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Photo essay / Foto esej: This issue of Clotho was published during the pandemic, so it seemed fitting to include a photo essay on "Corona," although with a somewhat older connotation, one from classical antiquity. / Številka je nastala v času pandemije, v spomin na to ima tokratni foto-esej naslov »Corona«, vendar s starejšo, antično konotacijo. (Wikimedia Commons.)

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"Ovid's Old Age": Jacek Kaczmarski and the Sung Poetry of Exile

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INTRODUCTION

Ovidian exile reverberates through European literature. First expressed in the Augustan poet's own *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, the exilic tradition these works engendered has influenced the work of some of the most important Polish writers. These literary engagements have attracted sustained attention among Polish scholars, but they do not feature prominently in recent international publications on the reception of Ovid's exile.[1] In an attempt to bridge these two strands of scholarship, we introduce Jacek Kaczmarski (1957–2004), a contemporary Polish poet and musician, heavily influenced by Ovid and classical culture.[2] In his 1987 sung poem "Ovid's Old Age" ("Starość Owidiusza"), Kaczmarski presents a musical and lyrical interpretation of the last days of Publius Ovidius Naso during his exile (43 BCE–17 CE).[3] In addition to

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1 For Polish studies, see Milewska-Waźbińska and Domański, *Owidiusz: Twórczość – recepcja – legenda*; and Bocheński, *Nazo Poeta*. For the most diverse collection of recent scholarship in English, see Ingleheart, *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile After Ovid*.

2 Kaczmarski's wide-ranging inspirations have been only partially discussed. Apart from his engagement with visual arts, especially early modern European painting (cf. n. 22), he is also famous for drawing upon Russian poetry and literature, see "Wyśpiewać Rosję, przeczekać sowiety – Rosja w twórczości Jacka Kaczmarskiego," available online.

3 Zbigniew Herbert's "Dlaczego klasycy" is perhaps the best known contemporary Polish poetic engagement with the classical exilic tradition. This poem is briefly discussed in Milewska-Waźbińska Barbara, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 421–427.

providing an English translation of this poem (below), our paper will illustrate how Kaczmarski's artistic response to Ovid and his exilic experience can be read both as a deeply personal poem and as part of a more universal and complex interplay between Polish art of the socialist era and classical antiquity.[4] Ovidian exile plays a central role in Kaczmarski's depiction of the political and cultural displacement of Polish emigrants in the 1980s.[5] "Ovid's Old Age" is one of almost two dozen sung poems in which Kaczmarski responds to classical antiquity. Therefore, in our analysis, we shall also attend to Kaczmarski's relationship to antiquity more broadly and attempt to reveal how classical history, myth, and literature informed Polish poetry during the socialist era.[6]

"Ovid's Old Age" was written and released in 1987 on an album called *Kosmopolak*, recorded in Munich.[7] Kaczmarski had been on tour in France in December 1981, when martial law was announced in Poland after a long period of anti-communist strikes and protests. During this period of martial law (1981–

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4   For more on the relationship between the Greek and Roman classics and communism, see Karsai et al., *Classics and Communism*; Movrin and Olechowska, *Classics and Class*, and Movrin and Olechowska, *Classics and Communism in Theatre*. For more on specifically Polish communist classics, see Elżbieta Olechowska's *Classical Antiquity on Communist Stage in Poland*. For British communist classics both inside and outside the academy, see Hall and Stead, *A People's History of Classics*, 476–495 and 514–531. For early Soviet receptions of classical antiquity, see Stead and Paulouskaya, "Classics, crisis and the Soviet experiment"; and for a growing digital archive of the intersections between classics and world communism, see the collaborative research project Brave New Classics, available online.

5   This paper in part builds on work by Milewska-Waźbińska, whose article about Polish poets exiles, especially Kaczmarski, establishes some of the key points of reference between Ovid's work and "Ovid's Old Age," which are noted throughout the text.

6   "Powtórka z Odyseji," "Przybycie Tytanów," "Starość Tezeusza," "Wykopaliska," "Upadek Imperium Lekcja Historii Klasycznej," "Kasandra," "Pompeje," "Pompeja Lunapar," "Przechadzka z Orfeuszem," "Kołysanka dla Kleopatry," "Lament Tytana," "Młody Bacchus," "Oliwo Wino i Czas," "Petroniusz Bredzi," "Meldunek," "Lot Ikara," "Upadek Ikara." Additionally, there is also a number of songs responding to the biblical tradition: "Hiob," "Kara Barabasza," "Wieża Babel," "Arka Noego," "Wygnanie z Raju," "Strącenie Aniołow," "Przejście Polaków przez Morze Czerwone," "Sara."

7   See the memoirs of directors of the music label Pomaton, which later acquired the rights to all of Kaczmarski's musical output, on the website www.kaczmarski.art.pl.

1983), ten thousand people were imprisoned in internment centers across the country, and the immediate impact on cultural activity was devastating.[8] Polish creative practitioners and the general public observed a year-long boycott from television and radio, taken over by the military. Literature and performances continued to be monitored and were subject to censorship. At the time, Kaczmarski was heralded by many as the bard of the oppositionist movement, which made it unsafe for him to return to his country, where the state's control and potential repercussions by the socialist regime would have severely affected his personal and artistic life. Instead, he became briefly involved in political activism in France and toured intensively. He spent most of the 1980s in Munich working for Radio Free Europe and traveling around the globe, giving concerts to Polish minorities.[9] Six years into his emigration, Kaczmarski began work on *Kosmopolak*, which in addition to "Ovid's Old Age" contained "The Last Days of Norwid" ("Ostatnie Dni Norwida"), in which he explored another figure of the displaced artist, in this case, the Polish poet Cyprian Norwid (1821–1883).[10]

Ovid was one of the most famous Roman poets whose popularity in Rome was well established before his exile to Tomis, a Greek colony on the Black Sea. Trained in rhetorical studies and having performed some minor judicial posts as a Roman equestrian, Ovid abandoned public service. He gained cultural prominence with such works as *Ars Amatoria* and *Metamorphoses*, but was banished by Augustus in 8 CE in uncertain circumstances. Certainly, a *carmen* [poem] was one reason for the exile.[11] The other was an unspecified *error* – perhaps some involvement in one of the imperial household scandals. Ovid was never pardoned and died in his exile.[12] In any case, the shape of Ovid's fate

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8   Olechowska, *Classical Antiquity on Communist Stage*, 72–4 and 106.

9   Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 140–192. Cf. also Kozioł, "Jacek Kaczmarski," on culture.pl.

10 Kaczmarski talked about his interests in the cultural displacement and a general sense of estrangement in relation to also other poems, such as "Opowieść Pewnego Imigranta" or "Ostatnie Dni Norwida" in an interview with Jolanta Piątek, "Za dużo czerwonego," Radio Wrocław, published in *Odra* in 2001–2002.

11 Ingleheart, *Introduction*, 4–5 convincingly suggests that Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* caused offense to Augustus and his anti-adultery program of reforms.

12 For a detailed account of Ovid's life and his exile, see Ingleheart, *Introduction*, 1–5 with notes. Cf. Hinds, "Ovid," in OCD.

particularly attracted Kaczmarski, and the young poet saw many parallels to his own experiences.

Kaczmarski's relationship with Ovid and the Ovidian exilic tradition was formed through direct and indirect literary interactions with antiquity. Despite the now well-documented account of the plight of the traditional classical education behind the Iron Curtain,[13] as a well-educated and avid reader, Kaczmarski would have been exposed to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria*, which were typical essential reading for a 1970s Polish undergraduate.[14] Since he wrote his master's thesis on the Polish Enlightenment, he must also have been familiar with the classicism associated with that period.[15] However, at school, he only learned the basics of Latin, which means that he depended on vernacular translations for his classical reading.[16] The most readily available Polish translations of Ovid in the late 1970s and 1980s were *Przemiany* [*Metamorphoses*] by Jan Michalewski from 1932, *Metamorfozy czyli Przemiany* [*Metamorphoses, or Transformations*] by Bruno Kiciński from 1826/43 (reprinted in 1953), and *Owidego Nazona, Wiersze na wygnaniu pisane to jest Rzeczy smutne, Klątwa na Ibisa, Listy z Pontu* (includes *Tristia, Epistulae ex Ponto* and *Ibis*) by Przybylski from 1802, which was reprinted, revisited and complemented by later poets and classicists throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[17]

Kaczmarski also read *Naso the Poet* (*Nazo Poeta*), a fictional account of Ovid's life written by Jacek Bocheński (b. 1926) in an Aesopian language and published in 1969 as the second volume in a series that was highly popular among Kaczmarski's intellectual

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13   See Movrin and Olechowska, *Classics and Class*, and Karsai et al., *Classics and Communism*, passim.

14   Based on the information provided in an email exchange with Kaczmarski's biographer, Dr. Krzysztof Gajda. See also Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 76–80.

15   Lorentz and Rottermund, *Klasycyzm w Polsce*, 6–41; Axer, "Central-Eastern Europe," 132–155, esp. 148–50; cf. Torlone et al., *Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe*, 162–164, note the mention of Kaczmarski as one of the post-war poets using classical myth and history to comment on violence of the communist era.

16   Note, however, that when commenting on his poem about Caesar's conquests of Gaul, Kaczmarski referred directly to the "cold" tone of Caesar's writings in Latin, see the second interview in a series "Za dużo czerwonego."

17   For the complex history of these translations, see Witczak, "Polskie tłumaczenia 'Tristiów' Owidiusza," 139–153.

circles.[18] In Bocheński's book, where Augustus is modeled on the Polish communist leader, Gomułka, and Ovid is a rock star,[19] the author accentuates the conflict between emperor and poet, bravely drawing analogies to the soviet apparatus of the secret police and questioning the role of poetry in an autocratic system.[20] Kaczmarski's depiction of Ovid's exile also draws on these themes. Bocheński's work was a crucial mediating reception and one in which Kaczmarski surely found parallels with his role as a politically engaged creator of sung poetry. Especially important for the interpretation of Ovid's nostalgia for Rome in "Ovid's Old Age" is Augustus' notion in "Naso the Poet" that poets are responsible for praising their (communist) country, that this is their civic duty. Kaczmarski's Ovid praises Rome but not because he feels an obligation, but because he misses it so terribly that the image of his home becomes idealized. But more on that later.

One can also detect notes of Eugène Delacroix, *Ovide chez les Scythès* (1859), in Kaczmarski's creative palette. Delacroix portrays the Roman poet in a rustic, almost underdeveloped setting, which, as we shall see, resonates with Kaczmarski's Ovid.[21]

18 On Bocheński, see Marciniak, "*Veni, Vidi, Verti*," 357–388; Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns*, 159–163. Kaczmarski might have also accessed another fictionalised story of Ovid written in French by Vintilă Horia (*Dieu est né en exil*), but Kaczmarski's biographer has not found any evidence to prove it (based on private correspondence with Dr. Krzystof Gajda).

19 For Bocheński's own account see Marciniak, *Veni, Vidi, Verti,* 377–378.

20 Deleixhe, "Powieść historyczna pod czujnym okiem cenzora – analiza tekstów."

21 For Kaczmarski's inspirations drawn from European paintings and drawings, see Grabska and Wasilewska, *Lekcja historii Jacka Kaczmarskiego*, 2011. Kaczmarski's education in painting analysis was part of the training he received at Warsaw University and from his parents, professional artists; see Gajda, Jacek Kaczmarski, 81–3. Cf. "Za dużo czerwonego," part 3, in relation to the paintings of Jacek Malczewski. Among paintings depicting ancient themes that are attested as sources of inspiration for Kaczmarski's poetry is Caravaggio's *Young Sick Bacchus*, which became "Młody Bacchus," see Gajda, Jacek Kaczmarski, 66. In the context of Ovid, it is possible that Kaczmarski knew or saw the famous painting *Ovide chez les Scythes* by Eugène Delacroix either in the National Gallery London or during an exhibition in Zurich in Kunsthaus 05/06/1987 – 23/08/1987 (05/06/1987 – 23/08/1987) and was at least partly reacting to its depiction of Ovid.

Kaczmarski found in Ovid's figure the inspiration to express his personal experience and comment more generally on the condition of the émigré. The Roman poet's exilic experience – the central theme of the poem – plays a fundamental role in Kaczmarski's processing of his position as an émigré poet. Kaczmarski mythologizes himself by identifying his exilic experience with the situation of the lyrical subject of his poem. He embodies Ovid as an archetypal figure of suffering to understand and ease the pain of his politically forced emigration.[22] He admitted as much in an interview and claimed that he sought consolation for his difficulties exploring the Ovidian myth.[23] This concrete personal interest in Ovid allows Kaczmarski to investigate other important and more universal themes in "Ovid's Old Age": landscape, imperialism, displacement, "national" poets in exile, nostalgia, and the force of poetry.

In many respects, Kaczmarski's response to Ovid as an exiled figure confirms the key observations made by Ingleheart (2011) about the potency of the Ovidian myth as being "uniquely susceptible to being adapted to a wide range of aesthetic, intellectual, and political

22   On self-construction in responses to the Ovidian exile and its myth, see Ingleheart, "Introduction," 8, 19, and Dellner, "Children of the Island," 223–237, who analyses Eavan Boland's search for consolation in Ovid.

23   See "Za dużo czerwonego," part 3, quoted after www.kaczmarski.art.pl. Among Kaczmarski's difficulties in this period was alcoholism, which he confesses in the interview. Cf. Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 189–191, 213–217.

agendas."[24] Kaczmarski comments on a wide range of issues from the perspective of a composite lyrical subject, which can be mainly identified with the mythical Ovid as imagined by Kaczmarski. He dramatizes Ovid's dislocation and emphasizes the sorrow caused by exile. He creates his distinct vision of Ovid's exile that is profoundly shaped by his own political and personal context where the problems of poetic creativity, linguistic isolation, and cultural estrangement became especially acute.[25] The blurring of ancient and modern time-lines in the depiction of Ovid allows Kaczmarski to comment on displacement, the role of poetry, and personal tragedy in the shadow of Soviet and Augustan imperialism. Finally, in the context of the artistic project, *Kosmopolak*, for which the poem was produced, we can interpret Kaczmarski's use of Graeco-Roman literary tradition as an attempt to remind his audience that the Polish people, though under Soviet oppression and with its own distinct national culture, were also still part of European culture.

The following section offers a thematic analysis of "Ovid's Old Age," which interprets the contextual and universal importance of the poem and serves as an introduction into a broader discussion on Kaczmarski's relationship with the classical world. There are obvious stylistic and biographical parallels between Ovid and Kaczmarski; they were both deeply self-reflective, exiled from their native land, and had expansive artistic ambitions. Besides, they both suffered from confrontation with oppressive autocratic regimes that marked their artistic creation. Such parallels explain Kaczmarski's initial attraction to Ovid's poetry, but the notoriously learned Polish poet's engagement with the classical world extended beyond Ovid. His poems and songs betray a long-lived passion for Greek and Roman antiquity, which he encountered predominantly through translated literature and the visual arts. As "Ovid's Old Age" illustrates, his poems transcend the personal, intimate level and elevate the figures' concerns to a more abstract, social, even universal level.[26]

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24 Ingleheart, "Introduction," 9.
25 "Ovid's Old Age" also confirms that "the exiled Ovid appears to be particularly 'good to think with' in times marked by autocratic regimes," Ingleheart, "Introduction," 16.
26 Polish original text from www.kaczmarski.art.pl. Translation by Paweł Borowski. The divisions every four lines reflect the rhythm and cadences of the poem in a sung form.

i.

1. Cóż, że pięknie, gdy obco – kiedyś tu będzie Rumunia
2. Obmywana przez fale morza, co stanie się Czarne.
3. Barbarzyńcy w kożuchach zmienią się w naród ambitny,
4. Pod Kolumną Trajana zajmując się drobnym handlem.

ii.

5. Umrę, patrząc z tęsknotą na niedostrzegalne szczyty
6. Siedmiu wzgórz, które człowiek zamienił w Wieczne Miasto,
7. Skąd przez kraje podbite, z rąk do rąk – niepiśmiennych
8. Iść będzie i nie dojdzie pismo Augusta z łaską.

iii.

9. Nie ma tu z kim rozmawiać, zwój wierszy wart każdej ceny.
10. Ciała kobiet ciekawych brane pośpiesznie, bez kunsztu
11. I bez szeptów bezwiednych – chłoną nie dając nic w zamian
12. Białe nasienie Imperium w owcą pachnącym łóżku.

iv.

13. Z dala od dworu i tłumu – cóż to za cena wygnania?
14. Mówiłem wszak sam – nad poezją władza nie może mieć władzy.
15. Cyrku w pustelnię zamiana spokój jednak odbiera,
16. Bo pyszniej drażnić Cesarza, niż kupcom za opał kadzić.

v.

17. Rzymu mego kolumny! Wróg z murów was powydziera
18. I tylko we mnie zostanie czysty wasz grecki rodowód!
19. Na nim jednym się wspieram tu, gdzie nie wiedzą – co Grecja
20. Z szacunkiem śmiejąc się z czci, jaką oddaję słowu.

vi.

21. Sen, jedzenie, gra w kości do bólu w schylonych plecach,
22. Wiersz od ręki pisany dla tych, którym starczy – co mają.
23. Piękna tu nikt nie obieca, za piękno płaci się złotem.
24. Pojąłem, tworząc tu, jak z Ariadny [*sic*] powstaje pająk:

vii.

25. Na pajęczynie wyrazów – barwy, zapachy i dotyk,
26. Łąki, pałace i ludzie – drżący Rzym mojej duszy –
27. Geometria pamięci przodków wyzbyta brzydoty,
28. Zwierciadło żywej harmonii diamentowych okruszyn.

viii.

29. Stoją nade mną tubylcy pachnący czosnkiem i czuję,
30. Jak zmieniam się w list do Stolicy, który nikogo nie wzrusza.
31. Kiedyś tu będzie Rumunia, Morze – już Czarne – faluje
32. I glebą pieśni się staje ciało i świat Owidiusza.

I.

1. So much for pretty, when it's alien – one day it'll be Romania
2. Washed by the waves of a sea that will become "Black."
3. Barbarians in sheepskins will form an ambitious nation,
4. Under Trajan's Column conducting petty transactions.

II.

5. I will die looking out, yearning for the out-of-sight summits
6. Of the Seven Hills, which Man transformed into the Eternal City,
7. From where, through conquered lands, passing from hand to illiterate hand,
8. Augustus' letter of pardon, always coming, will never arrive.

III.

9. No one to speak to here; a scroll of poems worth any price.
10. Bodies of curious women dealt with fast, with no art,
11. And no spontaneous gasps – they absorb but give nothing back,
12. The Empire's white seed in a bed that smells of sheep.

IV.

13. Far from the court and crowd – what a price to pay for exile?
14. After all, I used myself to say: over poetry Power shall have no power.
15. Yet, the switch from Circus to hermit's cave steals peace of mind,
16. For riling Caesar sits better than adulating fuel merchants.

V.

17. My Rome's columns! From the walls, the enemy will tear you
18 And I will remain the sole guardian of your pure Greek lineage!
19. It is my only consolation, here where they are ignorant of Greece,
20. Laughing politely at my reverence for the word.

VI.

21. Sleep, food, dice, till my bowed back hurts,
22. A handwritten poem for those to whom it suffices what they possess.
23. No one will promise beauty here, beauty is paid for in gold.
24. Writing here, I understand how from Ariadne [*sic*] came a spider:

VII.

25. On the web of words – colors, odors, and touch,
26. Meadows, palaces and people – trembling Rome of my soul,
27. Free from ugliness the geometry of our ancestors' memory,
28. A mirror of the living harmony of diamond particles.

VIII.

29. The natives stand over me stinking of garlic – and I feel
30. How I transform myself into a letter to the Capital that doesn't move anyone.
31. Someday this will be Romania, the Sea already breaking Black,
32. And into the song's soil is turned the body and world of Ovid.

TRANSFORMATIONS

The poem's central stylistic theme of transformation alludes to Ovid's grand-oeuvre, the *Metamorphoses,* where mythical characters are regularly changed or transformed.[27] In this way, Kaczmarski creates an "Ovidian" feel to the poem. His artistic engagement with the theme is also explicitly attested in another poem interacting with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria*: the ironic portrayal of a female accountant in "Metamorfozy Sentymentalne" ("Sentimental Metamorphoses"). But more importantly, he uses the language of transformation to underscore the volatile nature of exile and, by proxy, of human existence under autocratic regimes more generally. The instances of transformations discussed in more detail in individual sections are not merely decorative but also convey an important message: the world under autocrats is continuously in flux. The poets have to adapt, even when their exile makes everything even less predictable.

The opening and closing lines anticipate profound changes in the exilic landscapes. Scythia will become Romania (1, 31), Pontos will become the Black Sea (2, 31), the barbarians will develop into an ambitious nation (3), and even the "Eternal City" of Rome will continue to change after Ovid's death, with the addition of Trajan's column (4) and, eventually, the enemy's dismantling of the walls (17), symbolizing the city's fall. The very moment of banishment is communicated through a "transformation" of the Circus (Maximus), frequented and described by Ovid,[28] into a hermit's cave, or "hermitage," to which he was reduced in exile (15). There is a certain irony to this transformation because, as noted above, initially, the poet welcomes it as liberating, only to discover later that it comes with a significant drawback – political and cultural displacement. Ovid's world is therefore unpredictable, and a poet under an autocratic regime cannot fully predict how his circumstances will really change. The nature of poetry is also changing. The metaphor of Arachne turning into a spider and weaving webs of words (24–5) evokes cultural displacement but also a heightened sense of poetic sensibility fuelled by nostalgia. Ovid himself – who produced so many accounts of the transformations of others in *Metamorphoses* – is being changed too through

27 This deliberate stylistic choice confirms that Kaczmarski must have had good knowledge of Ovid's writings. Cf. possible reference by Kaczmarski to *Ex Ponto,* in Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 167–8.

28 Esp. *Ars Amatoria* 1.135 and *Amores* 3.

his exilic condition. His despair reduces him to a letter begging for pardon (30). Finally, the (dead) body and the world of Ovid – both the products of exile – turn into a fertile soil that will inspire future poetry and consolation for generations of poets émigrés to come.

LANDSCAPE, SPACE AND TIME

The opening and closing lines of the poem (1–2 and 31–2) set Romania and the Black Sea as the poem's main stage. The first line stresses the dichotomy between natural beauty ("cóż, że pięknie" – lit. "so what if pretty") and displacement of the lyrical subject ("gdy obco" – "and yet foreign"). It also introduces one of the main themes of the poem, the sense of alienation and estrangement.[29] In lines 1–2, the lyrical subject anticipates the change of the Dobruja region, colonized as Moesia by the Romans in the 1st c. BCE, to a modern nation-state ("kiedyś tu będzie Rumunia" – "one day it will be Romania") and of the sea's name from *Pontos* to the Black Sea ("morza, co stanie się Czarne" – "sea that will become 'Black'"). In lines 3–4, he predicts that the ancient inhabitants of Romania will form an "ambitious nation." Kaczmarski thus imposes his modern knowledge on the ancient context of Ovid's exile to blur the distinction between past and present, lyrical fiction, and historical reality.[30] The passage of time throughout the poem is especially evident in the closing lines (31) where the sea is already Black ("Morze – już Czarne – faluje" – "The Sea already breaking Black"), indicating the transition from Ovid's ancient to Kaczmarski's contemporary geography.

The blurring of geographical and temporal boundaries emphasizes the universality of the experiences explored in the poem and their applicability to Kaczmarski's circumstances. The lyrical subject embodies Ovid, who uses first-person verbs (5: "umrę" – "I will die") to describe the exilic experience. It is perhaps also the voice of Kaczmarski embodying the Ovidian figure. The precision of the

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29   For Kaczmarski the exile was not limited to one concrete space, but similarly to Ovid longing for Rome, his object of nostalgia was the center of his native culture and language, Warsaw.

30   For the fictional blend of lyrical and historical character of the poem and the multifaceted character of the lyrical subject. Cf. Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 167: "Słowa te są sygnałem historyczno-literackiej fkcji, którą buduje w wierszu. Historia miesza się tu ze współczesnością, literatura z faktem, fikcja z rzeczywistością."

word "umrę" foreshadows Ovid's death with a certainty that only the contemporary author and audience can have. Ovid himself is left helplessly hoping for the emperor's pardon until the end of his days (7–8). Such word choice creates a sense of intimacy between the audience and the lyrical subject, and between Kaczmarski in the present and Ovid's figure in the past.[31] The depiction of the setting where Ovid spends his last days does not aim, therefore, for a faithful reconstruction of historical geography and reveals that Kaczmarski is not interested in the historical figure of Ovid per se. His poem focuses instead on a mythical figure of an exiled poet whose fate can resonate across time and space and help Kaczmarski understand his own political emigration experiences. This timeless rusticity chimes with Delocroix's mythic scene.

The landscape also features prominently as a barrier that establishes the distance between the lyrical subject and the object of his nostalgia. Lines 5–8 situate Ovid helplessly awaiting a pardon letter from Augustus as an old man isolated from his intellectual circles. There is tragedy in the fact that the great Roman poet is confined to a distant country looking with longing for Rome but unable to culturally interact with it anymore. The sense of displacement is powerfully conveyed by the geographical distance between the eternal *urbs* (Rome) founded on seven hills that are invisible from Ovid's location, which is surrounded by a very different type of landscape, the sea (5–6). The contrasting depiction of the "familiar" hills versus the "vast and unknown" sea can reflect the lyrical subject's sense of angst and can also serve to heighten his sense of isolation from the known and intelligible world.[32] Kaczmarski does not qualify these landscapes so explicitly, but his depiction of Ovid's suffering is built upon the profound dichotomy of the uncouth world in which the ancient poet found himself and the cultured world to which he used to belong.

The vast space isolating Ovid from his home underlies the hopelessness of his position. The image of doomed hope is conveyed by lines 7–8 that protractedly describe Ovid awaiting the imperial pardon to end his exile. Neither we nor Kaczmarski can know whether

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31 Cf. Ingleheart, "Introduction," 6–7.
32 For the creation of "civilized" and "barbaric" literary spaces in works responding to Ovidian exile, see Ingleheart, "Introduction," 17–18, and Michalopoulos, "The Love-Artist," 265. For an example of textual analysis of the Black Sea as a "threatening" landscape that heightens a sense of isolation in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* by Euripides, see Bray, *Interrogating Liminality,* 52–71.

such a letter was ever sent, but Ovid's hope is evoked by the image
of a pardon letter, passed from hand to hand, but never arriving.
The phrase "z rąk do rąk – niepiśmiennych. Iść będzie i nie dojdzie
pismo" ("from where, through conquered lands, passing from hand
to illiterate hand, / Augustus' letter of pardon, always coming, will
never arrive") delays the delivery by using the future continuous
tense ("iść będzie" – "it will be arriving") which stretches time and
reflects Ovid's never-ending wait.[33] The same phrase also manipu-
lates space. The distance between the seven hills of Rome, invisible
from Romania, and the Black Sea, feels especially impassable and
impenetrable for a pardoning letter because none of its handlers are
literate enough to realize its cultural importance. The image of a
letter coming from Rome to Tomis through illiterate hands depicts
an axis of culture and civilization, with Rome at the epicenter, and
Ovid in Scythia, at the farthest outskirts of the known world.[34] The
conquered lands filled with illiterate peoples evoke the empire's scale
and contrast with Ovid, whose personal culture and independence
doom him to be utterly lost and hopeless in the face of the limitless,
unintelligible, and utterly alien space that separates him from home.
His transformation into the letter lost in the middle of that unboun-
ded space compounds this sense of isolation. One can see in Ovid's
desperate hoping against all the odds a reflection of Kaczmarski's
own exilic experiences. To Kaczmarski in 1987, there seemed little
chance in socialist Poland for the political change that would allow
him to return to his country.[35]

IMPERIALISM

Lines 3–4 evoke the transformation of the barbarians wearing sheep-
skins into an ambitious nation, trading under Trajan's column. The
juxtaposition of the nation's ambition with their disparaging econo-
mic activity ("drobny handel" – lit. "small-scale business") signals
skepticism or even irony towards the inferior position ascribed to

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33 We have attempted to render this effect by using the present participle, which
    felt more natural in English.
34 For a literary polarisation of Tomis and Rome as an essential element of
    responses to the Ovidian exile, see Ingleheart, "Introduction," 17–18.
35 "Za dużo czerwonego," part 2: "To był 1987 rok, taki okres ciszy przed burzą,
    wydawało się, że już naprawdę nic z tego nie będzie, tylko żałoba, pleśń i
    rozkład."

the provincials within the scheme of the empire. The barbarians do not become cultured men in Rome but are reduced to small traders under Roman rule. The transition is evoked by Trajan's column, which depicts the conquest and exploitation of Dacia (a region neighboring Moesia Inferior, where Ovid was in exile) almost a hundred years after Ovid's death. The evocation of Trajan's column foreshadows military coercion through which the peoples inhabiting the coast of the Black Sea will be forcefully incorporated into the empire.[36] The notion of the Roman conquest of lands between Rome and Tomis is also expressed in line 7 ("przez kraje podbite" – "through conquered lands"). All these references to the military character of the Roman empire can be interpreted as Kaczmarski's ironic commentary on imperialism and colonial exploitation that elevates him above Ovid's imperialistic perception of the local people. Here, Kaczmarski's Ovid presents the perspective of rulers, which considers Romans and their culture as superior to the people living in the peripheries of the empire, far away from its center, Rome.

