%
Lexical need C	4	3.45%	1	0.97%	61	13.96%
Addressee specification	0	0%	2	1.94%	5	1.14%
Quotation	4	3.45%	2	1.94%	26	5.95%
Caption	29	25.00%	0	0%	0	0%

Lexical need A (absolute need) and B (convenience/informality) is also common in status updates, as is playfulness. In comments, a high proportion of group identity is noteworthy; most of those instances, however, relate to a specific language user's frequent use of English on one and the same comment thread (responses to birthday greetings). Other conspicuous functions in the comments section are interjection, emphasis and lexical need A (absolute need). In chats, lexical need A (absolute need) and B (convenience/informality) commonly occur and the same applies to interjections and lexical need C (coincidence). When

looking at individual functions (horizontal), this particularly applies to repetition, addressee specification and a particular topic, but quotations, strengthening/softening, English for attention and message demarcation are also rather infrequent functions.

Next, we come to the overlapping of functions. In the status updates, the function of caption most commonly overlapped with lexical need and playfulness. In the comments, the main overlaps were between group identity and interjections, on the one hand, and lexical need and playfulness on the other. Playfulness and lexical need were also conspicuous in chats and those two functions were likely to coincide.

#### **4.2.1. Status updates**

As may be gathered from Table 2 above, this text category comprised a total of 5,983 words and the ratio of English was 2.12% (127 words). English was commonly used in captions (29 instances), often in association with playfulness or lexical need A (absolute need) and B (convenience/informality). Among other functions are interjections (7 instances), English for attention (7 instances) and message demarcation (6 instances). Other interpretations occurred four times or fewer.

Table 4 illustrates a number of instances in status updates, where the functions emphasis, interjection, English for attention, playfulness and group identity have a prominent role, although other functions also occur (for further details see below). Three out of six examples are also captions.

In example (1) the English phrase is used as an independent element referring to a link where the participant in question urges his friends to take part in a quiz about himself. Example (2) clearly demonstrates how English emerges as an interjection; in this case, a playful exclamation to express the pleasure of a weekend holiday. Example (3) is a caption in the form of a repeated phrase which further highlights the indolent mood of the picture accompanying the caption.

**Table 4**

Examples of the use of English in status updates:  
Emphasis, interjection, repetition, English for attention,  
playfulness, group identity

Text	Function
(1) Go for it!	Emphasis
(2) Helgarfrí öðru nafni vinnutörn. <b>Here I come!</b> [Weekend holiday otherwise known as work spree. Here I come!]	Interjection Playfulness
(3) Sunday, lazy Sunday	Repetition Caption
(4) Ég bíð og bíð eftir að þetta lag komi út. Ég jafnvel býð í það að það komi út. Fyrir mér er þetta kapphlaup hvort komi út á undan, ný plata Heimir Rappari eða Messierfönkið hans Kött Grá Pje... Undirritaður er <b>self-hyping</b> grimmt. Spennufallið verður massíft þegar útgáfuhjólin byrja að snúast [I keep waiting for this tune to be published. I am even ready to make a bid for it. To me it is a race which record comes first Heimir Rappari or the Messierfunk by Kött Grá Pje. The undersigned is massively self-hyping. The anticlimax will be massive when the wheels of production start to turn].	English for attention Lexical need B (convenience/informality)
(5) Kynþokkafyllsti maður íslands fundinn! <b>Like if he is hot</b> [Iceland's sexiest man found! Like if he's hot]	Playfulness Caption
(6) <b>dis gurl is my bestie</b>	Group identity Caption

In (4) “self-hyping” appears to be used to ensure that the comment receives the intended attention, without adding any particular emphasis, but also springs from the lack of a corresponding word in Icelandic. In (5) the language user publishes a picture of his (newly awakened) friend and uses the caption to



underline a certain clowning or tomfoolery. Thus, the use of English serves the function of fun and playfulness, cf. the introductory discussion on English being linked to entertainment and leisure. Example (6), then, clearly illustrates how English is often used to express affection, but at the same time, to create a certain distance, perhaps to avoid an impression of sentimentality. Although examples (1) and (4) are not classified as captions in Table 4 they can be understood as being of that origin since they are used to refer to a link.

Table 5 presents examples of English usage with the function of strengthening/softening, message demarcation and specific topic. One of five instances also serves as a caption and, as before, other functions also occur.

**Table 5**

Examples of English usage in status updates:  
Strengthening/softening, message demarcation, specific topic

Text	Function
(7) Þátturinn á morgun verður jafn sexý og þessi mynd. Keyrslan verður frá kl 16:00-18:00 á fimmtudag en ekki föstudag vegna mikilla anna. 98,9 stillið inn kæru vinir og ef það eru athugasemdir um þáttinn þá <b>plís</b> gagnrýnið hann. Við elskum gagnrýni. [Tomorrow's programme is going to be as sexy as this film. It is going to be run between 16:00 and 18:00 on Thursday, but not Friday because they are so busy. 98.9 tund in dear friends and if there are comments on the programme, please criticise it. We love being criticised.]	Strengthening/ softening Lexical need B (convenience/ informality)
(8) Þetta lýsir líklega best hversu mikil lofthræðsla mín er þegar pabbi henti mér í eitthvað xstream trampólin tæki á [land, ár] þar sem flestir hoppa tæpa 20 metra uppi loftið, ég lét mér duga sirka 2m. Pabbi gerði þó heiðarlega tilraun til þess að slá á lofthræðsluna með að öskra alskonar orðum sem lýstu vonsvikni hans. <b>Golden moment</b>	Message demarcation Caption

[It probably best demonstrates my fear of heights when my dad threw me into some xstream trampolene monster in (country, year) where most people jump twenty metres, but I thought approx. 2m was enough. My dad really tried to help me get over my fear by shouting all kinds of words to express his disappointment. Golden moment]	
(9) Hoopin with the lil one! #bball #basket #lil-bro @NN	Specific topic Group identity
(10) Veit einhver hvað “ <b>nymphal gills</b> ” eru á íslensku? [Does anyone know what “nymphal gills” are in Icelandic?]	Quotation Lexical need A (absolute need) (asking for help)

In example (7) English is apparently seen as stronger thus highlighting the urgency of the wish, but at the same time freeing the language user from being formal or affected. As is mentioned in section 2 above, it is questionable whether *plís* should be regarded as an instance of code-switching rather than borrowing. However, we believe that the choice and use of *plís* here serves a particular purpose which would not have been fulfilled by the corresponding Icelandic option (*vinsamlegast/ endilega*). In (8) we see an example of how a short English phrase is used to underline the meaning or content of a longer text in Icelandic. Example (9) illustrates how the participant concerned seems to find it more natural to talk about basketball in English, and is, in this instance, probably indirectly referring to a discussion relating to the NBA in USA. Example (10) contains a direct reference to the text the participant is using and his use of quotation marks shows that he is aware of the citation.

### 4.2.2. Comments

As indicated in Section 4.1, this text category comprised a total of 4,084 words, the ratio of English being 2.82% (115 words). The most common functions of English usage were group identity (26 instances), interjection (24 instances), emphasis (17 instances) and lexical need A (absolute need) (11 instances) and lexical need B (convenience/informality) (5 instances). Other interpretations occurred three times or fewer. Most examples of group identity happened to originate from the same participant who, when thanking friends for birthday greetings, seemed to favour the English phrase "Love you".

Table 6 presents several instances of English usage in comments where the functions emphasis, interjection, repetition, English for attention, playfulness, and group identity are most prominent, although other roles are also represented.

**Table 6**

Examples of English usage in comments: Emphasis, interjection, repetition, English for attention, playfulness, group identity

Text	Function
(11) <b>Lots of hate</b> <3 nei úps <b>love</b> [Lots of hate <3 no oops love]	Emphasis Group identity
(12) Mjög svo fallegar myndir! <b>Four for you, [Nafn]. You go, [Nafn]</b> [Very nice photos! Four for you, (Name). You go, (Name)]	Repetition Emphasis Group identity
(13) Okey <b>wtf</b> [Nafn], ertu að skoða gamlar myndir af mér ? hahaha [Okey wtf (Name) are you looking at old pictures of me? hahaha]	Interjection
(14) Held að ég hafi reddað þessu, tók kortið og batterið og hann er allavega til friðs núna, og hleðst. <b>Thank god!</b> Hef virkilega ekki efni á því að laga þennan, hvað þá kaupa nýjan 😊 [I think I sorted it out, removed the card and the battery and it is at least behaving itself now and charging. Thank god! I cannot afford to	Interjection

have this one fixed let alone buy a new one]	
(15) þyngri en E-63 ?? <b>doubt it</b> [heavier than E-63??doubt it]	English for attention
(16) Jébb <b>keep up the good work</b> [Nafn] [Yes keep up the good work (Name)]	Playfulness
(17) Frábær mynd! Takk elsku besta blóm! <b>Love you baby!</b> Sé þig á morgun [Excellent picture! Thank you my darling flower! Love you baby! See you tomorrow]	Group identity Emphasis Interjection

Here the functions are the same as in Table 4 except for the absence of status updates with captions. Example (11) shows, similarly to (6) above, how English is used to strengthen group identity and simultaneously maintain a certain emotional distance. In (12) English is used to reiterate an earlier message and encourage the recipient to go on. In (13) and (14) we note how an English interjection is used to express astonishment and relief. In (15) it is of course perfectly possible to say “Ég efast um það” or something to that effect in Icelandic, but English appears to be used to highlight the doubt. Example (16) comprises the ironic closure of a conversation where the speaker makes good-natured fun of his counterpart, referring to an incident where the latter had not performed particularly well. Example (17) conveys one of several comments from the same participant, expressing warmth and gratitude without being excessively emotional, cf. discussion above. There are also indications that the older the recipients and closer to her, the more likely she is to use Icelandic to express similar feelings. This is interesting in light of Dewaele’s (2008) study which showed that the sentence “I love you” carries greater emotional weight in people’s first language. Here it appears that while English is used to underline the “love” that connects the participant and her peers, the Icelandic version is reserved for older members of her family, where the affective feelings may be stronger.

Table 7 presents examples of English usage having the functions of strengthening/softening, message demarcation, addressee specification, quotation and lexical need A (absolute need), B (convenience/informality), C (coincidence).

**Table 7**

Examples of English usage in comments: Strengthening/softening, message demarcation, address, quotation and lexical need (A, B, C)

Text	Function
(18) Hehe. <b>Sorrymemmig. Random add</b> [Hehe. Sorryaboutme. Random add]	Softening (apology) Lexical need A (absolute need (explanation)
(19) Þetta er alltaf fyndið! <b>Never gets old.</b> [This is always funny. Never gets old.]	Message demarcation
(20) <b>Wow wow</b> þvilíkt teymi! Væri ekkert á móti því að skola einum niður með þér <b>king</b> [Nafn]! En takk fyrir kallinn minn! [What a team! I would be happy to have a drink with you, king (Name)! But thank you, my dear chap!]	Addressee specification Group identity
(21) Þegar ég las „[Nafn] <b>added a photo of you</b> ” ta stressaðist eg þvilíkt upp hvað þá þeat þær eru 5!! Haha en takk fyrir elsku uppahalds kallinn minn [When I read “(Name) added a photo of you” I became really stressed up because then there are 5 of them!! But thank you, my dear favourite chap]	Quotation
(22) Ég skil þig algjörlega, Clapton <b>touchið</b> virkar [I completely understand you, the Clapton touch works]	Lexical need A (absolute need)
(23) OH hversu mikið sakna ég þín? Takk elsku besta [Nafn] mín! Við tökum bráðlega gott <b>chill</b> og þetta lag! Elska þig af öllu hjarta [Oh, how much I miss you! Thank you my darling, (Name)! We’ll soon have a good chill and	Lexical need B (convenience/ informality)

this tune! Love you with all my heart]	
(24) HAHAAH mogulega bestu <b>moment</b> lífs mins að liggja uppi rummi með þer a hotel [Nafn] og hlægja yfir þessu meistaraverki! Takk fyrir elsku kallinn minn [Perhaps the best moments of my life to lie in bed with you at a hotel (Name) and laugh at this masterpiece! Thank you my dear chap]	Lexical need C (coincidence) English for attention Playfulness

In example (18) “sorry” is used to apologise, perhaps because it is less “serious” than saying *afsakaðu* or *fyrirgefðu* (I beg your pardon, excuse me), in much the same way as *plís* in example (7) above fulfills a purpose that its immediate Icelandic options would not. In (19) it is clear that the language user is defining how funny the topic is, by a kind of reiteration. Example (20) shows how the language user employs an English form of address to single out a recipient on the comment thread in question. In (21) a quotation is used in much the same way as in (10) above, where the language user is referring to an example in front of him which he flags with quotation marks, thus emphasising that the text in question cannot be translated. In example (22), as in (18), (Facebook-reference), English appears to be used as it is well-nigh impossible to find an Icelandic synonym as a replacement. In (23) words such as *slökun* or *afslöppun* [relaxation, unwinding] would be used in more formal varieties of Icelandic, but “chill” appears to emphasise this informal relationship between the two language users. In example (24) one could easily imagine a comparable Icelandic word, but “moment” appears to be closest at hand at that instant. Here we could keep in mind the discussion in Section 2 to the effect that code-switching does not always have a clear purpose, but can also occur somewhat haphazardly.

### 4.2.3. Chat

As stated in Section 4.1 this text category was by far the largest, or 17,408 words and the ratio of English was 3.38% (589 words). The most common functions of English usage were, in this order: lexical need A (absolute need) (73 instances), playfulness (64 instances), lexical need C (coincidence) (61 instances), emphasis (56 instances), lexical need B (convenience/informality) (49 instances), interjection (37 instances), strengthening/softening (27 instances) quotation (26 instances). Other interpretations occurred nine times or fewer.

Let us first look at lexical need A (absolute need), B (convenience/informality), C (coincidence) since those functions were highly prominent in the chats. Table 8 presents examples of this kind.

**Table 8**  
Examples of English usage in chats (A, B, C)

Text	Function
(25) <b>saveaðu storyið</b> þitt og sendu mér það [save your story and send it to me]	Lexical need A (absolute need)
(26) er hægt að <b>signa</b> sig inn á sinn <b>account</b> og <b>downloada</b> leik aftur... I aðra tölvu [is it possible to sign in on your account and download a game again ... In another computer]	Lexical need A (absolute need)
(27) Ok bara <b>beil</b> á finnlandi þá, við erum búin að eyða allt of miklu púðri í þetta nú þegar [Ok let's bail on Finland then, we have spent far too much time on this already]	Lexical need B (convenience/informality)
(28) Endilega að spyrja svo við eigum ca. Svör yfir hversu mörg pláss við eigum fyrir <b>local</b> folk [By all means ask so we can get a fair idea as to how many places we have for local people]	Lexical need B (convenience/informality)

(29) tók smá <b>powernap</b> fyrir leikinn [I had a little power nap before the game]	Lexical need C (coincidence)
(30) hvað ertu lengi að <b>withdrawa</b> pening frá 365? [How long does it take you to withdraw money from 365?]	Lexical need C (coincidence)

(25) and (26) reveal clear examples of English words being used in a specific context, in this instance a discussion involving computers and computer games where the basic environment is English and probably the language user really feels awkward communicating on this matter in Icelandic. In examples (27) and (28) we see how single English words replace a more complex or formal delivery in Icelandic. Finally, (29)–(30) exemplify English as somehow being the easiest option in that particular context without any obvious reason. This is comparable to what we saw in (24) above. As a whole, those examples of lexical need when chatting are of particular interest in light of earlier cited words of the students in the focus group interviews that in this context they “take the liberty of jumping from one language to another”, depending on which words or phrases are most applicable. This “jumping” can no doubt be traced to the informal environment of a real-time conversation with resultant speed, and the fact that in these conversations the addressee is known to the sender and that the two are likely to share common ground in terms of knowledge of English, which in turn facilitates the use of certain English forms.

**Table 9**

Examples of English usage in chats: emphasis, interjection, English for attention, playfulness, group identity

Text	Function
(31) ja get ekki <b>fucking</b> beðið [yeh, cannot fucking wait]	Emphasis
(32) <b>omg</b> þarf að segja þer hahahaha [Nafn] systir er ÓLÉTT [omg must tell you hahaha-haha my sister (Name) is PREGNANT]	Interjection



(33) hver í <b>fuckanum</b> er þetta? [who the fuck is this?]	Interjection English for attention
(34) hæ samningaviðræður kl. 13 á föstudaginn and <b>i'm going on a date tomorrow night</b> ^^ víj [hi negotiations at 13.00 on Friday and i'm going on a date tomorrow night ^^ víj]	Playfulness
(35) <b>wanna do nothing?</b>	Playfulness
(36) já <b>baby</b> ...svo þarf ég gað geta allt aftur í splinger cell hehe [Yes baby ... then I'll have to do everything again in "splinger" (sic!) cell hehe]	Group identity

In (31) “fucking” is obviously added for emphasis. The sentential position of the word is also characteristic of “Englishness”, so to speak, since an Icelandic word of a similar meaning, such as “*fjandakornið*”, would have to occur immediately after the personal verb. In (32) and (33) instances of interjection occur, emphasising excitement and enthusiasm, on the one hand, and consternation, on the other, where the English word appears to be used for added effect although it has certainly been assimilated to Icelandic. In (34) news of a prospective date is obviously being communicated in a humorous vein, cf. the circumflexes ^^ and the interjection víj. Example (35) is part of a longer conversation where Icelandic could easily be used, but English appears to be used to communicate fun and playfulness where two friends are chatting. Í (36) “já baby” appears to have a similar function as in (17); that is, to express friendliness without excessive formality.

## 5. Summary and conclusion

It would seem appropriate to finalise this study of code-switching among Icelandic youths on Facebook by summing up the main conclusions and, at the same time, answering the

research questions on which the work was based. Our first question (A) focused on the frequency of code-switching from Icelandic to English in our database and when surveying the results as a whole the answer to this question is probably the most noteworthy. At least, in light of constantly growing English usage in Iceland it turned out as somewhat of an eye-opener to the authors of this article to discover that English constitutes only 2-3.5% of the total vocabulary used by the young people – numbers which can hardly be considered of particular concern in the context of the precarious position of Icelandic with regard to English. This, however, should not have come as a special surprise with a view to above-mentioned conclusions from abroad (cf. Section 2) which indicate that electronic communication is by no means an inevitable source of code-switching (Ting and Yeo 2019). Simultaneously, the conclusions provide a fairly clear answer to our final question (D): To what extent are there indications of English being used as a primary language along with or even in place of Icelandic? In a nutshell, few if any indications are revealed of such circumstances. On the contrary, the overall picture drawn from the evidence suggests that in the social media language of the youths concerned English serves the function of a kind of seasoning, adding flavour to a dish which in every other respect is made of Icelandic ingredients.

As may be expected, however, overall traits and averages do not tell the whole story and there are clear indications that circumstances and conversation topics to some extent influence the nature and extent of code-switching, on each occasion, cf. our question (C) on this subject. Thus, code-switching is least likely to occur in the young people's status updates, show up somewhat more frequently in comments and, finally, peak in the chat environment. A direct cause of this hierarchy is probably that while the status updates are open and, in the young people's opinion require a relative formal style, cf. their statements in the focus group interviews, the chat usually occurs between two individuals where certain inhibitions are

abandoned. The comments, then, occupy an intermediate position. The impact of the conversation topic may be judged by the fact that English plays a considerably larger part when the topic is rather specific, often with an English background, such as computers, technology and current popular culture. In several places we note how circumstances and chat topics are interwoven in various ways, cf. on the one hand two girls chatting about schoolwork home assignments where the use of English is minimal and, on the other, a playful and mischievous chat, a third of which is in English, where two boys talk mostly about music or films and tell tales of their friends and schoolmates. On the whole, those results also demonstrate that it is of highly doubtful value to talk about the way Icelandic is spoken in an electronic environment and the potential impact of English thereon, on the premise that this is only one environment. As demonstrated here, an electronic environment is just as diverse whether it be spoken or, more traditionally, written and the manifestation of the language used is to a large extent determined, here as elsewhere, by the formality and/or openness of the communicative environment on each occasion, the number and identity of respondents, the topic of discussion etc.

