

Hanne Juntunen, Kirsi Sandberg, M. Kübra Kocabaş (editors)

# IN SEARCH OF MEANING

LITERARY, LINGUISTIC, AND TRANSLATIONAL  
APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATION



# **In Search of Meaning**

**Literary, Linguistic, and Translational Approaches to Communication**

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## **Preface**

The Doctoral Programme in Language Studies at the University of Tampere provided a fruitful environment for our search for the interface between meaning and communication. As such, we wish to thank our contributors and our editorial board, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers, who generously donated their time and effort to this project.

Special thanks to the head editors of the series, Jarkko Toikkanen and Teemu Ikonen, for their helpful and supportive feedback throughout the process. Warmest thanks to Tarja Hilli for help with the cover image. We also wish to thank Professor Mona Forsskåhl whose encouragement got us started with this project.

Tampere, November 2018

Hanne Juntunen, Kirsi Sandberg, M. Kübra Kocabaş

## Foreword

Hanne Juntunen, Kirsi Sandberg, M. Kübra Kocabaş

During one of the early editorial meetings of this collection, we had a discussion about authorial meaning – that is, how reliably the text can be understood to communicate the intended meaning of its author, and whether this is a relevant question at all. We, the head editors, come from different fields of linguistic and literary studies, each of us with our own preconceptions that were laid out in the open in the meeting. We discovered that one underlying presumption in certain research paradigms within linguistics is that the connection between the meaning of the author and the meaning of the text can be understood rather non-problematically, that is, the text is seen to represent the conscious choices the writer has made, and the communication of the author can be equal to the communication of the text.

This is in contrast to literary research where the authorial meaning and the meaning of the text are often seen to be two distinct things, even if not exclusively so. In other words, the text can communicate things that its writer does not necessarily intend it to do, or, put another way, authorial intention is relevant only insofar as it can be actually read from the text itself. Meaning is seen not as a clear message from a controlling author, but as shaped “in the interaction between the text, conceived of as a succession of words, and the developing response of the reader” (Fish 1980, 3). This discussion demonstrated the deep but latent, unvoiced, differences of theoretical thought governing the varied fields that this collection encompasses.

This collection also reflects the dynamic moment it was collected in. The collection spans the entire existence of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Tampere. After the publication of this collection, the fields will splinter into two faculties, but up to now, we have enjoyed a co-existence that is interdisciplinary and multilingual; a fact reflected in this collection as well. On the most immediate level this can be seen in the fact that one of the articles is in Finnish while the rest are in English – we did not feel the need to control what language our authors decided to use. Furthermore, one article discusses a Swedish-language novel, and several analyze texts that are in Finnish. The variety of languages is greater than what meets the eye. Lastly, all articles have undergone the peer-reviewing process.

Meaning is a pivotal term in many varieties of investigation in the humanities. Positing current linguistic, literary and translational research in the frame of communication opens up a possibility for furthering our understanding of how meaning is communicated in various texts. However, in multidisciplinary environments – in which the contributors of this anthology work – that bring together writing, information, and interaction, communication can develop into a key concept to unite an entire university faculty, and

the diverse fields of linguistic, literary, and translation research, even if it is not used explicitly as an operationalized concept very often. Communication, when understood as the sharing of meanings, uses language, a social sign system, as its vehicle. Language, whether verbal or visual, is what the articles in this collection engage intimately with. One outcome of this collection is therefore an exploration of how much of literary, linguistic and translation research is about, directly or indirectly, the communication of meaning through language.

We as readers and researchers should be mindful of the thorny question of what constitutes meaning and communication. There is no one definition, or even single field-specific definitions, but rather, multiple viewpoints into the understanding of what communication is, and how texts communicate their meaning through language and images. Well-known theoretical frameworks in the human sciences, such as structuralism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and semiotics have conceptualized communication based on their own theoretical underpinnings, but they all touch upon, one way or another, on the active participators, the message, and the sign system. These models have long histories of influence, and they continue to inform a large portion of humanistic investigation to this day.

Roman Jakobson famously created a context-sensitive, structuralist communication model that emphasized the functions language assumes in the communicative event (1987, 65–70). The hermeneutic and phenomenological paradigms emphasize the importance of active interpretation in making experiences of the world meaningful, and the central role shared language – and its corollary, communication – plays in this process (Deetz 1982; Littlejohn & Foss 2011; Radford 1991). Meanwhile, in semiotic approaches the idea of mediation is central: we cannot isolate the meaning from the sign nor from its interpretants (Peirce 1998, 1893–1913; Saussure 1974, 1916).

The influence of these theory paradigms is evident in the logic of thought and the aims of different modern approaches. For instance, the nature and role of human interpretation in making observations meaningful is handed down to us from the hermeneutic tradition, and the interplay between the human interpreter and the sign system from the tradition of semiotics. Even if the influence of these foundational traditions is not immediately observable in the theoretical frameworks of the articles in this collection, they have all been affected by them. It could be argued, then, that these traditions are at the “roots” of our articles – the soil where they have sprouted from. The papers are new research and thus, in a sense, the flowers of this multi-rooted theoretical plant.

What all these theories bring to the fore is the role of language as communication, as a social system, as an object of study, as a constitutive component of meaning. Instead of theorizing about real-life communication situations or the attitudes of the communicators, one focuses on issues such as the conscious experiences and interpretations of the reader

(Littlejohn & Foss 2011) or social practices and the mediation of meanings in interaction, as well as transferring interpretations in increasingly multimodal translations (Christiansen 2017; Ketola 2018; Visakko 2015; Vladimirova & House 2018). In the articles of this collection, language as literature, translation, and text, is the focal point of analysis, and so context, sign system and interpretations take the central stage. That is, they are interested in the features that are unique to language as a sign system, and linguistic objects, since, as Saussure points out: “the distinguishing characteristic of the sign – but the one that is least apparent at first sight – is that some way it always eludes the individual or social will.” (Saussure 1974, 17.)

This collection consists of six articles, in two languages, in the fields of literary, linguistic and translation studies. Five articles are in English, one in Finnish. The object of this anthology is not the delineation and discussion of each participant field’s conception of meaning and communication. Each article discusses its chosen topic from its discipline-specific framework. However, the function of this foreword is to bring to the reader’s attention, and to highlight, the fact that each field has its own implicit understanding of communication.

The opening anecdote about the differences between fields regarding authorial meaning illustrates well how the articles in this collection may discuss their topics with rather different conceptual presumptions. We wish to explicitly invite the reader to reflect on these presumptions, and consider what is similar and what is different in them as they are reading these articles. The collection contains one linguistics article, concerning blogs, where the underlying assumption of a non-problematic relationship between the author and authorial voice can be read. In Hanna Limatius’ article, “Fat, curvy or plus-size? A corpus-linguistic approach to identity construction in plus-size fashion blogs”, the digital communication of the blogs has a double audience: firstly, the readers of the blog, and secondly, more importantly, the plus-size fashion community. Limatius’ argument is that the function of the communication in those blogs is community-building and self-identification. As such, the meaning of the text is directly related to the meaning of the writer, and by extension, to the meanings within the plus-size fashion community online.

Literary meaning, on the other hand, appears as fluid and polyvocal, affected by “different kinds and degrees of contextual understanding which may be brought to bear by different communicants” (Sell 2000, 3). This is reflected in all three literary articles in this collection, as they do not talk of the author communicating their meaning, but rather the text doing so by working with multiple meanings and voices. Especially well this can be seen in the articles discussing Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, as these articles are explicitly about meanings that arise from the text as it is read.



Hanne Juntunen in “The Grotesque of Silence in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*” discusses the multiplication of meanings detached from authorial intention. While the play communicates the story of two men, Vladimir and Estragon, the general perception of its “intended communication” is the lack of meaning, supported by the extratextual communication of the author himself. In contrast to this, Juntunen examines how a multitude of meanings grows out of this surface level of meaninglessness, supported by an analysis of the historical interlocking of the absurd and the grotesque. Juntunen argues that while Beckett’s play emphasizes absurdity, in keeping with the existentialist emphasis on the meaninglessness of human actions, *Waiting for Godot* also manifests grotesque elements, which, in contrast to the absurd, are characterized by an excess of meaning, ultimately saturating the play with meaningfulness.

Erika Pihl’s detailed analysis of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, “The Echo Effect: The Collective Voice as an Authority of Meaning in Medieval Narrative”, examines how a single narrative opens up into a range of voices and meanings in the context of the culture of the Middle Ages. Pihl’s article discards authorial meaning altogether, and focuses on the meaning communicated by the narrator. Pihl argues that Chaucer’s poem calls into question the modern concept of the epistemological superiority of the narrator in terms of the authority of meaning. This means that in modern literature it is taken for granted that the omniscient narrator has the fullest knowledge of all aspects of the text – including the cognitive capacities and thoughts of the characters – and as such, the narrator is the authoritative communicator of textual meaning. Pihl argues that turning to medieval texts and theories with modern narratological approaches can lead to a broader historical understanding of narrative complexity. Pihl demonstrates that the relationship between the characters and the narrator is bilateral: the characters influence narration as much as the narrator, and as such, in Pihl’s own words, “no single voice takes the central place in defining the work’s meaning.” (29)

Whereas Juntunen and Pihl examine how literary texts generate multiple meanings and voices, Nanny Jolma considers the creation and communication of meaning as a process in “Muistojen arkisto ja muistelun kertomus - metaforinen ja narratiivinen muistelu Bo Carpelanin proosassa” (“Memory Archive and the Narrative of Remembrance: Metaphorical and Narrative Memory in Bo Carpelan’s Prose”). Jolma examines through the analysis of one book, *Blad ur höstens arkiv*, the general tendencies of communicating meaning by evoking a range of tropes related to remembrance as a process of identity creation found in Bo Carpelan’s oeuvre. Focusing on the communication of the narrator, Jolma demonstrates how the first-person narrator employs a number of archival metaphors for memory and the act of remembering, and through this explicitly described process of which memories to keep and which to discard, the narrator creates through literary communication an identity and a history for himself. The narrator’s writing process and ensuing narrative is reminiscing and autobiographical in tone, as well as a process of identity-creation. The metaphors employed in this process express in concrete

terms the formation of the narrator's identity and his process of remembering his past life. Complementing the analyses of Juntunen and Pihl, Jolma's discussion shows the literary text constructing meaning by navigating multiplicity and difference.

Finally, the two articles on translation offer another, contrasting view on the author–reader model of communication, as they fix their analytic gaze on a third, mediating actor, the translator, and their contribution to the meaning-creation of the text. “Creating Characters in Visual Narration: Comics and Picturebooks in the Hands of the Translator” by Riitta Oittinen and Eliisa Pitkäsalo deals with the verbal, visual, and aural modes of the creation of the illusion of life-like characters in translating comics and picturebooks. These different modes of comics and picturebooks have their own meaning-making mechanisms, or clues to the meaning of the whole, which the translator must interpret and translate to communicate the meaning understandably to the new target audience. The role of the reader within this communication of text's meaning becomes highlighted in very explicit terms. Non-verbal communication especially, such as gestures and expressions, are highly culturally specific, and plainly seen in the visual presentation in a comic or picturebook. This presents a daunting task for the translator, of how to make the intended meanings of non-verbal communication understandable for the new target audience. Oittinen and Pitkäsalo indeed argue that characters in picturebooks or comics serve as optimal illustration for how, in addition to linguistic proficiency, the translator of comics and picturebooks need skills pertaining to the meaning-making conventions of visual communication, and culture-specific non-verbal communication, among other things.

The distinction between the meaning of the author and the meaning of the text becomes blurry once the question of the audience assumes centre stage. In this paradigm, the translator is the mediator between the author and the audience, but also between the text and the audience, as Anne Ketola's article “Picturebook Translation as Transcreation” makes clear. Ketola discusses communicating meanings in picturebooks from the source language and the original audience to the target language and for a new target audience. Ketola argues that translating multimodal texts such as picturebooks requires high degrees of inventiveness and flexibility from the translator, as the process may even include rewriting parts of the original text. Consequently, the concept of transcreation (combining the word “translation” with “(re)creation”) describes the translating process of picturebooks better than the more established term translation. Translation can be defined as the transferring the meaning of a text from the source language to the target language. Transcreation, then, means that the meaning of the text is not transferred as such but re-created in and for the target language and the new target audience. Using two well-known picturebooks by Margaret Wise Brown, *The Color Kittens* and *The Sailor Dog*) as illuminating examples, Ketola argues persuasively how all dimensions of a multimodal product, be it words or images, are in constant interaction and mutually affect

one another. They may influence how the communicated meaning in one mode is changed in the transcreation process, and they may even take on new meanings themselves.

As we have seen, the current collection foregrounds facets of communication that are of central interest to literary, linguistic and translation scholars, but may not be as interesting as topics in research conducted in the fields of, for instance, media or communication studies. Indeed, as has been suggested, some of our writers might feel that the word *communication* misrepresented their work on meaning in literary, linguistic, and translation research. These fields have a variety of definitions for communication and meaning. As we wish to build bridges between schools of thought, our objective is to show how communication and meaning are intimately interconnected in the study of language, translation, and literature in the humanities. This is where we as researchers and editors of this collection feel that we have the most to contribute to the study of communication. Our aim is to persuade the reader that working in a research community and a university faculty with several disciplines can be seen as a privilege. There is much to be learned from our colleagues in different disciplines, and, in turn, we can also bring our own research interests and methods to rise to the challenge set by new emerging multidisciplinary environments, wherever the future might take us.

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# **Fat, curvy or plus-size? A corpus-linguistic approach to identity construction in plus-size fashion blogs**

Hanna Limatius

This paper focuses on the terminology that plus-size fashion bloggers use when describing their bodies in blog texts. Specifically, I use corpus-linguistic methods to examine how frequently these bloggers use the terms “fat”, “plus-size” and “curvy” to construct their identity in a corpus of roughly three million words. All three terms have specific connotations when it comes to identity construction: “Fat” is a traditionally derogative word, while “curvy” is considered flattering and positive, and “plus-size” a neutral, politically correct option. Previous research on plus-size fashion bloggers and language has mostly focused on the potentially empowering process of reclaiming the word “fat” as a non-derogative term, and little attention has been paid to how its use relates to the use of other body-related terminology. The results of the present study illustrate that most bloggers prefer “fat” or “plus-size” over “curvy”, which partially supports previous qualitative research. However, the findings also suggest that there is variation between different categories of plus-size fashion bloggers when it comes to the use of these body-related terms – for example, “fat” is more likely to be used by bloggers whose blogs focus on fat acceptance activism, while those with a more fashion-focused approach to blogging appear to favour “plus-size”. Thus, there are divisions within this online community that should be addressed in further research.

**Keywords:** corpus linguistics, identity, computer-mediated communication, plus-size fashion blogs

## **1 Introduction**

In this paper, I study the ways in which plus-size fashion bloggers use body descriptors to construct their identity. Through specific uses of body-related terminology, these women who are marginalized both in the world of fashion and in society (Limatius 2016), can construct a more inclusive, body positive (Sastre 2014) discourse to oppose the hegemonic fashion discourse that idolizes thin, toned bodies. As previous research illustrates, online interaction is an important resource to marginalized groups, as online environments can be used as safe spaces (Sastre 2014, 929) or communities of practice (Stommel 2008; Limatius 2016), where marginalized identities can be expressed. The role of language is integral in such communities – in the case of plus-size women in particular, language can be used to deconstruct and challenge what LeBesco (2001, 76) refers to as the “spoiled identity of fatness.” In fact, there are previous studies in the fields of consumer and market research (e.g. Harju and Huovinen 2015; Scaraboto and Fischer

2013) that refer to the process of reclaiming terms with traditionally negative connotations as empowering to plus-size women, especially when it comes to the word “fat”. However, no quantitative data has been presented to support these claims, which is why I wanted to expand on this discussion by applying corpus-linguistic methods to blog data. In the present study, I examine three words that are used for describing the body in a corpus compiled from 20 UK-based plus-size fashion blogs – “fat”, “curvy”, and “plus-size” – to answer the following questions:

- 1) How often do the bloggers use the term “fat”?
- 2) How does the use of the word “fat” compare to the use of two other popular body descriptors, “plus-size” and “curvy”?
- 3) Are there any differences between individual bloggers or categories of bloggers when it comes to the use of these terms, and in what kind of contexts do the terms appear in different categories of plus-size fashion blogs?
- 4) How is (body) identity constructed through the use of these terms?

The previous research on plus-size fashion bloggers has, to my knowledge, relied on purely qualitative approaches, such as qualitative applications of discourse analysis (Connell 2013; Harju and Huovinen 2015; Limatius 2016, Limatius 2017), ethnography (Downing Peters 2014) and netnography (Gurrieri and Cherrier 2013; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). The present study combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches – although the bulk of the analysis focuses on the frequencies of the three terms in the blog corpus, qualitative interpretation was used to distinguish between three categories of bloggers within the corpus (fat activists, fashionistas and all-rounders), and the terms I chose to focus on were also established based on qualitative criteria. As such, the study provides an insight into what quantitative data can add to the study of plus-size fashion bloggers, as well as other online communities of marginalized people, without completely abandoning the qualitative, discourse-focused research tradition that has been established in the field. However, due to its relatively narrow focus, this paper should be viewed as a pilot study, and more extensive studies that focus on wider varieties of terms and apply more statistical tests to the data are required in the future.<sup>1</sup>

It should be mentioned that quantitative methods have been used in the past to study different genres of blogs from various perspectives – topics such as style in French politicians’ blogs (Lehti and Laippala 2014), blog reader comments as an aboutness indicator in the Birmingham Blog Corpus (Kehoe and Gee 2012), motivations of Polish bloggers (Trammell et al. 2006), and the gender and age distribution of blog authors (Herring et al. 2004) have all been explored through quantitative data and methods. However, such methods have not yet been used to study the language of fashion bloggers,

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<sup>1</sup> I am currently working on an extended study of the same corpus as a part of my PhD thesis.

despite the popularity of this genre of blogs, both from a consumer point of view and as a subject of academic research (see e.g. Chittenden 2010; Findlay 2015; Rocamora 2011; Titton 2015).

The paper is structured as follows. First, I will introduce the plus-size fashion blogging phenomenon, as well as discussing previous research on the topic. I will focus especially on practices of identity construction within this genre of blogs, and the ways in which body-related terminology features in these practices. I will also discuss the social conceptualisations of fatness, and how the plus-size fashion blogging phenomenon is intertwined with social movements such as the body positivity movement (Sastre 2014) and the fat acceptance movement (e.g. Scaraboto & Fischer 2013). After that, I move on to describe the blog corpus I compiled for my research, presenting three categories of plus-size fashion bloggers: fat activists, fashionistas and all-rounders. Next, I will describe the methodology, explaining how and why I chose to focus on the terms “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size”, and what kind of occurrences of these terms I considered relevant in my analysis. Finally, I will present the results of the analysis and conclude the paper with a discussion and suggestions for future research.

The findings of the study show that although “curvy” is traditionally considered to be a flattering, positive descriptor for a larger woman, and is often used in advertising by plus-size fashion brands, most of the bloggers in the corpus prefer to use the words “fat” and “plus-size” when describing themselves and other women who share their identity as plus-size fashion bloggers (or plus-size women in general) – thus, it appears more likely for them to identify with these terms. “Fat” is often used deliberately and in a neutral or positive context as an instrument of resistance and empowerment, as previous research has also suggested (e.g. Gurrieri and Cherrier 2013; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Harju and Huovinen, 2015; Limatius, 2017). However, the findings of the present study also reveal variation in the way that different sub-categories of bloggers use body-related terms, illustrating the diversity within the plus-size fashion blogosphere in a way that previous studies have not. While earlier research has treated plus-size fashion bloggers as one, coherent group, the present study shows that bloggers who focus on fat activism and “body politics” are more likely to use the term “fat” than bloggers who focus mainly on fashion- and beauty-related topics, who, in turn, are more likely to lean towards using the term “plus-size”.

## **2 Plus-size women, blogging and fashion**

Plus-size fashion blogs are topical blogs that revolve around fashion, beauty and personal style, and that are authored by women<sup>2</sup> who identify as plus-size. Unlike author-centric

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<sup>2</sup> While there are men who write fashion blogs and identify as plus-size, the majority of plus-size fashion bloggers are women, and the 20 blogs in my corpus are authored by women.

blogs, where familiarity with the author is what engages the readers, topical blogs “rely on the topic in order to get an idea of the audience, since knowledge of and interest in certain topics constrains a blog’s potential readership” (Puschmann 2013, 94).

In the fashion industry, plus-size clothing collections usually start at size UK18 / US14 / EU46, although sometimes smaller sizes are included, and plus-size models are notoriously often smaller in size than the target consumer. The discourse on plus-size fashion mostly revolves around women’s fashion, although in recent years the representation for plus-size men has increased, both in the world of fashion blogging and, to some extent, in other fashion media. However, the concept of “plus-size” remains strongly connected to women, which reflects the fact that the marginalization of the fat body is a gendered phenomenon – as Harjunen (2009, 15) states, “body size has become a central determinant of social acceptability for women.”

Plus-size fashion blogging can be seen as a sub-category of personal style blogging: a genre of blogging that emerged in the early 2000s, but became widely known in 2009, after a select few bloggers were invited to sit in the front row of fashion shows during the Spring/Summer Ready-to-Wear (RTW) season (Findlay 2015, 158). Much like the fashion-focused blogs written by straight-size women, most plus-size fashion blogs focus on presenting fashion and giving blog readers style advice through “outfit of the day” posts, as well as reviewing clothing items and other products (for a more detailed description of the content of these blogs, see Limatius, 2017). Fashion bloggers can be seen as a link between the consumers and the industry – the bloggers show their audience what the current trends look like on average consumers instead of models in commercials. As Titton (2015, 205) puts it, fashion blogs “revolve around the representation of fashion in the lifeworld of their authors and potential readers.”

For plus-size women in particular, engaging in fashion blogging also has an element of activism. Fat bodies are strongly stigmatized in modern Western cultures, where fatness is portrayed as “repulsive, funny, ugly, unclean, obscene and above all as something to lose” (LeBesco & Brazziel 2001, 2). In the fashion industry, fat is especially stigmatized, and mainstream fashion imagery consists of almost exclusively thin bodies (Connell 2013, 212). As Scaraboto and Fischer (2013, 1239) point out, fashion not only reflects the social stigma against fatness, but also intensifies it. The field of fashion places plus-size women on the outside, in the realm of the abnormal. It also makes plus-size women invisible; one rarely sees truly large models on the covers of fashion magazines or on billboard advertisements. However, social media have provided a new channel for individuals to express their sense of fashion and personal style, as well offering an alternative to mainstream fashion media. Through fashion blogging, plus-size women are able to both express their interest in fashion, and to interact and form communities with similar others who share this interest (Limatius, 2016). For some of these women, blogging has even turned into a career.



I consider two related – but not identical – social movements relevant for understanding the activist aspect of plus-size fashion blogging: the fat acceptance movement, and body positivity. The fat acceptance movement stresses bodily acceptance and opposes prejudice toward fat people, i.e. sizeism (Scaraboto & Fischer 2013, 1245). It is a movement that predates the Internet, but has become more widely known after the advent of what Scaraboto and Fischer (2013, 1239) refer to as “the Fatosphere”; a network of bloggers and activists who identify with the movement, but also have an interest in fashion choices.<sup>3</sup>

Body positivity, both as a term and as a movement, is more recent and more strongly connected to websites and social media. Sastre (2014, 929–930), who studied three websites dedicated to body positivity, defines it as a movement that highlights inclusivity and the importance of visibility for all types of bodies, thus challenging the normative constructions of beauty in mainstream media. Although for the most part well-intentioned, body positive websites can also be problematized, as the term is now used in increasingly commercial contexts (Limatius, 2017; Sastre 2014, 933). Sastre (2014, 939) also refers to problematic connections between body positivity websites and television makeover shows, as both concentrate on a “therapeutic” process that views the body – or one’s relationship to the body – as a project. In a qualitative study on plus-size bloggers and their construction of a “body positive blogger identity”, I discovered that as well as an empowering resource, body positivity could act a basis for constructing in-group norms and restrictions (Limatius, 2017).

### **3 Blogs and identity construction: The role of language**

Identity construction has been the focus of a lot of academic research on both straight-size (e.g. Chittenden 2010; Rocamora 2011) and plus-size (e.g. Gurrieri and Cherrier 2013; Harju and Huovinen 2015; Limatius, 2017) fashion blogs. Titton (2015), for example, developed a theoretical framework for identity construction in fashion blogs based on her empirical research. In an analysis drawing from sociological identity theories and fashion theories, she examined the practices that fashion bloggers used to construct a fashionable persona, which she describes as “a subject position that is, on the one hand, embedded in established fashion narratives and, on the other, based on references to the self and self-representation” (Titton 2015, 203). Although the fashionable persona is rooted in the bloggers’ self-identity, as they engage in the practices of fashion blogging, “the narration of their self-identity is augmented, expanded, and altered by the incorporation of other narrative trajectories, stories, and events so as to

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<sup>3</sup> Scaraboto and Fischer (2013, 1239–1240) also point out that not all fat acceptance activists regard fashion blogging positively. Nevertheless, there is overlap between the identity categories of plus-size fashion bloggers and fat acceptance activists.

form a distinct character, or persona” (Titton 2015, 209). Thus, the identity construction of fashion bloggers can be considered a combination of their personal traits and the social and cultural norms that define what it means to be “fashionable.” One alternative term for this type of identity could be the neologism “fashionista”, meaning a dedicated follower of latest fashions, as well as its plus-size counterpart, “fatshionista” (Scaraboto & Fischer 2014, 1239).

According to Titton (2015, 213), one way in which fashion narratives are embedded in the identity of fashion bloggers can be observed in the fashion terminology that the bloggers use. To establish their authority as fashion insiders, the bloggers must use the language of fashion, “starting from the technical terms used to describe clothing and their make (the correct names of cuts, fabrics, textile manufacturing techniques, etc.) to the terminology employed in the labeling of fashion trends and styles” (Titton 2015, 213). In Harju and Huovinen’s (2015) study on plus-size fashion bloggers<sup>4</sup> and identity, it was discovered that the bloggers used performative identity practices “mimicked” from straight-size fashion blogs, such as posing in specific ways in their outfit photographs. However, at the same time these bloggers also manipulated the “existing cultural discourses surrounding gender, fashion and the market” to create their own fashion discourses (Harju and Huovinen 2016, 1618). This phenomena of resisting, but at the same time sustaining dominant fashion discourses is also reflected in the terminology used by plus-size fashion bloggers – while they use fashion jargon familiar from straight-size fashion blogs and other fashion media, plus-size fashion bloggers also have their own, group-specific practices (Limatius, 2016). As such, I consider the group of bloggers to form a community of practice (Wenger 1998); they communicate with each other on a regular basis, share a joint enterprise of making plus-size bodies more accepted and visible in fashion, and use shared linguistic and discursive practices (e.g. specific ways of referring to other bloggers, strategies of linguistic politeness, particular ways of linking to other blogs) in their interactions (see Limatius, 2016 for more on this topic).

Perhaps the most well-known example of an in-group linguistic practice among plus-size fashion bloggers is the neutral or positive, reclaimed use of the word “fat”. Harju and Huovinen (2015, 1612), for example, see reappropriating the term “fat” as the bloggers’ way to “distinguish themselves and reject demands for bodily changes”, and to “constitute themselves as active, empowered subjects”. Indeed, many plus-size fashion bloggers seem to have embraced the traditionally derogatory term, and at the same time rejected terms that the fashion media has used to “sugar-coat” fatness, such as “curvy” (Limatius, 2017). However, while the previous research on plus-size fashion bloggers and identity recognizes the reclaimed use of the word “fat” as an important practice for constructing identity in these blogs, the discussion on terminology has thus far been rather superficial.

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<sup>4</sup> Harju and Huovinen (2015) refer to the bloggers they studied as “fatshionista” bloggers. However, since the bloggers in my study tend to use the term “plus-size fashion blogger”, I have also chosen to use it in this paper.

## 4 The blog corpus

The data for the study was a corpus of 3,095,874 words that was compiled from 20 individual UK-based plus-size fashion blogs. I first discovered the blogs through a Facebook group aimed at plus-size fashion bloggers, and contacted the bloggers via email to request permission for using their blogs in my research. The blogs are interconnected, since the bloggers often read and comment on each other's blogs.