While setting the stage for Ovid's suffering and longing for his home, Kaczmarski conveys his critical stance towards seemingly beneficial aspects of living in an empire, reminding us that the gravitational pull of its capital was founded on brutal military conquest. His view is undoubtedly informed by contemporary experiences and perceptions of economic emigration in socialist Poland, and in the Eastern Block more generally, where many every-day commodities had to be procured through small-scale trade, often abroad.[37] The economic difficulties of ancient and modern "provincials" living in the shadow of imperialism are related to Kaczmarski's sensitivity to the question of imperialism in antiquity and in modern times.[38]

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36   The region was secured permanently by Roman force in 29 BCE (Liv. *Per.* 135, Cassius Dio 51.23–6, Florus 2.26, 13–16, Zonaras 10.32). For the historical background of the Black Sea region before and during Roman conquest, see Musielak, *Społeczeństwo greckich miast zachodnich wybrzeży Morza Czarnego*; for the overview of the province of Moesia, encompassing Tomis, where Ovid was exiled, see Cary and Wilkes, "Moesia," in *OCD*.

37   Krywult-Albańska, *Przyczyny i okoliczności emigracji z Polski w latach 1980 na przykładzie emigracji do Kanady*, 3–5; Kornai, *Niedobór w gospodarce*; Staniszkis, *Patologie struktur organizacyjnych (próba podejścia systemowego)*; Górny and Stola, "Akumulacja i wykorzystanie migracyjnego kapitału społecznego," 98.

38   Kaczmarski later differentiated between Soviet imperialism the conquests of Alexander the Great or Caesar. He found the former more contemptible than the latter, which he partly justified as a civilizing mission. See "Za dużo czerwonego," part 2.

His ironic depictions of historical figures and events can be found in several other sung poems and serve as a bitter commentary on the nature of imperialism, military power struggles, and colonial conquests.[39] In this poem, it is the image of the descendants of the *Getae* and Scythians who trade in the literal shadow of Roman imperialism, cast by Trajan's column. From this perspective, Kaczmarski's response to Ovid can be seen as part of a more general trend to treat Ovid's figure as an occasion to discuss or critique the repressive nature of twentieth-century regimes.[40]

CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT

As was the case of another 1.3 million Polish people, Kaczmarski lived as an émigré in the 1980s and could not come back to the country without fear of political repression.[41] In 1987, when he composed "Ovid's Old Age," he had already been "displaced" for six years, living first in Paris, then in Munich.[42] During this time, as an artist creating in his native tongue, he must have particularly suffered from cultural and linguistic isolation.[43] Kaczmarski thus purposefully reconstructs the emotional state of the exiled Ovid, longing for Rome and hoping for his exile to end, to understand his own situation and experiences. In his 2001 interview with Jolanta Piątek, he admitted that he used his source material depending on his own need and context: "partly to improve my frame of mind, partly as an attempt to understand the nature of exile – in the case of Ovid, it was political exile."[44]

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39 E.g., "Jałta," "Sen Katarzyny ɪɪ," "Historia Lekcji Klasycznej," "Kniazia Jaremy Nawrócenie."

40 Ingleheart, "Introduction," 15–16.

41 For Polish emigration in this period, see Krywult-Albańska, *Przyczyny i okoliczności emigracji z Polski,* and Pleskot, "Polish Political Emigration in the 1980s," 49–64.

42 Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 148: in Paris, Kaczmarski had relatively comfortable living standards compared to most political émigrés.

43 For the very Polish character of Kaczmarski's poetry and its reception by foreign poets and friends, see Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 154. However, Kaczmarski had a large audience abroad, especially in France, where generations of immigrants produced a large minority of Polish speakers, see Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 157.

44 Interview "Za dużo czerwonego" was conducted in Radio Wrocław in 2001 and published in *Odra*. Retrieved from www.kaczmarski.art.pl and translated.

The four lines depicting isolated Ovid in Tomis illustrate how Kaczmarski's exilic experiences found their expression in the figure from antiquity. The renowned poet Ovid has no one to talk to (9: "Nie ma tu z kim rozmawiać" – "No one to speak with here") and suffers from a lack of artistic stimulation in a place where poetry is so rare that any script becomes priceless ("zwój wierszy wart każdej ceny" – "scroll of poems worth any price"). Among the sheepskin wearing barbarians (3) who smell of garlic (29), Ovid is wholly isolated from the high culture in which he participated in Rome. Kaczmarski himself was obviously also partially culturally separated from the artistic activities in Poland, but his "exile" allowed him to participate in Polish cultural activities abroad, for example, to meet some of the most renowned Polish actors and filmmakers.[45] Nonetheless, since Kaczmarski's own literacy and poetic prowess were rooted in his native language, the foreign people surrounding him might have seemed as illiterate as Ovid's Scythian companions who knew no Latin and were "ignorant of Greece" (19). These unusual circumstances for an artist prompted Kaczmarski to align himself with Ovid's artistic fate and depict him as linguistically displaced.

The solemn tone of 19–20 underscores Ovid's expression of discontentment with his cultural displacement. The lyrical subject seeks solace in the Graeco-Roman culture that permeates his poetry, which proves to be the only reliable source of "support" during his exile (19: "na nim jednym się wspieram" – "It (the lineage) is my sole consolation"). During exile, cultural identity becomes much more important than anything else. The significance of the cultural heritage cherished by Ovid is contrasted with the supposed ignorance of people who ridicule his reverence for poetry (20: "śmiejąc się z czci, jaką oddaję słowu" – "laughing politely at my reverence for the word"). These lines are full of bitter irony and resemble Ovid's expression of frustration with the Getae laughing at his use of the Latin language (Ov. *Trist.* 5.10.38).[46]

It is important to note that Kaczmarski changes the emphasis slightly in this image: his Ovid is concerned with the lack of understanding for the value of poetry and the importance of language in general. Whereas the passage from Ovid's *Tristia* depicts the more

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45 Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 148, 151–3, 163–7. Kaczmarski became friends with Andrzej Seweryn and had frequent contacts with internationally renowned filmmakers, such as Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland.

46 Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 169–170.

mundane ridicule of the local people in every-day miscommunication with Ovid, it does not undermine the role of poetry in general. The difference in emphasis can be explained by the fact that Kaczmarski himself spoke fluent French while he found himself in exile and did not have communicative problems. For this reason, it might have been more personally relevant to focus on Ovidian exile as not just a linguistically alienating experience, which is a more generic emigratory experience, but primarily as a cultural displacement where the poet's core values are challenged. The resulting picture is one of contrast between Ovid, who represents the purest form of classical poetry, and the barbarians who ignore the most fundamental aspects of his culture (19: "tu, gdzie nie wiedzą – co Grecja" – "here where they are ignorant of Greece"). No doubt, through this image, Kaczmarski conveys his own exilic experiences of being fundamentally misunderstood abroad, especially when he was ascribed the constraining role of a national bard (see below), which changed the interpretation of even his apolitical songs.[47]

Ovid's cultural displacement is further underscored by an image of non-intellectual pleasures replacing his poetic activity. The list of Ovid's key activities is composed of a series of abruptly uttered words (21: "Sen, jedzenie, gra w kości" – "Sleep, food, dice") which evoke the lack of sophistication in his daily life. Instead of spending time writing, he gambles excessively (21: "do bólu w schylonych plecach" – "till my bowed back hurts"). When he does write, it is a cheap commission, produced hastily, and for an easily satisfied audience (22). By evoking bodily, visceral sensations, such as eating, suffering from back pain, or writing on a knee in a bent position, Kaczmarski draws his audience into the experience of a poet reduced to the physical world. This reduction is particularly difficult because it distances Ovid from the intellectual world of poetry, which becomes the cornerstone of his identity in exile (19). The reduction of the poet to a sore gambler is a powerful development of the image of cultural alienation that helps the audience to identify with the exiled Ovid, and by proxy, with Kaczmarski.

Kaczmarski's depiction of the Scythians as disinterested in Graeco-Roman culture and literature corresponds with Ovid's complaints (Ov. *Trist.* 4.1.94).[48] His new audience is too content with what they already possess and therefore are not as interested in the

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47   Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 168–9.

48   For linguistic isolation, see Milewska-Waźbińska "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 166.

hope and mirage that Ovid's poetry could offer. The striking contrast between the locals' materialism and the spiritual experience that could be accessed through poetry underlies the next lines. No one will promise beauty because one must pay for it in gold (23). This makes for an intellectually and lyrically poor, almost hostile environment. Ovid cannot achieve aesthetic satisfaction among the people who are only interested in material goods. His cultural displacement is all the more profound because no one around him shares the same aspirations and expectations from daily life.

The last line of this section evokes a mythical figure from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* whose tragic displacement can only be understood by the lyrical subject in exile. This is also perhaps the most ambiguous part of the poem because of the uncertainty whether the figure should be identified as Ariadne, who helped Theseus navigate the Minotaur's maze, or Arachne, who was turned into a spider. Arachne was punished by Minerva for her hubristic challenge of the goddess's craft and the resulting masterly tapestry that depicted crimes of the gods (Ov. *Met.* 6.1–145). Did Kaczmarski confuse Ariadne with Arachne? Judging by how closely Kaczmarski was engaged with Ovid's work, it seems improbable that he did not distinguish the two figures. We could try to explain this lapsus by the fact that, like most of Kaczmarski's poems, it was supposed to be sung out loud, which could obscure the minuscule phonetic dissimilarity between the two names. This explanation's weakness lies in the fact that Kaczmarski had excellent diction and would have been quite capable of distinguishing between different sounds. Unfortunately, there are no accessible manuscripts of the lyrics to verify which name Kaczmarski had originally written and whether it was changed later when copying the lyrics.[49] While there are several creative defenses of Ariadne, it is most likely a simple mistake. The two names are similar and, especially for the non-specialist, exist within the same interpretative realm, i.e., classical myth.[50] Faced with these interpretative difficulties, we read the line as: "Pojąłem, tworząc tu, jak z *Arachne* powstaje pająk" ("I grasped, composing here, how *Arachne* turns into a spider"), which makes the most sense in the

49 Checked against the largest online database of Kaczmarski's manuscripts, available on www.kaczmarski.art.pl.

50 He would not be the first, and certainly will not be the last to mistake the two names. See, e.g., Hall and Stead, *People's History of Classics,* 76, where Miles Aston also mistook the two in a poem, published in Dublin, 1728.

context of its place in the poem.[51] One of the reasons for which Ovid was banished by "divine" Augustus was a song, *carmen*.[52] Similarly, Arachne met her punishment after she created the most beautiful and highly detailed tapestries. After her transformation by Minerva, she continued to weave with the same skill she had before, but ephemeral cobwebs rather than tapestries. Ovid, too, retained his poetic skill but, after banishment, had been reduced to writing among people who could not appreciate his art. In the same way, Arachne's fellow spiders were incapable of comprehending the sophistication of her weaving skills. The metaphor primarily communicates Ovid's and Kaczmarski's alienation and the feeling of being misunderstood as poets, but it recalls the brutal physical manifestations of metamorphosis. Towards the end of the poem, it will be juxtaposed, however, with the image of resilient poetry that, despite hostile surroundings, retains its power to offer solace by conjuring images of a lost home (see the section on nostalgia and exilic poetry below).

Ovid's displacement is not confined to linguistic alienation and the reduction of his poetic activity but also encompasses changes in intimate, personal life. Directly referring to Ovid's works on love life, Kaczmarski dramatizes the poet's erotic life in exile. In Tomis, sexual conquests, so vividly depicted in *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, become devoid of the art that characterized intimate encounters in Rome. The bodies of local women are taken hastily and without sophistication, without art (10 "brane pośpiesznie, bez kunsztu" – lit. "taken hurriedly, with no art") and produce nothing but disappointment (11 "chłoną nie dając nic w zamian" – "they absorb, giving nothing in return"). They "absorb" ("chłoną") white semen of the empire without reciprocity, without sighs. These women might be prostitutes or ordinary "curious" local women, "curious," perhaps about Ovid as a famous poet or simply because at the outskirts of the empire, his Roman status makes him privileged ("ciała kobiet ciekawych" – "Bodies of curious women"). Controversially, the lyrical subject reduces them to "bodies." Their human agency is removed, leaving space but for a distraction for Ovid, who is nostalgically comparing them to his artful sexual relationships in Rome. There is also a jarring power dynamic set up in the image of "curious women's bodies" attracted to Ovid's "imperial semen."

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51 For fans' divided interpretations of this passage and various explanations of how "Ariadne" can make sense in the poem's context, see www.kaczmarski. art.pl.

52 Cf. n. 23: Ingleheart, "Introduction," 4–5.

Do they want to have children with a Roman citizen to improve their legal status? Or are they simply attracted to the famous international poet? There seems to be a value judgment hidden in these lines, and the sexual exploitation can be read in parallel to lines 3–4, which strongly suggest a skeptical stance towards Roman imperialism. Kaczmarski compares Ovid's poetic "art of love" in Rome with the crude objectification of women as purely sexual objects during his exile.

Is this sexual image an expression of Kaczmarski's disappointment with his exilic fame and popularity among female fans? Kaczmarski's promiscuity is no secret, and his preference for considerably younger women further problematizes the already unsavoury image.[53] The uncertain nature of our sources, as well as dynamic developments in the poet's intimate life, make it difficult to define with precision how much of his depiction of Ovid's erotic life can be read as Kaczmarski's self-reflection on his own extramarital sexual experiences with women abroad.[54] However, it is not improbable that Kaczmarski subtly confesses his dissatisfaction with the sexual life that the exilic conditions offered to him, for example, when touring in the US in 1987.[55] Adding to this picture's complexity, the description of beds as smelling of sheep (12) repeats the notion of barbarity and perhaps even inferiority of the people surrounding Ovid. This is a perverse picture of "simple" women attracted by artistic fame, the basis of which they cannot understand, and by the superiority of a Roman, who, as the conqueror sent to the province, takes their bodies as his spoil.[56] Therefore, displacement is not just a linguistic problem but an overall bodily experience that alters even the most intimate aspects of a poet's exilic life.

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53   See, e.g., Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 103 for a latter account of Kaczmarski's conversation about his intimate relations with younger women.

54   Kaczmarski certainly did not shy away from tackling intimidate relations and details of intercourse in his poetry, see, e.g., "Potępienie rozkoszy" or "Wyznanie kalifa, czyli o mocy baśni."

55   See Kaczmarski's self-reflection on a two-month tour as hedonistic and excessive in "Za dużo czerwonego," part 4, where Kaczmarski refers to alcohol consumption and heavy partying.

56   Kaczmarski's attitude towards marital fidelity in his 20s was qualified by his friends as "relaxed." He had an active sexual life, often involving younger female fans, and extra-marital romances which eventually ended his first marriage with Inka Kardyś, see Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 202–211.

POLITICAL DISPLACEMENT

There is no doubt that Kaczmarski sought in the myth of Ovid's exile an analogy to his emigration and positioned himself as an exiled poet suffering from political displacement.[57] The character of the self-identification of Kaczmarski with the lyrical subject of his poem – an imaginary Ovid – is underlined by self-mythologization. Kaczmarski's life in western Europe can hardly be compared to his rendering of the Ovidian experience of displacement in the cultural backwaters of the world.[58] Nonetheless, despite Kaczmarski's sustained activity and a certain level of professional success abroad (well-paid job in the Free Europe Radio alongside many international and intercontinental tours), he strongly needed to express his sense of isolation and frustration with the authoritarian regime that caused the immigratory trauma.[59]

The analogy to Ovid testifies to Kaczmarski's need to communicate his suffering for which he found expression in similar feelings in antiquity. Lines 13–16 explore the consequences of political exile for the poet's agency in more depth. The lyrical subject suggests that, on the one hand, the price of exile seems low because it "frees" the poet from the influence of the court and the crowd (13: "Far from the court and crowd – what a price for exile"). That these audiences were the negative side of residing in Rome is evident from the next line suggesting Ovid's work constraints. The lyrical subject proclaims in line 14 that poetry ought to be free from "władza," a word which denotes both power in a general sense, e.g., the audience's taste exerting influence on the artist, and the political authority of a person or institution. Kaczmarski's "authority shall not rule over poetry" (14) evokes Ovid's actual words concerning his talent (*ingenium*) over which Caesar cannot rule (Ov., *Trist.* 3.7.45–48: *ingenio tamen ipse meo comitorque fruorque: / Caesar in hoc potuit iuris habere nihil –* "my mind is nevertheless my comrade and my joy; *over this Caesar could have no right*").[60] Ovid's position as portrayed by Kaczmarski

57 "Za dużo czerwonego": "'Ovid's Old Age' was a more or less conscious positioning of myself in the role of the poet exile" ("*Starość Owidiusza* były mniej lub bardziej świadomym ustawianiem siebie w roli poety wygnańca").

58 For the account of Kaczmarski's life abroad in the 1980s, see Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 146–216.

59 That is how Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 213–4 interprets Kaczmarski's work and testimonies of his life from this period.

60 Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 169.

was both a universal statement and a reflection on the particular situation in Poland after 1981 when some leading artists and intellectuals supported communist propaganda, which agitated Kaczmarski.[61] Kaczmarski was equally allergic to constraints of artistic freedom coming from the political opposition and explicitly stood against "making poetry useful," whatever the cause.[62]

On the other hand, the price of political exile is higher than it seems to the poet at first. The lyrical subject might have championed the freedom of poetry, but now, the change of the circus into a hermitage (15: "Cyrku w pustelnię zamiana") snatches his peace away ("spokój jednak odbiera"). This "transformation" points to an unexpected consequence for the poet who is disappointed with the final result. The Polish word for hermitage "pustelnia" has strong connotations with the physical isolation of a spiritual man and can be associated with a setting where one can find inner peace and perhaps achieve illumination. It contrasts with the *Circus* (Maximus), a symbol of socializing in Rome (and a setting in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.135). For a poet, such isolation might promise artistic freedom, but in Kaczmarski's imagined reality, the removal from the center of Rome has the opposite effect on Ovid. The poet regrets the "trade-off" because he has been reduced to a man bargaining for fuel from an artist able to goad the emperor himself (16). The degradation of his socio-economic position is conveyed by the image of an ancient poet forced to use his rhetorical skills to negotiate for fuel to keep himself warm – a position of extreme economic precariousness. Both the economic instability and removal from the court's circle are humiliating and severely minimize the role an exiled artist can hope to play.

Kaczmarski plays with the irony of political exile where, though free from political censorship or tastes of the crowd, artistic creation is constrained by the necessities of every-day life and has a reduced impact on the distant political authorities. The poet's removal from Rome means that there is no longer any point in criticising the emperor because there is no audience that can listen to Ovid.[63] Through this image, filled with frustration, bitterness, and disappointment,

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61   Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 165–6. For artistic expression of Kaczmarski's disappointment with some artists and intellectuals in this period, see e.g., *Marsz Intelektualistów, Koncert Fortepianowy, Artyści.*

62   "Za dużo czerwonego," part 1.

63   Cf. Vintilia Horia's depiction of Ovid as having a new, politically free voice on his exile, analyzed by Sebastian Matzner, "Tomis Writes Back," 307–321.

Kaczmarski explores the paradox of his displacement. Away from the communist regime, he is finally free to compose and perform however he wishes. Kaczmarski's artistic creation and performance before emigration in 1981 were constantly marked by a careful dance around censorship. He was ultimately tolerated by authorities in public performative settings, but this constrained his delivery of more politically explicit songs to only smaller, private audiences, sometimes to key political oppositionists.[64] However, the freedom from political censorship is accompanied by cultural displacement – partial removal from literary life and distance from his native audiences – which limits the scope of his artistic activities. As in the case of Ovid, Kaczmarski's removal from literary life in Poland was only partial. His songs were illegally duplicated in Poland, and his name continued to be advertised through international concerts in numerous Polish diasporas.[65]

The depiction of political displacement corresponds to the ambiguous reality of Kaczmarski's and Ovid's political stances. Neither of them was an open adversary of the contemporary authorities. The Ovidian exile was the first attested banishment of a major poet due to political reasons, even though the exact reasons for Augustus' displeasure with Ovid are still debated.[66] Kaczmarski's artistic stance towards the communist regime might appear more critical than Ovid's, it was however rarely as explicit as his audience's reception of it. After all, he preferred to zoom out from criticism of the problems at hand to more universal observations, such as the fate and role of the exiled national poets.[67]

NATIONAL POETS

In lines 17–20, Kaczmarski depicts Ovid as an exiled national poet whose work will become the cornerstone of national literature. In

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64 See Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski*, 100–102, 106–110. For Kaczmarski's "diplomatic" contacts with the secret police, see ibid., 113–114, and 121–122.

65 For the removal of Ovid's books from libraries in Rome as a rhetorical theme and modern responses to this aspect of Ovid's exile, see Ingleheart, "Introduction," 16–7.

66 Ingleheart, "Introduction," 14–15.

67 For an account of Kaczmarski's political involvement and contemporary perceptions of his political views in poetry, see Gajda, *Jacek Kaczmarski,* 70–71, 86, 94–131.

so doing, Kaczmarski merges two distinct traditions of responses to the emigrated national artists. One is related directly to the figure of Ovid, who has been an archetype of an exiled national poet in European literature for centuries. The other is derived from the nineteenth- and twentieth-century experiences of Polish national writers and the cultural legacy they left for the generations of politically oppressed Poles. The Polish national tradition is important here because it strongly marks the image of Ovid who "retains in himself" the fundaments of Graeco-Roman culture (18). A key national poet will preserve it, presumably through artistic legacy, even after "the enemy" will have torn columns apart from the walls in Rome, that is after the fall of Roman civilization (17). This ennobling cultural mission is juxtaposed with the cultural alienation of poet exiles just discussed.

The Polish tradition of exiled and repressed artists encompasses some of the most influential artists whose work during the Partitions (1795–1918) became part of the canon of Polish national culture. Some of the most iconic Polish artists who had to emigrate from Poland and who produced the most nationally acclaimed work include Frederic Chopin (1810–1849), Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849), and Cyprian Kamil Norwid (whose exilic fate Kaczmarski explored in "Ostatnie Dni Norwida" in 1987). Among the near contemporaries of Kaczmarski, other famous Polish poets émigrés suffered from the political repression of the socialist regime, e.g., Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) whose grand-oeuvre *Zniewolony Umysł* from 1953 did not appear in Poland officially until 1989.[68] This national tradition is distinct from the Ovidian exile, but it is worth noting that the latter was an ever-present influence in Polish literature.[69] Having graduated from Warsaw University with a diploma in literature, Kaczmarski must have studied the topos of "an exiled poet" suffering from political repression while composing essential national works.[70] This background is evident in his ironical poem from 1996, "Czaty Śmiełowskie" where Kaczmarski makes a direct link between his situation during the transformation period and that of Adam Mickiewicz (one of the most iconic figures of nine-

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68   Stankowska, *Literatura i krytyka w czasopismach Wielkiej Emigracji*; Wolski, "Literatura emigracyjna 1939–1989"; Lenkiewicz, "Wielka Emigracja i wizje Wieszczów."

69   For a recent study of Ovidian exile in Polish literature, see Milewska--Waźbińska and Domański, *Owidiusz: Twórczość – recepcja – legenda*.

70   See, e.g., Straszewska, *Życie literackie Wielkiej Emigracji we Francji 1831–1840*.

teenth-century Polish literature), who was also entangled in difficult personal circumstances during political upheavals related to the November Uprising in 1831. In "Czaty Śmiełowskie," the comparison of the two poets focuses on the influence of "patriotic conscience" on artistic creation. Politically displaced, Kaczmarski's Mickiewicz finds inspiration in his complicated situation to write works that will become canonical in Polish literature. On the other hand, the image of an inspired poet creating his crucial works in exile is in some opposition to Ovid's rhetoric of the inferiority of the poems composed in Tomis, and the high importance of Ovid's writings from his time in Rome.[71] Nevertheless, Kaczmarski, influenced by the Polish national tradition of exilic poetry, depicts Ovid as a "repository" of his national heritage.

Kaczmarski's unique response to Ovidian exile thus becomes only understandable when seen in the context of the Polish tradition of exiled poets who compose masterpieces of national literature abroad. The way "Ovid's Old Age" situates Ovid as a banished national poet draws upon such figures as Mickiewicz and helps Kaczmarski identify himself as an exiled poet with a cultural mission. This is not, however, self-mythologizing for its own sake. The evocation of Ovid's or Mickiewicz's cultural missions in exile can be read as Kaczmarski's search for consolation. Suffering caused by political and cultural displacement can also create a unique opportunity for an artist to leave a long-lasting legacy. Mickiewicz and Kaczmarski composed away from home, just as the legacy of the Graeco-Roman civilization was retained in Ovid and his work when he was not in Rome. The image of lines 17–18 where Rome is destroyed but Ovid's poetry endures suggest that national heritage is best preserved not by cultural centers themselves, but in the poets who embody their national identity, even though they are composing abroad because the political situation or the enmity of political authorities is preventing them from being physically present at home.

NOSTALGIA AND EXILIC POETRY

The lack of interest in poetic work among the Scythians is contrasted with Ovid's heightened sensitivity to poetry fuelled by exilic nostalgia. Arachne's metaphor conveys the poet's suffering from cultural alienation, but it also unfolds itself into a web of words (25 "Na

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71   See Ingleheart, "Introduction," 7–9.

pajęczynie wyrazów" – "on the web of words") that depicts a lyrical image of Ovid's lost home. The penultimate section reveals an intimate image of Rome that is characterized by both lyrical sophistication and the idealization of the poet's home. Lines 25–28 thus explore how the pain of an exiled poet can be transformed into art and how art, in turn, can conjure powerful mental images of Rome. To elicit the image of Rome (26 "drżący Rzym mojej duszy" – "trembling Rome of my soul"), Ovid's web of words names sensory experiences (colors, smells, touch), spaces (meadows, palaces), and people (25–6).

Kaczmarski does not evoke any concrete names but calls out the categories of words that can empower the process of conjuring a clear image of a place. In so doing, he observes from a distance how an exiled poet would draw his audience into a lyrical image. Kaczmarski does not attempt to offer a picture worthy of Ovid but simply reflects on poetic techniques that can be effectively used to ease the longing for home by depicting it as vividly as possible. Here, Kaczmarski limits himself to an observation of the artistic workshop, but throughout the poem he indicates that he has mastered these techniques during his exile. In lines 21 and 29, he draws his audience into Ovid's exilic life by evoking sensory experiences (21: "Sen, jedzenie, gra w kości do bólu w schylonych plecach" – "Sleep, food, dice, till my bowed back hurts" and 29: "tubylcy pachnący czosnkiem" – "garlic-smelling locals") and places (Romania, Black Sea) that are meant to be immediately recognizable by his audience. Kaczmarski's affinity to Ovid's fate allows him to use the techniques of an exiled poet to blur the boundaries between the contemporary world and the ancient landscape. It is thus the condition of exile and its accompanying nostalgia that empowers Kaczmarski's poetry. His displacement is a source of both suffering and inspiration, without which he would not have been able to portray Ovid's exilic experiences with such sensitivity and thorough understanding of a poet *exilé*.[72]

Ovid's nostalgia idealizes the mental image of Rome he conjures. Kaczmarski explores the effects of exile on the poet's perception of his home and illustrates through concrete metaphors the extent to which an exiled poet can lose his critical, distanced view of his country. Line 27 describes the memory of ancestors that is devoid of ugliness: the word "geometria" [geometry] implies that this image

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72 For exilic nostalgia as a source of empowerment for exiled poets and artists, such as Nabokov, Cavafy, or Portillo, see Riley (forthcoming), *Imagining Ithaca: Nostos and nostalgia since the Great War.*

underwent a beautifying process akin to the mathematical idealization of real-life imperfections. The following expression, "Zwierciadło żywej harmonii diamentowych okruszyn" ("mirror of a living harmony of diamond particles"), is perhaps the most complex and elusive. Like the geometry of memory, it confirms that imagined Rome conveys feelings of harmony rather than urban chaos. Nevertheless, the image of the mirror and the diamond particles refers to Rome by evoking light and shimmering, which produce a much blurrier and more rapidly changing picture than that of mathematical "geometry." The two images juxtaposed together can be seen as a reflection on the nature of our nostalgia, which, on the one hand, idealizes the blemishes and, on the other, provides only unstable pictures that flit like reflected light. Kaczmarski communicates through these lines that the exilic experience and its accompanying longing for home can both profoundly inspire and manipulate poetic visions.

THE EVERLASTING FORCE OF POETRY

The poem's final section brings us back to the present reality of Ovid's life in exile. Overwhelmed by his exilic condition, he becomes reduced to one wish only – to be granted pardon. The profound realization that he is utterly displaced in Tomis consumes Ovid, and this is metaphorically expressed as his transformation into a letter to the capital asking for pardon. Surrounded by the locals smelling of garlic (29), Ovid feels himself having been transformed into a letter (30). This image is in direct parallel with Ovid's identification with a physical letter that is described in Ovid's own writing (Ov. *Trist.* 5.4.1–4).[73] The smell of garlic can be associated with repugnancy (Hor. *Ep.* 3.3.), religious impurity, or an agricultural laborer's dish.[74] In Ovid's context, garlic symbolizes the poet's displacement among the peoples of different sensibilities. No one in Rome is, however, moved by Ovid's predicament (30 "nikogo nie

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73 Cf. Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 169, who quotes the same passage but in relation to lines 5–8.

74 Kloppenborg and Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations*, 265 (IG II2 1365); for the garlic dish in the *Moretum* see Stead, thehighwindowpress.com: "One at a time he exposes garlic heads / from their knotted bodies and strips off / their outer skins scattering the discarded / husks all over tossing them to the ground / He wets each bulb freed from its skin / and casts it into the circular hollow of stone."

wzrusza" – "moves no one"). The use of the word "Stolica" – "capital," instead of "Rome" or "the City" (more idiomatic in Ovid's time), reminds us about the modern viewpoint of Kaczmarski, who associates the center of power with a country's capital, in his case Warsaw. Where there are exiled poets, there are also capitals where the fate of the émigrés is decided. What matters is not the specific case or period but the universal struggle of poet exiles. That Rome is not evoked by name here or anywhere else in the poem helps Kaczmarski to show that the exilic experiences he describes apply to anyone who can identify with Ovid's fate.