The function of code-switching in the young people's writings was a central issue in our investigation, cf., question B. Our conclusions indicate that code-switching is generally most likely to occur in the context of interjections, added emphasis, playfulness or dramatic display, the formation of relationships or preservation of group unity when the young people lack Icelandic words. In our data we observed a need for a more fine-grained analysis of this lexical need than has been applied in previous work of a similar kind. English also tends to occur in texts students write to support or explain pictures or links they publish in status updates. This is also reflected in research abroad which reveals highly comparable functional organisation of code-switching in an electronic environment where functions in many respects resemble those noted in code-switching in spoken language (Androutsopoulos 2011).

The overall ambience of the functions we identified in many respects also highlights what was said above about English as a spice adding flavour to an otherwise Icelandic dish. Usually this is a case of a rather superficial addition to the Icelandic core, in the form of interjections, emphatic words – or expressions, playfulness or phrases lacking an Icelandic counterpart, at least momentarily. In many instances the definition of code-switching may be traced to a fairly broad portrayal of that particular concept. According to a narrower depiction, several of these would probably be regarded as a form of borrowing or slang.

As indicated above, this research embarked on to a mostly unploughed field in an Icelandic context. Consequently, several questions remain unanswered, whether these relate to following up conclusions presented here which may appear of most interest or exploring those aspects of young people's code-switching between Icelandic and English in an electronic environment which we have chosen not to focus on for the time being. It would seem appropriate here to encourage further studies of this topic, especially with regard to aspects which may be considered to limit the value of the research outlined here. It would be of interest, for example, to conduct interviews with participants with a strong focus on their code-switching and their attitudes to it; it would also be helpful to collect more recent data than used here, perhaps including other social media, apart from Facebook, which are widely used among young people. In light of the constantly increasing profusion of electronic communication, regardless of users' age it would of course be appropriate to widen the coverage; thus, also including code-switching by grownups in this same environment to investigate whether, and if so, how they "jump from one language to another".

## Note

A previous version of this work was published in Icelandic in 2021 (Friðriksson and Angantýsson 2021, <https://ritid.hi.is/index.php/ritid/article/view/154/142>). Since then we have revised the paper thoroughly and adopted it for an international readership.

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## **Treating time as space in Polish: Metaphors and metaphorical expressions**

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### **Abstract**

Situating itself within the long-standing tradition of conceptual metaphor studies, the present paper seeks to analyze the means through which Polish exhibits linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE. From the Polish National Corpus, selected metaphorical expressions are retrieved and analyzed, taking into consideration their frequency, collocative environment and semantic scope. The results indicate that the metaphorical variations of TIME IS SPACE in Polish align with the variations in spatial conceptualization and employ similar linguistic tools, such as prepositions and cases. The level of productivity and conventionalization of the metaphor in question speaks to its prominent role within the Polish conceptual system.

### **Keywords**

conceptual metaphor, corpus linguistics, metaphors of time, Polish linguistics

## **Traktowanie czasu jako przestrzeni w języku polskim: Metafory i wyrażenia metaforyczne**

### **Abstrakt**

Wpisując się w wieloletnią tradycję badań nad metaforą pojęciową, niniejszy artykuł ma na celu analizę środków, za pomocą których język polski buduje językowe wyrażenia metafory pojęciowej CZAS TO PRZESTRZEŃ. Za pomocą narzędzi Narodowego Korpusu Polskiego, przeanalizowano wybrane wyrażenia metaforyczne, z uwzględnieniem ich częstotliwości, kontekstów i zakresu semantycznego. Rezultaty wskazują, że metaforyczna różnorodność wyrażenia CZAS TO PRZESTRZEŃ w języku polskim odpowiada różnorodności konceptualizacji przestrzennej i wykorzystuje analogiczne środki językowe, takie jak przyimki i przypadki. Poziom produktywności i skonwencjonalizowania omawianej metafory świadczy o jej znaczącej roli w polskim systemie pojęciowym.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

metafora pojęciowa, badanie korpusowe, metafory czasu, językoznawstwo polskie

### **1. Introduction**

Human society is structured around many fundamentally abstract concepts, one of the most prominent of which is the idea of time. Temporality organizes and, in turn, determines many of the social and personal experiences across different cultures around the world (for further elaboration on the social functions of time see: Adam 1995, Hallowell 1937, Luhmann 1976). To think and talk about time in a manner that reflects the scope of subjective perceptions of temporality without using metaphor is difficult, which is why there exists a plurality of languages that employ a range of different conceptualizations, such as TIME IS MONEY (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Johansson 2007, Mueller 2016) or TIME IS A CHANGER (Piata and Pagán Cánovas 2017, Golfam, Ghorbanpour and Mahdipour 2019). The precise

reason why such a difficulty should arise is subject to debate, with Lakoff (1993) suggesting that its explanation lies in the lack of a temporal sensory device in the human body: a claim which is refuted by Evans (2004), who in turn highlights the neurological evidence of temporal subjectivity embedded in the embodied experience. However, the experimental psycho-physical research conducted by Casasanto and Boroditsky (2008) suggests that the metaphorical transfer of concepts between the spatial and the temporal domain does contribute to the general human cognitive system.

Whatever the roots of this temporal metaphoricity may be, different linguistic communities form diverging conceptual paths toward the imaging of time (Radden 2004, Kövecses 2006, Máthé 2021, Chen 2014, Reali and Lleras 2017, Pamies-Bertrán and Yuan 2020, Khatin-Zadeh, Banaruee, Reali et al. 2023). In light of this fact, the importance of a thorough description of such metaphorical expressions cannot be understated, as it is an indispensable tool for the exploration of the potential embodied systematicity of language, and in turn thought across cultures. Integral to this path of inquiry is examining languages whose speakers, beyond accessing the superordinate TIME IS SPACE metaphor, also use a variety of submetaphors. One of such languages is Polish with its metaphor CZAS TO PRZESTRZEŃ, which the present paper aims to characterize in order to discern the kinds of dominant cognitive strategies of conceptualizing temporality employed by Polish speakers.

The metaphor in question entails a robust set of submetaphors, covering all of which is an impossible task due to its cognitive productivity. It is therefore necessary to restrict the inquiry to the most frequent and conventionalized submetaphors. The analysis below will primarily focus on the following:

- TIME IS A CONTAINER
- SOON IS NEAR
- DURATION IS MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE
- THE FUTURE IS A SURFACE YOU CAN PLACE OBJECTS ON
- THE NIGHT IS A SPACE TO BE WALKED UPON

- THE PAST IS AN ABYSS
- FORSEEABLE EVENTS ARE DOWN
- THE EVENING IS ABOVE A SURFACE etc.
- THE MORNING IS BELOW A SURFACE etc.

## 2. Theoretical background

The exact character of temporal metaphors has been subject to many intellectual investigations utilizing the general framework of analysis known as the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The development of CMT marks a break with the previous tradition, wherein the study of metaphor was confined to the domain of poetic inquiries (Johnson 1981). A conceptual metaphor, as Deignan (2008: 14) maintains, is a mode of thinking, functioning within the mind, rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon. While linguistic evidence of conceptual metaphor abounds, most speakers do not pay attention to its roots, which can perhaps be interpreted as testimony of the depth of the conceptual metaphor's entrapment within the human cognitive device (Lakoff and Turner 1989, Kövecses 2010).

The structure of conceptual metaphor is based on a cognitive mapping of concepts from two different domains, traditionally referred to as the *source* and the *target* domains; with the latter used to describe the object understood and conceptualized through the domain of the former (Lakoff and Turner 1989). It is possible to point to a general directional tendency of cross-domain mappings originating from a physical, sensory-dependent source towards a more abstract target (Gibbs 1996: 311, Deignan 2008: 17). An analysis of spatial metaphors of time may be aided by the theory of image schemata (Langacker 1982, 1987, Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987), which are "recurring, dynamic patterns of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that give coherence and structure to our experience" (Johnson 1987: 14). In other words, the linguistic expressions of temporality should be considered in relation to the deeply

ingrained gestalt image patterns and their connection with the conceptual metaphors in the speakers' minds.

This study investigates one of such metaphors, the TIME IS SPACE metaphor, which appears to be a way of conceptualizing temporal events across many languages, with relational links between the two domains (Boroditsky 2000). For the purposes of the present paper, spatial relations will be primarily defined as the directly perceived static or dynamic orientational positioning of an object relative to another object or a geometrically defined landmark. This means that metaphors such as MOVING OBSERVER and MOVING TIME (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 42) were also included in the dataset of TIME IS SPACE.

The particular focus on Polish metaphorical linguistic phenomena has been previously taken up by a number of researchers, who investigated metaphors of computers (Zabawa 2018), metaphors from the Polish political discourse (Gieroń-Czeczor 2013), and metaphors related to the European Union (Zbierska-Sawala 2004), among many others. The way Polish temporal utterances reveal different conceptualizations of space has also been investigated by scholars such as Dąbrowska (1996), Kochańska (1996), Bacz (1997) and Stanulewicz (2010).

### **3. Methodology**

The following analysis of how Polish utilizes this metaphor seeks to explore the question of potentially systematic characteristics of metaphorical temporal conceptualization. Given the relatively small size of the body of literature based on Polish spatio-temporal conceptual metaphors, the following examples were compiled with the aid of the balanced 300 million-segment National Corpus of the Polish Language (*Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego*, later referred to as NKJP) (Górski and Łaziński 2012: 33), employing the PELCRA search engine (Pęzik 2012: 253).

The data was based on items that form a balanced corpus and include inflectional variability in instances where the application of the lemma setting was possible. Data searches were

generally set to a maximum word span of two. There were environments where these rules were adjusted in an effort to produce a more metaphorical sample of items, such as in (12a) and (12b), which required the omission of all collocations with the words *patrzeć* ‘to see’, *na dół* ‘downwards’, *traktować* ‘to treat’, as well as no additional distance between the preposition *z* and the noun *góry*. The aforementioned adjustments proved necessary in eradicating utterances based on non-temporal metaphor and physical experience meanings. The corpus searches were conducted in a manner that prioritized the elimination of irrelevant data and guided by the searches based on items from the target domain of the analyzed metaphor.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. The metaphor TIME IS A CONTAINER

According to Przybylska (2002: 205), the preposition *w* ‘in’ is the most frequent of all prepositions found in the Polish language. It is therefore not surprising that it also forms the most frequently listed spatial metaphorical expression in the NKJP, with time being conceptualized as a CONTAINER (Przybylska 2002: 231). Some of the most common nominal collocations of the preposition *w* include the words *dekada* ‘decade’, *rok* ‘year’, *miesiąc* ‘month’, *dzień* ‘day’, *noc* ‘night’, *godzina* ‘hour’ and *minuta* ‘minute’. The most frequent (per both T-Score and Z-Score) collocate is *rok* ‘year’, but all of the seven aforementioned nouns are used often (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Expressions exemplifying the metaphor TIME IS A CONTAINER

Expression	Mutual Information	T-Score	Z-Score
w + dekada (decade): <i>w dekadę</i> 'in a decade'	4.447	30.830	144.003
w + rok (year): <i>w rok</i> 'in a year'	4.517	413.605	1 979.412
w + miesiąc (month): <i>w miesiąc</i> 'in a month'	3.352	102.082	326.214
w + dzień (day): <i>w dzień</i> 'in a day'	3.880	211.459	811.337
w + noc (night): <i>w nocy</i> 'at night'	4.779	133.346	698.629
w + godzina (hour): <i>w godzinę</i> 'in an hour'	3.036	85.547	245.031
w + minuta (minute): <i>w minutę</i> 'in a minute'	3.645	78.947	279.192

What may prove to be of particular interest is that the CONTAINER image schema supplied by this metaphor appears in two forms in Polish: a dynamic form and a static form. The distinction is marked by the different case endings: the accusative and the locative, respectively.

The two patterns occur in mutually exclusive semantic environments when paired with proper nouns and specific temporal markers. Thus, one would talk about year dates and names of the month by using a static metaphor of events inside a time-container:

- (1)(a) Nieoczekiwanie, w roku 1879, po wojnie z Turkami, porzucił karierę wojskową [...]<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> All corpus-based examples are provided according to their original spelling and punctuation, and followed by a literal and non-literal English translation.

‘Unexpectedly, in the year of 1879 , after the war with the Turks, he gave up his military career [...]’

(Marek Krajewski, 2003, *Koniec świata w Breslau*, WAB)

(1)(b) W styczniu 1944 r. otrzymałem list [...]

‘In January 1944, I received a letter [...]’

(Teresa Torańska, 1985, *Oni, Świat Książki*)

However, references built upon the names of the week, or the times of day and night utilize a conceptual structure that assumes that events are put into a time container, a pattern established via the usage of the accusative noun form:

(2)(a) W poniedziałek listonosz przyniósł mi list [...]

‘On Monday, the postman brought me a letter [...]’

(Sławomir Mrożek, 1965, *Opowiadania 1960-1965*, Noir sur Blanc)

(2)(b) Zawsze w południe go widzisz.

‘You always see him at noon.’

(Andrzej Stasiuk, 1955, *Opowieści galicyjskie*, Znak)

This rigid structural divide does not find full application in instances of durational references to non-specific temporal markers amounting to a duration between a second and an hour, where both the accusative and the locative noun forms may appear. However, there does appear to be a set of possible contrastive semantic environments, according to which Polish speakers show preference for a given conceptualization. One of such cases to take into consideration may be the application of this metaphor with the singular noun for minute; while *w minucie* (the locative form) appears in many different semantic contexts (see: 3a), its major collocative pairings are related to sports (*bramka* – 2030, *mecz* – 339, *gol* – 187):

(3)(a) W minucie na pewno się zmieszczę.

‘A minute is going to be enough for me.’

(Biuro Administracyjne Kancelarii Senatu RP, *Sprawozdanie z 39. Posiedzenia Senatu RP w dniu 7 maja 2003 r.*)



- (3)(b) W 64 minucie Grunwald mógł zdobyć bramkę.  
 'During the 64th minute, Grunwald could have scored a goal.'  
 (Tomasz Hucal, 2000, *II liga: Grunwald – Polar 1:2 Polar odetchnął*, Gazeta Wrocławska 18/01)
- (3)(c) Iwan opuścił boisko w 70 minucie [...]  
 'Iwan left the football court during the 70th minute [...]'  
 (*Metropol* nr 9/04, 2001)

This is not true in relation to the accusative form of the discussed noun, the major collocations of which are not necessarily connected with any one particular semantic domain:

- (4)(a) W minutę jestem na placu Villa Fiorelli.  
 'In a minute I am in the Villa Fiorelli square.'  
 (Tadeusz Breza, 1960, *Urząd*, PIW)
- (4)(b) W minutę później otrzymał odpowiedź [...]  
 'In a minute he received an answer [...]'  
 (Edmund Nizurski, 1954, *Księga urwisów*, WK Agencja)

The Accusative-Locative realization divide is further complicated by the irregularity of the lexicalized markers of the times of day (see: 13a and 13b). However, if one were to draw a generalized pattern, there is a strong tendency for Polish to utilize dynamic conceptualizations in more immediate temporal contexts, such as references to the days of the week, and more static ones for longer lasting periods, such as names of the months or years.

It is worth mentioning that dynamic conceptualizations of time are also common outside of the TIME IS A CONTAINER metaphor. Polish generally allows for linguistic manifestations of both MOVING TIME and MOVING OBSERVER metaphors in a manner similar to the English examples considered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 42), where the figure conceptualized as undergoing relative movement is either the deictic ego or time itself. The exact ratio of appearances of the two possible general dynamic scenarios may prove to be fertile ground for future research.

## 4.2. The metaphor SOON IS NEAR

Spatial relations in the Polish language are mostly established through prepositions (and the accompanying cases). This tendency is carried over to metaphorical expressions in the treatment of time as space. However, there are also linguistic manifestations of TIME IS SPACE that do not employ prepositions. The most frequent of such non-prepositional expressions in the NKJP is rooted in the conceptual metaphor SOON IS NEAR:

- (5)(a) W najbliższą niedzielę jedziemy do Aburatsubo [...] 'Next Sunday, we're going to Aburatsubo [...]' (Andrzej Urbańczyk, 1985, *Dziękuję ci, Pacyfiku*, Muza)
- (5)(b) Nie planujemy też w najbliższym czasie ślubu. 'We're also not making any short-term plans of marriage.' (Kinga Dunin, 1998, *Tabu*, W.A.B)
- (5)(c) W najbliższych dniach kupimy trzecie. 'In the upcoming days we will buy a third one.' (Anna Bojarska, Maria Bojarska, 1996, *Siostry B., Twój Styl*)

A particularly relevant feature of the Polish linguistic realization of the discussed metaphor is the predominant usage of the superlative form of the adjective *najbliższy* 'nearest'. Its basic form (*bliski* – 'near') does appear in the NKJP corpus, but much less frequently (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Collocation strength of expressions related to SOON IS NEAR

Measure	najbliższy + przyszłość ('nearest + future')	bliski + przyszłość ('near + future')
Mutual Information	8.429	5.269
T-Score	32.463	9.241
Z-Score	602.652	57.378

This could suggest that the broader range of approaching future events is conceptualized as deictically near, and the speakers use the superlative to more precisely specify the immediacy of their temporal references.

### 4.3. Durational metaphors

Expressions of duration in Polish tend to build on the preposition *przez*, denoting a movement *through* space:

- (6)(a) Na razie będę spał przez cały tydzień [...]
   
‘For now, I will be sleeping for the week [...]’
   
(Henryk Worcell 1936, *Zakłete rewiry*, Dolnośląskie)
- (6)(b) Tak powinno być jeszcze przez jakiś czas [...]
   
‘It should remain so for some time [...]’
   
(Józef Banaszak, 2008, *Czas nie przeszedł obok*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Branta)

The vast majority of collocative relationships that the phrases in (6a) and (6b) form with verbs are based on the imperfective aspect of verbs, which marks a given situation as not completed, yet to be finalized (Sadowska 2012: 311). The imperfective aspect may therefore be connected to the transitory nature of the metaphor of DURATION IS MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE, which highlights the act of advancing through a given temporal space (duration), rather than arriving at a specific temporal destination (point in time).

### 4.4. Metaphors of future plans

The preposition *na* in isolation can be translated as both *on* and *onto* (the latter signifying an event involving movement). In this case, however, the temporal nouns which collocate with *na* appear in their accusative form, thus constituting a dynamic schema (*onto*) often paired with the verb *przełożyć* (to move something from one place onto another surface):

- (7)(a) czy dużo zadano na poniedziałek  
‘if there were a lot of assignments for Monday’  
(Jan Parandowski, 1936, *Niebo w płomieniach*, Czytelnik)
- (7)(b) można by s przełożyć to seminarium na wtorek  
‘the seminar could be postponed to Tuesday’  
(Rozmowa o sile oraz innych zagadnieniach, PELCRA)

This conceptualization of the future in Polish may therefore be described as realizing a metaphor of THE FUTURE IS A SURFACE YOU CAN PLACE OBJECTS ON.

Przybylska (2002: 295) suggests that metaphorical expressions that pair *na* with the locative inflectional endings are related to peripheral, outermost part of a temporalized space. Examples of such usage found in the NKJP include instances where *na* collocates with nouns such as *koniec* ‘end’, *przełom* ‘turning point’, or *początek* ‘beginning’:

- (7)(c) Tak samo wyglądały na początku, tak samo będą wyglądać na końcu  
‘They looked the same at the beginning, they’ll look the same at the end’  
(Olga Tokarczuk, 1996, *Prawiek i inne czasy*, W.A.B.)

#### 4.5. The metaphor NIGHT IS A SPACE TO BE WALKED UPON

In Polish, repeated events set at night acquire spatial prepositions referencing a two-dimensional movement on a temporal surface. This metaphor is only manifested in linguistic expressions with the plural form of the noun *noc*, thus remaining in contrast with the phrase *w nocy*, which always includes a singular noun:

- (8)(a) Już przed wojną śniła się Pawełkowi po nocach.  
‘Even before the war, Pawełek would dream of her at night.’  
(Andrzej Szczypiorski, 1986, *Początek*, Kantor Wydawniczy SAWW)

- (8)(b) Dziś w nocy śniły mi się psy.  
 'I dreamt about dogs last night.'  
 (Stanisław Kowalewski, 1961, *Czarne okna*, Siedmioróg)

It is worth noting that the metaphorical expression in the (8b) occurs almost 18 times more frequently than the one in (8a) and may also be implemented in contexts denoting repetitiveness. The NIGHT IS A SURFACE TO BE WALKED UPON metaphor has stronger collocations connected with undesirable behaviors such as *plakać* 'to cry' or *hałasować* 'to make loud noise', as opposed to primarily neutral collocative verbs accompanying the NIGHT IS A CONTAINER metaphor, for example: *obudzić* 'to wake' or *spać* 'to sleep'. The former may highlight the repetition aspect of a given action, which perhaps in the context of nocturnal events Polish speakers most often connect with negative associations.