To compile the corpus, all blog posts that had been published in the blogs before January 2015 were downloaded into a database. Because my interest was on how the bloggers describe themselves and others in the same social group – meaning plus-size fashion bloggers, or plus-size women in general – reader comments were not included in the corpus. All blogs were anonymized for the analysis and randomly assigned a number between 1 and 20.

Before I began the quantitative analysis of blog material, I thoroughly familiarized myself with the group of bloggers by reading the blogs and examining the topics that were discussed in them. While all of the blogs in the corpus were topical blogs that focused on plus-size fashion at the time on collection, many bloggers also discussed topics other than fashion in their blogs, and some of the blogs had started out as more general, “personal diary” or “lifestyle” type of blogs. The bloggers also approached the topic of plus-size fashion in different ways. For others, plus-size fashion blogging appeared to be strongly connected to the fat acceptance movement, and posting images of themselves in different outfits was seen as a way to resist hegemonic fashion discourses and to create representation for fat women in the fashion media (see also Connell 2013; Harju and Huovinen 2015). The bloggers in this category frequently wrote opinionated posts on society's beauty standards and their effect on women, issues of discrimination, gender equality, bullying and disability, as well as other topics related to what can be broadly defined as “body politics”. Others, however, were more interested in reporting on the current trends in fashion through their blogs. While being plus-size was one part of their blogger identity – their fashionable persona, to use Titton's (2015) term – they only occasionally discussed the socio-political aspects of living in a marginalized body. Although identifying as plus-size fashion bloggers, several of the bloggers also wrote about topics other than fashion, such as make-up, food, photography, art and home décor.

The bloggers in the corpus can be divided into three categories: Fat activists, fashionistas and all-rounders. I based this division on the observations I had made in my previous qualitative investigations of this group of 20 bloggers (Limatius, 2016, Limatius, 2017), as well as my overall impression of the most common themes of each blog after a close

reading of them. The defining features of each category, as well as the blogs belonging to said category, are listed in Table 1.

<b>Fat activists</b>	<b>Fashionistas</b>	<b>All-rounders</b>
<p>Fashion is seen as an instrument of activism and empowerment.</p> <p>Body politics and equality are discussed often, representation for marginalized bodies is integral.</p>	<p>Emphasis on current fashion trends rather than socio-political issues (although such issues might also be discussed sporadically).</p> <p>Being plus-size is not necessarily the main focus of the blog – only one part of the bloggers’ identity.</p>	<p>Blogs started out with more general “lifestyle” approaches and only later focused on plus-size fashion.</p> <p>They still cover a variety of topics, including make-up and beauty reviews, as well as other themes that are not directly related to fashion or being plus-size.</p>
<p>Blog 1, Blog 2, Blog 4, Blog 8, Blog 11, Blog 13, Blog 15.</p>	<p>Blog 3, Blog 6, Blog 9, Blog 14, Blog 16, Blog 17, Blog 18.</p>	<p>Blog 5, Blog 7, Blog 10, Blog 12, Blog 19, Blog 20.</p>

Table 1: Categories of plus-size fashion bloggers in the corpus

## 5 Method

Once the blog corpus was completed, I used AntConc Version 3.4.4 (Anthony 2015) to compile a list of all words that were used for describing appearance in the blogs. I then narrowed down the list to words that could be used to describe body shape or size. Since my research interest is the identity construction of plus-size women, I decided to focus on words that described plus-size bodies, thus excluding terms such as “slim” or “thin”. I also excluded “neutral” words that could be used to describe both plus-size and straight-size bodies, like “tall” or “short”.<sup>5</sup> The most frequent words that were used for describing

<sup>5</sup> Although it could be argued that “curvy” is also a neutral word, in that it refers more to body shape than size, I have chosen to include it in the analysis because of its firmly established role as a descriptor for plus-size women in fashion advertising.

the plus-size body are listed in Table 2, alongside the raw number of hits for each word in the corpus.

<b>Hits</b>	2,328	2,025	1,600	630	532	495	378	336	238	237
<b>Word</b>	big	plus-size(d)	fat	thick	large	wide	larger	curvy	chunky	biggest

Table 2: Top ten terms for describing plus-size bodies in the corpus (before filtering for relevance)<sup>6</sup>

For further analysis, I narrowed down my focus to three terms: “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size”. Even though the main focus of my analysis is on quantitative research, I chose these three terms based on qualitative criteria. Because of the study’s emphasis on (body) identity, I wanted to investigate terms that have interesting connotations from the point of view of this kind of identity construction, as opposed to focusing on, for example, the most frequently or the least frequently used words. The three terms I chose all evoke particular mental images: negative (“fat”), positive (“curvy”) and neutral (“plus-size”). They were also fairly popular words in the corpus – all three terms were among the ten most frequently used words for describing the plus-size body (see Table 2 above). In the context of plus-size fashion blogs, these words are also relatively unambiguous, i.e. likely to be used for the specific purpose of describing bodies. Other words in the top ten – “big/biggest”, “thick”, “wide” “large/larger” and “chunky” – can be considered more likely to be used for other purposes. For example, even though the word “big” is the most frequent of the terms listed in Table 2, a quick AntConc search reveals that it has various uses in the corpus, many of which are not related to body size.

As discussed in the previous section, “fat” is traditionally considered to be a negative, derogative term,<sup>7</sup> and a lot of the previous literature on plus-size fashion blogging refers to bloggers reclaiming “fat.” “Curvy” is usually considered a positive, flattering term with connotations to well proportioned, feminine, hourglass figures. Although a “curvy” body is often expected to have a narrow waist in comparison to fuller hips and breasts, the word is also used frequently when advertising products to plus-size women, presumably because of its aforementioned “positive” connotations. For example, two highly popular UK-based online retailers, ASOS and New Look, have named their plus-size clothing lines as “ASOS Curve” and “New Look Curves” respectively. However, when it comes to the fashion industry, “plus-size” is also used very often, as it has “a close association”

<sup>6</sup> Note that the number of hits presented in Table 2 is the raw frequency of each term before any filtering for relevance. Thus, this number also contains the occurrences where the words are used to describe other things than body shape or size.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I use both “fat” and “plus-size” when referring to the bloggers. Whenever “fat” is used, it is used as a non-derogatory term and with no negative intent.

with fashion (Downing Peters 2014, 48). Recently, there has been heated discussion in the media regarding the relevance of the term “plus-size”, with celebrities like model Ashley Graham and actor Melissa McCarthy urging the fashion industry to “drop the plus” and to stop categorising women based on their size (Blair 2016).

Once I had determined which words I would focus on, I once again used AntConc to find every occurrence of each term in the corpus. I then manually went through the list of occurrences for each word and removed all occurrences that were not relevant. The following criteria were used to determine which occurrences were relevant and which were not.

## **6 Criteria for establishing relevant occurrences**

For the word “fat”, I considered relevant all occurrences where it was used to describe a person or a group of people (e.g. “I am fat”, “fat girls”); other types of uses for the word (e.g. “a big, fat cake”, “low fat diet”) were excluded. I did include references to body parts when they could be considered as identity construction (e.g. “I have fat thighs”). While “fat” is mostly used as an adjective when describing a person, in the plus-size blogosphere it is also sometimes used as a noun that refers to people (e.g. “us fats”), which is why I did not want to limit my investigation to only those cases where “fat” was used as an adjective. I also included all relevant occurrences of “fatter” and “fattest”. It should be noted that the word “fat” appeared in the names of some of the blogs that were investigated, and blog names were not included in the analysis. This was because some bloggers repeatedly mentioned blog names in their posts, and including these mentions might have skewed the results. Although many previous studies (e.g., Harju and Huovinen, 2015; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013) discuss plus-size fashion bloggers using “fat” as a neutral or positive term, I did not make a distinction between “positive” and “negative” uses of “fat”, because it would have required examining the wider context around each and every occurrence of the word. However, based on my previous qualitative research on the same group of bloggers (Limatius, 2016; Limatius, 2017), it is likely that most occurrences of “fat” in the corpus could be classified as the reclaimed use of the word.

For the term “plus-size”, any alternative spellings (plus size, plus-sized, plus sized) were taken into account. As with the word “fat”, only the occurrences where “plus-size” was used when referring to a person or a collective of people (e.g. “plus-size women”, “the plus-size blogging community”, “being plus-size”) were considered relevant. Occurrences where plus-size was used to describe other things than people were usually fashion-industry-related (e.g. “plus-size clothing”, “plus-size collection”, “plus-size brand”) and not considered as a form of identity construction. There were a couple of instances where it was difficult to determine whether an occurrence of “plus-size” was

relevant in terms of identity construction. In those instances, I tried replacing the word “plus-size” with the word “fat”. For example, a blogger might write “I just heard of a new plus-size retailer”, but it would be unlikely for her to say “I just heard of a new fat retailer”. In examples like this, the blogger does not make a conscious choice to use “plus-size” instead of “fat”; she merely uses the term generally used in the fashion industry. However, if the blogger writes “there’s talk of a new retailer in the plus-size blogging community”, it would have been possible for her to say “the fat blogging community” instead. Examples like this could thus be interpreted as identity construction.

Occurrences of “curvy” were also only considered relevant when they referred to a person or a group of people. “Curvy” is very commonly used in the names of plus-size fashion brands, so to limit the results to the occurrences where the bloggers made a choice to refer to themselves or others as “curvy”, all occurrences where “curvy” was mentioned as a part of a brand name (e.g. the lingerie brand Curvy Kate, which appeared very often in the corpus) were excluded. Any relevant occurrences of “curvier” were also included in the analysis. “Curviest” did not occur in the corpus.

## **7 Results**

There was considerable variation in the amount of textual material in each blog, from 39,885 word tokens (Blog 11) up to 569,653 word tokens (Blog 12) (see Figure 1). This was to be expected, since some of the blogs had been active for a longer period of time than others, and certain bloggers posted more often or wrote longer posts than others. To minimize the effect of blog size in the results, in addition to the raw number of relevant occurrences of each term in the corpus, I will present frequencies normalized to a common base of 10,000 words. Standard deviation has been established as a useful method when it comes to measuring dispersion within a complete dataset (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2006, 54), which is why I have also chosen to use it in the present study. The overall frequencies of relevant hits of each word in the corpus are summarized in Table 3, alongside normalized frequency, standard deviation and mean.

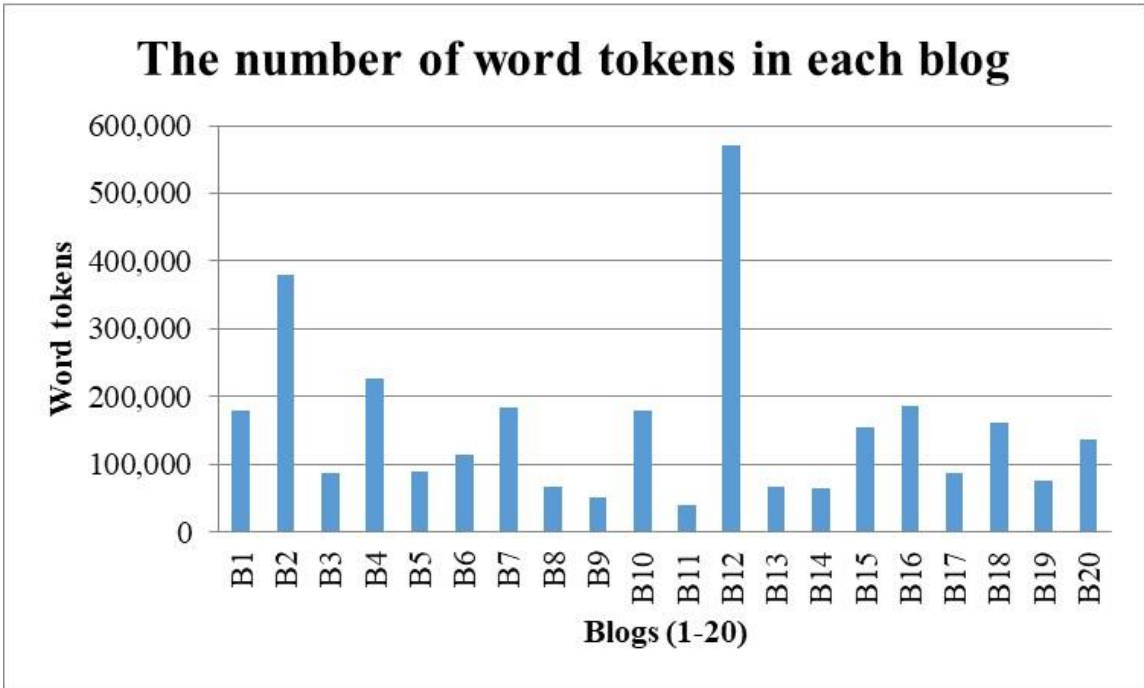


Figure 1: The number of word tokens in each blog

	“Fat”	“Curvy”	“Plus-size”
<b>Relevant hits in the corpus</b>	1,292	124	931
<b>Normalized frequency (the whole corpus)</b>	4.17	0.4	3.01
<b>Mean (of the normalized frequencies)</b>	5.54	0.5	4.35
<b>Standard deviation</b>	6.43	0.5	3.63

Table 3: Comparison of frequency, normalized frequency, mean and standard deviation



The results of my analysis show that while “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size” were all used by the bloggers to describe self and others, “fat” and “plus-size” were clearly more frequent than “curvy.” The findings also illustrate that there is variation within the group of bloggers when it comes to the use of all three terms. In the following sub-sections, I will present the frequencies of each word in more detail. I will also illustrate the ways in which the bloggers used the terms with a few excerpts from the blog texts. Bolded text is used in the excerpts to highlight specific linguistic or discursive features.

## **7.1 The frequency of “fat”**

“Fat” was the most common of the three descriptors with 1,292 relevant occurrences in the whole corpus. Out of these occurrences, 1,274 featured the form “fat”, 18 featured “fatter” and two featured “fattest”. The normalized frequency per 10,000 words was 4.17 for the whole corpus. The mean (calculated from the normalized frequencies) was 5.54.

Looking at how occurrences of “fat” are distributed among the bloggers it becomes apparent that some of the bloggers have a tendency to use the descriptive “fat” more frequently than others. In fact, the use of “fat” contained more in-group variation than either of the other two terms. This is reflected in the standard deviation of the sample, which is 6.43. However, it should be noted that a lot of the variation is caused by the fact that Blog 11, which is a blog that is particularly focused on fat acceptance activism, and also the smallest blog in the corpus, has a significantly higher number of occurrences per 10,000 words than any of the other blogs. Excluding Blog 11, the standard deviation of the sample would be much lower at 3.02. The normalized frequencies of “fat” in each blog are presented in Figure 2. The raw frequencies are presented in parentheses after the blog number, e.g. B1 (86).

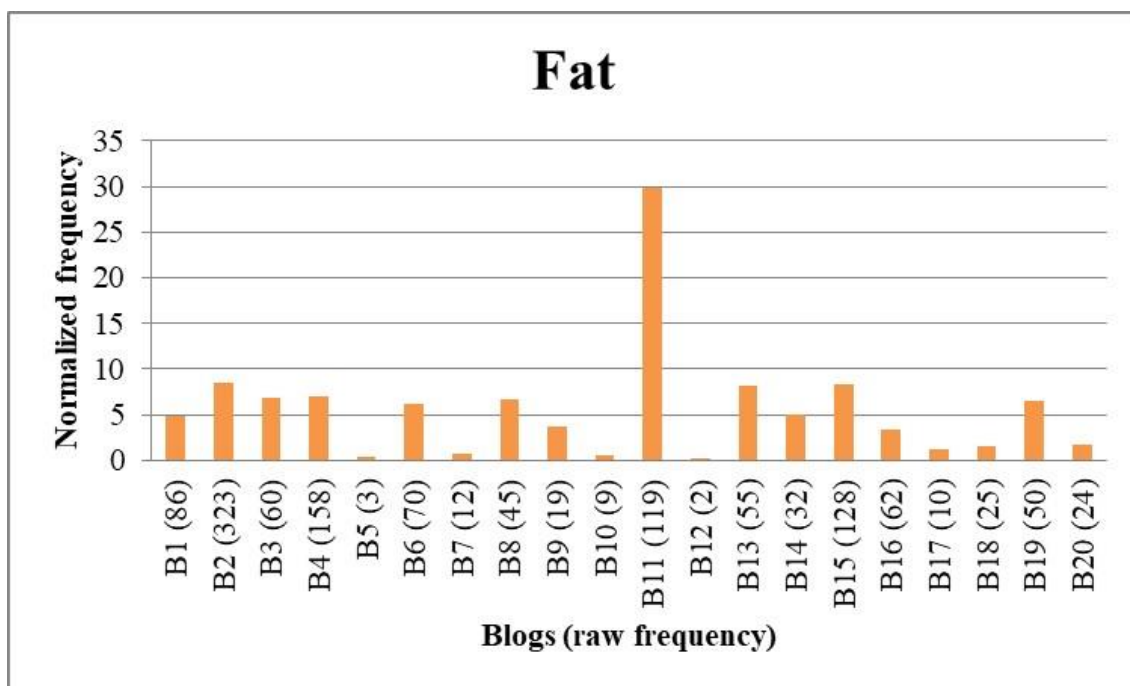


Figure 2: The normalized (and raw) frequencies of “fat”

An explanation for some of the differences within the group can be found in the bloggers’ blogging approaches. For example, the high number of occurrences of “fat” in Blogs 2, 11, 13 and 15 is most likely due to the fact that these blogs contain a lot of posts about fat acceptance and the socio-political issues related to being fat. Similarly, the low number of occurrences in some of the blogs, such as Blogs 5, 7, 10 and 12 might be explained by the fact that these bloggers, although currently identifying as plus-size fashion bloggers, also have posted and still post a lot about other topics that are not necessarily size-related, such as make-up, beauty products, health and photography. It could be that these bloggers do not feel the need to normalize or reclaim “fat” in the same way as those bloggers who belong the fat activist category. Most bloggers in the all-rounder category wrote extensively about makeup and beauty products, and thus could be seen as belonging to two blogging communities of practice at once: the plus-size fashion blogging community and the beauty blogging community. It is possible that being in between blogging communities in such a way could lead to these bloggers not adopting certain in-group linguistic practices, such as the reclaimed use of “fat”, as readily as those bloggers who were only engaged in the plus-size fashion blogging community.

Looking at the actual blog texts, there are indeed differences in the ways in which the bloggers use the term “fat”. In the following excerpt from Blog 20, which is an all-rounder blog, “fat” is listed as one way to describe the blogger’s body, alongside several other terms:

Example 1: **“I am plus size; fat, curvy, big, heavy, plump, chubby... however you want to put it is fine by me.** Because I accept that I am me, I am a body shape and life does not have to be one long mission to change it or hide it. It’s so tiresome, so negative and bloody boring!” (Blog 20)

In Example 1, the author of Blog 20 displays a somewhat indifferent attitude towards body-related terminology: “however you want to put it is fine by me.” She also highlights the fact that she is an individual (“I am me”) and that she does not wish her life to revolve around whether or not she should change her body. To her, “fat” is not necessarily political; it is merely a physical aspect of her body that she has come to accept as a fact. Thus, she could be interpreted as identifying more with the ideology of the body positive movement (inclusivity of different body types) than that of the fat acceptance movement (visibility and rights for fat people). However, in the following example from another blog, “fat” is portrayed in a notably different way:

Example 2: **“Being in a fat body is undoubtedly political.** Whether we like it or not **daring to leave the house in a fat body can be like entering hostile territory.** **Our** bodies elicit unwanted comments because we dare to exist. **We** are the butt of jokes, are often treated with no respect in healthcare settings and can be passed over for jobs we’re perfect for because of the size of our bodies. **At the higher end of the fat spectrum** I’d go as far as to borrow a Skunk Anansie song title and say Yes, it’s fucking political.” (Blog 2)

The author of Blog 2, which belongs to the fat activist category, states that her whole existence is “undoubtedly political” because of her fat body. Identifying as being “at the higher end of the fat spectrum”, the blogger continuously uses the term “fat”, partnered with the inclusive pronoun “we” to inspire a sense of community (see also Limatius, 2016). Whereas the author of Blog 20 in Example 1 treated “fat” as an individual quality, as one part of her personal identity, the author of Blog 2 uses it more as a marker of social identity, in reference to a larger group of people – a community (of practice).

## 7.2 The frequency of “curvy”

“Curvy” was clearly the least popular of the three descriptors with only 124 relevant occurrences in the whole corpus. Out of these occurrences, 109 featured the form “curvy” and 15 the form “curvier”. The form “curviest” did not occur in the corpus. The normalized frequency of “curvy” was 0.4 per 10,000 words (when considering the whole corpus), and the mean calculated from the normalized frequencies was 0.5.

The fact that “curvy” was so unpopular throughout the corpus is an interesting finding, bearing in mind that “curvy” is traditionally considered the most flattering and positive of the three terms under investigation in the present study, and also very frequently used by brands when advertising clothing for plus-size women. The low frequency of “curvy” in the corpus does indicate that the bloggers have created a group-specific counter-discourse (see also Connell 2013) where the traditionally derogative “fat” is normalized, and “curvy” is avoided because its use is seen as mainstream media’s way of “sugar-

coating” fatness (Limatius, 2017). Also, it should be noted that “curvy” is associated with voluptuous, hourglass-shaped bodies, which excludes a large part of ordinary plus-size women. The normalized frequencies of “curvy” are presented in Figure 3, again alongside the raw number of hits in parentheses after the blog number.

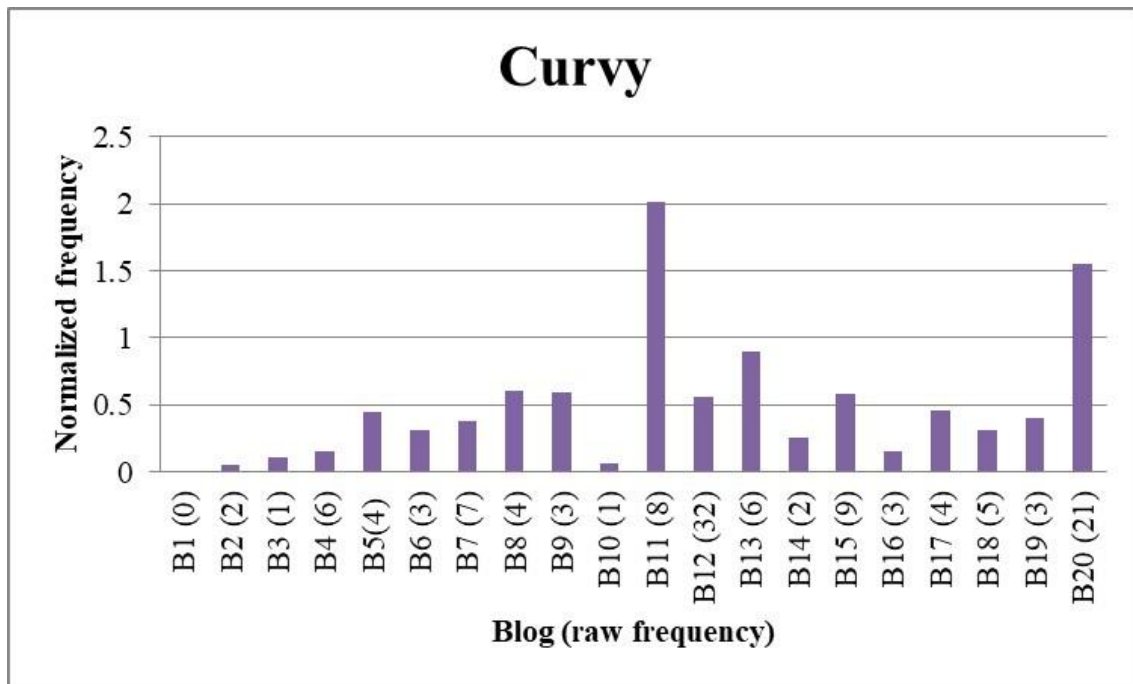


Figure 3: The normalized (and raw) frequencies of “curvy”

Comparing the frequencies of “fat” and “curvy”, we see that the use of “curvy” is a lot more evenly distributed among the bloggers than that of “fat” (see Figure 4). Indeed, for the word “curvy”, the standard deviation of the sample is much lower at only 0.5. However, there were still some interesting differences between individual bloggers. While the descriptor “fat” was used by all of the bloggers at some point, one blogger (Blog 1) did not use the word “curvy” at all. Also, while it is apparent that most of the bloggers favour “fat” over “curvy”, there are exceptions. Blogger 20 (all-rounder category), for example, uses “curvy” almost as frequently as “fat”. Blogger 5 (all-rounder category) uses both words very infrequently, although “curvy” is slightly more common. Bloggers 5 and 12 (also all-rounder category) are the only ones who use “curvy” more often than “fat”.

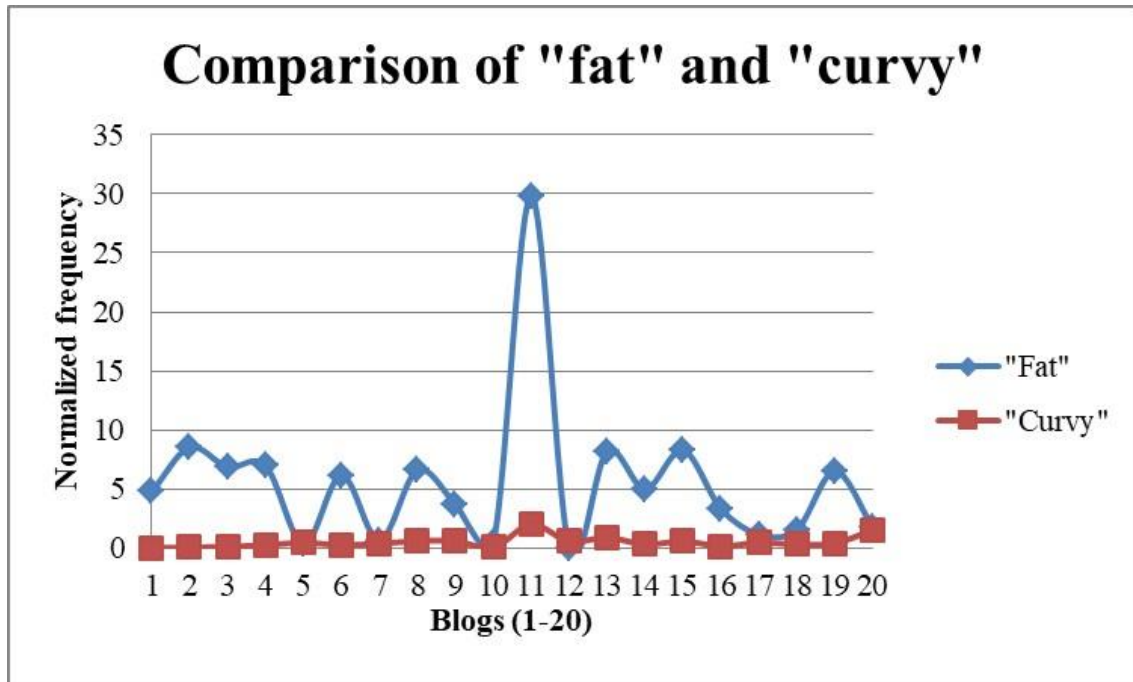


Figure 4: Comparison of “fat” and “curvy”

Like “fat”, “curvy” was also used most frequently in Blog 11 (fat activist category). As mentioned in the previous section, Blog 11 is very focused on fat activism and “body politics”, which most likely results in the blogger using all types of body-related terms more than others – the fact that the blogger mentions “curvy” as a descriptor of body shape does not necessarily mean she likes to use the term when describing herself. In fact, there were a few examples in the corpus where “curvy” was mentioned as a “sugar-coated” alternative to fat, and not as something the bloggers themselves might use to describe themselves:

Example 3: “...for the love of all things please **do NOT say that I'm curvy**. I do not take it as a compliment because **I am not/do not view myself to be curvy** and I feel that saying it is purely trying to make my fatness fit in to yet another socially accepted norm/standard.” (Blog 11)

Example 4: “No matter how anyone **dressed it up chubby, cuddly, curvy I knew I was fat.**” (Blog 17)

The author of Blog 11 explicitly requests that people do not call her “curvy”, as she does not see it as an accurate description of herself, nor does she “take it as a compliment”. Similarly, the author of Blog 17 (fashionista category) names “curvy”, along with “chubby” and “cuddly” as a way of “dressing up” the fact that she is fat.