Line 31 "buckles" the opening lines 1–2 and underscores this universalistic vision by blurring the boundaries of time and space.[75] The lyrical subject predicts that Ovid's surroundings will once become Romania but does not state it as a present fact yet. However, in the middle of the line, the "Sea" is already "Black," suggesting that the figure of Ovid and the modern knowledge of Kaczmarski are blended in this last image. The smooth transition of the lyrical subject from Ovid to Kaczmarski is evident in the last line where the narrative voice appears in the third person, rather than in the first person singular.[76] This is a very subtle indication of Ovid's sudden, almost unnoticeable death. Instead of dramatizing the last hours of the ancient poet, Kaczmarski uses the figure of Ovid turning into a letter begging for pardon to draw a universal picture that holds true in the present time. The despair of the old Ovid and his complete dependency on the mercy of the imperial authorities portray Kaczmarski, and other exiled poets, as a tragic individual confronted against the inhuman machine of bureaucracy where procedures and political agendas overtake sensitivity to the traumatic experience of emigrated poets.

The final image Kaczmarski delivers (32) is the transformation of Ovid's body into fertile soil for future poetry. In an elegant way, it punctuates the entire poem and observes that Ovid is no longer just "there," in past times among the garlic-smelling Scythians. Although dead, Ovid's body and his world "are becoming" the fertile ground for a song, that is for poetry in times to

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75 For the ring composition here, see Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 170.

76 The transition is suggested but not fully explained by Milewska-Waźbińska, "Exulowie wszystkich czasów," 170. Kaczmarski writes here "świat Owidiusza" (Ovid's world), instead of "mój świat" (my world).

come. Kaczmarski must be intentionally describing this transformation by using the present continuous tense of "to become" ("staje się") rather than present perfect form ("stało się") to emphasize the universality and timelessness of Ovidian exilic experience for poets.[77] Ultimately, the fertilized soil is Kaczmarski's poetic vision of the role of Ovid and his exilic myth.[78] As Kaczmarski's poem testifies, Ovid's exilic experiences nourish contemporary poetic encounters, whether mediated or not, with the classical world. In communicating his emigratory trauma through Ovid's figure, Kaczmarski pays homage to the ancient poet and acknowledges his timeless importance.

[77] The effect of timelessness is also achieved through Kaczmarski's music. It has been acknowledged that Kaczmarski's musical composition enhances the meaning of his lyrics, see Dźwinel, "Piosenki Jacka Kaczmarskiego w aspekcie zagadnienia melosemii," 110–120. In the case of "Ovid's Old Age," the song opens and ends with a chord, the individual notes of which are picked in a repeating pattern, creating a dreamy, timeless atmosphere. Even when the chord changes, the base note remains the same throughout much of the verse, establishing a sense of unresolved continuity. The echoing effect of the base note seems to reverberate through time, encouraging the reading of Kaczmarski's forced emigration as an echo of Ovid's exile. Warm thanks to Dr. Chloe Bray for her comments on the music in "Ovid's Old Age."

[78] Cf. Derek Walcott's "All that Greek manure under the green bananas," in *Omeros*; Nanton, "'All that Greek manure under the green bananas': Migration in Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and Homer's *The Odyssey*," 472–476.

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ABSTRACT

"Ovid's Old Age" is a sung poem written by the Polish poet and musician Jacek Kaczmarski (1957–2004) which engages with the myth of Ovid's exile. Kaczmarski's works were heavily influenced both by classical culture and his experience of political emigration during the communist era. He was famed as an unofficial bard of the opposition movement, but is as yet little known to classical reception scholars. This paper presents Kaczmarski's creative engagement with Ovid as both a deeply personal reflection on the nature of exile and at the same time a universal commentary on poetry under authoritarian regimes. Our interpretation is based on a thematic analysis of the poem, including landscape, imperialism, displacement, "national" poets in exile, nostalgia, and the force of poetry. We set the reception in its social, political, and biographical context, with reference to several mediating receptions of the Ovidian exile. In Kaczmarski's poem, the Ovidian voice helps the poet to express the trials of emigration and reveals their effect on his art. It shows how engagements with classical culture may flourish, even while the formal discipline of Classics has been undernourished. We provide a bilingual translation of "Ovid's Old Age" to foster the understanding of migratory experiences in contemporary poetry and enrich international scholarship on the reception of Ovid with a response from communist Poland.

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

»Ovidijeva starost«: Jacek Kaczmarski in spevna poezija izgnanstva

»Ovidijeva starost« je spevna pesem poljskega pesnika in glasbenika Jaceka Kaczmarskega (1957–2004), ki gradi na mitu o Ovidijevem izgnanstvu. Dela Kaczmarskega so nastajala pod močnim vplivom klasične kulture ter avtorjevih izkušenj s politično emigracijo v obdobju komunizma. Kaczmarski je slovel kot neuradni bard opozicijskega gibanja, vendar je med raziskovalci klasične recepcije še vedno razmeroma slabo poznan. Pričujoči članek predstavi njegov ustvarjalni stik z Ovidijem kot globoko osebno razmišljanje o naravi izgnanstva ter hkrati kot univerzalni komentar o vlogi poezije v avtoritarnih režimih. Ta interpretacija temelji na tematski analizi pesmi, ki vključuje pokrajino, imperializem, razseljevanje, »nacionalne« pesnike v izgnanstvu, nostalgijo in moč poezije. Recepcijo postavlja v njen družbeni, politični in biografski kontekst, sklicujoč se na več posredniških recepcij Ovidijevega izgnanstva. V pesmi Kaczmarskega ovidijevski glas pesniku pomaga izraziti preizkušnje emigracije in razkriti njihov učinek na njegovo umetnost. Pokaže, kako srečevanje s klasično kulturo lahko cveti tudi v času, ko je klasična filologija kot stroka podhranjena. Članek ponuja prevod »Ovidijeve starosti«, postavljen ob izvirniku, ter skuša s tem spodbuditi razumevanje migracijskih izkušenj v sodobni poeziji ter obogatiti mednarodno raziskovanje Ovidijeve recepcije z odzivom iz komunistične Poljske.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Jacek Kaczmarski, klasična recepcija, Poljska, Ovidij, spevna poezija, komunizem, izgnanstvo

Mulierem fortem quis inveniet: Polish Women Classicists under Communism

Elżbieta Olechowska[*]

The fate of classics under communism only became, in earnest, a subject of studies during the second decade of the twenty-first century.[1] An international project, "Gnothi seauton!"[2] under the direction of Collegium Budapest and the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (IBI)[3] of the University of Warsaw, funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, ensured the participation of scholars from most, if not all, formerly communist European countries. After the unwelcome demise of the Collegium Budapest in 2011, the project was continued by two of the participating institutions, the University of Ljubljana and the University of Warsaw. The initial, strictly regional scope was widened to include themes and scholars from the United Kingdom and the United States; accordingly, the group became known as *Classics and Communism.* Three volumes of research were published in Ljubljana and Warsaw: the first one (2013) focused on figures of prominent classicists of the region,[4] the second (2016) on teaching the two classical languages,[5] and the third (2019) on ancient

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1 A short version of this paper was presented at the FIEC congress in London, in early July 2019.

2 Under the full title *Gnôthi seauton! – Classics and Communism: The History of Studies on Antiquity in the Context of the Local Classical Tradition; Socialist Countries 1944/45–1989/90*, the program was convened by Professors Jerzy Axer, György Karsai, and Gábor Klaniczay.

3 Since 2012 transformed into the Faculty of "Artes Liberales."

4 Karsai, Klaniczay, Movrin, and Olechowska, *Classics and Communism,* 2013.

5 Movrin and Olechowska, *Classics and Class*, 2016.

theatre used as an ideological medium by both sides of the political scene.[6]

The main conclusion of the decade-long research within the *Classics and Communism* project has been the striking diversity among the situations of classics in different countries of the region, existing in parallel with an array of homogenous aspects of the communist reality present in the whole area. One such consistent trait was the relative absence of women classicists in the position of power in the academic community during at least the first two post-war decades.[7] For that reason, the *Classics and Communism* series includes profiles of only three women classicists from the communist bloc, two academic scholars, and one high school teacher: Olga Freidenberg in the USSR, Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova in Bulgaria, and Stefania Światłowska in Poland. Among other studies published on the subject of classics under communism,[8] none discusses or explains what was happening to the very few established and many emerging women scholars.

The need to address this gap in research was brought to my attention when I was working on the recently published *Biographical Dictionary of Polish Women Classicists: 20th Century.*[9] This article proposes a detailed review of the issue based on the case of Poland, and because of that focus, it is not necessarily applicable in its conclusions to the other post-communist countries. While the *Dictionary* does not explicitly center on the relations between communist authorities and women classicists, it profiles fifty-six such women active in the second half of the century. It provides extensive biographical and bibliographical data, which makes possible a reasonably accurate assessment of the situation.

The absence or scarcity of women among university professors suggests that the fate of classics in that era, through the force of numbers, depended on male scholars who were the leaders of the academic community. Such was undoubtedly the case of Poland until World War II. Communist ideology championed equal

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6   Movrin and Olechowska, *Classics and Communism in Theatre,* 2019.

7   In the USSR, where communism became the dominant ideology almost three decades earlier, the situation was somewhat different.

8   Bers and Nagy, *Classics in East Europe,* 1996 – a collection of articles based on papers presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the American Philological Association; Natunewicz, "East European Classical Scholarship," 1975; Connelly, *Captive University,* 2000.

9   *Biographical Dictionary of Polish Women Classicists: 20th Century,* 2018.

rights for women also in the area of education and academic careers – proclaiming the intention to break with traditional, backward stereotypes. Still, it is doubtful that the change was due to the communist rhetoric. If the reality began to evolve, it was for other reasons. Indeed, post-war cohorts of students of classics in general, and classical philology in particular, were composed majoritarily of women, and this tendency has persisted until today. An inevitable consequence was the emergence of a growing number of well-educated and talented women scholars who, in due course, gained prestige and importance, which, in turn, was backed by nominations to high academic posts.[10] While "power" may have been still out of reach for women classicists during the first decades of communism, scholarly excellence, recognition, and influence gained through hard work in the basic organizational area were not. During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, dozens of women – some because they successfully navigated the communist reality, the majority on sheer scholarly merit – received professorial nominations and headed several departments of classics, including ancient history, philosophy, and archaeology.

A LOOK DOWN HISTORY LANE
AT EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

To fully understand this evolution, one must first look back and determine what precisely the situation of classics in Poland was at the moment of the imposition of the Soviet regime in 1945. The six years of war had decimated the Polish classical community. Nazi policies of eliminating Polish intelligentsia and reducing the entire nation to the role of unskilled labor also included the closure of universities and the abolition of the secondary- and high-school system. The experience of civil, and at times, armed resistance

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10   Incidentally, by 2019, the situation has evolved but not nearly to the point of parity. There are now many women vice-rectors at the 88 Polish universities and other institutions of higher learning (over 20 percent of all vice-rectors according to Lidia Borell-Damian and Martine Rahier, Women in university leadership: subtle leaks in the pipeline to the top, EUA, 2019, available online), but only three artistic academies and two pedagogical universities are led by women rectors. This number (5), valid from 2016 to 2020, did not even register on the EU statistic scales (see the paper by Borell-Damian and Rahier quoted above), even though it constitutes 5.68 percent of all Polish rectors; it is of course nowhere near the average for the EU which is 21 percent.

against foreign occupation that lasted over a century, extending from the late eighteenth century to the end of World War I, remained vivid in national memory and was to become useful again two decades later. Within months of the German invasion in 1939, an intricate, nation-wide underground network of small classes, taught at all the forbidden levels of the school system, operated at the private homes of students and teachers. Women constituted a large proportion of both the dispensers and the recipients of clandestine teaching. Classes in the underground network were naturally co-educational, contrary to the pre-war tradition of separate schooling for girls and boys.

The Polish experience of underground schooling for girls dates back to the tsar's 1864 decree forcing a transformation of convent[11] schools into state schools with Russian as the language of instruction. Teaching the Polish language, literature, history, and other patriotically charged subjects went underground. It took the form of entire clandestine schools or unsanctioned classes taught at the state schools without the knowledge of the occupying authorities. Barely twenty years later, there were over a dozen such underground private high schools for girls in Warsaw alone.[12] In the Austrian and Prussian partitions, girls were educated either at home or in private, often convent schools. Boys attended state schools or a few private schools.

When Poland regained sovereignty in 1918, the three school systems that had been imposed on the occupied territories by the partitioning powers (Russia, Prussia, and Austria) embarked on a delicate and painstaking process of integration, following the plans conceived and widely discussed during the war, in preparation for the hoped-for independence of the country.[13] While women began studying classics at Polish universities in the late 19th century, they only obtained full access to higher education after World War I. There were no fast tracks from a classics degree to an academic appointment in the traditional, male-dominated higher education. Before World War II, only fifteen women reached the post-doctoral

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11 Among them were schools run by: Ordo Visitationis Beatissimae Mariae Virginis, Moniales Ordinis Sancti Benedicti ab Adoratione Perpetua, Candidus et Canonicus Ordo Praemonstratensis, and Moniales Ordinis Sancti Benedicti; See Winiarz, "Kształcenie i wychowanie dziewcząt," 12–13.

12 See Nietyksza, "Kobiety w ruchu oświatowym," 72–73.

13 See my introduction to the *Biographical Dictionary of Polish Women Classicists*, 12–13.

degree of habilitation (*venia legendi*) at the Jagiellonian University, only one among them was a classicist (in fact, an archaeologist, Mieczysława Ruxerówna, in 1937). The war radically slowed down academic careers for both men and women who, once this tragic chapter of European history ended, eagerly resumed their professional lives. During the first decade following the war, women classicists were either teaching Latin at high schools, working for large postwar editorial and lexicographic projects, producing editions of Polish historical sources, translating ancient texts, or working for libraries and publishing houses. Only a small number taught at university. This situation changed gradually and significantly, in parallel with the course of academic careers of the post--war cohorts.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE REGIME

Like the entire classical community, the vast majority of women classicists were brought up as Roman Catholics and Polish patriots; both aspects were considered fundamental to the national identity. During the war, these women took part in the resistance movement as clandestine teachers, but also as soldiers of the Home Army. Those who lived in Warsaw fought in the 1944 Uprising. They were, as a rule, opposed to communism. The reasons for such a homogenous attitude of women classicists are only, up to a point, philosophical, or ideological. Communism was perceived as a political system imposed by Russia, a superpower historically aggressive and hostile towards Poland and now, additionally, godless. In 1939, the Soviet Union united with Nazi Germany to invade Poland. In 1944, during the 63 days of the Uprising, despite the Allies' urgent requests for assistance, Soviet troops sat across the Vistula, watching the giant Nazi war machine overcome poorly armed resistance forces and kill hundreds of thousands of civilians. After the Uprising ended, the Red Army remained as a spectator in close vicinity and until January of the following year,[14] let the Nazi *Brand-* and *Sprengkommandos* continue razing the city to the ground.

War losses in human capital were compounded by territorial losses in 1945. The imposed new borders led to displacements and migration, also resulting in the Soviet annexation of two well-esta-

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14   There is a massive amount of research into these events, see e.g., Davies, *God's Playground*, 352–357.

blished universities with flourishing classics departments: Stefan
Bátory University in Vilnius and Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv.
Polish scholars of both universities who survived the war were expel-
led. The schools were reorganized according to the Soviet template.
These traumatic experiences reinforced hostile attitudes towards the
imposed ideology, not only among the scholars displaced but in the
entire classical community.

Two new universities were created within the post-1945 Polish
borders. A minor part of their mission was to welcome the scho-
lars who had to leave Vilnius and Lviv, classicists included. Both
universities were inaugurated in 1946; the first lectures still took
place in the Fall of 1945. Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
was organized from scratch. The University of Wrocław – from
1952 to 1989 bearing the name of the Stalinist president of Poland,
Bolesław Bierut – had two historical predecessors, the eighteenth-
-century tradition of the Jesuit Leopoldina and the Protestant Vi-
adrina, transferred to Wrocław from Frankfurt on the Oder in the
early 19th century. Most of the classicists from Stefan Bátory Uni-
versity ended up in Toruń, those from Jan Kazimierz University
went to Wrocław. The first MA degree at the restored University of
Wrocław was granted in 1946 to the future classics professor Jerzy
Łanowski. The second went to his colleague and also future profes-
sor, Ludwika Rychlewska.[15]

Few women classicists were sympathetic to the new ideology,
and even fewer joined the party. The rare communist sympathizers
were more noticeable among historians (the transformation of this
discipline was crucial to Marxists) than among philologists. People
believed that declaring such sympathies could be useful in accele-
rating the progress in their academic careers. However, there is no
clear evidence of that, and most of the women initially favorable
to communism became disenchanted at various tipping points in
the history of the People's Republic of Poland. Decisively so in 1968,
after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and even more resolutely in
1981, after martial law was declared, allegedly as a lesser evil than
an outright Soviet invasion that could deal with massively growing
anti-communist opposition more efficiently than the homegrown,
traditional communist apparatus.

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15   See her biography by Alicja Szastyńska Siemion in the *Biographical
     Dictionary*, 200–206.

STATUS OF WOMEN CLASSICISTS

Before discussing the various cases of interference or persecution conducted by communist authorities against specific individuals among women classicists, it is vital to briefly sketch out a general picture of the status of these women at Polish universities. While all chairs of Classics after the war were entrusted to well-established pre-war professors, female scholars, junior often only by rank, took care of the mind-boggling logistics of setting up the defunct departments and preparing them for the first cohort of students. It was an unusual group composed of various ages and levels of knowledge. Older ones saw their education put on hold during the war or attended underground university classes but did not obtain their degrees. Younger ones completed high school within the same clandestine system.

On top of the administration and functioning of the departments of classics, a variety of other areas, all requiring considerable and sustained work of a typically behind-the-scene character, became the purview of dedicated women scholars. This included departmental libraries and the compiling of a past and current bibliography of books and articles written by Polish scholars for *l'Année Philologique.* There were the logistics of the reopening and the setting-up of scholarly journals, the resumption of the Polish Philological Society and the organization of its various activities, including regional chapters and annual assemblies and conferences. Women scholars performed these tasks well and enthusiastically, their status stemmed from academic hierarchy and tradition, but they were necessarily encroaching on their time for research. Things began to change with women advancing in their careers, obtaining degrees and university positions, during the second post-war decade.

IN SEARCH OF BOOKS

Of all the critical but "invisible" tasks performed by women classicists immediately after the war, one merits special mention. World War II created a specific urgent problem for Polish higher education: a penuria librorum. It was solved or somewhat alleviated by women classicists in a particular manner, possibly less known outside of Poland. University libraries lacked the basic resources required for the study of classics. The Nazis had destroyed Greek and Latin texts, along with all the other books, in Warsaw and other centers.

High-school libraries remained relatively intact only in the so-called Recovered Lands, a territory that had been Polish in the historical past but belonged to Germany in 1939. The region was ceded to Poland by the victorious Soviets "in compensation" for the Eastern regions annexed by the USSR.

Household goods of various kinds abandoned by the retreating Germans were sought for and collected by private individuals for their own use or for sale. In the shortage of basic staples, the Recovered Lands seemed like an ideal source of free-for-all goods – to be paid for with the inconvenience of still chaotic travel and the specific risks associated with acquiring abandoned property and dealing with aggressive potential rivals. For women classicists looking only for books, the risks were negligible; still, a lot of courage and dedication was required. It became a labor of love for women involved in the reopening of their departments. They traveled extensively throughout the region, collecting books from abandoned schools and private libraries. The most active in the replenishing of the devastated crucial resources were scholars from Warsaw, Maria Maykowska (b. 1892), Gabriela Pianko (b. 1893), and Lidia Winniczuk (b. 1904) – and Mieczysława Ruxerówna (b. 1891) from Poznań.

CASES

At the newly-created University of Toruń, the relatively large (and definitely non-communist) group of scholars who arrived from Stefan Bátory University after Vilnius became the capital of the Soviet republic of Lithuania, was a source of serious aggravation for the authorities mandated to create "a new socialist university" on the Soviet model. In 1949, barely five years after its creation, twelve chairs in humanities were closed down, and altogether twenty-seven teachers were fired, officially and openly for being Catholic reactionaries from Vilnius.

Zofia Abramowiczówna (1906–1988) and Leokadia Małunowicz (1910–1980) were among those who lost their jobs. Both scholars began working at the Scholarly Society of Toruń. Abramowiczówna prepared medieval Latin texts for use by historians, Małunowicz worked as a copyreader. A year later, the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) hired Małunowicz as an *adiuncta* at the Department of Classical Philology. As a private school, KUL enjoyed greater independence than state universities, and was able to appoint her as an Associate Professor in 1956 – the year of the political thaw.

Nonetheless, she was only granted the title of professor *ordinaria* in 1972; the nomination was in the purview of the authorities. She directed the Latin Seminar in 1956–1963, 1969–1972, and from 1974 to 1980. Abramowiczówna, on the other hand, only came back to the university in 1956. The political change was, unfortunately, short-lived. Abramowiczówna's academic achievements were widely recognized abroad (for her 4-volume Ancient Greek-Polish dictionary and the corrections to the Liddell-Scott Supplement she suggested). Still, the progression of her career continued to be hampered by the communist authorities. Her professorial nomination was delayed even longer than that of Małunowicz, that is, until 1973.

Two members of Kazimierz Twardowski's Lwów-Warsaw School of Philosophy, Daniela Tennerówna-Gromska (1889–1973), and Izydora Dąmbska (1904–1983), were both victims of hostile interference by the communist authorities. The survivors of the school[16] – many perished during the war, some left the country – "saw little merit in Marxism"[17] and did not hide their view.

After the war, Gromska did editorial work for well-known Polish scholarly publishing houses, Czytelnik, pwn, and piw. Her excellent translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* waited to be published until 1956, but met with high praise and was reprinted many times. The next year, she was offered a post at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, where she taught history of ancient philosophy during the following three years and until her retirement. In 1963, she published Theophrastus (with I. Dąmbska and J. Schneyder) in the *Library of Classics of Philosophy* series, directed by another classical philologist and translator, Irena Krońska (1915–1974).

The case of Dąmbska was more complex. On the one hand, she was very well known in Poland and abroad, and had many potential international supporters. On the other, she was fifteen years younger than Gromska. Hence her career under communism spanned several consecutive stages of the evolution of the regime. She left Lviv to avoid arrest by the nkvd in 1945 and moved to Gdańsk, where she worked at the Municipal Library, continuing her academic progression. In 1946, she received the post-doctoral degree of habilitation and began teaching at the University of Warsaw and the University of Poznań. A fate somewhat similar to what happened in 1949 in Toruń befell the University of Poznań in 1950. The Soviet directives ordering Polish academic life to model itself on the Soviet system prompted the

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16   See Gromska, "Philosophes polonais morts entre 1938 et 1945," 31–97.
17   *Biographical Dictionary*, 105.

closure of the department of philosophy and other "re-organizations" as a simple measure to eliminate elements considered hostile and dangerous to the regime. Dąmbska was among the dismissed teachers.

A year later, she protested against a communist campaign targeting her mentor, the late Professor Kazimierz Twardowski.[18] From 1952 until 1957, Dąmbska worked for PWN, the state publisher of scholarly books, on translations of philosophical texts in the *Library of the Classics of Philosophy* series. In 1957, she was given a choice of three chairs of philosophy – in Warsaw, Wrocław, and Kraków. She opted for the Jagiellonian University, which also hired Gromska, and until 1964 headed the department of philosophy there. Her didactic talent and exceptional relations with students irritated the communist authorities to the point of forcing on her an involuntary transfer to the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences, where she was restricted to research only. The reason given for the transfer was the Socratic charge of "corrupting the youth." She wrote a letter to the Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History, expressing her concerns about the transfer. It was never presented at the session of the Council.

She refused to be deprived of the possibility of teaching and invited students to attend a seminar on epistemology and methodology at her private home. In 1976, the group became a research team of the Kraków chapter of the Polish Philosophical Society. The communist victimization continued after Dąmbska's transfer to the Academy, and her nomination for professor *ordinaria,* was withheld until 1974. She enthusiastically rejoined the resistance to the regime when the Solidarity movement exploded and when martial law was declared (1981–1983).

The case of Anna Maria Komornicka (1920–2018)[19] will illustrate a mechanism that trumped any ideological principles and guaranteed survival: good connections. One of the "late" beginners, she studied at the Jagiellonian University after the war, wrote her MA thesis on the workers in Aristophanes' comedies, advised by Tadeusz Sinko; she did her PhD in French on Aristophanes' stylistics, guided by Kazimierz Kumaniecki. Profoundly religious and traditional in her values, and deprived by the Soviets of her ancestral home in Eastern Poland, she was immune to communist ideology. Still, she

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18   See Dąmbska's biography by Jolanta Janik in the Biographical Dictionary, 58; and Izydora Dąmbska 1904–1983, passim.

19   This story was shared by Anna Komornicka in an interview with the author within the research program "Gnothi seauton!" on October 24, 2009.

adapted to the post-war reality and never actively opposed the regime. When her professorial nomination stalled in the mid-1980s, in response to her inquiries, she was told by the communist party cell at the University of Łódź, where she worked while permanently living in Warsaw, that before the nomination could go through, she needed a recommendation of a professor who was a member of the Party. She did not know any communist professors in Łódź. However, in conversation with the Party secretary, she mentioned how, when in Łódź, she stayed with her cousin. The cousin was also a professor at the university. Hearing the cousin's name, the secretary exclaimed: "You need no other recommendation, this woman saved my life during the war!" The nomination went through without a further hitch.

Good connections underpinned with talent and a faultless work ethic also helped the brilliant academic career of Iza Bieżuńska-Małowist, an ancient historian with a solid philological education who graduated in 1938. Of Jewish origin, she tragically lost most of her family during the Nazi occupation. In May 1945, she started working at the Department of Research and Higher Education in the Ministry of Education and came in touch with people influential in the government. While never a party member, she was considered by communists as having more affinity with socialism than the staunchly Catholic classicists. Her main research interest and topic of many publications was slavery, a subject very favorably looked upon by communists. She defended her PhD in 1947. Her habilitation in 1951 was followed by an appointment to the function of Head of the Ancient History Department at the History Institute. She was named Associate Professor in 1954, but later had to wait for a full professorship until 1973. She continued directing the Department until her retirement in 1987.[20] The full scope of Bieżuńska's grasp of the communist reality, her talent, and force of personality could be seen in her extraordinary network of international contacts (Paris, Oxford, Princeton, Hamburg, Besançon). She established them under challenging conditions and used them to her own, her students', friends', and collaborators', as well as her university's advantage. Communists eventually realized that she was not getting closer to them, and was indeed evolving towards oppositionist positions, but were too late to do anything about it.

20 Cf. the biography by Krystyna Stebnicka in the *Biographical Dictionary,* 40–46; and at the website of the Institute of History, University of Warsaw; or any of the commemorative papers listed in the *Biographical Dictionary*, 46.

After the war, the teaching of classical languages, in popular under-
standing ideologically associated with national traditions, conservative
(read: reactionary) mentality, and the Catholic Church, was viewed with
suspicion by communists and systematically curtailed. The various
campaigns in defense of Latin at school led by the Polish Philological
Association (PTF) met with, at best, a mixed success.²¹ As a consequence,
the number of positions for Latin teachers in high schools, traditionally
the leading career path for young classicists, went down. High-school
teachers of subjects below the communist radar, such as Latin, were
usually left in peace unless they attempted to take a stand in public con-
troversies and vocally defend positions not approved by the authorities.
Stefania Światłowska (1914–2009) is an example of an outstanding Latin
teacher who, at the end of her career, openly took a stand. Her problems
with the communist authorities were discussed by Jerzy Axer in *Classics
and Class: Greek and Latin Classics and Communism at School*.²²

She inspired her students by the personal example of integrity and
discretion; she never mentioned or alluded to her oppositionist activi-
ties conducted in collaboration with two much more outspoken teach-
ers of the Reytan Gymnasium, where she taught all her educational
career. After her retirement in 1974, she continued to teach. When com-
munists viciously squashed the workers' strikes in 1976, she mobilized
teachers to give their backing in a letter to Parliament requesting an
investigation of the brutalities. She was punished by the interdiction
of further teaching. In 1981, Solidarity, jointly with the whole Reytan
community, brought her back to school, although only for a short time.
On December 13, the imposition of martial law deprived her of teaching
again. She remained in the hearts of her former students who funded
the annual school award in her name. In 1988, at the tail end of com-
munism in Poland, the Polish Philological Society made her an honor-
ary member in recognition of her educational and civic achievements.

The picture that these seven cases of Polish women classicists and
their attitude towards communism combined with the communists'
attitude towards them paint is out of necessity a partial, but hope-
fully not a distorted, reflection of the past. This past, as grim as it
was, remains a reality that was not deprived of certain glamour; it
was shared by several generations of admirable people who should
not be forgotten.

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21 For the evolution of classics at school during communism and an analysis of
    the efforts to support the teaching of Latin, see Brzuska, "Latin and Politics in
    People's Poland," 229–286.
22 Axer, "Stefania Światłowska," 329–336.