#### 4.6. The metaphor THE PAST IS AN ABYSS

A spatial image that can be attributed to the Polish metaphorical conceptualizations is one that can be broadly described as THE PAST IS IN AN ABYSS. The context of this metaphor's primary occurrence is that of events from a distant past, which is highlighted through the image of visually impenetrable vastness, thus utilizing the SEEING IS KNOWING metaphor as well. History (and the past that is perceived as historical, or distant) is therefore conceptualized as a temporal state so far removed from the current state of things, that it disappears in an *otchłań* 'an abyss, a void':

- (9)(a) [...] w procesie stworzonym przez przyrodę, gdzieś w otchłaniach czasu.  
 '[...] in a process created by nature in the midst of time.'  
 (Maciej Kuczyński, 2005, *Podróż*, Wydawnictwo Kos)

- (9)(b) Jak od ciemnych otchłani wspólnej historii przejść do wspólnego porządku wolności?  
 ‘How to move on from the shared dark pages of history towards a common order of freedom?’  
 (1994, *Ciężar jedności*, in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Agora)

It is worth noting that this particular expression can be characterized as one of low frequency in comparison to preposition-based manifestations of metaphors such as TIME IS A CONTAINER. This attests to a relatively lower level of conventionalization.

#### 4.7. “In the space of” constructions

Perhaps the most noticeable TIME IS SPACE mapping in Polish is that which is manifested through the direct usage of the phrase *in the space of* and followed by a given temporal unit:

- (10)(a) Akcja filmu rozgrywa się na przestrzeni kilkudziesięciu lat.  
 ‘The plot of the film unfolds over the course of dozens of years.’  
 (2001, *Zagmatwane losy przyjaciół*, in: *Metropol* no. 19/02)
- (10)(b) [...] trenerów zespołów ekstraklasy, którzy na przestrzeni kilkunastu godzin stracili posady .  
 ‘[...] of the Premier League coaches who lost their jobs in the space of a couple of hours.’  
 (2010, *W Wiśle Kraków, Legii Warszawa skończyła się cierpliwość*, in: *Gazeta Pomorska*)

This expression, while literally rooted in spatial meanings, appears to be more frequent in a temporal context than in a spatial one. For example, all of the inflected forms of the noun *kilometr* ‘kilometer’ only appear 64 times in the NKJP following the phrase *na przestrzeni* ‘in the space of’. Contrastively, the inflected forms of the noun *rok* ‘year’ appear as many as 1042 times in this position.

#### 4.8. Metaphors of change

To express the ability to undergo change alongside subsequent changes to one's broad environment, Polish deploys a prepositional phrase that exemplifies the TIME IS SPACE metaphor without the image of movement:

- (11)(a) Kościół musi iść z duchem czasu albo stanie się anachroniczną instytucją  
 'The Church needs to keep up with the time, or it'll become an anachronistic institution'  
 (Maria Nurowska, 2009, *Niemiecki taniec*, W.A.B.)

In (11b) the phrase *na czasie* is meant to indicate that something is in line with the fashions and trends of the present. No symmetrical expression of being out of fashion or not aware of what is in fashion exists in Polish. The speakers seem to instead directly negate the aforementioned phrase:

- (11)(b) Dziewczyny uswiadomcie mnie jak wygląda sukienka typu bombka bo ja jestem w sprawach mody troche nie na czasie  
 'Girls, explain to me what a bauble dress looks like, because I'm not entirely up to date with the world of fashion'  
 (User Tangerine, 2005, *Sukienka Na Studniówkę, studniówka*, Forumowisko.pl)

#### 4.9. Metaphors of foreseeable events

Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), FORSEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS ARE UP is a metaphor rooted in the physical experience of observing an incoming object within the subject's field of vision. With the shortening of the distance between the aforementioned subject and object, the object visually appears to grow in height. This metaphor can be observed through expressions that appear, for example, in languages like English, such as: "I'm afraid of what's up ahead of us" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Polish employs a different deictically centered metaphor, which presupposes the subject's positioning *above* the foreseeable event:

- (12)(a) Od samego początku Północny realizował z góry obmyślony plan.

'Północny was executing a plan that was devised in advance.'

(Mariusz Sieniewicz, 2003, *Czwarte niebo*, W.A.B.)

- (12)(b) [...] z góry zakłada, że parlament będzie znajdował się w opozycji do prezydenta [...]

'[...] assumes in advance that the Parliament will be in opposition to the President [...]

(Piotr Kozarzewski, 1994, *Dokąd zmierza Rosja*, In: *Gazeta Wyborcza*)

This particular metaphor highlights the ability to predict a future event through the mapping of a physical experience of looking from up above at an easily visible terrain, into which the observer is advancing. Being able to see is conceptualized as being able to predict or know via the SEEING IS KNOWING perceptual metaphor. The foreseeability of a given event is thus facilitated by the act of approaching something *z góry*, from up above.

#### **4.10. The metaphors THE EVENING IS ABOVE A SURFACE and THE MORNING IS BELOW A SURFACE**

A Polish set of expressions worth considering is one used in reference to approaching the evening or morning hours:

- (13)(a) Pod wieczór już tak nie bolało [...]

'By the evening, it didn't hurt so much [...]

(Igor Newerly, 1952, *Pamiętka z Celulozy*, *Czytelnik*)

- (13)(b) Nad ranem mężczyźni wrócili z jakimiś ludźmi.

'Early in the morning, the men returned with some people.'

(Olga Tokarczuk, 1996, *Prawiek i inne czasy*, W.A.B.)



As evidenced by (13a) and (13b), the presence of these expressions – *pod wieczór*, lit. under evening-ACC, and *nad ranem*, lit. above morning-INSTR – in Polish points to the opposing orientational metaphors of time. While the evening is near, the events and the subject are placed below it, as opposed to being situated above the morning in the hours preceding it.

A possible physical explanation of the discussed contrast could be found in relation to the visible astronomical bodies culturally connected with day and night: that is, the Sun and the Moon, respectively. As midnight approaches, the most prominent feature of the prototypical sky is the Moon, seen above the position of the observer, who is thus situated *below the evening*. On the other hand, dawn is preceded by sunrise, the visual perception of the Sun rising. Anticipating the event in question, the observer might mark their temporal position as above the sun, or *above the morning*. This recurring experience could potentially function as a physical explanation for the presence of the two opposing metaphors mentioned beforehand. Elaborating upon the accuracy of this hypothetical experiential explanation would necessitate conducting further research which falls outside the purview of this paper.

## 5. Discussion

The presented corpus data stands as evidence that there is internal variety within one metaphorical mode of conceptualization. This implies a high level of productivity of the conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE, which, as predicted by Clausner and Croft (1997), in turn relates to its high conventionalization. Although the overall discussed type of metaphorical expression is undoubtedly very frequently used among Polish speakers, the individual submetaphors vary in their frequency. For instance, the phrase listed in (9a) only appears in the NKJP 34 times, while the one in (2a) is listed 12,286 times.

It may prove worthwhile to discuss the individual temporal submetaphors which are most often accessed by speakers. The most frequent metaphor in Polish is TIME IS A CONTAINER, which can be divided into two separate schemata: a dynamic schema (2a) or a static schema (1a), marked by using either the accusative or locative inflectional morpheme, respectively. The two schemata appear in mutually exclusive collocative pairings. Perhaps the reason for this could be the difference in the level of abstraction, given the fact that a smaller time unit may be easier to access on a cognitive level. This could be connected with the way that the knowledge of different units of conventionalized time is acquired at different stages of cognitive development (Friedman 1978). Alternatively, the shared division may result from the fact that days of the week are entirely rooted in social convention, whereas months and years constitute experiential cycles. Another possible reason may be the frequency of everyday spoken usage: references to days and weeks constitute a more immediate mode of temporal organization than references to years, hence their greater utility in organizing the everyday experience.

To elaborate further on the most frequent metaphors, spatial metaphors of time are most often manifested in prepositional phrases, which reflects the linguistic patterns associated with space. For example, the most frequent of such Polish phrases – (1a) – appears 187,046 times in the balanced corpus, while the most frequent non-prepositional metaphorical phrase (*mieć czas* ‘to have time’, rooted in TIME IS MONEY) is only listed 11,530 times. There is, therefore, a tendency to follow linguistic patterns connected with expressing concepts from the source domain while referring to the target domain, a fact which suggests that conceptual metaphors manifest not just in the speakers’ choice of lexical items, but also in their choice of grammatical categories.

Furthermore, some metaphorical expressions appear to be conventionalized to a degree that their frequency of use is greater than that of their literal, spatial counterparts, as is

evidenced by (10a). This example showcases a deictically anchored SOON IS NEAR metaphor, through which the speakers conceptualize upcoming events as physically close to them. The NKJP corpus shows that the primary manner of expressing this is the usage of the superlative form of the adjective *bliski* ('near'). Thus, a graded conceptualization of space, and in turn time, is implied, which creates the need for a reference to a more specific restriction.

The TIME IS SPACE metaphor is also often co-activated with other cognitive metaphors. The schema from (11a), for example, demonstrates the manner in which Polish linguistic expressions may manifest both the discussed orientational metaphor of time, and the experiential KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor simultaneously. Similarly, Stanulewicz (2010) points out that the Polish prepositions *przed* (before) and *za* (after, behind) activate at least four conceptual metaphors in reference to events of the past and future (two of which overlap with the ones in 12a). This speaks to the fact that the analyzed metaphor is not always found in isolation, a feature that Polish speakers seem to exploit often.

## 6. Concluding remarks

In analyzing Polish conceptual metaphors of time, TIME IS SPACE is not only of particular interest because of its prevalence, but also due to the fact that it is found in connection with a variety of submetaphors. This rich internal diversity may be rooted in the metaphor's productivity, level of conventionalization, and the diversity of linguistic tools usually used to describe concepts the source domain. The individual metaphorical expressions vary in their frequency, the other accompanying co-activated metaphors and the categories of the words they select. The most commonly utilized conceptual metaphor – TIME IS A CONTAINER – further varies in its selection of either the accusative or the locative case.

The preceding findings might be worth contextualizing through a comparative cross-linguistic analysis, especially one with a focus on languages from culturally distant regions. This could illuminate the extent of universality and individual specification of the Polish spatio-temporal expressions found in the NKJP. It may also be worthwhile to pursue a further quantitative analysis of other temporal metaphors expressed in Polish, as it might demonstrate the specific role and significance of TIME IS SPACE within the cognitive system of the speakers.

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## Corpus

Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego (PELCRA). Available at <<http://www.nkjp.uni.lodz.pl/>>. Accessed 04.03.2022.

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## **Circumlocutions with *plenny* in Hawai'i Creole English**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the uses of circumlocutions with *plenny* in Hawai'i Creole English in the translation of King James' Bible. The examples were extracted from *The Revelation of St. John Divine* and analyzed by means of *AntConc*. As a result, seven different circumlocutions have been extracted. They are found 18 times in the text. These multiword expressions function as nouns and adjectives.

### **Keywords**

circumlocution, creole, Hawai'i Creole English

### **Peryfrazy z *plenny* w hawajskim języku kreolskim**

### **Abstrakt**

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza użycia peryfraz ze słowem *plenny* w hawajskim języku kreolskim w tłumaczeniu Biblii Króla Jakuba. Przykłady zostały zaczerpnięte z Apokalipsy św. Jana i przeanalizowane za pomocą programu *AntConc*. W rezultacie wyodrębniono

siedem różnych peryfraz. Występują one w tekście 18 razy. Te wielowrazowe wyrażenia funkcjonują jako rzeczowniki i przymiotniki.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

hawajski język kreolski, języki kreolskie, peryfraz

## **1. Introduction**

Pidgins and creoles are contact languages which emerge in dire need of a common means of communication. Such a language serves as a medium of communication which unifies and brings together various groups of people of distinct linguistic as well as cultural backgrounds (Sebba 1997: 26–27, Veenstra 2008: 219–220).

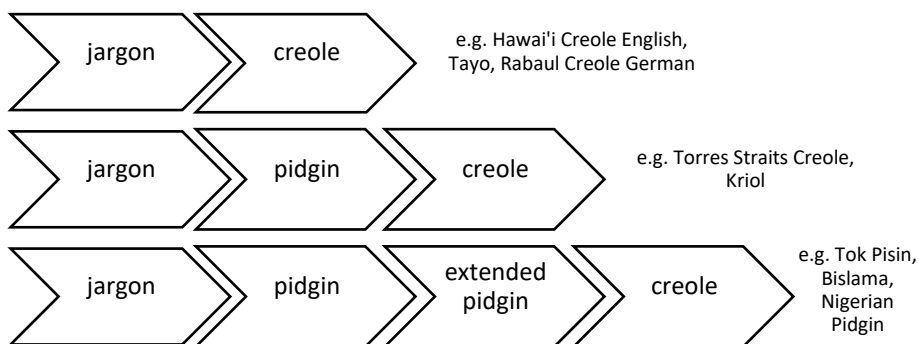
Let us now explain the difference between the terms *pidgin* and *creole*. Moreover, let us also account for the intermediate state between pidgins and creoles, namely, *pidgincreole*. Table 1 shows sociolinguistic features of these contact languages.

**Table 1**

Sociolinguistic features of pidgins, pidgincreoles and creoles  
(Bakker 2003: 7)

Feature	Pidgin	Pidgin-creole	Creole
native language	–	+ / –	+
general community language or official language	–	+ / –	+
ethnic or political group language	–	–	+
speakers have it as their only language	–	+ / –	+
used between people who have no other language in common	+	+ / –	–
used mostly as a second language	+	+ / –	–
expressive function	–	+	+

It is argued that pidgins, pidgincreoles and creoles constitute an evolutionary continuum of these contact languages. Pidgins may also be referred to as stable pidgins which implies that they emerge from unstable varieties, that is, jargons. Jargons (also known as unstable or rudimentary pidgins) are considered limited and temporary communicative strategies which, if necessary for a particular speech community, may transform into stable pidgins. Stable varieties are used as auxiliary languages by people who do not share a common language. What is more, once a stable pidgin gains expressive functions and may, as well, be used as a native language by a limited community, it changes into a pidgincreole (also known as extended/expanded pidgin). A pidgincreole is a predecessor of a creole. Lastly, creoles are languages which are full-fledged natural languages whose linguistic properties supply their speakers with all sufficient communicative means (Bakker 2003: 7, Bakker 2008: 131–132, Velupillai 2015: 18–20).



**Figure 1**

Three types of creole life cycles  
(Mühlhäusler 1985: 479)

Figure 1 suggests that all distinguished creoles should follow one of the three possible ways of evolution. All the paths consist of two extremes, that is, the jargon and the creole. The first path shows a simple and direct transformation from the jargon into the creole. The second path presents one transition point between the extremes, namely, the pidgin. The third path includes two transition points, that is, the pidgin and extended pidgin. Examples of creoles whose historical background suggests one of the three possible developments are given on the right-hand side. What may be inferred is that Hawai'i Creole English (henceforth HCE) followed the first evolutionary path according to Mühlhäusler (1985: 479).

*The Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures Online* states that there are nearly 600,000 users of HCE who employ the language as their mother tongue. Moreover, there are 100,000 speakers of the creole located on the US mainland. The language is used on a daily basis. Alongside HCE, Standard American English and Hawaiian are used. These two languages have had a huge impact upon HCE. The result of this influence is reflected in the components of the language, among others, lexicon and syntax. As a result, in such languages, inflectional morphology may be limited (Plag 2009: 346–347), therefore more analytical structures might be used instead, for instance circumlocutions (see Radomyski 2020, 2022). For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to extract and analyze circumlocutions in Hawai'i Creole English Bible via the software *AntConc* (version 4.2.4.). To be more specific, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of circumlocutions with the word *plenny*?
2. What type of grammatical patterns do circumlocutions with *plenny* exhibit?
3. What names of e.g. phenomena or objects do these circumlocutions replace?
4. Are there any underlying metonymic or metaphorical processes involved?

## 2. Circumlocution

A linguistic phenomenon which bridges lexicon and syntax is circumlocution. In simple terms, it is considered to be an elaborate expression which functions instead of individual words or conventionalized phrases (Bańko 2002: 5).

It is worth pointing out that circumlocutions may occur in various registers such as literary language (Białoskórska 2002, Machnicka 2005, 2011, Rychter 2011), the speech of people suffering from aphasia (Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska 2016) or students learning foreign languages (Broeder et al. 1993, Jourdain and Scullen 2002). Needless to say, circumlocution is also present in language produced by speakers of pidgin and creole languages.

However, even though circumlocutions are employed in various contexts they bear several similarities. Firstly, their staple function is to name objects, phenomena, people and/or activities. For this reason, they may function as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs. Second, according to Machnicka (2011: 75–85), circumlocutions may serve a number of functions such as: defining an unknown object, embellishing a literary text or specifying an object mentioned in a text by providing an elaborate description, to mention a few. Lastly, as stated by Bańko (2002: 3) and Straś (2001: 104), circumlocutions may be coined by implementing metonymic and metaphorical processes.

## 3. Methodology

For the sake of this study, circumlocutions with the lexeme *plenny* were selected. *Plenny* derives from the English word *plenty* for this reason one may argue that the HCE equivalent has a similar function. The *Cambridge Online Dictionary* defines this word as “(the state of having) enough or more than enough, or a large amount”. Let us also take into account the definition from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, available online, “an abundance especially of material things that permit a satis-

factory life: a condition or time of abundance". It is worth emphasising here that Jourdain and Scullen (2002: 230) account for uses of similar phrases (e.g. 'type of' or 'like') in circumlocutions produced by second language learners.

In this paper, *The Revelation of St. John Divine* in Hawai'i Creole English was analyzed. The software *AntConc* was implemented to extract circumlocutions with *plenny*. The text consists of 17,375 words. The extracted circumlocutions were compared with their equivalents from King James' Bible. According to Velupillai (2015: 198), pidgins and creoles are extensively documented in biblical texts and their translations.

Lastly, circumlocutions were excerpted from *The Revelation of St. John Divine* in Hawai'i Creole English by means of the quantitative methodology applied in the extraction of lexical bundles (Radomyski 2022 as well as Stanulewicz, Radomyski and Komorowska 2022). In this technique, the length of a lexical bundle is taken into consideration, as well as their occurrences in the corpus. Besides, one factor is neglected, that is, the distribution of circumlocutions in different texts.

#### **4. An analysis of the circumlocutions with *plenny***

As has already been mentioned, the lexeme *plenny* is found 57 times in the corpus. It is used in seven distinct circumlocutions whose total frequency is 18. The following sections present structural and semantic analyses of circumlocutions with *plenny*.

##### **4.1. The structure of circumlocutions**

Let us now consider grammatical structures observed in these expressions. Generally speaking, the circumlocutions with *plenny* form two major classes, that is, simple and complex circumlocutions. Table 2 presents these circumlocutions and their degrees of complexity.

**Table 2**  
Degree of complexity of circumlocutions with *plenny*

Complexity	Degree of complexity	Frequency	%
Simple circumlocutions	2	12	66.66
	3	4	22.22
Complex circumlocutions	4	1	5.56
	5	1	5.56
Total		18	100.00

What is seen in the table above is that the most popular type of circumlocutions in the text is simple circumlocutions. They occur 88.88% in total. However, complex circumlocutions are not as common, and they are only found in 11.12% of all the circumlocutions. Now, let us take into consideration syntactic patterns. Table 3 shows grammatical constructions.