However, some bloggers in the corpus did identify with the word “curvy” and used it to describe themselves:

Example 5: “Jumpsuits are everywhere at the moment especially in the straight size stores. It’s great to see that the plus size brands are taking notice and designing them too - **us curvy girls want to look just as good don’t we?**” (Blog 12)

In Example 5, the author of Blog 12 (all-rounder category) uses the term “curvy” with an inclusive pronoun – “us curvy girls” – in a way similar to how the author of Blog 2 used “fat” in Example 2. As well as identifying as “curvy”, she also includes her potential readers in the group of “curvy girls”. Again, this is a common linguistic practice for creating a sense of community between a speaker and an audience, often used in political discourse (see e.g. Fetzer 2014).

### 7.3 The frequency of “plus-size”

“Plus-size” was nearly as common as “fat” with 931 relevant occurrences in the whole corpus. The normalized frequency per 10,000 words was 3.01 for the whole corpus, and the mean was 4.35. The normalized frequencies of “plus-size” are presented in Figure 5, alongside the raw frequencies in parentheses after the blog number.

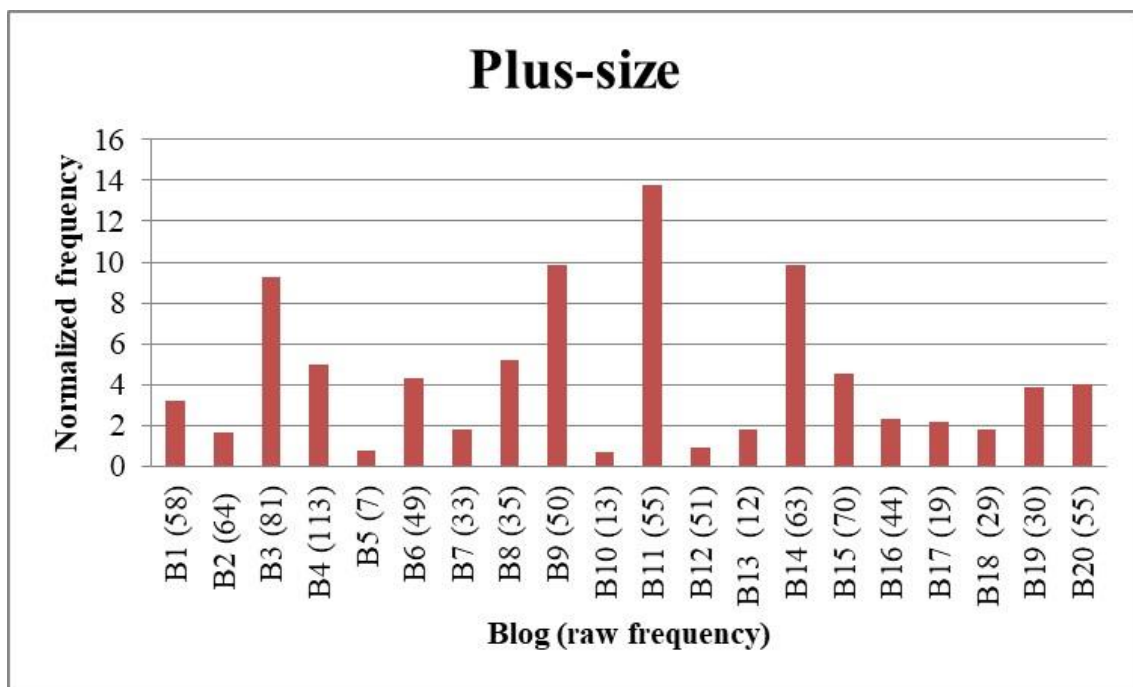


Figure 5: The normalized (and raw) frequencies of “plus-size”

As illustrated by the comparison in Figure 6, with the exception of Blog 11, the distributions of “fat” and “plus-size” form fairly similar patterns, although some bloggers who use “fat” more tend to use “plus-size” less, and vice versa. The standard deviation of the sample was 3.63, which puts “plus-size” in between the more unevenly distributed

“fat” and the very evenly distributed “curvy”. However, if the highly exceptional Blog 11 is not taken into account, the difference between “fat” (standard deviation 3.02) and “plus-size” (standard deviation 2.94) becomes a lot smaller. “Curvy”, however, remains the most evenly distributed even with the omission of Blog 11 (standard deviation 0.36). The comparison of “curvy” and “plus-size” is presented in Figure 7.

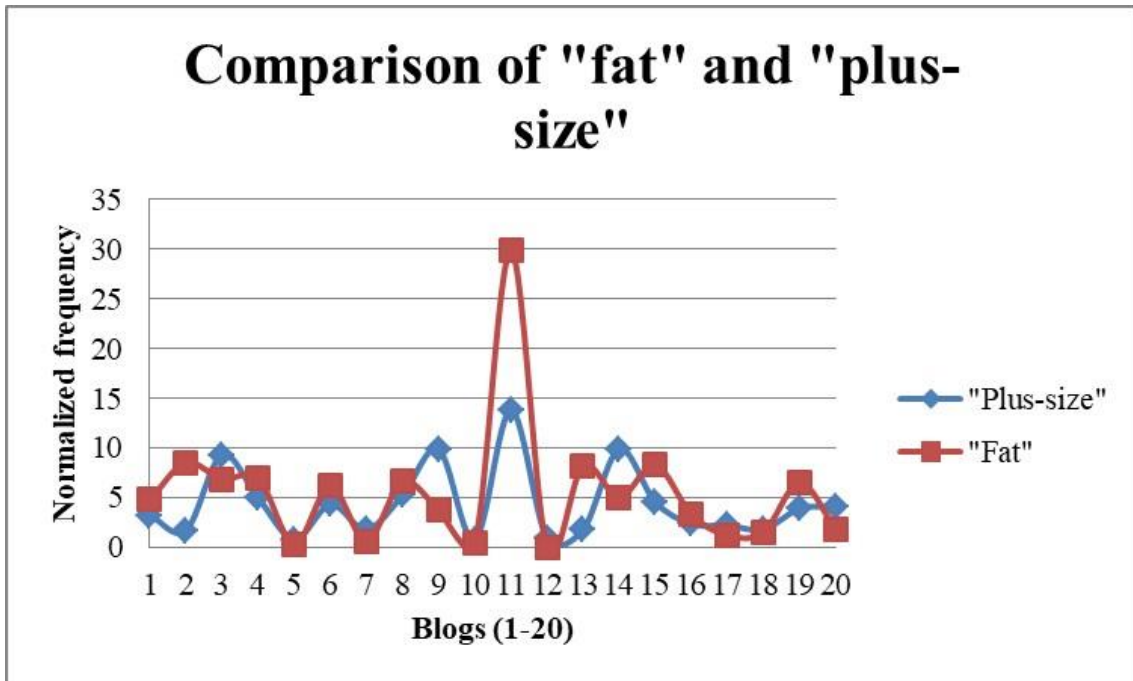


Figure 6: Comparison of “fat” and “plus-size”.

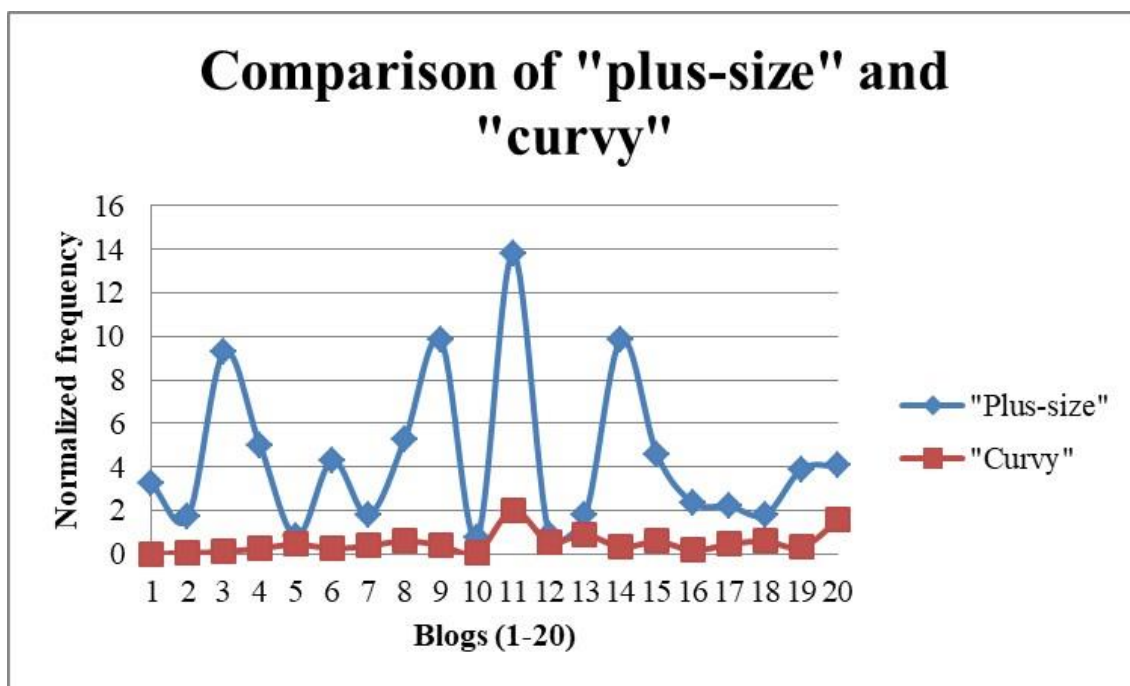


Figure 7: Comparison of “plus-size” and “curvy”.

The contexts in which “plus-size” appears in the blog texts seem to support its role as a “neutral”, politically correct term:

Example 6: “**The plus size community is a diverse place**, as it should be, and long may it continue.” (Blog 1)

Example 7: “In the last 6 years (since leaving comprehensive school) I have learnt to accept and love my body for the way it is. **I have fluctuated between sizes and weights I'll admit, but I always have and probably always will be plus size.**” (Blog 9)

In Example 6, the author of Blog 1, which belongs to the fat activist category, refers to the “plus size community”, describing it as a “diverse place”. “Plus-size” is perhaps seen as a safe option to use when referring to other people, since different individuals can have differing opinions about the appropriateness of terms with derogatory connotations, such as “fat” (see also Limatius, 2017). Because of its neutral connotations, “plus-size” also has the widest range of possible interpretations. In Example 7, the author of Blog 9 (fashionista category), describes herself as having “fluctuated between sizes and weights”, but also as having “always” been plus-size. Thus, “plus-size” appears as something containing a variety of different sizes, and as something that is not clearly defined. Interestingly, however, the author of Blog 2 also used “fat” in a similar way, describing herself as being “at the higher end of the fat spectrum” (see Example 2). As well as constructing their identity through the use of different body-related descriptors,



the bloggers also construct it by placing themselves at specific “levels” or “stages” of these descriptors.

#### 7.4 Distribution within categories of bloggers

In order to better understand the effect of the bloggers’ blogging approaches, I also compared the frequencies within the three sub-categories of bloggers. Predictably, all the bloggers in the fat activist category used “fat” more than either of the other two terms. Some bloggers in this category used “plus-size” more than others, but “plus-size” was more popular than “curvy” and less popular than “fat” throughout the category (see Figure 8).

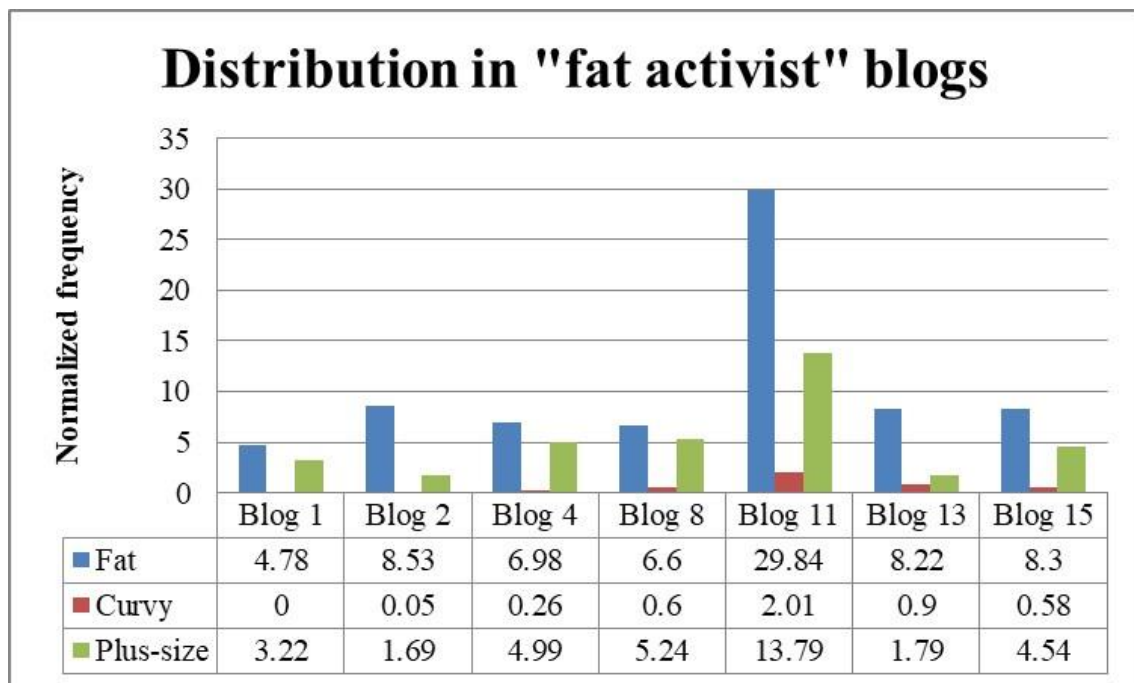


Figure 8: The distribution of “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size” in the fat activist category

However, when considering the frequencies within the fat activist category, special attention must be paid to Blog 11. As mentioned before, Blog 11 is a very fat-acceptance-focused blog that contains a lot of discussion on body-related terminology. It is also the smallest blog in the corpus with only 39,885 word tokens. Because of the small size of the blog and its emphasis on fat activism, the normalized frequencies are significantly higher than those of other blogs in the category. As such, Blog 11 cannot be considered as truly representative of its category.

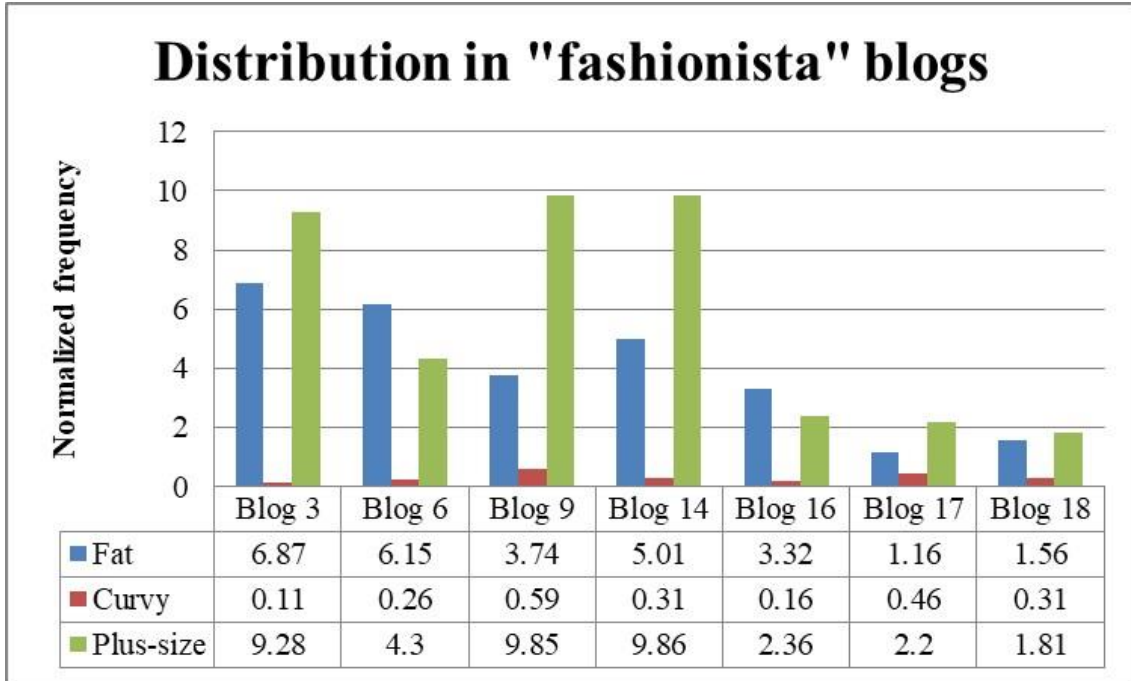


Figure 9: The distribution of “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size” in the fashionista category

In the fashionista category (see Figure 9), “plus-size” was more popular than “fat”, except for two of the blogs (Blog 16 and Blog 6). Blogs 14, 3 and 9 were notable in the sense that they featured “plus-size” a lot more frequently than the other four blogs in the category. Somewhat unexpectedly, considering its frequent use by fashion brands in their advertising, the word “curvy” was the least used term in all of the blogs in the fashionista category.

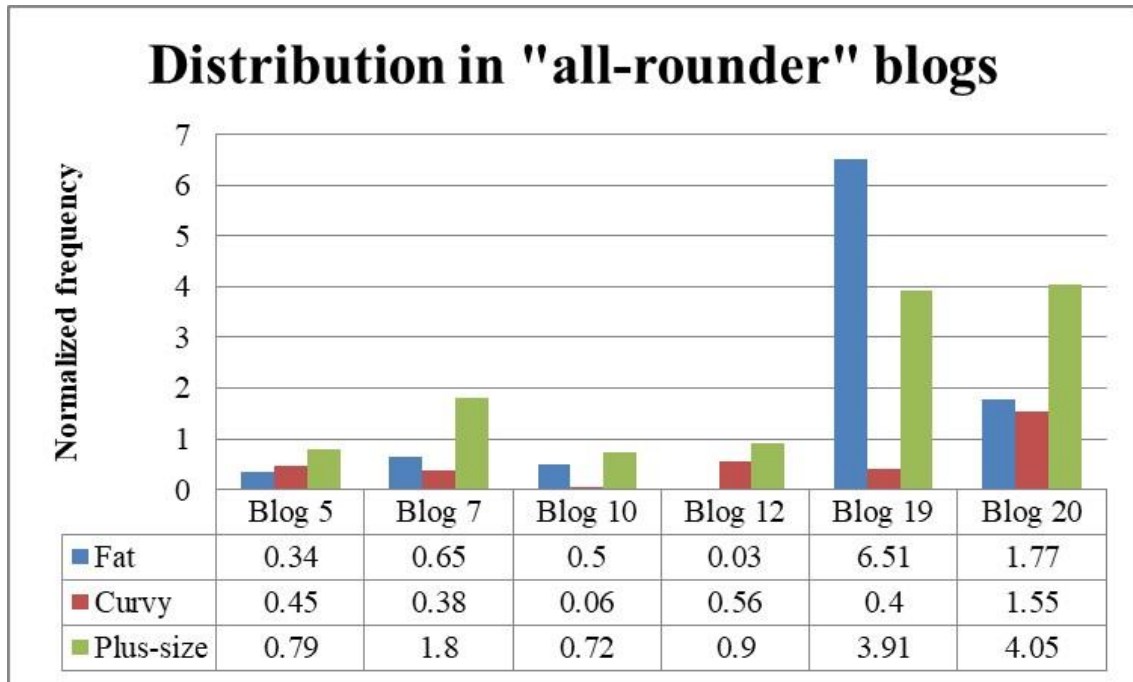


Figure 10: The distribution of “fat”, “curvy” and “plus-size” in the all-rounder category

In the all-rounder blogs, all three terms were used fairly infrequently, although the author of Blog 19 used “fat” a lot more than the others in the group, and “plus-size” was slightly more popular in Blogs 19 and 20. The infrequent use of all three terms is most likely explained by the fact that these blogs contained a lot of non-size-specific content such as beauty product reviews. Again with the exception of Blog 19, the bloggers in this category used “plus-size” more than “fat” or “curvy” (see Figure 10). Interestingly, the only blogs that featured “curvy” more frequently than “fat” (Blogs 5 and 12) were both in the all-rounder category.

## 8 Discussion and conclusions

The findings of the study reveal that, in general, plus-size fashion bloggers are more likely to use “plus-size” or “fat” than “curvy” when describing themselves or the group of women they identify with. Out of these three terms, previous research (e.g. Harju and Huovinen 2015; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013) has only focused on the word “fat” and its role as a reclaimed, potentially empowering marker of identity.

Even though the quantitative results of this study show that “fat” is clearly more popular than “curvy”, it is only slightly more common than “plus-size” overall, and “plus-size” is actually more popular in two out of three sub-categories of bloggers (fashionistas and all-

rounders). Thus, the results also show that there is variation in how frequently different bloggers use different terms, which poses interesting questions for future research.

Because of the emphasis that has been placed on the reclaimed use of “fat” in previous research, further discussion regarding this term is required. In the present study the variation within the group was apparent in the case of “fat”. One reason for this is evident in the way the frequencies of the three terms are distributed among the three categories of bloggers: the bloggers whose blogs had a fat activism focus all used “fat” more than either of the other two terms, although as mentioned, “plus-size” was the most popular of the three terms in the other groups. Moreover, there were also individual bloggers who used the term “curvy” more often than “fat”.

As for the generally low frequencies of the word “curvy”, it is possible that plus-size bloggers avoid using the term because it has a long tradition of being used by the fashion industry as a way of “sugar-coating” fatness. While using “curvy” in advertising is thought to evoke positive imagery, it can also seem rather condescending towards plus-size consumers. The term also has connotations to a certain type of “femininity” that positions the female form as the object of (male) sexual desire. This might be one reason why especially those bloggers who identify with the fat acceptance movement, which has ties to feminism, avoid using the term. When I interviewed plus-size fashion bloggers for another study that is a part of my PhD project, I also inquired about their thoughts on body-related terms. While the word “fat” was widely accepted by the bloggers as a neutral or even positive way of describing their bodies, and “plus-size” was considered a “PC” (politically correct) word that was useful especially when shopping for clothes, the attitudes towards “curvy” were more mixed and critical. Overall, my research implicates that plus-size fashion bloggers self-identify as “plus-size” or “fat”, rather than “curvy.” However, further research on more than one blogging community is required on this topic.

Because of the variation between different categories of bloggers, the findings can be interpreted to suggest that not all plus-size fashion bloggers necessarily identify as fat acceptance activists, and that some of them prefer to focus on more mainstream fashion content instead of getting involved in the politics of size. Indeed, the fact that so many bloggers preferred “plus-size” over “fat” indicates that not all plus-size fashion bloggers even identify as “fat”, or feel empowered by the term. Additionally, it is likely that even if the bloggers have reclaimed the word “fat” for themselves, they might be hesitant to use it when referring to others, as it could be interpreted as a face threatening act (Brown & Levinson 1987) because of its derogatory connotations. This might lead to decreased usage of the term when discussing plus-size bloggers as a group; however, further research that focuses on the collocations of the term is also needed to establish whether this is the case.

The findings of the present study offer a new perspective to the topic of plus-size fashion bloggers, identity and body-related terminology, considering that previous research has mostly treated the blogs in this genre as a unified group with a strong connection to the fat acceptance movement. Although such a connection undeniably exists, these findings indicate that a more detailed examination of the different sub-categories of blogs is needed to fully understand the plus-size fashion blogging phenomenon. The popularity of “plus-size” could be connected to an ideological shift from the fat acceptance movement to the more generally inclusive concept of body positivity, which appears to be currently happening over several social media platforms. – While the reclaimed use of “fat” certainly seems to be an in-group practice in online communities that have their roots in the fat acceptance movement, it does not necessarily have a place in communities formed around the body positive ideology, as those communities also include members who are not or do not identify as fat.

Another possible factor in the differences between individual bloggers is the length of time they have been involved in the plus-size fashion blogging community. The relatively low frequencies of all three terms in the all-rounder category suggest that if a blogger’s blogging approach is not (or has not been) solely focused on plus-size fashion, body descriptors do not feature as heavily in their identity construction. Also, in a qualitative study of the same group of 20 bloggers, I observed evidence of diachronic change in the way the bloggers talked about their bodies. For example, many of the bloggers seemed to change their views on weight loss after becoming more engaged in the plus-size fashion blogging community (Limatius, 2017). Thus, chronological studies of specific online groups and the terminology that is used to construct identity within these groups are relevant in the future – especially in the case of marginalized groups, as adopting identity-constructing terminology as a positive resource can be empowering to marginalized individuals.

Another interesting topic for future research would be comparing the frequency and collocations of identity terms within particular online groups with larger, more general CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) corpora. As the present study is a pilot study with a very narrow focus – I only examined three words that I considered particularly interesting from the point of view of identity construction – a more extensive investigation of all body-related descriptors that are used in plus-size fashion blogs is required in the future.

The present study illustrates that corpus-linguistic methods can be used in the study of in-group terminology to complement previous studies that have relied on qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis. The quantitative findings presented here offer some support to the existing, qualitative findings on the use of the word “fat”, but they also illustrate the variation within this group of bloggers in a way that most likely would not have been discovered through purely qualitative methods.

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# The Grotesque of Silence in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Hanne Juntunen

This article discusses the absurdist play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. It analyses the play from a previously marginalised viewpoint: the grotesque. In the framework of the absurdist tradition, the play by Beckett has been argued to be meaningless. However, as has been shown, the claim is untenable. This then gives rise to the question of the dynamic between meaning and meaninglessness in the play. The article will demonstrate how the grotesque responds to this question. It is shown that while the absurd and the grotesque superficially appear mutually exclusive, the grotesque is in fact not only a prominent part of the play, but a central, integral component of it.

**Keywords:** grotesque, absurd, drama, Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, meaninglessness

## 1 Introduction: The Interconnections of the Absurd and the Grotesque

Philip Thomson (1972, 30), in his *Critical Idiom* book on the grotesque, remarks in passing: “We should probably be hard put to decide between ‘grotesque’ and ‘absurd’ to describe such characters as Lucky and Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*”. The connection Thomson makes is an unusual one, as the absurd and the grotesque are rarely discussed in conjunction. The two concepts seem rather separate, too, as the absurd is generally used to describe a mental phenomenon, the *condition humana*, whereas the grotesque describes physical and bodily anomalies. The absurd evokes meaninglessness and the grotesque the fullness or even excess of meaning. Surely the link is tenuous at best? Furthermore, while the play, *Waiting for Godot* [1952], by Samuel Beckett, has been widely discussed in terms of the absurd, the grotesque is not a concept that has often been linked to the play. The grotesque does certainly seem an odd fit, considering especially how far removed Beckett’s play is from the “classics” of the grotesque, such as the works of Rabelais or E. T. A. Hoffmann. Admittedly, work by such figures as Franz Kafka are closer to Beckett in many ways, but this highlights the peculiarity of Beckett’s marginal position within the literature of the grotesque. Yet Thomson’s point is meant to illustrate the interconnection of the two critical concepts specifically in the context of *Godot*. However, Thomson’s argument raises more questions than it answers: How are the characters absurd? How grotesque? What makes it difficult to decide under which rubric they fall better? Perhaps most importantly, what are the points of intersection between the two concepts, which seem so far removed? My article takes these questions as its starting point, and demonstrates the deep interconnectedness of the grotesque and the absurd, particularly in *Godot*, and more generally touching upon Beckett’s oeuvre as well



as the Theatre of the Absurd<sup>1</sup> in which *Godot* is a seminal work. My argument is that the grotesque, which is in many ways diametrically opposed to absurdity and meaninglessness, is a foundational part of the play as a whole, and a strong element in Beckett's works in general. It is also a central component of the Theatre of the Absurd movement, and rather understudied as such.