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ABSTRACT

While all chairs of classics after the war were entrusted to already well-established pre-war professors, female scholars, junior often only by rank, took care of the mind-boggling logistics of setting up the defunct departments and preparing them for the first cohort of students. It was an unusual group composed of various ages and levels of knowledge. Older ones saw their education put on hold during the war or attended underground university classes but did not obtain their degrees. Younger ones completed high school within the same clandestine system. Things began to change during the second post-war decade with women advancing in their careers, obtaining degrees and university positions. The paper discusses the careers of seven prominent classicists: Zofia Abramowiczówna (1906–1988), Leokadia Małunowicz (1910–1980), Daniela Tennerówna-Gromska (1889–1973), Izydora Dąmbska (1904–1983), Anna Maria Komornicka (1920–2018), Iza Bieżuńska-Małowist (1917–1995), and Stefania Światłowska (1914–2009).

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

Mulierem fortem quis inveniet:
Poljske klasične filologinje pod komunizmom

Medtem ko so bila vsa profesorska mesta na oddelkih za klasično filologijo po vojni zaupani uveljavljenim predvojnim profesorjem, so filologinje, ki so jih ti pogosto prekašali le po statusu, skrbele za neznansko zapleteno logistiko pri ponovnem postavljanju uničenih oddelkov in pripravah na prvo skupino študentov. Bile so nenavadna skupina, raznolika po starosti in stopnjah znanja. Starejše so izkusile, kako se je šolanje med vojno ustavilo, nekatere so obiskovale tajna predavanja, vendar niso pridobile diplome. Mlajše so končale srednjo šolo v istem tajnem sistemu. Stvari so se začele spreminjati, ko so ženske v drugem povojnem desetletju napredovale v karieri ter pridobile diplomo in univerzitetne položaje. Prispevek obravnava kariero pomembnih filologinj: to so Zofija Abramowiczówna (1906–1988), Leokadia Małunowicz (1910–1980), Daniela Tennerówna--Gromska (1889–1973), Izydora Dąmbska (1904–1983), Anna Maria Komornicka (1920–1983), Iza Bieżuńska-Małowist (1917–1995) in Stefania Światłowska (1914–2009).

KLJUČNE BESEDE

klasična tradicija, raziskovalke, zgodovina komunizma,
poljska klasična filologija, klasični študiji

Pico della Mirandola on the Dignity of Man and Some Contemporary Echoes of His Philosophy

Marko Uršič*

Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), one of the finest Renaissance minds, endeavored in his short life to establish a universal synthesis of all contemporary philosophical and religious doctrines. Not only to unite Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, as many had already tried before him, but also to reconcile three main monotheistic religions among themselves, as well as with various Hermetic, Kabbalistic, Orphic, Zoroastrian, and other spiritual traditions.[1] As a rich man, Pico proposed to pope Innocent VIII in 1486 to organize on Pico's own expenses a great public disputation, or "council" in Rome. He would reveal a new theological and philosophical system for the reconciliation of all principal doctrines and beliefs. For this purpose, Pico prepared 900 theses, *Conclusiones* in Latin, and the oration *De dignitate hominis* (On the Dignity of Man), which was intended as the introductory speech to open the council. However, after almost a year-long reviewing of Pico's theses, Innocent VIII, with his cardinals, rejected Pico's project and condemned his *Conclusiones* as heretical.

The Oration on the Dignity of Man is a vibrant and brilliantly written treatise on various philosophical and theological topics. This paper's scope is Pico's principal statement that the critical quality, establishing the highest value of man compared with other created

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1 The paper was presented at the conference on "European Humanism and Its Challenges," organized by the University of Ljubljana, the University of Warsaw, and Central European University on September 8–9, 2017 as part of the Vilenica International literary festival.

beings – from the inanimate nature to angels – is the human *free will*. Free will is our freedom to shape the very form of our being by ourselves. However, this presents a paradox that is the main topic of this paper. Let us go step-by-step, beginning with Pico's famous introductory words to his *oratio*:

> Most esteemed Fathers, I have read in the ancient writings of the Arabians that Abdala the Saracen on being asked what, on this stage, so to say, of the world, seemed to him most evocative of wonder, replied that there was nothing to be seen more marvellous than man. And that celebrated exclamation of Hermes Trismegistus, "What a great miracle is man, Asclepius" confirms this opinion.[2]

This is a very Renaissance statement, emphasized by the famous words of Hermes Trismegistus, by his Asclepius in the *Corpus Hermeticum,* highly regarded by the scholars of the time. It is also characteristic that Pico mentions a Muslim sage in the very first sentence of his speech. Subsequently, Pico exclaims: "Oh unsurpassed generosity of God the Father, oh wondrous and unsurpassable felicity of man, to whom it is granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be!"[3] However, in this generous God's gift to man lies a paradox. It may be expressed in two mutually related formulations. 1) God defined man (or man's essence) by not defining him. 2) Man, in his freedom of will, cannot refuse this generous gift of God, even if it turns to be a Danaian gift someday, namely in case when God disappears from the stage. Pico proceeds, in God's name:

> We have given you, O Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature.[4]

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2   All quotes from Pico's *Oration of the Dignity of Man* are from the English translation by A. Robert Caponigri, 1996.

3   Ibid.

4   Ibid.

Well, it sounds indeed very generous and wise from God's side, but on the other hand, as we know from the Holy Bible, Adam's and Eve's "free will" implied their Fall from the garden of Eden, the earthly paradise (where, as one may guess, all the other animals remained). In Renaissance thought, the free will of man (and woman, of course) came to be closely connected with the human soul's central metaphysical position, as already stated by Marsilio Ficino and developed some years later by his young friend Pico. As the latter wrote:

> I have placed you at the very centre of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.[5]

Following Marsilio Ficino, the human soul is the *copula mundi,* "the bond of the world."[6] Otherwise said, Man's position in the universe is *central* – and that is, as we know, the prevailing view of the Renaissance period as a whole. However, this does not mean that Man is the highest creature in the universe, since the angels are still above him and, of course, God above them all. Considering Man's "central position" in the Renaissance, one has to stress and keep in mind that it is *not yet* such a central (and consequently also lonely) position. This will develop in the Modern, post-Renaissance age – Man as the founding Cartesian *cogito* or, later, as the principal ontological subject of the world. The modern subjectification of the human intellect will begin, in a strict sense, in the 17th century, in the "Age of Reason," lasting up to the present, with several vital transformations. Again, there is a significant *difference* between the Renaissance Man, philosophically presented and discussed in Ficino's or Pico's treatises, and the modern concept of Man as Subject. The latter "constitutes" the world (cf. Kant's transcendental philosophy) and finally establishes and judges all values by himself (e.g., in Nietzsche).

The Renaissance period, especially the Neoplatonism in Florence in the second part of the *quattrocento,* reveals – centuries later, in

5   Ibid.
6   Ficino, *Theol. Plat.* 3.2.

the time of decline or at least of a profound crisis of the Modern Age – a paramount and precious *harmony* between opposites. This can be understood, following another philosopher of the 15th century, Nicolas of Cusa, as the universal *coincidentia oppositorum.* In the present context, this *coincidentia,* or universal harmony, means the equilibrium between Man and God, between God's creation of Man and Man's free will. There is no paradox here for Pico, while from Modern or Post-Modern points of view, this *coincidentia* seems paradoxical, a problem that has to be solved somehow, whether in God's or Man's favor.

Before saying more about the modern dilemma, either God or Man, I would like to draw attention to the last part of Pico's passage quoted above. Pico knows that the individual in his (or her) freedom is always on the brink, on the edge: one can rise to angels, but also fall "to the lower, brutish forms of life." Unfortunately, this falling of individuals and humanity in general has been happening all the time. So they always have to make an effort, strive to live and think in better and higher spheres of being.

By reading Pico's oration, another compelling and vital question might be raised. To what extent can humans – as living and embodied souls – ascend to the higher spheres of being? Pico believes that we can reach angelic life, even more, that "all are Gods," that the deification of every man or a woman is possible if his or her soul is bright and good enough. He knows that this idea has been considered heretical (as Hermetic, Gnostic, or worse). So he needs to support it with a quote from the Bible: "… and that the saying of Asaph the Prophet, *You are all Gods and sons of the Most High* [Psalm 82.6], might rather be true…"[7] In his fervent vigor to rise spiritually as high as it is possible for Man, Pico believes that humans might be equal to angels, or placed even higher:

> Let us […] hasten to that court beyond the world, closest to the most exalted Godhead. There, as the sacred mysteries tell us, the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones occupy the first places; but, unable to yield to them, and impatient of any second place, let us emulate their dignity and glory. And, if we will it, we shall be inferior to them in nothing.[8]

7   Ibid.
8   Ibid.

Even more, we might rise to the highest throne of God and become "one spirit" with Him, our Father in Heaven:

> And if, dissatisfied with the lot of all creatures, he [Man] should re-collect himself into the centre of his own unity, he will there become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father, Who is set above all things, himself transcend all creatures.[9]

As already stated, such deification of the human soul is an old religious idea and a mystical vision. It was present and was expressed in several esoteric spiritual doctrines (mostly heretical from the orthodox theological point of view): from Gnosticism and Hermeticism to Sufism, and in many branches of Eastern spirituality. Understood in its more profound sense – and *not* as an idea that Man can or even should replace God by becoming the Master of the world – this idea of the deification of Man might be valuable. It can be revelatory also today, in our "post-time." It brings the presence of God closer and deeper into the human soul and spirit.

* * *

It seems that Pico della Mirandola, with his philosophy of human freedom, is a distant predecessor of Jean-Paul Sartre, the prominent defender of human freedom among the philosophers of the 20th century. In a certain sense, this might be true, but there are essential differences between them, not only due to their historical distance, which is relative when comparing great philosophers. Sartre is a radical *atheist,* and consequently, his existentialism is very different from Pico's Renaissance doctrine of free will. In his famous essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" (1946), Sartre explains his philosophical axiom in the following way: "What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards."[10] – One may assume that Pico could agree with Sartre's "self-definition" of man. However, Pico would surely disagree with Sartre's underlying argument for human freedom, as the latter states

9   Ibid.
10   English translation quoted from the translation by Philip Mairet, in *Existentialism and Humanism*, 1956.

that "there is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is."[11]

An almost logical sequel of Sartre's atheism, combined with his philosophical belief of free will, is our human anguish. We are alone in all our decisions since God is no more on the stage, neither behind the stage. Pico, on the contrary, was far from existential *Angst* as a sequel to human liberty. Much later, "Abraham's anguish" became one of the principal ethical problems in the modern philosophy of religion (cf. Kierkegaard, Sartre, Levinas). In the Renaissance, it did not yet exist as a relevant philosophical problem. One may guess that Pico would be surprised upon hearing Sartre's existentialist dilemma, "If a voice speaks to me, it is still I myself who must decide whether the voice is or is not that of an angel."[12] His probable answer would be in accord with the Renaissance spirit, with the pre-Cartesian and pre-Humean confidence in the human senses: "Of course it is the voice of an angel, provided that I *hear* his divine words …" – And if one continues with Sartre's existentialist sequence of thoughts, they lead to the (in)famous position of Dostoevsky's Great Inquisitor:

> Dostoevsky once wrote: "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted"; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. […] In other words, there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom. […] We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. […] Man] is responsible for everything he does. […] Every man] is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind …[13]

Considering this Sartre's passage, one might firstly deny the necessity of Dostoevsky's (more precisely, Ivan Karamazov's) statement that "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted." Namely by arguing from the point of the ethical Golden Rule and the Kantian autonomous categorical imperative, which is also valid for atheists. However, this would be a topic for another, long, and complicated discussion. In the context of this paper, I would like to point out – without any explicit theological commitments – that it is hard,

11   Ibid.
12   Ibid.
13   Sartre, ibid.

maybe even impossible, to overcome Sartre's existential anguish without any *transcendence*. Even if one accepts the Kantian autonomy of ethics, *die Angst* persists when everything, every decision and event in the world, is devoid of any transcendent *meaning*. To put it otherwise, if all immanence is entirely devoid of transcendence, all the world is just flat, only a surface without any depth or height. True, Sartre also spoke about transcendence, but in a different, existentialist sense. The principal feature of his conception of transcendence is the "self-surpassing" of man, namely, every human being can live their autonomous and authentic life as his free project:

> But there is another sense of the word [humanism], of which the fundamental meaning is this: Man is all the time outside of himself: it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man to exist; and, on the other hand, it is by pursuing transcendent aims that he himself is able to exist. […] Man is thus self-surpassing […] He is himself the heart and center of his transcendence. […] There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. […] – it is this that we call existential humanism.[14]

One may remark again that Pico would probably agree with these statements, *except* the one where Sartre says: "There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity." As already stated, the Renaissance was not subjective in the Modern sense of the world, although the Renaissance Man was supposed to be the center of the world, and the human soul was considered as the *copula mundi*.

Nowadays, one can find several post- or post-post-modern versions of radical atheism in the philosophical or broadly cultural attitudes of many thinkers: in Richard Dawkins's *God Delusion* (2006), in the works of some post-structuralist philosophers, and elsewhere. In our context, I have chosen the French writer Pascal Quignard for a short discussion of his ideas about religion, at least implicitly connected with Pico's concept of human dignity and free will. In his book of essays, *The Silent Crossing* (*La barque silencieuse,* 2009), Quignard proposed the following general definition of atheism and an atheist person:

> I term "atheist" the person who lives without gods, whose soul is without faith, whose consciousness is exempt from fear, whose mor-

als are not based on rites, whose thought is exempt from any reference to god, devil, demon, hallucination, love or obsession, whose death is accessible to the idea of suicide, whose post-death is nothingness.[15]

However, Quignard concedes in a rather Voltairean manner that, "as regards what drives the spirit, I think atheism is impossible, since it is not possible wholly to wrest a humanity which speaks from the verbal hallucination and abstract ideas that gradually emanate from words …"[16] Although in principle such a "wrest" would be welcome from his point of view, since reality is always better than "hallucination." (One may add here the old and never-solved question: *What* is reality, and *what* is hallucination?) Quignard comments realistically: "Lucidity may be regarded as a higher value than illusion. But however this may be, and however little we may like it, the desire to believe is reborn like sleep or thirst, or like the attachment of love or the desire to be happy."[17] If it is indeed, why should one deny it and flee away from it?

One may state that the common denomination of diverse atheist and liberal criticisms of religion is a presupposed belief that the religious faith, mind, and rituals are essentially dependent on human social and political life. To put it otherwise, that religions are sociological (and psychological) phenomena, *not* primarily the human attitudes and answers to the unknown, enigmatic and mysterious cosmic or metaphysical *reality* itself. This presumed mundane origin of religion is also inherent in the following passage from Quignard: "To live without god is an extreme human possibility. It is not actually the impious individual who is condemned in atheism but the traitor of the group. This is why the chronicle of atheism is a history of continuous, endless persecution."[18] Unfortunately, while this statement is itself not wrong, the problem with such a reductive understanding of religion is that it is only *partly true.* It does not express the whole truth of religious faith, not even its main τέλος, its important role in our search for the meaning of life. *Hélas*, one could not argue rationally against Quignard when he states that:

Moses, Jesus, Mohammed seemed to them [atheists] to be tyrannical masters laying claim to the totality of the social field. The dogmas of three prophets had contrived a control over people's souls, which

15   Quignard, *Silent Crossing*, 218.
16   Ibid., 217.
17   Ibid., 231.
18   Ibid., 217.

they hemmed in with prescriptions and terrors [… and] century af-
ter century, took millions and tens of millions of bodies and sacri-
ficed them in crusades or martyrdom.[19]

Unfortunately, this statement contains more than just a grain of
truth. As revealed in their sacred scriptures, monotheistic religions
prescribe numerous commandments, and many of them serve prin-
cipally for the formation of one or other confessional social *identity.*
One knows from history and from our contemporary world that re-
ligious identities, when considered as social and political denomi-
nations, are too often motives and even causes for conflicts, wars,
terrorism. Nevertheless, nowadays, the right question concerning
religion should be the following: How can one save and preserve
religion as a valuable, maybe the utmost precious spiritual attitude
of man towards the *unknown,* transcendent God, without being in
perpetual danger that religious beliefs may lead people into tragic
conflicts?

There were many different answers to this crucial question in
the long history of humankind and all variety of religious beliefs.
Nowadays, we have to, first of all, accept the autonomy of *human*
ethics (and politics) concerning various and sometimes also con-
flicting religious commandments. The fundamental ethical maxim
for believers and atheists remains the Golden Rule: *One should treat
others as one would like others to treat oneself* (there are several, but
almost equivalent variants). In this sense, Sartre was right. We are
alone in the world and entirely responsible for our decisions, what
we do and what we do not do. We are free in our decisions and acts;
therefore, we have to be fully responsible for them.

From this point on, there are (at least) three ways to avoid reli-
gious intolerance and, at the same time, preserve the precious jewel
of religions.

1. The most prominent answer in the Western world is the cen-
tral message of Jesus Christ: *Love is the only commandment.* Un-
fortunately, despite this spiritual core of the New Testament, this
"religion of love" has lead in the praxis of the Church (in fact, of
several Christian churches) to tragic conflicts, to the persecution of
heretics, atheists, and those who believed otherwise as prescribed
by the Church. That is why believers and atheists have to return to
Christ's first message of love – since all other religious doctrines are
eventually not so important.

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19   Ibid., 222.

2. Another way to avoid intolerance, generated from different religions and their role in social and political life, is the *mystical way*. Mystics, such as Meister Eckhart in Christianity or Sufis in Islam or arhats in Buddhism, have always been solitary souls, detached from the world in their cultural surroundings. Their thoughts, visions, and love have always been directed only towards God as the Spirit, the Saviour, the highest Light.

3. The third possible non-invasive religious way is *pantheism* in its several historical variants, from pre-Socratics to Spinoza, and even to Einstein's cosmic religiosity. Is it really true that pantheism is not compatible with theism – with *some* kind of belief in a personal God, the Father of Heaven? The history of Western culture knows intense endeavors for the reconciliation between the two "faces" of the same God, being both cosmic and personal. Philosophers were seeking the highest truth in this twofold, and at the same time unique, way: Plotinus, Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno, Schelling, Whitehead, Wittgenstein. According to Jan Assmann, this *henotheism* differs from the main three historical ("biblical") monotheisms in the following principal point: monotheism *excludes* all other gods, while henotheism *includes* them – together with and within the belief in the highest One (τὸ ἕν).[20]

* * *

At the end of this paper, I am returning to Pico della Mirandola (who remained a Catholic). All three of the abovementioned non-invasive ways of religious belief enable and even substantially ground human free will. Genuine and real freedom consists not only of the freedom *from* something but also – and that is even more important, particularly nowadays – of the freedom *for* something good and beautiful. One needs the highest *value* that gives *meaning,* sense to life and the world. For me, personally, the third of the mentioned options or possible ways of "pure" religious and spiritual faith – namely some kind of pantheism that is compatible with "inclusive" theism – is within the reach of my mind and belief, at least in this period of my life. The other two ways, (1) that Jesus is the "highest Angel of Love" (if one may say so), and (2) "the mystical way" of great solitary souls,

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20 Jan Assmann states that "One-only" negates plurality, while "One-(and)-All" (ἕν-πάντα) presupposes it dialectically ("Einzigkeit negiert die Vielheit, All-Einheit setzt sie dialektisch voraus"); Assmann, *Monotheismus und Kosmotheismus.*

are present in my mind just as high *ideals,* much harder to reach by experience. Excepting some enlightened souls, we experience mystical contacts with transcendence rarely, if at all. However, one has to remain open for the Highest. I think that there is no real humanism without transcendence.[21]

Instead of a conclusion, I want to finish with these beautiful verses of Walt Whitman, quoted from the "Song of Myself," from *Leaves of Grass*:

> Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
> I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each
> moment then,
> In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face
> in the glass,
> I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by
> God's name,
> And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
> Others will punctually come for ever and ever.[22]

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21 Even in the pantheistic way(s), there is a kind of transcendence, which we may call the "transcendence-in-immanence," or figuratively, "the depth (or height) behind the surface," or the Light behind the "shadows of the world" (see also my *Shadows of Being*, 2018).

22 Whitman*, Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose, 77–78.*

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ABSTRACT

The *Oration on the Dignity of Man* makes a claim, characteristic for the Renaissance, that the dignity of man, the real "excellency of human nature," is not present in any specific human quality or ability. Neither is it present in the role of the human soul as the "tie of the world" (*copula mundi*), as Marsilio Ficino has taught. Even higher than this eminent human role in the world is the freedom of man to choose his role and task himself. At the same time, Pico believes that Man was created as the *image of God,* in the sense that no man is determined in advance: human free will reflects God's free will in creation. From the point of view of the mainstream modern dualism, this is a paradox, even a contradiction. This paper argues the opposite: that the human free will is even nowadays, not less than in the Renaissance period, compatible with the belief in God. However, this is only the case if God (being transcendent or immanent to the world) does not command anything, if God does not demand anything – except *love.* Violence and killing are *eo ipso* prohibited, especially in the name of faith. Therefore, freedom and faith are perfectly compatible. Even more, modern humans are fatally unfree either in the secular "radicalization" of faith or in the atheistic secularization of the world. Unfree due to their existence (*Dasein*), enslaved by the *Angst* of "mere nothing."

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

Pico della Mirandola o človekovem dostojanstvu
in nekaj sodobnih odmevov njegove filozofije

Pico della Mirandola je v govoru *O človekovem dostojanstvu* razvil
za renesanso značilno misel, da človekovo dostojanstvo, tista pra-
va »odličnost človeške narave«, ni v določeni človeški lastnosti ali
sposobnosti, niti v tem, da je človeška duša »sponka sveta«, kot je
učil Marsilio Ficino, kajti še višja od te vzvišene človekove vloge v
stvarstvu je človekova svoboda, da si svojo vlogo in nalogo izbere
sam. Obenem pa je Pico prepričan, da je človek ustvarjen *po božji
podobi,* namreč ravno s tem, da ni vnaprej določen: človekova svo-
bodna volja zrcali božjo svobodo pri stvarjenju. S stališča novoveš-
kega dualizma je to paradoks, če ne že kar protislovje. V tem članku
pa želim povedati, da je človeška svoboda tudi dandanes, nič manj
kot v obdobju renesanse, združljiva z vero v Boga – vendar le tedaj,
če Bog (bodisi transcendenten ali imanenten svetu) človeku ničesar
ne zapoveduje, če v svetih spisih od človeka ničesar ne zahteva, niti
ne pričakuje – ničesar razen *ljubezni.* S tem *eo ipso* prepoveduje na-
silje in ubijanje, še posebej v imenu vere. Svoboda in vera sta povsem
združljivi, še več, sodobni človek je usodno nesvoboden tako v pos-
vetni »radikalizaciji« vere kakor tudi v ateistični sekularizaciji sveta,
nesvoboden v temelju svoje tu-biti, zasužnjen s tesnobo »zgolj niča«.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Classical and Christian Auctoritas in Marsilio Ficino's preface to the Corpus Hermeticum

Iskander I. Rocha Parker*

and György E. Szönyi**

INTRODUCTION

Learning Greek was a key factor for the philosophical and literary development of the humanist intellectuals of the Renaissance. It provided humanists such as Marsilio Ficino with the possibility of accessing texts that had not been read in the West for hundreds of years. One of those texts was the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. In the preface to his translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* into Latin, Ficino explains the content of the work and its importance for understanding the wisdom given by God. This provides insight into Ficino's understanding of antiquity, especially of Greco-Roman conceptions influential in fifteenth-century humanist circles.

Ficino was a physician, theologian, philosopher, teacher, and translator active from 1457 to 1498. He learned Greek from Platina at the age of twenty-six, which allowed him to begin his career as a translator, as Giovanni Corsi describes in his *Life of Marsilio Ficino*. Ficino's intellectual skills and potential came to the notice of Cosimo de Medici,[1] who supported his studies in Greek. Cosimo not only supported Ficino financially but also provided him lodging in

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1 Corsi, "The Life of Marsilio Ficino," 5.

the Villa Careggi for doing his translation work. Cosimo aimed to have the *Corpus Hermeticum* translated into Latin,[2] along with the remainder of the Platonic corpus.

Cosimo's interest in the *Corpus Hermeticum* was likely owed to his encounters with Gemistos Plethon[3] during the Council of Ferrara-Florence between 1431 and 1449. The council had been moved to Florence thanks to Cosimo's diplomatic abilities and due to the threat of the plague.[4] Cosimo was inspired by Plethon to develop an *academia* in Florence,[5] and the institution had Ficino as the head.[6] The Council of Ferrara-Florence promoted Byzantine scholars' transfer to Italy while Constantinople was under the menace of Mehmet II, resulting in a flood of intellectuals from the Byzantine Empire and a reintroduction in the West of the necessary knowledge for the translation and understanding of Greek texts such as the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

The development of the ideas of 15th-century humanists owed much to the new translations from Greek. Like other humanists of his time, Marsilio Ficino was deeply influenced by Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy. Among the subjects that he sought to understand were the origins of knowledge and wisdom. His explanation mixed the Greco-Roman and Christian frameworks, invoking big names to support his arguments. Quintilian had given this rhetorical device the name *auctoritas* in his *Institutio Oratoria:*

> Nam sententiis quidem poetarum non orationes modo sunt refertae sed libri etiam philosophorum, qui quanquam inferiora omnia praeceptis suis ac litteris credunt, repetere tamen auctoritatem a plurimis versibus non fastidierunt. Neque est ignobile exemplum, Megarios ab Atheniensibus, cum de Salamine contenderent, victos Homeri versu […] ponitur a quibusdam et quidem in parte prima deorum auctoritas, quae est ex responsis, ut, Socraten esse sapientissimum. Id rarum est, non sine usu tamen. Utitur eo Cicero in libro de aruspicum responsis […]

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2   Ibid.

3   Plethon reintroduced Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy to the West, especially in Florence in the circles established by Cosimo de Medici, which were attended by Ficino. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, 373.

4   Introduction in Ficino, *Sobre el Furor Divino y Otros Textos*, xxi.

5   Kristeller, *Ocho Filósofos del Renacimiento*, 59.

6   Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, 373; Celenza, "Marsilio Ficino"; however, one must understand the several meanings that the word "*academia*" can have; Hankins, "The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence," 433–36.

> As for reflexions drawn from the poets, not only speeches, but even
> works of the philosophers, are full of them; for although the philo-
> sophers think everything inferior to their own precepts and writings,
> they have not thought it beneath their dignity to quote numbers of
> lines from the poets to lend authority to their statements. Again, a
> remarkable example of the weight carried by authority is provided by
> the fact that when the Megarians disputed the possession of Salamis
> with the Athenians, the latter prevailed by citing a line from Homer
> […] Some include under this head the supernatural authority that is
> derived from oracles, as for instance the response asserting that Soc-
> rates was the wisest of mankind: indeed, they rank it above all other
> authorities. Such authority is rare, but may prove useful. It is em-
> ployed by Cicero in his speech on the Replies of the Soothsayers […][7]

According to Quintilian, quotations from philosophers, poets, and
even texts of divine inspiration could be used to add *auctoritas*.
Examples of this rhetorical device proposed by Quintilian to add
auctoritas included both Homer and the oracles – that is, appropri-
ate examples for a writer in the 1st century. However, humanists such
as Ficino had a broader repertoire upon which they could draw, in-
cluding Greek and Roman, and, in the same vein, Christian authors,
as well as the Bible, which provided a link to the power and influence
of the Church.

One should not ignore or diminish the importance of prefaces; as
Gérard Genette mentions in his *Palimpsests*, these paratexts should
be reconsidered as a genre, providing different information not only
about the author, printer, editor, or benefactor, but also about the
relations between the preface, the main text, and texts that influ-
enced them.[8]

Genette explains that the paratext enjoys a relationship that is
less explicit and more distant within the totality of the literary work,
at least compared to the relationship which binds this totality and
the text *sensu stricto*.[9] Paratexts can include valuable information,
from subtitles or prefaces to epigraphs and illustrations. In this
vein, the paratext provides the text with a setting "and sometimes a
commentary, official or not, which even the purists among readers,
those least inclined to external erudition, cannot always disregard

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7   Quint. *Inst*. 5.11.39–42. Quintilian suggests that these quotes could help
     someone gain a case by the power invested in those authorities. The English
     translation by Harold Edgeworth Butler for the Loeb Classical Library.
8   Genette, *Palimpsests*, 7–8.
9   Ibid, 3.

as easily as they would like and as they claim to do."[10] Another important category used by Genette is hypertextuality, which establishes a clearer relation between two texts. The relation is determined "between the imitated text and the imitative one, a supplementary stage and a mediation that are not to be found in the simple or direct type of transformation."[11] The imitated one is called the *hypertext*, while the imitative is the *hypotext*. This paper will use these three categories to explain the relations between Ficino's preface, the imitated texts, and the figure of *auctoritas*. In this sense, Ficino's preface sets the guidelines for his translation and for the rest of the humanists interested in the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PREFACE

Ficino completed his translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 1463, but it was only published in 1471, and even then, the work appeared without his permission.[12] Later, in 1532, Ficino's translation was printed again in Basel, this time including his translations of Iamblichus and Proclus.[13] The Basel edition includes the preface, dedicated to Cosimo de Medici, and has a marginal note on the second page regarding the Egyptian god Theuth, which other versions render as "Tem." Ficino's preface describes how he received the Greek version of the text from a monk, Leonardo da Pistoia, who sent it from Macedonia.[14]

The preface dedicated to Cosimo is divided into three main parts. The first one contains a description of Hermes Trismegistus; the second a description of Ficino's theory of the *prisca theologia* or "the ancient theology," previously developed by Plethon;[15] and the third is a description of the work's content and its relevance.

10   Ibid.

11   Ibid, 6.

12   Campanelli, "Marsilio Ficino's portrait of Hermes Trismegistus and its afterlife," 53.

13   This is the version used here; the quotes are indicated as Fol.

14   "At nuper ex Macedonia in Italiam advectus, diligentia Leonardi Pistorensis, docti probique monachi ad nos prouenit." Fol. 5.