**Table 3**  
Grammatical patterns of circumlocutions with *plenny*

Structure	Number of occurrences	%
V + <i>plenny</i>	10	55.56
V + <i>plenny</i> + NP	4	22.22
NP + relative clause containing <i>plenny</i>	1	5.56
<i>plenny</i> + N	1	5.56
<i>plenny</i> + Adj	1	5.56
<i>plenny</i> + relative clause	1	5.56
Total	18	100.00

As may be inferred from this table, there are six different syntactic patterns. Needless to say, the construction V + *plenny* (i.e. *suffa plenny* ‘tribulation’, lit. suffer plenty and *cost plenny* ‘precious’, lit. cost plenty) is the most common. Interestingly, this construction can be further extended by the addition of a noun. In consequence, the structure V + *plenny* + NP is also possible

(i.e. *get plenny power* ‘mighty’, lit. get plenty power). What is more, these circumlocutions can begin with the lexeme *plenny* and the next element following the word can be either a noun (i.e. *plenny grasshoppas* ‘locust’, lit. plenty grasshoppers, *plenny smarts* ‘wisdom’, lit. plenty smarts) or an adjective (i.e. *plenny awesome* ‘glorified’, lit. plenty awesome). Lastly, it needs to be emphasized that longer grammatical constructions are possible. There are two expressions of this kind: (1) *plenny* + relative clause (i.e. *plenny ice come down jalike rain* ‘hail’, lit. plenty ice come down just like rain) and (2) NP + relative clause with *plenny* (i.e. *marble stone dat cost plenny* ‘marble’, lit. marble stone that cost plenty).

Let us now take into account word classes which can be ascribed to the circumlocutions with *plenny*. Table 4 shows all the features discussed above. It also indicates different word classes.

**Table 4**  
Circumlocutions with *plenny*

Circumlocution in HCE	Frequency	Word class	Literal meaning	Meaning in HCE
<i>suffa plenny</i>	6	noun	suffer plenty	tribulation
<i>cost plenny</i>	4	adjective	cost plenty	precious
<i>get plenny power</i>	4	adjective	get plenty power	mighty
<i>marble stone dat cost plenny</i>	1	noun	marble stone that costs plenty	marble
<i>plenny grasshoppas</i>	1	noun	plenty grasshoppers	locust
<i>plenny ice come down jalike rain</i>	1	noun	plenty ice come down just like rain	hail
<i>plenny smarts</i>	1	noun	plenty smart	wisdom



As may be seen, 5 circumlocutions function as a noun, whereas 2 circumlocutions are adjectives. The last aspect which is worth mentioning is the semantics of circumlocutions.

## 5. The semantics of the circumlocutions with *plenny*

As has been signalled earlier, semantic aspects of the circumlocutions with *plenny* are dealt with in this section. Firstly, let us consider the semantic categories which emerge from the analysis of the circumlocutions. Table 5 illustrates these categories.

**Table 5**  
Semantic categories of circumlocutions with *plenny*

Category	Frequency		%	
Evaluative adjectives	8		44.44	
Misfortune	6		33.33	
Nature				
– inanimate	2	3	11.11	16.67
– animate	1		5.56	
Qualities	1		5.56	
Total	18		100%	

What may be inferred from the data contained in the table is that evaluative adjectives are the most common. According to Biber, Conrad and Leech (2019 [2002]: 197), evaluative adjectives “denote judgements, emotions and emphasis”. Let us now observe these adjectives in some context:

(1) **cost plenny** ‘precious’, lit. cost plenty  
degree of complexity: 2

*Was awesome, an wen shine cuz God stay dea. Da light from da town wen shine jalike one jewel stone dat **cost plenny**, jalike one diamond, an you can see thru um jalike da crystal.*

‘[...] having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most **precious**, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal [...]’

(2) **get plenny power** ‘mighty’, lit. get plenty power  
degree of complexity: 3

*Den, jalike one dream, I wen see anodda angel guy dat **get plenny power**, coming down from da sky. He get one cloud fo his clotheses, an one rainbow aroun his head. His face jalike da sun, an his legs jalike fire.*

‘And I saw another **mighty** angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire [...]’

The examples presented above show expressions which consist of the verbs *cost* ‘cost’ and *get* ‘get’. In the case of the first circumlocution the meaning of the verb is intensified by the word *plenny*. In the second expression, the verb *get* ‘get’ is preceded by an adjective *power* ‘power’ whose meaning is intensified by the lexeme *plenny*.

The remaining examples of circumlocutions are nouns. They are used to name objects or phenomena. Let us now consider the following examples:

(3) **suffa plenny** ‘tribulations’, lit. suffer plenty  
degree of complexity: 2

*Me, I you guys brudda John. I jalike you guys, cuz I stay tight wit Jesus too. Cuz a dat, I stay **suffa plenny** jalike you guys. An I get Jesus fo King jalike you guys. An I hanging in dea jalike you guys. Dey wen put me on top da island name Patmos cuz I wen tell wat God say, an da trut dat Jesus Christ wen tell.*

‘I John, who also am your brother, and companion in **tribulation**, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’

(4) **plenny grasshoppas** ‘locust’, lit. plenty grasshoppers  
degree of complexity: 2

*Den outa da smoke, **plenny grasshoppas** wen come down on top da earth. God wen give um da kine power jalike da scorpions get.*

‘And there came out of the smoke **locusts** upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.’

(5) **plenny ice come down jalike rain** ‘hail’, lit. plenty ice come down just like rain

degree of complexity: 5

*Den God’s temple inside da sky wen come open, so can see da Box Fo God’s Promise dat get da Ten Commandments inside. Den had lightning flash, an noise, an loud thunder. Da earth wen shake, an had **plenny ice come down jalike rain**.*

‘And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and **hail**.’

(6) **marble stone dat cost plenny** ‘marble’, lit. marble stone that cost plenty

degree of complexity: 4

[...] *gold kine stuff, silva, jewel stones dat cost plenny, pearls, fancy linen kine cloth, purple cloth, silk cloth, red cloth, all kine fancy wood, an stuffs from ivory, wood, bronze, iron, an **marble stone dat cost plenny** [...]*

[...] *the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyne wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and **marble** [...]*

(7) **plenny smarts** ‘wisdom’, lit. plenty smart

degree of complexity: 2

*Dey sing wit one loud voice: “Dey wen kill God’s Baby Sheep Guy Jalike one sacrifice. So he get da right fo get all kine power, An rich kine stuffs, An get **plenny smarts**, An fo be real strong! He get da right fo everybody give respect to him, An tell how awesome he stay, An tell him he good heart cuz he give us everyting!”*

[...] *saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and **wisdom**, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’*

In the examples shown above, it can be observed that, similarly to examples in (1) and (2), the function of the lexeme *plenny* ‘plenty’ is to intensify the meaning of some content words in the circumlocutions. Needless to say, the lexeme *plenny* strengthens the meaning of such words as *suffa* ‘suffer’, *grasshoppas* ‘grasshoppers’, *ice* ‘ice’, *cost* ‘cost’ and *smarts* ‘smart’. By juxtaposing these words with *plenny*, expressions are coined whose meanings correspond to such concepts as: (1) misfortunes (i.e. *suffa plenny* ‘tribulations’, lit. suffer plenty), (2) nature – inanimate objects (i.e. *plenny ice come down jalike rain* ‘hail’, lit. plenty ice come down just like rain, *marble stone dat cost plenny* ‘marble’, lit. marble stone that cost plenty), (3) nature – animate object (i.e. *plenty grasshoppas* ‘locust’, lit. plenty grasshoppers) and (4) qualities (i.e. *plenny smarts* ‘wisdom’, lit. plenty smart).

It is worth emphasizing that most circumlocutions function as descriptions of objects or phenomena. In Machnicka’s (2011: 75-85) view, this type of circumlocutions is referred to as definition-like circumlocutions. In the circumlocutions enumerated earlier, the subsequent characteristics may be observed: (1) the appearance (e.g. *plenny ice come down jalike rain* ‘hail’, lit. plenty ice come down just like rain), (2) generic categories (e.g. *plenty grasshoppas* ‘locust’, lit. plenty grasshoppers) and (3) qualities (e.g. *get plenny power* ‘mighty’, lit. get plenty power).

The last semantic aspect of circumlocutions which needs to be addressed is figurative language. The only figure of speech which might be noticed is metonymy. Let us analyze the circumlocution: *plenny ice come down jalike rain* ‘hail’, lit. plenty ice come down just like rain. It might be claimed that in this phrase the lexeme *ice* is used in a figurative way to refer to hail. By way of explanation, Kövecses (2010 [2009]: 180) states that the Constitution ICM encapsulates the relation THE MATERIAL CONSTITUTING AN OBJECT FOR THE OBJECT (e.g. *wood* for “the forest”). In a similar way, the lexeme *ice* stands for the material that constitutes the physical phenomenon known as “hail”.

## 6. Concluding remarks

To sum up, the word *plenny* in Hawai'i Creole English may be employed in phrases to form circumlocutions. The main function of this lexeme is to intensify the meaning of a word or words used in circumlocutions. As has already been emphasized, these expressions are analytical structures whose primary function is to replace names of phenomena, objects or people (see Machnicka 2005, 2011, Plag 2009). The most common grammatical pattern employed in these expressions is *V + plenny* (55.56 %).

It needs to be pointed out that the circumlocutions function as adjectives and nouns. Needless to say, the higher frequency of nominal expressions converges with the statement by Bańko (2002: 5) that the majority of circumlocutions are nouns since their primary function is to name objects (e.g. *plenny ice come down jakile rain* 'hail'). However, there are also several adjectival expressions (e.g. *gel plenny power* 'mighty').

As signalled earlier, the majority of these elaborate phrases are definition-like circumlocutions. As a result, these circumlocutions employ such characteristics as the appearance or qualities. Additionally, it is worth stressing that only one circumlocution contains a lexeme used in a figurative way, i.e. metonymy.

Lastly, the analysis presented in this paper shows that the HCE translation of *The Revelation of St. John Devine* contains circumlocutions which fulfil their basic functions, namely, they name, among others, objects and phenomena. Despite the fact that circumlocutions occur in the analyzed biblical text, compiling a corpus of other types of texts and analyzing occurrences of different circumlocutions could yield more meaningful observations.

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LITERARY STUDIES



**Protagonist and setting in the short story  
“The Greater Punishment” by Marek S. Huberath**

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**Abstract**

The article presents an interpretation of one of Marek S. Huberath’s first published short stories, which is also one of his first “eschatological” fictions (texts set in the after-world). The article analyses how the protagonist, who finds himself in a combination of hell and purgatory, wastes his chance to mend his ways and stays within a potentially endless cycle of sin and punishment. The spatial setting of the story becomes a metaphorical reflection first of the character’s opportunity and then of its loss. The story thus seems to suggest the idea that an inveterate sinner suffers a potentially endless punishment because, in spite of retaining free will, he keeps making the same wrong choices.

**Key words**

Huberath, “The Greater Punishment”, space, hell, moral transformation

## **Protagonista i miejsce akcji w opowiadaniu Marka S. Huberatha *Kara większa***

### **Abstrakt**

Artykuł przedstawia interpretację jednego z pierwszych opowiadań Marka S. Huberatha, stanowiącego zarazem jedną z jego pierwszych „fikcji eschatologicznych” (tekstów osadzonych w zaświatach). Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób główny bohater, który trafia do miejsca łączącego w sobie piekło i czyściec, marnuje szansę, aby naprawić swoje postępowanie i nadal tkwi w potencjalnie nieskończonym cyklu grzechu i kary. Tło przestrzenne opowiadania staje się metaforycznym odzwierciedleniem najpierw szansy stojącej przed bohaterem, a potem jej utraty. W ten sposób opowiadanie zdaje się wskazywać, iż niepoprawny grzesznik ponosi potencjalnie nieskończoną karę pomimo zachowania wolnej woli, ponieważ wciąż dokonuje tych samych błędnych wyborów.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

Huberath, *Kara większa*, przestrzeń, piekło, przemiana moralna

## **1. The protagonist and the other world**

**1.1.** Marek S. Huberath is a Polish science fiction and fantasy writer whose literary output, though limited in scope, merits scholarly attention for its extremely imaginative and intriguing ideas. This article, however, will not deal with any of his major novels. Instead, its aim is to focus on one of Huberath's early short stories, "The Greater Punishment" ("Kara większa"), which, in its time (the first version was published in 1991), attracted considerable attention and even aroused some controversy due to its decidedly pro-life content. The story has been, in fact, translated into English and included in the collection *The Dedalus Book of Polish Fantasy*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although an English translation of the story exists, I will use my own rendering whenever I quote the text under discussion. Also, all quotations of

This article aims to analyse the spatial setting of the world presented in Huberath's short story and the way that space is related to the main character's development in the course of the plot. For the purposes of the analysis to follow, a narratological framework will be adopted. Following Uri Mardolin, quoted by Fotis Jannidis, I understand by character "a general semiotic element, independent of any particular verbal expression and ontologically different from it" (2013: 11). Jannidis also points out that "Even some of those who have claimed that character is a paradigm of traits assume that there exists a cultural code making it possible to perceive these traits as a meaningful whole," citing Lotman as an example (2013: 14).

In a different context, Marie-Laure Ryan also cites Lotman as one of the first who "showed that in literary texts, especially poetry, spatial oppositions such as high and low, right-left, near-far or open-closed are invested with non-spatial meaning, such as valuable-non-valuable, good-bad, accessible-inaccessible, or mortal-immortal" (2014: 18). Out of these "spatial oppositions" that may bear "non-spatial meaning," two will be of special interest to us: "high and low" and "open-closed."

Other terms proposed by Ryan will also be useful in this study. The researcher uses the term *narrative space* to refer to the broadest spectrum of spatial phenomena within any fictional universe, i.e. without any references to the space of the medium in which a text is embedded (paper, layout, typography etc.) – she calls these physical aspects of a text the *spatial extension of the text* (2014: 12–13) – or to the physical space to which a text refers, in which it is read etc. (she covers this aspect of a text's spatiality with the descriptive term *space that serves as context and container for the text* [2014: 4–17]); my focus will be mainly on *narrative space* as such.<sup>2</sup> Ryan

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Polish sources are provided in my translation.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from narrative space, spatial extension of the text and space as context and container for the text, Ryan also proposes the term spatial form of the text, by which she means "any kind of design formed by networks of semantic, phonetic or more broadly thematic relations between non-adjacent

subdivides the term into *spatial frames*, *setting*, *story space*, *narrative world* and *narrative universe* (2014: 5–11). For the purposes of this study, I shall take the liberty to simplify this terminology by subsuming *setting*, *narrative space* and *narrative world* under the common heading *setting*, the definitions of the above three terms being sufficiently similar and sufficiently general to justify such a conflation. By *setting*, then, I will understand the sum of all intratextual spacial phenomena – both indicated and implied – along with all inferences regarding the spatial dimension of the world presented made by the reader based on their general knowledge (that is, even if a spatial element is neither mentioned nor alluded to in the text itself).

*Narrative universe* is a term that refers to “the world (in the spatio-temporal sense of the term) presented as actual by the text, plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, and fantasies” (Ryan 2014: 10). However, it seems to me that the concept of *narrative universe*, rather than being narrowed down to the spatial dimension of the actual and potential worlds within the fictional universe, should encompass those possible worlds in all their dimensions. The reason for this is the fact that such dream-worlds, hope-worlds or fear-worlds may often not involve any spatial dimension, while still being salient for the story (e.g. when a character asks him- or herself questions such as “will I come out of this alive?” or “whom will I marry?”). Therefore, the term *narrative universe* will not be used in this study.

This, then, leaves us with two main concepts within the general idea of *setting*: *spatial frames* and *story space*. *Spatial frames*, understood as the background of particular scenes (Ryan 2014: 6) – whether described in detail in the narrative or barely sketched in – will be at the core of the analysis as I shall argue that these carry metaphorical meaning exactly because of their correlation with given scenes. The concept of *story space*

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textual units” (2014: 16). It is, as she admits, a metaphorical aspect of a text’s spatiality, and it will not be relevant to the present research.

will also be relevant, insofar as it includes both *presented* (i.e. described) space and *implied* space (i.e. only named or alluded to) (Ryan 2014: 8). Both presented and implied space will be relevant to the present study inasmuch as they are relevant to the character's actions, plans etc. Also, *spatial frames* may have a virtual aspect to them, since they may not always be described in detail (making them partly *implied*), and yet retain their relevance to the story.

**1.2.** Overall, it will be argued that the spatial frames serve as a metaphorical reflection of the meanings that can be identified by analysing the protagonist's characteristics. The discussion will start with a plot summary and then go on to profiling the protagonist's character traits. As will be shown, the main figure's characterisation highlights his negative side, while also presenting him as a person faced with an opportunity for a change, who nevertheless does not use that opportunity properly. The spatial setting is endowed with metaphorical significance by correlating a large space with that part of the plot which deals with the main character's chance for moral improvement; and correlating a confined space with that part of the plot which shows the character as receiving punishment for his misdeeds. The plot depicts the character's movement from the limited space to the relatively open space and back to the confined space, and it is arguably this movement that metaphorically indicates the man's wasted chance. Apart from that, the article will also seek to prove that the above-mentioned confined space / broad space opposition is correlated, among others, with the up / down and vertical / horizontal oppositions that reinforce the non-literal meaning of the character's movement. Additionally, the article contends that, at one point in the story, the limited – broad – confined spatial scheme is reduplicated.

Before analysing the above-mentioned elements of the text, it is necessary to provide a brief outline of the setting and plot, as the story is not very well-known outside the circle of Polish

SF and fantasy fans. Huberath's "The Greater Punishment," like some of his other novels and short stories, is set in an imagined "after-world" which, in this case, resembles "a concentration camp" (Wiśniewski 2006: 64) that functions as a combination of hell and purgatory.<sup>3</sup> This hell- purgatory seems to be inspired by both German Nazi and Russian Communist systems as the demons who oversee this place bear either German names (Neuheufel [Huberath 2006: 165], Holzbucher [182], Kohlengruber [226]) or Russian ones (Blicyna [163],<sup>4</sup> Panfilowa<sup>5</sup> [176]) (Glensk 2002: 114). Some of them wear uniforms with the pentagram, a pop-cultural symbol of Satanism. As I explain in another article, the camp is an example of an intermediate space – or inter-space – between the world of the living and the other world (Chojnowski 2018). In the words of Neuheufel, "everyone must come here: everyone has passed through here, even the Galilean [Jesus]" [...]; however, some will eventually leave the camp and move on to heaven, while others will stay there forever.

The punishment that sinners receive in this after-world are divided into the Greater Punishment and the Lesser Punishment that alternate periodically. The Greater Punishment means tortures that take place in an underground chamber outside the camp itself; the Lesser Punishment is a stay in the camp which is called "the adaptation centre." The centre, as has been said, is modelled on a concentration camp: there are barracks, guard posts and a railway ramp that receives successive arrivals of the newly-deceased. However, the conditions of living are milder than in real concentration camps; for instance, there

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<sup>3</sup> As Huberath comments in an interview about *Miasta pod Skalą* [*Cities Under the Rock*], whose setting is based on a similar principle: "What mattered here was the spatial and temporal unity of hell and purgatory, which I assumed for the sake of the novel. [...] I reused my idea from 'The Greater Punishment.' [...] They [hell and purgatory] share a common space, except that for some people it is an endless punishment, whereas for others it is a finite one [...]" (2005: 12).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Blitsyna Surname Meaning & Statistics*, [in:] *Forebears*. 2012-2015. <http://forebears.io/surnames/blitsyna> Accessed: 19.05.2015.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Panfilova Surname Meaning & Statistics*, [in:] *Forebears*. 2012-2015. <http://forebears.io/surnames/panfilova> Accessed 19.05.2015.



is a crematory, but all it does is to burn rubbish from a hospital. Besides, most of the inmates are elderly people, who are unable to perform hard physical labour anyway.

The narration starts as the protagonist, Ruder Milenkowicz, also known as Rud, finishes his Greater Punishment episode and is being moved first to the hospital for operations and convalescence, and then on to the camp. Once in the camp, he makes friends with Maria, a 18-year old girl with whom he falls in love, and Patrycja, one of the “unborn,” i.e. aborted children that walk around the camp in the form of foetuses and communicate telepathically due to an undeveloped speech apparatus. Neither Maria nor Patrycja undergo the Greater Punishment and they both expect to leave the camp soon to move on to Heaven. In the meantime, Rud is performing intellectual jobs for Neuheufel, one of the supervisors, and trying to remember facts from his life that could have led to his being sentenced to the Greater Punishment. A likely cause was his relationship with Dianna, a girl whom he had made pregnant and then jilted and who aborted the pregnancy afterwards. Rud learns that Maria left the camp without a chance to say goodbye.

As a result of Neuheufel’s lies, Rud is for a long time convinced that the camp is a vestibule of Heaven. It is only at the end of the story that he learns that it is the Lesser Punishment instead. Also at the end, it is explained that both Rud’s mutilations and his later regeneration were merely a subjective way in which he perceived his punishment. The story ends with Rud being informed that the next day he will return for another session of the Greater Punishment and that he cannot be told whether the cycle will ever end for him.