*Waiting for Godot* is widely understood to be a story about nothing in particular, wherein nothing happens, which means that it lacks a traditional linear plot (see e.g. Cornwell 1973, 41; Esslin 1985, 22, 45–46; Kern 1954, 41). Plotlessness is considered to be symptomatic of the absurdity of the play. *Godot* is also generally agreed to be difficult to understand: the more Beckett refused to explain his work, the more urgently critics sought to (Esslin 1985, 1). It is therefore understood to be meaningless on two levels: existentially and linguistically. Esslin (1985, 84–85, 87) argues that Beckett shows to his readers and viewers a world without meaning, existential meaninglessness, which voids language of meaning as a consequence, resulting in linguistic meaninglessness. The two levels, existential and linguistic, are entangled either in the work itself or in the ensuing criticism. As such, and as with any work, there is no one true way of interpreting the play. Furthermore, the absurd, by definition, defies rational explanation (Esslin 1985, 44; Oliver 1963, 225). Esslin (1985, 44–45, 62) goes so far to argue that the play should not be analysed in the critical traditions of “conventional drama”, as that reduces the play to old conventions which he considers it to transcend. The question of how to analyse texts that eschew meaning-creation is indeed a tricky one. This creates a paradox of meaning and meaninglessness: a text, as an aggregate of signs which form a whole and give each other meaning, is practically by definition signification, meaning-creation, and thus the question of a text without meaning is untenable. The conundrum is made even more poignant from a critical point of view, for if we appreciate the meaninglessness (or “meaninglessness”) of the text, would analysis not impose some structure of meaning upon it? Analysis is, in a very concrete way, signification, making something significant. Stanley Cavell and Simon Critchley circumvent this problem by arguing (against critics such as Esslin) that Beckett's works *do not* present a meaningless world in meaningless language. Instead that meaninglessness and silence are the *goals* of Beckett's language use, and as such, the world that Beckett shows is *too full* of meaning (Cavell 2002, 156–159; Critchley 2000, 27, 147, 176–179). Indeed, Critchley (2000, 27) argues that the task of interpretation is “the concrete reconstruction of the meaning of meaninglessness”. It should be noted that here, too, the levels of meaningfulness and meaninglessness (both existential and linguistic) are conflated, so perhaps there is some connection between them? Can a meaningless world be represented only in meaningless text, and vice versa?

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<sup>1</sup> The Theatre of the Absurd is a loose collection of playwrights working in roughly the same time and around similar, often absurdist, topics; the writers associated with the Theatre of the Absurd are, among others, Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genet. The concept, while being widely recognised and cited, is a critical construct, first coined by Martin Esslin (1962).

Or can a meaningless world be represented in a meaningful text, or vice versa? Which does Beckett do in his works?

Here the interaction of the meaningful and the meaningless within Beckett's works is already approaching the grotesque. Geoffrey Harpham (1982, 65) argues that the grotesque on one hand compresses into meaningful ambivalence, while on the other proliferates into meaningless ambivalence. Due to this simultaneity of expansion and constriction, the grotesque has "*a surplus of significance*, a pronounced hospitality to interpretation" (Harpham 1982, 80; emphasis added). If we frame the central question of *Godot* not in terms of how language can be meaningless, but in terms of how language can emerge meaningless out of a fullness or surplus of meaning, then the concept of the grotesque gives us tools for teasing out these contradictions in the play. This is because the dialectic between meaningfulness and meaninglessness is in the very heart of the concept. This article will focus specifically on the characters Thomson mentioned, Pozzo and Lucky. Lucky is Pozzo's apparent slave, and he does all manner of gimmicks upon Pozzo's command, chief among them a speech which is composed of disconnected fragments and parts from a variety of identifiable discourses, such as academic, religious, and sports, as well as those of a more indeterminable, evocative nature. The speech is composed of repetition, lists, neologisms, and the associative combinations of these elements. It is an excellent example of how the play manipulates the demarcation between meaning and meaningless through the use of the grotesque.

Before diving into the analysis, I will provide a brief overview of the relevant concepts: the absurd, as understood within the Theatre of the Absurd, as a literary variant of the absurd (or as a form of applied literary absurd), and the grotesque specifically as a literary phenomenon. I will also touch upon their interconnections in the Theatre of the Absurd and in Beckett's works in general.

The authors associated with the Theatre of the Absurd, such as Jean Genet and Harold Pinter along with Beckett, do not constitute a literary movement per se; they are loosely collected under a common rubric as their plays seem, according to the renowned critic Martin Esslin (1985, 23), to reflect a similar attitude to life. Esslin formulated the idea of the Theatre of the Absurd in his book of the same name (first published in 1961), and each of the writers of the Theatre is "an individual who regards himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his private world" (Esslin 1985, 22). Regardless, the Theatre, even as a critical postulation, can be argued to be a central context for the analysis of the absurd in Beckett's plays, as it is the first critical context to bring up the concept which has not lost its relevance for even contemporary critical readings of Beckett's works.

Esslin defines the absurd of the Theatre of the Absurd as purposelessness, senselessness and uselessness (Esslin 1985, 23–24). The reaction to these, which the Theatre aspires to depict, is a "sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition" per

Esslin. (1985, 409.) The Theatre recreates for its audience the absurd universe, which has lost unity, purpose, and meaning (Esslin 1985, 411). As already noted, the existential and linguistic levels of meaninglessness are entangled, and thus it is established that the absurd signifies the lack of existentialist and linguistic meaning in the context of the Theatre of the Absurd. Yet, as discussed, texts cannot exist without meaning; Cavell (2002, 117) writes that a text cannot escape meaning, it is always given something to signify. Critchley (2000, 22), also, states: "Beckett's work, in its steadfast refusal to mean something – a refusal of meaning that is still achieved by way of dramatic or novelistic form". This is an interesting contradiction, as it was mentioned that the argument put forth by Cavell and Critchley keeps this entangling intact, by arguing that meaninglessness is the goal or achievement of Beckett's language in a world too-full of meaning. However, the goal of meaningless language can never be achieved, and so the existential and linguistic levels of meaninglessness can be untangled, and may, in fact, need to be. The grotesque can help achieve this: firstly, since the clash of meaningfulness and meaninglessness is an integral part of the concept. Secondly, as it shifts our focus onto the ways in which the play does signify, how it does create the meanings it undeniably has. Thus, the question of existential and linguistic meaningless becomes one of existential and linguistic grotesque – which is as a question of literary criticism much more productive to answer in the context of *Godot*.

Next a word on the characteristics of the grotesque. The general idea of the grotesque is a cohabitation of laughter and horror, neither taking over the emotional experience. Its combination of horror and laughter, that is, tragic and comic elements, creates an ambivalent reader reaction by undermining expectations. Tragicomedy, which *Godot* at least claims to be, therefore, is an optimal genre for the grotesque (Kayser 1981, 11).

There are two main traditions of the grotesque that interpret the general outlines of the concept differently. However, I will not be delving into their differences very deeply within this article. The first school can be called the subjective grotesque, essentially grim and directed towards individual experience. The second, the so-called carnival-grotesque is joyful, physical or bodily, and characterised by folk humour. Wolfgang Kayser is the main theorist of the subjective school and Mikhail Bakhtin of the carnivalistic school (Perttula 2011, 23). This division is not absolute, as Perttula (2011, 24) notes, the balance of laughter and horror is maintained in each tradition even though both favour one or the other. As such, the forms of the grotesque in later or contemporary fiction, such as Beckett's works, may not be limited to exclusively one or the other, but combine aspects from both.

The verbal grotesque, or the language of the grotesque, exists on two levels: content and narration. It is inappropriate or emotionally shocking textual or stylistic structure and subject-matter or a combination of these, which is judged incompatible. On the level of content (or story), verbal grotesque can manifest as grotesque characters and situations.

No topic or theme is inherently grotesque, but they often include “shameful” topics such as bodily functions. They may also include strange and disfigured creatures, such as monsters and puppets. (Kayser 1981, 10, 22, 53, 181–184; Perttula 2011, 32–36; Thomson 1972, 2–7.) On the level of narration, verbal grotesque can be seen as a clash of elements which remains unmitigated and unexplained. The tension between these two levels is the root of the grotesque effect: the clash of horror and laughter in the reader. (Bakhtin 1984, 19–20; Clayborough 1965, 12; Harpham 1982, 7, 14, 23, 36; Kayser 1981, 79; Thomson 1972, 27–28.) Furthermore, there is a third level, the level of the text itself. Grotesque language is elusive, that is, its familiarity as communication can suddenly turn strange, push the familiar meanings and words into inhuman meaninglessness. Kayser mentions “verbal grotesque”, where word formations and structures, such as neologisms, ellipses and non-grammatical forms, reflect the spirit of the grotesque. (Kayser 1981, 154–157.)

In light of these short introductions, how, then, are the absurd and the grotesque connected? For this, let us look at the Theatre of the Absurd again; the usual definition of the absurd as “opposed to reason” is quite narrow, and as such, Thomson argues that the Theatre actually expands the meaning of the term (Thomson 1972, 29–31). The changed scope of the term allows for a great deal of overlap between the absurd and the grotesque. The terms may be used to describe the same texts (or other phenomena), or they may be entailed by one another as it is argued that large-scale grotesque leads to the notion of absurdity, as grotesque forms are a favourable ground for the absurd experience to emerge (Clayborough 1965, 4, 18; Kayser 1981, 146–147; Stankiewicz 1972, 54; Thomson 1972, 31).

Furthermore, Esslin (1985, 327–335) traces the roots of the Theatre (which, I should stress, is his innovation) into history as far as mediaeval festivities, tentatively even further. The genealogy, when viewed through the lens of the grotesque, seems familiar. Esslin does, in fact, say that the Theatre has grotesque features on a number of occasions without much specification, but I shall demonstrate that such a vague (especially in terms of the grotesque in Beckett's works) reference does not quite reflect the fact that the tradition of the Theatre, and its historical lineage, seems inextricably bound with the grotesque.

Though the traditions of the grotesque and the absurd have undergone several formulations and forms, they seem to go hand in hand throughout their history, even if this shared history has not really been explicitly written down as shared. Next I will, briefly, show how the concepts, which have been discussed separately, reveal surprising parallels. The pre-history of both the absurd and the grotesque begins with cave paintings, at the very dawn of humanity's art and capability of feeling alienation (Cornwell 2006, 3; Harpham 1982, 49–59, 178; Manschreck 1976, 92; Perttula 2011, 21). Both traditions have borrowed aspects from Greek and Roman arts: the absurd from Greek tragedy and

comedy, and the grotesque from Roman miming theatre *mimus* (with grotesque characters) and ornamental paintings, where the word “grotesque” derives from (cf. Bakhtin 1984, 31; Cornwell 2006, 33–35; Esslin 1985, 330–332; Kayser 1981, 19; Oliver 1963, 225–226; Thomson 1972, 1–12). Medieval times and the Renaissance can be said to be the first historical periods when the grotesque (and perhaps the absurd as well) truly emerge as a cultural phenomenon. In Bakhtin's view, the grotesque flourished in Renaissance era literature as well as medieval folk carnival (especially *commedia dell'arte* and a type of humorous clowning theatre called the *sottie*). It was within these traditions that the grotesque style developed dramatically – and the Theatre of the Absurd has borrowed many aspects from both. (Bakhtin 1984, 15–17, 31–38; Cornwell 2006, 42, 228; Knight 1971, 183–188; Oliver 1963, 227.) Romanticism saw interest in both the absurd and the grotesque increase considerably. It was then that the grotesque acquired its gloomier form. (Bakhtin 1984, 11, 36–38, 44; Clayborough 1965, 11; Cornwell 2006, 43.) I argue that this change towards the inner, gloomy experience of the grotesque deepened the kinship between the traditions. Lastly, the grotesque and the absurd flourished during the modern period, and this was Beckett's time as well (cf. Bakhtin 1984, 46; Cornwell 2006, 44–55, 74; Kayser 1981, 130, 136; Oliver 1963, 226; Musgrave 2004; Thomson 1972, 11, 29–31). As a final note, I wish to emphasise that only four (Thomson, Knight, Cornwell, and Esslin, though the last perhaps more obliquely) of the ten sources cited above juxtapose the absurd and the grotesque explicitly at all.

Based on the description of the grotesque as a concept as well as its entanglement with the Theatre of the Absurd, it is easy to see how the grotesque is relevant to Beckett's works in addition to *Godot*. So much so, in fact, that there are grounds for arguing that the grotesque permeates Beckett's oeuvre as a whole. It has a number of elements that can be recognised as relating to the grotesque, but perhaps most emblematic are the bodies and the language found in them.

The physical corporeality of Beckett's characters has been subject to wide discussion, the most often noted qualities are emaciation, immovability, and incapacitation (Kern 1954, 42; Leventhal 1965, 43–46). This tendency is certainly observable in a number of Beckett's works. For example, Lucky must be whipped into action by Pozzo in *Godot*; Nell and Nagg live in trashcans where they never move out of in *Endgame*; Krapp is bound to his chair by old age in *Krapp's Last Tape*; all the characters exist inside either mounds of earth (in *Happy Days*) or in pots (in *Play*); the narrators in the *Trilogy* (*Molloy/Malone Dies/The Unnameable*) end up physically immobilised in their own ways – and this list is only a selection.

The kind of language use which we can identify as grotesque on the basis of the previous discussion is plentiful as well, and especially so in Beckett's narrative prose fiction, both in his short fiction (in *Imagination Dead Imagine*, for example) and novels (*the Trilogy* is nearly exhausted by babbling, incoherent grotesque language). There are, however,

excellent examples of Beckett's grotesque language in his theatrical pieces: Lucky's speech in *Godot*, and the entire narration of the short play *Not I*.

The interconnectedness of absurdity and the grotesque, in terms of Beckett and the grotesque, is supported by the fact that Beckett's works in general (or *Waiting for Godot* in specific) receive passing mentions from Thomson (1972, 1), Kayser (1981, 72), and Clayborough (1965, 61) in their discussions on the grotesque; furthermore, Esslin (1985, 41), Cornwell (2006, 221–223), Musgrave (2004), and Schevill (1977, 230) argue that Beckett's works have some – undefined – grotesque features. Both sides of the grotesque/absurd discussion take it as self-evident that Beckett's works have grotesque aspects, but only David Musgrave studies the grotesque specifically in Beckett's works. He focuses on the prose trilogy *Molloy/Malone Dies/The Nameless*. According to Musgrave (2004, 380), Beckett's grotesque develops further towards abstraction, where “the metaphysical aspects of the traditional grotesque are extrapolated into the nth degree”. As Musgrave does not really define the “metaphysical aspects” of “the traditional grotesque”, I shall analyse the metaphysical of the grotesque in terms of the aforementioned internal dynamics of linguistic and existential aspects of the grotesque – an aspect which certainly is heightened in Beckett's works.

To conclude, the two concepts of the absurd and the grotesque, at first glance so far apart, are actually rather similar: both can be detected as a form of a clash and both can be characterised as elusive experiences. There is grounds for arguing that they are deeply entangled, as I just briefly demonstrated. Despite these similarities, the grotesque has been nearly ignored in the analysis of *Godot*. My main argument is that the grotesque permeates the play on all levels, and that the absurdity, the paradox of linguistic and existentialist meaninglessness, which was discussed earlier, in *Waiting for Godot* unravels into, or is resolved in, the grotesque. The grotesque is characterised by the simultaneous presence of mutually incompatible phenomena, and the problem of meaninglessness in language and world is transformed into the concrete terms and forms of the grotesque, such as physical deformities, mental anomalies, and monsters, and into the words which call these forms into being.

## **2 The Absurd and the Grotesque in Waiting for Godot**

In the following analysis, I will demonstrate how the grotesque permeates all three levels of the play, content, narration, and text, through the double images of speaking/silence and eating/vomiting. My analysis will focus on the characters Pozzo and Lucky. The analysis is divided into three parts: firstly, characters and bodies, secondly, speaking and eating, and thirdly, silence and vomiting. Speaking as action is especially relevant in *Godot*, as the characters are quite static (or inactive) in both their movement and their actions. The physical activities they do undertake seem pointedly irrelevant, such as

exchanging hats. Speaking is the predominant way the play proceeds, time- and plot-wise. Speaking, in turn, is tied with eating by what Alys Moody calls Beckett's "art of hunger": its aim is to reject expression, and to embrace this linguistic failure; hunger is the lack of, rather than craving for, meaningful communication. In *Godot*, hunger is the process of the text divesting itself of all meaning-objects and failing to do so. The result is the fluctuation of being with and without an object. The state of lack is repeatedly disrupted by language and the obligation to express. (Moody 2011, 56, 59–63, 67, 71.) In other words, the dynamic between the struggle to be freed from what Cavell called the logic of language and the recurring failure to achieve that is conceptualised by Moody in terms of hunger. The art of hunger endeavours to convey things in a way that subverts the expressive power of language, and thus meaning. But meaning is, as Cavell (2002, 117–126) argues, inescapable: the work of art cannot remain hungry and objectless, and therefore the art of hunger is "force-fed" meaning.

In this configuration, eating and speaking are ways of conquering the world, they signify an attitude of appropriation – the attitude of the character Pozzo. I argue that this is an attitude typical of the carnival-grotesque. The inverse of this, silence and vomiting, are refusing to appropriate the world, and maintaining the position of an outsider. This attitude is typical of the absurd and the subjective school of the grotesque. This attitude is exemplified by Lucky.

## 2.1 Grotesque Content: Characters and Bodies

Esslin (1985, 21–22, 24, 377) argues that absurd characters do not resemble internally consistent individuals; they are more akin to mechanical puppets. The inconsistency, outright irrationality, of the characters and the characterisation is argued to reflect the feeling that senselessness and irrationality plague the modern human condition, and that human nature, in general, is not coherent (Esslin 1985, 24, 377; Hurley 1965, 634–635; Oliver 1963, 228). This apparent incomprehensibility of the character's actions and motivations serves to alienate the observer. Returning to the previous levels of grotesque, level of content, narration, and text itself, characters locate the grotesque of the play on the level of content.

A prime example of the incomprehensibility and the absurdity of the characters in *Godot* is the dynamic between Pozzo and Lucky. In the first act, Pozzo is established as a boastful and cruel master figure to Lucky, whom he keeps in a leash, uses as a carrier-mule, whips, and calls demeaning names. One of the main characters, Vladimir, asks Pozzo why Lucky cannot put his heavy burden down. Pozzo responds:

Why he doesn't make himself comfortable? Let's try and get it clear. Has he not the right to? Certainly he has. It follows that he doesn't want to. There's reasoning for you. And why doesn't he want to? [Pause.] Gentlemen, the reason is this (. . .) He wants to impress me,

so that I'll keep him. (. . .) He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision. Such is his miserable scheme. As though I were short of slaves! (Beckett 2006, 24.)

Lucky appears to be, then, an eager slave to Pozzo. Furthermore, Pozzo continues, "Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise." (Beckett 2006, 24.) Not only is the arrangement between the characters mutual but it is also completely at random. While the bond between the characters is unmistakably one of a slave and an owner, the laws under which it operates remain unclear. How could Pozzo have become Lucky's slave and not vice-versa? While this kind of at-random power structure seems like it could well describe the modern human condition, as differences in societal positions are based on opaque reasons, the inner workings of the dynamic between the characters remains mysterious.

To shed further light on the specifics of this bond, let us consider Wolfgang Kayser's definition of the grotesque character. As already noted, grotesque characters (or grotesque bodies) are a prevalent theme in Beckett's works as a whole. I will take this specific conception of the integral and multifaceted aspect of the grotesque for the reason that Esslin's description of the absurd characters of the Theatre bears some interesting parallels to it. Kayser's understanding of the grotesque character does rely less on physicality or embodiedness, but this fits the subject of Godot's characters well, as already noted that they are quite static, puppet-like and diminished. On a general level, characters can be grotesque in three ways according to Kayser (1981, 105–106): 1) their appearance and movement are grotesquely distorted; 2) their cognitive behaviour is distorted to eccentricity and outright insanity; 3) they are, to use Kayser's word, "demonic", with strange appearance and skills. Grotesque characters can be real-life creatures (such as bats), unnatural physical combinations (such as of machinery and flesh), or familiar things made strange, such as puppets and mental anomalies. These varieties have in common a certain monstrousness, strangeness, and ominousness. (Kayser 1981, 68, 71, 184.) It was argued that the characters of the Theatre of the Absurd are puppet-like. The puppet, as it is found in the grotesque tradition, relates to category 3. In the subjective tradition, it is a grotesque image when it is given strangely familiar or life-like skills and features – meaning that something inanimate has come alive. In the carnivalesque tradition, on the other hand, the puppet is seen only as a laughable, though grotesque, thing, whether alive or not.

Grotesque characters can also be *like* puppets: they are human beings, but their behaviour is influenced by such external impulses or obsessions that they appear as puppets guided by an external intellect. Sometimes they can also appear almost weightless or bodiless. (Bakhtin 1984, 39–40; Kayser 1981, 41, 92, 119–123, 183.) The focus on monstrosity emphasises the aspects of human nature that are usually ignored, such as animalism, bodily functions, and violent behaviour. Grotesque characters may act aggressively and



violently. (Bakhtin 1984, 211; Kayser 1981, 119–120; Perttula 2011, 30, 33–34.) Grotesque characters, then, are strange in a way that alienates the reader.

The quote by Thomson at the beginning of this article considered Pozzo and Lucky as grotesque characters. Above I discussed the absurd qualities of their relationship, now it is time to turn to the grotesque qualities they have.

Lucky and Pozzo do not appear outwardly “grotesquely distorted”. Lucky, for example, is described as “a trifle effeminate” but “not bad looking” (Beckett 2006, 18). Their abusive dynamic is, however, reflected in their appearance; the characters are perhaps in their seventies, and Lucky has white hair like an old man, but Pozzo says: “You wouldn't think it to look at me, would you? Compared to him I look like a young man, no?” (Beckett 2006, 26.) It is as if Pozzo has sucked vitality from Lucky through their bond of servitude, certainly a demonic (or “demonic”) power and act.

Outside of his appearance, Lucky meets well the criteria for a grotesque character: He is puppet-like (arguably mentally anomalous) and violent. He moves only as ordered, does not say a word unless commanded to, and mostly stands still. It is as if Lucky is Pozzo's marionette, moved around by a whip and a sharp word. For example, Pozzo amuses the main characters Vladimir and Estragon by making Lucky perform. He asks, “What do you prefer? Shall we have him dance, or sing, or recite, or think, or –” (Beckett 2006, 32). They settle on making Lucky dance first and then think. It is interesting to note that in a play, which is often most rigorously stage-directed – for example, each instance of the characters taking off their hats is meticulously defined – Lucky's dance is not described at all: “[LUCKY *puts down the basket, advances towards front, turns to POZZO. LUCKY dances. He stops.*]” (Beckett 2006, 33). When he is ordered to dance again, he simply “executes the same movements” (Beckett 2006, 33). He “executes” the movements like a machine or a puppet. Furthermore, Lucky's thinking is initiated only by putting a hat on his head, and when it is wrested from him, he falls down silently (Beckett 2006, 35–38). Lucky also turns unexpectedly from unresponsive to violent, as when he kicks Estragon (Beckett 2006, 25). Therefore, there is solid evidence for calling Pozzo and Lucky grotesque. This, in itself, is an avenue of approach to the play that has not been pursued much. However, what difference does it make to the reading of the piece as a whole?

Considering this, the question of comedy arises. In the Theatre of the Absurd, humour arises from characters in comical predicaments we cannot empathise with – William Oliver (1963, 229) calls this the “comedy-coated pill of absurdity”. That is, the audience accepts the pessimistic mindset of the absurd, such as the meaningless suffering of the characters, more easily if it is presented in humorous tones (Esslin 1985, 411–412, 415). This gives rise to the experience of the grotesque, as the Theatre combines the laughter of humour with the horror of lacking meaning. Furthermore, Neil Cornwell (2006, 15–18) argues that there is something comedic about the experience of the absurd itself. It is,

indeed, laughter which links the grotesque to the absurd, since the comic is experienced as incongruity – similarly to the absurd and the grotesque, as Esslin (1985, 411) argues. Furthermore, this presents to the reader a concrete image of the senseless and disintegrating absurd world, which is a form of social criticism, albeit perhaps unintended, as the Theatre of the Absurd is argued to be part of a tradition that focuses on basic individual circumstances, the inner world of the mind, rather than social realities (Brater 1975, 198; Esslin 1985, 410–411; Haney 2001, 39–40; Hurley 1965, 636–638).

However, the example of the type of absurd dynamic between Pozzo and Lucky that we have discussed is difficult to read otherwise than as social criticism. One of the main characters, Vladimir, is repulsed by the power imbalance between Pozzo and Lucky: “VLADIMIR: After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a... like a banana skin. Really... [spoken to Pozzo]” (Beckett 2006, 26.) Vladimir considers Pozzo to abuse and exploit Lucky. Pozzo responds:

*[Groaning, clutching his head.] I can't bear it... any longer... the way he goes on... you've no idea... it's terrible... he must go... [He waves his arms]... I'm going mad... [He collapses, his head in his hands]... I can't bear it... any longer... (Beckett 2006, 26–27.)*

After this, Vladimir completely changes his mind, turning to chastise Lucky: “How dare you! It's abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him like that! After so many years! Really!” (Beckett 2006, 27.) The situation between the two characters could be called grotesque (staying still on the level of grotesque content): Pozzo torments Lucky physically, Lucky (allegedly) torments Pozzo mentally, and Vladimir, as a bystander, is indignant over both in turn. The complete change in Vladimir is written quite funnily in this situation, but what is the point of the joke? It is very easily read as a barb directed against a society, our society, where the oppressors shift the blame to the oppressed with emotive language, and the disapproval of the bystanders of the society, the Vladimirs of our time, is so trivially swayed. And we, the real-world readers and viewers, go along gleefully since we are entertained by the situation. The sudden change in behaviour could well be understood as grotesque, but I would argue that this realisation that I, as the reader, am a part of the mechanism of implication in oppressive structures is even more so. Furthermore, on the level of content, the unity of the levels of existential and linguistic grotesque remains intact: the grotesque situation in the play mirrors the real world.

## **2.2 Grotesque Narration: Speaking, Eating, and Pozzo**

Kayser (1981, 85) argues that drama is a fruitful genre for the grotesque as it lacks a narrator through which the ambivalence of the grotesque could be reconciled. Tragicomedy, especially, suits the ambivalence of the grotesque, as it is a “strange” combination of opposite styles, tragedy and comedy (Harpham 1982, 68, 130; Kayser 1981, 11). However, the term “narration” comes under question in drama. for the same

reason – narration without narrator is a contested issue. This theoretical discussion is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, I introduce the idea of quasi- or induced narration: the reader must, in order for the grotesque effect to emerge, realise the grotesqueness of the situation presented (or “narrated”) without the help of a narrator, so that the clash between content and the narration could be detected. Focusing on the play as a text, rather than as a multisensory theatrical staging also sidesteps this problem of the narrator in drama. This being said, Pozzo's character and speeches as a whole is an excellent example of how the induced narration of the reading process creates grotesque narration in the play.

In the absence of a narrator, speaking is undoubtedly an important way of forwarding the story. *Godot* features a substantial amount of speaking considering even this; the main characters Vladimir and Estragon have dense, music hall-like dialogue that resembles a game, Lucky has his speech, but Pozzo's speaking is perhaps most interesting of all because it resembles the speaking of a tragic hero with dramatic monologues and aphoristic phrasing. Furthermore, through his speech, and with the help of a whip, he manipulates Lucky. As mentioned, Pozzo's attitude of appropriation, ownership and mastery in the first Act is reflected in his speech. Kayser (1981, 154–157) argues that linguistic grotesque can manifest in the form of neologisms, ellipses and non-grammatical forms, and, on a more general level, in the way the communicativity of language can suddenly collapse into “inhuman” meaninglessness. Strange or inexplicable word formations are also noted in absurdist criticism: Enoch Brater (1975, 205) argues that strange word combinations contribute to the linguistic and verbal effect that is peculiar to Beckett, and she cites the word “knook” as an example. *Knook* happens to be a word used by Pozzo, but it is perhaps an irregular example as it also represents the only instance of “strange” word usage by him. Furthermore, in the original French edition, the word used was *bouffon*, which means ‘a clown’. Beckett later changed it into *knook*. Therefore, perhaps *knook* is not at all as strange as it appears to be. Overall, uncommon words are very rare in the play as a whole.

