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FOREWORD

“The Journal of Comparative Studies” publishes original multidisciplinary papers dealing with issues of regional, national, international and global significance applying comparative methodology on all aspects of culture. The current volume of the Journal is devoted to a broad conception of the virtual world, its significance in the modern world, and its various interpretations, as also proven by the majority of articles.

Human’s being in the virtual space transforms his/her worldview. The analysis of the concept of the virtual world has become important in contemporary humanities and social sciences. Many futurologists, computing scientists, philosophers predict that enormous amounts of computing power available in the future will change our daily lives and such important spheres as medicine, military, education, science, a. o. Scientists also presume that our world is a computer technology simulation. In 2003, Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom stated that we were almost certainly living in a computer simulation, which had been created by a more developed future civilization. In 2016, investor, engineer, and inventor Elon Musk declared that we lived in the virtual reality. This idea is widely used in art and literature, creating imagery and graphics for the virtual life.

Several of the published articles were presented at the annual international conference “Scientific Readings XXVII” organized by Daugavpils University Faculty of Humanities in January 2017. One of the working groups within the frame of the conference was “The Virtual in Language, Literature, and Culture” organised by the Centre of Cultural Research of Daugavpils University Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. The participants of the working group discussed virtual reality in literature and language, cinematography and the media, and by employing the comparative methodology analysed the relationships between “a human and virtual reality”, mechanisms, technology for constructing virtual reality, processes of developing subcultures of artificial reality and imitations of sensations.

Bina Nir in her article "The Perception of Time in the Virtual Space: A Cultural-Philosophical Analysis" presents the key conceptions of time in Western culture, explains the cultural shifts in the perception of time in terms of existing physics models, observing changes in the perception of time in the context of virtual space. Bārbala Simsons in the article "Virtual Reality in World and Latvian Science Fiction" examines the depiction of virtual reality and the pertinent storytelling characteristics in foreign and Latvian science fiction. Tatiana Filosofova's article "Religious Poetry of Literary Origin in the Manuscript Tradition of the Russian Old Believers" analyses the didactic poetry by the Russian Old Believers that originated from the medieval Russian literary tradition by comparing the plots, motifs and characters' interpretations in the two previously unknown and unpublished religious poems. The research "Translation at the Crossroad of Rhetorical Trope: Translating Metaphor in the Light of Relevance Theory" by Samuel Babatunde Moruwawon discusses the translation of metaphor as a stylistic element in the light of Relevance theory. Raivis Vilūns' article "Detecting Tabloidization of Online Media in Latvia" tells about detecting and describing the key elements of tabloidization and sets a base for further research on online media tabloidization on the example of Latvian commercial news portals and public media websites.

Editors of the collection:

Ilze Kačāne

Alina Romanovska

THE PERCEPTION OF TIME IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE: A CULTURAL- PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

BINA NIR

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Dr. Bina Nir works at the Academic College of Emek Yezreel. Her initial academic education was in the natural sciences. For a period of almost twenty years, she prepared students for the Israeli matriculation exams in physics and math and served as a school principal. In the early 1990's she completed a second B.A. degree in communication, and continued study for master's degree at Tel Aviv University in political communication. She completed her doctoral dissertation in the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University. Since 2000, she has been a lecturer at the Academic College of Emek Yezreel, at first in conjunction with her teaching position at Tel Aviv University. At present, she is a director of the Honors B.A. Program. Her research focuses on the interface of Western religions and contemporary cultures, specifically the genealogies of cultural constructs rooted in the Western religions, in such areas as the perceptions of time, judgement, leadership and success and failure. In 2017 her book "Failure of Success" [Hebrew] was published by Resling Press.

ABSTRACT

In this article, we will present the key conceptions of time in Western culture, while observing changes in the perception of time in the context of virtual space. Among other things, we will examine the change in the Newtonian space-time concept. The Newtonian conception views a permanent system of space and time. Being in virtual space transforms us, it would seem, to the cultural conception of time presented by Einstein, which does not view time as an absolute measure, but rather as changing according to the speed of our movement. The faster we move, time speed reduces. It is not the objective of this article to probe the depths of physics, but to try and understand the cultural shifts in the perception of time in terms of existing physics models.

Moreover, we will explore the cultural return to “mystical time” in terms of the “divine gaze” – today, in virtual space, a new point of view enables us to observe existence from an external point of view. Changes also include the obstruction of the linear sequence of time due to the simultaneity of past, present and future in the Augmented Virtual Reality. In this article, we will attempt to understand experiencing virtual reality in terms of hallucination time, and will conclude with the virtual promise of eternal life – being in eternal time, which exists in the virtual space.

Keywords: eternal time, mystical time, hallucination time, simultaneity, relative time

INTRODUCTION

The issue of time has interested scholars and thinkers in different fields of knowledge throughout the ages. Philosophy and Physics pondered questions such as, is time external to us, or do we move in it; when did time begin and what existed before it; is time independent and absolute, as Plato contended, or is its existence dependent on changes in motion, as described by Aristotle. (Schlein 2016). The great mythologies also dealt with the essence of time. For Chronos, the god of time in Greek mythology, time is eternal, sequential, complete, flowing and unstoppable. Questions such as “will time end and history come to an end” are probed in various religious contexts, based on verses from the Book of Daniel and the Revelation to John in the New Testament, or in response to global warming, as scientists predict (Sagiv 2016). For Christianity’s St. Augustine of the 4th century AD, time is deceptive: “What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know” (Confessions, Book XI). Time, therefore, is not only a substantial, physical measure and scientific term, it is also a cultural term contingent on our perception of reality.

The perception of time in every culture dictates a form of thought. All knowledge is time, man lives in a framework of time (Krishnamurti and Bohm 2003). In different eras in the history of Western culture, different terms for time were set one against the other, sometimes contradicting, and sometimes complementing (Funkenstein 1991). Therefore, one should not ascribe discourse on the definition of “time” solely to scientific contexts, but also to cultural, political and personal contexts, however, without losing sight of understanding the dimension of time in its scientific contexts. Time is at the crux of our perception of reality. Reality, as Virilio contends, offers us different and varied levels of meaning, from which we extract personal and cultural significance (Virilio 2006).

The “long time,” according to Braudel, is time that undergoes slow changes – with almost no motion. It is the time of climate, the time of geography (Braudel 2005). Within “long time,” various times move, including economic-social and event-individual time. According to Sand, the “rhythm” in “long time” accelerated as scientific-technological instrumentation became more advanced (Sand 2015).

In this article, we explore changes that the concept of time is undergoing in the virtual culture of the digital age in which the perception of reality is changing. The digital age itself is undergoing fast and essential changes, each of which has bearings on perceptions of time and space. We will discuss the effects of cyberspace on the

perception of time. Cyberspace is a network of digital data bases accessible to its users for navigating and searching for broad knowledge “that exists in a certain space formed by an interaction between user and computer, and which requires navigation” (Rosen 2016, 21). In other words, the virtual, intangible space that developed due to computer usage.

1. SPACE-TIME

The first parameter we address is the term space-time. The Newtonian concept, which views time as separate from, and independent, of space (Hawking 1989), was the principal conception of time in secular Western culture for centuries (Nir 2015). The digital revolution, we will argue following Virilio (2006), carries – in social, cultural and personal contexts – Einstein’s conception of space-time.

Aristotle distinguished between the perception of time and space (Biletzki 1996). He provided the first systematic consideration of the term “external time” (Eyal 1996) and viewed time as an objective, external, physical, measurable and quantitative entity independent of man’s perception (Hagar 2004). Isaac Barrow, Newton’s teacher who operated in the 17th century, argued that time has no other dimension than length, that all its parts are similar and that it can be perceived as consisting of the simple addition of successive moments or as the linear flow of a single moment. Georg Cantor was the first to present a mathematical structure for the straight line’s continuousness, but it was Newton who attributed time its full independence and liberated it from motion (Miller 2008). While for Aristotle, time was always dependent on motion, for Newton, time is absolute, real, mathematical and flows in a unified fashion unrelated to anything external (Elitzur 1994).

Newton believed that there is a permanent system of space and time – absolute space and time exist independently. Newton based his ideas on the logical perception of the senses. One of Newton’s justifications for this was fundamentally mystical; he argued that space and time are a form of divine revelation (Shoshani 2008). Newton believed in an eternal and infinite god who determined the laws of the universe. A god manifests not only in his unique traits, but also in his substantiality; he is all power of sensation, comprehension and agency (Gleick 2007). In Newton’s view, space and time formed a system of absolute reference in relation to which the motion of all objects is measured (Kaku 2005).

Newton's mechanics was, and still is, in part at the basis of our conception of time. This is because our sensory experiences are founded on time's order. This order, Einstein argues, generates a thought structure of subjective time, and subjective time leads, through other terms such as material objects and space, to the concept of objective time (Einstein 2004). Inherent in classical, Newtonian mechanics is the assumption that material points and the forces that operate between them are unchangeable. Since changes in time are external to mechanical interpretation, we arrive at the atomistic structure of the matter. Newtonian physics attributes a substantial, independent existence to space, time and matter.

As mentioned, up to the twentieth century, physics referred to time as absolute. In his famous article of 1905, Einstein showed that if we accept equations of electrodynamics, we must relinquish the concept of absolute time. That is, the clock will measure different time spans from different points of view; time is relative. Time's relativity also applies to our biological clocks, and the explanation for this is given in the classic example of a twin who would look younger than his twin, if we could follow him as he passes by in a high-speed spaceship (Unna 1991).

Einstein contends that time can move in the universe at various speeds corresponding to the speed of our motion. The faster the motion, the slower time progresses. This means that events that occurred simultaneously in one frame of reference did not necessarily occur simultaneously in another (Kaku 2005). Einstein's definition of space-time at the beginning of the twentieth century, no longer appears only in the scientific context, but also in social, cultural, political and personal contexts (Virilio 2006). The change in this conception is linked to changes in the perception of reality in the digital age. **The electronic media destroy the uniqueness of time and space.**

Computer technology, such as the internet, changed the classical, Newtonian perception of reality and of absolute, independent time and space. In the age of digital information, a flow of information has formed a situation that engenders a culture characterized by time-without-time and space-without-space. The events occur here and now on the screen before us with the single click of a mouse. The slow and fragmented mechanical world is gradually disappearing, and instead a computerized, fast, simultaneous and unified world is growing, one which converges and compresses within the boundaries of our physical bodies and our consciousness (Rosen 2009). Cyber-space is a compressed space of enormous data that reaches us at the speed of light, but it is not a space independent of time. The

information is accessible and reaches the surfer's consciousness during his response time. In fact, while surfing, a "compression of space and time" occurs (Rosen 2016, 23).

This space does not operate in accordance with Euclidian rules of geometry. In this space, geometry is not linear. One of the aspects of space-time is simultaneity. Simultaneity constitutes a violation of logical continuity because in Euclidian geometry a point in space cannot inhabit two places simultaneously. In classical physics, events simultaneously perceived as simultaneous by one observer will also be perceived as simultaneous by a second observer who is moving toward the first at a steady speed. Contrarily, in terms of Einstein's theory of relativity, the events will not seem simultaneous to the second viewer – the more their relative speed comes closer to the speed of light, the time difference observed between them will increase. In the theory of relativity, time is relative and not absolute, and the time and space coordinates are intermingled when shifting between different observers' descriptions of events (Granot 2016). In fact, in high-speed motion in cyberspace, a flattening of the linear perspective takes place. The distance between the different objects that become two-dimensional gradually decreases.

Today, people live simultaneously in virtual and real-physical space. The digital revolution presents us with a reality in which one can no longer separate time from space as Newton did. The characteristics of the new media constitute a basis for the development of a "new space-time" (Moshe 2003). Time is not external to us and not separate from space, but rather, we move within it when we are in the virtual space, and we can "exit" from it into the "other" physical, classical Newtonian time.

In the Newtonian conception, there is one time axis. While in large software systems such as, Facebook, Twitter, etc., each computer has its own time axis and time is not absolute. As Lorenz and Rosenan (2016) exemplify using the hotel reservation site *booking.com* – two users in different parts of the world reserve the same room, but what occurs in the large software systems, is that the room is simultaneously both booked and available. In internet spaces, as in universal spaces, time is not absolute. For each computer, there is a unique time axis – that is, a separate time axis. Thus, although each computer acts as predicted, the entire system's behavior, from the point of view of the user, suddenly becomes unpredictable. The order of events may be different on each of the time axes, and it is difficult to synchronize them (Lorenz and Rosenan 2016). The axis of absolute time we are accustomed to, has been replaced with an infinite number of different time axes.

Faster. Time in the virtual space is linked to the speed of our motion within it. The faster we are, we absorb more, collect more, time slows its progression down in the sense that we have “accomplished” more in the same measurable Newtonian external time, and therefore, personally, we have “gained” time. In other words, in time external to us in the substantial physical space, a unit of time has passed, but at the same time, the duration of time spent by the fast individual is different; they have managed to learn, discover, and accomplish more, perhaps even “live” more, and in this sense, reduce speed in the same unit of external time.

The fast individual in the virtual space is different from the fast individual in the Newtonian space because the former’s speed is linked to knowledge and high competency, not solely to speed of motion. That is, output is not only linked to speed of motion but to competency in terms of accurate searching and gathering, and talent or the understanding of virtual space and its rules. Today, the individual exists in two different time dimensions – the individual determines the flow of time in virtual space, and in this sense, time is relative, whereas the individual has no effect on the flow of time in the physical space. In terms of our sensory perception of time outside the virtual space, it behaves according to Newton’s model.

Virilio (2006) conceived the science of speed, Dromology (from the Greek dromos, meaning high-speed acceleration). Virilio views the hyperactive individual as a contemporary version of the Nietzschean Übermensch – in his article “The Art of the Motor,” he discusses, among other things, the human body’s mechanization as derived from the need to expedite organic processes (Neuman 2006). If “time is money,” as Benjamin Franklin claimed in 1748 (Levine 2006), then it is possible to “gain time,” “save time” and “sell time” (Zakay 1998). Therefore, according to Virilio, “speed is power.” In a situation in which time is accelerated, the space collapses into a non-space and non-time. The faster individual rules in **space-time**, and is therefore the powerful one (Virilio 2006, 9). Virilio does not separate the dimension of time from Einstein’s scientific contexts and argues that we live the theory of relativity through cellular phones, real-time, live broadcasts, virtual reality or space travel. Therefore, one must understand the physical theory in the cultural and social contexts it creates and constantly apply it (Virilio 2006, 10). The condensing of time and space is a consequence of accelerating the speed of motion in space, as well as of technological and conscious changes (Rosen 2016).

2. FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

In Western culture, which is based on the Judeo-Christian narrative, two principal themes existed concurrently. Eternal-mystical time that belongs to God, and worldly, linear time that flows from a beginning to an end. To understand the changes that occur in virtual space in the context of both mystical and worldly time, we need first to understand the historical and cultural significance of both mystical and linear time.

Mystical time. Mystical time is the time of the god who exists outside this time as an eternal being: “[In] the Eternal nothing passeth, but the whole is present” (St Augustine “Confessions” XI). In the Bible, the basis of the Judeo-Christian narrative, there is an essential difference between mystical, eternal, divine time, and worldly, human time. For the biblical man, worldly time is inherently linear and contingent on obeying God’s commandments. God exists beyond this time as an eternal entity. In the Bible, time appears as belonging to God, as a resource he willingly gives to man, as Psalms’ poet writes: “Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the luminaries[d] and the sun. You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter” (Psalms 74: 15–16).

Man is granted mystical time on special occasions when he leaves worldly time. The creator, the owner of time, expropriates the sabbath from worldly time and renders it holy, combining it with divine time. Linear time is a time of work, investment and laborious effort toward a purpose. Through the tangible marking of this day, which is essentially different from all other days, the sense of mystical-divine time is manifested (Shavid 1984). “Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns” (Exodus 20: 9–10).

Man experienced mystical time in the Garden of Eden (Agur 1997, 213–215). From the time he is expelled from Eden, the possessor of mystical time grants him appointed times to commune with mystical time. The Garden of Eden is planted in mystical time (although there the Tree of Life is forbidden for human beings). Protection of the Tree of Life commences with the expulsion, with the beginning of human time: “He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3: 24). With the expulsion, the first rapture between divine and earthly time occurs. God exists above biological existence, biological time

and the governing laws of nature. Supporting evidence of this is in the etymological discourse on God's name, Jehovah, which is derived from the Hebrew root of present time, *hove*. The mystical God is an eternal being, described in terms of eternal time.