The synopsis provided above testifies to the fact that “The Greater Punishment” can be classified as a certain characteristic sub-genre of speculative fiction for which, in my doctoral dissertation, I proposed the term “eschatological fiction” (Chojnowski 2021: 76). Like other narratives, including films, that can be grouped under the same heading (for instance, *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders (2017), *What Dreams May Come*

by Vincent Ward (1998, an adaptation of Richard Matheson's 1978 novel), *Constantine* by Francis Lawrence (2005) or *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold (2002), filmed by Peter Jackson in 2009), it features the deceased as characters, an imaginative version of the after-world as setting, a plot that is directly related to the character's situation in afterlife (e.g. working out the rules, possibilities and limitations in the land of the dead) and an axiology that is also relevant to such an environment and involves, for instance, the concepts of guilt, redemption, sacrifice etc. (Chojnowski 2021: 76–80).

**1.3.** Now, we need to know more about the protagonist's character traits in order to understand what causes his overall failure; a failure, needless to add, that is primarily moral in nature. There are certainly a few negative characteristics that Rud does not manage to realise and, consequently, to overcome. His stay in the camp, or "adaptation centre," seems to present him with an opportunity to "mend his ways"; if he did, his moral metamorphosis could, it is implied, liberate him from the vicious circle of alternate Greater and Lesser Punishment. However, the man does not take this chance. Rud's main vices seem to be his inconstancy of feelings, his egocentricity and his shallow approach to women (and to himself as well). His changeability is perhaps the most salient of his features: this is possibly what brought him to the place of torment: he discards Dianna, easily forgetting her and starting to take interest in another woman. As he confesses to Neuheufel, "Then I had to leave because I started my studies [. . .]. And she was pregnant. She even followed me. To where I studied. But I was already after another" (Huberath 2006: 185). This inconstancy is strictly related to his egocentricity: after jilting Dianna, Rud did not seem to care for her fate or their child's:

"Did she have that baby?" [asked Neuheufel]

"I think she didn't. I mean I'm sure she didn't[.]" [said] Rud [...].  
(Huberath 2006: 185).

It is also worth noting that the protagonist's inconstancy and callousness are accompanied by a third related feature: his shallowness that manifests itself in paying special attention to his and other people's external looks. When he describes his relationship with Dianna, he focuses almost entirely on her looks, which suggests that it was her appearance that made her attractive to Rud: "In her face, everything was pretty: the brows, the lashes, a blush just like a peach's and a matching delicate fuzz on her cheeks" (Huberath 2006: 184). Even if he talks about her with sentiment ("I'll never forget her eyes"), he does not stop to evaluate her with the cold eye of someone concentrated on aesthetics: "The nose, perhaps slightly too prominent" and, later on: "Only later did I realise that she dyed her hair. But that wasn't too much of a problem" (Huberath 2006: 184). He even indirectly objectifies her by his choice of words: "Her eyes were inquisitive, distinct, green-blue [...]. Plus bright hair. A gorgeous *set*" (Huberath 2006: 184, emphasis added). Thus Rud's inconstancy and egocentricity, coupled with his superficiality, brought the punishment on him and, as we might infer, it is these features that require mending for him to be liberated. Is such a metamorphosis possible for Rud?

## **2. A wasted chance**

One of the things that point to Rud's potential for change is the shift in his attitude towards the unborn as a result of his friendship with Patrycja. Before meeting her, he keeps aloof from them: "Rud did not like the unborn. He believed they thought themselves better than others" (Huberath 2006: 181). Since his meeting with Patrycja, his attitude is starting to change. He invites her for a chat of his own will (Huberath 2006: 217) and is glad to meet her by accident (Huberath 2006: 233). A friendship is kindled between them. "The unborn never assumed an embryonic position in the presence of the born: in this way, they tried to assert their human status. The fact that she [Patrycja] curled up like this in the company of Rud was evidence of close

intimacy” (Huberath 2006: 233). The acquaintance thus seems to create favourable conditions for Rud to change his attitude to his own unborn child, which he disregarded during his lifetime.

However, even in this otherworldly milieu, a relationship between Rud and his son, who chose the name Rolf for himself, does not come into being. They do meet, but only once: Rolf comes to Rud in the form of a young man “to see him and say goodbye” before leaving the camp. He tells Rud: “You didn’t want to teach me how to catch fish. You were a good angler and I could have been too [...]. Now it’s too late” (Huberath 2006: 217). Rud does not recognize Rolf as his son until after it is too late: “It was only when he shaved in front of a mirror that Rud made a discovery: Rolf had looked almost like Rud’s copy: somewhat sligher, perhaps, somewhat younger. The only difference had been his green-blue eyes, like Dianna’s” (Huberath 2006: 217). Now that Rolf is gone from the camp, any further attempts at forming a relationship are precluded and the father and son may never meet again.

Apart from Rud’s change of attitude towards the unborn, another possible change of his character can be seen in his occasional altruistic acts that he performs for the sake of his fellow inmates. For instance, he “started disinterestedly to provide food for the inmates of Maria’s barrack” (Huberath 2006: 223). However, his disinterestedness is far from obvious. Firstly, Rud is not immediately told to whom Maria gives the food he provides. Initially, he simply offers it to her, evidently to gain her favour. It is only some days into this scheme that Maria explains to Rud that women in her barrack “are starving” (Huberath 2006: 221), implying that she is aiding them. Before that explanation, Rud could think that Maria *sold* the bread she received from him. Secondly, when Rud learns that Maria has left the camp, he erroneously thinks that his beloved did not want to say goodbye, and says: “She forgot about me [...]. She only needed me to get chow for her friends” (Huberath 2006: 234). In this way, Rud ascribes a calculating nature to Maria; at the same time, it can be inferred from the same utterance that Rud

himself is calculating. If he isn't happy because of helping someone, it may mean that he provided food for Maria only to gain her favour.

Another instance of Rud's possible altruism is the change in his attitude to his fellow barrack inmates. Once, when Rud was given a week-long ban on leaving the barrack, "only at this point [...] did he notice that the old men were starving" (Huberath 2006: 230). Later, after Maria had left the camp, "it sometimes even happened that he shared his food with the infirm old men who did not leave their bunk beds" (Huberath 2006: 238). Still, "he did not do it out of pity, but because Maria had done so" (Huberath 2006: 238). It might mean that he learned something from her, but it may also mean that he is again trying to gain Maria's favour in case he ever meets her again. Thus even those of Rud's behaviours that could qualify as an improvement of his character are themselves dubious because of his potentially calculated motivation.

But there is even more to testify against his supposed improvement; namely, an active perpetuation of his vices: shallowness, egocentricity and inconstancy. The first of these manifests itself in the fact that the protagonist pays particular attention to his looks and the impression he makes on others. One by one, he obtains a pair of smart shoes (Huberath 2006: 194), trousers, a hat (Huberath 2006: 208) and a jacket (Huberath 2006: 211). Already with the pair of shoes he earns the nickname Dandy; the complete outfit makes him resemble a "leader": a prisoner functionary, equivalent to a kapo. (But his plan backfires as Maria, whom he wanted to impress with his looks, feels intimidated and terrified rather than attracted to him).

Rud's egocentricity manifests itself in the form of callousness towards Eckhardt, a leader who competes with him for Maria. Rud learns from Neuheufel that Eckhardt is a castrate. Neuheufel, when informing Rud about this, jeers at Eckhardt's mutilation. "Initially, Rud joined in Neuheufel's sneering laughter, but then he thought that Eckhardt is even more miserable than himself, and by laughing at him, he seemed to despise

himself as well” (Huberath 2006: 198). Nevertheless, later on Rud uses this knowledge unscrupulously to humiliate Eckhardt before Maria (which, by the way, ends with Rud being beaten by Eckhardt [Huberath 2006: 210]).

As regards the protagonist’s inconstancy of feelings, Rud evinces this trait in his afterlife as well. Maria is not his only love interest: before meeting her, he was attracted to a medical doctor named Panfilowa. But once Maria makes an appearance, “he did not like Panfilowa as he used to, for now he was thinking about Maria” (Huberath 2006: 211). It is no wonder then, that, after Maria is gone from the camp, Patrycja rebukes him for his inconstancy: “I know that Maria loved you. And you, Ruder? Yesterday it was Dianna, today Maria, tomorrow perhaps the transport will bring another girl . . .” (Huberath 2006: 235).

All in all, it seems that the main character’s potential for change remains unrealised. Admittedly, Rud’s return for another session of the Greater Punishment is a routine element of the punishment cycle; and neither the narrator nor the characters ever say explicitly whether this cycle will ever end. But there is more evidence to support the claim that the protagonist remains a static character than to the contrary. We can see the persistence of the character’s old negative features that resurface in the new environment: as on earth, so in his afterlife, Rud displays self-centredness, superficiality and changeability of affections. We can also see the dubious nature of his supposed transformation. This would seem to confirm Neuheufel’s words: “each Lesser Punishment episode is for them [the inmates] a chance they don’t take” (Huberath 2006: 240).

### **3. Spatial frames as a reflection of the protagonist’s (lack of) development**

The story juxtaposes confined and (relatively) open spaces: the open space of the camp is a spatial frame of that part of the plot which deals with the protagonist’s opportunity to change, whereas the confined space of the torture chamber is the spatial

frame of the scenes in which Rud receives punishment for his misdeeds. The fact that it is a limited space can be inferred from the fact that it is referred to as an “interrogation room” (Huberath 2006: 166), which in itself implies being limited by the four walls. Besides, “at one point, during an interrogation, the blood splashed as far as the clock” (Huberath 2006: 162), which means that the distance between the wall and the table Rud is fastened to cannot be great. The camp, on the contrary, is vast in dimensions. We know it because “Rud walked for over an hour before he reached row 971” (Huberath 2006: 231), where Maria’s barrack was to be found. It must be stressed, though, the openness of the camp is relative as, in spite of its dimensions, the camp is naturally surrounded by a fence, beyond which no inmate can go without permission.

All of the above-mentioned events which testify to Rud’s chance for a change, i.e. his evolving attitude to the unborn and to other coinmates, take place against the spatial frame of the camp. As a result of this correlation, the relatively open space of the camp acquires a (relatively) positive significance, as opposed to the cramped space of the interrogation room. Additionally, it is worth noting that the open/confined spatial opposition is reflected in the narration time and in the spatial extension of the text. In terms of narration time, the plot follows a certain pattern: the scenes that take place in the torture chamber are either recapitulated briefly as a flashback of the story’s *vorgeschichte* or implied as the *nachgeschichte* to unfold after the story’s final words, while the main part of the plot takes place in the relatively wide and open space of the camp. Thus, the narration time devoted to the scenes in the interrogation room is as “cramped” as the room itself and the narration devoted to the scenes in the camp is as extensive temporally as the camp is extensive spatially. Consequently, the spatial extension of the text, i.e. the physical space covered by the text, also reflects the relationship between the enclosed and open spaces: the greatest portion of the text is devoted to the camp scenes and the portion

of the text that describes torture chamber scenes is decidedly smaller.

The character's movement from confined to open space and back again constitutes a metaphor of a wasted chance. If, as has been noted, the space of the camp is a metaphorical parallel to Rud's chance, it is not difficult to ascribe to the torture chamber the opposite meaning, that of not having or losing a chance. At a literal level, then, the character being moved from the "interrogation room" to the camp signifies his chance to leave this hell; at a more metaphorical level, the same movement signifies a chance to improve his character and be freed from the consequences of his previous actions. The return to the room signals that Rud has forfeited both kinds of opportunity. Additionally, it is tempting to claim that this kind of plot and setting scheme – confined to open and back to confined space – hints at what is ultimately going to happen with Rud: whether he is ever going to be liberated from the potentially endless cycle of Greater and Lesser Punishments. Admittedly, Huberath's short story is technically open: Neuheufel explicitly refuses to answer the protagonist's question about his ultimate liberation. However, the fact that the story ends on an ominous note – Rud being told of his imminent return to the chamber for another bout of interrogation – quite strongly suggests that the protagonist's cycle of punishments will never end.

The open / confined opposition overlaps with several other spatial oppositions: up / down, vertical / horizontal and mobility / immobility, plus what might be called "social" oppositions. As literary scholar, Michał Głowiński, observes when discussing the motif of movement, "it is thanks to movement that elements of space reveal themselves, in a sort of natural fashion, in a literary text" (1978: 94-95). Thus the way from the enclosed spatial frame of the torture chamber to the open spatial frame of the camp is simultaneously a way up: when Rud is released, Neuheufel takes him "all the way up" in a lift (Huberath 2006: 167). The interrogation room is probably situated underground: when the protagonist witnesses an accident in the camp



(a toppling watchtower), “it seem[s] to Rud that” the stretcher-bearers, who have been called “from below,” “[a]re squinting their eyes, unused to the light” (Huberath 2006: 200). The enclosed / open and down / up motion also overlaps with a shift from the horizontal to vertical and from immobility to mobility: in the interrogation room, Rud is fastened to a table; after his release, he can stand up and move around. (Not immediately, of course; at first, he is emaciated and can hardly stand on his feet. But then he spends some time in the hospital, so that when he actually enters the camp, he is in a much better condition.)

The above oppositions can be supplemented by two others: isolation / company and foes / friends. If the only characters Rud has contact with in the torture chamber are “interrogators” and “executors” – a narrow set of hostile personages (including a spiteful cleaning lady) – so in the camp Rud finds himself surrounded by a much larger and more varied company. Apart from the diabolical overseers, he now has contact with a lot of fellow inmates, including the kapo-like “leaders,” but also with friendlier persons, such as Maria and Patrycja. These additional spatial and other oppositions reflect and reinforce the metaphorical function of the basic enclosed / open opposition. As has been shown above, the spatial concepts of “confinement,” “down,” “immobility” and “horizontality,” as well as the non-spatial concepts of “isolation” and “foes” are correlated with the interrogation room as a place where pain is inflicted, whereas “openness,” “up,” “mobility” and “verticality” plus “company” and “friends” are associated with the camp as a place where the protagonist has regained health and is presented with a chance for a moral transformation.

As if to emphasise and draw attention to its metaphorical potential, the narrative and spatial schema of temporarily releasing the character only to confine him again is repeated on a smaller scale: while Rud stays in the camp, he is allowed to leave it for some time with a group of other prisoners, but then they are forced to return. The area outside the camp is described when Rud comes to the camp from the hospital: “The Adaptation

Centre covered a considerable area surrounded by grey hills on one side and a sickly little wood on the other. The grey-blue sky, which he had not seen for he knew not how long, was breath-taking” (Huberath 2006: 179). From this, it can be concluded that the area outside the camp is greater, if not more inviting: the adjectives “grey” and “sickly” indicate that the landscape is unattractive. Additionally, one must admit that the wood and the hills can be construed as a kind of natural barriers, making the outside space limited too. The horizon is not mentioned either, being evidently invisible behind the wood and the hills. Still, the camp, though enclosed, is incomparably bigger than the interrogation room, and the area beyond the camp’s fence is even more expansive. Therefore, it is little wonder that the main character perceives this latter area as attractive: “Rud observed the little wood that grew beyond the wires. He had a great notion to get to that wood” (Huberath 2006: 199).

An opportunity to fulfil this wish comes after the already mentioned accident when a rotten watchtower collapses: in order to reconstruct it, building material must be obtained, and a group of prisoners is sent to the copse to cut some wood.

Rud was overcome with joy when he realised that they would go to cut wood in none other than his wished-for grove [...]. They were accompanied by only one unarmed investigator. He introduced himself as Schulz. The wood wasn’t far and, after a little more than a dozen minutes of brisk walking, they came in among the first trees. Schulz picked out the ones for them to cut down. Then it began: Rud’s nose started to feel Itchy. He sneezed once, twice, ten times. Mucus came trickling out of his nose. He felt terrible [...]. Everyone else suffered similarly [...]. They took the felled and prepared trunks on their arms, two men to each trunk. In spite of the burden, they returned at a fast pace, to the accompaniment of sneezes and curses [...]. Rud came back inside the wire fence with a relief. The hay fever symptoms abated the moment he set his foot in the Adaptation Centre. (Huberath 2006: 202-203)

The disappointment experienced in the outside space and the necessity to return to a less open one mirror the broader spatial scheme of leaving an enclosed space, entering an open space and coming back to the enclosed space. This arguably serves to draw the reader's attention to the metaphorical significance of both movements (exiting and returning) as reflections of the character's inability to "go beyond" his own wicked tendencies.

All things considered, Huberath's "The Greater Punishment" has as one of its main plot motifs the character's chance for a transformation and his failure to use it. The plot includes scenes which prove that the protagonist has a potential to change; however, there are also scenes which depict the tenacity of his old negative habits. The latter tendencies seem to outweigh the former. The spatial frames which form the backdrop to the plot – first enclosed, then open, then confined again – constitute a metaphorical parallel to the plot about a wasted opportunity. The other spatial oppositions – horizontal / vertical, down / up and immobility / mobility – enhance and reinforce the metaphor. The open ending with a pessimistic twist suggests that the protagonist may fail to use similar chances in the future too. In this way the story seems to present the addiction of a sinner to his sins.

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## **Terry Pratchett's Discworld witches as liminal beings**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents the characters of witches in the Discworld series by Terry Pratchett. Witches are a part of the Western civilisation and are popularly connected with evil and harm they can cause to people. In this article I argue that Terry Pratchett depicts witches as liminal beings in his Discworld series. I also identify the most important qualities of these literary characters.

### **Key words**

Terry Pratchett, Discworld, witches, liminality

## **Wiedźmy z cyklu o Świecie Dysku Terry'ego Pratchetta jako istoty liminalne**

### **Abstrakt**

Poniższy artykuł omawia postaci wiedźm w cyklu o Świecie Dysku Terry'ego Pratchetta. Wiedźmy są częścią cywilizacji zachodniej i w większości kojarzą się ze złem i szkodą, jaką mogą wyświadczyć ludziom. Artykuł ukazuje wiedźmy w wybranych utworach Terry'ego

Pratchetta jako istoty liminalne oraz identyfikuje najbardziej charakterystyczne cechy tych postaci.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

Terry Pratchett, Świat Dysku, wiedźmy, liminalność

## **1. Introduction**

Following the definition in the *Handbook to Literature*, liminality can be most simply defined as “the state of being on a threshold in space or time” (Harmon 2012: 273). The concept of the liminal is primarily applied in anthropological studies, for example by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, who employed it in describing customs and rituals connected with important changes in individual and social life, such as a wedding or graduation ceremony. These changes are often perceived as crossing a threshold beyond which an individual may change their name, status, clothing and many other qualities (Harmon 2012: 273).

In literary texts liminality is often expressed by spatial motifs of “thresholds, windows, sills, edges, borders, and passages” (Harmon 2012: 273). Dianna C. Lacy in her thesis *Expanding the Definition of Liminality* explains that this notion is “easiest to define as [...] a space between the spaces” and connects it with “an exploration of the self”: “A liminal space is the space through which the character journeys while on the way to something new” (2019: 1). She also observes that “it is a place of uncertainty” thus linking the spatial aspect of liminality with the experiential one (Lacy 2019: 2). According to Bjorn Thomassen’s essay “The Uses and Meanings of Liminality”, liminal experiences embrace “the way in which personality [is] shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience” (Thomassen 2009: 14).

In this paper I will apply the notion of liminality to characters of Discworld witches, and treat it as something that defines

them, bearing in mind that it always functions in motion, between one state or place and another. In order to prove that Terry Pratchett portrays witches as liminal beings, I will distinguish three aspects of liminality: supernatural (or magical) liminality, spatial liminality, and gender liminality. All three aspects can be seen as important in characterizing the witches from Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series.

The word *witch* derives from Old English *wicca* (masculine) or *wicce* (feminine) and denotes "a woman supposedly having supernatural power" which is believed to derive from evil spirits or the devil (*Webster's* 1976: 1633). Tradition has it that witches are almost exclusively female. Their traditional image is that of an old woman wearing a black cloak and pointed hat, and flying on a broomstick.<sup>1</sup> Male practitioners of magic are not called witches, but wizards, warlocks, or sorcerers. The word "witcher" is a recent neologism and denotes a fictional character from Andrzej Sapkowski's book series and has no connection to what is traditionally understood as a witch.