Related to speaking, eating, too, is a way of appropriating the environment in the carnival-grotesque tradition: Bakhtin argues that through eating and defecating the body transcends its limits, transforming the outside into the inside. The separation between the consuming body and the consumed body is blurred in the act of eating; by making the world part of himself in eating it, human conquers the world in their mouth. In the act of defecation, the world is excreted out as a confusion of the inside and the outside, as a mediator between the self and the non-self. (Bakhtin 1984, 225, 278–283; Harpham 1982, 4.) Bakhtin does not make it explicit, but in talking exclusively about eaten bodies, it is apparent that meat is the central grotesque food.

If hunger in *Godot* is the lack of communicable meaning, the struggle for release from meaningful communication, as Moody argues, then Pozzo represents its opposite. Indeed,

he expects his very name to communicate something: “POZZO: [*Terrifying voice.*] I am Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Does that name mean nothing to you? [*Silence.*] I say does that name mean nothing to you?” (Beckett 2006, 15.) When it does not (indicated by “[*Silence.*]”), Pozzo acts threateningly and indignantly. However, he soon forgives them, by saying condescendingly: “You are human beings none the less. (. . .) As far as one can see.” (Beckett 2006, 15). What his name was supposed to mean to the characters or, by extension, the reader, remains unclear, but the effect of this introduction is a certain lingering sense of threat that Pozzo could potentially pose. His cruel behaviour towards Lucky does not help dispel the ominousness.

Pozzo also delivers several dramatic monologues. He takes special care that everyone present is listening:

POZZO: Good. Is everybody ready? Is everybody looking at me? [*He looks at LUCKY, jerks the rope. LUCKY raises his head.*] Will you look at me, pig! [*LUCKY looks at him.*] Good. (. . .) I don't like talking in a vacuum. Good. (Beckett 2006, 23).

Pozzo does not “like talking in a vacuum”, that is, he wants to make sure his communication is delivered, understood, and carefully considered. His monologues have all the signs of a dramatic recital of an almost Shakespearean quality – or a parody thereof:

“Ah yes! The night [*He raises his head.*] But be a little more attentive, for pity's sake, otherwise we'll never get anywhere. [*He looks at the sky.*] Look. (. . .) What is there so extraordinary about it? Qua sky. It is pale and luminous like any sky at this hour of the day. [*Pause.*] In these latitudes. [*Pause.*] When the weather is fine. [*Lyrical*] An hour ago [*He looks at his watch, prosaic*] roughly [*Lyrical*] after having poured forth ever since [*He hesitates, prosaic*] say ten o'clock in the morning [*Lyrical*] tirelessly torrents of red and white light it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale [*Gestures of the two hands lapsing by stages*], pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until [*Dramatic pause, ample gesture of the two hands flung wide apart*] pppfff! Finished! It comes to rest. But – [*Hand raised in admonition*] – but behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging [*Vibrantly*] and will burst upon us [*Snaps his fingers*] Pop! Like that! [*His inspiration leaves him*] Just when we least expect it. [*Silence. Gloomily.*] That's how it is on this bitch of an earth.” (Beckett 2006, 30–31.)

This monologue is an excellent example of the meandering and abrupt way that Pozzo delivers his speeches. It is inarguably unusual, especially for a dramatic monologue; however, if we look at it, it contains no neologisms, ellipses, or uncommon word formations, that is, there are no grotesquely marked linguistic elements. In this monologue, peppered with abrupt stylistic changes from lyrical to prosaic, to admonishing, to gloomy, Pozzo explains (or “explains”) to Vladimir and Estragon how nightfall works. There is no need of it, of course, as it is an ordinary sky, as Pozzo himself says. Yet through this speech act, Pozzo tries to redefine the sky, and the nightfall, endeavouring to symbolically own them. The connection between eating and speaking is reinforced by the fact that Pozzo is the only character to eat meat – and drink wine – in

the play: he eats chicken in the first Act (Beckett 2006, 17–20). Interestingly, the eating takes place in conjunction with the first monologue he delivers in the play. It could be argued that this proximity strengthens the connection. Furthermore, Lucky is entitled to the remaining bones, but he does not eat them, as he does not speak, either.

Pozzo may be the least grotesque character in the play; he reads more like a parody of a tragic hero. Especially his later blindness is in this context evocative of the famous hero of a Greek tragedy, the blinded Oedipus. The inexplicability of his condition is like the unknowable act of a god. Perhaps this makes Pozzo not a tragic hero but a tragicomic one. However, what makes his character a grotesque one is specifically tied to his eloquence: Pozzo mentions quite early on that he got his oratory skills from Lucky. He says that if not for Lucky “all [his] thoughts, all [his] feelings, would have been of common things. [*Pause. With extraordinary vehemence.*] Professional worries!” (Beckett 2006, 26.) He says: “Beauty, grace, truth of the first water, I knew they were all beyond me” (Beckett 2006, 26). Pozzo has robbed Lucky's ability to “think very prettily” (Beckett 2006, 32) and now uses it himself. In the next section, we will see to what Lucky's once-pretty thinking has been reduced to. If the reader or viewer misses these seemingly insignificant remarks, Pozzo's speeches seem rather silly. However, if the reader is cognizant of them, that is, through what I termed “induced narration”, the speeches take on a more sinister aspect. This uncommon, inhuman behaviour is simply offered to the reader without comment and explanation, which emphasises its ominousness – and this unmitigated, unexplained clash of elements is the mark of grotesque narration. On the level of narration, we can begin to glimpse the division of the existential and the linguistic grotesque: Pozzo exhibits some grotesque features, and the eating is certainly extant enough, but the main impact of the grotesque originates on the textual level of linguistic elements.

### **2.3 Grotesque Text: Silence, Vomiting, and Lucky's Speech**

Lastly, I shall discuss the level of the text. I use the term text to refer to the play as a typographical object, constituted by visual marks (letters) and the mental images they evoke in the process of reading them, as opposed to the play as, for example, a (live or televised) multimedia theatrical production. The text-level grotesque is perhaps vaguer as a concept than the previous two, especially as it is not a very established part of theoretical thinking on the grotesque. However, it can be distinguished by its focus on the idea of the language of the text becoming suddenly strange, non-communicative, and meaningless. Lucky's speech is an excellent example of how the line between meaning and meaninglessness is manipulated through the linguistic grotesque in *Godot*.

Regarding grotesque speaking I listed some of its aspects in the previous section, but there is a form of the grotesque that is particular to Beckett's works in general, as Musgrave

argues that Beckett's words are fused with silence. According to Musgrave (2004, 374), Beckett's words are grotesqueries, hybrid combinations in and of themselves – the silence in the play is not “a passive absence but rather an active presence which contributes to the shape of the work as a whole”. This active silence as a presence, then, combines with the different aspects of grotesque speech to create the textual grotesque peculiar to *Godot*. The silence not as absence but as presence is not confined to the play as a text; rather, it can be detected in its theatrical performances as well, in the way the lines spoken by the actors interact with the silence that surrounds them (the silence of the audience, backstage, the story itself). If anything, the bodily presence of the actors, who do not speak, highlights this silence. Furthermore, Musgrave (2004, 379) argues that the active silence can be detected in language use, especially rhetorical devices such as the enthymeme, or the incomplete syllogism, and rhetorical devices exist independently of the medium of the play.

The textual grotesque appears in *Godot* as what Moody calls word-vomit. If appropriating the world in the mouth happened through eating, this process is reversed through vomiting. In the frame of the art of hunger, *speaking* is vomiting: “word-vomit assumes expression's form, while recasting it as literally and figuratively tasteless, and divorcing it from the authentic connection to the speaking subject that is integral to the proper operation of expression” (Moody 2011, 69–70). This vomited text is strange, non-communicative, in short, grotesque. Though the play does not visually present vomiting to its audience, it is nevertheless a prominent part as vomit composed of words, the pivotal instance being Lucky's speech: according to Moody (2011, 69), word-vomit is the separation of language from its “authentic connection to the speaking subject”. As an interesting side note, Lucky's speech has been named a proverbial dish, word-*salad* by Metman (1965, 122) and Brater (1975, 203) very early on in the tradition of Beckett criticism; Metman's analysis was published a little over a decade after the play's English-language premiere. Decades later the idea of word-food resurfaces again in Moody's article, but it has switched directionalities and become vomit. Naming the speech either as vomit or as salad certainly stems from its chaotic confusion of fragmented discourses and registers. Yet, to me, word-vomit much more cannily describes the urgent expelling of words characteristic of the monologue. Lucky exemplifies what was identified earlier as Beckett's “art of hunger”: not only the lack of, but active flight from, meaningful communication, which is disrupted by what Cavell (2002, 117–126) calls the logic of language, which takes over all texts and always succeeds in inserting meaning into them. Thus, Lucky's speaking is characterised by the alternating absence and fullness of meaning.

Lucky, as the slave to Pozzo's mastery, is Pozzo's mirror image. Where Pozzo was the embodiment of meaning, eating, and speaking, Lucky is the embodiment of meaninglessness, silence, and vomiting. Lucky has only one line in *Godot* (divided into two by an interruption by Pozzo), and I would argue that his silence is constitutive of his

character, it shapes Lucky's character and the way the other characters and the reader or viewer react to him. I previously pointed out how Lucky is reduced to a puppet-like state by Pozzo's imposing words. Exactly like a puppet Lucky responds to Pozzo's commands with a resounding silence, as Pozzo has taken away Lucky's ability for "pretty thinking". Lucky's silences resonate with the thoughts he once had, which Pozzo has somehow taken away from him. Lucky is reduced to a mute puppet who appears most of the time to not be cognizant at all. As such, silence is an essential part of the way Lucky is a grotesque character. It could be argued that chiefly through Lucky, *Godot* construes a new form of grotesque, a grotesque of silence.

Pozzo forces Lucky to speak simply to amuse Vladimir and Estragon, and the act can be read as having an element of humiliation in it, since it involves forcibly putting a hat on Lucky. Pozzo claims that it is the only way for Lucky to speak (Beckett 2006, 34–35), and so Lucky expels almost violently a string of fragmented clauses that have no apparent relation to each other. Allon White (1993, 164) argues that the body expels "phobic monstrosities" through vomiting which the conscious mind will not acknowledge, and Lucky, usually taciturn, when forced to speak, expels the monstrosity of meaning:

Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Punter and Wattman of a personal God quaquaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment (. . .) it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm (. . .) as a result of the labors unfinished of Testew and Cunard it is established as hereinafter but not so fast for reasons unknown that as a result of the public works of Punter and Wattman it is established beyond all doubt (. . .) concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports (. . .) in a word for reasons unknown (. . .) namely concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown but time will tell (Beckett 2006, 36–37).

It is interesting how pseudo-academic phrases, such as "given the existence of", "in the public works of", "it is established as", concepts such as apathia, athambia, and aphasia, as well as conventional argumentation markers, such as "for reasons unknown" and "what is more", are repeated in a variety of environments in the speech. Names are also frequently used to refer to the works of other thinkers and writers. This makes it appear like the parody of an academic, learned monologue – in fact, it seems like a parody of Pozzo's monologues. This would make it a parody of a parody, a meta-parody. Comparing this to the monologue by Pozzo, several similar elements can be detected: the Latin word *qua* (meaning 'as'), descriptions of a calm sky, repetitiveness, and a certain quality of uneven delivery, though Pozzo's delivery changes stylistically, Lucky's goes further and changes thematically. The apparent meaninglessness undermines the meaningfulness of Pozzo's monologues by using basic rhetorical devices such as connective phrases like "what is more" or "that is to say" to turn them into strings of words that do not form coherent, content-full wholes. However, this meaninglessness is only one side of the

textual grotesque in Lucky's speech. The other is, of course, meaningfulness: if we omit certain "interrupting" phrases from the beginning of the speech, the result is the following (note that this is roughly the same excerpt as the previous citation, only the omissions are changed):

Given the existence (. . .) of a personal God (. . .) with white beard (. . .) outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions (. . .) and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown (. . .) are plunged in torment plunged in fire (Beckett 2006, 36).

This appears to be, rather straightforwardly, about the biblical God and the Christian condition: God, who has a white beard, loves humans dearly, and suffers the torments of hell even with sinners, who perhaps are the exception Lucky mentions. He also suffers from divine apathia, athambia, and aphasia, which refer to the inability to emote and speak (athambia appears to be a neologism), which could perhaps explain why God sends some people to hell, and why humans cannot speak to him. Furthermore, the names mentioned throughout the speech can be more allusive than academic. Lucky mentions ten names altogether: Puncher, Wattman, Testew, Cunard, Fartov, Belcher, Feckham, Peckham, Fulham, and Clapham. Without much strain on the imagination, three of these, *Testew*, *Cunard*, *Peckham*, may allude to genitalia. Three to rude activities: *Puncher*, *Fartov*, and *Belcher*. And one, *Clapham*, may be read to reference a venereal disease. I want to point out that these three areas are included in the realm of the grotesque by Bakhtin. Perhaps this, in conjunction with the thinking on God, could constitute a form of grotesque debasement, where all that is high and lofty is made lowly and earthy, and really display the presence and workings of the grotesque in Lucky's speech.

Furthermore, the speech has all the marks of grotesque speech listed previously: ellipses, non-grammatical word forms, and neologisms. Ellipses are indicated by three full stops, and perhaps the whole structure of the speech can be called elliptic. Non-grammatical word forms abound, such as "the Acacacademy of Anthropopometry", and neologisms such as "Essy-in-Possy". The formation "the Acacacademy of Anthropopometry" is especially interesting as it gives the effect of stuttering: on one hand, the stuttering subject is not cognitively responsible for the speech they involuntarily produce – this is very evocative of the textual grotesque, which turns language strange, non-communicative, and meaningless. Yet on the other hand, the stuttering effect also creates new meanings: *caca*, referring to excrement, hides within Academy, and *popo*, a German word that refers to the posterior, hides within Anthropometry. The lofty subject of academia is debased by the intervening grotesque body with its functions. The neologism "Essy-in-Possy" appears to be a place name, such as Stratford-upon-Avon, and appears to be compounded of two nonsense words, "essy" and "possy". The words may allude to Latin, *esse* means 'to be', and *posse* 'to own', yet especially the word "possy" may also refer to genitalia. Again, the interrupting lower body debases the epitome of learning, Latin.



Also contrasting with the learned monologue, the speech has an automatic quality to it, with lists and nearly obsessively repeating, like the broken speech synthesiser of a puppet (Kern 1954, 44. This, again, recalls the textual grotesque in the image of the speaking puppet:

such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating  
camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter  
winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts ( . . . ) in Feckman Peckham Fulham Clapham  
( . . . ) in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm  
alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull ( . . . ) tennis... the stones... so calm...  
Cunard... unfinished... (Beckett 2006, 37–38).

Especially when the speech is viewed as a parody of Pozzo's speaking it matches the description of the text-level grotesque: it turns the communicative and argumentative power of Pozzo's speech (or academic discourse) into grotesque, alternatingly meaningful and meaningless nonsense. It subverts the kind of final meanings that appropriation and definition require. This is emphasised by the ending of the speech; it ends with the word “unfinished” and three full stops, which indicate that the thought is left unfinished, seen in the citation above. In the citation below, we can see how the speech provokes a violent reaction from its audience, for whose entertainment it was intended:

[During LUCKY's *tirade* the others react as follows: [1] VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON all attention, POZZO dejected and disgusted. [2] VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON begin to protest, POZZO's sufferings increase. [3] VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON attentive again, POZZO more and more agitated and groaning. [4] VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON protest violently. POZZO jumps up, pulls on the rope. General outcry. LUCKY pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text. All three throw themselves on LUCKY who struggles and shouts his text.] (Beckett 2006, 35–36.)

### 3 Conclusions

After Lucky is vanquished and his speech ended, Pozzo takes Lucky's hat, tramples it, and says: “There's an end to his thinking” (Beckett 2006, 38). Why is Pozzo tormented so? Perhaps he recognises how Lucky's words mock, silence and debase his own. The reader, through Pozzo's reaction, experiences the breakdown of communicative language, and is pushed into the inhuman meaninglessness of the strangely simultaneously meaningful and meaningless text. The strangeness of the passage is emphasised when it is read rather than watched: the speech consists of a full spread, filled with text with no breaks, no paragraphs, not even full stops. Confronted with such an unforgiving mass of text, the reader struggles to make sense of the whole, to find even one coherent part – yet finds none. The reader, too, experiences the dislocation of the grotesque text on a very concrete, typographical level. On this textual level, we can detect the full divorce of the

linguistic and the existential grotesque: the grotesque originates in speech, that is, words upon a page, without a reality to even refer to.

Perhaps the final affirmation of Lucky's silence is the fact that in the second Act he has, mirroring Pozzo's situation, turned suddenly and inexplicably mute. The stage-directions point out that he even has a new hat (Beckett 2006, 69) yet he will never speak again as the play ends. He has become a physical testament to the tension of meaning and meaninglessness, which eventually unravels into the grotesque of silence. As such, we have uncovered something about *Waiting for Godot*: it not only has grotesque aspects, indeed, a grotesque language perhaps unique to the play, but we have also seen how the grotesque permeates the play on all three levels: content, narration, and text, in a way that merits far more attention than a mere passing mention.

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# The Echo Effect: Voice, Omniscience and the Diffusion of Authority in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

Erika Pihl

The essay explores the uses of narrative voice in Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century poem *Troilus and Criseyde*. By focusing on the interplay between the indirect speeches of the narrator and the direct speeches of the characters, it will argue that the poem's discursive "echo effect" cancels the representational and epistemological hegemony of the narratorial discourse, thus calling into question the modern narratological dichotomy between authorial and figural voices. Through an investigation of the doubling and inversion of the functions of narrator, characters and audience produced by such discursive interlacing, the essay aims to show that Chaucer's text represents authorial agency as essentially shared and fragmented. In addition to narratological analysis, the findings will be discussed in relation to recent research on the role of the narrator in medieval literature. Moreover, the effects of voice will be considered in the context of oral performance.

**Keywords:** authority, Chaucer, omniscience, speech and thought representation, voice

## 1 Introduction

The question of "who speaks?" (Genette 1980) in a narrative discourse, with what kind of authority and from which ontological level (cf. Walsh 2010, 38), has long been one of the key concerns of contemporary narrative theory. At first glance, the modern reader of Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century verse romance *Troilus and Criseyde* (ca. 1380; hereafter *TC*) tends to spontaneously interpret the poem's third-person narrative voice as a representative of the so-called omniscient narration. As is generally understood in narratological studies, these all-knowing narrators are "invested by convention with the highest authority to tell a story because they possess reliable knowledge about the storyworld" (Dawson 2013, 248); they can, for instance, access the consciousness of characters and articulate general truths about human nature (cf. Culler 2004, 26–32). Furthermore, it is typical of this kind of "authorial narrative situation" that the "narrator's world exists on a different level of being from that of the characters," while the "process of transmission originates from an external perspective" (Stanzel 1984, 4).

On the basis of these criteria, the narratorial voice of Chaucer's poem can indeed be classified as authorial and omniscient: the poet-narrator<sup>1</sup> recounts the love affair between

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<sup>1</sup> The relevance of the concept of the "narrator" to medieval literature has been called into question by medievalists, most notably A.C. Spearing (2005 and 2012). I use the term here for convenience, and interchangeably with "poet-narrator" and the author's name, when referring to the poem's authorial voice.

a Trojan prince and a widowed Trojan lady in the third person, from an outside perspective and from an ontological level different from that of the narrated world. In this capacity, the poet enters at will the minds of his characters, describing their innermost sentiments and secret thoughts with apparent confidence and skill, while also drawing universal and moral lessons from their particular experience. Such a categorisation is, however, only partially accurate. In a symptomatic passage, near the middle of the poem, the narrator turns to his audience and requests them to *correct* his narrative according to their own expertise in the poem's subject matter of love; in other words, he represents his narratorial discourse as being under construction, to be rewritten or perhaps overwritten, by his more accomplished audience:

For myne wordes, heere and every part,  
I speke hem alle under correccioun  
Of yow that felyng han in loves art,  
And putte it al in youre discrecioun  
To encesse or maken dymynucioun  
Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.  
(TC, 531)

[For my words, here and in every part,  
I speak them all under the correction  
of you who understand the art of love,  
and submit them all to your judgement  
to increase or make a diminution  
of my language, and that I you beseech.]<sup>2</sup>

This passage succinctly illustrates the central concern of the present essay: the subversion of the *Troilus* narrator's omniscient authorial agency through the decentralisation of his "langage," his authorial voice. More precisely, I would like to argue that the idea of re-writing the authorial language, as it were, is representative of the entire communicative structure of Chaucer's poem; that is, it applies not only to the relationship between the poet-narrator and his audience, but to the relationship between the poet-narrator and his characters as well. I will explore this relationship through the poem's representation of the characters' thoughts in the narrator's as well as the characters' own language.

The starting point of my analysis is the linguistics-based approach of classical narratology, which categorises fictional speech and thought acts in terms of direct, indirect and free indirect discourse (e.g. Cohn 1978; McHale 1978; Leech and Short 1981; Stanzel 1984; Fludernik 1993).<sup>3</sup> Mainly building on Dorrit Cohn's (1978) influential

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For medieval theory of authorship, see Minnis 2010. For recent work on medieval poetic voice as a site of intersecting discourses produced by translations and reuses of antecedent texts, see Lawton 2017.

<sup>2</sup> My translations into modern English are adapted from Nevill Coghill's translation (see Chaucer 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Contemporary narratology has primarily focused on the representation of speech and thought in the modern novel. For application of the categories to medieval texts, see Fludernik 2011; Marnette 1998 and 2005.

work on fictional consciousness representation, I will focus on the first two categories. The principal difference between these two modes is the degree of authorial intervention. To put the point in another way, direct and indirect discourse can be understood as opposite poles on a continuum ranging from zero to total narratorial control (cf. Leech and Short 1981, 324): while the former technique purports to give us an unmediated word-for-word quotation of a character's "figural" (Cohn 1978) language (e.g. "'Oh no, I'm gonna miss the train,' she said/thought"), the latter emphasises the presence of a mediating authorial voice (e.g. "she realised she would miss the train"). Indirect thought, or "psycho-narration" in Cohn's terminology,<sup>4</sup> is thus a form of consciousness representation which involves the reporting and summarising of characters' mental events, such as thoughts, attitudes or beliefs, in the narrator's idiom and vocabulary (Cohn 1978, 21–57; cf. also Palmer 2004, 81–85). In other words, the authorial voice takes precedence over that of the character to portray the inner workings of the character's mind. Hence psycho-narration is arguably a tool of authorial omniscient rhetoric, indicating in its default mode a "cognitive and linguistic disparity between a narrator and his character" (Cohn 1978, 29), with the former being capable of reporting subconscious emotions and latent motivations inaccessible to the characters themselves.

Such a hierarchical status has been similarly assigned to reported discourse in the context of medieval literature. Sophie Marnette (2005, 212–14) suggests that the use of indirect speech and thought is frequent in twelfth- and thirteenth-century French chronicles and prose romances, because these genres seek to represent a historical or religious truth, which allows "only for one point of view, that of the narrative voice, to which the characters' discourses are clearly subordinated." In both modern and medieval narrative, then, indirect discourse tends to be considered as an authorial truth device, the use of which amplifies the all-knowing supremacy of the narratorial discourse over the figural one and therefore, in Stanzel's (1984, 188) words, "reinforces the tendency towards an authorial narrative situation".

Through a comparison of the direct quotations of the characters' thoughts in *Troilus and Criseyde* to their indirect paraphrasing in the narrator's discourse, I aim to demonstrate that Chaucer's narrative effectively challenges this traditional understanding of psycho-narration's authorial status. My main argument will thus be that Chaucer's deployment of direct and indirect forms of discourse presentation overturns the epistemological and synoptic privilege associated with authorial omniscience, while it also calls into question the imbalance of representational competence between the poet-narrator and his characters. Windeatt (1992, 188–90), discussing the work's "series of doubled and paralleled incidents," remarks that "patterns of doubling and concatenation are worked into the structure of *Troilus*," and I would like to argue that this poetics of doubling also informs the poem's strategy of voice. Central to the text's narrative technique is what I

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<sup>4</sup> The mode is also known as, for example, "thought report" (Palmer 2004) and "narrative report of thought acts" (Leech and Short 1981).

propose to call the “echo effect”: by this I mean the mirrored quality of the poet’s and the characters’ speeches. Another way of putting this is to say that the narratorial superiority seemingly indicated by psycho-narration becomes frequently cancelled by the characters’ “quoted monologues” (Cohn 1978, 58–98): in these instances of direct speech and thought, the protagonists evaluate their own and each other’s mental processes by employing the very similes and rhetorical devices that feature in the narrator’s discourse. I go on to suggest that, by means of such a recurring rhetoric, Chaucer’s poem consciously toys with the indeterminacy of the location of textual authority and meaning, diffusing authorial omniscience amongst the figural voices, thus doubling and even inverting the roles of author and character. The communicative structure of *Troilus and Criseyde* can therefore be read as another manifestation of the “play of agency” of Chaucerian narrative, which, according to Van Dyke (2005, 265) characteristically explores the “shifting configurations” of “various kinds of authority – personae, earlier texts, communal norms, rational dogma”.

In what follows, I will first analyse the poem’s interplay of direct and indirect discourse with a focus on self-reflexive commentary embedded in psycho-narration, discussing my findings in relation to recent research on the role of the narrator in medieval literature. Then, I move on to examine the recycling of metaphors on different discursive levels as a technique of audience involvement. Finally, I will consider the ambiguous discursive status of some of the poem’s statements in gnomic present tense, and conclude with a brief consideration of the effects of voice in oral performance situation.

## 2 “And what she thoughte, somewhat shal I write”: Authorial Inversions

Let us first consider the following passage, in which the poem’s male protagonist, Prince Troilus, is concerned about the prospect of his beloved Criseyde’s exchange for a Trojan prisoner of war. Troilus’s anguish is conveyed indirectly, as reported thought, in the narrator’s discourse:

[1] And ful of angwissh and of grisly drede  
 Abod what lordes wolde unto it seye;  
 And if they wolde graunte – as God forbede –  
 Th’eschaunge of hire, [2] than thoughte he thynges tweye:  
 First, how to save hire honour, and what weye  
 He myghte best th’eschaunge of hire withstonde.  
 [3] Ful faste he caste how al this myghte stonde.

[4] Love hym made al prest to don hire byde,  
 And rather dyen than she sholde go;  
 [5] But Resoun seyde hym, on that other syde,  
 ‘Withouten assent of hire ne do nat so,  
 Lest for thi werk she wolde be thy fo,

And seyn that thorough thy medlynge is iblowe  
Youre bother love, ther it was erst unknowe.’  
(*TC*, 540; bracketed numbers added)

[And full of anguish and of grisly dread  
about what the lords would say;  
and if they would agree, heaven forbid,  
to the exchange, he then thought of two things:  
first, how to save her honour, and how  
he might best withstand the exchange.  
He wildly cast about to find a way.

Love made him eagerly to oppose her going,  
and rather to die than let her go;  
but Reason said, on the other hand,  
‘Without her assent do not do it,  
if you resist, she will be your foe,  
and say that through your meddling was revealed  
your love that was earlier unknown.’]