In the Christian West, mystical, divine time is linked to the religious experience. The Christian believes in the End of Days when humanity will unite with eternal-mystical time. In the Christian world, the prophecy of the King of End of Days first appeared in Abbot Adso Dervensis' treatise "De ortu et tempore Antichristi" (The Time and Place of the Appearance of the Antichrist), which he sent to the Frankish emperor, Louis IV's widow in 954 AD. The treatise conveys that at the End of Days the Frankish king will rise from the dead, unite East and West and conquer the Holy Land. As the end of miracles approaches, Gog and Magog will charge forth from the North, but they will be defeated by the Christian king. After the victory, the King will ascend the Mount of Olives, spread his arms out, place his crown on his head and return his soul to the creator. Thus, when all authority and license on earth are eliminated, the antichrist will be revealed and the events of the apocalypse will begin (Haran 2000). The church promised unconditional love to all who take refuge in its shadow, and offered men a way to believe that God forgives and loves them. Until the end of the Middle Ages, the universe was an easily conceivable place; man stood at its center and paradise or hell were his future places of residence – the promised mystical time (Fromm 1992).

Earthly, linear time. The Bible, upon which Western Christianity is also based, is the source of the concept of linear time. In deeply-rooted Western Judeo-Christian thought, time has a beginning, "In the beginning when God created [...]" (Genesis 1.1), and an end, "In days to come" (Isaiah 2.2). Earthly, biblical time is linear, irreversible and entirely directed toward the final event, the heavenly kingdom (Leibowitz 2002). The prophets promise that we have decisive influence on this end, "For if you truly amend your ways and your doings [...] then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever" (Jeremiah 7.5–7).

This cultural conception of time that leads from beginning to end is at the cultural foundation of the West. Time is not circular, but one-directional and irreversible, whereas for Aristotle, time is a two-way, eternal entity because the world does not have a beginning, and therefore, an end is impossible. For him, the universe is and always will exist forever (Hawking 1994).

The biblical, linear conception leads from the creation to the End of Days, and history is manifested in this sequence. This linear conception of history and its division into sections, which aggregate toward the end, became dominant in all cultural domains for which the biblical basis constituted the foundation of their worldview (Dan 2000). Cultural domains marked by modernism, capitalism and democracy are founded on the Christian perception, which inherited its concepts of time and history from the Jewish Bible (Russell 2001).

With the enhancement of secularization processes in Europe, accompanied by a lack of faith in the soul's preservation in the eternal dimension, mystical time disappeared and the enrooting of worldly time began. At the end of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, the human longing for eternal time fades. Worldly, linear time becomes the only significant time (Debord 1992).

The change in the perception of time in the Renaissance is reflected also in art, and one can observe this with the development of the perspective methodology. The evaluation of perspective is chronological and consequential; when the viewer moves in time and space, their personal perspective shifts. Therefore, in every time unit, it seems as if reality changes. This is a shift from a concept of eternal time and mystical symbolism to a concept of time that is influenced, among other things, from the new scientific thought, subject to the control of logic and the viewer's individual experimentation within the system. Perspective is a graphic description of solid objects in a three-dimensional space, in accordance with one's individual optic perception of reality (Beckett 1994). This perception is in direct opposition to the pure symbolic description. Man is at the center of observation as a researcher.

The return to the Mystic Time. In the digital age, we wish to argue, there is a return to the simultaneous, mystical time – to the divine point of view from within mystical, eternal time. Cyberspace has returned us to mystical time and to God's divine perspective. Today, one can see or experience the entire world simultaneously, by means of enormous memory akin to the entire potential memory possible only in a domain of a superior power like God (Rosen 2016). Following are several examples:

Google Earth. Google operates a virtual, three-dimensional program named Google Earth by means of which the surfer can see everything from angles hitherto unavailable. The program enables one to "fly" anywhere in the world and it displays satellite images, maps, three-dimensional structures, etc. from space galaxies to ocean canyons. The program replaces substantial space-time and enables a gateway to interactive virtual worlds. One can navigate the site

and using a mouse, come closer or farther away; this is galactic navigation that includes images and information about outer space sourced from NASA or other space agencies (Rosen 2016). This is a point of view that is not based on the viewer's sensory experience and experience within the system, this is a comprehensive and general viewing position like the symbolism that characterized art of the Middle Ages, a view from divine, eternal time, from God's viewpoint. This new perspective, enabled by surfing the internet domain, leads us to Spinoza's conception. According to Spinoza, comprehensive, complete vision is achieved only through the viewpoint of eternity (Weinryb, Ramot 2011). When we observe things happening in time, we do not see them as they are. Only from the divine viewpoint will we obtain the complete picture because God, according to Spinoza, is eternal, in the sense that he is outside time and eternal. Complete comprehension is achieved only from the point of view of eternity (Spinoza 1985).

Big Data. Information in cyberspace exists in a super-space that can be navigated and surfed electronically. Big Data means a large amount of information from multiple sources (internet sites, social networks, cellular devices, sensors, security cameras, etc.). The information is stored without deletion and enables analytical capabilities in many content worlds such as, meteorology, trade, cyber warfare, military and police intelligence, etc. Speedy data retrieval and identification of different patterns and links, which are humanly unpredictable, among millions of pieces of data distant in time and space, leads us back to simultaneous view and agency from the divine, inhuman point of view.

Like the symbolism characteristic of Medieval art, a large and unified world picture comes into being, typified by strong linkages between all it contains. This is not only a comprehensive, virtual viewpoint, as exemplified by Google Earth, but the ability to make connections and predict a world picture fast, based on an enormous amount of information. This is a simultaneous form of observing everything. This picture coincides with Leibniz's metaphysics. In Leibniz's view, God created a world in which *a priori* there is full congruency between its elements; at every moment, all created monads are programmed to operate compatibly. According to Leibniz, only the divine, simultaneous, monad sees the world through universal formula, while we see the world in terms of a lacking, changing and transient formula (Rosen 2016). Contrary to Spinoza's point of departure in which the one entity includes everything, Leibniz's starting point is the existence of private things (Weinryb, Ramot 2011). The world is made up of individual and unique objects, but

between all monads a constant harmony operates *a priori* and they operate in congruence. Compatibility is whole despite the absence of reciprocity between the monads. Simultaneous congruity of this type between huge amounts of data, and the production of a unified picture based on details currently possible due to information in cyberspace, “super-space,” a harmony which, according to Leibniz, is reserved for God alone.

Augmented Reality. Instead of thinking about two extreme possibilities – one, the real world; the other, the virtual world –, in 1994, Paul Milgram first suggested thinking about a continuum that passes between these possibilities, thereby attaining different versions of mixed reality (Friedman 2006). This domain is referred to as enriched reality or augmented reality. In augmented reality, there is also a return to simultaneous time.

This is a space-time that includes everything – past, present and future; this conception of time is at the basis of modern physics, contrary to the linear continuum of Newtonian physics in which time flows from past to future (Hagar 2004). For example, in augmented reality, the present is enriched by the addition of a virtual dinosaur from the past whose existence seems palpable – this is simultaneous time in which we can find several realities side by side, past and present. The Newtonian linear continuum is broken, and augmented reality presents us with the co-existence of other times – a conception that is not possible in terms of Newton’s conception. Augmented reality is presented in a manner that seems palpable even though it is virtual.

3. VIRTUAL REALITY AND HALLUCINATORY TIME

The term “virtual reality” means a three-dimensional reality in which individuals can move while interacting with objects and other individuals. Virtual reality replaces the real world completely. When we are in virtual reality our senses are supposed to be attentive only to the virtual world instead of the real world (Friedman 2006). Virtual reality, as opposed to terms such as “virtual environment,” is an environment that the participant experiences by means of special equipment.

This is an intangible reality in which a private or shared illusion is experienced. The creation of a virtual environment is analogous to the creation of the world (Friedman 2006). When a virtual environment is constructed, it is not necessarily like everyday reality. The

virtual world can be very different from the real world, even in terms of its most fundamental axioms. Computers satisfy the sense of vision and hearing. To enable a total virtual reality experience, information must be provided to all the senses and needs to be as rich as possible.

“The future of virtual reality in Oculus technology is already here.” This was announced by Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Facebook, at the world’s largest mobile conference in Barcelona 2016 – Oculus technology (owned by Facebook) Gear VR goggles will be in the hands of millions who will be able to view 360 degree movies, in which they will be able to see and feel as if being inside the video. In virtual reality, real world spatial and depth perception is reconstructed, in addition to a broad field of vision. Obviously, hearing and touch (weight, texture, temperature, hardness, etc.) are also involved in the experience. The discussion on virtual reality takes us back to Plato’s cave allegory in which a group of people in a cave see shadows projected on the wall before them, thinking they are real objects, however, this is a conscious experience and therefore closer to hallucination time.

Hallucination time does not adhere to the realistic rules of reality (in art, surrealism represents hallucination time). Hallucinations are defined as sensations or sensory perceptions that exist without an external reality (Sacks 2013). This is not a deficient sensory perception, rather hallucinations are “conjured” from nothingness. They are distinctively different from dreams and are a unique category of consciousness and mental life.

During a hallucination, the individual experiences an objective and substantial reality as Jung testifies on hallucination time from personal experience:

“I felt as though I were floating in space [...] Everything around me seemed enchanted [...] These were ineffable states of joy. Angels were present, and light [...] And what a contrast the day was: I was tormented and on edge [...] I would never have imagined that any such experience was possible. It was not a product of imagination. The visions and experiences were utterly real; there was nothing subjective about them; they all had a quality of absolute objectivity. We shy away from the word ‘eternal’, but I can describe the experience only as the ecstasy of a non-temporal state in which present, past, and future are one.” (Jung 1961, 354–355).

In a dream, we may experience imaginary and surrealistic events, but we are willing to except them because we are enveloped in the dream consciousness. Hallucinations, on the other hand, may frighten us and we tend to remember them in detail, in the sense that being

in virtual reality is interfaced with hallucination time. Reality seems substantial and objective, exciting, eventful and real, unmeasurable in terms of time.

The extremization of virtual reality is demonstrated in the film "The Matrix" (1999), the Wachowsky brothers hit, in which the tangible reality that the characters experience and what they see around them is a virtual reality created and coordinated by a mega-computer they are all connected too; when the hero awakens into "real reality," he discovers a desolate landscape and smoldering ruins (Žižek 2002).

Hallucination time characterized experiences of time represented in texts of ancient cultures. During the ritual, concrete time was cancelled. In these texts, if time is disregarded during ritual, it does not exist (Eliade 2000). Primitive man lived in a continuous present. In cultures that lived in accordance with cyclical time, there were many instances of ritual time, festive time, game time and times of spiritual elevation – significant times that distinguish between daily activities and social, religious or sacred time.

Van Gennep, in his reference to rites of passage from one state to another – from a cosmic or social world to another world – calls attention to **liminal time**, defined as transitional time, twilight time. In tribal societies, in cultures that live according to cyclical time, liminal time is between sequential Time A to sequential Time B (Van Gennep 1986). This is contrary to rituals in modern society in which liminal times are artificial and fixed. In his research on game time in culture, Huizinga notes that in ancient societies, particularly in ancient Greece, games were limited in terms of time and place, time had a beginning and end. For the reduction of game time there was a permanent identifying mark, like in sacred worship ceremony (Huizinga 1966). Game time, like rituals, had a structured social role.

Today, being in virtual, insubstantial time replaces ritualistic hallucination time and game time. Being in this time cancels concrete time; the linear sequence and modern man's race against time are obstructed. As human beings, we require freedom – or at least the illusion of freedom – to reach beyond ourselves and wander to other worlds, to rise above the immediate world around us. Cyberspace becomes a refuge in times of stress in the substantial space. Virilio warns us against the day when virtual reality will become more powerful than substantial reality – that will be the day when, in his opinion, the integral accident will occur (Rosen 2016).

The desire to wander to other worlds by means of hallucination is described in Stanislaw Lem's book "The Futurological Congress"

(1981). Lem explores questions related to humans' capacity for denial and their desire to live in an illusion. In a chaotic world, the use of hallucination gas causes a group of people to experience day dreams about a utopian world that seems perfect, but in which humanity is in dismal condition. We need this type of disconnection as much as we need relationships and integration in our lives (Sacks 2013).

4. ETERNAL LIFE

The digital revolution also carries the promise of eternal life and in this sense, there is a return to **eternal time**. In the past, eternal time characterized the monotheistic, religious perception of time that is different from the perception of time in modern, capitalist culture. In consumerist capitalism, time became a costly individual resource. Social or financial success was measured in terms of efficiency and optimal results within a framework of limited time; setting a schedule had become the norm in industrial capitalism, a system that fed on speed (Honore 2006). The desire to succeed in minimal time brought on various experiments in efficiency. Time became more tangible and material (Mali 1991).

To teach workers the significance of time in terms of modern capitalist demands, in the nineteenth century the ruling classes began regarding precision as a civil duty and moral trait. Contrarily, slowness and procrastination were considered a fundamental sin (Levine 2006). At the end of the nineteenth century, Frederick Winslow Taylor used a stopwatch and slide rule to calculate time, in fractions of a second, for each production worker. Taylor executed the experiment at Bethlehem Steel Works in Pennsylvania where he applied his scientific time management system. Many workers complained about stress and fatigue, and eventually resigned (Bluedorn 2002, 224–225). This was an era in which time was beginning to be thought of as a commodity, and in which life was organized around the clock.

On the personal level, Westerners live with the biological sense of life passing by, of death and personal extinction. During life, the personal perception of time changes. Time for youngsters in the West is not the same as “adult” or “elders” time. During adolescence, there is a significant change in the perception of time. At this time, one begins to see the sand clock slowly emptying. Again, we no longer ask how much time has passed, rather how much time we have left (Eyal 2004), and idioms such as “the biological clock is ticking” reflect an image of life as a type of organic clock whose

time is limited and predetermined. As of the 1960s, this image takes on a significantly tangible meaning due to an experiment conducted by Leonard Hayflick. In his experiment, Hayflick demonstrated that when cells harvested from a human embryo are enabled to divide freely, they divide approximately fifty times and then die. Apparently, this finding indicates that death is genetically prescribed, and that the biological clocks in our body cells begin ticking with our first heartbeat (Ashkenazy 1991).

In modern society, time is experienced as a gradually perishing resource. It is a value measure like currency for the merchant, a commodity for investment and consumption, and especially, an important resource for success. The Western myth expresses a chronic lack of time. Evidence of time becoming a rare social commodity is accumulating (Davidson 2004). In secular life in the West, where there is no belief in preservation of the soul, the overall sense of time is one of progression toward extinction – the future is obviously different than the past. Time is felt as flowing, one-dimensional and real. We believe that the future is different than the past in the sense that it can be changed, and therefore we know less about it than we know of the past. All our efforts to succeed are directed toward the future. Likewise, we witness irreversible phenomenon occurring daily, the most significant of which is our lives.

The digital revolution carries the promise of remaining in eternal time and of the illusion of eternal life. LivesOn is a Twitter application that guarantees you will continue to Tweet even after death: “When your heart stops beating, you’ll keep tweeting” (Tzezna 2013, 112). Lifenaut.com believes that in the future, it will enable its clients to transfer their consciousness to a new receptacle – whether it be a computer or substitute biological body. Company executives trust that future technologies will facilitate these goals, and therefore suggest transferring relevant information to the company now. The vast wealth of information accumulated in Facebook servers can bring humans back to life in a virtual version. Today, according to Tzezna, we are surrounded by Facebook ghosts – users who have passed away and whose profiles have become memorial profiles, but which, in a few decades, will become much more active (Tzezna 2013, 117). In the digital world, the promise of eternal life that appears in art and literature seems more probable today than ever. In digital space, there is the promise of exiting ever-diminishing linear time, and of “killing time” – turning it into eternal time, as Louis Carroll describes in “The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland” – the clocks stand still because the mad hatter “killed time” (Carroll 1954, 78–80).

CONCLUSION

This article attempted to present some of the changes our cultural and personal perceptions of time are undergoing due to life in the virtual domain. Life in this new space has many implications for our lives. The rate of changes in this space is much faster than that attributed to “long time” (Braudel 2005). The overall “rhythm” is accelerated in accordance with the development of a more advanced scientific-technological equipment.