The negative image of a witch in our culture stems from several aspects, the first of which is, without doubt, the ever-present connection to the devil and accusations of doing harm to innocent people. According to Professor Edward Peters and his *The Literature of Demonology and Witchcraft* project website, the women understood under the common denominator of a witch could bring harm to people and property using secret methods only they knew. One could identify a witch by means of, for example, finding and revealing their body mark (which connected them to the devil). Additionally, a witch was supposed to have her own *familiar*, or a low-rank demon in a cat's, toad's or any other small animal's body, provided by the devil to help the woman. She was also supposed to be able to shapeshift and fly,

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Dworkin writes "The broomstick [is] an almost archetypal symbol of womanhood, as the pitchfork [is] of manhood" (1974:139), to which Justyna Sempruch adds: "The flying broomstick also denotes escape from housework, domestic ties and oppressive confinement to the sphere of home" (2008:28).

either using a broomstick, or by means of levitation. What is more, these alleged servants of the Lord of Darkness gathered in what was called a “synagogue” or “sabbath” of witches, during which they performed acts of unspeakable evil and promiscuity to pay homage to the Devil (Peters 1998). Between 1561 and 1670 in Germany such an understanding of witches led to a mass hysteria and persecution on a large scale, with many a wise woman ending their lives on a pyre or the executioner’s table of torture.<sup>2</sup>

The advancement of science on the one hand and the revival of wicca on the other has certainly altered the view of a witch in the twentieth and twenty first centuries although the stereotypical image of an old, unkempt and ugly woman still remains deeply ingrained in popular culture. Terry Pratchett’s Discworld novels definitely belong to popular culture though they frequently challenge traditional stereotypes, which also concerns the liminal aspect of the Discworld characters.

## **2. Liminality**

Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement suggest that the witch is an ambiguous figure: “the sorceress – the witch, the wise woman, destroyer and preserver of culture – is she not the midwife, the intermediary between life and death, the go-between whose occult yet necessary labors deliver souls and bodies across frightening boundaries?” (1968: xiii). The Discworld witches in Terry Pratchett’s novels can also be considered as liminal characters due to their role of intermediaries between the living and the dead: they help women in labour and assist souls of the dying people in crossing the black desert to the afterlife.

In actual fact, Pratchett’s major fictional witch Esmerelda Weatherwax comments on the liminal aspects of witchcraft in

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the understanding of witches see Diane Purkiss’ *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (1996).



*The Wee Free Men* (2004): “[The witches] look to ... the edges, [...] a lot of edges, more than people know. Between life and death, this world and the next, night and day, right and wrong ... an’ they need watchin’. We watch ‘em, we guard the sum of things” (Pratchett 2004: 304).<sup>3</sup> The liminality of the Discworld witches is expressed in their use of magic, in their social relations and in their transgression of gender stereotypes. In the following sections I will consider liminality connected with magic, community and gender.

### **2.1. Supernatural (magical) liminality**

In contemporary fantasy female characters wielding magic are more often than not much weaker than their male counterparts. One could say modern fantasy almost solely foregrounds more or less powerful men, with women being put in the subsidiary parts of a healer or an evil, old mumbling crone in a cabin in the woods. Good example of such approach can be found in the early Earthsea series, namely *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) and *The Farthest Shore* (1972), in which women’s magic is considered as much weaker and inferior to the magical powers of male wizards. The Earthsea denizens have two significant sayings on the topic: “weak as a woman’s magic” and “wicked as a woman’s magic” (LeGuin 2004: 6–7). Barred from reaching mastery in the magical arts as no school wants to teach them, women in Earthsea can only learn such basic skills as healing. True to the popular wisdom, some witches join the evil forces of the Powers of the Earth, but so do some wizards.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Granny Weatherwax also emphasizes that the witches are not interested in personal gain: “we never ask for any reward. That’s important” (Pratchett 2004: 304).

<sup>4</sup> The inferiority of women’s magic is reversed by Ursula Le Guin in *Tehanu* (1990), *Tales from Earthsea* (2001) and *The Other Wind* (2001), in which magic power of women is presented as the one connected with the natural order – as opposed to the artificial magic of wizards.

Craig Cabell claims that “Pratchett has homed in on the sexism of the whole fantasy genre, with witches having lesser powers than wizards and it being accepted as fact that females are only good for flying on broomsticks and throwing eye of newt into a bubbling cauldron” (2012: 61). Even though Pratchett presents witches as humorous characters, they also play an extremely important part in their communities – and not thanks to the magical abilities (although they do have them), but due to their approach to those they serve – with kindness, relatability and constant willingness to provide help to the needy.

Actually the tension between the witches’ magical abilities and their use of entirely natural means of curing people’s various ailments can also be seen as an aspect of liminality. The most experienced and powerful witches wield what Granny Weatherwax calls headology. From the point of view of the modern reader it is nothing short of psychology. Like all aspects of the witches’ magic, headology is never to be used to for obtaining any kind of personal gain. One can find a passage in *Maskerade* (1995), in which Esmerelda Weatherwax uses it for the sake of curing a patient with a bad backache. She provides him with a quasi-magical prescription of what to do:

This is a mixture of rare herbs and suchlike,’ she said. ‘Including suckrose and akwa.’ ‘My word,’ said Jarge, impressed. ‘Take a swig now.’ He obeyed. It tasted faintly of liquorice. ‘You got to take another swig last thing at night,’ Granny went on. ‘An’ then walk three times round a chestnut tree.’ [...] ‘An’... an’ put a pine board under your mattress. Got to be pine from a twenty-year-old tree, mind.’ (Pratchett 1996: 27).

After that she sets his vertebrae in place, just like a chiropractor would do though she pretends she trips over something and incidentally kicks the suffering weaver’s back in the exact place which needs healing. The weaver is soon much better while the witch observes: “People were so blind, she reflected. They preferred to believe in gibberish rather than chiropracty” (Pratchett 1996: 27–29). It is easy to understand that Granny Weatherwax

uses headology in order to impress the superstitious patient, as otherwise he would not understand or believe in her power. The tension between quasi-magical gibberish and the witches' true medical knowledge creates a humorous tension suggesting another dimension of the witches' liminality.

The supernatural/magical liminality of the Discworld witches is also expressed by how they serve their communities by standing between life and death. When Esmerelda Weatherwax is summoned to help a gravely ill child, she is able to see and talk to Death himself and challenges him to a daring game of poker. The stake is the highest there could be: the life of a child. The narrator describes the situation as follows:

'Fair enough,' she said, [...] how many have you come for?' ONE.<sup>5</sup> [...] 'Then I challenge you to a game. That's traditional. That's allowed.' Death was silent for a moment. THIS IS TRUE. [...] HOWEVER... YOU UNDERSTAND THAT TO WIN ALL YOU MUST GAMBLE ALL? 'Double or quits? Yes, I know.' [...] 'Very well. How about one hand of poker? Five cards each, no draws? Sudden death, as they say.'" (Pratchett 1996: 98-102).

Having faced Death, Granny Weatherwax prevails and Death leaves with the soul of a cow, while the child quickly regains health. As he is standing in the doorway, Death asks: "WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I HAD NOT ... LOST?, [...] Granny laid the baby down carefully on the straw, and smiled. 'Well,' she said, 'for a start ... I'd have broken your bloody arm'" (Pratchett 1996: 102). This is a clear indication of the lengths to which a true witch is willing to go to save their community. Even Death needs to reassess his plans when facing such a formidable opponent as Esmerelda Weatherwax with her power and determination.

Moreover, the Discworld witches possess an important ability connected with crossing the boundaries between life and

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<sup>5</sup> The utterances of the character of Death are rendered in capital letters in Pratchett's novels.

death, and returning safely to the living. They are able to enter the liminal zone beyond life that the newly dead have to cross in their journey to the afterlife. For example, the young witch Tiffany Aching learns how to bring a dying person across the black desert – the passage to the afterlife for the Discworld characters. Helping souls to depart from the Disc to another plane of existence is also one of the most important duties of a witch. Definitely liminal in its nature, such a feat can be achieved by nobody else but a witch. In *A Hat Full of Sky* (2005), Tiffany helps a Hiver – a dangerous magical creature – to find its way across the black desert:

Beyond the door, black sand stretched away under a sky of pale stars. There were some mountains on the distant horizon. *You must help us through*, said the voices of the hiver. [...] So, thought Tiffany as she stared through the doorway, *this* is what we do. We live on the edges. We help those who can't find the way . . . She took a deep breath and stepped across. [...] The sand felt gritty underfoot and crunched when she walked over it [...] but when it was kicked up it fell back as slowly as thistledown [...]. The air wasn't cold, but it was thin and prickly to breathe. The door shut softly behind her. *Thank you*, said the voices of the hiver. *What do we do now?* Tiffany looked around her, and up at the stars. They weren't ones that she recognized. 'You die, I think,' she said. [...] Tiffany looked around at the endless sand. She couldn't see anybody, but there was something out there that suggested movement. It was the occasional change in the light, perhaps, as if she was catching glimpses of something she was not supposed to see. 'I think,' she said, 'that you have to cross the desert.' [...] She felt the hiver fall away. There wasn't much sign of it – a movement of a few sand grains, a sizzle in the air - but it slid away slowly across the black sand. (Pratchett 2005: 303–306)

Without her help, the Hiver would not be able to find the correct path and would be lost forever on the black sands. An example of a character lost in the black desert can be found in Terry Pratchett's *Small Gods* (1993) where the antagonist Vorbis dies and has to walk the black desert alone and without assistance.

As he does not have any witch to help him, he spends one hundred years waiting in an unspeakable terror haunted by his evil deeds. It takes the protagonist Brutha, when he dies, to finally help Vorbis find the way as they both cross the desert (Pratchett 1993: 379-381). Brutha can do it because he is a good person and acts out of compassion and mercy, just as a witch would do.

The Discworld witches possess another magical ability that is evidently liminal: it is called Borrowing and it allows a witch to take control over the mind of an animal host. Trying to possess a human being is possible but not practised as it is seen as completely immoral. An example of Borrowing (performed on animals) is provided by a deaf and blind witch, Miss Treason, who in *A Hat Full of Sky* uses different animals to see and hear through their eyes and ears. Also Esmerelda Weatherwax is known to be able to use bees and other animals to gather information, which she does on a regular basis. However, even such a powerful witch needs to be aware of possible overstaying one's hospitality in the animal mind and, in effect, losing the ability to return to one's own mind and remain human. Such was the danger faced by Ged Sparrowhawk in Ursula Le Guin's *Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), who had to be rescued from the bird's form or else he risked remaining a bird forever. Eskarina Smith, the protagonist of Pratchett's *Equal Rites* (1987) also finds Borrowing very pleasant and, having possessed an eagle for an extended period of time needs Granny Esme Weatherwax to come for her and save her from almost sure dissolution into the animal's form, with her cold body staying apparently lifeless in her hut. Borrowing illustrates another form of magical liminality of a witch: the crossing of the border between the human and the animal, which seems parallel to the witches' ability to cross the boundary between life and death, and return to the living.

## 2.2. Spatial liminality

Pratchett's witches can also be associated with another aspect of liminality: in this case spatial liminality. It can be found in *Carpe Jugulum* (1998) where, as the plot unfolds, three witches – Magrat Garlick, Agnes Nitt and Nanny Ogg – compare notes on a strange spatial phenomenon known as “gnarly ground”:

‘What is gnarly ground?’ said Agnes. ‘There's a lot of magic in these mountains, right?’ said Nanny. ‘And everyone knows mountains get made when lumps of land bang together, right? Well, when the magic gets trapped you ... sort of ... get a bit of land where the space is ... sort of ... scrunched up, right? It'd be quite big if it could but it's like a bit of gnarly wood in an of tree. Or a used hanky ... all folded up small but still big in a different way.’ (Pratchett 1999: 176)

An additional feature of gnarly ground is the difficulty to perceive it or even notice. As the narrator puts it: “[it was] tricky to spot, like a join between two sheets of glass, and it seemed to move away whenever she was certain she could see it, but there was an ... *inconsistency*, flickering in and out on the edge of vision” (Pratchett 1999: 183). What is more, when the trespasser is happy and full of joy, the gnarly ground reflects the mood and is enjoyable, safe and delightful for the person, while a bad mood, fear or depression can make the gnarly ground a death trap.

An example of such terrain is definitely provided by the mound of King of Elves, which Tiffany Aching, at that time a powerful witch herself, enters in order to fight the Elves. This is not the first time she has visited the Elvish domain as in *The Wee Free Men* Tiffany journeys there to save her baby brother Wentworth taken captive by the Elves. The domain of Elves is a different dimension of reality in Discworld, so the ability to enter it involves crossing over the boundaries of one's proper world – a feat similar to entering the sphere of death.

Another aspect of the witches' liminality is pointed out by Rosi Braidotti when she says that "[they] can only be 'in-transit,' moving on, passing through, creating connections where things were previously dis-connected or seemed un-related" (1994: 93). This quality is amply exemplified in the Discworld series where the witches are often shown traveling and rarely stay in one place. Tiffany Aching traverses the Chalk in her line of duty to provide assistance and help to her community. In *Equal Rites* Esmerelda Weatherwax is travelling with her young protégé, Es-karina Smith, the first female wizard of the Disc. In *Witches Abroad* Esme and Gytha Ogg travel to Genoa or Akh-Morpork (the biggest city on the Disc and *axis mundi* for the vast majority of the Discworld series novels) in order to solve serious issues ailing their people and help those in need. Witches provide restoration via healing, protect people from evil (for example, Elves) and if necessary assist them on their last journey to the after-world. They never restrict themselves to their own jurisdiction only, but they go outside their turf to help the needy.

### **2.3. Gender liminality**

When we talk about witches, gender is one of those aspects that immediately come to mind. Terry Pratchett's witches can also be analysed from the gender point of view. True to tradition, the Discworld witches are women. However, one of the most interesting examples of gender liminality as applicable to the witch comes in the character of a man, namely Geoffrey Swivel – one of the main figures of *The Shepherd's Crown* (2015) and the youngest offspring of Lord Harold Swivel. As the youngest son, his only task is to read and learn from the hired tutor Mr. Wiggall, who instils love for knowledge, literature and wisdom into Geoffrey. Then, after Wiggall is fired (due to Lord Swivel's mistrust of teachers and education itself), Geoffrey receives his education from an elderly servant, McTavish, who is all about nature and love of animals.

Taught by both preceptors to be kind and love animals, Geoffrey refuses to kill an animal during a hunt on the order of his father Lord Swivel. He then leaves his home, pursuing his goal to become a witch. As this is close to impossible (mostly because everybody knows men are wizards and women are witches, and no exceptions are admitted), he turns to the only person that would help him – to Tiffany Aching of Lancre, who reluctantly approves him as her apprentice. In the interview Tiffany asks: “Why do you want to be a witch instead of a wizard, which is something traditionally thought of as a man’s job?”, and Geoffrey answers: “I’ve never thought of myself as a man, Mistress Tiffany. I don’t think I’m anything. I’m just me” (Pratchett 2015: 150). This answer can be understood as Geoffrey’s denial of his innate sex and therefore taking on an unmarked gender. It proves to be the key to Tiffany’s approval, as this is how a true witch would answer. Consequently he becomes a back-house boy. This is not a prestigious job, as it is about providing firewood, assisting the witch with even the worst most menial tasks (like cutting old men’s toenails) and in general doing what the superior witch-in-command does not want to do herself. However, all these unrewarding, difficult and sometimes even disgusting chores are kind of an exam, testing if the back-house boy has what it takes to become a witch, as a true witch performs such tasks all the time without complaining.

Geoffrey soon wins over the people of Lancre. His revolutionary ideas (e.g. the invention of the man shed, in which elderly men can avoid their wives’ nagging while enjoying their free time) and his kind heart are the key to the acceptance of his community. The narrator says about Geoffrey: “there was something about his willingness to stop and talk, his gentle smile and pleasant manner, that made them immediately warm to him” (Pratchett 2015: 165). As soon as Geoffrey shows diligence and proves that he can do his chores easily and correctly, Tiffany starts bringing him along when she attends to the villagers. She also immediately recognizes that



the houses lit up as soon as he came in, so cheerfully alive. He could be funny, he could sing songs, and somehow he made everything ... a bit better. Crying babies began to gurgle instead of howl, grown-ups stopped arguing, and the mothers became more peaceful and took his advice. He was good with animals too. [...] Tiffany once saw him leaning up against a woodland cottage wall with a family of rabbits resting at his feet – at the same time as the farm dog was by his side. (Pratchett 2015: 166)

Geoffrey is well-met at every place that he visits, and anticipated with pleasure, which is not often experienced by witches – mostly due to the so-called unbelonging of the witch, which I will talk about later. However, this exception may have its root in the fact that Geoffrey is a man, which in a conservative rural environment means more than being a woman. In this case his occupation is less important than his sex.

Due to his special abilities, Geoffrey Swivel is officially named a “calm-weaver” (Pratchett 2015: 325). All the most powerful witches, including Gytha Ogg, also acknowledge his powers:

[...] he calms people. You all know that. He is calm itself, and the calm stays even when he has left. He doesn't just jolly people up. After he is gone, they are somehow much better – as if life was still worth havin'. People like that, like Geoffrey, well, they makes [sic!] the world, well, better. (Pratchett 2015: 323)

For all he does to and for the people, he is soon approved as a true protector of the land and assigned with his own witch's cottage and jurisdiction. However, he cannot be proclaimed a witch as he is a man – and witches are women, undisputedly and undeniably. Geoffrey is definitely a character unique in the sense that his attempts to fill in a position traditionally assigned only to women rewrite the requirements for a witch. Geoffrey represents everything that essentially stands for being a witch – he lacks only the official title. And as we know from *Romeo and*

*Juliet*: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet” (2005: 379, verse 85–86).

Another example of gender liminality can be found when we consider how the people perceive witches. They can feel that the women who care for them are no ordinary ones. They know their power and, even if they do not exactly love their witches, they care for them. More often than not, however, the witches are not understood by their communities, and therefore “[the witches are] needed [...] practically all the time, but not, in a very polite and definitely unspoken way, not *exactly* wanted” (Pratchett 2011: 11). Fear and anxiety among villagers and, to a lesser extent, among city dwellers (mostly because they do not believe in witches’ power that much) accompany the work and life of a witch, especially since her supernatural powers and abilities give her the opportunity to know, see and perceive more than anybody else. Therefore, many witches build their huts outside the borders of the village and the community. The witch takes care of the people, works among them, but in fact does not belong to them. This is also an important aspect of the witches’ liminality – both spatial and social at the same time. Such a state can be named “un/belonging”. Quoting after Justyna Sempruch,

un/belonging, a term designating both physical location (belonging) and sociopolitical relation with agency (unbelonging), conveys a decentralized but not disempowering cultural topography. As a fugitive from melancholic positions of absence and exclusion, s/he draws on her confinement to the ‘far away land’ of collective myths and superstitions, to her repulsion from the ‘here and now,’ and simultaneously her ubiquitous physical presence, her hidden closeness as a neighboring woman, mother or daughter. But her nonconforming physical appearance is ambiguous, because as a phallogocentric projection of the feminine it should be familiar (motherly), but it is not. [...] Her enforced exile or voluntary flight is from this initially marked gender, as she is caught between, rather than supported by, the various laws and languages of the Father. (2008: 122)

It can be seen that the reason of the witch's unbelonging is her gender, as well as the fact that she is always different than the rest of the community. This tension between how people perceive the witch and her true nature is another example of the her ambiguity and liminality.

The above examples show clearly that the witches of Discworld are liminal characters – spatially, socially and in magical/supernatural manner. Their ability to visit places the ordinary people cannot, like gnarly ground, the land of the Elves or the black desert or to see and interact with supernatural beings (like Death or the Hiver) is connected with spatial and social liminality, whereas crossing barriers and thresholds between life and death and between man and animal are good examples of supernatural liminality. Social liminality is also represented by the fact of unbelonging – as the witch serves her community but is not really part of it and is separated from the rest of the people, who fear her and cannot or do not want to understand her.

### **3. Conclusion**

This article is devoted to characters of witches in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series and focuses on their liminality in supernatural, spatial and gender aspects, also connected to the social liminality. The characters' liminality serves to express their transgressive status in the story world of the series. Though thematically the witches can be seen as embodying certain female qualities and illustrating some social attitudes to women in general, they definitely go beyond these functions in Pratchett's novels because they express crucial human values and serve to introduce a serious moral perspective in the predominantly humorous world of Pratchettian fantasy.