In the first stanza, the narrator summarises and labels Troilus’s state of mind [1], then reports the contents of the character’s thought [2] and finally describes the nature of his mental action [3], as the prince attempts to find a solution to his situation. In the second stanza, the narrator proceeds to portray the character’s inner conflict in a typical medieval fashion in the form of a *psychomachia*,<sup>5</sup> a battle between two personified forces of the psyche – “Love” (irrational) and “Resoun” (rational) – whose arguments are represented in indirect [4] and direct [5] speech. In this sense, then, Chaucerian psycho-narration seems to fall neatly in line with its modern counterpart as a mode of representation which, as Cohn (1978, 29) suggests, implies “the narrator’s superior knowledge of the character’s inner life and his superior ability to present it and assess it,” while also being particularly useful in the rendering of sub-verbal states:

Not only can it order and explain a character’s conscious thoughts better than the character himself, it can also effectively articulate a psychic life that remains un verbalized, penumbral, or obscure. Accordingly psycho-narration often renders, in a narrator’s knowing words, what a character “knows,” without knowing how to put it into words. (Cohn 1978, 46; original quotation marks)

As the above description of the functions of psycho-narration suggests, and as I already pointed out in the introduction, this mode of representing a character’s mental functioning

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<sup>5</sup> Deriving its name from the title of a work by the Late Antique poet Prudentius, *psychomachia* refers to an allegorical conflict of personified vices and virtues in the human soul. In *Poetria nova*, a thirteenth-century manual on the composition of poetry, Geoffrey of Vinsauf (2010, 33) describes the rhetorical device of personification: “Give power of speech to that which has in itself no such power – let poetic license confer a tongue.”



presupposes an epistemological and linguistic discrepancy between the narrator and the character, with the former in the dominating position: the authorial indirect discourse can verbalise states of consciousness of which the characters “may only be dimly cognizant, and certainly not in the terms of description supplied by the narrative” (Fludernik 1993, 297). This does seem to be the case in the passage describing Troilus’s mental strife. The character’s interiority is indeed captured in the narrator’s objective language in a manner which consequently seems to establish a hierarchical relationship between the authorial and the figural consciousness: the narrator orders and explains Troilus’s inner life with a precision that appears to far exceed the linguistic and organisational capacity of the troubled character. Moreover, the deployment of allegorical personification invests the narrator’s language with a particularly authorial flair, reminding the audience of the rhetorical repertoire available to the poet and thus foregrounding the artificial nature of the unfolding narrative.

However, this hierarchy is soon neutralised as Troilus himself presents an informed account of his inner conflict in a self-addressed monologue:

“Thus am I lost, for aught that I kan see.  
 For certeyn is, syn that I am hire knyght,  
 I moste hire honour levere han than me  
 In every cas, as love ought of right.  
 Thus am I with desir and reson twight:  
*Desir for to destourben hire me redeth,*  
*And reson nyl nat; so myn herte dredeth.”*  
 (TC, 545; emphasis added)

[“So I am lost, for all that I can see.  
 For it is certain, since I am her knight,  
 I must love her honour more than myself  
 in every way, as a lover rightly should.  
 So I am with desire and reason torn:  
*desire counsels me to seize and carry her away,*  
*and reason forbids it, so fears my heart.”]*

Here the figural voice adopts an authorial tone, making use of the poet’s rhetorical strategy of *psychomachia*. Knowing *exactly* how to put into words his psychic life, the character echoes – or re-writes – in his own language, the narrator’s synoptic and conspicuously literary representation of his thought: embedded in Troilus’s direct discourse we find indirect discourse, which repeats and transposes in the character’s words the utterances of the two *personae* originally formulated in the narrator’s discourse. As Marnette (2005, 56) observes, “reported discourse is not necessarily the ‘discourse of the Other’,” but “it can also be the discourse of the Self . . . whether past or virtual.” In Troilus’s case, the discourse of the Self is doubly portrayed as the discourse of the Other: not only does it consist of the voices of his personified thoughts, but it also mirrors the

narrator's evaluation of his mental state. To put the point in medieval terms, one can hear traces of the *exegeticon* (narrator's speech) in the stretch of *dramaticon* (characters' speech), and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically, the echo effect both negates and reinforces the superiority of the authorial voice in our example passage: while the repetition of the authorial discursive strategies in the figural discourse arguably undermines the idea of the narrator's privileged rhetorical and epistemological powers, it also invests, through a reminder, the character's language with an author-like potency.

However, on a closer look Troilus's echoed authority seems in fact to quite surpass the original. In comparison to its representation in the authorial discourse, the character's narration of his own mental event is, as a matter of fact, more vague and centrifugal. Reducing the interference of his narratorial voice, Chaucer pays attention to the precise content and wording of the lines spoken by the *personae*: he tells us that Love urges Troilus to fight to the death to prevent Criseyde's exchange and gives a verbatim quotation of Reason's arguments. Troilus, on the other hand, relays only the essence of the words spoken by his inner voices: desire counsels him to oppose the exchange, but reason forbids it. Leech and Short classify such a technique as "narrative report of speech acts". This mode is "realized in speech acts which merely report that a speech act . . . has occurred, but where the narrator does not have to commit himself entirely to giving the sense of what was said, let alone the form of words in which they were uttered" (Leech and Short 1981, 323–24). On their scale ranging from total to zero narratorial control, Leech and Short place this category near the beginning, with the "narrator apparently in total control of the report," whereas indirect speech and direct speech are placed in the middle and towards the opposite end, with the "narrator apparently in partial control of the report" and the "narrator apparently not in control of report at all", respectively. It may be argued, then, that in the quoted passages Chaucer switches the places of authorial and figural discourses, subduing his own narratorial voice while imbuing the character's speech with a degree of authorial distance and control in the presentation of his inner life. Accordingly, through this chiasmic inversion of the roles of the poet-narrator and the character, the character as a subordinate object of narrative representation arguably becomes the superordinate narrative agent, his figural voice momentarily transcending the authorial one in terms of representational range.

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<sup>6</sup> The classic Platonic distinction between authorial narration (*diegesis*) and characters' speeches (*mimesis*) was transmitted to the Middle Ages through the fourth-century Latin grammarian Diomedes, whose classification of the types of poetry into *dramaticon*, *exegeticon* and *koinón* is based, in direct imitation of Plato, on the person speaking. In Diomedes's account given in his *Ars Grammatica*, the first category, *dramaticon*, includes the imitative forms of poetry, such as tragedy and comedy, where the characters alone speak and no interfering voice of the poet can be heard. *Exegeticon*, on the other hand, refers to the narrative mode in which the poet's voice is the only one present, such as in Vergil's *Georgics*, and finally, *koinón*, the form of epic narrative, displays a mixture of both the poet's and characters' discourses (cf. Curtius 2013, 440). Somewhat similarly to the modern linguistic categories, then, *dramaticon* seems to offer a direct view into the storyworld as well as the characters' experience, whereas *exegeticon*, as its name implies, is an interpretative and indirect form which foregrounds the authorial narrative voice.

In addition to this structural subversion of the poet's representational hegemony, the *Troilus* narrator frequently calls attention to his own ineptitude as the teller of his tale by emphasising the limitations of his literary abilities and wit, and his representation of the story almost seems to pale in comparison to the characters' controlled acts of narration. Unlike the narrator, who points out that he cannot forge a comprehensive narrative that would include "every word, or soonde, or look, or cheere," not even if he wanted to ("And though I wolde, I koude nought"; *TC*, 520), the protagonists do seem to capture every detail in their retelling of the love affair to one another: "And ek rehercen how and whan, and where / Thei knewe hem first, and every wo and feere / That passed was" (*TC*, 532; "And also rehearsed how and when and where / They knew one another first, and every woe and fear / That was past"). Such narratorial self-denigration is certainly characteristic of Chaucer's poetics which habitually plays with the idea of the poet-narrator as "somewhat obtuse, inquisitive, and vaguely inappropriate observer of supernatural events and personal crises that he is ill-equipped to understand" (Ganim 2005, 235).<sup>7</sup> It should be noted, however, that rather than attributing these self-proclaimed representational difficulties to a single coherent narrator figure in *Troilus*, they should be understood as just one aspect of Chaucer's narratorial voice, which can also assume, within the same work, a contradictory tone that is learned and scholastic. Indeed, as has been widely demonstrated by scholars of medieval literature (e.g. Spitzer 1946; Spearing 2005 and 2012), it is unreasonable to expect from medieval narrators the same kind of ontological and psychological consistency as we do from modern ones. A.C. Spearing, in his critical study of the concept of the narrator in medieval English narratives, warns against the installation of an autonomous speaking subject within a medieval text, opting instead for "a series of narrating 'I's enacting a variety of different roles" (Spearing 2005, 52). Thus, we should not think of the medieval narrator as an ontologically fixed entity, but rather as "a poet moving flexibly from one textual role to another as he tells his story" (Spearing 2005, 57).

Such an idea of a fragmented authorial voice is, to be sure, irreconcilable with the theoretical models of contemporary narrative theory which, predominantly drawn from the modern novel, rely on the idea of a narrator's discursive and ontological coherence. To take but one example, a recent rhetorical definition of narrative as "somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened" (Phelan 2007, 3) presupposes an origin of discourse – a "somebody" – in possession of a stable identity and a singular voice. This is true not just of first-person but also third-person narration. Although in the latter case the "I" of the narrator is often only implicitly present, narrative theory tends to naturalise the authorial voice as issuing from a coherent individual relating the tale, as we have seen, from a superior position of control over the storyworld. Medieval narratives, on the other hand, tend to steer away from such clear-

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<sup>7</sup> For Chaucer's "self-depreciatory literary roles," see Minnis 2010, 190–210.

cut definitions.<sup>8</sup> In Spearing's (2005, 95) words, "[w]hen we look closely at almost any narrative passage in Chaucer, we find not a single shaping subjectivity but the traces of many different centres of consciousness" – not just of different authorial roles, I would like to add, but of echoed voices which shift focus from singularity to collectivity.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, then, one of the roles Chaucer adopts is that of an *ignoramus* utterly unversed in the matters of love, who invites the audience – “ye wise, proude, and worthi folkes alle” (*TC*, 476) – to retell his tale. The poet strikes a pose as a humble servant of courtly lovers, one that has not personally dared, for his ungainliness, to try his hand at the art of love: “For I, that God of Loves servantz serve, / Ne dar to Love, for myn unliklynesse” (*TC*, 473). Moreover, Chaucer frequently makes use of the “inexpressibility topos” (Curtius 2013, 159–162), as when he points out that “Thow, redere, maist thiself full wel devyne / That swich a wo my wit kan nat diffyne” (*TC*, 564; “You, reader, may yourself full well divine / That such a woe my wit cannot define”). In the following stanza, where the poet seeks to overcome his authorial shortcomings, his act of representation becomes intertwined with his depiction of Criseyde's inner life that he attempts to “somewhat” describe by imitating his source material, his “auctour”.<sup>9</sup> As Spearing notes, here “the difficulty and interest of *imagining* that life and of *representing* it seem scarcely indistinguishable” (2005, 84; original emphasis):

And, Lord! So she gan in hire thought argue  
In this matere of which I have yow told,  
And what to doone best were, and what eschue,  
That plited she ful ofte in many folde.  
Now was hire herte warm, now was it cold;  
And what she thoughte, somewhat shal I write,  
As to myn auctour listeth for t'endite.  
(*TC*, 498–99)

[And lord! So she began to argue in her mind  
about this matter of which I have told you,  
and what it was best to do and what to avoid,  
she turned her thoughts back and forth in fold on fold.  
Now her heart was warm and now it was cold;  
and I shall to some extent write down her thoughts,  
as it has pleased my author to relate.]

Which is, in fact, the primary object of representation here – Criseyde's experience or the narrator's difficult task of putting that experience into words? Is this a representation of

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<sup>8</sup> As Spearing (2012) argues, even in cases of medieval dream poems, prologues and *dits*, which formally may seem to correspond to our modern first-person narratives, the “I” of the text should not be anachronistically naturalised as a subjective individual.

<sup>9</sup> Although Chaucer's primary source is Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* (ca. 1335–40), he claims to be following an almost certainly fictitious Latin writer called Lollius (e.g. “As writ myn auctour called Lollius”; *TC*, 478). The presence of such an imaginary *auctor* is perhaps not surprising in a work that is constantly engaged in a process of dislocating and relocating authorial agency.

an experience or a representation of a representation of an experience? Does the distressed interjection “And, Lord!” refer to the character’s mental anguish or to the poet’s efforts of translating into language Criseyde’s psychic life? To be sure, the traditional way to interpret this particular exclamation would be to treat it as an instance of “stylistic contagion” (Stanzel 1984, 168–184) or “consonant psycho-narration” (Cohn 1978, 26–33), where, in Cohn’s formulation, the narrator’s “idiom is strongly affected (or infected) with the mental idiom of the mind it renders.” In this type of psycho-narration, “the narrator remains effaced” and “readily fuses with the consciousness he narrates” (Cohn 1978, 26). In the *Troilus* passage, on the other hand, we are faced with a prominent and loquacious narrator, who fuses his character into his own consciousness: the narrator’s voice and idiom interfere in the represented discourse to such a degree that the act of telling all but supersedes the world of the told.

It has been observed that such metafictional highlighting of the narrator’s role is typical of the compositional frame of *Troilus and Criseyde*. For instance, Lawton (1985, 83) claims that “[m]uch of the first-person narratorial intervention in *Troilus* directs our attention specifically to the performance of the work,” and Mehl (1986, 219) likewise believes that “the main function of the narrator is not to force a particular interpretation on us, but to make us critically conscious of the process of composition and transmission.” Although this kind of overt narratorial identification as the shaper of the tale is to be perceived as a feature of omniscience (cf. Culler 2004, 30), its effect in *Troilus* does not however involve the managerial self-assurance of an omniscient authorial presence. Quite the opposite: through the interlacing of the narrator’s representation of Criseyde’s thought and his not entirely confident self-reflexive commentary on that process of representation, the stanza discussed above effectively deconstructs the omniscient status of the psycho-narration in which it is rendered. Next, I will examine how the echoing of metaphorical images in the poem’s direct and indirect speech acts further unsettles the hierarchy between them, and discuss the function of these recycled figures of speech as a means of transferring authority to the audience.

### 3 The Sun and the Oak-Tree: Recycled Metaphors

As the poem’s female protagonist, Criseyde, is having doubts about embarking on a secret love affair with Prince Troilus, the poet-narrator indirectly describes her gloomy state of mind in terms of a cloud eclipsing the sun:

But right as when the sonne shyneth brighte  
In March, that chaungeth ofte tyme his face,  
And that a cloude is put with wynd to flighte,  
Which ouersprat the sonne as for a space,  
A cloudy thought gan through hire soule pace,  
That ouerspradde hire brighte thoughtes alle,

So that for feere almost she gan to falle.  
(TC, 499)

[But just as when the sun is shining brightly  
in March, a month which often changes face,  
and a cloud is set in flight by the wind,  
to overspread the sun for a while,  
a cloudy thought began to chase across her soul,  
which overspread all her bright thoughts,  
so that fear almost caused her to collapse.]

Here psycho-narration takes the form of “psycho-analogies,” a term coined by Cohn to describe metaphorical images which seek to convey mental movements in literary narrative. In her discussion of the modern use of such metaphors, Cohn points out that they tend to “underline the vague and contradictory nature of thoughts and feelings”; consequently, they are to be found most frequently “at moments when an author is for some reason unwilling to entrust the presentation of the inner life to the character’s own verbal competence” (Cohn 1978, 37–44). Implicit in this statement is the assumption that an *authentic* presentation of a character’s inner life is something of which only the narrator is capable. Thus, the employment of psycho-analogies is an effective method of expanding the cognitive divide between authorial and figural discourses.

Unsurprisingly, this is perhaps not the best approach to the psycho-analogies in *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Chaucer recycles the same metaphors through the languages of both his narrator figure and the characters. The weather metaphor, as it turns out, is not at all beyond Criseyde’s verbal competence. Only a few lines after the narrator’s metaphorical description of her state of mind, the simile is mirrored by Criseyde herself, in the form of direct thought, as she assesses the disadvantages of love and accordingly verbalises her present state of mind in a manner that is not at all less competent or authentic than the narrator’s representation:

“For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf,  
Right of hymself, that evere was bigonne;  
For evere som mystrust or nice strif  
Ther is in love, som cloude is overe that sonne.”  
(TC, 500)

[“For love is the stormiest way of life,  
in its own kind, that ever was begun;  
there is always some mistrust or silly strife  
in love, some cloud that covers up the sun.”]

Furthermore, when Criseyde’s monologue is finished three stanzas later, the narrator resumes his authorial reporting and again relies on the weather metaphor to convey the lady’s mental condition, stating that her murky thoughts are now beginning to clear: “And

after that, hire thought gan for to clere, / And seide, ‘he which that nothing undertaketh, / Nothyng n’acheveth” (“And after that her thought cleared and said, ‘nothing ventured / nothing gained’”). The cycle of representation has come full circle: the metaphor put forth by the narrator has been reflected through Criseyde back to the narrator. The authorial narrative mode that the psycho-analogy at first seems to establish becomes thus complicated by the character’s quoted monologue which replicates the narrator’s assessment of her mental state through recourse to the same metaphor.

Let us take a look at another example. Here Troilus is reading, with his heart racing, a hope-inspiring letter from Criseyde. The narrator describes the effect of the lady’s words on the prince by likening his increasing desire to wood catching fire as well as to the growth of a sapling into a mighty oak-tree:

But as we may alday oureselven see,  
 Thorough more wode or col, the more fir,  
 Right so encrease hope, of what it be,  
 Therwith ful ofte encresseth ek desir;  
 Or as an ook comth of a lital spir,  
 So thorough this letre which that she hym sente  
 Encrescen gan desir, of which he brente.  
 (TC, 507)

[But as we may ourselves every day see,  
 the more the wood or coal, the more the fire,  
 just so does the increase of hope, be it for what it may,  
 very often bring with it the increase of desire;  
 or just as an oak comes from a little spire,  
 so through this letter which she him sent,  
 increased the desire with which he burnt.]

Only six stanzas later, the narrator’s wood metaphor is picked up and enlarged upon by the poem’s third central character, Uncle Pandarus, who acts as a go-between for the two lovers, enthusiastically carrying letters and arranging secret trysts. In an attempt to console Troilus, who is rather crestfallen by Criseyde’s game of hard-to-get, Pandarus likens the lady’s stubbornness to a sturdy oak not easily bent by the winds, thus implicitly drawing a comparison between her steadfastness and the prince’s unwavering resolution to love her:

“Thenk here-ayeins: whan that the stordy ook,  
 On which men hakketh ofte, for the nones,  
 Receyved hath the happy fallyng strook,  
 The greete sweigh doth it come al at ones,  
 As don these rokkes or these milnestones;  
 For swifter cours comth thyng that is of wighte,  
 Whan it descendeth, than don thynges lighte.

“And reed that boweth down for every blast,  
Ful lightly, cesse wynd, it wol aryse;  
But so nyl nought an ook, whan it is cast;  
It nedeth me nought the longe to forbise.  
Men shal reioissen of a gret empryse  
Acheved wel, and stant withouten doute,  
Al han men ben the lenger therabout.  
(*TC*, 508)

[“Think, on the contrary: when the sturdy oak,  
at which men often hack, indeed,  
has received the happy felling-stroke,  
greatly swaying it comes down at once,  
as do these rocks or these millstones;  
for more swiftly falls a thing of weight,  
when it descends, than does a thing that is light.

“And the reed that bows down at every blast  
very easily, cease wind, will arise;  
but not so an oak, when it is cast;  
I do not need to provide more examples.  
Men shall rejoice when a great enterprise  
is well achieved, and stands firm, without a doubt,  
although they have taken longer about it.]

A similar pattern may be observed here as in the previous example of the weather simile: the image of the wood, first applied by the narrator to explain a character’s mental state, is later revived in the figural discourse. But this time the metaphor is, in fact, passed on to a different character – from the narrator to Pandarus – instead of Troilus, whose thought it was used to describe. Pandarus, in turn, does not apply the metaphor to his own mental condition, as did Criseyde in the case of the weather metaphor, but aptly uses it to make sense of another character’s frame of mind. In either case, the effect is the same: the echoing of the authorial discourse in the figural one undermines the assumption of narratorial cognitive and linguistic privilege which would posit the poet-narrator as the final authority on the “truth” of the characters’ experience, yet the shades of authorial language in the subordinate discourse imbue the characters’ language with an authoritative tone. This eventually raises a question of primacy: where do we locate the origin of the echo? The narrator’s weather and oak metaphors could be interpreted either as a prediction or a reproduction of the characters’ similes, with the two-way impression certainly becoming more pronounced the more times one reads the poem, or perhaps, in its original context, listens to the text being orally performed.

Through such processes of interwoven foreshadowing and imitation, the bidirectional echoes fuse the authorial and figural discourses into an interconnected collective voice. The characters assume a layered role as both narrated and narrating, and as we have seen, also the audience is invited into this project of re-writing. If Criseyde’s “delit or joies”



(*TC*, 531) or Troilus's "pleynt, his languor, and his pyne" ("lamentations, his languor, and his pain") are indeed impossible – or at least rhetorically impossible – for the poet to "telle aright or ful discryve" ("rightly tell or fully describe"; *TC*, 564), the audience is openly encouraged to adjust the under-construction narrative – to "encrese or maken dymynucioun" – according to their skill or taste. As Windeatt (1992, 17–18) observes, the poem creates an "overlapping sense . . . as being simultaneously composed and recited," and the "recurrent fictionalizing of an audience of 'lovers' allows any actual audience to locate themselves in relation to that projected audience . . . perhaps enjoyably watching themselves collaborating in the creation of illusion." It is hardly surprising that, in a work so extensively concerned with the characters' inner lives,<sup>10</sup> this dialogic construction of meaning should emerge especially at moments when the poet seeks to capture the complexities of inner life through language. Contrary to the direct addresses to the audience found throughout the narrative, the use of metaphorical images invites cooperation rather more discreetly by the systematic development of an empathetic perspective from which the audience can understand and respond to the mental states of the protagonists.

Such an effect is achieved in the poem through the recycling of psycho-analogies that are uncomplicated and easy to understand, as in the passages cited above where the metaphorical rendering of the characters' minds is based on everyday observations of the surrounding physical environment. When describing Troilus's increasing desire, the poet-narrator remarks on the familiarity of his figure of speech ("But as we may alday oureselven see, / Thorough more wode or col, the more fir"), implying that due to this very familiarity it should be easy enough for the members of his audience to picture in their minds the prince's fevered state and thus to empathise with the "desir, of which he brende." Likewise, Pandarus's description of Criseyde's perseverance through the images of the oak and the reed is so natural and lucid that he finishes with "It nedeth me nought the longe to forbise" – I need not illustrate further – and similar kinds of affirmative phrases occur in the narrative on several occasions. For instance, when expressing Troilus's feelings for Criseyde, the narrator again adopts the image of fire and concludes with a reference to its general intelligibility: "And ay the ner he was, the more he brende. / For ay the ner the fir, the hotter is – / This, trowe I, knoweth al this compaignye" (*TC*, 479; "And the nearer he was, the more he burnt. / For the nearer the fire, the hotter it is – / This, I think, know all this company").

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<sup>10</sup> The nuanced psychological treatment of the characters' mental processes in *Troilus* has been widely noted by Chaucer scholars. For instance, Sheila Fisher (2000, 155) refers to the poem's portrayal of the female protagonist as "the most fully realized representation of a woman's consciousness and self-consciousness in the Middle English romance tradition". Contrary to the timeworn assumption that subjectivity emerged only in the Renaissance, medieval narratives "are often profoundly concerned with the nature of selfhood and with modes of understanding, expressing, and concealing emotions and anxieties" (Turner 2015, 5), of which *Troilus and Criseyde* is a most impressive example.

The characters' sentiments are thus justified through an appeal to natural phenomena that cannot be gainsaid, but it is precisely this ethos of self-evidency which in fact implicitly challenges the audience to carefully consider the characters' choices and actions, to compare the narrated fictional experience to their own, and, if necessary, to "overwrite" the characters' – and thus the poet's – choices through active contemplation and discussion. In other words, Pandarus's demand to think – "Thenk here-ayeins" – strikingly placed in the beginning of the stanza quoted above, is directed not only to Troilus by Pandarus, but also to the extrafictional audience by Chaucer. In the next section, I will discuss such layered statements in two passages in which the poet's authorial voice is revealed as a figural one by virtue of deferred identification of the speaker, and consider the implications of this narrative strategy for oral performance.

#### 4 Which Voice? Deferred Attribution and Oral Performance

In the following excerpt, where Uncle Pandarus is planning the first meeting between his niece and the prince, the narrator equates his careful mental preparing to that of a person undertaking the building of a house:

This Pandarus, tho desirous to serve  
His fulle frend, than seyde in this manere:  
'Farwell, and thenk I wol thi thank deserve!  
Have here my trowthe, and that how shalt wel here."  
And went his wey, thenkyng on this matere,  
And how he best myghte hire biseche of grace,  
And find a tyme therto, and a place.

For eueri wight that hath an hous to founde  
Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne  
With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,  
And sende his hertes line out fro withinne  
Aldirfirst his purpos forto wyne.  
(*TC*, 488)

[This Pandarus, eager to serve  
his full friend, then said in this manner:  
'Farewell, and think I will your thankfulness deserve!  
Have my word for it, you shall hear good news.'  
And he went on his way, thinking about this matter,  
and how best to win to her good graces,  
and find a time for it, and a place.

For nobody who has a house to build  
goes dashing out to work and make a start  
with a hasty hand, but he will wait for a while,  
and sends a line of plan from his heart  
first to win his purpose.]

The narrator's referring to Pandarus by his name, as well as his summary report of the character's state of mind ("thenkyng on this matere") mark the first stanza as psycho-narration. It is therefore only natural to presume that the following present-tense observation in the second stanza also belongs to the narratorial discourse – that it is the narrator who compares the character's slow and cautious proceeding to the complex planning of a house, at the same time embedding the character's private thought in a universal frame and deriving from it a moral lesson along the lines of "make haste slowly." Focusing on consciousness representation in the realist and modernist tradition, Cohn (1978, 28) suggests that such gnomic statements signal a "maximal dissonance" between authorial and figural voices. As the "inner life of an individual character becomes a sounding-board for general truths about human nature" in these "pronouncedly authorial" narrative situations, the reader's attention is directed from the character to the narrator as a "discursive intelligence who communicates with the reader about his character – behind his character's back" (Cohn 1978, 23–25).

However, Chaucer's text thoroughly unsettles this notion of gnomic statements as a tool of objectifying authorial rhetoric. Consider the final two lines of the previous stanza which I will reproduce here in its entirety for the sake of clarity:

For eueri wight that hath an hous to founde  
Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne  
With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,  
And sende his hertes line out fro withinne  
Aldirfirst his purpos forto wynne.  
Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,  
And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte.  
(*TC*, 488; emphasis added)

[For nobody who has a house to build  
goes dashing out to work and make a start  
with a hasty hand, but he will wait for a while,  
and sends a line of plan from his heart  
first to win his purpose.  
Pandarus thought all this in his mind,  
and wisely planned his work before he began.]

Here it is precisely the *ex cathedra* generalisation that disrupts the authorial mode of narration. Due to Chaucer's "artfully delayed attribution" (Windeatt 1992, 214), we find out only at the end of the stanza that what we have taken as the narrator's gnomic sage-like statements are, in fact, Pandarus's thoughts ("Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte"). Through this act of conversion, the *dramaticon* and the *exegeticon* are superimposed: the lines may be read simultaneously as authorial psycho-narration and as an unmediated

quotation of the character's thoughts. Here, instead of echoing one another, the direct and indirect discourse merge into one voice which points centrifugally in two directions.

The house-building simile resurfaces later, in equally ambiguous terms, when the scene is finally set, like the timber framework of a house, for the secret meeting between Troilus and Criseyde:

For he [Pandarus] with gret deliberacioun  
Hadde every thyng that herto myght availle  
Forncast and put in execucioun,  
And neither left for cost ne for travaille.  
Come if hem list, hem sholde no thyng faille;  
And for to ben in ought aspied there,  
That, wiste he wel, an impossible were.

Dredeles, it clere was in the wynd  
Of euery pie and euery lette-game;  
Now al is wel, for al the world is blynd  
In this matere, bothe fremde and tame.  
This tymbur is al redy up to frame;  
Us lakketh nought but that we witen wolde  
A certeyn houre in which she comen sholde.  
(*TC*, 520)

[For he with great deliberation  
had everything that would happen  
forecast and put into execution,  
and had spared for neither trouble nor expense.  
Come, if they liked, nothing should fail them;  
and as for being caught by spies,  
that, he knew, was impossible.

No fear, he was downwind  
from every kind of chattering pie and spoilsport;  
now all is well, for all the world is blind  
in this matter, both wild and tame.  
The timber is all ready for the frame;  
we need nothing but to know  
the specific hour of her arrival.]