It is important to summarize and say that we did not intend to foresee Virilio’s Integral Accident, the day in “Matrix” in which virtual reality becomes more powerful than substantial reality (Rosen 2016). We do not wish to assume, as Tzezna (2013) does, that we are surrounded by ghosts of deceased Facebook users who will become more active in the future. And to whether we are experiencing a stage of evolutionary development, in which there will be no distinction between the mechanical and the biological, or between physical and virtual reality, as Raymond Kurzweil (2006) argues, we obviously cannot offer an answer.

In this article, we presented the changes in the conception of time aligned with a return to various conceptions of time in Western culture in the past. The Newtonian mechanics’ tangible conception remained in the three-dimensional world in which we live, but in life in virtual space, time becomes relative and it does not exist independently, as Newton demonstrated. In virtual space, we exist in relative time as presented by Einstein. In today’s secular Western world, the return to mystical time and to the symbolic viewpoint that characterized art of the Middle Ages, is made possible by means of big data and search engines. These enable us as a human society, an agency that in the past was attributed only to divine powers. We experience the virtual world from an eternal, divine perspective unavailable in the past. Moreover, today the obstruction of the linear sequence is feasible in a technically augmented reality – past, present and future exist in a simultaneous virtual world that seems real.

Today, we straddle two technologies: mechanical and virtual-digital, a circumstance that forces us to examine this distinctive cultural reality from various perspectives, and not only in terms of the conception of time. Our probing into changes in the cultural perception of time in virtual space is only at its beginning.

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VIRTUAL REALITY IN WORLD AND LATVIAN SCIENCE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to examine the depiction of virtual reality and the pertinent storytelling characteristics in science fiction written by foreign and Latvian authors. In world science fiction, the idea of virtual reality and computer-generated worlds as a particular segment of reality appeared as early as after World War II, yet it was after the evolution of a specific sci-fi subgenre, known as cyberpunk, that it became especially popular. The novel “Neuromancer” by William Gibson (1984) is considered as the defining oeuvre of this type of science fiction. Writers did, however, continue to study virtual reality not only using the peculiar *noir* aesthetics pertaining to cyberpunk, but also in works of a lighter character. Nowadays the concept of virtual reality appears in YA [young adult – ed.] literature dealing with topics related to computer gaming as well as part of another popular science fiction branch, the dystopia. This article looks into several acclaimed YA novels published in the recent years and containing both computer-game related and dystopian elements.

Until now, in the not-so-wide array of Latvian science fiction the idea of virtual reality has received little attention, but this article inspects the science fiction works written over the last five to six years (2010–2016), in which virtual reality is assigned a comparatively significant role, thus reflecting current global trends. This article examines the different aspects of virtual reality explored in the works of Latvian sci-fi writers and seeks and analyses the parallels of the said works with the aforementioned universal tendencies – especially regarding the dystopian traits.

Keywords: computer games, cyberpunk, dystopia, science fiction, virtual reality

INTRODUCTION

In this article, my objective is to examine the depiction of virtual reality and the pertinent storytelling characteristics in literary works of the science fiction genre. First, I will provide a brief description of the essence and development of virtual reality, as well as a few of the relevant global trends that have developed in the recent years. In the second section of the article, I will inspect Latvian works of science fiction that have examined the subject of virtual reality and will search for traits that characterize the interpretation of virtual reality within these works and can be aligned with the tendencies defined in the first part of the article. In the analytical section of the article, the comparative method has been used to reveal the similarities and differences between the works of world and Latvian sci-fi authors that have been written in the same genre and for the same target audience. The analytical part also seeks to answer the question: To what extent are global trends present and relevant in original Latvian science fiction?

In 2017, it seems, there is no more doubt that the virtual era has insinuated itself in nearly all aspects of our everyday life. Such notions as “virtual environment”, “virtual time”, and “virtual friends” have become commonplace; we talk about cyberspace, cybersecurity, cybercrime, even cybersex. Interactive computer gaming has experienced speedy development, offering gamers not only 3D graphics but also sensory-motoric immersion, simulating various actions: such as riding a motorcycle, piloting an airplane, etc. Apart from gaming, the possibilities offered by virtual reality rapidly acquire popularity in other spheres such as journalism, social media, sports and music; virtual reality is explored by tourism and even healthcare industry. The life of the modern person seems to be divided into two parts – real and virtual – and the latter has been steadily gaining importance. Since literature acts as a reflection of current events, it cannot avoid this topic. The question of virtual reality, just like the majority of the technologies that have a prominent impact on people’s lives and perceptions, has become one of the standard themes of science fiction, too.

The term “virtual reality” has traditionally been defined as “a realistic and immersive simulation of a three-dimensional environment, created using interactive software and hardware, and experienced or controlled by movement of the body” (Virtual Reality 2017a), or “an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli (as sights and sounds) provided by a computer and in which one’s actions partially determine what happens in the environment”

(Virtual Reality 2017b). Science fiction authors broaden this definition and consider virtual reality to be nearly any type of simulated environment generated by a computer and able to create a consistent illusion of reality in the human mind by using feasible or imagined means. It should be noted that in computing terminology the terms “virtual reality” and its look-alike “simulated reality” are usually set apart. Simulated reality denotes instances where computer-generated environment creates an illusion of reality so complete that the human mind cannot separate it from actual reality. In the case of virtual reality, however, the person is aware that everything he or she sees is a game, simulation, or similar type of environment projected in cyberspace. In this article, though, I will be using the term “virtual reality” to talk about both these concepts, as in the literary works in question they often overlap or are merged together. Thus in this article the notion of virtual reality is used to encompass all models of illusive environments described in science fiction, directly linked with existing or imagined computer technologies, and imitating actual reality, regardless of whether the literary character recognizes the reality as virtual or not.

In world science fiction, the concept of virtual reality and computer-generated environment as a distinct segment of reality is relatively new. It is true, though, that the idea of artificial intelligence that is equal or even superior to ours – which has served as a foundation for the notion of artificial and possibly conscious environment – has been present in literature since early nineteenth century when Mary Shelley wrote her celebrated novel “Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus”. Writers have long since been interested in the consequences that could befall humankind if we were to invent a machine that would surpass us in terms of intellect, as well as the formation of a fully technological society, which implies a number of possibilities to influence and even control human mind by means of these technologies: the idea of controlling human consciousness by means of highly developed technologies is present in the dystopias written by such world-famous authors as Aldous Huxley and George Orwell as well as others. Seeing that “[t]he idea of the virtual reality has often been linked with game-playing” (Virtual Reality 2016), some researchers have even named Lewis Carroll’s “Through the Looking Glass” as one of the earliest examples of virtual reality in fiction, since the world that Alice enters through the mirror is based on actual game, the chess; however, modern theories insist that the game principle implied in virtual reality should necessarily be “machine-mediated” (Ibid.).

The notion of “artificial reality” first appeared just after World War II (the term “virtual reality” was not invented until 1989). It took, however, considerable development of the actual science for science fiction to include virtual reality among its regular themes, since before then writers could base their theories only on rather implausible speculations. As soon as actual technologies began to exceed the wildest predictions of the genre, cyberspace and virtual reality became one of the staples of science fiction and have preserved this position ever since.

The first science fiction writer to describe virtual reality without using the actual name for it was Stanley G. Weinbaum. In his story “Pygmalion’s Spectacles” (1935), Professor Ludwig invents a pair of goggles that enable the wearer to watch “a movie that gives one sight and sound. Suppose now I add taste, smell, even touch, if your interest is taken by the story. Suppose I make it so that you are in the story, you speak to the shadows, and the shadows reply, and instead of being on a screen, the story is all about you, and you are in it” (Weinbaum 2006). In the following years, many science fiction writers used this approach (although they did not yet mention the term itself) to create virtual worlds that offered escape from the dreary reality. Virtual reality initially served as a symbol for an existence free of the governing powers, laws, and rules. Escaping into such reality meant escaping oppression, and cyberspace became a sort of “artificial paradise”.

However, the concept of virtual reality saw rather radical changes over the years – not from the practical aspect (which was, of course, enhanced by actual technological progress, allowing writers to base their descriptions of virtual reality not only upon their own imagination, but also on real and existing technologies that in turn opened up many more possibilities for extrapolating these technologies), but from the moral standpoint. Artificial worlds, originally viewed as an escape from reality, in the hands of science fiction writers began to take on a darker hue. Virtual reality was increasingly often portrayed as an environment that could potentially cause a dangerous dependency or a tool that could be used to manipulate with users’ minds; the latter is successfully revealed, for example, in the highly popular movie trilogy “The Matrix”, released in the late 1990s. The plot of the trilogy is based on the supposition that all reality perceived by humans is, in fact, a computer simulation created by sentient machines with the aim to subdue the human population and use the heat and electrical impulses of their bodies as an energy source.

Another fact that bears mentioning: after this “change in direction” the popularity of literature featuring virtual reality soared, and this

concept quickly became a staple in fiction geared towards all age groups, including children and young adults.

VIRTUAL REALITY IN WORLD SCIENCE FICTION: CYBERPUNK

The depiction of virtual reality in science fiction still remains inconsistent, but I would like to briefly outline two trends that are completely different, yet both have become relevant in the last thirty years. The first is cyberpunk, which gained popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, while the second trend encompasses dystopian YA novels that feature computer games as part of the plot. The concept of virtual reality is, of course, also widely explored in science fiction works outside these two subgenres, but I have chosen them to illustrate a tendency of the genre that has since become its own antithesis. Initially, it was cyberpunk fiction that introduced wide readership to the concept of cyberspace (virtual reality) and established its key characteristics; moreover, it created a series of nuanced associations that, from that point onward, would be forever linked to the portrayal of virtual environment in science fiction (traits of space, time, and setting, polarity among characters). The latter tendency, that of dystopian YA fiction, in turn, paints virtual reality according to an aesthetic codex that is somewhat similar to that created by cyberpunk nearly thirty years in the past, yet the accompanying moral perspective is almost completely different.

With the birth of cyberpunk in the second half of 1980s, the concept of virtual reality in literature saw its first and biggest wave of popularity. The novel “*Neuromancer*” by the American writer William Gibson, published in 1984, is considered to be the defining work of the genre. Written in a curious *noir* style, the novel reveals a world where it is possible for people to connect to cyberspace – a computer-generated environment where humans interact with machines, showing how bleak and lonely the world has become when human values are replaced by technology. The protagonist of the novel is a washed-up computer hacker Case who, by linking his nervous system to cyberspace, is able to access a global virtual world full of information stored in the shape of three-dimensional illusions. An unfortunate event in cyberspace damages Case’s nervous system, thus preventing him from further virtual excursions. Cut off from his main source of income, Case lives in Japan, barely getting by until he receives an “offer he can’t refuse”. Naturally, it leads him back into cyberspace and toward unpredictable adventures.

Of course, it is evident that cyberpunk is, in a way, just a slightly modified take on of the fantasy genre concept of parallel universes or “secondary worlds” accessible only to the chosen heroes. What cyberpunk did was to combine this idea with the possibilities offered by the twentieth century technologies. The title of the novel contains a rather obvious analogy with the word “necromancer”, i.e., a wizard who can summon spirits of the deceased; in cyberspace Case is shadowed by a “ghost” of a dead hacker. But cyberpunk is notable for fusing the concept of alternate realities with the postmodern disillusionment of the late twentieth century, thus allowing for a wide interpretation of such postmodern metaphors as divided consciousness, fragmented and unreliable perception, the idea of a person as a mechanism or a device, etc. It became even easier for readers to identify with cyberpunk protagonists because the action took place in present day or not-too-distant future and used a familiar metropolitan setting.

Literary analysts studying the science fiction genre consider the emergence of cyberpunk to be the most important innovation in the genre since the so-called *New Wave* revolution in the 1960s’ science fiction. In essence, cyberpunk offered a dramatically different worldview even within the paradigm set by the genre itself: “Cyberpunk offers an alternative vision of virtual reality, one where its primary goal is not reproduction but augmentation and transformation. In “*Neuromancer*”, William Gibson hints at many of these possibilities.” (Bailenson et al 2007, 148) Cyberpunk was declared a basis for a mass countercultural movement and even an aesthetical manifesto; it became associated not only with literature, but also with movies, games, comics, and even fashion styles fitting in with a certain aesthetics. As stated by literary analyst Sergey Berezhnoy, “The main achievement of cyberpunk as a movement was neither the creation of fundamentally new themes or techniques (virtual space, nanocybernetics, artificial intelligence, etc.), nor the juxtaposition of anarchistic individuals with powerful corporations – all that already existed before. What cyberpunk did, though, was find the exact proportion of the said themes and techniques as well as the exact tone that struck a nerve with the readers, got under their skin, gained their complete trust... and immediately after that revealed rather unpleasant yet undeniable truths about themselves and humanity as a whole” (Berezhnoy 2012). One of the most notable ideologists of cyberculture Bruce Sterling uses an unconventional analogy to express the essence of cyberpunk: “Anything that can be done to a rat can be done to a human being. And we can do most anything to rats. This is a hard thing to think about, but it’s the truth. It won’t go

away because we cover our eyes. *This is cyberpunk*" (Sterling 2008, 322). Interestingly enough, at the time when cyberpunk boomed the actual internet was still scarcely used, slow, and unpopular, and writers themselves were as unfamiliar with it as were their readers, so in the early works "the credibility of the virtual landscape was achieved by exclusively literary means" (Berezhnoy 2012). Or, as stated by Andrew Liptak, "Gibson not only understood and apparently predicted how the internet would eventually work, but went another step further and imagined exactly how someone might enter and interact with it, in one of the more relevant and vivid descriptions of the technology" (Liptak 2016). As technology developed, some literary analysts believe that engineers used concepts found in cyberpunk literature as the basis for creating online environment: "Cyberpunk became a sort of action program for the formation of virtual reality" (Berezhnoy 2012). However, as soon as cyberpunk became a mainstream genre, it lost its unique character and essentially stopped existing in its original form. As literary analyst Ronalds Briedis points out: "With the evolution of computer technology and the Internet becoming a global network, cyberpunk became a trend, provoking countless rip-offs of the seminal literary works and the appearance of cyberpunk computer games, movies, *anime*, and *manga*, as well as a subculture of "true" cyberpunks who, in an attempt to emulate the symbiosis of human flesh and technology seen in cyberpunk worlds, underwent plastic surgery to implant microchip simulacra in their bodies. Meanwhile the pioneers of the movement, plagued by a Frankenstein complex, were clamoring that cyberpunk was dead" (Briedis 2007).

Cyberpunk fiction created a relatively small but stable and aesthetically peculiar segment in world science fiction. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of virtual reality was more and more intensely explored by writers in other genres as well. In recent years this concept has surfaced in science fiction dealing with the topic of computer games and geared toward young adults, and also as part of another popular subgenre of science fiction – the dystopia. Therefore, in order to illustrate the viability of this trend in modern literature, I will be discussing several YA novels where virtual reality is depicted as a world inside a computer game and possessing dystopian traits.

VIRTUAL REALITY IN WORLD SCIENCE FICTION: YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIAS

YA fiction about computer games usually blends issues that concern most teenagers – school, relationships with their peers, the romance of first love – with the tempting yet often dangerous parallel reality found in computer games, which closely resembles or equals virtual reality. One of the most imaginative science fiction works of this type is the series “Ender’s Game” by Orson Scott Card, first published in 1985. The novel “Ender’s Game is of futuristic character – it is set in distant future where Earth has already suffered two invasions of an insectoid alien species. The international space fleet prepares for the next invasion attempt by training a new generation of soldiers, picking out the individuals best suited for warfare. Being the third child in his family in a world where strict two-child policy is implemented, Andrew “Ender” Wiggin is sent off to a residential war school where he must learn battle skills in simulated fight scenarios, virtual space, and in contact with his vicious peers. Ender exhibits outstanding strategic abilities and quickly becomes a master of the game and commander of an army composed of his own schoolmates, but he is still merely a pawn in the game the school administration officers play with the cadets. The concept of the game is the key point of the novel – the simulations play out life-and-death scenarios in both virtual and actual reality. In the meantime Ender plays another, private computer game – as the rules of the genre dictate, it makes him take action in an unknown environment, see the phrase “Game Over” on the screen over and over again, and start anew, seeking another way. The concept of game in its various aspects – Ender’s private game where he plays out his own personal problems in search of a solution; his relationships with schoolmates and friends as a game; the overlapping of game in virtual space and reality in the climax of the novel – has been used by the author as an extensive metaphor revealing the fusion of virtual and actual reality and the risks provoked by such a fusion, as well as the complex inner world and emotional growth of a boy.