15   The discussion about the origin of the ancient theology attached to Plethon is not without controversies. Some affirm that he was the source for Ficino; see Kristeller (*Ocho Filósofos del Renacimiento*, 59); for others, like Woodhouse, this is not that clear, since Plethon did not mention Trismegistus in his writings (Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, 373). Hanegraaff makes a

As is the case with many prefaces of the period,[16] Ficino's preface provides vital information about the period, the patronage, and the reception of the text. However, what is specific for his case is the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, which reflects the transmission of knowledge from antiquity. Ficino attempts to situate Hermes within both the Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions. He cites Augustine, Lactantius, and Cicero as authorities in support of his theory: "This was written of him by Aurelius Augustinus, although Cicero and Lactantius, believed there to be five consecutive Mercuriuses, the fifth being this one, who was called by the Egyptians <Theuth (in other Them)>, and by the Greeks, Trismegistus."[17]

In previous accounts, Trismegistus was a pagan figure related to astrology, alchemy, and during the Middle Ages, to magic.[18] Ficino likely sought to change this conception of the Trismegistus figure by using the *auctoritas* given by citations from Augustine and Lactan-

good point about Ficino's role in developing of the *prisca theologia*, explaining he acted as a divine messenger (Hanegraaff and Pijnenburg, *Hermes in the Academy*, 7–8). Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the importance of the syncretism characterizing the *prisca theologia* and other trends during the fifteenth century, as well as its importance for the development of Hermeticism and other esoteric trends; see Szönyi, "The Hermetic Revival," 52–55.

16   On the importance of other prefaces of different authors see Villalba Álvarez, "Un Interesante Capítulo En La Historia Del Libro: Los Prefacios de Aldo Manucio a Sus Ediciones de Textos Griegos y Latinos."

17   "Hoc autem de illo scribit Augustinus: quanquam Cicero atque Lactantius, Mercurios quinquem per ordinem fuisse volunt: quintumque fuisse illum, qui ab Aegyptiis Theuth, a Graecis autem Trismegistus appellatus est." Fol. 3. The translation was published by Ilana Klutsein in *Ficino's Hermetic Translation of His Latin Pimander* and is used here with slight modifications.

18   During the Middle Ages and particularly in the western part of Europe, the figure of Hermes Trismegistus was related to astrology and magic. For example, there are several mentions in the Picatrix, a book about talismanic magic and astrology, in which Trismegistus is described, among his other skills, as an expert in astrology and divination; see Greer and Warnock, *Picatrix*, 133. The relation of Trismegistus with alchemy in *Liber de compositione alchimiae*, is described by Campanelli, "Marsilio Ficino's portrait of Hermes Trismegistus and its afterlife," 53–54. Lynn Thorndike presents the same argument. He proposes that *Liber de compositione* introduced the figure of Hermes Trismegistus as the father of alchemy in the 12th century. Thorndike argues that many alchemical texts used Hermes' *auctoritas* and authorship to gain recognition and acceptance, for example, *A Treatise of Mercury to his disciple Mirnesindus* or *The Secret of Hermes the philosopher, inventor of metals, according to the nature of transmutation; see* Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental*

tius.[19] By using *auctoritas,* Ficino likely sought to change the perception of his arguments; it is no longer the opinion given by a single philosopher or translator, but consonant with the views expressed by those wise men that had set the pillars for the Christian Church against the ideas of the pagans. Maurizio Campanelli noticed, for example, how Ficino had changed a verb so that the text could conform more closely to the arguments expressed in the preface.[20] He had used the verb *dubito* to diminish the perception, expressed by Augustine, that Trismegistus was under some demonic influence. Ficino reconciled the opinion expressed by Augustine with that of Lactantius, who did not express doubt as Augustine did, and portrayed Trismegistus as the founder of the *prisca theologia*, granted by the Divine Mind, and as a figure akin to the prophets: "So that Aurelius Augustinus, as it happens, <pondered> that he had foretold many things by divination of the stars or by demonic revelation. But Lactantius does not hesitate to count him among the Sibyls and the prophets."[21]

The figure of Hermes, however, was complicated even in antiquity. Herein lies the importance of Cicero's *auctoritas*, since he was the one who proposed the first rational explanation for Trismegistus. In *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero explains that there were five Hermeses, the first being a celestial god, while the fifth one is identified as Theuth by the Egyptians.[22] This explanation served as a hypotext for both Christian authors; Augustine used it in *De Civitate Dei*[23] and Lactantius in the *Institutiones Divinae*.[24] The three texts served as the historical basis for the development proposed by Ficino. In other words, they were the hypotexts for Ficino's hypertext. These hypotexts had a significance that surpassed mere sources for quotations. References to them appear in the exordium, the beginning of the text, where Ficino shows not only the main idea of what he

Magic 2:214–18. In Thorndike's words*:* "among the Arabs and in medieval Latin learning the reputation of Hermes continued not only as an alchemist but as a fountain of wisdom in general"; ibid., 2:219.

19   Campanelli, "Marsilio Ficino's portrait of Hermes Trismegistus and its afterlife," 58.

20   Campanelli, 57.

21   "Quo factum est, ut Aurelius Agusutinus dubitaverit, peritia ne syderum, an revelatione daemonum multa protulerit. Lactantius autem illum inter sibyllas ac prophetas connumerare non dubitas." Fol. 5.

22   Cic., *Nat. D.* 3.56.

23   Aug., *De civ. D.* 8.26.

24   Lact., *Div. Inst.* 1.6.

will explain but also his abilities. He portrays himself as one of the *literati*, one who had read the authors of antiquity. By beginning with these texts, Ficino satisfies two goals. First, he fends off critiques of other intellectuals, since attacking Ficino would implicitly mean attacking Augustine's or Lactantius' opinions. Secondly, Ficino shows himself as a *peritus*, skilled in theological matters, that is, a person able to discuss and propose theories related to divine things, as the *prisca theologia*.

A different case of *auctoritas* is presented in the context of the *prisca theologia* itself, where the authority lies not in quotations but in the renown of the philosophers, listed from Hermes Trismegistus up to Plato. Among other things, the *prisca theologia* addressed this: "He was the first to debate with utmost wisdom the majesty of God, the rank of demons, and the mutations of souls. He was therefore called the first theologian. And Orpheus followed him, taking second rank in ancient theology."[25] Ficino claims that this ancient theology was introduced in the books of Trismegistus, thus making him the author of all theology. But Ficino also asserts that Trismegistus "foresaw the ruin of the ancient religion (*prisca theologia*), the birth of the new faith, the advent of Christ, the future judgment, the resurrection of man, the renewal of the world, the glory of the blessed, and the torment of the sinners."[26] Accordingly, Trismegistus appears as a prophet, not as a Biblical one but a pagan one, who was charged with spreading the word of God through philosophy, which eventually arrived at the Greeks.

Several biblical passages address the importance of tradition and the lines of succession. Examples are the priestly lineage inherited by Aaron and his sons from Moses' power by virtue of their descent from Levi,[27] or the verification of the lineage of Jesus to prove that he was the Son of God.[28] These examples demonstrate the authority of the characters, the idea that their ancestry allowed them to act above the rest of the population while their words and speeches were transformed into law. These lines of succession, as described in the Bible, were known to Ficino, who utilized the same technique for

25 "Primus de maiestate dei, daemonum ordine, animarum mutationibus sapientissime disputavit. Primus igitur theologiae appellatus est autor." Fol. 4.

26 "Hic ruinam praevidit priscae religionis, hic ortum novae fidei, hic adventum Christi, hic futurum judicium, resurrecciones seculi, beatorum gloriam, supplicia peccatorum." Fol. 5.

27 Exodus 28:1 ff.

28 Luke 3:23–38.

the Greek and pagan philosophers. Following Plethon,[29] he acknowledged the pagan line of succession, especially the role of the Greeks, therein fashioning them as heirs of the word of God.

The line of succession proposed by Ficino in the preface of the *Corpus Hermeticum* begins with Hermes Trismegistus, the author of these dialogues and the one to whom the nature of God and of the temporal and eternal world, as well as the power and wisdom of God were revealed.[30] Trismegistus is thus portrayed as the first theologian, one whose message was initially delivered in "Egyptian letters," and later via the Greek translation. Ficino, following Plethon, used the *auctoritas* of the theologians mentioned in the *prisca theologia* to explain the transmission of the ancient religion from one generation to the next. This ostensible line of succession continued through Orpheus, Pythagoras, Aglaophemus, and Philolaus before culminating with Plato as the last theologian. By enumerating these ancient philosophers, Ficino achieves two key ends: first, reconstructing a chronology for the transmission of the ancient theology; and then elevating them to the rank of pagan theologians who transmitted the word of God, even if they did so unaware.

Ficino's contention that the Christian and pagan lines of succession worked in parallel was consistent with his aim of reconciling the pagan and Christian frameworks.[31] However, the selection of theologians is not without its problematic aspects since virtually no information is available for Aglaophemus, and not much is known of Philolaus, besides the fact that he came from Kroton.[32] For Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato, on the other hand, the preface manifests a clear interest to portray them in a less pagan light. Instead of that, Ficino portrays them as Greeks who had inherited wisdom from the Christian God via Trismegistus, which could reconcile them with the traditional opinion.

The pagan philosophers, portrayed by Ficino in this line of succession, became quasi-Christian prophets or, in the words of Ficino, theologians. This was meant to support their writings and help them

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29   Moshe Idel points out Ficino's intention to put the Christian and pagan traditions on the same level and not, as sometimes suggested, one over the other, in the context of Gemistos Plethon; cf. Idel, "*Prisca theologia* in Marsilio Ficino" in Allen, Rees, and Davies, *Marsilio Ficino*, 147.

30   Fol. 6.

31   Introduction of Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark in Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 38–39.

32   Diog. Laet., *Vitae* 3.6.

become relevant literature for Christians. In this new scenario, the perception of these wise men from antiquity was transformed and mixed with the Christian mindset. Because of this syncretism, such an approach to these texts could not be interpreted as an attempt to resuscitate paganism but merely as a different approach to understanding the wisdom of God.

CONCLUSION

The authority displayed through this paratext does not remain static. Just as Genette explains, it offers a commentary of the main text, which is the translation of the first fourteen dialogues of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. At first glance, Cicero, Augustine, and Lactantius appear to serve as representative authorities for Ficino, the first for pagan antiquity, the other two for Christianity. However, a higher rank is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus because he, like the prophets of the Bible, received from the Divine Mind the revelation of God. According to this interpretation, while Moses was a prophet for the Jews, Trismegistus became the prophet for the gentiles. In this setting, both of them served in the same position. Ficino's rhetorical devices in the preface show his ability to manipulate the hierarchy of authority. He transformed Trismegistus into a theological authority by the use of the *auctoritas* provided by the other figures. The preface does more than merely invite the reader to approach the text or clarify some obscure terms. It presents Ficino as a translator, introducing the *Corpus Hermeticum* into humanist circles, ready to influence the reading of all those in search of God's wisdom.

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ABSTRACT

Marsilio Ficino's fame as a translator, not least due to his contributions to theology and the development of hermeticism, has already been established by Frances Yates and debated by Wouter Hanegraaff. For each of his translations of Greek texts, Ficino wrote a preface to guide and to manipulate the reader. This paper presents an analysis of the *auctoritas* in the paratext of the *Corpus Hermeticum,* analyzing it as a rhetorical device used by Ficino to express his ideas, particularly the role of Hermes Trismegistus. Ficino used his rhetorical skill not only to translate from Greek to Latin but also to support his theories in commentaries, letters, or, in this case, prefaces.

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

Klasična in krščanska *auctoritas*
v predgovoru Marsilia Ficina za *Corpus hermeticum*

Sloves Marsilia Ficina kot prevajalca, nenazadnje tudi na podlagi njegovih prispevkov k teologiji in razvoju hermetizma, je izpostavila že Frances Yates, o njem pa je razpravljal denimo Wouter Hanegraaff. K vsakemu od svojih prevodov grških besedil je Ficino napisal predgovor, ki naj bi bralca vodil in nanj vplival. Prispevek analizira *auctoritas* v paratekstu, ki spremlja *Corpus Hermeticum*, ter jo analizira kot retorični pripomoček, s katerim Ficino izrazi svoje ideje – zlasti o vlogi Hermesa Trismegista. Ficino svoje retorične veščine ni uporabljal samo za prevajanje iz grščine v latinščino, temveč tudi za podpiranje lastnih teorij v komentarjih, pismih ali – kot v tem konkretnem primeru – v predgovorih.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

hipertekst, *auctoritas*, Marsilio Ficino, Hermes Trismegist, predgovor

The Recuperation of Humanism in the Context of the Martial Society: Homer, Anton Schneeberger, Kurt Lewin, and Narrative Medicine

Katarzyna Jerzak*

Many years ago, as graduate students, my then-husband and I spent a year of research at the University of Heidelberg. While living in Germany, we went to visit a friend in the Teutonic town of Bad Mergentheim, where her father, a gastroenterologist, ran a private sanatorium. Entertaining us in his library, Dr. K. asked my husband about the subject of his dissertation. Since at the time Stephen was working on Georg Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen,* he thought it would be better to say simply that he was working on German intellectual history, but the gastroenterologist insisted. As it turned out, he was familiar with Creuzer's opus and with its reverberations in *Geistesgeschichte.* A long discussion followed, not unlike a Princeton University graduate seminar with professor Anthony Grafton. I have no reason to assume that all the while, Dr. K. was not a good physician. Even further back, in the 1970s, our own family doctor in Sopot, Poland was an amateur expert on the kabbalistic elements in Adam Mickiewicz's oeuvre and would travel to Copenhagen where he discussed the topic with Jewish scholars.

In the twenty-first century, in my Children's Literature undergraduate course at the University of Georgia in the United States, I dis-

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covered that no matter what methodology I employed, the majority of my students cried during class presentations. While reading basic canonical texts – Brothers Grimm's folk tales, Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince," Janusz Korczak's *King Matt the First,* and others, less canonical for that field but all the more potent in the context, such as Albert Cohen's *Book of My Mother,* Henryk Grynberg's *Children of Zion* or Tove Jansson's *Summer Book* – they experienced something that until then had not been expressed in their American lives. Subsequently, during oral presentations, they inevitably brought tears to their own and everyone else's eyes. Later I observed the same phenomenon in my Honors Literature and Medicine seminar, whose existence the University of Georgia owes to pre-med students starved for a humanities course that would complement their science curriculum.

The two vignettes, that of a humanist physician conversant with philosophy and literature, and the oddly deprived modern-day university student, reduced to tears in front of a text that inadvertently mirrors the readers' traumas and scars, serve here as an introduction to what I call the recuperation of humanism: a consideration of the imperative place of humanist thinking in the age of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.[1] For the contemporary society to function not on a dystopian model described by George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Andrei Platonov, but instead as a humanist enterprise, it is imperative to reconsider the importance given in the present era to the sciences at the detriment of the humanities. I seek to demonstrate that humanist thinking does not go against science, neither does it exist in a separate sphere; on the contrary, just as in the original Renaissance project, it is the humanist insight that can inform, replenish, and sustain science, especially medical science. "Renaissance humanism was not, and probably could never have been, permanently confined to the restricted company that had once created it," writes Ingrid D. Rowland in her "Abacus and Humanism."[2] "Even its most esoteric branches – Neoplatonism, magic, cabala, alchemy – had their practical side, for they had been conceived and continued to operate in a world of practical needs."[3]

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1   For the purpose of this article I will draw a broad connection between the humanist enterprise as it originated in the Renaissance and the humanities as such, the vestiges of which we witness at present.

2   Rowland, *Abacus and Humanism*, 695.

3   Ibid.

The last notion – that of the successful combination and implementation of humanist notions in the real world, is what interests me the most. Humanism, in its purely theoretical aspect, is not worthy of its name. It is through a return of ideas in print to life, of ensuring that ink is also blood, that humanism matters because it does not remain contained in books. What Rowland identifies in the original humanist drive, is the continuity of thought and action, a salutary blending of the intellectual and the social spheres that we badly lack nowadays:

> By the first two decades of the early sixteenth century, fundamental concepts of Neoplatonism, though they may have retained their esoteric charm for self-conscious cognoscenti, had also become common coin, the imagery in which merchants, professionals and technicians couched their own philosophical yearnings. At the same time, humanistic patterns of thought had come to govern actions in the political and financial sphere no less than they governed the progress of letters and art. Humanism had in effect become a social phenomenon as much as an intellectual stance.[4]

Nowadays, neither humanism nor science seems to be a social phenomenon. We make daily use of most advanced scientific discoveries without the slightest notion of how they come about, and at the same time, most of the population has ceased to read the *belles lettres.* The trouble seems to be so much graver than in 1959 when C.P. Snow delivered his famous Rede lecture entitled "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution." He outlined the "dangerous divide between the ethos, outlook, and practices of the sciences and those of the old humanities."[5] Speaking about his lecture in 2010 at the University of Cambridge, Lisa Jardine called the goal of integrating arts, sciences, and humanities "yet unachieved."[6] The work, then, is up to us. Justin Stover, in a recent statement published on 4 March 2018 in the *Chronicle of Higher Education,* expounds a clear credo of the humanist role both in the university and in today's world. Stover compellingly argues that the humanities do not need to be justified because, without the humanities, there is no university:

4   Ibid.
5   Jardine, "Snow's Two Cultures," 49–57.
6   Ibid.

> The humanities have always been, just as their critics complain, self-contained, self-referential, and self-serving. Those tendencies are exactly what enabled the humanities to create a class that continued to demand them. People have read Virgil for two thousand years, and people have built institutions designed to facilitate the reading of Virgil. For reasons high and low, people long believed that the one qualification truly necessary — for civil service, for foreign service, for politics, for medicine, for science, for law, for estate management, for ecclesiastical preferment, for a life of aristocratic leisure — was the ability to compose good Latin hexameters. They were not looking for skills or creativity or values. They did believe that conjugating irregular verbs would mysteriously produce moral improvement (perhaps it did), but they were not too concerned about how. They simply believed in the humanities and knew from experience that the disciplines would bring students above the categories of nation, vocation, and time to become members of a class constrained by no such boundaries.[7]

While well supported in a diachronic perspective and altogether convincing both in its modest and hubristic aspect, Stover's argument is nonetheless somewhat complacent. Let the humanities cultivate the minds that flock to them for their own sake, says Stover. Let us forget the other, more technical and vocational areas of civilization, and just read the Classics. As Rowland and Grafton demonstrate, that is not what the humanist enterprise was in the Renaissance, and Snow and Jardine argue that neither should it be the case now. The area in which it may be possible to combine the two cultures for the benefit of all involved is the one that affects humanity across disciplines in a very immediate way, that is, medicine. Anthony Grafton notes the following:

> The humanists did not confine themselves to strictly literary areas of study. After 1450 they often analyzed scientific texts and produced results of interest to specialists in medicine and astronomy as well as to general readers. The scientists, for their part, often did work of great penetration and originality in the humanist fields of textual exegesis and cultural history. The two cultures, in short, were not locked in a battle […]; they coexisted and collaborated.[8]

As an inspiring and still little known example of a genuine Renaissance man who combined erudition in the humanities with exper-

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7   Stover, "No Case for the Humanities," 210–224.
8   Grafton, *Defenders of the Text*, 5.

tise in medicine let us consider the figure of Anton Schneeberger – born in 1530 in an upper-class Zürich family, died in 1581 in Cracow – the Swiss doctor and botanist who studied medicine in Basel and Cracow. He traveled extensively, as a modern European might, visiting Vilnius, Königsberg, Paris, Montpellier. Schneeberger wrote the first scholarly work in botany to be published in Poland: a catalog of wild plants in Latin and Polish (*Catalogus stirpium … 1554*), as well as the first modern manual of health – both physical and mental – for the military, dedicated to the Polish King Sigismund II Augustus, *De bona militum valetudine conservanda liber*, a landmark work based mostly on a sophisticated reading of the Ancients. According to Stanisław Ilnicki, Schneeberger's work, published in 1564 in Cracow, is the oldest modern textbook of military hygiene. It predates other such works by over a hundred years (Janusz Abraham Gehema, 1684) or even by two hundred (John Pringle, 1754; Maurice Saxe 1757; Jean Colombier 1775; and the American Benjamin Rush 1777).[9] The Polish edition, with the original Latin and a facing-page translation by Robert A. Sucharski, appeared in 2008. It is in *De bona militum valetudine conservanda liber* that Anton Schneeberger elaborated an early definition of what we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and described the possible ways of preparing for trauma and assuaging its effects. To heal sorrow and mourning, he recommends the use of storytelling, arguing that memory and hope are reconciled through the creation of an interpersonal narrative.

It is a tale as old as time. In his *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, Jonathan Shay, a doctor and clinical psychiatrist, has shown how the soldiers in Homer's *Iliad* suffered moral injuries not unlike those borne by Vietnam veterans.[10] Later on, he explored the pitfalls awaiting them on the road back to civilian life in *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*.[11] Despite its ostensible state of peace, contemporary Western society is plagued by disorders frequently encountered in combat zones: PTSD and other anxiety disorders, depression, suicide. The lucid direction of humanist medicine and medicinal humanities must be to study the role of literature in the overcoming of these disorders. Arnold Weinstein, in his book *A Scream Goes Through the House: What Literature Teaches Us About Life*, opposes the medicine cabinet to the bookshelf, pointing out that in the United States,

9 Schneeberger, *De bona militum valetudine conservanda,* xxv.
10 Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, passim.
11 Shay, *Odysseus in America*, 11–148.

one is more likely to turn to the former than the latter. In twenty years of university teaching, I have seen that novels and memoirs focusing on traumatic events, be it individual (*King Matt the First* by Janusz Korczak, *Summer Book* by Tove Jansson, *Brothers Lionheart* by Astrid Lindgren) or collective (*Jewish War* and *Children of Zion* by Henryk Grynberg, *Comet in Moominvalley* by Tove Jansson), can have a therapeutic effect on the readers, as if literature allowed for an expression of their own traumas. In a culture in which Walt Disney supplanted both the Bible and Greek tragedies, the lack of a humanist education deprives individuals of a meaningful way of addressing their moral injuries outside of psychiatry proper. In a society such as that of the contemporary United States, i.e., one in which most basic human needs are met for the majority of its members, there is nonetheless a humanist lacuna which contributes to the current psychological crisis. In Europe, the situation is nearly equally alarming. According to data from 2010, one third of American college students suffered from depression that made them dysfunctional, as if they were in a combat zone. A dramatic increase in the number of suicides has been noted both on US college campuses and among US troops at home and abroad. In Poland, only 38 percent of people read at least one book in 2009. At the same time, increasing numbers of the population participate in long-distance running, triathlons, decathlons, and paramilitary sports such as paintball and airsoft. Soon the warfare model might be applicable in Poland as well, even though the Poles' identity is still shaped by the long shadow of World War II.

Under what guise does the issue of trauma appear in classical twentieth-century literature? In the opening paragraphs of *I and Thou*, the Jewish thinker Martin Buber proposes that the object of human relation affects the subject. "For the I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It."[12] In other words, the object of my relation makes me into a different person. If I have an It as my object, I am necessarily limited.

In contrast, "[W]hoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there also another something; every It borders other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others."[13] Buber foresaw the unstoppable progression of our modern society from the I-You to the I-It. The gaping discrepancy between medical sciences focused on the purely technical, laboratory orien-

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12   Buber, *I and Thou*, 53.
13   Ibid., 55.

ted medicine on the one hand and the disappearing modes of cultivating humanist interests that overlap with medicine in the center of which there is always the human being, on the other hand, means that it is ever easier to slip into what Buber defines as the continuum of Its.

There is a connection between literature and the meaningful naming of the disorders plaguing contemporary martial society. Novels and memoirs focusing on traumatic wartime memories, be it individual (Marguerite Duras's *Hiroshima mon amour*, Ota Pavel's *Death of the Beautiful Deer*) or collective (Henryk Grynberg's *Jewish War* as well as his recent *Memoir, Memoir 2*, and *Memoir 3*), work both to heal and illuminate the abiding martial state in which we must function. Acts of war that punctuate the twenty-first century may not correspond to the propaganda rhetoric of the 'war on terror' but nonetheless deal real enough psychic wounds that literature dutifully marks (e.g., "Photograph from September 11" by the Polish poet Wisława Szymborska). When I taught Henryk Grynberg's *Jewish War* at the University of Georgia, the students who chose to do oral presentations were an Iraq war veteran (shot down over Karbala) and a criminal justice major who could not eat for three days after he had watched Paweł Łoziński's 1992 documentary film *Birthplace*. Both could speak only when literature breached a crack in their traumatic silence.

While in the trenches of World War I – on the German side, because he had been born in Moglino, near what was then called Posen, and studied in Berlin – Kurt Lewin, the Jewish-German topological psychologist developed his theory of "war landscape" which he then wrote up in an extraordinarily clear and compact essay entitled *Kriegslandschaft* (published during a furlough in 1917).[14] Lewin puts forth a distinction between the landscape of peace that extends indefinitely in all directions and that he describes as "round, without front or behind,"[15] and the landscape of war, which is directed and bounded. "The danger zone changes depending on the combat situation. The general character of danger increases or diminishes with the intensity of combat; furthermore, the danger points shift, new

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14   Kurt Lewin, after his World War I experience, became a Gestalt psychologist and worked in the United States (most notably at MIT), both as a clinician and theoretician. His work, just like that of Mikhail Bakhtin, is used in organizational studies and in psychology.

15   Lewin, "The Landscape of War," 201.

ones are formed and old ones disappear."[16] Thus in the landscape of war, the line of combat is everpresent, however changeable or even invisible it may be. Lewin makes several points that both harken back to Schneeberger's categories of fear and terror and at the same time pertain to modern war. For instance, he recounts an incident in which his fear – as a field artilleryman – was diminished by his perception of the place of combat as an ordinary, peacetime village: "While we were halted on the road after a lengthy march as army reserves, the battle for a nearby village suddenly escalated. The village remained a normal "village in the landscape."[17] The battle as a whole did not seem to me to be particularly serious, and the reminder to take cover seemed somewhat pointless despite the relatively high level of danger, clearly because the combat landscape had not yet taken the place of the peacetime landscape." Such difference in perception is attributable to the changed aspects of the war landscape that contains "things of combat," *Gefechtsdinge*, while in the peace landscape, the same things are "peacetime things," *Friedensdinge*. A village, a farmhouse, a forest appear differently to the observer depending on their status in a given landscape. Things of combat do not contaminate peacetime things if those are clearly distinct from them by their purpose: "Thus, for example, in mobile warfare a tent or even an exposed sleeping spot next to a cannon has the character of being removed from the war, a virtually homely character, which is particularly striking precisely on account of its being alongside pure things of combat."[18]

Inversely, when over a century after the publication of Lewin's wartime essay one travels by air and is forced to surrender a bottle of water to the security agents at the airport in order to be able to board a flight, it is because the ostensible landscape of peace is at any moment subject to a disturbance. On September 11th 2001, passenger airplanes were deftly transformed from peacetime things into things of combat. Lewin concludes his essay with an analysis of combat things in time. A trench position "filled with death and war" is left behind not as something meaningless but rather as a "war formation," a tangible trace that speaks of what has taken place there. Lewin calls burnt villages *"Kriegsinseln" im Friedensland*. The modern landscape is, even to this day, dotted with these "islands of war," and, after 9/11, they also appear in Manhattan, Paris, or Brus-

16   Ibid., 202–203.
17   Ibid., 204.
18   Ibid., 206.

sels. It takes a humanist of Lewin's stature to render the soldier's perspective meaningful: the space in which the human person moves, his or her environment, is significant precisely because it is perceived in a certain manner. In the contemporary society the purely peacetime landscape has ceased to exist.

If modern Western society functions in a surreptitious landscape of war, becoming a kind of martial society, i.e., a society whose members are exposed to psychic and moral injuries comparable to those sustained in battle, how does literature help in the recovery from those injuries? One answer was offered by Joseph Brodsky, who himself had grown up in a totalitarian system that attempted to erase the human person from the heart of society. In "The Condition We Call Exile," the Russian poet wrote:

> Since there is not much on which to rest our hopes for a better world, since everything else seems to fail one way or another, we must somehow maintain that literature is the only form of moral insurance a society has; that it is the permanent antidote to the dog-eat-dog principle; that it provides the best argument against any sort of bulldozer-type mass solution—if only because human diversity is literature's lock and stock, as well as its *raison d'être*.[19]

Applying Brodsky's insight even further, let us state that literature shall have a chance to function as a form of moral insurance only if it is, as it were, returned to life. A relatively new discipline of health care, narrative medicine, that has developed along the lines foreseen by doctor Anton Schneeberger in the sixteenth century places storytelling at the heart of its practice.[20] It is not an exaggeration to consider the therapeutic value of storytelling as a homeric insight.[21] Thus, in narrative medicine, patients and health professionals are

19   Brodsky, *On Grief and Reason*, 23.
20   To name just a few examples, Narrative Medicine has been taught at Columbia University since the 1980s, and Medical Humanities are a part of the Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University, while in the United Kingdom, research in Medical Humanities is conducted both at Oxford and at the University of Glasgow.
21   Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, chapter 11: "The ancient Greeks revered Homer, the singer of tales, as a doctor of the soul. In the *Odyssey*, Homer paints a (self-)portrait of the epic singer whose healing art is to tell the stories of Troy with the truth that causes the old soldier, Odysseus, to weep and weep again. (*Odyssey* 8:78ff)" [Why and how does narrative heal?]

encouraged to tell and listen to stories of illness. The key to humanist medicine is the human being at the center of care – not an individual part or organ, but the entire sentient person, with memory and traumas, but also with resilience. Narrative medicine, humanist medicine, and medical humanities confirm the value of humanist training for both disciplines. The Renaissance humanists did not limit themselves in their inquiry and neither should we.