In the third line of the second stanza, the past tense suddenly shifts to the present for the remainder of the passage (“Now al is wel ...”). Again, we might understand the lines that follow as belonging simultaneously to the authorial and the figural language: they could be a direct rendering of Pandarus's thought or an instance of narratorial commentary. Here the house-building simile, “initially a metaphor for planning a love affair, becomes one for planning the poem itself” (Spearing 2005, 86), thus linking together the two different ontological levels of narrative. It is certainly no coincidence that Chaucer (and

/ or Pandarus) borrows the metaphor from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's treatise on the art of poetry. In the section cited by Chaucer, the premeditation necessary before the poet begins his work is contemplated:

If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in a definite order. The mind's hand shapes the entire house before the body's hand builds it. (Geoffrey 2010, 20)<sup>11</sup>

This direct allusion to the craft of fiction, together with the alternating pattern of diffused and compressed voices, underlines the analogical relationship between the poet and the characters. Significantly, the stanza cited above closes with yet another occurrence of layered *dramaticon* and *exegeticon*: the lines “Us lakketh nought but that we witen wolde / A certeyn houre in which she comen sholde” can once again be taken as a direct quotation of Pandarus's thought – the “us” consisting of the intratextual *dramatis personae* – or as a self-referential authorial commentary, in which case the “us” would include the poet and his audience spatially and temporally removed from the fictional storyworld. Through such manipulation of tense and person, the narrative explicitly plays with the multiplication of authorial figures and creates an experiential space in which the line between inside and outside of the storyworld, between illusion and reality, becomes deliberately hazy and indistinct.

But how were such ambiguous attributions of voice treated in oral performance? To be sure, medieval narratives were “voiced narratives” (Vitz 1999, 160) in more than just a metaphorical sense, and in Chaucer's time the audience “would have had little sense of the poem as a text in its material sense, as a physical object, because they would have heard the work rather than read the book” (Windeatt 1992, 16; cf. also Coleman 1996). If, then, *Troilus and Criseyde* was recited by just one performer, whether Chaucer himself or not, which voice did this reader adopt for the sections which superimpose the *dramaticon* with the *exegeticon*? A distinctly Pandarian voice, or a neutral narratorial one? Or, if actors were used for the direct discourses, did they perhaps speak the lines in unison with the presenter figure?

It appears that only the latter would preserve in an oral-aural setting the effect of ambiguity achieved on written page, and even so, the element of surprise brought about by the deferred attribution would be lost. Presenting a “remarkable combination of identities and deliveries, referring to itself at various moments as being written, recited, or even ‘sung’” (Windeatt 1992, 16), *Troilus* is a hybrid of textual and oral effects, with both modes of reception encoded in its vocal texture.

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<sup>11</sup> “Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actum / Impetuosa manus: intrinseca linea cordis / Praemetitur opus, seriemque sub ordine certo / Interior praescribit homo, totamque figurat / Ante manus cordis quam corporis . . .” (quoted in Faral 1924, 198).

In oral recitation by a single performer, the mimetic illusion of diverse voices unravels, as does the experience of unmediated immersion into the story, to which we as silent readers of realist novels are accustomed. Multiple voices are physically compressed into one as the poet conducts the literary fabrication in front of the audience, miming the figural voices embedded in his authorial discourse and, moreover, channelling the earlier tradition, which was the typical medieval fashion of composing poetry; the medieval poet, as Spearing (2005, 22) puts it, “does not create but recounts, retells, often with commentary, a pre-existing story about pre-existing characters”. The medieval writer is thus himself a re-writer, who consciously echoes an earlier discourse. The narrative structure of *Troilus*, which underlines the coming together of different voices, is hence crystallised in the poem’s oral reading, where the similarity of functions between the poet-narrator and the characters is even further amplified.

## 5 Conclusions

As I hope to have demonstrated in this essay, the discursive interlacing in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* problematises the binary of authorial versus figural voice. By concentrating on the poem’s quoted monologues and psycho-narration, I have aimed to show that the so-called echo effect between the *dramaticon* and the *exegeticon*, as well as the compression of some of the poet’s and the characters’ speeches into single lines, tend to annul the poet-narrator’s epistemological and representational hegemony, resulting in the doubling and inversion of the roles of narrator and character. Moreover, I have suggested that the omniscient ethos of the authorial voice is compromised by the narrating “I”s self-conscious commentary on the compositional process, while the characters and the audience are presented as equally if not more adept at conducting and understanding the unfolding narrative. In other words, the authorial voice speaks “under correccioun” not only of the audience, but also of the characters who “enresse or maken dymynucioun” of the poet’s “langage,” re-writing and even overwriting his narratorial discourse. No single voice takes the central place in defining the work’s meaning: the only way in which a comprehensive narrative can be achieved is through a narrative structure which cancels the poet’s prerogative to have the last omniscient word and diffuses authority amongst the various participants of the communicative situation, leading the poet, the characters and the audience into sharing responsibility for the textual creation. Thus, the sense of the author as a supreme, all-knowing mastermind going behind the characters’ backs (or minds, as it were), so familiar to our modern tastes, tends to be missing from Chaucer’s poem.

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# Muistojen arkisto ja muistelun kertomus: Muuntuva arkistometafora Bo Carpelanin romaanissa *Blad ur höstens arkiv*

Nanny Jolma

This article analyses the representation of remembrance in Bo Carpelan's prose. The research questions are: how can a modern version of an archival metaphor reflect memory as a changing process, and also how are the metaphors of memory constructed through interaction of archival space, narrative, and the autobiographical processes of the first-person narrator? The arguments of this article are developed through textual analysis and in discussion with Jens Brockmeier (2015), Corin Depper (2016), and Sebastian Groes (2016). The first of these theorists makes a strong separation between the archival and narrative understandings of memory while the other two have a slightly more flexible approach to memory metaphors. Jan Hellgren's (2014) and Anna Hollsten's (2004) research on Carpelan and his poetics are also mirrored in the analysis. The metaphors will be examined by critically applying conceptual metaphor theory, and by using Mikko Turunen's (2010) concept of common semantic ground.

**Keywords:** memory, remembrance, metaphor, archive, narrative, first-person narrative, Finland-Swedish literature, Bo Carpelan

## 1 Johdanto

Käsittelen tässä artikkelissa muistelun esityksiä Bo Carpelanin proosalle tyypillisessä muistelevassa minäkerronnassa. Tutkin tekstianalyysin kautta muistia kuvaavaa arkistometafora ja sen muuntumismahdollisuuksia sekä käsitystä muistamisesta kertomuksena. Pääasiallinen kohdetekstini on *Blad ur höstens arkiv* -teos (2011 = *BU*), jossa rakentuu Carpelanin romaaneista eksplisiittisimmin muistoja kuvaava arkistometafora. Lisäksi viittaaan lyhyemmin myös muuhun Carpelanin proosatuotantoon.<sup>1</sup> Artikkelin tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat: Millaista potentiaalia arkistometaforalla on muistelun prosessuaalisuuden kuvaajana? Miten kohdoteoksissani esiintyvät arkistometaforat ja käsitys muistista kertomuksena ovat vuorovaikutuksessa keskenään?

Viime vuosina käydylle muistikeskustelulle on ollut ominaista runsas tieteidenvälisyys. Jens Brockmeier (2015) tarkastelee muistamista neljän eri tieteenalan näkökulmasta:

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<sup>1</sup> Tilallisuus on Carpelanin kaunokirjalliselle tuotannolle keskeinen tema ja rakentumisperiaate. Hellgren (2014, 193) toteaa esimerkiksi *Urwind*-romaanin kokonaisrakenteen rinnastuvan tilalliseen konstruktion, kuten varastoon, arkistoon, museoon tai kirjastoon, jonne menneisyys on säilötty aakkostetun tai luetteloidun järjestyksen sijaan assosiaatioita noudattaen.

neurotieteiden, sosiaalitieteiden, uuden muistiteknologian sekä kirjallisuustieteen ja narratologian näkökulmasta. Vastaavasti Sebastian Groesin toimittama artikkelikokoelma (2016) esittää rinnakkain useiden eri alojen avauksia muistamisen aiheesta. Rajaan artikkelini käsittelemään muistin representoitumista kaunokirjallisen teoksen fiktiivisessä kehyksessä. Tarkastelen, minkälaisen kuvan teorit antavat muistamisesta monitieteellisenä ilmiönä ja testaan muistamista koskevia teoretisointeja kaunokirjalliseen aineistoon. Analyysini kohteena on erityisesti muistelu, joka aineistossani näyttää nykyhetkestä kauas lapsuuteen suuntautuvana, reflektioivana ja identiteettiä rakentavana muistamisen prosessina. Tutkimukselleni keskeisistä käsitteistä myös kertomus on nykytutkimuksessa monia tieteenaloja yhdistävä kiinnostuksen kohde. Tässä yhteydessä rajaan näkökulmani siihen, kuinka kertomukset osallistuvat muistelun esittämiseen fiktiivisessä ympäristössä. Samaan aikaan tutkimukseni kannalta on kuitenkin tärkeä tiedostaa, että kertomus ymmärretään nykytutkimuksessa usein ihmiselle ominaisena tapana luoda merkityksiä, jäsentää maailmaa ja omaa identiteettiään. (Brockmeier 2015, IX; myös esim. Hyvärinen 2013; Hyvärinen et al. 2010). Havainnollistan analyysissäni, miten minäkertojien kertomukset omasta menneisyydestään ilmenevät tekstissä muisteluprosessia konkretisoivina metaforina.

Carpelanin teoksessa huomio kiinnittyy muistamisen metaforien tapaan yhtäältä hyödyntää klassista arkistometaforan mallia ja toisaalta rikkoa sitä. Käytän arkistometaforaan kattokäsitteenä muistimetaforille, jotka hyödyntävät erilaisia säilöviä rakenteita, kuten varastoa, ullakkoa tai kirjastoa. Arkistometaforan vanhimpana edustajana pidetään Platonin vahataulumetaforaa, joka jakaa muistin kolmeen osaan: Ensimmäisessä vaiheessa muisto kirjataan ylös vahatauluun, toinen osa on arkistoiva rakenne, jonne muisto säilötään. Kolmas komponentti on arkistosta esiin ottaminen ja uudelleen käyttäminen.<sup>2</sup> (Brockmeier 2015, 71, Depper 2016, 27–29.) Tämä klassinen malli korostaa muistin varastoivaa ja staattista luonnetta sekä muistojen muuttumattomuutta varastoinnin ja uudelleenkäyttöönnoton vaiheissa. Kyseinen malli ei sellaisenaan vastaa modernia muistikäsitystä, jonka mukaan muisti näyttää ennen kaikkea prosessina (Groes 2016, Depper 2016, Brockmeier 2015).

Arkistometaforan käytöllä on kuitenkin pitkät perinteet kaunokirjallisuudessa ja sen vaikutus on edelleen nähtävissä yleisen muistiin liittyvän kielenkäytön taustalla. Brockmeier (2015) esittää varastoinnin ajatukselle perustuvat metaforat ongelmallisina vaikuttimina nykypäivän muistikäsitysten ja jopa muistitutkimuksen taustalla. Tilalle hän esittää narratiivista muistikäsitystä, jossa korostuvat muistelun prosessuaalisuus ja kytkökset identiteetin rakentamiseen. Esimerkiksi Corin Depper (2016) puolestaan huomioi arkistometaforan muuntuvuuden potentiaalini käsitellessään muistia kuvaavien metaforien kehityskulkuja. Brockmeierin ajatukset arkistometaforasta ja narratiivisesta

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<sup>2</sup> Myöhemmin näistä prosesseista on alettu moderniin tietotekniikkaan liittyvien arkistometaforien yhteydessä käyttää nimityksiä tiedon tai kokemuksen koodaaminen (encoding), varastoiminen (storing) ja palauttaminen (retrieving).

muistista ovat tutkimukseni kannalta erittäin kiintoisat, mutta niiden vastakkain asetteleva käsittely ei kohdetekstini analyysissä ole hedelmällinen tai toimiva. Osoitan analyysissäni, että kohdeteoksessani arkistometaforat ovat monimuotoisuudessaan joustavia ja ilmaisuvoimaisia, eivätkä konkreettisen tilan raameihin rajoittuneita kuolleita metaforia.

Peilaan muistelevien rakenteiden analyysiani Bo Carpelanin poeettisille esseille keskeiseen avonaisuuden käsitteeseen<sup>3</sup> ja siihen liittyvään aiempaan Carpelan-tutkimukseen. Sekä Carpelanin proosa että lyriikka ilmentävät voimakkaasti kirjailijan poetiikan taustalla olevaa filosofiaa ja ideologiaa. Jan Hellgren toteaa (2014, 57; ks. myös 2006, 322) Carpelanin tuotannon sisältävän elementtejä, jotka ovat nähtävissä vain, jos tulkintaa tehdään tietoisina Carpelanin 1950-luvun poetiikasta. Anna Hollsten tiivistää (2004, 287–294) avonaisuuden poetiikan olevan Carpelanin eri lähteistä kokoama omaperäinen synteesi. Sen juuret ovat romantiikassa, jossa korostuvat luonto, orgaanisuus ja ajatus vapaasta luomisesta.<sup>4</sup> Toisaalta siinä on piirteitä klassismista: avonaisuus on myös tasapainoa, selkeyttä ja kokoavuutta. Analyysini kannalta keskeistä on lisäksi huomioida Carpelanin poetiikkaan liittyvä valmiiksi määriteltujen rajojen ylittäminen sekä fragmentaarisuuden ja kokoavuuden jatkuva jännite.<sup>5</sup>

Artikkelini metodiset työkalut muodostuvat metaforateorioista, joita sovellan ja testaan kohdeteokseni analyysissä. Lähdän liikkeelle kognitiivisesta metaforateoriasta, jonka avulla analysoin kohdeteoksessani kielen tasolla esiintyvien metaforisten ilmauksien taustalla vaikuttavia käsittemetaphoria (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Turunen 2010, 47). Käsittemetaphorien avulla voi myös hahmottaa muistelun teeman muodostumista teoksessa (Päivärinta 2010, 7). Tarkennan analyysiani soveltamalla Mikko Turusen (2010; 2011) määrittelemää semanttisen yhteisalueen käsitettä, joka havainnollistaa metaforien rakentumista sen osille yhteisistä elementeistä. Etenen analyysissäni yksittäisistä metaforisista ilmauksista laajempiin metaforisiin verkostoihin (esim. Päivärinta 2010).<sup>6</sup> Viimeisenä käsitteelen muistelun kertomuksia ja niiden suhdetta metaforiin.

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<sup>3</sup> Carpelan määrittelee omaa poetiikkaansa ensimmäisen kerran esseessä ”Dikt och verklighet” (1955) ja jatkaa esim. esseessä ”Om diktens öppenhet” (1960).

<sup>4</sup> Kytökset romantiikkaan näkyvät erityisesti Carpelanin ”Om diktens öppenhet” -esseessä (1960), jossa hän yhdistää avoimuuden idean runoilija John Keatsin negatiiviseen kyvyn käsitteeseen. Sivuan tätä aihetta toisessa artikkelissani (tulossa 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Lisää rajojen ja kategoriaiden kyseenalaistumisesta artikkelissani ”Det groteska och öppenhetens poetik i Bo Carpelans roman Benjamins bok” (2018), jossa tutkin avonaisuuden poetiikan ja groteskille tyypillisen transgressiivisuuden ja avonaisuuden yhtymäkohtia.

<sup>6</sup> Sekä Turunen että Päivärinta käsittelevät runoutentutkimusta, mutta heidän teoriasa ja metafora-analyysinsä ovat tässä yhteydessä sovellettavissa myös proosaan – etenkin, kun Carpelanin proosan kieli on runon tavoin runsaasti kuvallisuutta hyödyntävää. Hollsten (2004, 13) toteaa Carpelanin käsittelevän samoja teemoja eri kirjallisuudenlajeja hyödyntäen, ja tutkii itsekin kirjailijan lyriikkaa ja proosaa rinnakkain.

## 2 Arkisto muistin metaforana

Bo Carpelanin romaani *Blad ur höstens arkiv* tuo nimessäänkin esiin arkistometaforan eri komponentit. Jotain, tässä tapauksessa lehtiä, on varastoitu arkistoon ja prepositio ”ur” puolestaan viittaa säilötyn materiaalin palauttamisprosessiin. Teoskokonaisuuden kontekstissa arkistointi yhdistyy muistamiseen esimerkiksi muiston näyttäytyessä arkistoituna kuvana: ”en minnesbild i höstens arkiv” (BU, 181). Näin muisto samalla rinnastuu myös otsikossa mainittuun syksyn lehteen. Näiden kielentason metaforisten ilmausten taustalle voidaan kognitiivista metaforateoriaa soveltaen konstruoida MUISTI ON ARKISTO -käsittemetafora. Kertojana romaanissa on vanha muisteleva ja kirjoittava mies. Teoksen alaotsikko onkin ”Tomas Skarfelts anteckningar”. Menneisyys on vahvasti läsnä eläköityneen tilastoalan virkamiehen päiväkirjamerkinnöissä, joissa hän pohtii arkeaan, menneisyyttä sekä elämää ja olemassaoloa ylipäätään. Sana ”anteckningar” viittaa kirjoittamalla talletettuihin muistoihin, jolloin myös käsittemetafora MUISTELU ON KIRJOITTAMISTA aktivoituu. Tomasin muistiinpanot voidaan tulkita osiksi hänen syksyksi kääntyneen elämänsä arkistoa. Arkistointi rakentuu teoksessa Tomasin oman henkilökohtaisen muistelun tavan kuvaksi. Se on kuulunut vahvasti Tomasin työelämään ja siitä näyttääkin tulleen hänelle tapa ymmärtää ja jäsentää maailmaa. Tällä tavoin muistelun kuvaamisessa käytetyt metaforat heijastavat minäkertojan kokemusta maailmasta ja hänen omasta elämästään.<sup>7</sup> Syksyn ja elämän loppupuolen rinnastuminen tekstin pintatasolla rakentaa ELÄMÄ ON VUODENKIERTO -metaforaa. Syksy on vahvasti läsnä teoksen kerronnassa kehystämässä vanhenemista, jossa menneet vuodet ovat putoavien, aiempia vuodenaikoja edustavien lehtien lailla olemassa nykyhetken rinnalla: ”År faller som löv” (BU, 194). Näitä syksyn lehtiä minäkertoja taltioi kirjoittamalla omaan arkistoonsa. Myös luonnolliseen kiertokulkuun liittyvä katoavaisuus nousee esiin: ”blad på marken som blir jord” (BU, 117). Orgaanisen syklisyyden teema luo kiinnostavan jännitteen suhteessa arkistoinnin teemaan. Rinnakkain hahmottuvat orgaaninen ja rakennettu tila. Kirjoittamisen teeman taas voi tässä tulkita viittaavan muisteluun oman kertomuksen kirjoittamisen prosessina. Samalla se ikään kuin toimii myös yhdistävänä tekijänä arkistoinnin ja syklisyyden teemojen välillä.

Carpelanin romaanituotannossa ylipäätään esiintyy Tomasin muistiarkiston lisäksi lukuisia menneisyyttä varastoivia tiloja, joihin muistot kiinnittyvät ja joiden kautta muistelun prosessit lähtevät liikkeelle. Ullakko on näistä yleisimmin ja lähes kaikissa myöhäisissä romaaneissa esiintyvä muistojen arkisto.<sup>8</sup> Lisäksi muistot varastoituvat muun muassa kirstuihin, komeroihin ja portaisiin (esim. Berg). Brockmeier (2015, 73)

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<sup>7</sup> Tämä on tyypillistä myös muille Carpelanin romaaneille: *Benjamins bokissa* (1997) eläkkeellä olevan kääntäjän muistelua kuvataan suuren vielä kääntämättömän kirjan tulkitsemisena ja *Bergissä* (2005) puolestaan maailmaa pikkutarkasti tarkkailevan ja jäsentävän Mattiaksen muistelu rinnastuu valokuvaamiseen ja valokuvien kehittämiseen.

<sup>8</sup> Pалаan ullakkometaforaan myöhemmin tässä artikkelissa.

toteaakin arkistometaforan olevan muistia kuvaavien metaforien kategoria, jonka sisällä on runsas valikoima erilaisia varastoivia tiloja hyödyntäviä metaforia. Myös ajan saatossa arkiston konsepti on varioitunut. Depper (2016, 27–29) kuvailee arkistometaforia kategoriana, joka pyrkii kiinnittämään ajatuksen muuntuvaan liikkeen johonkin stabiiliin ja pysyvään alustaan, kuten Platonin vahataulumetaforassa. Dynaamisempi versio arkistomallista on esimerkiksi palatsimetafora, joka juontaa juurensa antiikin Kreikassa käytetyistä muistitekniikoista.<sup>9</sup> Esimerkiksi Cicero käyttää tilaa muistin luonnollista kapasiteettia laajentavana apuvälineenä. Palatsimetaforassa muistot eivät enää tallennu vain yhteen varastohuoneeseen, vaan erilaisiin toisiinsa kytköksissä oleviin tiloihin, joiden läpi muistelijä voi kulkea.<sup>10</sup> Näistä klassisista metaforista poiketen modernit muistamisen metaforat taas eivät rajoitu vanhojen ideoiden varastoimiselle, vaan voivat aktiivisesti luoda uusia tiedon muotoja.<sup>11</sup> (Depper 2016, 33–35.)

Myös romaanissa *Blad ur höstens arkiv* arkisto saa erilaisia ilmentymiä tekstissä. Seuraavassa katkelmassa rakentuvaa arkiston kuvaa voidaan tulkita edellä mainitun palatsimetaforan edustajana:

Ett arkiv samlar uppgifter om ett liv, använda eller förstörda tankar, sanningar bekräftade eller upphävida av tiden, det rymmer dagboksanteckningar och journaler; i ett arkivs gångar hörs svagt men monotont en jämmer, en klagan, ett rörligt, fint fördelat dammoln av glimmande fakta (BU, 78).

Mystinen vanhan aineksen ja tomupilvien koristama arkistorakennus huoneita yhdistävine käytävineen muistuttaa ajatusta muistipalatsista. Tämä arkisto sisältää erilaisiin kategorioihin luokiteltavissa olevaa yksilön menneeseen elämään liittyvää materiaalia, jonka voidaan ajatella sijoittuvan eri lokeroihin tai eri huoneisiin. Kohta tuo esiin myös muistojen varastoitumiseen liittyvää myyttisyyttä sekä juhlallisuutta vanhojen aineistojen äärellä. Katkelman loppuosa kuitenkin herättää tulkitsijan huomion: Käytäviltä kuuluu valittavaa, muistoissa kaikuva menneisyyden ääntä. Ääni kuitenkin rinnastuu heti toiseen, visuaalisesti havaittavissa olevaan kuvaan. Käytävillä leijuu liikkeessä oleva, hienojakoinen ja kimmeltävä faktojen pölypilvi. Tämän voi tulkita korostavan muistiaineksen moniaistillisuutta ja vaikeasti määriteltävyyttä. Kyseessä on muistamista kuvaava toisiinsa limittyvien metaforien rypäs, jonka hahmottamista auttaa käsittemetaforien konstruointi. Metaforien MUISTOT OVAT ÄÄNIÄ ja MUISTI ON MATERIAA rinnakkaisuuden muodostamaa ristiriitaa korostaa myös liikkuvuuden ominaisuus ja pölypilven hiukkasten nimeäminen faktoiksi. Kohdassa rinnastuu näin

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<sup>9</sup> Depper (2016, 28) nostaa esiin myös palatsimetaforan yhteydet Aristoteleen kineettisyyttä ja assosiativisuutta korostavaan muistikäsitykseen.

<sup>10</sup> Kuuluisana esimerkkinä palatsimetaforan käytöstä Brockmeier (2015, 71–72) mainitsee Augustinuksen (354–430) *Tunnustuksien* (397–398) muistipalatsin.

<sup>11</sup> 2000-luvulla muistin kuvaaminen ei enää Depperin (2016, 33–35) mukaan ole sidoksissa erilaisiin rajaaviin kuoriin, kuten teatterin tai palatsin tilaan tai edes kovalevyn varastointikapasiteettiin. Sen sijaan hyödynnetään uusimman teknologian avaamaa ääretöntä tilaa, joka vuorostaan tarjoaa omat mahdollisuutensa ja haasteensa.

ollen myös jokin muutokselle altis ja yleisesti muuttumattomaksi ajateltu. Esiin nousevat kysymykset muistin luonteesta, pysyvyydestä ja muuntuvuudesta saavat lisää painoarvoa arkistometaforaan liittyvien viimeaikaisten teoreettisten avausten kontekstissa.

Muistia kuvaava arkistometafora poikkeaa Brockmeierin (2015, 80–81) mukaan prototyyppisestä metaforasta, joka rinnastaa toisiinsa kaksi konkreettisesti olemassa olevaa entiteettiä. Prototyyppinen metafora sisältyy esimerkiksi filosofi Thomas Hobbesin (1488–1679) kuuluisaan toteamukseen ”man is a wolf”, jossa suden olemus luo uusia merkityksiä nostaessaan esiin tiettyjä ihmisen piirteitä. Metaforassa MUISTI ON ARKISTO vain toisella puolella metaforista yhtälöä on tarkasti määriteltävissä oleva asia, arkisto, kun taas muistilla ei luonnossa ole konkreettista hahmoa: ” – on mahdotonta nimetä inhimilliselle muistille yleisesti hyväksyttyä, kouriintuntuvaa tai muutoin rajattua materiaalista todellisuutta. Muistista voi tulla luonnollinen olio vain ’niin sanotusti’.” (Brockmeier, 80, suom. NJ.) Arkistometafora luo tavanomaista metaforan kaavaa käyttämällä illuusion siitä, että muistilla olisi konkreettinen aineellinen olemus. Se liittyy muistiin piirteitä tilasta tai rakennuksesta sekä menneitä tapahtumia varastoivista huoneista.

Brockmeier (2015, 5; 69–74) näkee konkreettisuuden illuusion olevan siinä määrin harhaanjohtava, että vankka usko muistiin varastona näkyy länsimaisessa ajattelussa aina moderniin muistitutkimukseen asti. Ongelmallisuuden ydin piilee siinä, että ajatus muistin konkreettisuudesta on niin vakiintunut, ettei sitä välttämättä tiedosteta metaforaksi, saati kyseenalaisteta. Samalla arkistometafora on menettänyt innovatiivisen kuvausvoimansa, jolloin voidaan puhua kuolleesta metaforasta (Brockmeier 2015, 81–83).

Groes (2016) ja Depper (2016) eivät puolestaan suhtaudu negatiivisesti muistia konkretisoivaan ajatteluun sinällään, mutta pyrkivät laajentamaan muistikäsitystä arkistoinvan mallin ulkopuolelle. Sen sijaan modernit muistamisen metaforat nähdään muuntuvaisina ja aktiivisesti uutta luovina. Groesin (2016, 16–19) mukaan metafora on tärkeä muistin kuvaamisen väline juuri siksi, että sen voima perustuu kyvyille muuntaa abstraktit käsitteet konkreetteiksi, helpommin hahmotettavissa oleviksi kuviksi. Corin Depper (2016, 27, suom. NJ) tiivistää kyseisen ajatuksen seuraavasti: ”Miten muistia voi ymmärtää, jos ei metaforan avulla?”

Brockmeier (2015, 91) puolestaan esittää arkistometaforan olevan monella tavalla riittämätön muistin kuvaamiseen. Kirjaamisesta ja varastoimisesta muodostuvat metaforat keskittyvät vain yhteen rajattuun osaan muistamisen kompleksisessä olemuksessa – monimuotoisista variaatioistaan huolimatta. Arkistometaforan selitysvuimasta jää uupumaan muistamisen temporaaliset, kulttuuriset ja kontekstuaaliset ulottuvuudet sekä muistin prosessuaalisuus ja kytkeytyminen identiteetin muodostukseen. Lisäksi Brockmeierin (2015, 86) mukaan arkistometaforat eivät

useinkaan ole kokonaisuudessaan toimivia. Ne koostuvat useista elementeistä, jotka eivät kaikki välttämättä toimi loogisesti yhdessä.