Computer game as a captivating as well as dangerous form of alternate reality and a means for the author to reveal the intricacies of teenage life appears in several other YA novels popular at the beginning of the new millennium. One of them is “Erebos”, a thriller written by Austrian author Ursula Poznanski and published in 2012. The protagonist is sixteen-year-old Nick, an ordinary student at an ordinary school in present-day London. His day-to-day life is comprised

of school, friends, and basketball practice until he notices something weird going on among his classmates – there is a flat package circulating from hand to hand, and everyone who receives it starts acting strange. When Nick receives the package, it alters his life. It contains the computer game “Erebos”; the fascinating plot quickly pulls him in, yet the game seems to be surprisingly well informed about Nick’s life and problems. “Erebos” begins issuing tasks Nick must carry out in real life, it commands, threatens, and punishes – it seems to be run by an AI that slowly bends the player’s mind to its own will. Step by step, the game reveals itself to be a means of manipulation with a brilliant mind behind it – the mind of a man, not machine – that uses game-addicted teens for his own benefit. The computer game serves as a smoke screen, a way to exploit the teens as pawns in a different game – the revenge carried out by the cruel creator of “Erebos” in real time.

Ernest Cline’s novel “Ready Player One”, published in 2011, spins a slightly similar tale. In the year 2044, the world is ravaged by an energy crisis, unemployment, and poverty, so people seek refuge from the stark reality in cyberspace. A virtual world called Oasis has been created, and over time it has evolved from a mere computer game to a hub of socialization, business, work, and education for the bigger part of the society. Teenage Wade has grown up using the simulation and has dedicated his life to figuring out the reality of Oasis. Wade’s singular goal is to solve the riddle left inside the game by its creator James Halliday – to find the secret puzzles concealed within Oasis (“Easter eggs” scattered throughout the virtual world) and crack them, because, as everyone in the story knows, the first one to do it will inherit the billionaire’s entire fortune. Of course, such a prize implies that players will use any means necessary to obtain it, and the virtual world of the game slowly penetrates the real life: gamers try to bully each other into quitting, and when that does not work they resort to physical destruction of their opponents; the power of virtual reality is so great that it overshadows morals and respect for the law. Thus, the virtual reality as depicted in this novel has become an immense degrading force.

In a way, it is possible to distinguish a link between a virtual reality and dystopian features also in the highly popular YA trilogy “The Hunger Games”, which headlined the dystopian “boom” in YA science fiction. Granted, the environment where the teen protagonists are planted to fight each other to the death is not simulated but real (even though it can be technologically altered much faster than it would be natural), but this bizarre competition is televised and watched in real time by nearly all inhabitants of the futuristic

nation, while the authorities monitor the “games” and steer them in their desired direction. Because of this, it is possible to draw parallels between “The Hunger Games” and the aforementioned novels: the environment in which the teens fight each other is, in a way, virtual, as it imitates actual reality but does not reflect it faithfully, while spectators watch the competition as a reality show; moreover, they can manipulate it like a computer game – for example, by granting extra privileges to their favorite contestants. “The Hunger Games” are not a computer game, but the spectators seem to perceive them as one, so this provides grounds for affirming that the concept of virtual reality is present in these novels as well.

All these YA novels exhibit the aforementioned interesting deviation from the innovations and conception of virtual reality brought to science fiction by the cyberpunk revolution. Cyberpunk envisioned virtual reality as a symbol for freedom, an environment unrestrained by corporations and independent from the demands imposed by the outside world. Paradoxically, with the accelerated development of real-world virtual reality, cyberspace has been ascribed significantly different qualities, as attested by the said YA novels: often by means of computer games, it has turned into an environment that enslaves, represses, and controls, or at least provides such opportunities to anyone who has power to manipulate it. Sci-fi writers’ prediction that virtual reality would one day prevail over actuality is slowly coming true, but the writers view it as happening in a rather grim fashion. The freedom offered by the “unreality” of the virtual world, the ostensible impunity and anonymity of the cyber-environment allow for an unrestrained display of both the noblest and most undignified aspects of the human character – as obviously demonstrated by the infamous comment sections of different web portals, and confirmed by literary works penned during the zenith of social media and online communication.

VIRTUAL REALITY IN LATVIAN SCIENCE FICTION

In the rather modest collection of Latvian science fiction works, the concept of virtual reality has been touched upon quite sparsely. However, as the range of domestic science fiction grows, the last five-six years have seen the publication of several sci-fi works that prominently feature virtual reality, thus reflecting, at least to some extent, the trends of world literature. Virtual reality has been discussed in both short stories and novels.

One of the first examples of Latvian fiction to focus on computer games is the novella “Spēle” [The Game] by Dace Šteinberga. While visiting a cybercafé, the teen heroine acquires a CD with a computer game on it and, for all intents and purposes, becomes addicted to it. As she plays, though, she does not realize that the trio of characters – Marija, Melisa, and Miks – are real people, her fellow teenagers, who have been pulled into the game by bright blue objects they have received from a mysterious bypassing lady: one of them has been handed a cell phone, another has found a seemingly forgotten wallet lying on a bench in a park. By touching these objects, the teens lose consciousness and wake up trapped inside the game. In reality, their bodies are kept prisoner in a strange building and only their minds take part in the game.

In the strategy game, the teens must survive in a historical environment, fight supernatural creatures, and familiarize themselves with the world of Latvian and world mythical tales. In all their adventures they are accompanied by Vadātājs [the Trickster], who is actually the anonymous player. It is interesting that the teens trapped inside the game realize that everything they see is not real, and they are actively trying to discover the identity of the player; that would let them leave the game. This is the first example of Latvian fiction that features a computer game as a major plot device, and although the novella is mainly just an entertaining adventure story, it already demonstrates the tendencies that will become prominent in later works of Latvian science fiction dealing with the topic of virtual reality: cyberspace is shown as a threatening alternate universe, imprisonment that the computer game characters must escape at any cost, the addiction of the gamer, and a dystopian universe that all the heroes can escape only by returning to actual reality.

The idea of virtual reality has been featured in select science fiction short stories. In the titular story of the anthology “Zilie jūras vēršī” [Blue Sea Oxen] Džeina Tamuļeviča describes a world that extrapolates current obsession with social media – with the help of future technologies it has been made into a tangible alternate world. The unnamed female protagonist lives a quiet, monotonous, and bleak life; the only thing that makes it interesting is constant communication and news in various social sites (all the networks mentioned in the story, such as *Instagram* and *Foursquare*, actually exist), which offer everything she lacks in reality: gripping activities, beautiful scenery, real friends. “All it took was connecting your central nervous system to your phone, and you landed in a captivating movie without any drama or negativity” (Tamuļeviča 2015, 11). Technology companies offer to supply all citizens with an illusion of an exquisite

and active life to share across social media while in reality they are still stuck in routine, because the important thing is not to actually live these experiences but to create an impression on others. As a result, people often lack the time and energy to enjoy the technologically created miracles at their disposal – they are in too much of a hurry to share them on social media. The most important task is keeping your phone charged at all times, because if the battery dies “you are left alone with your thoughts and [...] thrown out of the party and back into your rough and rather shabby reality” (Tamuļeviča 2015, 13). A wide range of applications provide the user’s brain with simulations of everything they can imagine – from dinner at a five-star restaurant to relaxation by the sea. In the universe of the story, meeting up with friends means simply “logging into the same program” (Tamuļeviča 2015, 17). The plot is driven by the belief that something is finally happening for real, but ultimately it turns out to be nothing but “a glitch in the program” (Tamuļeviča 2015, 23). The dystopian story realistically portrays the modern obsession with virtual environment, slowly substituting reality by illusion until everything that would qualify as “real” can actually turn out to be imagined. Step by step, the human mind and consciousness merge with computer network, until humanity as a whole can be questioned; at the end of the story, the heroine is revealed to be an android.

In the anthology “Purpura karaļa galma” [In the Court of the Crimson King] the concept of virtual reality is discussed in the story “Snaudas eksperts” [Slumber specialist] by Artūrs Dedzis. The story takes place in a futuristic prison where a group of thirty inmates are locked together inside a projected environment that imitates extreme survival. “Slumbers – that’s what the author and director of the project, Dr. Harris, called the sessions where, with the help of a specifically designed technology that controlled neurons in the brain, people were held in an induced, yet highly stable state of sleep with lifelike dreams. The objective of the project, he said, was to regularly submit the inmates of our prison to Slumber, thus saving prison resources” (Dedzis 2012, 220–221). Of course, the prisoners confined to virtual reality quickly form a community with its own problems – rivalry, conflicts, survival challenges – as the community is located in simulated wilderness where everything necessary for survival must be obtained by primitive methods. After the main character – the designated “Slumber Host” in whose mind everyone else is imprisoned – dies in one of the conflicts, in the real world his biological body perishes as well, while his consciousness awakens as a complex, incorporeal computer program that could be further used to impose the “resource saving”. The story clearly illustrates

virtual reality as a means of holding the human mind and consciousness hostage, which, with the use of the right technologies, allows not only for the physical but also – and more effectively – spiritual subjection of a person. The story also addresses the idea of absolute moral ambiguity of machines and technology (previously explored only in world science fiction) – that is to say, even the most developed form of artificial intelligence is incapable of moral reasoning. As humans possess this ability, it allows them to use technology for either good or bad purposes, and the writers often express their fear about the latter.

The relationship between virtual and actual reality is present in several stories of the anthology “Dubultnieki un citi stāsti” [Seeing Double] by one of the most imaginative young modern sci-fi writers Toms Kreicbergs. One of the concepts that is present in several of Kreicbergs’ stories is the so-called “jack-stream” – a probable future technology that links together the minds of several people in a natural or induced state of sleep, allowing them to hear and experience the life of the other person from a safe perspective. As the author explains, “the human process of thinking is, essentially, an unending conversation with oneself. For instance, while solving a math problem, you have a thought, the next one answers the first, the following thought again answers the previous one, then a third voice jumps in and suggests you should go get something to eat, another one outyells it, and so on. I came to the natural conclusion that conversations between people are literally an attempt to broaden their minds, to include other, different voices in this inner dialogue. From this idea it took me but one step to design jack-stream – if there was a technology that allowed people to communicate in a manner where they were unable to separate their inner “voice” from another, their minds would be essentially *jacked* together.” (Kreicbergs 2011, 107) In several stories this concept lets the author delve into a topic that in science fiction always supersedes technology – the relationship with oneself and with others, and with the current era. In the story “Domājošas sievietes muļķu pulks” [A Thinking Woman’s Crop of Fools] Kreicbergs investigates what would happen if jack-stream was used for industrial purposes, as the female protagonist “rents” her mind for a price. In the story “Atkal būt vieniem” [To Be Alone Again] he explores the possibilities jack-stream would open up for criminally inclined individuals. In the titular story of the anthology, a Russian-born Latvian named Sasha and an American called John have been sharing a mind ever since they were children, but the real issue is with how Sasha’s family perceives “sharing” their brother and son with a stranger. The variations are countless, and each of them allows

the author to explore a person's relationship with themselves, others, and the current circumstances from an unusual angle. Admittedly, the technology of jack-stream technology differs from virtual reality, but the methods are similar – the human mind and consciousness are influenced by technology, thus altering their perception and submitting it to manipulation, that is to say, limiting their freedom. In Kreichbergs' stories, however, instead of describing jack-stream as wholly negative, the author highlights the aforementioned moral ambiguity of technology: depending on the user, every technological innovation can be used in a constructive or destructive manner.

The future "virtualization" of our planet is one of the topics addressed in the YA novel "Septiņdesmit piecas dienas" [Seventy Five Days] by Ilze Eņģele. In the futuristic city of Metropolis it is mandatory for all immigrants and inhabitants to wear digital glasses or contact lenses that, on the one hand, seemingly make life easier, as any kind of information can be accessed momentarily through a kind of *Google* browser that is always hovering in front of one's eyes. On the other hand, though, it turns out that the information displayed by the device does not always correspond with objective reality. All the information concerning each person is registered and available to the authorities, making it a perfect control mechanism, and the seemingly flawless façade hides an Orwellian world that harbors class division, total control, and the loss of humanity. Metropolis is obsessed with youth, beauty, and fashion: there are "gene booths" on every street corner that offer to change the color of customers' eyes, hair, and skin; fashion trends change at a break-neck speed, and nearly all residents of the city do their best to conform to these artificial standards. The false splendor slowly corrupts the relationships and soul of Heidi, a young girl who has come to Metropolis to work and get her "big break": the illusory brilliance becomes more important than her friends, family, values, and even basic morals. Heidi's relationships and communication with people migrate to the virtual world, for example, parties with her friends largely take place online since they are cheaper and easier to achieve. The citizens of Metropolis mock the people still living outside the technologically enhanced city in the so-called Wild Valley where life is not computerized and people choose their occupation according to their own preferences and even enjoy such archaic forms of entertainment as the theater. Heidi is slowly going under, losing her identity and breaking all her principles just to remain in the illusion of perfect life a little while longer. A glitch in the program reveals it actually is an illusion; for a split second Heidi glimpses reality as it is: grim and ghastly. Metropolis is but a crumbling

city without any color, fancy costumes, or any of the things that she found so alluring; all the brilliance was just a trick of the glasses. The conclusion of the novel, however, leaves open the question – which one of the realities was actually real and which was virtual? The direction of the plot correlates with that of the world YA novels discussed in the first part of the article, where virtual reality acts as a means of mind control and a dangerous illusion, as opposed to the real world.

The issue of virtual reality is also addressed in the novel “Laimes monitorings” [Happiness by the Mile] by Laura Dreiže – a look at the future of our planet in the digital era. In a city ruled by a cruel government two illegal groups of young rebels live side by side. They are involved in a peculiar competition – trying to catch a mysterious van that can somehow dispel people’s misery. At the same time, these rebels are hoping to overthrow the governing regime. Accessing the Internet, which in the novel is known as the Web, is only safe for a person who is equipped with special implants (because connection is secured via electrical impulses sent through wires that are directly attached to the person’s body), but the rebels have neutralized their implants, as they simultaneously serve as a surveillance and control mechanism. After one of these young adults is trapped inside the Web during an illegal virtual expedition, Avery, the protagonist of the novel, must enter cyberspace – that is, put her mind on the line to connect to the Web, knowing that in case of a glitch the electrical impulses may cause irreversible damage to her brain. Avery’s adventures in cyberspace are quite similar to those that the characters navigate in real life, but the way the virtual world is portrayed is rather interesting – it is nearly indistinguishable from reality, yet there are subtle details reminding that it is actually but an illusion. “The world around her rippled. Alarmed, Avery rubbed her eyes. At once, everything returned to normal, as if nothing had happened. People went on with their business, the traffic resumed, and the massive LCD screens on the buildings continued to transmit a wide range of advertisements. But Avery realized at once what she had just witnessed. A system update. That could mean only one thing. She was not in the real world anymore” (Dreiže 2011, 174–175). This scene mainly serves to further the plot (in cyberspace Avery meets a stranger, and later their meeting plays a significant part in plot development), but the omnipresence of the Web that allows to immediately identify anyone who has accessed it illegally points to the same idea that Enģele’s novel discusses from a different viewpoint – virtual reality is seen as a control mechanism, an illusion that threatens adequate perception of reality. The Web is just another

way for the totalitarian government to exercise control over not only the bodies, but also the minds of its citizens. Additionally, the use of implants to access cyberspace can be viewed as the author's paying homage to the cyberpunk tradition that often used the same method.

The novel "Digitālo neaizmirstulīšu lauks" [The Field of Digital Forget-Me-Nots] by Ellena Landara also explores the link between virtual reality and control. The protagonist is a teenage girl Airii who is living in the futuristic city of Niron – a seemingly harmonious place. Each citizen has an implanted bio-mechanism that monitors all bodily functions and in case of emergency calls for medical assistance. The people of Niron do not realize that this convenient device is actually overseeing their every step, and one of its features allows the switchboard to use special programs in order to penetrate a person's mind and influence their thoughts, creating a false perception of reality, essentially a virtual one. After a tragedy at work Airii encounters an underground resistance movement and learns that her own life and the lives of other citizens are built almost entirely on technologically fabricated lies, and she herself carries source code that could help the rebels overthrow the controlling regime. Once again, this novel emphasizes the issue of the "web" – even if the motivation for connecting all citizens in a unified network of information seems nothing but positive, it also permits the government or other controlling forces to use this connection for altogether different purposes. It may be interesting to note that these concerns are to be met also in real life: although at the moment, mind control via implanted mechanisms is only found in science fiction, people in reality have also expressed their concern about what the consequences might be if the authorities could access all the information about any person at any given time. The possibility that these technologies could also create an artificial reality in the person's mind only serves to heighten this concern.