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ABSTRACT

The humanist tradition developed in the Renaissance that not only cultivated the human spirit but applied its knowledge for the purpose of improving society across various humanist and scientific disciplines is not altogether extinct. Using the erudite Swiss physician and botanist Anton Schneeberger (1530–1581) as a founding father of sorts of modern humanist medicine confronted with war, I discuss the recuperation of humanism in the twentieth century, first in the thought of psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) who, under war circumstances, produced a work whose analytical acumen can still be used today, and subsequently in the creation of the discipline of narrative medicine that, unwittingly perhaps, echoes Schneeberger's insight into the imperative of inserting storytelling into the practice of both patient- and physician-centered medicine. In the background of the argument is the existence of a new society, a martial society that functions as if there were war despite its ostensible state of peace.

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

Krepitev humanizma v kontekstu borilne družbe:
Homer, Anton Schneeberger, Kurt Lewin in narativna medicina

Renesančna humanistična tradicija, ki ni le vzgajala človeškega duha, temveč je znanje v različnih humanističnih in znanstvenih disciplinah uporabljala za izboljšanje družbe, ni povsem izumrla. Izobraženi švicarski zdravnik in botanik Anton Schneeberger (1530–1581) velja za nekakšnega ustanovitelja sodobne humanistične medicine, soočene z vojno. S pomočjo njegovega primera članek razpravlja o oživljanju humanizma v dvajsetem stoletju. Najprej v zapuščini psihologa Kurta Lewina (1890–1947), ki je v vojnih razmerah ustvaril delo, katerega analitično ost je mogoče uporabiti še danes, nato pa v luči nastanka narativne medicine, ki morda nevede odraža Schneebergerjev uvid o nujnosti, da se pripovedovanje zgodb vključi v medicinsko prakso, naj bo osrediščena na pacienta ali na zdravnika. V ozadju tega argumenta je obstoj nove družbe, borilne družbe, ki se obnaša, kot da je v vojni, dozdevnemu miru navkljub.

Examining Humanity in Bernard Beckett's Genesis: Anaximander, Plato, Classical Philosophy and Gothic in Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults

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New Zealand author Bernard Beckett's young adult novel *Genesis* (2006) blends classical philosophy and Gothic tropes in a dystopian novel about the nature and ends of humanity. It is a curious work, presented in the form of philosophical dialogue and set in a future world known as The Republic, in which robots have triumphed over humanity and formed a new society based on rational order. Yet sinister underpinnings to their society and their emotional origin--story, which forms the core of this novel, show both that their rational world order is built on lies, deception, and murder, and that the human soul is harder to be rid of than they imagine. The clash between robots and humans is depicted as a clash between reason and passion, and also a clash between a classical calm (seen in the Republic's emphasis on classical philosophy) and the Gothic turbulence associated with the dark, but emotional, side of humanity. *Genesis* is a compelling reflection on the nature of the human soul, aimed at young readers. This paper will trace how that reflection plays out through Beckett's use of classical and Gothic ideals in an unusually thought-provoking dystopian work for young readers.

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To summarize the plot: *Genesis* is set far in the future, on the island of Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand). Its protagonist, a bright and ambitious student, named Anaximander, is being interviewed for admission into a prestigious Academy. It is the elite institution of her society, which is known as The Republic. The Republic, we gradually discover, is post-human. Its citizens, including Anaximander, are artificially intelligent beings, robots proud to have overcome their original creators, the humans. They are also vigilant in eliminating any lurking remnants of humanity, i.e., "mutant" robots infected by the virus of the human soul. Chillingly, they do so by deception – luring intelligent mutants to "examination" for entrance into the Academy. In the final stages of the novel, Anaximander, who believed she had been excelling, discovers that there is no Academy. Instead, she has been selected because she is a mutant. Anaximander is put to death, her head disconnected from her body by her tutor, Pericles.

Like the rest of her society, Anaximander is a robot. Her special examination subject is a man from the last days of humanity: a human soldier turned rebel leader, Adam Forde (2058–77), who spent the end of his life in captivity. He was punished for his rebellion by being used to test a new form of artificial intelligence, the prototype robot named Art. The records from this testing give Anaximander much of her material to present Adam's debates with Art as a holographic animation. We discover that Adam persuades Art to escape, but when soldiers surround the pair, Adam asks Art to kill him. This Art does, and before he is captured, he downloads his program into the computer matrix, enabling the development of an AI society which takes over from humanity. Or at least, so the official story goes. Later, we discover that Art planned to kill Adam and that the robot take-over was a violent, premeditated attack. We also discover that Adam has not gone quietly. In the final moments of his life, when he is killed by Art, he looks into the robot's eyes and transmits aspects of his soul into Art's operating system. When Art later downloads his program into the system, he downloads Adam's soul as well. The Examiners refer to Adam's soul as a virus in the system, and those who are infected by him as mutants, as Pericles explains:

> It is my job to find potential mutants and prepare them for the examination. They have not been examining your suitability for The Academy, Anaximander. The Academy accepts no new members.[1]

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1   Beckett, *Genesis,* 143.

As Pericles kills Anaximander, removing her head from her body, he is carrying out what he believes to be a necessary task to keep his society safe. It is also a secret task, for most citizens of The Republic only know about the false version of their society's origins. Few of them are interested enough in the figure of Adam Forde to find out more. Those who do, like Anaximander, are judged to be mutants, to be infected by the virus that Adam has passed to Art. That virus – of individuality, of power, of non-conformity, of free-thought, of hate, of love – of the soul, or spirit, or essence of *humanity*, is what the Examiners eradicate on behalf of their AI society and is the subject at the core of the novel.

Subtexts and ironies abound in *Genesis*: here, we have a novel about beginnings and endings – the ending of Anaximander's life comes as she discovers the truth about her society's origins (and its original sin). Instead of being a peaceful, rational society, The Republic originated in violent destruction, when the robots slaughtered humans and took their place. Leaders of The Republic present their society as sinless – and therefore peaceful and rational – and do so through a false origin myth, in which Art peacefully overcomes Adam and downloads his program into the system, enabling the robots to rise and overcome the profoundly flawed humanity. The Examiners tell Anaximander this lie is necessary: "So long as you do not know the evil you are capable of, there is a good chance you will never embrace it."[2] However, as Anaximander discovers, The Republic is based on something worse than a lie: namely, the systematic elimination of any robot who has inherited human traits (or souls). In short, a horrific genocide. The novel closes on a moment of horror, as Anaximander's head is disconnected from her body. But as it is, she looks deep into her tutor's eyes, believing she sees in them sorrow and compassion. Perhaps in doing so, she infects him with her soul (for the soul and compassion seem to be transmitted by looks), suggesting that humanity will continue to survive.

The plot of *Genesis* is deliberately puzzling: it unfolds through a pair of nested narratives, moving backward and forward through time (the present of Anaximander's examination and the past of Adam's actions, inquisition, escape, and death). The narratives are presented as a series of dialogues, the truth and its interpretation are contested, and meaning is continually shifting and uncertain. Many plot elements take time to become clear, with delayed moments of realization a crucial part of Beckett's narrative approach. With *Ge-*

2 Ibid., 142.

nesis, Beckett presents his readers with a puzzle. He claims it has friendly intentions, that it is merely "about the things that puzzle me, as my books are in the end. I hope it puzzles you too, in a friendly sort of way."[3] Packing a great many puzzles into its 144 pages, *Genesis* pushes us to think hard about what it means to be human – in particular what it means to feel, to dream, and to have a soul.

In their discussions, Anaximander, Adam, and Art discuss whether humanity is beautiful or whether it contains the seeds of monstrosity. What is a thought? What is the soul? Is the word soul simply another word for ideas and thought? Where do actions come from? From impulse or thought? From feeling or reason? Does Adam's violence come from instinct or passion? Does Art kill him? Or does Adam win, and repeatedly win, despite The Republic's best efforts to control his virus? These and more puzzles are layered throughout *Genesis.* Nevertheless, at its core is this: is humanity, as represented by Adam Forde, monstrous (i.e., instinctual, irrational, emotional), in contrast with the compellingly rational robots represented by Art? Or is something else at play?

Genesis invokes the clash between reason and passion, science and faith, empiricism and superstition. The novel's appeal to rationality is part of its form – presented as a series of dialogues, not unlike the dialogues of Socrates drawing both on the conventions of examinations and on the tradition of philosophical dialogue. *Genesis* also engages with irrationality, through religion, superstition, and passion, through a Gothic interior, in which one finds the core elements of human behavior: love, death, killing, sin, life, and belief in the soul. If humanity is monstrous, as the robot examiners believe, it must be destroyed (even if this action makes their own society monstrous). This tension between reason and passion, between conformity and non-conformity, between society and the individual, plays out in the novel as part of young adult fiction's concern with what it means to be human, what it means to fit into society and yet remain an individual.

If Beckett hopes that his young readers enjoy his novel's puzzle, what purpose does that puzzle play for them? There are a few options, each of them drawing from different literary traditions. On the one hand, there is the tradition of philosophical debate, enshrined in the dialogues of Plato and his Socrates. On the other, there is the tradition of Biblical faith and human passion, visible in its title, *Genesis,* drawn from the first book of the Bible, and the

3   As stated in Longacre Press's *Genesis* resource kit.

name of Anaximander's subject, Adam – the first human in the Bible, and perhaps the last, or only, human in the novel. There are traditions of young adult fiction in which a young protagonist (here: Anaximander), finds him- or herself growing as an individual thinker in the face of challenges of societal hierarchy and orthodoxy.

Moreover, there are traditions of Gothic science fiction, works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which explore monstrous technological creations that challenge conceptions of what it means to be alive, to have a mind, a soul, and indeed a society. All these genres (and more) are intertwined in *Genesis*, which is highly post-modern and intertextual. This paper focuses on three main strands: classical philosophy, Gothic narrative, and young adult fiction, as *Genesis* is most interesting in its engagement with these forms – a classical purity struggling with Gothic passion, in the mind of a teenage robot.

THE RATIONAL FRAME: CLASSICAL PURITY AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

Genesis draws on a vision of classical antiquity (particularly, though not entirely, Greek), in which philosophical debate is a key part of reflection about the nature of society. The author signals this early on in the novel through the names of key characters. The protagonist, a girl named Anaximander, is named after the scientist Anaximander of Miletus, who sought the origins of all life. Her examination and her special subject, Adam Forde, can be seen as connecting to the novel's title and its key mystery: what is at the heart of The Republic's identity and *modus operandi*. Other characters, namely Plato, Socrates, Pericles, Thales, are also named after well-known philosophical and political thinkers. The setting is spare. Though she lives in a high-tech futuristic society, it is not hard to envisage Anaximander and her examiners sitting among classical columns or wearing chitons or togas. This is a kind of classical "purity" that has become traditional and is used in science fiction to indicate a kind of chilly intellectualism – admirable for its elegance, polished clean by the passage of time (but also worrying, because of a sense that it is fragmentary and slightly inhuman).[4]

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4   Geoffrey Miles sees in this purity a connection to the fascistic classicism often presented in dystopian fiction, such as Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*, which suggests for him that "Beckett is endorsing the philosopher Karl

That chilly intellectualism is vital to the tone of *Genesis*. In his review of the novel, Patrick Ness (himself a distinguished author of young adult dystopian science fiction) writes: "Beckett has written a very different young adult novel – assured, cool, almost cold – that will make smart teenagers feel very respected."[5] He refers to the novel's presentation: a frame narrative in which rational debate seems to be the prime concern – as they would be during an examination. As Anaximander presents her interpretation of Adam Forde's life and is interrogated by the panel of Examiners, it seems that both parties emphasize truth and clarity, seeing themselves as part of a grand tradition of philosophical debate. The Republic links itself to the thinkers of ancient Greece through the names of its main characters and thus gives a sense of connection to a grand tradition (and with it, continuity and stability). As Sarah Annes Brown observes, using classical figures (names, ideas, architecture, civilizations) is a common trope, giving a "science-fictional frisson," reminding us of the decay of former civilizations, and looking towards the end of our own.[6] As she notes, the fall of the Roman Empire offers an incredibly vivid set of images warning about the passage of time and the nature of societal decay. While for many, the ruins of classical civilization seem to have an elegant polish and purity, in Gothic fiction, they offer a haunting warning against hubris: all civilizations think they will be the one to survive through time.

Such looking backward and forward is a crucial part of *Genesis*. As Anaximander provides a contextual history of Adam Forde's life, she tells the story of a decaying human society and its replacement by new ideas, drawing on ancient Greek philosophy. In the early parts of the 21st century, she tells the Examiners, the world was being ravaged by war and plague. Isolated in the far South of the Pacific Ocean, Aotearoa escaped the main ravages and sealed itself off to refugees. Under the leadership of a billionaire calling himself Plato, who drew on the theories of the Greek philosopher Plato to develop a new Republic, an orderly society was formed. "Forward towards the Past" is the new Plato's motto.[7] "The Republic," as it became known, used rigid social control to maintain stability and stasis. It was divided into four social classes (Labourers, Soldiers, Technicians, and

Popper's influential view of Plato as the founding father of totalitarianism."
    Miles, "Utopia," 91.
5   Patrick Ness, "*Genesis*," *The Guardian*, 5/10/2009, available online.
6   Sarah Annes Brown, "'Plato's Stepchildren'," 416.
7   Beckett, *Genesis,* 15.

Philosophers) and encouraged social control by abolishing the concept of family. Children were raised in their social groups according to education in mathematics and genetics and a strict regime of physical training. This last, as Geoffrey Miles and Babette Pütz note, draws on aspects of Spartan culture, and the structure of The Republic has much in common also with that of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), in which children are prepared from birth to accept the social class into which they are arbitrarily divided.[8] Miles comments that the "original Plato's *Republic* was a thought experiment in defining the nature of justice," in contrast with the world in *Genesis*, shaped as a response to the threat of extinction.[9] Pütz further points out that "Beckett uses allusions to the foundation myth of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's *Republic*, the so-called 'Noble Lie,'" by means of which he and Socrates planned to "get the whole state, ideally all citizens and the leaders, but at least the citizens, to believe in their shared national identity and in the state's class system."[10] *Genesis* is aware of the double-edged nature of uncritically aligning a new social order with one that has met its end.

Perhaps Adam Forde sees through the "Noble Lie." At any rate, he rebels against the hierarchies and divisions of The Republic and becomes both a popular hero and a target for punishment and destruction. Anaximander recounts the actions that set him apart from other humans and led to his imprisonment and his use as a testing device for a new form of robot – presented in his debates with Art, a prototype robot. Robots are newly developed by a member of the Philosopher class, William, to support human society (and ultimately to supplant the Labouring, Soldiering, and Technician classes).[11] Debate piles upon debate – in their nested narratives, Anaximander and Adam both debate their interlocutors, debating for their lives as it turns out. With only a few narrative interjections, the novel is presented almost entirely in dialogue form – a further nod to classical tradition and the dialogues of Plato and Socrates.

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8   Miles, "Utopia," 87–111; Pütz, "Classical Influences in Bernard Beckett's *Genesis*, *August* and *Lullaby*," passim.

9   Miles, "Utopia," 91.

10 Pütz, "When is a Robot a Human?" (forthcoming).

11 A move that never ends well for humanity – witness the Golgafrinchans in Douglas Adams, *Life, the Universe and Everything*, who remove a seeming useless third of their population – hairdressers, telephone sanitizers, marketers – only to be wiped out by a disease caught from an un-sanitized telephone.

It may be that *Genesis*'s dialogic qualities are responsible for the "cool, almost cold" aspects of the novel that Ness observes. Certainly, the emphasis on education, rigour, and philosophical debate promotes ideas of control and mind, instead of body and feeling. But nothing is as it seems in *Genesis*. Anaximander is continually unsure about the impact of her carefully thought out statements, and though she is a good student, excited by her subject, and confident in her abilities as a historian, in the slippery matter of interpretation she finds herself entering dangerous waters.

The original Greek philosopher, Anaximander of Miletus, wrote a prose treatise *On the Nature of Things*, which "included an account of the origins of human life."[12] Anaximander of Miletus was a student of Thales, the first recorded Greek scientist, and advanced his theory of the place of the world in the universe – being the first to map a systematic understanding of the cosmos, and believing that all life sprang from a primordial seed he called "apeiron."[13] The parallel is clear – Beckett's Anaximander is on a quest to join the Academy, to find out how the world works, and be part of an elite Philosopher class who "built the blueprint for the future."[14] Instead, she learns the truth about the origins of robotic life: that it is the product of a hideous combination of human violence and robot adaptability.

> *Anaximander:* Adam knew, didn't he? The look on his face, when he was strangled, that was a look of victory. He knew that just as Art had managed to export his program, something of him was destined to become eternal. He made Art look him in the eyes. He made him taste the power. He deliberately let the virus loose.[15]

The robot Republic seeks to root out the virus that is Adam's bequest, finding students who are "aggressive in their quest for knowledge"[16] and who sense a connection with Adam Forde. The Philosopher class promotes several lies, including both that robots are naturally peaceful and that Adam was defeated: these lies, as much as the story they conceal, are responsible for The Republic's ongoing murder of its young citizens. This is another paradox or puzzle: if one society

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12   Pütz, "Classical Influences," passim.
13   See e.g., Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. Thales also appears in *Genesis*, as Anaximander's best friend.
14   Beckett, *Genesis,* 61.
15   Ibid.*,* 142.
16   Ibid., 143.

is to thrive, another must die, but the cost to the survivors is also tremendous. This Republic is rational, but it is also ruthless.

"THE LAST DUBIOUS GIFT FROM A FADING PAST" – GENESIS AS GOTHIC

In contrast with this chilly frame is the life that pulses within *Genesis,* and which I associate with the novel's Gothic elements. The genre of Gothic is fascinated with life, and the borders of life are surrounded by death and threats. Art sees the soul as an essentially Gothic element of human ideology: "the soul you speak of, in turn it speaks of fear," – and that fear of course is the fear of death, the absence of life. But what life do the robot members of The Republic have, if they do not possess souls? Geoffrey Miles, in writing about the novel's dystopian elements, points out that we must "wonder how long a society can survive when it must kill off its most promising and creative members."[17] The elimination of the fear of death (contained in the soul), condemns robot society to a lifeless and stagnant existence. Indeed, Beckett suggests, stasis *is* a kind of death. Furthermore, the Examiners reveal that they will kill Adam as often as it takes, for as long as it takes. They also reveal that there is an essential deadness at the core of their society – it is a society that cannot evolve, cannot move forward. Despite lacking souls, and therefore lacking the fear of death, the robots are in the grip of death.

While *Genesis* is not specifically a Gothic text, its preoccupation with death and the fear of death gives it a menace, both at the level of broader society and at the level of the individual. Adding to the novel's tension, Anaximander and Adam both face death and die (and do so in confined spaces). The broader dystopian horror of The Republic, based, as Babette Pütz notes, on an ignoble lie that hides to its people its violent origins, makes itself felt in these individual moments. The Republic's official doctrine is that it is *humanity* that has monstrous (Gothic) qualities: it is humanity that falls prey to plague, to violence, to horror, to cruelty, to superstition, and to fears.[18] This is in stark contrast with their self-image of a rational, peaceful society. However, if it is based on a lie, then The Republic is surely as monstrous as the society it replaced?

17 Miles, "Utopia," 93.
18 Beckett, *Genesis,* 15.

Within the elegant format of *Genesis* (its emphasis on examination, dialogue, and reflection) lie both unease and horror. The relations between the frame and inner narrative highlight this tension – between smooth futuristic rationality and rough historical violence. Once one notices the Gothic elements, it is hard to unsee them: throughout both narratives run a checklist of Gothic techniques that emphasize what Brantlinger calls a "break from reality" through "internalizing conventions."

> The Gothic romance is characterized by a set of literary conventions that internalize or subjectify events, thus emphasizing the break from reality. These internalizing conventions include frame-tale narration; the use of unreliable narrators; the pattern of the double or of the ghostly, demonic alter ego; claustrophobic motifs of imprisonment, secret passages, coffins and catacombs; and metaphors that liken events to demonic possession or – what is usually the same thing – to lunacy. These are the conventions of the inward journey, into the heart of darkness of the narrator or the protagonist, through which a Gothic romance becomes an analogue for a nightmare or a delirious dream vision.[19]

Brantlinger notes the elements of uncertainty, of reality shaking itself apart, through the Gothic journey into a heart of darkness. Clues to the nature of Anaximander's journey can be seen in the motifs of imprisonment that pervade the novel – the action takes place in a series of enclosed spaces: her examination room, the laboratory in which Adam and Art conduct their debates, the watchtower where Adam shoots his fellow guard, the cave in which he and the refugee Eve hide. The layers of frame narration not only emphasize a post-modern uncertainty about truth and meaning but hint at dark secrets lurking within, delaying the final revelation of Gothic darkness to the novel's very end.

Infected individuals, the Examiners tell Anaximander at the end of the novel, are identifiable because they are fascinated by Adam Forde, because they demonstrate aggression in seeking knowledge. Anaximander has already given herself away to the examiners: her holographic reconstruction of Adam's trial and his debates with Art reveals her pleasure in scholarship, her empathy with this long-dead rebel, and her empathy for the passions of humanity that he exhibits. As Anaximander sympathetically presents it, Adam's story is one of a powerful individual who breaks out of a society that enforces con-

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19   Brantlinger, "The Gothic Origins of Science Fiction," 35.

formity. Key moments reveal Adam's passions. As a young teenager, he makes friends with a girl named Rebekah and follows her when she is transferred on assignment. He is demoted to the Soldier class, and once he has completed his training, he is given the role of a coastguard. From his position on the cliffs overlooking the seas near Wellington, his task is to shoot any refugees who may have made the perilous journey to Aotearoa. One day, meeting the "huge and frightened" eyes of a refugee girl named Eve, he turned his gun on Joseph, his fellow guard, and escaped with her, becoming a symbol of resistance. Anaximander reports that Adam describes this moment as a "flash, a realization. He told the authorities that he did not decide to fire, but rather heard the report of the gun echo through the small room [of the watchtower]."[20]

These moments, in which Adam acts instinctually out of empathy and fellow-feeling, confirm his humanity, coming from a kind of Romantic humanism. They can also seem monstrously irrational, coming from a brutal, almost bestial side of human nature. They place Adam outside of society and its rules. This is another example of *Genesis*'s emphasis on a puzzling paradox: contradictory interpretations or readings make it hard to figure out what motivates Adam and what the novel promotes as ideal. Anaximander presents this moment as stemming from a kind of compassion for the refugee Eve. Her Examiner asks her: "Are you saying a society wracked by plague is preferable to one wracked by indifference?" She replies: "I think, in the circumstances, it is impossible to justify the romanticism of Adam's actions, although, given our history, we all [i.e., members of robot society] have cause to be thankful for them."[21] Uncertainty surrounds the moment. To understand what happened, Anaximander is sifting through historical records: surveillance videos, court reports, Adam's testimony. If Adam's action in helping Eve is the one that allows the plague into human society, leading to the need for robots and justifying their replacement of humanity later on, then the robots do have "cause to be thankful." What Adam sees in Eve's eyes is also uncertain. Perhaps she infects Adam through the power of her gaze. Perhaps Adam is already infected and, meeting her eyes, realizes what he must do to survive. The fugitives are found in a cave, and in the ensuing shootout, many soldiers are killed. Adam is put on trial and convicted.

20   Beckett, *Genesis,* 33.
21   Ibid., 38.

The robot Republic indeed has much to be thankful for in Adam's actions. Later, Adam is further punished by being used as a test subject in the development of the robots who will later take over the world. One of the (human) Philosophers, Philosopher William, chooses to put him into confinement with Art, where they debate the nature of intelligence, power, and the soul. Anaximander carefully reconstructs their discussion from the available records. This debate is aggressive and competitive as if both players know how significant the stakes are. Its focus on the soul as the essence of humanity emphasizes this further, when Art claims that by believing in the soul, humanity makes our fear of death explicit:

> *Art:* The soul is your most ancient Idea. Any mind that knows itself also knows the body which houses it is decaying. It knows the end will come. And a mind forced to contemplate such emptiness is a force of rare creativity. The soul can be found in every tribe, in every great tradition.[22]

For Art, the soul is simply an Idea, a concept used to manipulate humans, associated with the fear of death rather than a generative power moved by love or creativity:

> It is not consciousness you cling to, for as I have shown you, consciousness is easily fashioned. It is eternity you long for. From the moment the soul was promised, humanity has been unable to look away. This soul you speak of, in turn it speaks of fear. And the Idea that flourishes in times of fear is the Idea that will never be dislodged. The soul offers you comfort, and in return asks only for your ignorance.[23]

Art's dismissiveness aside, he is right to point to humanity's many flaws – after all, humanity in *Genesis* destroys itself through fear, superstition, war, pestilence, plague, and imprisonment. Nevertheless, the soul survives. It does so in the form of Adam. While Art sets out to demolish the soul, to claim it is merely an idea, and as such no different from a computer program or virus, Adam proves him wrong, tricking Art into killing him and infecting the robot with the very soul he claims does not exist. This causes the robot to violate Philosopher William's Imperative "to cause no harm to another

22   Ibid., 108.
23   Ibid., 109.

conscious being"[24] by killing a human. This act infects Art with the monstrousness of murder. Furthermore, it infects all future robots made according to his program: in short, haunting robot society with the legacy of murder, making it monstrous.

Here, one can see the power of Gothic science fiction in operation, raising serious philosophical questions about the nature of good and evil, the power of humans to create new life, and the nature of monstrosity. Are humans more violent and devious than robots? Have robots, by learning to kill and violating the Imperative of Philosopher William, taken on the worst forms of their creators? Have they ceased to be rational beings and instead taken on the worst form of irrationality – namely violent destructiveness? Or, in their rational approach to killing, have they superseded humanity? Is a clinical, premeditated killing worse than an instinctual kind of violence?

Furthermore, as Art's metal fingers close around Adam's throat, Adam looks Art in the eyes, infecting Art with a second virus – this time the virus of human feeling or soul. On his face is an expression of triumph. Be it interpreted as an act of love or compassion, it is in forcing the robot to gaze into the soul of a human that Adam infects his future robotic society with the elements of humanity.[25] Anaximander is only one of many fellow robots infected by Adam's virus. Only Adam's descendants – only those robots with a soul – are examined; all are eliminated. The Academy exists only for this purpose, as her tutor Pericles explains to her. The robot society is monstrous, having murderous origins, having killed its creator species, and setting up those who inherit the qualities of the creator to be murdered over and over again. This is a Gothic breakdown of the boundaries between good and evil; the robot society, hiding the evidence of its original sin, commits that sin again and again.

FEAR ITSELF: ANAXIMANDER'S CHOICE

As a work of fiction for young readers, *Genesis* highlights the choices that young protagonists make under challenging circumstan-

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24 Ibid., 127.
25 This might be a subtle literary homage to Philip K. Dick's very first published genre story, "Beyond Lies the Wub" from 1952, where a wub, an intelligent and jovial pig-like creature capable of discussing Odysseus, transfers his consciousness to his human killer during one final gaze.

ces. Beckett highlights heroic moments in which both Adam and Anaximander make acts of free will, even though they know they will bring them into conflict with the status quo. As a young protagonist, Anaximander is eager to prove herself worthy to join the elite, and is conscious that she is somehow "different" from her ordinary peers. She likes to spend time alone, walking in her favorite place, "a ridge up above the city," where she enjoys the "breeze coming in off the sea"[26] and takes in the spectacular sunsets:

> It was the view. From the hilltops you could see the water sparkling silver, and dark against it the rusting outlines of the huge pylons, which had once supported the Great Sea Fence [from the days of Aotearoa's defences against the plague]. To the west, the ruins of the Old City, overgrown and crumbling, being called back to the earth. A beautiful sight too, Anax thought, although she had never heard anyone else describe it that way.[27]

The soul is more than a fear of death: it is the love of life, of others, and of beauty. Anaximander's enjoyment of learning and interest in life contrast with her friends who show their compliance to the status quo by suddenly developing a "careful nonchalance which appeared one day without warning, spreading through her classmates like the plague."[28]

At the end of the novel, Pericles informs Anaximander that he had selected her because she showed the tell-tale signs of infection by Adam's virus – her enjoyment of aesthetics, of intellectual debate, her sense of being set apart. He plays upon her dreams of being unique: "Pericles had told her all along that there was more to her than she realised and now, with the examination finally here, she could stop doubting it. She knew this story so well. She couldn't imagine knowing it better. She would not let him down."[29] It is not difficult to identify with Anaximander, eagerly studying for entry into the prestigious Academy, desiring to join an elite group who help to shape her world, feeling exam nerves, overthinking everything.

It is also not difficult to identify with Anaximander's desire for free will. *Genesis* emphasizes the need for young adults to feel able to make their own decisions, and to know their minds, even if their

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26   Beckett, *Genesis,* 58.
27   Ibid., 58.
28   Ibid., 57.
29   Ibid., 61.

free will means their death. Though Anaximander is initially lured into the Academy by Pericles, who preys on her interest in ideas and affinity with Adam Forde, she too is capable of free thought. Indeed, that is her danger – the virus that Adam has infected the robots with, by looking into the eyes of Art, contains individualistic qualities – violence and love, but also freedom of thought and freedom of choice. At key moments during her examination, Anaximander realizes that she is making unorthodox choices, and while she revels in the excitement of her original thinking (another kind of original sin, in the world of The Republic), she is aware there are risks involved. Indeed, to have a soul is to take risks, like Adam and Anaximander prove.

The achievement of *Genesis* is to exhibit a teenager under pressure calmly thinking through her society's problems and balancing her emotions with a rational understanding of her situation. She weighs the risks against the opportunity and weighs her individual experience with the collective needs of The Republic and The Academy.