The appearance of the male witch in Pratchett's last novel forcefully suggests transcendence of gender stereotypes and adds a vital aspect to the witches' liminal nature. Geoffrey Swivel, who is gifted with an endless compassion and the power

to weave calmness over people, is a unique and very interesting character. Being male, he throws the qualities required of a (female) witch into a sharp focus. Paradoxically, supernatural abilities are not of primary importance, the values which are really crucial for a witch include understanding, devotion to helping others and calmness. Even though a witch often chooses to live outside a village (like Granny Weatherwax), due to the witch's un/belonging, Geoffrey is very welcome whenever he goes – which contrasts him with other witches. As a man, Geoffrey cannot be accepted as an ordinary witch, but he is treated as an honorary one. Being a witch and not being one makes him an emphatically liminal character.

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**The child and the natural world:  
Anna Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children***

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**Abstract**

Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743–1825) is one of the eighteenth century authors of religious hymns for children, a hymn variant initiated by Isaac Watts early in the same century. Nature, as the most important spatial and thematic motif in Barbauld's prose hymns, serves to reveal the omnipresence and power of God to the child. The didactic hymns are addressed to the "rational child"; however, the child's unity with nature and openness to metaphysics look forward to Romanticism.

**Key words**

Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, Isaac Watts, *Divine and Moral Songs*, child, semiosphere

**Dziecko i świat natury:  
*Hymny prozą dla dzieci Anny Barbauld***

Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) jest jedną z wczesnych autorek religijnych hymnów dla dzieci, zapoczątkowanych w początkach XVIII wieku przez Isaaca Wattsa. W pisanych prozą hymnach Barbauld najważniejszym tłem przestrzennym i motywem tematycznym jest przyroda, która stanowi punkt wyjścia do ukazywania dziecku wszech-

obecności i potęgi Boga. Dydaktyczne utwory Barbauld odwołują się do racjonalności dziecięcego odbiorcy, ale ukazanie otwartego na metafizykę dziecka w jedności z naturą wpisuje się w nurty charakterystyczne dla romantyzmu.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, Isaac Watts, *Divine and Moral Songs*, dziecko, semiosfera

Religious and moral teaching used to play a major role in texts addressed to children that were published in the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At its roots this didactic tradition includes James Janeway's stories published as *A Token for Children* (1671), emblematic poems by John Bunyan included in his *A Book for Boys and Girls* (1686) and Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), later known as *Divine and Moral Songs*. All three writers were ministers or preachers of Puritan or nonconformist convictions. Being primarily concerned with the salvation of children's souls, they produced texts essentially utilitarian in their didactic purposes but also innovative in their employment of literary conventions and in their designation of children as a new type of audience.

In this article I intend to focus on the poetic genre of hymn in its variant specifically addressed to children. I define hymn as "a song [...] in praise of a divine or venerated being" (Baldick 2001: 118). Initiated by Watts in the early eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> the idea of writing hymns for children was continued by many other writers, for example, by John and Charles Wesley, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld in the eighteenth century, Jane and Anne Taylor, or Cecil Frances Alexander in the nineteenth. My particular intention here is to examine Barbauld's short col-

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<sup>1</sup> On Isaac Watts's hymnody compare, for instance, Clarke (2011), Marini (2003) or Music (2022).



lection entitled *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781) that seem especially interesting in referring to the Enlightenment cult of reason on the one hand and looking forward to Romanticism on the other. I am going to concentrate on Barbauld's construction of the child, especially in relation to nature treated as a gateway to the spiritual world.

Moreover, it will be instructive to juxtapose Barbauld's hymnal with the earliest collection of children's hymns by Isaac Watts. Since I have examined Watts's collection elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> my references to his hymns will be only serviceable in emphasising important aspects of Barbauld hymnal. The inclusion of Watts as a comparative material is justified by the fact that in the later eighteenth and even in the nineteenth century Watts continued to be an important influence on writers and an author well known by children. In actual fact both Watts's and Barbauld's hymnals went through numerous editions and continued being popular almost till the end of the nineteenth century (McCarthy 2005: 196; Hilton 2007) though possibly this popularity did not directly derive from the children's choices but rather from the convictions of their educators – parents, teachers, or ministers.

Elements of comparative analysis will be supplemented with references to the semiotic notions of semiosis and semiosphere. Semiosis will be understood as a sign process involving the production of meaning, or sign<sup>3</sup> action (Sebeok 1999: 4). Semiosphere is a term introduced by Yuri Lotman to designate "that semiotic space, outside of which semiosis itself cannot exist" (Lotman 2005: 208).

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<sup>2</sup> Compare my article "The construction of the Child in Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs for Children*" (Węgrodzka 2016).

<sup>3</sup> As defined by Charles Sanders Peirce the term sign refers to "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (quoted in Eco 1979: 15).

Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) was an educator, teacher, writer and literary critic (Carpenter and Prichard 1995: 44-45). As a writer of hymns addressed to children she followed in the footsteps of Isaac Watts (1674–1748) who was a famous non-conformist minister, theologian, writer and poet primarily concerned with religion (Music 2022: 9–31). Like Watts she was a dissenter though obviously not a Puritan<sup>4</sup> and had a keen interest in religion: she published controversial essays daring to seriously engage in religious disputes even though she was a woman. When in the 1780s her *Hymns in Prose for Children* appeared in print, she was already a successful poet. In contrast to Watts who used rhyming verse in his hymns, Barbauld decided to address children in prose because she “doubted, whether poetry ought to be lowered to the capacities of children, or whether they should not rather be kept from reading verse, till they are able to relish good verse: for the very essence of poetry is an elevation in thought and style above the common standard” (Barbauld 1781).<sup>5</sup> This awareness of children’s limitations as readers also inspired her earlier *Lessons for Children* (1778–1779), whose first part is addressed to children as young as two years of age and exclusively employs words of one syllable to make understanding easier. This was an innovative approach<sup>6</sup>, especially since at that time many children still progressed from their alphabets straight to the Bible or catechism.

The prose Barbauld uses for her *Hymns...* is what her Preface calls “measured [and] nearly as agreeable to the ear as a more regular rhythmus” (Barbauld 1781). The *Hymns...* employs what can certainly be termed poetic prose that seems

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief discussion of Barbauld’s dissenting background compare, for instance, Duquette (2016: 1–5) or Bailey (2010: 608).

<sup>5</sup> Watts was also conscious of children’s limitations as inexperienced readers. He admits in the introduction to his collection that he “endeavoured to sink the language to the level of a child’s understanding” (Watts 1715).

<sup>6</sup> An interesting discussion of the innovative construction of *Lessons for Children* from the perspective of cognitivism can be found in William McCarthy’s “Mother of All Discourses: Anna Barbauld’s *Lessons for Children*” (McCarthy 2005: 85–111).

occasionally to turn into blank verse (Bailey 2010: 611). Not only do particular hymns allude to Biblical psalms in their imagery, but they also resemble the psalms in their elevated diction and cadenced sentences. The rhythmic quality of Barbauld's prose is functional in relation to the intended reader who – similarly as in the case of Watts's collection – was supposed to recite the hymns from memory. The two collections position the child as the addressee and reader-performer<sup>7</sup> as well as a character in the created world of the poems.

Barbauld's book of 12 hymns is much shorter than Watts's containing 45 poems, with 28 constituting the hymnal proper. Barbauld begins her collection with a hymn encouraging the child to praise God as the creator of all things and then in subsequent texts reveals the presence of God in the observable elements of the world and points to His qualities, such as power, care, or perfection. The sequence ends with the perception of death (in Hymn X), renewal of life (in Hymn XI), and reflection on Heaven (in Hymn XII). While both collections are obviously religious, Watts's is more varied in the selection of topics<sup>8</sup> while Barbauld's is more unified. The latter writer applies the same approach in every text: on the basis of the elements and qualities of the described world the speaker concludes about God's presence in all perceivable phenomena. For example, in Hymn IX the speaker first discusses the variety and richness of creation and then remarks: "There is little need that I should tell you of God, for every thing speaks of him" (Barbauld 1781).

Barbauld's purposes are equally religious and didactic as Watts's, though neither writer resorts to direct moralising. Barbauld presents her didactic messages in the shape of conclusions drawn mainly from the observation of nature. These

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<sup>7</sup> The phrase reader-performer refers to the use of the hymns intended by both authors: the hymns were supposed to be learned by heart and then performed by reciting or singing. For a detailed analysis of hymn singing in relation to children-performers (though only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) compare Alisa Clapp-Itnyre *British Hymn Books for Children, 1800–1900* (2016).

<sup>8</sup> Watts's children's hymns evidently follow his collections for adults in the broad scope of their theological topics (Music 2022: 64).

conclusions – about the nature of God and the worship He deserves – are never forced on the child-addressee as an obligation he or she must fulfil. Watts’s hymns, however, directly teach the child about God’s qualities and at the end often present the child-speaker’s resolutions which can be seen as indirect admonitions.<sup>9</sup>

In order to make the didactic messages of the hymns accessible to children, Barbauld follows Watts in attempting to ground them in the child’s experience. Watts’s *Divine and Moral Songs* abounds in references to children’s familiar experiences and activities, such as walking, going to church on Sunday, praying, reading the Bible as well as playing, boasting, quarrelling with siblings, or even fighting (Węgrodzka 2016: 467-8). No need to say, quarrels, boasts and curses are presented as reprehensible by Watts. Interestingly, so is playing.<sup>10</sup> This activity, currently recognised as an obvious feature of childhood, is in Watts’s poems presented as a waste of time and distraction from religious duty, as is succinctly expressed in Song 24 “The child’s complaint”:

Why should I love my sports so well,  
So constant at my play,  
And lose the thoughts of heaven and hell,  
And then forget to pray? (Watts 1715: st. 1)

The tension between playing and praying is entirely absent from Barbauld’s texts. Her *Hymns...* contains rather few references to children “sport[ing] [them]selves on the new grass” (1781: Hymn II) or “children at play” (1781: Hymn V). In the former

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<sup>9</sup> An example of an indirect admonition can be found in Song 9 “The all-seeing God” ends with: “O may I now for ever fear / T’indulge a sinful thought, / Since the great God can see and hear, And writes down ev’ry fault!” (Watts 1715). The moral lesson is presented as a child’s own conclusion and resolution. The lack of direct moralising strongly contrasts with the Victorian collection *Songs for Little Children* (1848) by Frances Alexander, where explicit moral lessons are to be found in every poem.

<sup>10</sup> Playing appears in 8 poems in Watts’ collection while its equivalent – sports – in 27 poems; see J. Węgrodzka (2016: 468).

example it is the speaker who encourages the children to come out into the fields and play. The latter phrase appears when the speaker observes the absence of sounds and activity at night: “There is no sound of a number of voices, or of children at play, or the trampling of busy feet [...]” (Barbault 1781). The implication is that while such activities as playing cease at night, during the day they are quite normal. Thus, playing in Barbault’s hymns appears as children’s ordinary activity. The hymns also contain some references to family life: such as mother putting a child to sleep in Hymn V. A more extended description of family life opens Hymn VIII, which, in contrast to Watts’s hymns, emphasises harmonious coexistence and mutual support and not discord among the siblings:

See where stands the cottage of the labourer, covered with warm thatch; the mother is spinning at the door; the young children sport before her on the grass; the elder ones learn to labour, and are obedient; the father worketh to provide them food: either he tilleth the ground, or he gathereth in the corn, or shaketh his ripe apples from the tree: his children run to meet him when he cometh home, and his wife prepareth the wholesome meal. (Barbault 1781)

Also in this context play is treated as an unexceptional activity.<sup>11</sup>

The example of play in Watts’s poems points to a significant feature of the created world of his hymns. If we look at the world of Watts’s poems as a semiosphere, we can observe that no neutral elements seem to be admitted: every object, human action or thought is either good or bad, that is, employed in the service

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<sup>11</sup> It was characteristic of the social structure of the times that older children in poorer families worked alongside their parents (children in richer families would be engaged in formal education). This was not only true of rural life but also later when many farm labourers moved into newly industrialised areas and started working in factories where their children “naturally” accompanied them. Child labour began to be perceived as a problem only in the nineteenth century.

and praise God or not. In this metaphysical vision play is reprehensible because it detracts from praying and worshipping God. Watts's poems guide the child to the realisation that every single act or decision is seen and judged by God, and may lead to heaven or to hell. The dominant rule organising the semiosphere of Watts's poems is the all-encompassing division between good and evil. Thus earthly life becomes an arena of constant struggle between heaven and hell played out in human moral choices. Young age does not exempt children from this struggle: in this respect the child is no different from the adult.

Watts's poems construct a fuller picture of the child's life and range of activities than Barbauld's collection of hymns. In the latter the context of the child's play or familial relations, though present, seems less important than the context of the natural world. The speaker in Barbauld's book opens many hymns with the encouragement addressed to the child to go out and observe natural phenomena: "Come, let us go forth into the fields, let us see how the flowers spring" (Hymn II), "Come, and I will shew you what is beautiful. It is a rose full blown" (Hymn IV), "Come, let us go into the thick shade, for it is the noon of day, and the summer sun beats hot upon our heads" (Hymn VII), or "Come, let us walk abroad" (Hymn IX) (Barbauld 1781). It may be also noted here that the opening imperatives may be primarily understood as addressed to the child-character in the created world of the poems. However, placed as they are without any preliminary information about the communicative situation, the opening imperatives may also function as directed to the addressee of the hymns. It may be tentatively concluded that that the child-character of the hymns is identified or even fused with the addressee, who is encouraged to follow the child-character in an imaginative observation and contemplation of nature.

Nature (in the sense of natural landscapes) constitutes the most important spatial setting of Barbauld's collection: it appears in every single hymn – even in Hymn VIII which explains the human world to the child. Hymn VIII starts with the

description of the family and proceeds through a village, town, and kingdom to the whole world. It is characteristic of Barbauld's semiotic world that the village "stands enclosed in a green shade, and the tall spire peeps above the trees" while the kingdom "is enclosed by mountains; it is divided by rivers; it is washed by seas" (Barbauld 1781). The human sphere is encompassed by the natural world; the two are separate but not opposed.

Moreover, the importance of nature is also suggested in Barbauld's collection by vocabulary items concerning nature in its various aspects. Words naming plants, animals, elements of landscape, weather phenomena, or celestial bodies are present in all the hymns, and testify to the importance of nature not only as a spatial setting but also a thematic motif. The presence of words directly referring to particular plants and animals makes the presented natural world detailed and concrete<sup>12</sup>. The child is encouraged to observe natural phenomena such as various flowers, trees, grass, insects, domestic and wild animals, and different kinds of weather, listen to the sounds made by birds, animals, water and wind, smell the fragrance of flowers, feel sharp thorns or soft leaves, or experience the heat of the sun and the coolness of the shade. For example, the opening of Hymn II emphasises visual and aural perceptions: "Come, let us go forth into the fields, let us see how the flowers spring, let us listen to the warbling of the birds [...]", in Hymn IV the speaker asks the child to observe details of a rose plant: "It is a rose full blown. See how she sits upon her mossy stem [...]", while in Hymn IX the speaker encourages tactile impressions: "Take up a handful of the sand [...]" (Barbauld 1781). The hymns abound in nouns and phrases related to visual, aural, olfactory and tactile impressions and describe natural phenomena in ways

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<sup>12</sup> Names of particular plants employed in the hymns include (in the order of appearance): primrose, cowslip, violet, rose, poppy, harebell, wheat, fir, willow, thistle, mallow, hop, oak, daisy, tulip, iris, reed, water-lily, heathflower, wall-flower, hawthorn, snowdrop, laurustinus, cherry, lily of the valley, brambles, and hen-bane. Names of animals are only slightly less numerous.

evoking sensory experiences: “warbling of the birds”, “the crimson blossoms of the peach and the nectarine” (Hymn II), “the air [...] filled with [the rose’s] sweet odour” (Hymn III), “the air which was sultry, [and] becomes cool”, “the beams of the morning-sun [that] strike through your eye-lids” (Hymn V), “the murmur of the brook , [...] the whispers of the wind” (Hymn VI), “the summer sun [that] beats hot upon our heads”, “the shade [that] is pleasant, and cool”, “the grass [that] is soft to our feet” (Hymn VII) (Barbauld 1781).

The “emphasis on the particulars of sensory experience” as the basis of education is one of John Locke’s most influential ideas (Lerer 2009: 107). Barbauld’s attention to sensory impressions is certainly related to her pedagogic practice: as she explains in the Preface, her intention in writing the hymns was “to impress [the child] by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder or delight” (Barbauld 1781). Moreover, the saturation of the presented world with names of various plants and animals, and with verbs, nouns and phrases related to sensory perceptions seems to enhance the addressee’s sense of participation in the world of the hymns as the one who observes and experiences nature, albeit only vicariously.

Barbauld’s pedagogical attitude can be also observed in the practice of grounding her texts in what is known to the child and only then progressing to more abstract or more difficult things. Thus in the already mentioned Hymn VIII, the speaker first describes the family as the social unit familiar to the child, and then explains larger units (a village, a town, a kingdom, and the world) in a increasing progression of size and abstraction. A gradual introduction of more difficult or abstract ideas may be seen as a rule operative in the whole collection: the concepts of death, resurrection and heaven appear only in the final texts of the hymnal as less accessible to the child in emotional and



intellectual terms.<sup>13</sup> It has to be emphasised that even in the case of the latter concepts, the speaker's discussion is firmly grounded in the child's experience of the details of the natural world, or "the epistemology of the particular" deriving from Locke's educational theories (Lerer 2009: 113). For instance, in Hymns 10 and 11 which address the problem of death, the latter notion is introduced through a child-speaker's observation of a rose, a tree, insects, and a man. First the child sees them alive and beautiful and then dying or dead. Similarly, such natural phenomena as the regrowth of a plant from its root, the return of the sun in the morning, or the transformation of an insect after its apparent death are used to illustrate the idea of human afterlife.

Isaac Watts also uses elements of nature as a source of examples to teach the child. However, his way of employing the natural world in *Divine and Moral Songs* greatly differs from Barbauld's. Watts's most famous poem "Against idleness and mischief" (Song 20) may be seen as illustrative of his usual technique. The poem is based on the (emblematic) analogy between the child and the "busy bee" which is praised for industriously working all day long and for her skill in building honeycombs. After praising the bee in stanzas 1 and 2, the speaker, who is revealed to be a child in stanza 3, resolves to imitate the bee in "works of labour or of skill" because "Satan finds some mischief still / For idle hands to do" (1715: Song 20, st. 3). An element of the natural world (a bee) is described in the poem as a model for the child's behavior. Similarly, in Moral Song 5, an ant is presented as a pattern of industry and foresight to be followed by a young person. A negative version of this discursive technique is employed in Watts's Song 16 "Against quarelling and fighting" which opens with a description of dogs that "bark and bite" and "bears and lions [that] growl and fight" to lead to the authoritative speaker's warning of the child-addressee against

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<sup>13</sup> As Gillian Avery and Margaret Kinnell observe: "Mrs Barbauld's teaching about death was at that time unique in its adjustment to a small child's comprehension" (1995: 47).

“such angry passions” (Watts 1715). In making nature a source of moral lessons Watts’s usual discursive technique consists of drawing analogies between children and animals whose various behaviours undergo semiosis in accordance with the basic rule of the semiosphere of Watts’s hymns, that is, the division into good and evil. It may be added that semiosis applied to certain features of animal behaviour seems reminiscent of animal fables, though Watts’s animals are not directly personified.

While Barbauld also employs elements of nature in a didactic way, she does not use them to suggest instructive parallels between animals and children. The child is not taught to imitate praiseworthy behaviours of animals or reject undesirable ones. In Barbauld’s collection children are expected to observe, or even contemplate, the whole world of nature. When some elements of nature are singled out, they serve to exemplify universal laws (as in the Hymns X and XI about death and renewal of life) and not exemplary types of behaviors. For Barbauld nature is the space of contemplation of God’s presence and delight in his creation, and not a collection of moral examples. The principal rule of the semiotic world of Barbauld’s hymns seems to be its unity. Moreover, the author also appears to view humanity as a part of nature, whose role is to praise God on behalf of his creatures, as it is explained in Hymn II:

The young animals of every kind are sporting about, they feel themselves happy, they are glad to be alive, – they thank him that has made them alive.