CONCLUSION

I realize that the number of examples given is too small to draw comprehensive conclusions concerning the portrayal of virtual reality in Latvian science fiction; however, it is possible to distinguish some tendencies and parallels with the previously viewed world science fiction works.

As the corpus indicates, all the literary works that are mentioned in this article and contain descriptions of virtual technologies are written by young authors – which is logical because it is the millennial

and the successive generations that are the most knowledgeable when it comes to virtual environment. It is interesting to observe, though, that in nearly all these works the attitude, the authors exhibit towards their portrayed virtual worlds, is decidedly negative – the writers view computerized environment as a threat to a truthful perception of actual reality, as a means of deceit and control, an illusion that destroys lives and relationships. It is therefore possible to conclude that, being inseparably connected to this environment in their everyday life, the young writers still do not trust it. This observation is consistent with a similar trend in globally popular YA science fiction with dystopian characteristics: both foreign and Latvian writers choose to emphasize the dangers virtual reality presents, as it can supplant actual reality in the users' minds as well as break into the real world and alter it – such parallels are clearly visible, for example, when comparing the works by Ellena Landara, Ilze Eņģele and Ernest Cline, all of which concentrate on the possibilities of influencing people's – particularly young people's – perception of reality via means of virtual technologies, and point out that consequently not only their mindset but also moral values get dangerously overturned. Several authors have also chosen to emphasize the alienation brought about by the extensive use of virtual reality: it is interesting to note that, for instance, nobody denies the fact that excessive computer gaming can cause the player's isolation from the world (which is in fact the underlying admonition of Ursula Poznanski's novel); whereas the use of social networks seems to have a twofold effect: on the one hand, these networks are meant to bring people closer and alleviate communication, on the other hand (as illustrated vividly by Džeina Tamuļeviča's story) they can be used to create a fictional identity that hinders actual relationships rather than aids them.

It follows that the topic of moral ambiguity of virtual technology has also been highlighted in both world and Latvian science fiction works. The Latvian authors, on the one hand, appear to follow the Western writers' tendency to express apprehension about the ever more speedily developing virtual technologies and their actual and probable impact on people's everyday lives and minds; on the other hand, authors, such as Toms Kreicbergs, in their works also point at the fact that, similarly to other technologies in the past, which also used to cause some anxiety, the possibilities offered by virtual reality can be exploited in various ways, and the threat level virtual reality poses mostly depends on the person or institution controlling cyberspace. However, some of the writers (Dreiže, Tamuļeviča and Eņģele) seem to imply that there is a certain possibility that computer environment can be perceived as at least partially sentient being capable of

making its own decisions and acting independently of the user's wishes – so these particular literary works are proposing a different take on yet another of the ever-popular science fiction tropes: the moral aspects and consequences of creating artificial intelligence. It is possible to conclude, then, that the majority of the Latvian science fiction featuring virtual reality corresponds with the dystopian subgenre, so significant parallels can be observed with similar novels written by foreign authors.

Conversely, for the time being Latvian writers do not seem to be attracted by cyberpunk, especially not the peculiar cyberpunk aesthetics; there is still no Latvian equivalent to William Gibson's work to be discussed. This can, however, be explained: since at the time when cyberpunk experienced its peak of popularity outside the USSR there was practically no original Latvian science fiction and cyberpunk did not penetrate the iron curtain separating world literature tendencies from those predominant in the Soviet Union, this genre in its original form has been of next to no influence to Latvian authors. Consequently, the aspects of virtual reality as means to escape the present world into a more independent and sincere reality have not been reflected in Latvian science fiction works at all. The specific aesthetic turn of the classic cyberpunk works has found but a superficial reflection in some of the works under discussion, mainly emphasizing the tangible aspects of cyberpunk environments (such as dark and dreary urban landscapes and body implants allowing the person to connect to the virtual space, i.e. almost exclusively material nuances) but almost completely ignoring the postmodern aesthetics and possible metaphoric interpretations of these facts. In short, the few cyberpunk features that are to be met in Latvian authors' science fiction works, serve mainly illustrative rather than symbolic purposes.

Another, rather peculiar, conclusion is that the majority of Latvian authors under discussion with the sole exception of Dace Šteinberga have not been attracted by the topic of computer gaming which unlike cyberpunk is both well-known and widespread in Latvia. However, this perhaps might be explained by the fact that social media currently are much more popular means of entertainment than gaming, which in turn might be viewed at least by the younger generations as slightly dated.

Finally, it must be pointed out that there are other aspects of the virtual environment that still remain nearly untouched by Latvian authors: for instance, the phenomenon of blogging, or cyberharrasment; there is also a lack of more comprehensive approach to the social networks which gradually gain ever growing importance in

people's everyday lives. Nevertheless, in all likelihood the apparition of literary works exploring these subjects is just a matter of time.

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RELIGIOUS POETRY OF LITERARY ORIGIN IN THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF THE RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS

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ABSTRACT

The current research focuses on a little-known area of studies, didactic poetry by the Russian Old Believers that originated from the medieval Russian literary tradition. In particular, it aims to bring to light and examine two previously unknown and unpublished religious poems of a literary origin: "Why We Need to Endure so Much Sadness and Trouble (An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida)" and "A Poem About a Desperate Sinner". Both texts were discovered in manuscripts (by the Russian Old Believers) that are held in the Drevlekhranilishche IRLI (Pushkinskii Dom, St Petersburg, Russia). The research employs the comparative method to establish the origin of these two poems and examine the adaptation techniques of some popular didactic plots by the Old Believer men of letters. It examines, compares and contrasts plots, motives and characters' interpretations in the above named poems with selected stories from "The Great Mirror", popular reading of the 17th–18th centuries. The poem "An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida" is additionally examined in comparison with the folk tale, "The Little Mouse" and the fable "About Those Who Condemn Other People" by the Russian poet V. Maikov. The current work also aims to use these newly discovered poems as examples of some lesser studied groups of texts that were known to the Russian Old Believers.

Keywords: poems, folk, authored, manuscript, the Russian Old Believers

INTRODUCTION

The comparative method is one of the essential tools that is widely used in many areas of study of the humanities, including liberal art and social sciences. Comparison has proven to be especially beneficial when dealing with literal and folklore texts of a complex nature or unknown origin. In particular, the comparative method may be a helpful tool for establishing the origins of folk texts or literal works by anonymous authors. The large body of folk and authored religious poetry that has been known and circulated in manuscripts among various branches of the Russian Old Believers can serve as an example of complex text groups that have been borrowed from a broad range of written sources and mainstream Russian folklore. The mainstream religious folk poems (*dukhovnye stikhi*) and penitential poems (*pokaiznnye stikhi*) were particularly cherished and enjoyed great popularity in the Russian Old Believer communities. They were acknowledged by Old Believer men of letters as meeting the norms of religious devotion. Singing or reading these texts promoted a pastime, which was, in the words of the Old Believers “good for the soul”. On the basis of this tradition, they created their own religious folk poetry and literature tradition. Moreover, in the Old Believer communities, religious poetry became an area of popular and creative work, which continued to develop as a living tradition over the centuries and produced a large number of poems by anonymous Old Believer writers whose identity may not be possible to establish. Implementation of the comparative method in examining plots, motives, text structure, and linguistic particularities of religious poems known to the Old Believers helps us to establish the origin of many texts and the ways in which they were recorded, edited and circulated in the Old Believer manuscript tradition.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE REPERTOIRE OF THE RELIGIOUS FOLK AND AUTHORED POETRY BY THE RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS

The current research focuses on a little-known area of studies, didactic poetry by the Russian Old Believers that originated from the medieval Russian literary tradition. In particular, I would like to bring to light and examine two previously unknown religious poems of a literary origin: “Why We Need to Endure so Much Sadness and Trouble (An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida)” and “A Poem

About a Desperate Sinner". I came across both poems while working with the Old Believer manuscripts in the Drevlekhranilishche IRLI (Pushkinskii Dom, St Petersburg, Russia). Both texts were included in manuscript volumes of religious folk poetry ("Stikhovniki") alongside popular mainstream poems (a poem about St Iosaaf; a poem about St Alexii, the poems about the separation of the soul and body and many others). Both volumes are dated to the end of the 19th century – beginning of the 20th century. The characteristics of the versification, the well-known literary origin of the texts and the fact that they were not circulated beyond local manuscript traditions may prove that they were authored. It is likely that both poems were either produced by an anonymous Old Believer author or copied from a literary magazine of that period (for example, "The Niva" magazine) or from a popular religious pamphlet by a scribe.

It is worth noting that the Old Believer men of letters had developed a distinctive method for expanding their reading repertoire of non-sacred texts: religious poetry, legends, and moralistic didactic novels. Alongside mainstream popular religious folk poems (*dukhovnye stikhi*), they borrowed popular plots or whole texts from a broad range of sources, for example, literary magazines. They then edited the original to satisfy their tastes. The distinguished Old Believer publisher, V. Z. Iakzanov stated that: "The Old Believers have never being shy of including in their collections of religious poetry, poems by popular Russian authors, if these poems satisfied the criteria of moral principles and values of good Orthodox Christians" (Yakzanov 1911, 3). In another words, according to the Old Believers any reading for entertainment purposes must be "beneficial for the soul". It is interesting that this criterion is spelt out in the titles of the poems. The majority of the religious poems that were included in the poetry collections called among the Old Believers "Stikhovniki" had a phrase "a poem beneficial for the soul" (*stikh dushepoleznui*). This explains why the repertoire of non-sacred texts in the Old Believer tradition is so broad and inclusive. Besides the mainstream folk poetry included in "Stikhovniki" without mentioning the author or the source there are:

- Poems by Russian professional writers and poets: M. V. Lomonosov, M. Y. Lermontov, A. S. Pushkin etc.
- Poems by Old Believer ideological opponents, such as D. Rostovskii. For example, his poem "A Mortal Man, Look Diligently How Your Life is Passing by, and Your Death is on Your Doorstep" became one of the most beloved and popular poems by the Old Believers.

- Poems by anonymous writers of Old Believer origin. The authorship of some of these poems is difficult to establish due to the lack of any background information.

It is important to stress that all the authored poems were always included in their manuscripts as anonymized folk poems without any reference to their origin.

THE ORIGIN OF AN UNKNOWN DIDACTICAL POEM “AN ANECDOTAL STORY ABOUT PAKHOM AND STEPANIDA” BY THE RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS

The plots of both poems examined in this article (“An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida” and “A Poem About a Desperate Sinner”) have a striking similarity to two stories from a very popular reading of the 17–18th centuries, the book entitled “The Great Mirror” (“Velikoe Zertsalo”), which was translated from Polish into Russian in the 17th century [the comprehensive examination of “The Great Mirror” can be found in the following works: Vladimirov 1884; Derzhavina 1965; Romodanovskaya, 2004]. “The Great Mirror” contains a large collection of moralistic stories based on Biblical and New Testament fables. The didactical nature of these stories made them especially popular among the Old Believers.

The first poem “An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida” tells us the story about a bad wife who ruined her own and her husband’s prospect of a good life. It examines the origin of female naughtiness and mankind’s stupidity; and explains how all of mankind can be vulnerable in face of even the smallest of temptations. The poem contains three parts: an introduction outlining the topic of the poem; the main body that describes the weak and vulnerable nature of mankind who are so easily tempted and finally the conclusion with the moral of the story that is meant to be very instructive for all good Christians. The two leading characters of the poem are poor peasants, husband and wife, called Pakhom and Stepanida. The poem begins with the couple’s dispute about a timeless topic: who should be blamed for all men’s misfortunes and the hardship of life, Adam or Eve. Stepanida insists that Eve must be blamed for all men’s sins and considers that our suffering in life is unfair as God made the men suffer for somebody else’s sins:

<p>– Ах, за что мы переносим Столько горя и забот, Землю пашем, сено косим, Так что градом льет пот? Нас нужда бы не видала, Мы не видали бы труда, Если бы Ева не вкусила Запрещенного плода. Разве это не обида Нам терпеть за грех чужой? – Так ворчала Степанида, С поля идучи домой. (Karel'skaya № 506)</p>	<p><i>What we are enduring so much Suffering and troubles for; We plough land, mow the grass for hay As hard as our sweat is pouring down. We would not have experienced poverty, We would not have worked hard, If Eve would not have tasted The forbidden fruit. Is it unfair To suffer for someone's sin? – Stepanida was grumbling While going home from the field.</i></p>
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Unlike his wife, Pakhom insists on Adam's obvious fault, he was stupid enough to allow Eve to convince him and made the fatal mistake:

<p><i>И Адам не меньше в этом Виноват, – сказал Пахом, – Муж не жениным советом, А своим живи умом. Если бы этак не сгубили Долю праотец свою, Мы бы жили бы, да жили, Припеваючи, в раю. (Karel'skaya № 506)</i></p>	<p><i>Adam is equally guilty, – Said Pakhom. A husband must not be told by his wife, But he rather must use his own brain. If our forefather would not have Ruined his fate, We would have still be living happily In Paradise.</i></p>
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The couple left for work in field and kept arguing. Then the poem took a turn to a fairy tale. On their way, the couple came across a mysterious stranger, a rich, powerful and kind man, a sort of magic helper or benefactor that every Russian fairy tale has. The stranger entered the couple's dispute and pointed out that condemnation of one's actions is, itself, a sin. He also suggested that both Pakhom and Stepanida would have made the same mistakes if they had been Adam and Eve. Moreover, the "magic helper" offered the couple "a magic gift": a new easy and wealthy life without any difficulties or hard labor on one condition. Pakhom and Stepanida would be able to enjoy all the benefits of this great life, relax, sleep, eat and drink as much as they wish. However, they are not permitted to lift the lid of one mysterious dish that would be served at dinner each day. The couple could not believe in their luck and were very happy to accept the gift with this condition:

<i>Вот живет на новом месте</i>	<i>Here our good couple are:</i>
<i>Наша добрая чета,</i>	<i>They live in their new home,</i>
<i>Пьют, ядят, гуляют вместе,</i>	<i>They drink, eat, relax together.</i>
<i>Знать, их счастье – не мечта.</i>	<i>Their happiness is a reality, not a dream.</i>
<i>Им ни горя, ни заботы,</i>	<i>They are living carefree,</i>
<i>Ни нужды нет никакой,</i>	<i>They do not have any troubles,</i>
<i>Хоть валяйся без работы</i>	<i>They can relax doing nothing</i>
<i>С боку на бок день деньской.</i>	<i>All day long.</i>

(Karel'skaya № 506)

However, this poem has an unhappy ending. Pakhom and Stepanida have repeated the same mistake as Adam and Eve. Stepanida could not resist female naughtiness, and was tempted to look under the lid of the mysterious dish. Pakhom did not manage to stop his wife from such a stupid action. To their surprise, instead of magic dish they discovered a mouse on the plate. Immediately, the magic helper appeared in front of the shamed and disappointed couple. He lectured them on their bad behavior and the danger of condemnation by our ancestors and sent the ashamed couple back home to their old life full of poverty and hardship:

<i>И пошли они, вздыхая,</i>	<i>They set off, sighing,</i>
<i>В деревенский домик свой,</i>	<i>For their old peasant hut.</i>
<i>Как изгнанники из рая,</i>	<i>They felt like their ancestors who lost</i>
	<i>Paradise.</i>
<i>Со сокрушенною душой.</i>	<i>Regretting their deeds.</i>
<i>Путь их к хижине убогой</i>	<i>The way back home</i>
<i>Им теперь невесел был,</i>	<i>Appeared to be sad for them.</i>
<i>А Пахом жену дорогой,</i>	<i>Pakhom as he would be in the right,</i>
<i>Будьто правый, все корил</i>	<i>Was reproaching his wife.</i>

(Karel'skaya № 506)

In the concluding part of the poem Pakhom tells the readership the moral of the story:

<i>Полно плакать, не поможет, –</i>	<i>Stop crying, it won't help, –</i>
<i>Наконец, сказал он ей,</i>	<i>Finally, he said to her.</i>
<i>Осуждать-то всякий может,</i>	<i>Those who condemn the others</i>
<i>А не сделает умней.</i>	<i>Make the same mistakes</i>

(Karel'skaya № 506)

This original poem has, undoubtedly, strong connections with two literary stories and one folk tale:

- First, as I mentioned above, the poem's plot and motifs and the leading characters behavior are very close to a story entitled "Who Condemns Adam's Sin Became a Sinner". This fable is included in "The Great Mirror" under number 100 (Derzhavina 1965, 284–285; 143–144). This allows us to consider that the poem may be a poetic revision of this popular story.
- Second, it is important to point out striking similarities between the poem "An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida" and the fable "About Those Who Condemn Other People" by the Russian poet of the 18th century, V. I. Maikov [Maikov 1936, 162–164].
- Finally, the plot, motifs and characters of the poem about Pakhom and Stepanida have a lot in common with a Russian folk tale entitled "The Little Mouse". This folk tale, "The Little Mouse", was very popular in the Russian North and has been included in the Russian Folk Tale collection by Onchukov (Onchukov 1908, 457).