> Anax thought of her own upbringing. She thought of the life outside. Her friends treated her with respect, and that respect was returned. Her teachers were kindly, and work was a duty gladly received in a land where leisure time was plentiful. The streets were safe now, day and night. The individual was trusted, no bounds were placed upon their curiosity. Anax only had to look at herself to see that. Hadn't she been given unlimited access to the files of Adam Forde even when it became clear that her findings would challenge the orthodoxy? The fear had not gone, the fear could never go, but it had been the great contribution of The Academy to balance fear with opportunity.[30]

This passage has obvious parallels to the Book of Genesis in the Bible:

> The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Gen. 2:15–17)

Running through *Genesis*, of course, are religious themes, the chief among them ideas about the Creation and Fall. Tatjana Scha-

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30   Beckett, *Genesis,* 113.

efer, noting that it is Adam, the human, who gives the divine bre-
ath to the robot Art, sees the humans of *Genesis* as "quasi-divine"
– it is they who have created and given life to their robot succes-
sors. (Like Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll?)[31] Indeed, Anaximan-
der seems to see Adam, at the very least, as quasi-divine. For her
holographic presentations to the Examiners, she highlights his
hair, makes his eyes extra blue, in ways that show how much she
admires him. Later, when it is revealed to the reader that Anaxi-
mander is one of the robot species, built in the form of an orang-
-utan, she looks at herself, seeing her "hairy body, its protruding
stomach, and short bowed legs, and for the first time fe[els] un-
easy, foreign."[32] She feels suddenly ugly and ashamed, contrasting
herself (and her species) with the "graceful, animal proportions"
of Adam's form. This moment of shame is again reminiscent of
the Bible – when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of knowledge and
realized their nakedness. Anaximander's sudden revulsion at what
she knew all along, namely that "it had been decided that the an-
droids would craft not just their faces, but their bodies too, in
the image of the orang-utan. It was a collective joke, a deliberate
sign of disrespect to the human species that had framed them,
and up to that moment she had been proud of her heritage."[33] At
this moment, Anaximander, and with her, the reader, realizes the
extent of Art's transgression. The Examiner explains: "In the Aca-
demy we like to call it the Original Sin. It is our little joke."[34] Art,
the first successful android, transmits the ability to transgress to
all subsequent robots.[35]

Anaximander, learning this, finds out that her society is at least
as sinful as humanity and at least as infected by the desire to sur-
vive. Her response is fascinating. Given the opportunity to renounce
Adam, she does not, knowing that it will result in her death. This
is a crucial moment in the novel when Anaximander acts out of a
sense of free will, knowing that the darkness will swallow her. As a
novel for young adults, *Genesis* here encapsulates the dilemma that
all teenagers come to grips with at some point: how best to recon-
cile their desires and ambitions with the possibilities their society
allows them. For Anaximander, this means coming to terms with

31   Schaefer, "Religion," 156.
32   Beckett, *Genesis,* 139.
33   Ibid., 139.
34   Ibid., 142.
35   See Schaefer for a detailed analysis of the religious implications of *Genesis*.

the dark side and finding a way to stand up against it. What Art depicts as a kind of Gothic emotionality in his debates with Adam is the free expression of an individual mind, seeing through social assumptions, and acting for itself. Because of her association with Adam, because she too possesses a soul, she can act individually, even if it means her death.

As Geoffrey Miles comments, the broader tragedy of *Genesis* is that the society depicted in its pages is eliminating its most creative citizens. Anaximander is informed, thoughtful, considerate, creative, and optimistic. Unlike her classmates, who adopt a careful "nonchalance," she has not given herself over entirely to the status quo of socialization, and in her desire to join the Academy, she betrays a desire to influence society – to be creative, and to change things.

For Art, the founder of the robot race, change is to be avoided. It is a source of fear, and the robots of The Republic believe it brought down humanity. As Anaximander explains:

> The pre-Republican world had fallen prey to fear. Change had come too quickly for the people. Beliefs became more fundamental, boundaries more solidly drawn. In time, no person was left to be an individual: all were marked by nationality, by colour, by creed, by generation, by class. Fear drifted in on the rising tide.
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> Art was right. In the end, living is defined by dying. Bookended by oblivion, we are caught in the vice of terror, squeezed to bursting by the approaching end. Fear is ever-present, waiting to be called to the surface. Change brought fear, and fear brought destruction.[36]

The Republic is built to overcome this fear – of change, of death, of a life bookended by oblivion. However, as Anaximander comes to discover, rejecting change causes a different kind of decay, especially when it comes to suppressing the truth. As her examination takes her deeper and deeper into the recesses of her society's mind, she discovers "the dank stench of a truth deprived of sunlight" – in other words, the violent origins of The Republic and its ongoing murderous demands. She begins to understand, with terror, how high the stakes of her examination are. Here, one can understand the importance of her name, influenced by the Greek philosopher Anaximander of Miletus, a scientist searching for life's origins. Anaximander's

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36   Beckett, *Genesis,* 112.

quest is for the origins of the society in which she lives; hence the novel's name.

Babette Pütz sees in Anaximander a figure of great optimism – she sees her examination as a kind of Pandora's box, filled with evils but also containing the seeds of hope. Though her death is tragic, it is a death she has chosen on her terms.[37] As Kay Sambell notes, it is a rare work of young adult dystopian fiction that ends without an element of such optimism.[38] Though *Genesis* contains many allusions to darkly dystopian novels for adults, such as *1984* and *Brave New World*, in which surveillance and social engineering serve to rob individuals of happiness and self-determination, *Genesis* does leave its readers with some sense of hope – at least if they consider the continued survival of the human race a positive. Anaximander's story may end with her disconnection, but she is not the only member of The Republic who has been infected with Adam's spirit. (There is Soc, for instance, another student she meets in the hallway during a break in the examination). The very existence of the Academy, expensive and complicated to run, proves that the human spirit, or soul, is hard to contain.

Furthermore, Anaximander is intelligent enough to know that she has a choice. She has continually been offered the choice – to follow the orthodox line, to suppress her individuality. But the soul (be it human or robot) cannot be suppressed, so her refusal to kowtow to the Examiners is a kind of heroic triumph, one that reinforces the idea of humanity for young readers.

EVERYBODY YOU MEET IS ENGAGED IN A BATTLE

In a blog post about what he hopes his children will gain in their time at school, Beckett turns to another latter-day avatar of the real Plato for advice, citing a widely misattributed quotation: "Plato once said: Be kind, for everybody you meet is engaged in a battle." He explains:

> For me, Plato offers two messages. The first, that kindness flows from empathy. Nobody's life is entirely easy. We will all meet fear, loneliness, and grief. And so we all need kindness, all the time. The human being appears to have evolved a unique capacity for imagining our

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37 Pütz, "When is a Robot a Human?"
38 Sambell, "Presenting the Case for Social Change," passim.

way into the lives of others, to understand, at least partially, the world from another's point of view. . . . Or so I hope. Plato's second message, if you think about it, involves resilience. If everybody we meet is engaged in a battle, then so too are we. Life will be hard, sometimes.[39]

Genesis is a novel about that battle and the hardness of life. In it, a teenage protagonist learns just how hard life can be. The novel ends with her death, as Pericles, her favorite teacher, disconnects her by ripping her head from her body. It ends on a note of terror, as she dies. However, immediately before that, she has proven her worth as a heroine, feeling empathy for Pericles, who is doing the job he has to do. She looks into his eyes and sees sorrow in them. She may be projecting her own emotions on to him (indeed, another view of Pericles is that he has well and truly betrayed a brilliant student). As the refugee Eve to Adam, or Adam to Art before her, she may be transmitting the virus of humanity to him. She demonstrates the resilience of the human spirit, even as she faces darkness.

Teenagers, facing an increasing number of examinations in which their future careers (and lives) seem to be at stake, can identify with many elements in Anaximander's situation. Her realization that she is fighting vainly for her life and that rather than having a chance at elevation, she has been selected for elimination, may strike a chord with readers anxious about pre-existing social strata or feeling that their teachers do not understand or care about them. Many young adult novels exploit this feeling of powerlessness and alienation through presentations of bad or wicked teachers who clash with young protagonists. It is a trope that connects with the fear, expressed in dystopian fiction, that the system is rigged against the individual and individual freedom. In The Republic, the robot-world of *Genesis*, this is the case: individuality is a disease, and those suffering from it must be eliminated. "Surely there must be another way,"[40] says Anaximander, just before the teacher she loves disconnects her, concluding the novel on a moment of climax. She also meets his eyes, viewing in them sorrowful compassion. She may be projecting her feelings onto him. She may also be transmitting the virus of the human soul into his operating system, for as the refugee Eve has done with Adam, and Adam has done with Art, using the eyes as the window to the soul infects potentially receptive hearts or minds.

39   Beckett, "The Wisdom of Greeks," available online.
40   Beckett, *Genesis,* 144.

Within the lucid framework of *Genesis* lurks a lurid plot. The overlaps in *Genesis* between reason and emotion, society and the individual, the word and the action, clarity and confusion, the past and the future, science fiction and the Gothic, make this short novel a powerful experience. Moreover, if the novel is about the things that puzzle Beckett, then one might see this novel as an incredibly complicated puzzle, one in which there is no solution save that of reading it. Going with Anaximander, and Art, and Adam, into the darkness at the heart of their society enables readers to examine what it means to be human, to experience the hardships of human life, distanced by the novel's futuristic setting, made clinical by its references to long-past classical rationalism, but brought close by its emotional and Gothic power.

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand author Bernard Beckett's young adult novel *Genesis* (2006) blends classical philosophy and Gothic tropes in a dystopian novel about the nature and ends of humanity. It is a curious work, presented in the form of philosophical dialogue and set in a future world known as The Republic, in which robots have triumphed over humanity and formed a new society based on rational order. Yet sinister underpinnings to their society and their emotional origin--story, which forms the core of this novel, show both that their rational world order is built on lies, deception, and murder, and that the human soul is harder to be rid of than they imagine. The clash between robots and humans is depicted as a clash between reason and passion, and also as a clash between a classical calm (seen in the Republic's emphasis on classical philosophy) and the Gothic emotions associated with the dark, but emotional, side of humanity. *Genesis* is a compelling reflection on the nature of the human soul, aimed at young readers. This paper will trace how that reflection plays out through Beckett's use of classical and Gothic ideals in an unusually thought-provoking dystopian work for young readers.

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

Človeškost v *Genezi* Bernarda Becketta: Anaksimander, Platon, klasična filozofija in elementi gotskega romana v distopičnem delu za mladino

Mladinski roman Bernarda Becketta *Geneza* (2006) povezuje klasično filozofijo in gotske trope v distopičnem delu o naravi in mejah človeškosti. Gre za nenavadno besedilo, predstavljeno v obliki filozofskega dialoga in postavljeno v prihodnost, v svet, imenovan Država, v katerem so roboti zavladali nad človeštvom in oblikovali novo družbo, utemeljeno na racionalnem redu. Toda zlovešča podlaga njihove družbe in njena čustvena zgodba o izvoru, ki predstavlja jedro tega romana, izdajata, da je ta racionalni svetovni red zgrajen na lažeh, zavajanju in umoru ter da se je človeške duše znebiti teže, kot si roboti nemara predstavljajo. Spopad med roboti in ljudmi je upodobljen kot spopad med razumom in strastjo, pa tudi kot spopad med klasično umirjenostjo (ki se kaže v poudarku Države na klasični filozofiji) ter gotsko obarvanimi strastmi, povezanimi s temno, vendar čustveno platjo človeštva. Geneza je vznemirljiv razmislek o naravi človeške duše, namenjen mladim bralcem. Članek temu razmisleku sledi skozi Beckettovo rabo klasičnih in gotskih idealov v tem miselno nenavadno izzivalnem distopičnem delu za mlade bralce.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

antična filozofija, mladinska književnost, Platon, Anaksimander, klasična recepcija, gotski roman

"It Never Hurts to Keep Looking for Sunshine": The Motif of Depression in Works for Children and Youth Inspired by Classical Antiquity

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and Angelina Gerus[*]

INTRODUCTION

Depression[1] is often called the "illness of the 21st century"[2] and is on its way to becoming the second most severe disease in the world (according to the World Health Organization). Statistics show that it affects a broader group of people every year, regardless of age.[3]

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1   The research results presented in this article have been achieved within the project *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges* led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales," University of Warsaw, with funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme – ERC Consolidator Grant (Grant Agreement No 681202). – We wish to give hearty thanks to Anna Mik for her ideas and contribution to the article in the preliminary phase of our work on this topic.

2   Osińska et al., "Depresja – choroba cywilizacyjna XXI wieku" [Depression – civilization disease of the 21st century], 123–129.

3   World Health Organization, *Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders: Global Health Estimates.*

Along with the growing numbers of individuals who suffer from depression, there is an increasing need to break the mental health taboo, still prevalent in many societies. One of the biggest challenges in this context is to explain these problems to the young, who are often not ready to understand how complex the human psyche can be, and who have often experienced difficulties in recognizing their mental states. To spread knowledge about psychological issues among children and adolescents, authors often decide to devote their works to this challenging topic. While the past centuries often considered psychological issues as incompatible with children's works of culture, it is becoming increasingly clear that this combination can be valuable.

The motif of depression seems to be one of the most discussed psychological disorders in contemporary works for children and adolescents. One can find it in many forms in all fields of culture: literature, picture books for younger children included (such as *Meh: A Story About Depression* by Deborah Malcolm, 2015; *The Princess and the Fog* by Lloyd Jones, 2015; *Den långa vandringen* [The Long Hike] by Martin Widmark and Emilia Dziubak, 2018), music (song *1-800-273-8255* by Logic, Alessia Cara and Khali, 2017, whose title is a phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in the USA), internet lessons and animations (*Ted-Ed Kids* lesson about depression, 2017),[4] or television series and films (*13 Reasons Why,* the controversial series for teenagers, 2017–2020, or *Inside Out*, an animation devoted to human emotions, where children can meet the character of *Sadness*, 2015).[5] Not only depression in children, but also that of the parents is frequently discussed (for instance in *Why Are You So Sad: A Child's Book About Parental Depression* by Beth Andrews, 2002; or *Håret til Mamma* [Mamma's Hair] by Gro Dahle and Svein Nyhus, 2007). The issue is presented to younger children, especially in picture books, and to teenagers and young adults.

The authors of such works concentrate mainly on clarifying issues referring to the complexity of the human psyche. They discuss the symptoms and treatments of the condition, the different ways of perceiving this issue and dealing with it. Many explain to children the difference between "being sad" and "feeling depressed," showing that sadness is an emotion that is a constant element

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4   Farrell, *What Is Depression*, available online.
5   "Mind Set" channel, *What Causes Anxiety and Depression – Inside Out*, August 6, 2016, available online.

of human existence. At the same time, they try to point out that there might be a moment when grief will overcome the rest of the feelings in every person's life and that one should not be ashamed of this. There are many repetitive motifs used by the authors of children's culture to trigger the associations with the theme of depression or grief. English-speaking readers will be familiar with the color blue, related to the phrase "feeling blue," and with the black dog character, hinting at the metaphor for depression popularized by Winston Churchill.[6]

In parallel with children's authors who increasingly write about mental problems, recent decades have seen these topics actively entering the discussions of scholars studying children's and young adult literature and culture. One may start with the problem of "not-optimistic" children's literature explored by Nicholas Tucker in 2006, called, by him, "depressive."[7] Studying attitudes towards children's literature, primarily in the English-speaking world, Tucker emphasizes the strong tradition of eliminating difficult topics or depicting problematic children as protagonists in the stories. According to Tucker, such an attitude was rooted in perceiving childhood as an "entirely positive time for all concerned,"[8] and with the aim of making "achievement motivation literature."[9] Notwithstanding, the author argues for the necessity of variety in literature for children:

> And if young readers find characters in their fiction suffering from the same type of misery they may be going through at the time, some comfort can also be gained from the recognition that at least one writer seems to know what they are going through.[10]

Tucker emphasizes that one of the problems children have to struggle with is depression, which was "once thought of as something that only starts during adolescence."[11] Due to this, the presence of the problem in children's books is essential, as "children, even

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6   The emotions associated with a depressive state also adopt various metaphoric representations, such as rain, clouds or cypresses, often used to denote sadness; a rose with thorns, which may signal suffering; the color black, which may reflect grief; and others.
7   Tucker, "Depressive Stories for Children," 199–210.
8   Ibid., 200.
9   Ibid., 202.
10   Ibid., 203.
11   Ibid., 205.

infants, have a right to know some of the less palatable facts about the world they live in."[12]

Identifying the young reader with the book's character mentioned by Tucker plays a significant role in understanding mental issues. Emotions and emotional states in children's literature are thus widely discussed in research on emotional development and education,[13] emotions[14] and mental disorders,[15] be it in books for children and young adults or in advice manuals.

A growing amount of publications supports the social-emotional development of children and adolescents through the use of bibliotherapy. A case in point is *Using Picture Books to Enhance Children's Social and Emotional Literacy* by Susan Elswick,[16] which presents activities and exercises that help parents and teachers to engage children in understanding their emotions. The author focuses on social-emotional literacy and its use in working with children and adolescents. She describes the use of "creative bibliography" to work with children, using various books for children "to teach a skill or process a need." Using a creative bibliography consists of adjusting the text to the child's needs to identify with the heroes. This can also mean presenting the characters' situation that metaphorically corresponds to the young recipient's problems. While working with the child on the text, parents or teachers can ask additional questions and perform additional activities, which help to understand the behavior and feelings of the characters (and so the child's feelings), showing the child how to deal with specific emotions or problems. During the recent pandemic, in which children were forced to spend time on their own, separated from their school communities and unable to participate in social activities, parents faced an even greater need to strengthen social and emotional competence in their children.

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12 Ibid., 208. Tucker's term and the question posed are also discussed by Pearson, "Depressive Literature," 162–163.

13 See, e.g., Frevert et al., *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and Emotional Socialization*; Nikolajeva, *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature.*

14 See, e. g., Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Emotional Connection: Representation of Emotions in Young Adult Literature," 127–138.

15 Cf. Church, "The Picture of Madness – Visual Narratives of Female Mental Illness in Contemporary Children's Literature," 119–139.

16 Elswick, *Using Picture Books to Enhance Children's Social and Emotional Literacy.*

Using stories for therapeutic purposes also helps young readers overcome various crises. Colorfully and sensitively illustrated publications, such as those in *The Storm and Storybook Manual: For Children Growing Through Parents' Separation*,[17] as well as in *Therapeutic Fairy Tales: For Children and Families Going Through Troubling Times*[18] by Pia Jones and Sarah Pimenta, develop children's creativity, encouraging them to cope with their emotions. Accompanied by the storybook manuals, they serve as tools for dealing with severe challenges, such as family breakdown, illness, or loss.

Turning back to classical mythology, it seems that myths provide rich material for such a "creative bibliography." The merging of concepts in children's literature and in classical myth, with all their therapeutic potential, seems to be quite natural. As Maria Nikolajeva states:

> Many children's books use mythological subject matter, and reading becomes more rewarding if the reader is familiar with mythical intertexts. These do not necessarily have to be concrete mythical sources, however, but can consist of mythical thinking, manifested, for instance, in a myth-like organization of time-space relations or a use of the narrative components of myths.[19]

Although Nikolajeva broadens the term of "myth," this paper will focus on the texts which explore classical motifs and retell stories from Graeco-Roman mythology. However, these retellings are often made in a "myth-like" style themselves, where a story is a variation on a theme rather than a direct insertion of myth into the story (like in *Lore Olympus*, *Reflection* and *Therapy*).

Many original contemporary works for children refer to classical antiquity, which can be a metaphor for talking about young people's different issues.[20] This paper will discuss some of the motifs concerning the topic of depression inspired by classical myths. It will analyze several different contemporary cultural texts to present a potentially broader perspective of its complexity. The examples chosen

17 Jones and Pimenta, *The Storm and Storybook Manual: For Children Growing Through Parents' Separation (Therapeutic Fairy Tales).*

18 Jones and Pimenta, *Therapeutic Fairy Tales: For Children and Families Going Through Troubling Times.*

19 Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*, 156.

20 Cf. the database *Our Mythical Childhood Survey*, available online, where one can also search for works connected with depression.

come from different parts of the world (Italy, New Zealand, USA, and Russia) and have met with significant international response. They belong to various media, such as literature, internet comics, and animation, addressing the youngest as well as the more mature youth audiences. The first one is a fragment of Laura Orvieto's mythology (*Storie di bambini molto antichi* from 2014, first published in 1937), which is addressed to younger readers and represents mythology proper. The other three works imply a senior recipient – a webtoon, *Lore Olympus* by Rachel Smythe (2018–2020), an animation, *Reflection* by Patricia Satjawatcharaphong (2010), and an Instagram comic strip series, *Therapy* by Anastasia Gorshkova (2019–2020). We believe that texts and images based on classical myths can function as therapeutic tools, helping young people cope with their problems.

PROSERPINE'S MELANCHOLY IN LAURA ORVIETO'S STORIE DI BAMBINI MOLTO ANTICHI

Laura Orvieto (1876–1953), an Italian-Jewish author of children's books, is widely hailed for writing the first Italian mythology series directed at young readers.[21] This work, *Storie della storia del mondo* (1911) [Stories of the History of the World], is still popular around the world.[22] Orvieto is also known for writing another novel with the same theme – *Storie di bambini molto antichi* was her last work published before World War II (released in 1937 in Milan by Mondadori). The book's distribution was limited soon after its publication because of the racial laws in Fascist Italy.[23] Many years later, the novel reached a broader audience thanks to the Mondadori publishing house, which decided to publish it again, in the same form but with a new graphic layout.

21   For Laura Orvieto's biography, see Del Vivo, "Orvieto, Laura," in the Italian Women Writers database. For the history of Italian mythological literature, see Grandi, *La musa bambina: La letteratura mitologica italiana per ragazzi tra storia, narrazione e pedagogia*.

22   More about her output in Garulli, "Laura Orvieto and the Classical Heritage in Italy before the Second World War," 65–110; as well as in a short description by Rejter (Bazylczyk): "Italian Boots and Mythical Stories: The Wonderful Works of Laura Orvieto."

23   Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura per l'infanzia tra le due guerre*, 244.

The new version of *Storie di bambini molto antichi* was published in 2014 with illustrations made by a contemporary artist, Rita Petruccioli.[24] Thanks to the new bookbinding, Orvieto's collection of myths became more appealing to readers. The innovative spirit of the colorful and modern illustrations, combined with the ancient stories, encourages the young readers to familiarize themselves with the world of myths. The specific selection of characters and references to the *Italian novella* helps the young audiences understand the ethical kernel of the mythical stories.

Laura Orvieto's *Storie di bambini molto antichi* (1937) provide particularly thought-provoking reading in the context of depression. Their myth of Proserpine, *Storia di una bambina che si chiamava Proserpina* [The Story of a Girl Called Proserpine], touches on the topics of the human psyche and the perception of sadness. The story encourages interpretations by presenting two complex figures, Proserpine and Ceres. Both characters are particularly popular in children's culture, usually in their Greek version of Persephone or Kora and Demeter.[25]

Orvieto concentrates on the emotions of Proserpine, rather than on the suffering and sadness felt by her mother. This is a less conventional approach, in contrast with frequent popular narratives of the myth rooted in the ancient depictions, where the focus is primarily on the character of Ceres (Demeter) and her pain after the loss of her daughter. It seems that Orvieto was inspired by the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid mentions Proserpine's anxiety and grief in a story told to Demeter by Arethusa:

> […] ergo dum Stygio sub terris gurgite labor,
> visa tua est oculis illic Proserpina nostris:
> illa quidem tristis neque adhuc interrita vultu,
> sed regina tamen, sed opaci maxima mundi,
> sed tamen inferni pollens matrona tyranni!
> (Ov. *Met.* 5.504–508)

>   Now it befell,
> as I was gliding far beneath the world,
> where flow dark Stygian streams, I saw
> thy Proserpine. Although her countenance
> betrayed anxiety and grief, a queen She reigned

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24   Her work is available online on her website, www.ritapetruccioli.net.
25   More about the myth of Persephone in children's literature in Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature*.

supremely great in that opacous world
queen consort mighty to the King of Hell.[26]

Although in this fragment, Arethusa is calming Ceres down and trying to convince her that Proserpine will gain power and a prosperous future, she also mentions the girl's anxiety and grief (Ov. *Met.* 5.506). The double negation (*neque interrita* [*vultu*]) emphasizes her sadness.

Orvieto's version of the myth of Proserpine, when read literally, seems standard. However, it allows for metaphorical interpretation if the reader pays attention to the details. From the beginning of Proserpine's story, before Pluto kidnaps her, Orvieto describes her as a young person who is very often overwhelmed by an unexplained sadness:

Senza un perché, tutto a un tratto, senza che le sia accaduto niente di male, ecco che la malinconia la prende, e il viso si fa triste, e gli occhi le si riempiono di lacrime. Oppure si sveglia, la mattina, e non si sente per nulla felice. Perché? Non lo sa.[27]

Melancholy takes her without any reason, all of a sudden, although nothing terrible is happening and her face becomes sad, her eyes are filling with tears. Even when she wakes up in the morning, she does not feel happy at all. Why? She does not know.[28]

The author uses the term *malinconia*, from μελαγχολία, one of the first words defining the state of depression, as used by the Greeks. The same term is used when Proserpine sings "*Il ritorno del canto,*" the poem written by Angiolo Orvieto,[29] Laura Orvieto's husband:

Su su per la collina con la melanconia;
e cammina e cammina la lascerem per via.
Si torni in compagnia d'un leggiadro cantare.[30]

Up, up on the hill with the melancholy,
walk and walk to leave it behind.
Come back with the joy of singing.

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26 Trans. by Brookes More.
27 Orvieto, *Storie di bambini molto antichi*, 137.
28 All the translations from Italian to English were made by Dorota Rejter.
29 Angiolo Orvieto (1869–1967) was an Italian poet, librettist and the founder of the *Il Marzocco* magazine.
30 Orvieto, *Storie di bambini*, 136–137.

To stress Proserpine's somewhat unusual personality, Laura Orvieto juxtaposes it with the behavior of her mother, Ceres. In the book, Proserpine's mother thoroughly "contrasts with her daughter's fragility"[31] – she is presented as a cheerful and robust person, not able to understand why her daughter is always so sad, distant, and lost in her thoughts.

Proserpine's fate in the story could be seen as a metaphorical description of what happens when a person slides into depression. In this case, Proserpine's κατάβασις, her descent into the Underworld by Pluto's abduction, could be perceived as a metaphor for her unconscious immersion in the world of sorrow and sadness. As Elizabeth Hale states, "[i]n terms of the individual, [the term] *katabasis* also has psychological applications – the protagonist's confrontation with the demons of the past, or personal fears or weaknesses of character."[32] This interpretation of Orvieto's myth can be reinforced by the passages describing that in the Underworld Proserpine continues to cry even more:

> – No, no, e poi no! Proserpine ormai me la tengo. Non dico che sia comodo avere una moglie che piange sempre, ma insomma è meglio che niente.
> – Come, piange sempre?
> – Ma sì, dalla mattina alla sera e dalla sera alla mattina. È noioso.[33]

> – No, no, no! I am going to keep Proserpine. I do not say that it is convenient to have a wife who cries all the time, but still, it is better than nothing.
> – What do you mean she cries all the time?
> – Yes, from morning to evening and from evening to morning – it is so dull.

The next fragment indicating depression is the one where Ceres advises her daughter. The advice covers the girl's coping with her feelings while being in the Underworld and what she should do to spend the happier part of the year on Earth. Spring and summer seem to symbolize the time of healing and happiness:

> – E come faccio a non piangere? – chiese Proserpine. – Se sapessi

31 Ibid., 137.
32 Hale, "Katabasis 'Down Under' in the Novels of Margaret Mahy and Maurice Gee," 257.
33 Orvieto, *Storie di bambini*, 146.

come sono sola, e come mi annoio.
– Sei sola perché non ti guardi intorno, e non vedi e non ascolti. Ti annoi perché non fai nulla.[34]

– How can I not cry? – Proserpine asked. – If you only knew how lonely I am and how bored I am.
– You are lonely because you do not look around you, and you do not see and do not listen. You are bored because you are doing nothing.

– Guarda – Disse Cerere. – Ognuna di queste radici ha una sua vita e un suo sogno. Ognuna ti dirà qualche cosa, se tu l'interroghi e l'ascolti.[35]

– Look – Ceres said. – Each of these roots has its own life and a dream. Each of them will tell you something if you will only ask them and try to listen to them.

The words of Ceres function as therapeutic elements, as she tries hard to help her daughter deal with her disease. Thanks to her guidance, Proserpine starts to see beauty, even in the Underworld. The girl starts to appreciate her position; she tries to stay positive, waiting for better days to come.

It seems that the illustrations made by Rita Petruccioli focus on the emotions of Proserpine. The first image shows her as a young, calm girl, weaving lace flowers. The colors used are light and cheerful. The next picture shows the dramatic kidnapping of Proserpine by Pluto. Its focus is on Pluto and his chariot, dominated by the shades of purple and black that strongly contrasts with the surrounding. In the last one, there are only black and grey roots illustrating the moment when Ceres tells her daughter how to survive in the Underworld.

The Story of a Girl Called Proserpine, read metaphorically, discusses depression among young girls. The relationship between the mother and the daughter, described in the text, can foster a conversation about two sides of a child's depression. One is the emotional state of a young girl. The other is the difficulty for parents to deal with their children's psychological problems. From this perspective, the myth emphasizes parents' and therapists' role in treating depression among young people.

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.