They may thank him in their hearts, but we can thank him with our tongues; we are better than they, and can praise him better.

The birds can warble, and the young lambs can bleat; but we can open our lips in his praise, we can speak of all his goodness.

Therefore we will thank him for ourselves, and we will thank him for those that cannot speak. (Barbauld 1781)

Barbauld’s prose hymnal envisions harmony of nature and the human being united in the praise of their Creator. It is through nature that the child first experiences God’s greatness and

goodness, just as in nature the child learns about his/her unity with all creation in God. In Barbauld's collection nature is the main object of description in order to become a stepping stone leading to higher levels of perception and understanding. In this sense, children – voicing their praises of God in the midst of natural scenery – become representative of humanity in general. This understanding of the child in Barbauld's *Hymns...* seems similar to the one in Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs*, where the noun "children" occasionally applies to members of the human race, i.e. "children of Adam" in Song 3 (st. 2) or descendants of Eve in Song 22 (st. 1–2). However, it needs to be emphasized that in Watts's Puritan vision what links the whole humanity independent of whether they are young or old is their sinfulness. Contrastingly, Barbauld's humanity is united in their ability to praise God.

Barbauld's linking of the child, nature and spirituality are also observed on the level of discourse. Similarly to Watts, the author of *Hymns in Prose...* teaches the child-addressee to understand the metaphysical world by logical reasoning. However, while Watts's logic mostly relies on precepts derived from Scriptural teaching, Barbauld usually starts with sensory experiences or simple observations of nature to lead the child-addressee to broader and deeper conclusions. In the predominant majority of hymns nature constitutes the main argumentative premise of the presence and greatness of God. For instance, in Hymn IX the speaker begins with: "Come, let us walk abroad; let us talk of the works of God" and then continues by encouraging the child to consider a great variety of natural phenomena, especially plants in their various shapes and habitats. Observations give rise to questions, such as, for example: "Who causeth them to grow [...], gives them colours and smells? [...]", "How can a small seed contain a plant?", "How doth every plant know its season [...]?", "Who preserveth them alive through the cold of winter [...]?", "Who breatheth on them with the breath of spring [...]?" (Barbauld 1781). This logical sequence leads to the

conclusion clearly defining the role of nature in the cognition of God:

There is little need that I should tell you of God, for every thing speaks of him.

Every field is like an open book; every painted flower hath a lesson written on its leaves.

Every murmuring brook hath a tongue; a voice is in every whispering wind.

They all speak of him who made them; they all tell us, he is very good.

We cannot see God, for he is invisible; but we can see his works, and worship his foot-steps in the green sod. (Barbauld 1781)<sup>14</sup>

Nature is defined here as a source of the knowledge of God.<sup>15</sup> Being a visible proof of his greatness, nature deserves to be closely observed and studied carefully since “They that know the most, will praise God the best” (Barbauld 1781: Hymn IX). The speaker guides the child-addressee in the observation of a variety of natural phenomena and processes, then poses numerous questions underscoring the amazing complexity and intricacy of these processes, and makes the observation of, and amazement at, the variety and complexity of nature the basis of a spiritual posture of worship and gratitude. In *Hymns in Prose for Children* nature is an essential place of the child’s spiritual education.

Barbauld’s almost exclusive focus on natural scenery creates a significant relationship between the child and nature. Nature is not only a place of games and recreation where children can “sport [them]selves upon the new grass” as Hymn II expresses it, but a fundamental place of education in understanding the created world and its creator, and in learning to perform the most important role of humanity – that of praising God. This essential link between nature, the divine creator and childhood,

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<sup>14</sup> Barbauld’s words echo the opening utterance of Duke Senior in Act II, scene 1 of *As You Like It* (Shakespeare 1975: 260).

<sup>15</sup> Barbauld’s attitude to nature as revealing the presence of God is connected with her Unitarian religious principles (Vargo 1998).

which underlies *Hymns in Prose for Children*, has strong Romantic connotations and establishes Barbauld as an important forerunner of the Romantic vision of the child as close to nature and to spiritual realities.

The conclusion that Barbauld's conjunction of childhood, nature and spirituality looks forward to Romanticism is confirmed by many scholars.<sup>16</sup> However, it has to be observed that the child in *Hymns in Prose for Children* does not have a special relationship with nature simply by dint of being a child. The collection makes it clear that the child must be guided and encouraged in establishing such a relationship – which the speaker attempts to effect by inviting the child to go out into the natural setting, observe it, and interpret it spiritually. In contrast to the Romantic understanding of the child who seems to have an intuitive insight into spiritual matters (like the girl from Wordsworth's "We Are Seven"), the child in Barbauld's *Hymns...* has to be carefully directed in interpreting his/her sensory experiences and observations of nature, which only then become a guide to metaphysics.

Nature as the context of the child's spiritual education in Barbauld's hymns seems very distant from anything Isaac Watts could have embraced. For the latter spiritual education is based on theological doctrines and the Bible, while nature may be useful in providing examples for teaching moral lessons to children. The two writers seem to employ very different semiotic approaches to the natural world. Watts isolates examples from nature and turns them into arbitrary signs: he stresses certain qualities – good or bad – that he needs for his intended didactic messages. Thus a dog is a sign of ferocity (Song 16, Moral Song

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<sup>16</sup> For the discussions of Barbauld's vital connections with Romanticism compare, for instance, Hilton (2007), Duquette (2016: 54) or Bailey who claims Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* to be "highly Romantic in its focus on the spiritual significance of and potential relationship between Nature and the individual human mind, especially the mind of a child" (2010: 609). Bailey also considers the author to be "the pivotal figure in early Romanticism" (2010: 615).

2) while a bee is a sign of industry and skill (Song 20).<sup>17</sup> In each instance an element of nature is made to carry a certain semantic value selected from a set of qualities desirable or undesirable in a child. The semiosis of natural elements is performed in accordance to the general rule of the semiosphere of Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs*: the division into good and evil.

Barbauld displays a completely different and more holistic approach. She does not perform semiosis on particular elements of nature. In her hymns the natural world as a whole is treated as a semiotic object, or even an indexical sign<sup>18</sup> whose appropriate interpretation points to the creator and his qualities. The view of the whole natural world as a text (or a sign) to be interpreted emphasises unity as the main rule of the semiosphere in Barbauld's collection. Whenever she focuses on one element – a lightning, a stream, a meadow, a particular plant or animal – it always remains part of the larger whole of the natural world. In Barbauld's hymns the child is not taught what is good and what is evil but how to interpret the natural world spiritually.

While the division into good and evil is essential in the semiosphere of Watts's poems, it is interesting to note that in Barbauld's hymnal the categories of evil and sin are entirely absent. In contrast to Watts's insistence on humanity's (including children's) inclination towards evil and sin, Barbauld's *Hymns...* neither provide any examples of evil nor warn children against sin. Only in the last Hymn XII does the speaker mention evil – but in a general way without providing any particulars. The hymn focuses on heaven as the true home of humanity, much better than the earth. The speaker contrasts heaven and earth by listing certain unpleasant aspects of earthly life – such as thorns on roses – that will be absent in heaven. The category of

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<sup>17</sup> The arbitrariness of animal qualities becomes particularly visible when we compare Watts's Song 20, where a bee is a sign of industry, with Bunyan's "Upon the Bee" from his *Divine Emblems* where the same insect "an emblem truly is of sin" because it tempts with sweetness and then stings (Bunyan 1686).

<sup>18</sup> In Peirce's classification; compare the discussion of indexical signs in Sebeok (1999: 61-79).

evil is suggested by the words “ill”, “wicked”, and “wrong” in the speaker’s claims that heaven cannot be entered by “any one that doeth ill”, that “nothing that is wicked must inhabit there” and that it is impossible to “do wrong any more” in that happy place (Barbauld 1781). Significantly, the experience of evil in the sense of moral transgression is not in any way described in terms accessible to the child.<sup>19</sup> The child in Barbauld’s *Hymns...* appears not to be conscious of evil in the moral sense, and freely shares in the unspoilt purity of the natural world. In sharp contrast to the child in Watts’ *Divine Songs*, Barbauld’s child seems uncorrupted by the original sin. However, the speaker’s strategy of practically removing the problem of evil from the semiotic world of *Hymns in Prose for Children* seems to suggest the young child should be guarded against potentially corruptive experiences, which evokes the Lockean idea of the child’s impressibility (Lerer 2009: 104-5). If the child’s innocence is conditioned by the impressions he or she receives, then the speaker’s evasive treatment of evil becomes clear in the context of the philosophy and psychology dominant in the eighteenth century England.

Although *Hymns in Prose...* is not concerned with moral evil and sin (Bailey 2010: 613), the collection does address the problem of death. In Hymn XII, already considered above, one important contrast between heaven and earth is permanence as opposed to transience: “spring and summer soon pass away, a beautiful rainbow vanishes from the sky”, and “life is [...] quickly swallowed up in death” (Barbauld 1781). Hymn X – addressed to the “child of mortality” – is entirely devoted to the problem of death. The child sees a dying rose, a decayed tree falling to the ground, insects dying or being eaten up by birds

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<sup>19</sup> However, in the already mentioned Hymn VIII, the speaker includes an example of a “Negro woman, who sittest pining in captivity, and weepest over [her] sick child; [...] forlorn and abandoned [...] amidst [her] bonds”. This image evidently evokes slavery and signals the speaker’s negative attitude to it. Slavery is presented in a way of evoking pity and compassion and thus may be seen as a social evil, but the hymn does not dwell on this aspect, instead using the image of the enslaved woman as an illustration of distress that God will redress (Barbauld 1781).

and fish, and an active man who is suddenly “stiff and cold on the bare ground [...] his life departed from him” (Barbauld 1781). The child weeps and concludes: “Death is in the world; the spoiler is among the works of God: all that is made, must be destroyed; all that is born, must die” (Barbauld 1781).

The treatment of death in Barbauld’s hymns stands in a sharp contrast with Watts’s collection though both writers situate death in the theological context of Christianity. Watts makes death directly applicable to the child, who is encouraged to consider it as a point after which no correction of his/her sinful behaviour is possible: death may mean damnation and torments of hell. Conversely, Barbauld makes death a gateway to immortality: in Hymn XI, complementary to Hymn X concerned with death, a dead flower grows again from its seed, the sun reappears after the night, and an apparently dead insect is transformed into a new form. These images from nature serve as arguments for human immortality and renewal of life after death. At the end of Hymn XI the addressee is called the “child of immortality” – in contrast to the “child of mortality” of Hymn X – and asked to “mourn no longer” (Barbauld 1781). It goes without saying that Barbauld does not even mention hell or damnation so important in Watts’s hymns. The treatment of death seems to accord with the dominant rules of the semiospheres in each writer’s collection: division and unity. Watts makes death a final, absolute division, while Barbauld stresses the aspect of continuation.

Both Watts and Barbauld seem to choose one dominant theological concern each and subordinate to it all other issues. What is equally important, they seek to evoke appropriate emotional reactions in the addressee. Though he raises many doctrinal matters, Isaac Watts appears to focus on the understanding of human (and the child’s) nature as essentially sinful (Thacker and Webb 2002: 16). This understanding – based on the doctrine of the original sin – determines the urgency of his insistent call for conversion which must be made within a short span of human life, even a child’s life, in order to escape hell



and its torments. Anna Barbauld eschews all references to sin and damnation in her *Hymns in Prose...* and concentrates on the ubiquitous presence of God in the natural world. While Watts attempts to achieve his spiritual aim through evoking emotional reactions of contrition for one's sins and fear of everlasting flames, Barbauld's aim seems to lie in evoking the emotions of wonder, delight and awe inspired by the perception of God's presence in the amazing complexity and richness of his creation.

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In the analysis of Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* I have so far referred to "the speaker" in the sense of the authoritative adult voice of the hymns. It is interesting to note that this authoritative voice is very often fused with the voice of the child. For instance, Hymn I begins with: "Come, let us praise God, for he is exceeding great; let us bless God, for he is very good. He made all things; the sun to rule the day, the moon to shine by night" (Barbauld 1781). Vocabulary and syntax are certainly simple but the commands and statements are theologically sound and authoritatively made. Moreover, the reference to creation – continued in the next sentence – connects the hymn with the Book of Genesis, which also enhances the authority of the opening statements.<sup>20</sup> The fourth and fifth sentences of the hymn pick up the theme of praise from the opening lines and list birds, brooks and rivers as voicing the praise of God. The sixth sentence introduces the pronoun "I" and identifies the speaker as a child who joins the whole creation: "I will praise God with my voice; for I may praise him, though **I am but a little child**" (Barbauld 1781, emphasis mine). So, while the beginning of the hymn may be understood to be uttered by an authoritative adult speaker, the sixth sentence redefines this

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<sup>20</sup> For other Biblical references in Barbauld's *Hymns...*, compare Duquette (2016: 57–61).

speaker as “a little child” – without, in my view, entirely invalidating the adult authoritative voice. I see the hymns as interweaving the voices of the adult and the child, just like the sounds of birds and other natural phenomena are conjoined with human praise of God. This interweaving of voices, made quite evident in Hymn I, also appears in some other hymns. For instance, in Hymn II the pronoun “I” does not appear, and the fusion of the two voices is suggested only by the pronoun “us”. These techniques of interweaving and fusing the voices seem to strengthen the sense of the child being subsumed in the general category of humanity, as I have already remarked. Moreover, the technique of interweaving voices may be perceived as an echo on the level of discourse of the semiotic rule of unity we have detected in the created world of Barbauld’s hymns.<sup>21</sup>

However, some hymns separate the adult’s and the child’s voices very clearly by employing a constructional method which I would call antiphonal in place of the term “catechistic” often used to describe the “style” of some hymns by Barbauld (or instance, by Bailey 2010: 613). While I recognise the usefulness of the latter term in describing the technique of questions and answers frequently appearing in education and in poetry (Richardson 1989: 853-868), I intend to dissociate Barbauld’s hymns from the connotation of rote learning and “mechanical production of set answers” implied by the adjective “catechistic” (Richardson 1989: 853). By employing the word “antiphonal” I wish to link Barbauld’s poetic technique with her intention that her hymns become part of the communal worship (as expressed in her introduction) since antiphonal singing or recitation is often used in liturgy.

This antiphonal method is evident in Hymn VI which opens with direct questions put to the child: “Child of reason, whence comest thou? What has thine eye observed, and whither has thy foot been wandering?” (Barbauld 1781). The child answers:

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<sup>21</sup> Obviously, the text as a whole, including the level of discourse, can be seen as a semiosphere, where the story world, or even its distinct parts, would appear as semiospheres interacting in different hierarchical positions.

“I have been wandering along the meadows”, and lists plants and animals he/she saw as well as the beauty of the summer’s day. To this the first voice authoritatively responds:

Didst thou see nothing more? Didst thou observe nothing beside?  
Return again, child of reason, for there are greater things than  
these. – God was among the fields; and didst thou not perceive  
him? his beauty was upon the meadows; his smile enlivened the  
sun-shine. (Barbauld 1781)

Subsequently the child describes a walk in the forest, and then reports seeing the moon overshadowed by thunderstorm clouds. To each of these the adult voice responds by urging the child to “return again” in order to see “greater things” than the superficial phenomena registered by the child’s eyes and ears. The authoritative speaker provides a proper – spiritual – interpretation of the perceived aspects of the natural world and concludes: “God is in every place; he speaks in every sound we hear; he is seen in all that our eyes behold: nothing, O child of reason, is without God; – let God therefore be in all thy thoughts” (Barbauld 1781).

Though the authoritative adult voice provides correct interpretations of the perceivable phenomena in Hymn VI, I do not think the child’s observations are invalidated: they are a necessary step leading to an enhanced understanding. The phrase “child of reason” and the speaker’s displeasure at the shallowness of the child’s observations seem to indicate cognitive limitations of the exclusively rational attitude to reality. Though the rational attitude needs complementing by spiritual insight, the child’s rational cognition is not invalidated. The soundness of the child’s observations is even more obvious in the already mentioned Hymn X where the child observes a flower, a tree, an insect and a man who all die, and weeps while correctly concluding “Death is in the world” (Barbauld 1781). The answer comes in Hymn XI which – as I have already stated – transcends the perspective of death and interprets natural processes of

revival as a promise of human immortality. Hymns X and XI illustrate the antiphonal construction operating not only within one text (as in Hymn VI) but across textual boundaries. The child's observations in Hymn VI or in Hymn X are not negated – they are valid in their semiotic context of earthly life. However, they can be complemented and enlarged (as it is suggested in Hymns VI and XI) by spiritual understanding, that is, by being transferred to a new semiotic context: that of spiritual life.

I refer to examples of antiphonal construction to suggest that in spite of the predominant fusion of the adult's and the child's voices, the child's voice retains a considerable degree of separateness and validity. Though the child's cognitive limitations and the resulting need to learn are obvious in Barbauld's instructive collection, the hymns appear to aim at helping the child transcend these limitations rather than at radically re-making his/her nature. The vision of an innocent child developing an understanding of God's goodness and greatness by observing, delighting in and learning to interpret natural phenomena in a spiritual way is far removed from Watts's Puritan vision of the child's innate inclination to sin, which it is possible to correct only through teaching him/her to fear God's terrible wrath. Barbauld, publishing her hymns over 60 years after Watts, evidently operates with a completely different concept of the child – foreshadowing the one soon to be embraced by the Romantics – and places this child in a strikingly different spiritual world.

The spiritual world of Barbauld's *Hymns...* is nature treated as a text which – when interpreted correctly – leads to the understanding of the perceivable universe and human place in it as part of the spiritual world that is both beyond nature and inherent in it. However, the textualised nature is not exclusively an index (*sensu* Peirce) of the divine power and goodness. Nature is valuable in itself as God's infinitely varied and complex creation inspiring emotional responses of curiosity, delight and awe. The three stages – observation of natural phenomena, emotional response, and intellectual and spiritual understanding –

are all essential in forming a reverent attitude in her readers, which Barbauld defines as her aim in the introduction to her *Hymns in Prose for Children*. It is also important to stress that the emotional attitudes of fascination, delight, reverence, or awe are not described or named in the hymns as desirable or obligatory. They are only implied by how the world of nature is described. This reticence seems suggestive of Barbauld's respect for the child's independence and integrity which are not invaded by forceful assertions of what is obligatory for a good Christian.

Barbauld's concept of the child, her depiction of nature as a gateway to spiritual reality through nature are generally regarded as Romantic. It has to be admitted, however, that the Romantics themselves turned her name into an emblem of narrow-minded and literal attitudes which they treated with hostility and derision. In a letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge written on October 23, 1802 Charles Lamb complains: "Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery [...] [while] Mrs. B.'s and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil?" (Lamb 1837). The "nonsense" presumably refers to insignificant and vapid but factual knowledge crammed into children under the guise of trivial stories offered instead of traditional imaginative tales. Scathing comments were also voiced by Coleridge himself and by Robert Southey who derisively calls Barbauld "Mrs Bare-Bald" (James 2006: 51; Vargo 1998). It is probable that Lamb referred to *Evenings at Home* penned by Barbauld and her brother John Aikin for the instruction and (useful) amusement of children, since Lamb's accusations do not seem to be applicable to *Hymns in Prose for Children*.

Siding with critics who deservedly place Anna Barbauld among important early Romantics, I have to repeat that her children's hymns are not entirely consonant with the Romantic understanding of the child, most famously expressed in 1907 by William Wordsworth in his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" where he claims that "...trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home: / Heaven lies about us in our

infancy!” (Wordsworth 1807gn: st. 5). While in Wordsworth’s Romantic vision, growing up loosens a person’s intimate connection to the spiritual realm, no such restriction seems to be indicated in Barbauld’s hymns. It is the adult voice that encourages the child (character and addressee) to perceive and experience nature also in a spiritual way. The ability to transcend the limitations of merely rational perception and understanding is not an exclusive prerogative of the child. It is the adult who has to carefully guide the “child of reason” towards spiritual insight into the world of nature. So, even if Barbauld’s hymns display a characteristically Romantic interconnection of the child, nature and spirituality, they cannot be seen as a full realisation of the Romantic idea. However, this reservation does not seem to justify the Romantics’ hostility which turned Barbauld’s name into an emblem of the insistently instructive and unimaginative in texts for children. While Barbauld’s didactic purpose is unquestionable in her *Hymns in Prose for Children*, she seems to treat the child as both reasonable and sensitive: rationally observing the world around and open to its spiritual significance.

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