It is likely that the poem's author knew at least one of the above mentioned literary sources and/or a folk tale. It is accepted by scholars that the didactical fables that promoted Christian values, from the book "The Great Mirror", were very popular among the Russian readership, including the Old Believer communities. It is an accepted fact that many original and compiled stories from "The Great Mirror" were copied, included and circulated in the Old Believer manuscripts. The story "About Those Who Condemn Other People" by V. Maikov was published in the popular, among the Old Believer communities, journal entitled "The Good Entertainment". Especially, in the second part of the 18th century many moralistic / didactic poems about Christian values by the Russian poets V. D. Sankovskii, M. D. Chulkov, A. P. Sumarokov and others were published in this journal. At that time "The Good Entertainment" became an endless source for plots and characters for the Old Believer scribes and men of letters. It is also possible to consider that the author of the poem about Pakhom and Stepanida may know the folk tale "The Little Mouse" as both the poem and tale were circulated in the Russian North. A comparative text analysis of four texts would help us to examine what all texts have in common and how they differ (see table on page 56).

This table demonstrates that all four texts have many motifs in common. The plots of all texts develop in a similar way. However, the leading characters differ in these four texts. In the story from "The Great Mirror" there are only two characters: a servant who condemns Adam and his master who also plays the role of a magical

helper and teaches his servant a lesson. In the fable by V. Maikov an old man and woman are the two leading characters and the magical helper is absent. It appears that the poem “An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida” has two leading characters, a peasant couple called Pakhom and Stepanida. The magical helper has several functions: he sets the task, punishes the leading characters and teaches them a lesson. It is worth noting that the folk tale lacks any Christian moral, has no references to Adam and Eve, but keeps all the other mentioned motifs. This proves that the poem “An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida” shares many particularities of traditional mainstream religious folk poetry. Like the majority of religious folk poems, the poem has a written (literary) origin, and may share some motifs and characters with folk tales. However, unlike a folk tale the poem emphasizes the Christian values and teaches its readership to be, first of all, a good Christian.

Motifs	The story entitled “Who Condemns Adam’s sin became a sinner (“The Great Mirror”)	The fable “About Those Who Condemn Other People” by V. Maikov	The folk tale “The Little Mouse”	The poem “An Anecdotal Story about Pakhom and Stepanida”
Envy	+	+	+	+
Condemnation of Adam	+	+	-	+
Condemnation of Eve	-	+	-	+
An instruction given by a stranger to the person who condemns actions by other people	+	-	-	+
The trail	+	+	+	+
A forbidden object: vessel/cup/dish	+(vessel)	+(cup)	+(mug)	+(dish)
Breaking the ban/rule	+	+	+	+
The content of the forbidden object: bird/rat/mouse	+(bird)	+(rat)	+(bird)	+(two mice)
Punishment for breaking the ban/rule	+	+	-	+
Admonition of those who broke the ban	+	+	+	+

THE ORIGIN OF AN UNKNOWN DIDACTICAL POEM “A POEM ABOUT A DESPERATE SINNER” BY THE RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS

The second poem examined in this article entitled “A Poem about a Desperate Sinner” discusses the beneficial and powerful nature of confession for everybody and explains that even the Devil himself could be forgiven if he would confess and overcome his pride. The poem also has strong connections with the story number 107, included in “The Great Mirror” under the title “How Man Could Purify His Soul through a Sincere Confession and How the Devil Wanted to Confess” (Derzhavina 1965, 271–272). Both, the poem and story from “The Great Mirror” share the same idea about the beneficial power of confession. Both texts teach the readership humility, one of the core Christian values as according to Christian belief, God would accept a sincere repentance and would forgive the worst of man, a completely lost soul (Derzhavina 1965, 27–272). Both texts also follow the same pattern in the plot development. They tell us a story of how once upon a time, the Devil attempted to confess his sins, went to a priest for confession, but failed, because he could not overcome his pride and repent. However, the author of the poem “About a Desperate Sinner” has modified his characters: the priest from “The Great Mirror’s” story became St Anthony, who at first did not recognize the Devil. He also created a new character, the second Demon/Devil who converses with the Devil:

<i>Демон демону однажды,</i>	<i>Once upon time a Demon met another Demon</i>
<i>Встретясь, так сказал:</i>	<i>And told him:</i>
<i>«Эх, брат, мне давно уж знать желалось,</i>	<i>Brother, for a while I have been edging to know,</i>
<i>Коль из нас кто, бросив зло, Обратился к Богу, Что бы Бог на это отвечал».</i>	<i>If one of the Demon kind would give up the evil deeds and would come to God, What would God have told him?</i>
(Karel'skaya № 91)	

“A Poem about a Desperate Sinner” contains three parts. An unusually long introduction gives us a lesson on the value of being a humble and remorseful person:

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TRANSLATION AT THE CROSSROAD OF RHETORICAL TROPE: TRANSLATING METAPHOR IN THE LIGHT OF RELEVANCE THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This present study discusses the translation of metaphor as a stylistic element in the light of Relevance theory. The data of the study consists of three assorted metaphors that have been used in French and their English translations. These texts have been taken from some published (Achebe "Things Fall Apart" (1958)) and unpublished literary material. The study focuses on the identification and analysis, from the perspective of relevance theory, of the metaphorical expressions used in the texts and explains the translation procedures resorted to by the translators in dealing with such expression. The study also adopts the operational framework of metaphor translation procedures based on the Source Text and Target Text approach developed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and Showqi (2014). Although no single theory of translation is able to analyse the phenomenon of metaphor in translation, the article relies on Relevance theory in order to develop a view on the translatability of metaphors in literary texts. The metaphors analysed in this study reveal the thinking pattern of people in the society. It equally provides a step in the right direction to understanding the phenomenon of metaphor translation in the light of relevance theory. We do not propose that our theory is the only answer to all the challenges of translation. Despite the usefulness of the theory, the translator's competence and knowledge are equally necessary to faithfully render metaphorical expressions from one language into another.

Keywords: Relevance theory, metaphor, translation, faithfulness, context

INTRODUCTION

A metaphor is regarded as a rhetorical device. It makes comparison between two dissimilar elements but this comparison is implied rather than stated. It is a condensed simile. Generally, a metaphor describes one thing in terms of another. The contemporary study of the metaphor from the point of view of cognitive linguistics, considers human thought processes as largely metaphorical and that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 3). A metaphor demonstrates a resemblance between two similar things: the image and the object, defined by cognitive linguistics as the target domain and the source domain respectively. The constraint that limits the production of a metaphor is that there must be a similarity between the two entities compared. If the two entities are not similar in some aspect, we cannot metaphorically use one to talk about the other (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 12).

From a pragmatic point of view, metaphor has to do with conceptualising and understanding our surroundings. Since metaphoring is an attempt to conceptualize our world through wording, fundamentally, basic awareness of the structure of our environment is required to be able to properly represent it. The making of a metaphor is a pragmatic process that engages the mind and sets it in motion to draw from the resources of the environment to paint the picture of a phenomenon. When these social realities manifest themselves in metaphorical forms, the study of such forms requires a pragmatic approach which would help to unearth them for better understanding. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 3) affirm that metaphors structure the actions that we perform. The conceptual approach to metaphors presupposes that the conceptual system is provisionally restructured for the occasion and a new adhoc category is created.

The notion of a metaphor as a conceptual structure is a particularly valuable linguistic theory of metaphor, because it suggests a difference between having a metaphorical mapping of two disparate domains already existing as a unit in one's conceptual system and the mental act of putting together that same metaphor for the first time (Omotosho 2014, 108). From the above discussion, we can deduce that the notion of a metaphor gives us a systematic means of structuring conceptual domains by means of metaphor which can be used profitably for the analysis of both literary and non-literary discourse. Metaphorical concepts constitute a new way of thinking; they have the power to create a new reality that is meant to re-order the conceptual system (Omotosho 2014, 108). Metaphor

is culture-bound. The metaphor an author uses depicts the life experience and culture. It is not uncommon that speakers of one language find it difficult to understand the metaphors of another language. This is one of the problems of metaphor translation. Metaphor transforms the truth of an experience as the truth of knowledge to an established public world. Hence, those who do not live in the same established community usually have a different experience that results in a different conceptual understanding of the meaning of such metaphors. In view of these problems, the translator does not render the source text metaphor word because he probably realises that the most important information should be rendered in a way so as to make the target reader understand the meaning of this metaphor without too much processing efforts by mobilising the different translation strategies to render the metaphor functionally.

METAPHOR, CONTEXT AND MEANING IN LITERARY TEXT

There are different views on the place of context in meaning relations. This is why some linguists consciously or unconsciously exclude it. It is argued that the meaning of a sentence being ambiguous or anomalous can be ascertained without the knowledge of its context (Esimaje 2003, 233). All those who speak a language must know the meaning of a sentence before they use it in any meaningful context. Ogden and Richard (1949, 11) affirm that knowing that two sentences are similar in meaning means that they can be used in similar contexts and that in setting up abstract relationships between sentences without considering what they refer to, is like describing all the equivalencies in a measuring system without indicating what that system really is. Stating meaning equivalences is not stating meaning, and in fact there is no proof that knowing the meaning of a sentence excludes the context in which it is used (Ogden and Richard 1949, 11). The significance of context in meaning relation has been established in some works and differentiated from linguistic context, as context of situation. These works are credited to Malinowski (1923, 301) and Firth (1957, 11) both of whom were concerned with stating meaning in terms of the context in which language is used, even though in different ways. Malinowski (1923, 301) argues that living languages must not be treated as dead ones, torn from their context of situation but seen as used by people. Language as used in books is not at all the norm, it represents a far-fetched derivative function of language, for language of human experience which is

perceptual, biological and cultural and varies from one culture to another.

A metaphor is the difference between the intended and the stated meaning and the receiver of the message must rely on a set of principles to understand the statement. If, for example, at a funeral when someone says "she kicked the bucket" this is a reference to the person in the casket. But if while milking a cow, a person says "she kicked the bucket", the phrase will be understood differently (Freeda 2009, 23). The difference in comprehension exists in factors external to the utterance itself. This is what Grice (1989, 370) refers to as cooperative principle, which relies on speaker-listener cooperation in order to bridge or at least reduce the gap between the semantic meaning and contextual meaning. Sperber and Wilson describe the functioning of the cooperative principle thus: "When an utterance has several linguistically possible interpretations, the best hypothesis for the hearer to choose is the one that best satisfies the cooperative principle and maxims. Sometimes, in order to explain why a maxim has been (genuinely or apparently) violated, the hearer has to assume that the speaker believes and was trying to communicate more than explicitly said. Such implicitly communicated propositions or implicatures are widely seen along with presupposition's illocutionary force as the main subject matter of pragmatics" (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 471).

The above suggests that metaphor translation is context dependent. This accounts for the difficulty in the translation of metaphor. According to Barthes (1972, 11), to interpret a text is not to give it a more or less free meaning, but on the contrary, to appreciate what plural constitutes it. This is seen in the following examples: "Love is a journey.", "Time is money.", "Argument is war!", and "Eagles do not breed doves." among others. These texts are galaxies of signifiers that can be reversible.

Firth (1957, 11) sees the context of situation in the same light as grammar, as a means of linguistic description whose purpose was a statement of meaning, as one way through which a linguist handles a language. Sperber and Wilson (1986, 15) affirm that the context of an utterance is the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance. The context, therefore, is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. Gutt (2001, 27) makes it clear that the context does not refer to some part of the external environment of the communication partners, be it the text preceding or following an utterance, situational circumstances or cultural factors, it rather refers to part of their

assumption about the world or cognitive environment. The cognitive environment of a person comprises a potentially huge amount of varied information. It includes information that can be perceived in the physical environment, including information derived from the preceding utterance and that of any cultural knowledge stored there as well as information that can be inferred from these two sources (Gutt 2001, 27).

Context is similar to schemata theory in which a person will understand the world based on how he views the world in schemas. Context forms the schemata of the translator's vision of his world and this context is not a complex one, hence it would be of little use to him. Because context plays such an indispensable role in inter-language communication, it is vital to set up a proper context to facilitate functional inter-language communication. As translation is a communication involving two languages and cultures, the identification of textual context is absolutely the first step to a faithful translation interpretation of a stylistic element such as metaphor in any literary text. For the convenience of the target reader, the translation of a metaphor as a stylistic innovation should provide the optimal relevance.

THE RELEVANCE THEORY

The Relevance theory involves verbal communication not only when encoding, transferring and decoding, but also crucially involves inference (Gutt 2001, 41). The basis of inference is our understanding of the world we live in, our cognitive interpretation of the universe. Man's universe can be described in terms of space, physical and psychological dimensions. When engaged in any form of communication, this knowledge of his surroundings will be activated and used as the means of interpreting the message of a discourse, whether oral or verbal. Thus, relevance theory highlights the contribution of context, the relationship between context and discourse as well as the interconnection of discourse. Relevance theory expounds the relevant principle in a convincing way from the perspective of human cognition, advocating that man has relevant cognisance in communication. The act of communication is relevance (Wu, Xuxihua 2008, 3). Such relevance leads the translator to effect functional inter-language inferences from the information in the source text in order to properly understand the sense of the original author of the text. The level of relevance relies so heavily on both the contextual and interpretative competence of the translator. The relevance of a text depends on the objective, the social function and the style and rhetoric

flavour of the writer. Generally speaking, literary works whose objective is to entertain are usually rich in content and implication, thus, the relevance is subtle, leaving the reader a lot of room for imagination and inference. This is why literary works are much more complex to render than scientific texts.

In contrast, pragmatic texts, which aim at conveying information with comparatively explicit message, tend to provide clear relevance to avoid misleading the target reader. As a result it is not very difficult for the target reader to understand the meaning of the target text. As a general rule, it is however, necessary to provide the optional relevance for the reader regardless of the function and style of the text to facilitate the reader's comprehension (Fang 2004, 30). We should note however, that literary texts that aim at entertaining are usually rich in content and implications, thus, usually the context gives the translator the opportunity for imagination and inferences. This is why fictional text is very difficult to translate. Context plays a powerful role in the translation of a metaphor. The notion of context entails that translation is being looked at as a part of communication (Gutt 2001, 22). The success of any inter-language communication depends on whether or not the author's intentions and the target reader's expectations are met. The translator is under obligation to coordinate his intentions with the target reader's expectations so that the product of his translation resembles the original text in terms of style and sense. If we ask how the translation should be expressed, the answer is: it should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended meaning without putting the target reader into unnecessary processing effort (Gutt 2001, 101).

PRESUPPOSITION OF THE STUDY

In the present study, which explores the translations of metaphor discourse, the target context is especially important for a proper understanding of the metaphorical expressions in the texts. The reason is that when translating metaphors in texts, normally the translators will consider the target reader's reaction within their specific context and in this regard, we will consider context as the source of presuppositions. Similar illustrations regarding the relationship between presupposition and context can be found in Givon (1989, 135–137), where presupposed information is traced back to the major subdivisions of context. The major subdivisions of context are open-ended; however, three foci under which specific categories get grouped are "highly stable and well attested in the traditional linguistic

literature" (Givon 1989, 137). First, the generic focus covers the shared world and culture, and refers to something universal to a great degree and remains the same across different cultures (Cui and Wang 2010, 57). It comprises, on the one hand, knowledge and beliefs concerning the real world, and on the other hand, people's ways and capacities to make sense of the world. The second covers what can be known about the speech situation, social personal relations between participants including their respective conditions such as status, power, obligations, needs and expectations and goals of communication (Cui and Wang 2010, 57). In this study, we will explore the presuppositions behind the ways of handling metaphors in texts with reference to contextual consideration.

ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR USING THE RELEVANCE THEORY

This section is analytical and takes as its starting point several source language French texts and their English translations. The study focuses on the identification and analysis of metaphorical expressions used in these texts from the perspective of relevance theory. Let us consider the following texts:

Text A

"Things fall Apart" by Achebe (1958)

Le monde s'effondre. (1966).

In Text A, Achebe derived the title of his novel "Things Fall Apart" from the poem, "The Second Coming Written by Irish Poet W. B. Yeats". "Things Fall Apart" is about a clan that once thought like one, spoke like one, shared a common awareness and acted like one. The white man came and his coming broke this unity. In the process, many heads rolled; new words, new usages and new applications gained entrance into men's heads and hearts and the old society gradually gave way. The process continues even today. This is why (Ohaegbu 2000) finally concludes his essay with the following statement on the nature of African literature:

"African literature therefore, can be seen as creative writings skilfully done in indigenous African languages or in foreign languages by African nationals or, if one prefers, bona fide citizens of the African continent (regardless of colour), whose works spring from African sociocultural background, deal with the problems of the African and offer to the rest of the world African perception of the human condition. [...] Even though its primary audience is the Africans, non-

Africans do and should have access to it. Only those who have profound knowledge of its cultural background and the language of the work should be qualified to undertake its criticism" (Ohaegbu 2000, 12).

The question is whether this last statement also holds true for translation and its translators. The analysis of the creative use of European languages in African literature shows that there are two forms of translation present. The first one is the common translation practice, whereby one language is translated into another language. The second one is the translation without the original, whereby African authors have to translate their thoughts in a different language. The first sense is important for understanding African literature, as the number of translated African works grows exponentially every year. The work of the translator "enable[s] many people of different cultural backgrounds to know, understand and appreciate African culture" (Gyasi 1999, 106). But Gyasi also states that translating African literature can be a struggle. That is why the translator needs more than "a certain linguistic competence" (Gyasi 1999, 106). "The translator, in addition to his/her linguistic competence, must be able to show proof of certain extra-linguistic abilities that consist in analyzing and interpreting the context in which the African literary text is embedded" (Gyasi 1999, 106).

From the above, the translator requires the exercise of contextual and socio-cultural judgement to choose the functional equivalent for the target reader with the guidance of relevance theory. Lack of information about the context of the original metaphor does not prevent it from being translated but it will leave the translator with no more than a direct analysis of the metaphor and its subsequent rendering in the target language. Without contextual clues, it is very difficult to establish the relevant ties within the text. This is the reality that the translator has to face due to the dynamic change of language use. The translator here explores feasible modulation procedure of translation to transfer the sense of Achebe into the target language. However, this metaphorical expression is analysed bearing in mind the benefit of source text's context. Conversely, the context of the text in which the metaphor is found is of utmost relevance to the translator in order to acquire all the information that contributes to the implicit meaning of the metaphor.

The translator shows the role played by relevance theory as an important cognitive theory that helps the translator to determine the relevant target language equivalence in a given context. For the sake of successful communication, the original text builds up the proper schemata in which the speech event in the text can be

appropriately interpreted. From the point of view of relevance theory, translation falls naturally under the interpretive use of language: translation is intended to restate in one language what someone else said or wrote in another language (Gutt 2001, 46). Just as a speaker reporting a speech, the translator in his effort of interpretive use of an utterance or a text should aim at faithfulness. The only difference between an intra-language quoting or reporting and a translation is that the source text and the target text belong to different languages (Gutt 2001, 46). No doubt, the translation of this metaphor challenges the patience and intelligence of the translator. As demonstrated above, the translation in the target language fulfils the need of optimal relevance, thus, the translation is faithful to the original metaphor.

Text B

“Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievement. As a young man of eighteen, he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat” (Achebe 1958, 3).

«Okonkwo était bien connu a travers les neuf villages et même au delà. Sa réputation reposait sur de solides réussites personnelles. Jeune homme de dix-huit ans. Il avait apporté honneur et gloire a son village en terrassant Amalinze le Chat» (Achebe 1958, 9).

From Text B, Amalinze was called the Cat because from Umofia to Mbaino, he was unbeaten as a wrestler, not only that his back would never touch the earth during wrestling. From here, the translator has to play the role of an interpreter of the source text in the light of relevance theory in order to provide optimal relevance in his translation and guide his target reader to the intention of the original author. The complexity is locating the word (image) that is accurate in this particular case to provide the optimal relevance and achieve the desired metaphorical effect in the target language. The context sets the image processing, highlighting the direction to correct interpretation, which helps the translator to anchor the text.

Text C

Do not play with fire
Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu

From Text C, the connotative value of the original text reflects that of the target text. This is so because before a metaphor can be interpreted, there must be a connotative value shared by both the target and the source language. The linguistic meaning of “do not

play with fire” presupposes that fire burns, causes pains. It equally suggests that you should avoid things or individuals that are harmful and dangerous. From the above text, it is shown that information derived from studies of relevance theory in relation to translation proves invaluable to validate the choice of the translator in his pursuit of equivalence and faithfulness. In some cases, the source text metaphor is understandable to the translator without the text as is the case here because the translator is familiar with the metaphor having had exposure to it in various contexts prior to the situation of the original text. The translator’s competence to understand and render this metaphor into the target language is born out of the translator’s cognitive and linguistic knowledge.

The idea of relevance theory is that a translation must deliver the message that is as closely equivalent as possible to the original text; however, the goal is to arrive at this outcome by relating the same meaning and message if possible, on the same level of generalization (Freeda 2009, 95–96). From the analysis, we note that presupposition as produced by the generic and situational context in the original text is the same with that of the target text. However, differences in terms of discourse, contextual presuppositions or the different characteristics of the target language determine what surface structure is used in the translated text. In some instances, a metaphor is realised through a surface linguistic structure. Some metaphorical expressions in the original text cannot be reproduced in the target language and as such, creative strategies in accordance with target linguistic features may be adopted in the target language. In the above example, the target reader appreciates the subject “fire” that is being talked about. Readers appreciate the creativity of the translator in the transfer of this metaphor into the target language and culture. We have introduced the notion of presupposition based on the fact that the translator works with his presupposition. In order to ensure successful translation of metaphors in a literary text, translators create their presuppositions in a way to arouse the target audience’s interest and desire.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of metaphors in literary texts shows that context and meaning contribute to the choice of the translator in the transfer of equivalence into the target language. The analysis of metaphors in the study is grounded in the idea that metaphor is a substitution and functions to improve literal language. In order to guarantee the seam-

less occurrence of this substitution, similarity must exist between the object compared and the literal expression. This similarity becomes the vehicle for transferring the meaning and message of a particular utterance from one language to another (Freeda 2009, 18). The study also reveals the multiple cognitive activities which involve analysis, interpretation, comparison, analogy, inferences, weighing of possibilities, planning, combing, and these processes are interactively united. Considering a metaphor as a complex entity, the study helps us to understand the unique characteristics that contribute to its make-up. Although no single theory is capable of explaining or analysing the phenomenon of metaphor in translation, the article relies on relevant theory in order to develop a view on the translatability of metaphors in literary texts. Metaphors that are chosen from Achebe's text reveal the thinking pattern of the Igbo socio-cultural society. We do not propose that our theory is the only answer to all the challenges of translation. We believe that it provides a step to understanding the phenomenon of metaphor translation in the light of relevance theory. Despite the usefulness of the theory, the translator's competence and knowledge are equally necessary to faithfully render a metaphorical text from one language into another.

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DETECTING TABLOIDIZATION OF ONLINE MEDIA IN LATVIA

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ABSTRACT

The turmoil of presidential election campaign of 2016 echoed around the world. The coverage of it spread far and wide. Even local and regional media started to follow the campaign that Americans themselves describe as divisive and unprecedented. Most likely it happened thanks to the personality of Republican Party candidate Donald J. Trump, a businessman and a television star. His personality, populist campaign and many scandals that followed him caught the attention of the world media. The scandalous news that came out of the campaign in the last few months became an interesting media tabloidization study ground. This paper talks about detecting and describing the key elements of tabloidization. Although Latvian online news sites have been running for almost two decades, there has not been an in-depth research on tabloidization of online media. Therefore, methods which could be used to identify the tabloidization of media content have not been developed yet. By using content analysis this study tries to set a base for further research on online media tabloidization and draws the attention to Latvian commercial news portals – TVNET, Delfi, Apollo and public media website Lsm.lv and the news they produced and republished concerning US presidential campaign in 2016. Findings show two major aspects – firstly, even though there is quite a lot of information about the campaign published on those media sites, this information is mostly republished from news agencies, secondly, the study has revealed that there are some indicators of tabloidization to be found in the Latvian news websites.

Keywords: tabloids, online journalism, USA presidential election, Donald Trump

INTRODUCTION

For the last twenty years virtual news consumption, or more precisely online media, has steadily been outpacing all the classical media formats one by one. As with the development and increasing accessibility of devices like tablet computers and smartphones, more and more people every day choose to use online media. According to audience research companies TNS data for the first half of 2016 – 71% of the Latvian population used internet daily, and in the same study it is noted that the 2nd most common activity in daily internet use is reading the news, losing marginally only to using social media. In January of 2017 top Latvian online media news website Delfi.lv received about 600 000 page visits, together local online media get more than 2 000 000 page visits per day.

When talking about the need for researching online media one could mention geopolitics in Eastern Europe and the topic of propaganda. Often it is stated that the best counteraction to hostile foreign information is a qualitative and professional local media content. (Institute for Security Studies et al. 2016). Focusing more on the importance of a professional online media (Everett 2011) it is important to note that people mostly prefer free content. And since there are no subscription type online news websites in Latvia, it can be assumed that many will choose to use online services instead of TV channels that require some sort of a monthly payment. Free commercial news websites have to gain earnings from advertising spaces and sponsored articles. Thereby editorial staff can be encouraged to create intriguing, loud, attention drawing content to maximize “the clicks” and get the user to spend more time online.

Online media importance can't be discussed without at least mentioning social media and the information sharing they facilitate. As it has been noted and observed, online news sharing is an important part of the social media usage (Kümpel et al. 2015), and it is also quite important when discussing the value of studying online media, we can't forget that social networks deliver vast amounts of news and because of the way these networks function it is harder for a reader to avoid tabloid news, than 100 or even 20 years ago. At that time a person could just walk by the magazine and newspaper stand where the “bad” media were, but not today, not in the virtual world of online media and social networks. So the two most popular Latvian online media user activities converge.

Of course, then the question arises: what counts as a tabloid journalism, what is a professional media content, what is soft and

hard news, and is it bad for professional journalism? Traditionally, the distinction is made by talking about hard and soft news. It should be noted, however, that media researchers are not always in agreement what exactly is hard and what is soft news (Reinmann, Stanyer 2011) and how they relate to tabloidization.

Taking into account all the previously mentioned arguments it should be clear why tabloidization – a tendency that often is grouped together with diminishing standards of traditional press – is an important and vital field of mass media studies. The intention of this analysis is to sketch one approach for further research, since there have not been any comprehensive tabloidization studies of online media in Latvia, the questions asked are – is there some sort of tabloidization in Latvian online media and can tabloidization elements be detected in a limited time period?

TABLOID MEDIA AND REPORTING NEWS

To talk about tabloidization, there needs to be a clear explanation of what counts as tabloid media. The word “tabloid” originally comes from the pharmaceutical industry (Esser, 1999) and was associated with means of drug / medicine compression so that those could be easily swallowed, from there the word “tablet” comes. But by the emergence of penny press in the early 20th century, the word was adopted as a derogatory term by which the media elite referred to the in format smaller newspapers that traditionally catered to the interests of common man, by focusing on crime reports, celebrity news, entertainment and sports (Glynn 2000; Conboy 2005). Tabloids offered news that were “easier to swallow”, they achieved it by using simpler terms, simpler language, illustrating most important stories with pictures.

Tabloid style media often are characterized by the continuous path finding to the “simple” audience using themes and means of expression that are familiar to the common man, this approach was contrary to classic, elite media, which used a more formal language, and traditionally wrote about politics, social issues with a very formal approach, spending little time on so called human interest stories. “[..] From the 1880s onwards, there was an accelerating trend towards the production of newspapers and magazines which sought ever more lucrative, mass markets by appealing to wider and lower social readerships” (Conboy 2005, 3).

It must be noted that there isn't a universal definition of tabloid media that the researchers have universally accepted. Each study

describes their interpretation, although most of them are quite similar to the everyday understanding of what tabloids are. Researcher Colin Sparks offers one: “[...] the tabloid is a form marked by two major features: it devotes relatively little attention to politics, economics, and society and relatively much attention to diversions like sports, scandal, and popular entertainment; it devotes much attention to the personal and private lives of people, both celebrities and ordinary people, and relatively little to political processes, economic developments, and social changes” (Sparks, Tulloch 2000, 10).

Another description inspired by Sparks is offered by Sofia Johansson:

“Contentious features of the tabloids include the typically sensationalist and personalized news style, and blurring of boundaries between private and public, politics and entertainment, but also their populist and partisan political interventions, their celebrity-orientated and sexualized news agenda and the use of aggressive journalistic methods such as cheque-book journalism and paparazzi coverage” (Johansson 2007, 7).

British tabloid researcher Martin Conboy has described some rhetoric patterns that appear in the language of tabloids. In the book “Tabloid Britain” (Conboy 2005) he describes patterns detected in British media: word play (as in rhymes and references); familiar names (as nicknames given to people featured often in tabloid); employing colloquial expressions and slang; scripts (expressions, words that compress meaning already known to readers); metaphors; salacious storylines; normalizing their readers and emphasizing the individual; inter-textual cultural references; referring to selves; lists (as “10 things men like”).

These patterns fall in line with tabloid definitions, so there could be an assumption that there are some universal qualities that tabloids try to adhere to in language and style. Although it must be noted that, for example, tabloid media researcher Frank Esser disagrees, comparing British and German tabloids he states that there are some significant differences that come from journalist practices, legal situations and other factors (Esser 1999). And it is true that studies and research methods from other countries can't be freely applied to Latvia. Thus the problem of having no previous study background is outlined in this paper. Since there has not been any comprehensive studies on Latvian tabloidization and online media, the first steps must be made by trying to adopt other studies and research categories, just to sketch the basic field for later, more comprehensive studies.

Tabloidization sometimes is linked with the softening of the news – a trend that sees hard news taking on angles that bring those

closer to the traditionally soft news area, like talking about policy issues but focusing not on the politics itself but on one family that is or will be affected by it (Boukes, Boomgaarden 2015). More and more journalism, specifically TV journalism in US, adopts this strategy to entertain and educate (Holbert 2005).

As with tabloid media, the definition of what can be considered as soft news and what can be thought about as hard news is not universally agreed upon. Many scholars have slightly different opinions (Kümpel et al. 2015). The first classification where the division of hard and soft news is mentioned is in the paper of Gaye Tuchman (1973), where by interviewing media professionals he ascertains that soft news is human interest stories, that are not deemed news-worthy – don't concern government policy, broad social issues. Soft news stories are about interesting or entertaining events, that media could choose not to report about. Soft news tends to be more sensationalized and, as in the case of tabloid news report, focuses more on disasters and crime on a purely personal level, sometimes disregarding the broader implications. Soft news is often categorized as focused on entertainment (Baum 2002) rather than education. Often the division is made by the feeling of the editorial team (Patterson 2000, 3). And the soft news is often described as reporting on the types of events that, as noted before, are classical tabloid media topics. “[...] in contrast to traditional, hard news outlets [...] they all focus primarily on soft news themes like crime, disaster, or scandal, and they all cover political issues similarly to one another” (Baum, Jamison 2006; Jebril et al. 2013). Although the division, as often is noted, is arbitrary (Patterson, 2000) and outdated, since soft news focusing on an individual can also tell stories about policies, it is quite clear that the soft news is a type of news that would best fit in a tabloid media or hard news outlet that shifts its traditional orientation and is willing to include human interest stories. Of course, there has to be a distinction made between reporting of soft news topics and being a tabloid, using a tabloid language and emphasizing the scandalous parts.