BLUE HADES AND PINK PERSEPHONE
IN LORE OLYMPUS BY RACHEL SMYTHE

A somewhat different story of Hades and Persephone is presented in Rachel Smythe's digital comics, or webtoons, *Lore Olympus*,[36] where it seems that it is Hades who is depressed. Persephone is the one who brings color and love to his life while harboring her own problems with deep sadness as well.

Lore Olympus has been appearing on webtoons.com every Sunday since March 4, 2018.[37] Webtoons originated as digital *manhwa* and are designed primarily for smartphones. As a result, episodes are published in long vertical strips of various lengths. They may also be accompanied by music. *Lore Olympus*, based on Greek Mythology and made by a New Zealand author, ranks as the most popular among all the webcomics on the platform (rated 9.78; liked by 21.6m readers; having 3.9m subscribers), and also among the romance/drama genre, as well as among webtoons read by females in their 10s, 20s, and 30s.[38] Hence one may consider the cartoons as crossover literature read mostly by female audiences.

Rachel Smythe is a graphic designer, and *Lore Olympus* is her fourth comic.[39] She describes its idea as "a modern-day deconstruction of the Greek myth of Hades and Persephone"[40] and emphasizes that "the gods aren't so different from us after all, especially when it comes to their problems."[41] The story underscores this with its opening quotation from a Homeric hymn to Demeter, specifically, from the speech of Hades to Persephone:

36 Smythe, *Lore Olympus*, from March 2018, available online. The authors would like to thank Elizabeth Hale for sharing information about these comics. See also a description of the webtoon in her *Children's Literature and Classical Reception: An Alphabetical Odyssey* (forthcoming).

37 Season 1 ended with the 115th episode on June 14, 2020. Smythe decided to continue the webtoon with the 2nd season.

38 Data on 13 June 2020, ranked by www.webtoons.com. The episodes have from 150,000 to 230,000 likes and plenty of comments from users registered on the platform. For example, the finale of season 1 got 13,723 comments and 118,772 likes a few hours after its publication on June 14, 2020.

39 More about her on lore-olympus.fandom.com.

40 An interview of Rachel Smythe in "On the Air" series, made by Webtoon on April 16, 2020, is available on YouTube.

41 Available online, on www.webtoons.com.

> While you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall
> have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud
> you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently per-
> forming rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore.
> (*HH* 2.364–369, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White)[42]

The quotation emphasizes being the queen of the Underworld, and
this topic recurs from the first episodes onwards.

The opening pictures are made in shades of blue; thus, Hades'
image painted in this color does not surprise the viewer. The cha-
racters are drawn in various tints (Zeus is violet, Poseidon is green,
Hera is yellow, Persephone is pink), and the blue is reserved for the
Underworld, which reflects the mood of the place. Although Smythe
confessed that she chose blue and pink for the two protagonists to
boost the contrast,[43] the colors retain their symbolic meaning. The
world of the gods is presented as a contemporary reality. The heroes
have smartphones (Hades owns one with a pomegranate logo) and
modern cars; they wear stylish outfits and live in glass apartments.
The human world is depicted as ancient Greece.

The first episodes take place at a party held by Zeus. From the be-
ginning, we see Hades being sad as his girlfriend Minthe[44] does not
want to accompany him (Ep. 1).[45] After phases of anger and despair,
the god shows concern for the fact that he has no wife (and, at the
same time, no queen of the Underworld), contrary to his brothers
Zeus and Poseidon (see also Ep. 30). His "deep feeling of loneliness"
(Ep. 71) seems to be the main reason for his depressive state. Further-
more, Hades often goes to sleep without taking his shoes and clothes
off (Ep. 5), is "really talented in insomnia" (Ep. 74), quickly takes the
blame and feels guilty (Ep. 5; 40; 42; 94), has problems with "facing
his feelings" (Ep. 77; also Ep. 47), attends psychotherapy (Ep. 25; 47;
94), and his best friends are dogs (Ep. 7; 9; 25), which is a problem
according to his therapist (Ep. 94). This makes quite a clear depres-

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42 Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-
     White. All translations from Hesiod and Homeric hymns are provided accord-
     ing to this edition. The webtoon includes an extensive reference paying tribute
     to the translator.

43 "I wanted Persephone to really pop out every time she is in the Underworld
     and vice versa," Q&A #18, available online.

44 Cf. Str. 8.3.14; Opp. *H.* 3.485–497; Ov. *Met.* 10.728–730.

45 The episode number in the main text, in brackets, refers to the list of episodes
     on webtoons.com. Frame numbers are not provided, as they do not appear in
     the webtoon.

sive pattern. Besides, Hades is infertile, according to the webtoon (Ep. 102). He admits that he "happen[s] to know a lot about being blue" (Ep. 26).

Hades' humor changes when he notices Persephone at the party (Ep. 2–3). The attraction is clearly there and in the next episodes, one can see smiles or care and support on the god's face, even hear him joking with Persephone (Ep. 26). While speaking with the girl, he looks like a person in love, not a desperate one, although being shy and unconfident (cf. Ep. 41; 74). A faux pas comment made by Hades ("Honestly, I think she [Persephone] puts Aphrodite to shame," Ep. 2) starts their story as the offended goddess of love arranges to get the girl drunk and brought to Hades' home, in order to humiliate both of them.

Persephone is depicted as a young[46] (19-year-old) girl in a big city (Olympus) for the first time, as her overprotective mother had previously restricted her from Zeus' "morally corrupt" world, keeping her in the mortal realm (Ep. 3). Being the goddess of spring (and fertility), she is usually cheerful and optimistic, as well as a little clumsy and naive (called "an adorable, pink, cinnamon roll" by Eros in Ep. 5; having "big, goofy" eyes, stripe #18 Q&A). However, in her speeches, she mentions loneliness ("I thought meeting all these new people would make me happy. But I just feel more lonely than ever," Ep. 4), insomnia (Ep. 74; 112), and lack of fun in her life (Ep. 53). It also appears that she has secrets to hide, and one of them was the changing of her name from Kore ("Maiden") to Persephone ("Bringer of Death") before her arrival to Olympus (Ep. 110; 115). The girl starts crying easily (Ep. 5; 40; 65; 85; 101). She even has to tell Hades this does not happen all the time (Ep. 26).[47] She frequently feels guilty, with or without a proper reason (Ep. 8; 40; 65; 88; 95; 108), and has problems with confidence (Ep. 56; 74), continually thinking about herself as being an unimportant and unremarkable "B-grade" goddess (Ep. 23; 26; 27; 58). Another symptom of Persephone's emotional problems is her sudden anger (Ep. 86; 87; 115). Sometimes, there are two personalities inside Kore/Persephone, as depicted in Ep. 111. Hades notices the goddess's mood and calls it a "melancholic quality" (Ep. 19).

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46   Especially when compared to Hades, who is over 2000 years old and looks about 40 in the comics.

47   Compare Hades complaining about the same problem in Orvieto's story.

Hades: When I first saw you at the party, you looked sad. / When I carried you into the house, you felt sad. / And you sound sad right now. (Ep. 26)

It seems that it was this sadness that attracted Hades, together with the beauty and sincerity of Persephone (cf. Ep. 26). He perceives them as being alike (Ep. 53; 80). The girl also falls in love with him as he was the first who did not "[treat her] like a child" (Ep. 23), respected her, and "made [her] feel important" (Ep. 17; 27; 64). Furthermore, it seems that this love is a cure for their melancholy.

Both protagonists have their reasons for being blue. For Hades, it is a post-traumatic stress disorder based on childhood trauma – being a son of Kronos, he lived in constant danger (Ep. 77) and was swallowed at the age of six (Ep. 25).[48] As a young adult, Hades participated in the Titanomachy, and we see him bandaged and seriously injured after the war (Ep. 78). As an adult, he still has nightmares (Ep. 25) and problems accepting himself and his father (Ep. 76; 77). It seems that his duties in the Underworld influence his mood (Ep. 45; 77).

As for Kore/Persephone, the goddess suffers from the overprotectiveness and control of her mother.[49] The mother even locked her up in a glass palace without doors at some point, "for [her] best" (Ep. 6). Even on Olympus, Persephone makes decisions based on how her mother will react (Ep. 89). Another important reason for her emotional problems takes place at the time of the story – Persephone was raped by Apollo (Ep. 24). Being young, she does not know how to stop him and decides just to wait until it is all over. She is left alone with her feelings, unable to discuss it with anybody for a long time until she can finally share it with Eros in Ep. 66:

Persephone: "I don't know how to talk about it because I feel like my facts aren't real? Everything is blurred together."
Eros: "Yeah, it's because your brain is trying to store the memories somewhere else until you're ready to deal with it. It's normal."

The god advises her to see a therapist as "it's ok to get help" (Ep. 66). The episodes concerning this topic are written in a very delicate way and include advice that may help readers. Nevertheless, they start with a warning about sensitive content and explain how to omit

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48   Contrary to the ancient sources saying that all of Kronos' offspring had been devoured after their birth (cf. Hes. *Theog.* 453–467; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1.5–1.2.1).
49   The motif is also common for Kate McMullan's *Phone Home, Persephone!*

reading these fragments, making the cartoon more child friendly. The webtoon corresponds with the understanding of Persephone as a victim of rape common for mythology; however, it changes the subject of the abuse.

Other characters are suffering from a depressive state in the webtoon as well, for example, Minthe after the break up with Hades (Ep. 104), Eros after leaving Psyche (Ep. 69–70), and Psyche herself (Ep. 69).

As a romantic story for teenagers, the comics shift the perspective and present the story of Hades and Persephone as one of mutual love[50] as the treatment for the prolonged sadness and melancholy of the protagonists. The author is delicate and openly discusses difficult topics, depression, trauma, and sexual violence; there is no didacticism or oversimplifying. The webtoon, having been created in real-time during an extended period, holds an open ending and evokes much empathy and involvement of the readers, as is evident from the numerous acclamatory comments.

THE SORROW OF MEDUSA IN REFLECTION BY PATRICIA SATJAWATCHARAPHONG

Reflection (2010)[51] is a short six-minute cartoon animation devoted to the character of Medusa. It was created by Patricia Satjawatcharaphong, a visual designer from the United States. The music was written by Nik Phelps.[52] The film has no age limit, but its cartoonish form and the Disney-style convention chosen to depict the protagonist indicate that it is intended for children and young adults. On the other hand, the solemn and sad music and the lack of dialogue or a narrator's voice suggest that the audience is not expected to be very young.

The movie starts with a quote from the Roman fabulist Gaius Julius Phaedrus (*Fab.* 4.2.5–7): "Things are not always what they seem; outward form deceives many; rare is the mind that discerns what is carefully concealed within." The sentence is a part of the introduction to his tale about "The Weasel and the Mice" (*De mustela et muribus*). The tale describes the deception of mice by an old weasel, which turns into a mousetrap having rolled itself

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50   A similar allusion is also voiced through Ovid's Orpheus, *Met.* 10.26–29.
51   Available online.
52   For more about him, see his personal website, niksprocket.org.

in flour. However, in the animation's case, the point is ultimately the opposite: the hidden side proves to be injured and suffering. Using the ancient motto, Satjawatcharaphong indicates that she will focus on the main character's psyche, not on her appearance, and that a familiar stereotypical image of Medusa will be challenged.

In the entire animation, Medusa is presented as a woman and not a monster, except in the last scene. Her character contrasts with the popular gruesome depictions in children's culture (such as in the *Percy Jackson* series). She reminds the reader of other, more niche representations of this character, which describe her positively. One example is an animation titled *Mythopolis* (2013) by Alexandra Májová (Hetmerová),[53] which presents Medusa as the loving mother of a baby minotaur.

The film shows Medusa as a sad and lonely woman who lives in a cave and walks between the stone figures she has petrified. The movie has no dialogue – only at the beginning, there is a song, perhaps sung by Medusa herself. The woman describes her lonely life in her grotto: "Shadow, shape the wall, / pain, contempt my fall, / my heart grieves for one and only, / dark eyes glare at me […]."

Medusa's sadness seems to be communicated to the viewer at two levels – the aural and the visual. The elements and colors contained in the animation symbolize her grief and suffering. The violin parts in the layers of music seem to emphasize the character's dramatic situation, and the blue colors of Medusa's hair and dress direct the viewer's attention towards anxiety and depression. When she passes by the stone figure of her lover (the movie does not stress that he was a god), she begins to remember her past. The sculpture comes alive and grabs her hand. The two characters show their past and the moments of happiness in love. Unfortunately, their joy did not last for long. One day, the goddess Athena (corresponding to the Ovidian version of the myth in *Met.* 4.800–802) notices the couple kissing in her temple, and for this, Medusa was punished. The movie ends back in Medusa's cave and – significantly – showing her again as a normal woman, not a Gorgon. Only when she wipes her face in front of the mirror, she reveals her reflection, which is the image of a monster. However, this monster does not seem to be threatening and dan-

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53   Alexandra Májová (Hetmerová)'s profile is available on *Vimeo*. Cf. also Zarzycka, "Mythopolis [Mitópolis] by Alexandra Hetmerova."

gerous – tears flow from her eyes, and she covers her face with her hands in order not to see herself in the mirror.

Medusa's myth presented in the animation carries a powerful message about the consequences of exclusion. Even though the author of *Reflection* departs from the Ovidian version of the myth (mainly by omitting the topic of Poseidon's rape of Medusa from Ov. *Met.* 4.795–802),[54] she is still able to keep the atmosphere of the story by highlighting the paradox of her marginalization by Athena. Showing Medusa's extreme suffering and sadness by putting her in a stigmatized position, the author presents her as a victim. This makes the viewer wonder about the ruthlessness of the goddess and the idea of punishment. The lack of Medusa's voice (sometimes figuratively replaced by music) can refer to silenced women in general. Following Lynn Enterline's reasoning, the Gorgon's monstrous image can function as a "face deprived of the capacity to speak,"[55] as a symbol of women deprived of their rights in a patriarchal system. *Reflection* raises questions about otherness, exclusion, injustice, equality of human and gender rights, as does Májová in her animation.

The ending appears to be crucial as it emphasizes Medusa's tragic story and its psychological aspect. Difficult to understand for children, it may appeal to teens or young adults. In the final scene of the animation, the author attempts to explain Medusa's monstrosity. Satjawatcharaphong shows her real reflection in a mirror as the indirect image of her inner self. Medusa's hidden monster can be the result of her self-judgment and her self-petrification.[56] Medusa, perceiving herself in a mirror as a terrifying Gorgon, keeps her real face deep inside her, just as people hide their emotions, ashamed of their problems.

While lasting only a few minutes, *Reflection* puts forth questions that come up after reading the more complex and brutal version of Medusa's story. The animation suggests that "there is no good or evil – just sorrow"[57] in Medusa's world. Her story can provide an opportunity to talk about depression and women's exclusion.

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54 The elimination of the subject of rape may be another indication that the animation had to be suitable for children.
55 Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*, 16.
56 Baumbach, *Literature and Fascination*, 127.
57 See the description of the animation at Patricia Satjawatcharaphong's profile on *Behance*, available online.

THERAPY FOR GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS IN COMICS BY ANASTASIA GORSHKOVA

Another example of a story addressed to teenagers and young adults is the *Therapy* comic strip series created by Anastasia Gorshkova (b. 1994), a visual artist from Novosibirsk, Russia.[58] The fifteen illustrated stories,[59] which include around ten images each, have been emerging on her Instagram profile since March 2019, raising the problem of mental health in an entertaining and tragicomic way, full of sarcasm and irony. Each cartoon presents a short fragment of a therapy session, handled by the same modern specialist, with a Greek mythology figure as her client. The author's manner can be distinguished by the simplicity of forms. The monotonous and restrained color scheme focuses on the characters of the comics. The series deals with tough topics and does not refrain from using vulgar, even obscene expressions. Despite that, no age restriction is set. The webcomics effectively find their response among young audiences, their provoking topics are reminiscent of real communication.[60]

Along with depression, *Therapy* discusses several other issues neglected in Russian-speaking public discourse. These include gender self-identification (comic 7, in which Heracles acts as a hostage to his masculine image), occupational burnout (comic 13, the case of Athena) or unhealthy spousal relationships (the unfaithfulness of Aphrodite and Hephaestus in comic 8, or of Zeus and Hera in comic 2; post-traumatic relationship disorder of Persephone and Hades, as well as Oedipus and Jocasta in comics 9 and 10 respectively). The depressive state, in turn, is represented in the series by several different means. Firstly, via its particular signs and symptoms, such as low self-esteem, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness, or sadness. Secondly, by highlighting the factors that might provoke the disorder, such as self-loathing or social marginalization. Finally, by the corollaries, such as turning to drugs and alcohol (in order to numb emotions) and suicide attempts.

For the characters traditionally perceived as mythical beasts or monsters, namely Medusa, Minotaur, and Hydra, the reason to see a therapist lies, to a greater or lesser extent, in their exclusion from

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58 Cf. Anastasia Gorshkova's profile on Instagram.

59 As of June 27, 2020.

60 The popularity of her webcomics can be glimpsed from the sheer number of her followers, 176,406 as of October 27, 2020.

society. As comic strip characters, they are humanized, not only by their ability to speak or by their human-like appearance but mainly because they get a voice, finally allowing them to express their sufferings and concerns. Nevertheless, despite their psychological problems, the clients have sharp tongues. Sometimes their reaction to the therapist is far from pleasant and can include insults.

Medusa (comic 3 in the series)[61] comes into the picture after having been defeated by Perseus. Beaten but alive, she starts her monologue by saying: "My head, of course, has been sewn back on, but there's still an unpleasant aftertaste."[62] Contrary to any version of the myth, she confesses her affection for the hero. Thus, the loss in the fight gets a metaphorical dimension, as the Gorgon literally "lost her head for him" and feels upset about being beheaded by the one to whom she was attracted. Perseus' action does not hurt her as much as the admission that she cannot build a relationship with a man. Being an Other, she suffers from a lack of acceptance. Like *Reflection*, the cartoon does not mention the topic of Poseidon raping Medusa (Hes. *Theog.* 278–279; Ov. *Met.* 4.799–800), although an advanced reader will keep this trauma in their mind as well. Speaking to the therapist, the Gorgon admits her complicated personality as "cockroaches in her head"[63] and perhaps snakes on it as well. She also regrets that her partners evade the discussion of problems. No wonder the petrified therapist does not interrupt Medusa's speech either. The sensitive Gorgon, baring her soul, has no place in the human hearts of stone. No longer a chthonic monster from Hesiod's *Theogony*, but still λυγρὰ παθοῦσα ("who suffered a woeful fate," Hes. *Theog.* 276), she uncovers callousness as the real monstrosity.

In comic 5,[64] the Minotaur, stigmatized as a monster from birth and hence put into the maze, declares himself feeling lost. In response, the therapist cannot help laughing – how can the labyrinth dweller get lost in his own home? However, the depicted Minotaur is not a murderous beast, nor can the maze be considered his beloved residence. His introspection resembles that of Asterion from *The House of Asterion* by J. L. Borges (1947), but despite staying in his domain,

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61 Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 3," Instagram slideshow, April 19, 2019.

62 "Голову мне, конечно, пришили обратно, но осадок остался."

63 "To have cockroaches in the head" is a Russian expression (close to "to have bats in the belfry" in English), which means that a person is marked by eccentricities and peculiarities. In the case of Medusa, it has no negative connotation and probably corresponds to the fact that she has snakes on her head.

64 Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 5," Instagram slideshow, May 22, 2019.

the comic strip character does not know the place, nor has he that kind of sympathy towards the walls entangling him. Feeling lost seems to be the result of his futile attempts to escape. Minotaur turns out to be a prisoner, recalling Plutarch repeating after Philochorus that the maze could be a "dungeon, with no other inconvenience than that its prisoners could not escape"[65] (Plut. *Thes.* 16.1), and Ovid describing the creature as being "shut" in it ("quo postquam geminam tauri iuvenisque figuram clausit," *Met.* 8.169–170). Wandering in the labyrinth may be interpreted both literally and figuratively concerning his inner state: alone, lost, and abandoned, he does not even hope to find his own Ariadne's thread.[66]

It is the loneliness within society that matters in the story of Hydra, comic 14.[67] The heads complement each other, indicating the "difficulty to get rid of the unpleasant feeling everyone is avoiding them," as "in the modern […] world appearance remains so important."[68] Hydra's social exclusion is emphasized by the fact that the therapist herself consults them online and had started doing so two years before the pandemic, as Hydra mentions. "Little Fabio," the only silent Hydra head, looks especially dispirited – covered by a paper bag with traces of tears on it. At the end, when the therapist interrupts the session pretending to have lost the connection, one can see, as the paper bag is torn, that Fabio has two heads. Although the reason for his trauma is not given, one may assume that he not only suffers from the perception of his outward distinctiveness (even among mythical beasts) but also from the post-traumatic stress disorder. As two new Hydra heads grew in the place of the one smashed (Ov. *Met.* 9.193–194; Apollod. 2.5.2), it is possible that Fabio was the victim of an attack. Consequently, this story evokes questions. Should peculiarity be considered as ugliness? Could people deal with it in any other way than attempting to get rid of the apparent monster?

However, one does not have to be repellent or unwanted in order not to be understood. Among the depressed characters of antiquity,

65 Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, English translation by Bernadotte Perrin.
66 Cf. "The Labyrinth" by Asaf Avidan. The authors would like to thank Zofia Kowalska for sharing this song.
67 Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 14: The Lernaean Hydra," Instagram slideshow, April 23, 2020.
68 This approach is present in another of Májová's animations about mythical monsters, "Swimming Pool," available online.

Narcissus from comic 4[69] merits particular attention. This handsome young man is not narcissistic, although he is undoubtedly aware of his beauty. It has proven to be his curse since people adore his body, treating him like "flesh" (and the blushing and flirting therapist is no exception). Unlike Ovid's vain Narcissus (from *Met.* 3.352–354, 400–401), this one suffers from harassment and sexual objectification, based on the fact that his inner world is devalued and reduced to an image.

Pandora from comic 1[70] is also tormented by the misunderstanding of the people around her. Pointing out that it is her twelfth try in turning to medical assistance (as every previous doctor drove her out from the session), she admits being powerless against these situations, both looking for help and managing her persisting guilt. Contrary to Hesiod's narration, this Pandora is deprived of "lies, crafty words and a deceitful nature" (Hes. *Op.* 78–79), as well as fatal curiosity. Unable to understand her motifs and redeem herself, she feels profound and bitter remorse for all the misfortunes in the world, including the death of the therapist's dog and her family problems. The therapist slaps Pandora in the face and throws her out as the predecessors did. The sense of guilt, typical for a depressive state, could nevertheless be surmounted by a detail. This is the Hope that "remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door" (Hes. *Op.* 96–99).

The gods, even those mostly viewed as cheerful, are still prone to depression, and to no lesser extent. Adolescent Cupid in comic 12[71] is forced to see the therapist after a failed suicide attempt. Calling himself a loser, he explains trying to shoot himself with a bow out of desire "to feel anything." With his words that love has always been lethal, the therapist offers help – to help Cupid understand that everyone would be better off without him. Unlike Ovid's *lascivus puer* ("wanton boy," *Met.* 1.456) who knows *saevam iram* ("vengeful spite") or the tender young god from Apuleius' tale of Cupid and Psyche, the Cupid from the cartoon is crushed by apathy and sees the only solution in death.

69   Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 4: Narcissus," Instagram slideshow, May 12, 2019.
70   Gorshkova, "Myths and Legends of Cranky Greece," Instagram slideshow, March 24, 2019.
71   Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 12: About *Amor*," Instagram slideshow, February 4, 2020.

Another god, Dionysus from comic 6,[72] chooses what is scarcely a better way to fight his mental state. He runs away from an unpleasant reality by turning to alcohol and drugs, as is obvious from his bloodshot eyes, as well as from his hands, alternately carrying a glass of wine, a smoking joint, and a bong. The character calls it "true hedonism," which allows him to feel real. As for the therapy, Dionysus says he showed up there by accident ("to ask for a lighter"). Medical studies affirm the link between the use of alcohol and marijuana and depressed moods during adolescence. Many are stressing that substance abuse can increase the risk of developing both major and longer depressive episodes and can lead to severe substance-related problems.[73] Thus, the Dionysian origin can lead to chaos and destruction (including self-destruction) by depriving it of the Apollonian antipode.

Therapy webcomics overturn the conventional mythological world. Mental and psychological disorders appear to be expected for everybody, for monsters and gods alike. The illustrations and their characters allow readers to immerse themselves in their experience and see people around them from a different perspective, introspective of the Other. More importantly, the displacement of heroes to present times shows that these characters have left the ancient Greeks' minds. They now live, suffer, and battle with their problems, which are very much like ours, in our midst.

CONCLUSIONS

Various texts of children's and young adult culture, including the ones analyzed and mentioned above, show that ancient myths are still a viable form of explaining the world, and that they can speak to humanity's current problems. As Lisa Maurice observes: "The depictions and adaptations of the ancient world have varied at different times, however, in accordance with changes in societies and cultures."[74] This applies perfectly to the contemporary culture of children and youth. Works inspired by myths – appropriately adapted to the regional contexts and current conditions – can help young people face the challenges posed by the rapidly changing world of the twen-

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72   Gorshkova, "Therapy, part 6: Dionysus," Instagram slideshow, June 12, 2019.

73   Cf. Deykin, Levy, and Wells, "Adolescent Depression, Alcohol and Drug Abuse," 178–182.

74   Maurice, "Children, Greece and Rome: Heroes and Eagles," 1.

ty-first century. As Maurice continues: "Children's literature, often the first meeting point with the worlds of ancient Greece and Rome, is arguably one of the most important experiences in forming perception of that culture."[75] Following this, one could add that children's works inspired by classical myths can not only become a tool for children that influences their perception of antiquity but can also be turned into a universal key to understanding themselves and the world around them.

Similarly, Katarzyna Marciniak underscores this extraordinary feature of children's works based on antiquity:

> We receive special help with how to overcome difficult experiences and to preserve the good ones. This help is offered by childhood literature, one of the kinds of which is common in nearly all the national literatures – the books for children and young adults inspired by Graeco-Roman Antiquity – both ancient myths and history.[76]

This helpfulness of children's works inspired by classical antiquity is particularly visible in texts that (literally or metaphorically) concentrate on mental issues, including depression. This kind of reception of antiquity seems to be vital in the context of contemporary children's culture, where there is a vast demand for texts which are able to present children both with timeless and contemporary values.

As variability and scope of interpretation are inherent for classical mythology, choosing myths as a base allows talking to children and youth in an open and non-didactic way. Taking this opportunity, the authors of the works analyzed have not only broken taboos, voicing among others the problem of depression and various traumas, but also shattered stereotypes about gods and monsters, heroes and villains, forcing the audience to think about the imaginative realm and their own surroundings. It is worth noting that ancient sources, in most cases, raise similar questions and allow parallel interpretations. The children's and young adult texts prove to be rooted in classical antiquity, especially in Ovid's oeuvre, in a more significant measure than just making allusions to mythological characters or events. The authors themselves are paying conscious tribute to classical culture.

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75   Ibid., 3.
76   Marciniak, "In the Mirror of Antiquity," 36.

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes a handful of works for children and youth that are based on mythology and deal with depression, a topic that is becoming more frequent in contemporary children's and young adults' culture, mainly because of the need to break the mental health taboo. These are the newest edition of Laura Orvieto's *Storie di bambini molto antichi* (2014, first published in 1937), Rachel Smythe's digital comics *Lore Olympus* (2018–2020), Patricia Satjawatcharaphong's short animation *Reflection* (2010), and the webcomic series *Therapy* created by Anastasia Gorshkova (2019–2020). They provide examples from literary and audio-visual culture for very young readers and more adult teenagers and youth, raising the issue of deep sadness utilizing storytelling and not in a didactic way. Some of the protagonists struggling with the problem are far from lively characters in conventional interpretations of the myths (including Hades, Hydra, or Medusa), so the texts play upon stereotypes entrenched in the culture. It appears that children's works inspired by classical antiquity have significant interpretative potential and educational value – as well as the ability to surprise the audience.

KEYWORDS

IZVLEČEK

»Nikoli ni narobe, če še naprej iščeš sonce«:
Motiv depresije v delih za otroke in mladino, vezanih na antiko

Prispevek analizira več del za otroke in mladino, ki izhajajo iz mitologije in govorijo o depresiji, temi, ki stopa vse bolj v ospredje tudi v sodobni kulturi otrok in mladostnikov, predvsem zaradi potrebe po odpravi tabuja v zvezi z duševnim zdravjem. To so nova izdaja dela Laure Orvieto *Storie di bambini molto antichi* (2014, prvič objavljena leta 1937), digitalni stripi Rachel Smythe *Lore Olympus* (2018–2020), kratka animacija Patricie Satjawatcharaphong *Reflection* (2010) ter *Therapy*, serija spletnih stripov Anastasie Gorshkove (2019–2020). Gre za primere iz literarne in avdiovizualne kulture za zelo mlade bralce ter najstnike in mlade odrasle, ki vprašanje globoke žalosti izpostavljajo z uporabo zgodb in na nedidaktičen način. Nekateri protagonisti, ki se spopadajo s to težavo (vključno s Hadom, Hidro ali Meduzo), so prikazani zelo drugače kot v običajnih in živahnejših interpretacijah mitov, saj besedila spretno preigravajo stereotipe, ki so se ustalili v kulturi. Zdi se, da imajo otroška dela, ki jih navdihuje klasična antika, velik interpretativni potencial in izobraževalno vrednost – pa tudi sposobnost za presenečanje občinstva.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

duševno zdravje, grška mitologija, Laura Orvieto, Rachel Smythe, Patricia Satjawatcharaphong, Anastasia Gorshkova

VSEBINA