Summarizing, it can be concluded that the tabloid is a media outlet, traditionally printed press, that devotes more attention to crime, scandals, sex, sports, celebrity news, promoting them through loud headlines written in a more accessible language, akin to how people talk “on the street”, and this type of stories can be also most of the times referred to as the soft news.

But in the case of this paper where the aim is to start the process of creating a base for tabloidization detection and research, the division will be made by taking into account the classical sense –

soft news will be understood as personal, entertaining stories, focused on interesting quotes or scandals, all other stories that are focused on policy or broad social issues will be classified as hard news stories.

ADOPTING TABLOID VALUES AND POPULARIZING THE NEWS

The process of media adopting tabloid values and storytelling elements is often referred to as tabloidization. It must be noted that in the academic field (Anderon 2013) more attention traditionally has been paid to the printed press as it changes physical size, which of course by itself does not mean sensationalistic journalism (Sparks 2010). “[...] tabloidization is a term for the alleged deterioration of the informational and intellectual content of the news media that accompanies their shrinkage to a smaller size and different format” (Gans 2009, 17.) Frank Esser writes that tabloidization is a process that often happens as a direct results of advertisers to reach wider audiences (1999). Necessity for profit “forced” some of the media to introduce additional segments devoted to sensationalism, sports and entertainment, attracting a wider audience. When regarding the commercialization pressures, it is interesting to compare public media, in countries where it is possible, to commercial media. Researchers have also found a link between commercialization, tabloidization and “serious news” decline, because such messages are less profitable. For example, in the early 2000s, when the Greek electronic media witnessed the impact of commercialization there was a decrease of stories that concerned parliament and government, resulting in more soft news materials (Papathanassopoulos 2001).

Tabloidization sometimes is described as convergence of “quality” newspapers towards the values characteristic of tabloid newspapers, which can be identified by personalization and sensationalism, and the adaptation of linguistic features through which these values are represented (Lefkowitz 2016).

Although it must be noted that in the modern media landscape talking about tabloidization has received some criticism for being elitist. One of the authors, drawing attention to the elitist approach of tabloidization is Herbert Gans. He prefers to talk about the popularization (Gans 2009), indicating that it is a process that takes place with a variety of cultural and information spheres. He notes that when concerning difficult subjects, for example in the science communication, the popularization works in a positive way, because it introduces complex ideas in a way a reader with no special education

can understand the significance of them, the same could be said for politics. Policy issues can be described in a way that a reader or a viewer can grasp the idea and evaluate the impact the policy will have on him

The best example of tabloidization not being so easily applicable is perhaps in the online media field (Lecheler, Kruike-meier 2016), since the format, technological and social media aspect allow and even call for more content which can't realistically be all serious traditional hard news. Secondly, the format allows to create sub sections devoted to serious news and pages that are devoted to entertainment and soft news.

Tabloidization can happen for several reasons and in a few different ways, but the main force behind it is economic drive to reach more audiences (Herman, Chomsky 2002) by catering to their needs. But it must not be viewed only as a negative tendency, and it should be carefully studied if the tabloid style stories are added or they are replacing the "hard" news stories. It could be speculated that online media, thanks to the unlimited space and no format constrictions do both. So by reaching larger audiences the media can further disseminate serious information.

DETECTING TABLOIDIZATION IN HARD NEWS FORMAT

It is not always easy to describe in an accurate way what tabloidization entails and it makes for a harder detection for a researcher. But the main goal of this paper was to look for a simple way that could be applied to a broader research on online Latvia media tabloidization. So there must be first steps on a way to a working description, which can be made use of in further studies. It was determined that the best way would be to use a qualitative content analysis that would help to sort and analyze news.

The questions given before the study were: is there some sort of tabloidization in Latvian online media and can tabloidization elements be detected in a limited time period analysis?

M. Conboy (2005) describes these patterns more thoroughly talking about different aspects of British tabloid media, but it can be assumed that these patterns would be at least partially detectable also in other countries and other type of media, because similar patterns have been recognized in American tabloids, as well as in German and British (Esser 1999), Australian (Mules 1998), Nigerian (Olokotun 2000) media, and they always fall in line with the tabloid

definition mentioned before. So it could be assumed that in some ways they are almost universal and could be used in this case for Latvian online media study, as part of the ongoing trend of tabloidization.

Based on the tabloid media, tabloidization definitions and description in previous chapters, for the study of Latvian online media a qualitative content analysis matrix was developed.

It must be noted that a lot of foreign news in Latvian media comes from news agencies LETA and BNS. So, firstly the authorship of each story was established – whether it was from news agency, or it was the online website or a specific author. If the author was credited as news agency, then the headline and the body were compared to the original to determine whether it had been changed in some way. The original materials were analyzed to comprehend the main idea of the story. Specific attention was paid to the word and rhetorical devices mentioned by M. Conboy. Looking at the text of the news, a special attention was paid to any words or phrases that suggest a certain attitude or “colors in” some sort of an opinion or a judgement. For example, when one of the websites wrote about D. Trump’s leaked tape scandal, then describing D. Trump’s comments they used a word that in the Latvian language signified media’s disbelief, skepticism about what he was saying, and there are several examples like these.

The purpose of this analysis was to carry out a test study for a further tabloidization research; accordingly, the selected period of time was relatively short – from October 1, 2016 to November 8, 2016, still there was quite a large body of news stories. The selected period was end of the election campaign, when the major party candidates participated in debates. The chosen period gave the opportunity to observe news stories about candidates, debates and two important events – a surfacing record with Donald Trump talking about women, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation announcement that they are looking into the case of Hillary Clinton’s deleted e-mails once again. For the media this period was quite intensive, and offered plentiful opportunities to demonstrate tabloidization. All the stories published in the previously stated time period were added to the body for the analysis, if they contained information about the US Presidential election campaign, and candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. The study used three of the most visited Latvian online media – Delfi, TVNET, and Apollo, as well as the public broadcasting media online website Lsm.lv that does its own journalism and also publishes news stories produced by Latvian public television and Latvian public radio.

In total 331 news stories, opinion pieces and other type of media materials related to the US presidential elections were selected. Most of publications about this event were in TVNET, but the fewest, as is expected, in the public media news site Lsm.lv. Delfi and Apollo offered almost the same quantity of the news stories.

TABLOID STYLE REPORTING IN PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL MEDIA

One of the most important tools for tabloid media, as mentioned, is the language they use to draw in readers. Analyzing the material in the four chosen media sites, the first finding that marked a sharp contrast was the quantity and quality of news stories in commercial media and public broadcasting news website Lsm.lv. Commercial media stories on the chosen topic of the US election campaign had more than 90% of stories republished from news agencies LETA and BNS, but the public media site Lsm.lv had only about 3% (from 44 entries devoted to the topics only 6 were prepared by the news agency) not original stories. In principle it can be explained as another aspect of tabloidization – tabloids often tend to take national position in support of the local characters and images. Paying less attention to foreign policy is understandable as those stories are hard to localize and remake in soft news style. So this can be viewed as a sort of a signifier for tabloidization. It is not incomprehensible that not spending limited resources on creating news about US presidential election is a decision that has been made taking in account financial reasons.

The difference between public media website Lsm.lv and the three most visited commercial media websites is quite broad. As mentioned before, public media for coverage of presidential election campaign used only small amounts of news agency content, although it must be mentioned that there are only few stories written by the website journalists, most of it comes from Latvian Public Radio and Latvian Public Television. There is also a difference in the quantity of the news stories about the same topic. Although the underlying story is largely the same, public media website chose to make broader stories, while commercial media published each little part of the story under a separate headline. Commercial media reported on evolving stories more often while public media chose to create broader compilations of an event not dividing each new development in a news story of its own.

Between three commercial media websites in the coverage of US presidential pre-election campaign there were no major differences.

They used almost the same amounts of news agency materials and original stories. Even most of the original stories were similar. From the three only Delfi published a few opinion pieces that touched upon the pre-election.

Another aspect that the news content analysis indicated was that commercial media sometimes will take a story from news agency, but they will change the headline to emphasize some part of the story, usually that will coincide with values that tabloid media are known for – they would make it more scandalous and intriguing. The study also found that there was a disproportional amount of news that was focused on Donald Trump, there were only few stories in each of the websites that concerned Hillary Clinton only or were focused on her. Most of the stories dealt with D. Trump and persons or events surrounding him.

There are a couple of examples that can be brought up to illustrate tabloidization tendencies where the headlines, since most of the news text comes from agencies, are especially revealing:

“Eminem’s New Song Decries Trump” / “Eminems jaunā dziesmā nopeļ Trampu” (*Apollo* October 20, 2016);

“Eminem also has Something to Say about Donald Trump” / “Arī Eminemam ir kas sakāms par Donaldu Trampu” (*TVNET* October 20, 2016).

Both of these stories come from news agency LETA. Apollo decided to keep the original title, that is very clear and explanatory – a famous hip-hop artist is being critical about one of the candidates. But TVNET chose to alter the title so it would offer some mystery and intrigue, because it is not immediately clear whether the famous artist supports Donald Trump or he is being critical of the Republican Party’s nominee. Further changes in the text were not made.

Another example, that M. Conboy also mentioned, is about using condensed information and common Latvian sayings or expressions:

“Trump: Russia Broke the Agreement on Syria, and does not Respect the US Leaders” / “Tramps: Krievija “lauza vienošanos” par Siriju un neciena ASV liderus” (*Delfi, TVNET* October 5, 2016);

“Trump Throws Fur to the other side: Criticizes Russia” / “Tramps “met kažoku uz otru pusi”: Tiek kritizēta Krievija” (*Apollo* October 5, 2016).

In this example Apollo used a popular Latvian expression – “throw the fur on the other side” that represents changing opinions.

By using this expression, Apollo says that it indicates that Donald Trump has changed his opinion on Russia, noting that previously he has not criticized and maybe has even praised Russia. One could argue that this form offers even more information than the unchanged news agency LETA title that Delfi and TVNET chose not to alter. As in the previous example – the rest of the text has not been altered:

“Trump on Sexual Allegations for Women: I’m the Victim” / “Tramps par seksuāla rakstura apsūdzībām sievietēm: es esmu upuris” (*Delfi* October 15, 2016);

“Robert De Niro is Ready to Punch Trump in the Face” / “Roberts de Niro ir gatavs Trampam iekraut pa seju” (*TVNET* October 8, 2016);

“I don’t Care that You are Dying! – Trumps Absurd Call to Turn to the Seriously Ill” / “Man vienalga, ka mirstat! – Tramps ar absurdu aicinājumu vēršas pie smagi slimajiem” (*Apollo* October 6, 2016).

These headlines are for original materials that were created by the media, not taken from news agencies. As the study has revealed, the commercial websites will write and translate news stories when they see a way to create a relatively loud, appealing article. Delfi example highlighted a seeming absurdity where a sexual abuser sees himself as the victim. In turn TVNET news talks about violence and demonstrates the unusual case where the film actor threatened a politician, it is also expressed in the language of “common man”. By contrast, the Apollo demonstrates an apparent absurdity and dissension from the politician. Commercial websites will spend their resources on creating stories that are easy marks for tabloidization, namely they chose stories that were so absurd, unusual or strange, that they were almost guaranteed to draw crowds. But if the story was more about policy on the candidates’ debate outcome, the commercial media sites would just copy the story from the online news agencies, while if there was a scandal, like in an example of D. Trump’s vulgar speech tape leak, the media would write the stories themselves emphasizing the scandalous or salacious nature of the event, being quite obviously skeptical of Trump’s explanations.

The stories were not always scandalous, in some cases they were more like a unique event, in case when media outlets, which traditionally remained neutral, decided to speak against Trump. Local online media translated and compiled those stories quoting media outlets which called Trump a xenophobic and sexist. These parts were quoted and emphasized to make the story more interesting, more unprecedented, thus raising the interest of the reader.

The language chosen by the media, even sometimes by the news agencies material, indicated strong deviations from classical, formal, “uninterested” style of reporting hard news. The public media in some news stories also were guilty of this. One explanation for this could be the general softening of online news, but since this most often appeared in the stories about D. Trump, another explanation might be the fact that the general public sentiment in Latvia was against D. Trump, because his policy seemed to be against Latvian national interests, so the traditional dispassionate reporting naturally shifted in line with the general Western world opinion about the candidate.

In general, strictly looking at the news reported by all four websites it can be said that more than half of those stories can be attributed to soft news. The public media websites have fewer materials in quantity, but commercial websites often strive for stories about the election that involve celebrities, sex or D. Trump’s strong language:

“Wall Construction, Russian Spies and Conflicts of Interest – Look Back at the last US Presidential Debate” / “Sienas celšana, Krievijas spiegi un interešu konflikti – atskats uz pēdējām ASV prezidentu debatēm” (*Lsm.lv* October 20, 2016);

“Info Graphic: What to Expect from the Next US President – Trump or Clinton?” / “Infografika: Ko gaidīt no nākamā ASV prezidenta – Trampa vai Klintones?” (*Lsm.lv* October 22, 2016).

Interestingly, in the commercial media stories there were no attempts at popularizing the US politics in the time under analysis. *Lsm.lv* did that only a few times – if we assume that popularization is striving to make the complex political or social news stories more comprehensible for the reader, either by explaining it in a simple manner or by using visual aids. In the public broadcast media website *Lsm.lv* from the 44 news stories there was one info graphic that was published together with explanation on what the major policies of both candidates are. As well there were three pieces that were published as opinions, but they were more as a recap and explanation on the three debates where both candidates participated. So these could also be seen as a way of popularization where a journalist spent time to summarize and explain what happened in the debates.

Returning to the beginning of this chapter it can be noted that the headlines are the most revealing material, since there is quite little of the original text to analyze as most of the news is directly taken from news agency, but the text, being an original material,

shows some tendencies of softening or, to be more precise, of tabloidization. And almost every rhetorical aspect mentioned by M. Conboy (2005) can be found there too. Of course, there is little of media outlet presence or talk about the reader, but that could probably be attributed to the fact that this is foreign news from a country quite far and does not have any immediate importance.

CONCLUSION

Tabloids sometimes have been called also as headline journalism, and this study shows it to be partially true, because since the most of the stories were coming from the news agency only with changed headlines, a cynical view would say that the media do not need to work more, because the reader will “click on the headline”. As the examples show there are signs of tabloidization and some small and rare occurrences of information popularization, which, if not proves, then nudges in the direction of tabloidization research. This paper showed how the study can be done. By taking certain event coverage and comparing it to a public media and news agency material, differences can be seen, and by adding the understanding of tabloid values and what these types of media try to accentuate, researchers can find a pattern. Although it must be noted that the chosen time period was not long enough to take a comprehensive look at the issue, because before the study it was underestimated how extensively online media in Latvia use news agency materials in covering foreign news. So, by taking a larger sample and possibly concentrating on news more important locally, it would be possible to have a clearer picture of tabloidization tendencies in Latvian online media. Also it could be recommended to work on the whole spectrum of news, possibly everything that the media publish.

The findings about the stories that were created by the journalists of the four chosen media revealed also that there are quite a clear sign of tabloidization in a form that has been described by foreign authors, consequently, a further research can be done on assessing whether there could be some universal tabloid language or form of expression and whether the scandalous news format defies language and cultural borders.

The next step in Latvian online tabloidization research could be starting to explore the signs of local Latvian tabloidization, rhetoric language patterns and ways of highlighting news preferred by the media. Since there have not been many studies about online media news there are a lot of questions that remain still unanswered and

are not reflected in literature. Another interesting issue demonstrated by this paper is the heavy reliance, in at least foreign news area, on news agency information. The research on the changes in language in Latvian online media might also be of considerable interest, since the initial findings in this study showed some general deviations from traditional hard news language even when talking about policy issues.

The research on tabloidization and information softening is quite important, since as mentioned – the easy accessibility and high penetration on online news thanks to social media make online journalism a vital part of the information intake, and if the vast majority of it focused on interesting and scandalous tidbits, there is a risk of not fulfilling one of the media functions – educating.

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Example: Book chapters

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Soares, C. (2005). "Liberia Set to Elect Africa's First Woman President." *Guardian* November 11, 21.

Example: Dissertation

Rolin, K. H. (1996). *Gender, Emotions, and Epistemic Values in High-Energy Physics: A Feminist Challenge for Scientific Methodology*. PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota.

Example: Film

Children of the Crocodile. (2001). Directed by M. Emerman. New York: Women Make Movies.

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