Kohdetekstini erilaisia piirteitä rinnastava jännitteisyys voitaisiin Brockmeieria myötäillen tulkita epäloogisuudeksi ja kokonaisuuden toimimattouudeksi. Tulkintani mukaan kyse on kuitenkin pikemminkin uutta luovasta metaforisesta diskurssista, jossa yhdistyvät päähenkilön muisteluprosessin eri puolia ilmentävät kuvat. Ristiriitaisuuden näen enemmänkin kysymyksiä herättävänä ja vastakohtia purkavana dynaamisuutena. Näkemykseni saa tukea myös Hellgrenin (2014, 217) *Urwind*-romaanista tekemästä analyysistä. Hän tulkitsee kyseisen romaanin rakentuvan syklisen päiväkirjarungon ohella pitkälti tilallisuuden varaan. Romaanissa muodostuva arkkitehtoninen kompositio ei kuitenkaan ole logiikaltaan aukoton. Jos rakennuksenomaisuus olisi täysin loppuunvietyä, se ei pystyisi tietoisien ja staattisten olemuksensa vuoksi ilmentämään ihmiselämälle ominaista dynamiikkaa. Tässä valossa Brockmeierin arkistometaforien logiikkaan kohdistama kritiikki vaikuttaa ristiriitaiselta: tavoitteleehan Brockmeier itse juuri prosessuaalisuutta ja muuttuvuutta korostavaa muistista puhumisen tapaa. Samalla hän kuitenkin kritisoi metaforisen rakenteen piirteitä, jotka mahdollistavat tällaiset merkitykset.

Kohdetekstini näkökulmasta herää kysymys, miksi arkistomalli ei voisi muiden muistia konkretisoivien metaforien tavoin taipua kuvaamaan muistamista modernia muistikäsitystä vastaavalla tavalla. Kaunokirjallisuudella on yleisesti tiedostettu kyky tehdä kuluneistakin ilmaisuista jälleen elinvoimaisia ja tutuista tai jämähtäneistä rakenteista vieraita. Seuraavassa kahdessa luvussa analysoin, millaista potentiaalia Carpelanin arkistometaforalla on muuntua moderniksi muistamisen metaforaksi.

### 3 Arkistometaforan muuntuvuus

Analyysini kannalta erityisen kiinnostavaa on eri teorioissa sekä myös kohdetekstissä esiin nouseva konkreettisuuden suhde muistin kuvaamiseen. Carpelanin vahvasti tilallisuutta hyödyntävä tuotanto ammentaa konkreettisen kuvaston luomaa sisältöä, ja arkistometaforan komponentit voidaan erottaa muistin representaatiosta. Toisaalta konkreettisuus ei ole yksiselitteistä tai muuttumatonta, vaan problematisoituu alinomaa. Tämä on nähtävissä esimerkiksi edellisessä luvussa analysoidussa valittavan äänen ja faktojen tomupilven kuvaryppäässä. Konkreettisuuden ja abstraktin välisen rajan ja vastakkainasettelun purkaminen liittyy olennaisesti myös Carpelanin poetiikkaan. Analysoin tässä luvussa arkiston konseptin muuntumista ja havainnollistan, millaisen taustan Carpelanin poetiikka tarjoaa kohdeteoksen analyysille.

*Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanin minäkertoja viittaa useaan otteeseen keräämäänsä syksyarkistoon, joka näyttäytyy jonkinlaisena identiteettiprosessina, merkitykselliseen

järjestykseen pistettyjen tärkeiden muistojen kokoelmana: ”till arkivet, mitt eget höstarkiv, lägger jag mina anteckningar: myggskrift” (BU, 178). Tomaksen muistiinpanot voidaan tulkita hänen arkistoon tallentamaksi perinnökseen. Omintakeinen yhdyssana ”myggskrift” luo rinnastuksen Tomaksen arkistoimien muistiinpanojen ja hyttysten jälkeensä jättämien ”geneettisten muistiinpanojen” eli geeniperimän sisältävien munien välille. Samoin kuin hyttysset jättävät munansa talvehtimaan ja odottamaan kevättä, uuden sukupolven aikaa, myös Tomaksen muistiarkisto on hänen henkinen perintönsä. Tätä tulkintaa vahvistaa muistiinpanojen säilömisen yhteydessä käytetty *lägga*-verbi, joka rinnastuu ruotsin kielessä munimista tarkoittavaan *lägga ägg* -ilmaisuun.

Syksyarkiston kuvassa limittyvät tiiviisti yhteen arkistoinnin, kirjoittamisen ja orgaanisen syklisyyden teemat. Arkiston konsepti hahmottuu orgaanisena ja muuntuvana. Muutos on luonnollista ja kuuluu asiaan, se luo vanhasta uutta. Myös tämän rinnalle muotoutuva, rakennetun tilan elementtejä korostava arkiston kuva lähtee teoksessa kehittymään, kun konkreettisen tilan raamit murtuvat ja hajoavat. Edellisessä luvussa analysoitu palatsimetaforan muunnos nosti esiin faktan pysyvyyden ja muistin määrittelyn kysymyksiä. Tämän lisäksi teoksessa hahmottuu myös toisenlainen rakennettua tilaa lähtökohtanaan hyödyntävä arkisto, maailmankirjasto, jossa muistot alkavat elää omaa kuritonta ja itsepintaista elämäänsä. Kyseessä on laajempi ja hallitsemattomampi kokonaisuus, joka sisältää myös paljon outoa ja tuntematonta:

I arkiv samlas de döda och deras texter, brev skrynklas av eld, stormvågor sköljer upp sigill och dokument, skugglika forskare böjer sig över historien där den ligger som lik på operationsborden för blödande analys och avslöjande obduktion. Men allt tar vi inte på alvar, samlar på etiketter och reklamplakat, fotografier och kläder, historiens tunga tumavtryck: doften av förgånget, av multnande papyrus och gulnande grafik förvandlar oss till snabbt bortsopade amatöraktörer i ett väldigt tidskeende, i ett tigande vulkanutbrott: allt dött talar i arkivet, världsbiblioteket, och börjar leva sitt egensinniga minnesliv. (BU, 78)

Kyseinen katkelma rikkoo monin tavoin perinteisen arkistometaforan rakennetta. Sen taustalle voidaan ajatella käsittemetaphora MUISTI ON ARKISTO, mutta kyseisestä huomiosta sinänsä ei tässä kohdin ole juuri hyötyä, koska kuvattavaa määrittävä kuva eli arkisto saa monenlaisia piirteitä, jotka eivät siihen arkikielen logiikassa liity. Arkistoon säilötty aines ei ole siellä vakaasti turvassa, vaan esimerkiksi kirjeet rypistyvät tulen tarttuessa niihin. Uuden aineiston saapuminen ei aina ole hallittua muistiinkirjausta, vaan muistoaines rinnastuu myös myrskyaaltojen kuljettamiin sekalaisiin ja ajelehtiviin tavaroihin. Pelkän varastokonstruktion sijaan arkistosta kehkeytyy myös ruumiillistuvan historiantutkimuksen näyttämö. Tämä puolestaan korostaa muistin ruumiillisuutta ja materiaalisuutta.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Erityisesti ruumiillinen metafora historiasta vertavuotavana ja aukileikattuna ruumiina kytkeytyy Carpelanin tuotannon groteskiin kuvastoon. Carpelanin tuotannon groteskeista piirteistä ks. Jolma 2018.



Historian tai tarinan vertavuotava analyysi ja ruumiinavaus voidaan myös nähdä kriittisenä kommenttina tieteen tekemistä ja sen tuottamaa varmuutta vastaan. Tämä tulkinta saa vahvistusta, jos rinnalla tarkastellaan Bo Carpelanin poeettisia esseitä. Hellgren (2006, 316–317) erittelee Carpelanin totaalisen ja välittömän avonaisuuden ideaalin ilmentävän 1900-luvulle tyypillisiä antimetafyysisiä tendenssejä, joihin liittyy epäluottamus abstraktioita ja tieteellistä varmuutta kohtaan. Aikuisuus ja oppineisuus kantavat mukanaan todellisuudesta vieraannuttavaa abstraktia rationalismia, josta esimerkiksi runoilijan on kuitenkin mahdollista vapautua olemalla yhtä maailman kanssa. Carpelan pitää ihanteellisena intellektuellisesti avointa suhtautumista, joka ilmenee kysymisenä, epäilynä ja etsimisenä. Keskeistä on myös aistillisesti avoin, eli näkevä, kuunteleva ja tunteva, suhde maailmaan. Tässä ajattelutavassa yksinkertaiset ja arkiset asiat saavat suuren merkityksen ja painoarvon. Hellgren (2006, 321) tiivistää arkipäiväisen yksityiskohtien korostamisen implikoivan taistelua kaiken kattavia selityksiä ja rutiineja luovia voimia vastaan. Nämä voimat turruttavat ja poistavat mystiikkaa sekä alentavat yksilön yksiselitteiseksi käsitteeksi, koneiston hammasrattaaksi tai tilaston numeroksi. Tätä taustaa vasten edeltävän tekstikatkelman outo tutkimustilanne edustaa kaiken selittämisen pyrkimystä, joka kuitenkin karnevalisoituu viimeistään, kun tarkastelijat muuttuvat vain pienen hetken valokeilassa paistatteleviksi amatöörinäyttelijöiksi. Se, mitä arkistossa tapahtuu, ”ett tigande vulkanutbrott”, palautetaan mystiseen ja ambivalenttiin asemaansa. Vaikeneva tulivuorenpurkaus on *oksymoron*, vastakohdille ja paradoksille rakentuva kuva, jota on mahdoton läpikotaisin selittää tai ymmärtää.

Arkiston huteruus ja toisaalta kysymykset muistojen säilömisestä ja uudelleentarkastelun mielekkyydestä nousevat eksplisiittisesti esiin seuraavassa katkelmassa, joka on jatkoa samalle arkistoa käsittelevälle luvulle kuin edeltävätkin lainaukset. Kyse on lopulta siitä, mikä ylipäättään pystytään ottamaan esille ja edelleen myös siitä, mikä on muistelemisen arvoista:

En risig hand börjar samla in naturens fläckiga dokument, samla dem i mappar, bleka som minnen, och ställer dem på sköra, sviktande reoler. Vad vill jag spara? En irrande tanke, en osäkerhet säkrad genom nedskrivning? Verkligen? Ett ögonblick fångat med håv, från en gisten båt?” (BU, 79.)

Arkiston hyllyt ovat hauraat ja huojuvat ja mappeihin säilötyt muistoihin rinnastuvat dokumentit jo ajan kalventamat. Kyseessä ei ole vakaa arkisto, vaan hutera säilytystila, joka saattaisi jopa romahtaa. Tällaisessa tilanteessa minäkertoja pohtii arkistoinnin mielekkyyttä. Ehkä jotakin voisi karsia, jostain päästää irti, jotta hyllyt kestäisivät mappien painon paremmin? Tämä on myös muistelijalle itse-epäilyn hetki, jolloin hän miettii, onko harhailevan ja epävarman ajatuksen säilöminen kannattavaa, ja onko muistelussa kyse vain silmänräpäysten sattumanvaraisesta kalastelusta. Rohkaisuksi omien epäilyjensä jälkeen minäkertoja kuitenkin turvautuu Mozartin sanoihin siitä, mitä kaikki luominen ja rakentaminen vaatii: ”varmt hjärta, kallt huvud” (BU, 79). Pohdinnat

muistuttavat Carpelanin (1960) avonaisuuden poetiikkaan liittyvästä keatsiläisestä negatiivisesta kyvystä, joka on kaikessa luovassa työssä tarvittavaa kykyä levätä epävarmuuden tunteessa. Negatiiviseen kykyyn liittyy myös taito tarkastella vastakohtia ja erilaisten kategorioiden välisiä rajoja suurella avoimuudella, jolloin jopa aikatasojen välinen hierarkia voidaan kyseenalaistaa.<sup>13</sup> Tämä tiivistyy ajatukseen silmänräpäyksestä, joka kokoaa eri aikatasot yhteen yhdeksi merkitykselliseksi hetkeksi. Minäkertojan maininta haavilla kalastetusta silmänräpäyksestä sisältää Carpelanin poetiikkaa vasten luettuna paradoksin: Silmänräpäys voi ohikiitävytydessään vaikuttaa mitättömältä. Samalla se voi kuitenkin ajan kronologian kyseenalaistuessa tiivistää yhteen kaiken – menneen, nykyisen ja tulevan.

Kognitiivinen metaforateoria on tässä ja edellisessä luvussa toiminut työkaluna paikallisia metaforia laajempien metaforakokonaisuuksien rakentumisen toteamiseen ja keskeisten teemojen tunnistamiseen. Käsittemetaforiin pohjautuvalla tulkinnalla on kuitenkin rajoitteensa ja ongelmansa. Kognitiivisen metaforateorian kritiikki on kohdistunut muun muassa sen väljyyteen, joka johtaa siihen, että lähes mitä kielen ilmiötä tahansa voidaan nimittää metaforaksi (Turunen 2010, 48). Tästä taipumuksesta pelkistää tai yksinkertaistaa voidaan tiettyyn pisteeseen asti ajatella olevan hyötyä analyysillä, sillä Carpelan käyttää runsaasti samaan aihepiiriin liittyvää kuvastoa, jossa eri elementit ovat monimutkaisissa yhteyksissä toisiinsa. Sivuttaessaan ja pelkistäessään tiettyjä metaforan määrittelyn ongelmakohtia kyseinen teoria jättää kuitenkin osittain huomiotta sanatason haastavimman metaforiikan (Päivärinta 2010, 7). Kognitiivinen metaforateoria pohjautuu ajatukseen metaforan arkisuudesta ja metaforasta ihmisen keskeisenä hahmottamisen tapana. Näin ollen se ei taivu ambivalenssilla ja rinnakkaisten tulkintojen mahdollisuuksilla operoivan uutta luovan metaforiikan tulkinnan välineeksi. (Päivärinta 2010, 12–13.) Oman analyysini suhteen voidaan todeta, että käsittemetaforien konstruointi ei vie tulkintaa varsinaisesti eteenpäin. Kyse on omaperäistä mielen arkistoa konkretisoivista metaforisista ilmauksista, jotka eivät perustu tavanomaisille mielleyhtymille, vaan ristiriitaisuuksien luomalle jännitteisyydelle ja moniaineksisuudelle. Seuraavassa luvussa syvennän analyysia ja sovellan semanttisen yhteisalueen käsitettä kohdeteokseni analyysiin.

#### **4 Semanttinen yhteisalue ullakkometaforan tulkinnassa**

Paksujen kattoparrujen ja harvojen lattialankkujen kehystämä vintti on useissa Carpelanin proosateoksissa toistuva ja tyypillinen kuvallisuuden lähde. Ullakkometaforan avulla teoksessa tuodaan esille erilaisia muistelun prosessin piirteitä: muisteluun rinnastuva vintille kapuaminen on Tomakselle hankalaa, sillä siellä hän joutuu kohtaamaan

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<sup>13</sup> Ajatus kokoavasta silmänräpäyksestä on tyypillinen modernistiselle estetiikalle (Hollsten 2004, 219) ja korostaa lineaarisen aikakäsityksen murtumista. Käsitelen Carpelanin kerronnan aikarakennetta toisessa artikkelissani (tulossa 2019).

menneisyyden painon sekä myös ajoittain muistojen katoamisesta aiheutuvan pimeyden (BU, 67–69). Seuraava *Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanin katkelma on yksi monista MUISTI ON ULLAKKO -käsittemetaforaa ilmentävistä kohdista, joka sisältää useita Carpelanin ullakkokuvauksille tyypillisiä piirteitä:

För tre dagar sen tog jag mig med en viss möda upp på vinden. Taksparrarna låg i skymning. Doften av århundraden låg kvar: trä, krollsplint, gulnade tidskriftbuntar, silande ljus som damm och sand, gavelfönstret mot väster söder i hörnet. Golvbräden breda som gamla skogar, den gamla blåmålade kistan i sitt hörn, dörren till vindskammaren på glänt: hördes där inte ljud, suckanden, stönanden, skratt, gapande tystnad – jag tog tag i den vita trädörren, där var våningssängen, nattygsbordet, pinnstolen, trasmattan, där var tystnaden efter så många döda och kanske ännu levande gäster, där var förgängelsen och den tomma blomvasen, där var barnröster som skuggor och den svaga doften av någon parfym – eller var det blommor, rosor? Där var ingen, med ingens blick och doft. (BU, 67.)

Teoskokonaisuuden kontekstista irrotettaessa kyseinen katkelma ei ole suoraan tunnistettavissa muistin kuvaukseksi. Sellaisenaan se on kuvaus ullakosta, vaikkakin mystisen moniaineksisesta sellaisesta. Teoskokonaisuutta vasten tarkasteltuna se kuitenkin yhdistyy selvästi muihin arkistometaforaan tekstin pinnalla realisoiviin metaforisiin ilmauksiin, kuten esimerkiksi aiemmin analysoidut arkiston kokoavuutta (*samla*-verbin toisteinen käyttö) ja moninaista sisältöä ilmaisevat kohdat (BU, 78–79). Kyseessä on usein vanhojen tavaroiden varastona toimiva tila, ullakko, jonka voidaan tulkita olevan MUISTI ON ULLAKKO -metaforan lähdealue, josta muistamisen kuvaamisen elementit ammennetaan. Pelkkä taustalla vaikuttavan käsittemetaforan toteaminen ei kuitenkaan riitä välineeksi Carpelanin ullakkometaforan erityispiirteiden analyysiin. Tavoitteenani on tässä luvussa tarkastella kyseisen metaforan rakentumista edellisiä lukuja tarkemmin semanttisen yhteisalueen käsitettä soveltaen ja sen käyttökelpoisuutta testaten. Mikko Turunen (2011, 27; ks. myös 2010) kutsuu semanttiseksi yhteisalueeksi metaforan osien välistä yhteisten piirteiden eli elementtien kenttää. Kaikkien elementtien ei tarvitse liittyä yhteisalueeseen samassa kohdassa, ”vaan metaforisuus voi kehittyä vähitellen esimerkiksi perättäisissä runoissa” (Turunen 2011, 28). Kohdetekstissäni arkistometafora rakentuu erilaisten arkiston variaatioiden täydentäessä kuvaa teoksen edetessä.

Muistin ja ullakon semanttista yhteisaluetta konstruoitaessa tulee esille Brockmeierin (2015, 80–81) mainitsema muistia kuvaavan arkistometaforan poikkeavuus prototyypisestä metaforasta ja tästä syntyvä konkreettisuuden ja aineellisuuden illuusio. Aiemmin mainittu IHMINEN ON SUSI -metafora korostaa ihmisessä sudelle tyypillisiä piirteitä, kuten raakuutta ja vaistonvaraisuutta. Nämä kuitenkin ovat ihmisen ominaisuuksiksi määriteltävissä olevia piirteitä, jotka metaforan avulla aktualisoituvat. Carpelanin ullakkometafora luo illuusion, jonka mukaan esimerkiksi moniaineksisuus, menneen säilöminen ja arkistominen olisivat muistin ja ullakon yhteisiä elementtejä. Muistin ominaisuuksiksi voidaan lähinnä käsittää moniaineksisuus ja kytkös

menneisyyteen, mutta menneen säilöminen ja konkreettinen arkistominen ovat ominaisuuksia, joita metaforan toinen osapuoli, ullakko, tuottaa muistille. Muistilla ei kuitenkaan todellisuudessa ole konkreettista arkistovaa hahmoa, vaikka kyseinen metafora ovelasti tulkitsijalleen näin esittää. Ullakon ja muistin semanttinen yhteisalue rakentuu näin ollen konkreettisuuden illuusion varaan. Tällä tavoin rakentuva metafora on jo lähtökohdiltaan ristiriitainen ja muistin kuvaamisen mahdollisuuksien tai mahdottomuuden kysymyksiä herättelevä.

Edellä lainatussa vintin kuvauksessa on samanlaista luettelomaisuutta ja vanhan ja kuolleen synnyttämää mystiikkaa kuin aiemmin siteeraamassani arkiston kuvauksessa (*BU*, 78). Mennyt aika on läsnä vanhojen äänien kaikuna sekä kaikenlaisena tavarana, jotka Carpelanin kerronnalle tyypillisesti luetellaan eriskummallisina karnevalistisina jonoina. Kyseiset jonot koostuvat muistin ja ullakon oletetulle semanttiselle yhteisalueelle sijoittuvista elementeistä. Ensimmäinen jono kuvaa vuosisatojen tuoksua, joka syntyy puusta, vanhojen huonekalujen täyteaineena käytetystä täpeheinästä, kellastuneista, menneisyyttä dokumentoivista aikakauslehdistä ja vinttiin päätyikkunasta siivilöityneestä valosta. Myöhemmin luetteloidaan ullakolta löytyviä huonekaluja: kerrossänky, yöpöytä, pinnatuoli ja räsymatto. Näiden ihmisen arkielämän tiloihin kytkeytyvien objektien sijoittuminen vintille korostaa metonymian kautta niihin liittyvän elämän olevan jo elettyä ja ohi. Ne eivät ole käytössä, vaan seisovat ainoastaan muistuttamassa menneistä ajoista ja niitä käyttäneistä ihmisistä. Tätä tunnelmaa korostaa entisestään seuraavana mainittu hiljaisuus, väliaikaisuus ja kukkamaljakon tyhjyys. Tässä mainitut elementit konstruoivat kaikki menneisyyttä jollain tavalla. Ne implikoivat muistin sisältävän moniaineksista materiaalia ja erilaisille jännitteisille suhteille (kuten negaatio tai vastakohtaisuus) perustuvia piirteitä.

Katkelma loihii esiin ullakon konkreettisten puitteiden lisäksi kerronnan hetkellä jo kuolleiden ja yhä elävien vieraiden jälkeensä jättämän hiljaisuuden. Samoin kuin hiljaisuus negaation kautta edustaa tässä ihmisten läsnäoloa, kuvaa tyhjä vaasi kaikkia niitä kukkia, joita se aikojen saatossa on kannatellut. Vaikka näennäisesti aika on kulunut ja mennyt jo mennyttä, on ullakon aika hidastunut. Tästä kertovat siellä vielä viipyilevät huokaukset, voihkinat, nauru ja lasten äänet ja niiden rinnalla jännitettä luova ammottava hiljaisuus. Äänien lisäksi mainitaan kukkien tai hajuveden tuoksu. Poissaolo ja tuoksu esiintyvät tässä ominaisuuksina, joiden kautta ihminen rinnastuu kukkiin. Tämän voi tulkita korostavan ihmiselämän katoavaisuutta sekä edellisen luvun analyysissäkin mainittua luonnon kiertokulkua, johon liittyen menneisyyden vähittäinen katoaminen kuuluu asiaan. Negaatioiden ja luetteloinnin kautta tekstiin syntyy poissaolon ja läsnäolon välinen jännite, joka on yksi semanttisen yhteisalueen määrittävistä piirteistä. Muistaminen on yhtäältä menneen tavoittamista, jolle identiteettimme pitkälti perustuu. Tässä tavoittamisessa ja asioihin palaamisessa on toisaalta aina läsnä myös tietoisuus menneisyyden saavuttamattomuudesta. Muistin aineellisuuden tapaan myös menneitten tapahtumien tavoittaminen, muistot, ovat konstruktioita ja illuusioita.

Poissaolon tematiikka tiivistyy katkelman lopussa: ”Där var ingen, med ingens blick och doft” (*BU*, 67).<sup>14</sup> Hollsten (2004, 256) erittelee poissaolon ja tyhjyyden liittyvän Carpelanin poetiikassa runoilijan luomistyöhön: ”Runoilija yrittää taistella poissaoloa vastaan tekemällä poissaolevasta maailmasta niin konkreettisen ja läsnäolevan kuin mahdollista”. Negaation avulla on myös mahdollista luoda poissaolevasta asiasta erityisen vahva mielikuva, jolle ominaista on läsnäolon ja kiellon kautta poispyyhkiytymisen ambivalenssi (Hollsten 2004, 259). Kyseiseen katkelmaan tiivistyy näin ollen myös paljon Carpelanin teoksille keskeistä kuvastoa sekä paradoksien ja vastakohtaparien luomaa jännitettä.

Vastaavia rönsyileviä luettelomaisia ullakkokuvauksia esiintyy aina Carpelanin varhaisesta proosasta myöhäisiin romaaneihin. Ensimmäinen tätä kuvallista verkostoa rakentava kohta löytyy novellikokoelmasta *Jag minns att jag drömde* (1979, 5), josta Carpelanin myöhemmälle proosalle ominaisen muistelevan minäkerronnan muotoutumisen voidaan määritellä alkavan. Myös esimerkiksi *Bergissä* (2005) ja *Urwindissa* esiintyy pitkin kuvaluetteloin kuvattu ullakko sekä muita mennyttä aikaa sisälleen sulkevia tiloja, kuten vanhoja komeroita ja kirstuja. Etenkin *Urwindissa* vintti on ydin, johon teoksen kuvallisuus tiivistyy. Hollsten (2004, 51–52) luonnehtii *Urwindin* kuvallisuutta ensinäkemältä kaoottisen runsaaksi ja tiheäksi, mutta pohjimmiltaan lähinnä tuulen ja ullakon muodostamaa kuvastoa varioivaksi. Teoksen alkupuolella minäkertoja Daniel Urwind leikittelee sukunimensä merkityksillä pilkkomalla sitä osiin.<sup>15</sup> Kyseessä on yhtäältä universumin alkutuuli, joka puhaltaa kaikessa, kaikkialla eikä silti missään tai minnekään. Jos tämän tuulen saa kiinni, se muuntautuu toiseen tilana havaittavaan hahmoon, siitä tulee valtava ullakko. (*Urwind*, 9–10.) Sana *vind* tarkoittaakin ruotsiksi sekä tuulta että vinttiä. *Ur*-liitettä taas voidaan verrata suomen *iki*-liitteeseen, jolloin *urwind* voidaan ymmärtää alkutuulen lisäksi myös ikivanhana ullakkona<sup>16</sup>. Kyseinen *Urwindin* kohta rakentaa ikivintin kuvaa piirtein, joista monet luonnehtivat myös myöhemmän *Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanin ullakkoa: ”taksparrarna, tjocka som armar”, ”doften av solbränt trä, dammets gyllne ljusfärg lagda över golvbjälkar” ja ”gulnade tidningsbuntar” (*Urwind*, 10). *Urwindin* kohtauksen voidaan nähdä toimivan esikuvana myöhemmille ullakkokuvauksille. Näin ollen myös *Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanin ullakkoarkisto voidaan tulkita ikivintiksi, joka sulkee sisälleen kaikki aikatasot, kokemukset ja myyttisestä alkutuulesta tiivistyneen muistojen alkuperän.

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<sup>14</sup> Tuoksujen avulla konstruoitu muistikuvien epätäydellisyyttä ja menneisyyden läsnä- ja poissaolon dynamiikkaa korostava ei-kenenkään hahmo. Tulkintani mukaan Carpelan kirjoittaa tässä ns. proust-ilmiotä vastaan. Marcel Proustin *Kadonnutta aikaa etsimässä* -romaanisarjan (1913–1927) tunnetussa Madeleine-kohtauksessa tuoksuistimuksella on erityisasema muistikuvien uudelleen elävöitymisessä (esim. Smith 2016, 38–39). Kohdeteoksessani tuoksut toistuvat ja ovat tärkeässä roolissa, mutta eivät yksiselitteisesti toimi porttina menneisyyteen, vaan muistelu pysähtyy merkityksellisiin negatioihin.

<sup>15</sup> Hollsten (2004, 52) keskittyy kyseiseen sanaleikkiin laajemmin.

<sup>16</sup> *Ur*-sana merkitsee ruotsiksi myös kelloa, mikä tuo tulkintaan vielä yhden ulottuvuuden. Romaaneissa *Urwind* ja *Benjamins bok* kellot toimivatkin toistuvina ajallisuuden teemaa rakentavina motiiveina.

Ullakkokuvaukset luovat toistuessaan teosten sisäisen koherenssin lisäksi myös autotekstuaalisuutta, eli yhteyksiä saman kirjailijan eri teosten välille (Hollsten 2004, 16). Carpelanin avonaisuuden poetiikalle pohjautuva kerronta hyödyntääkin lineaarisen temporaalisuuden sijaan toistuvien ja varioituvien fragmenttien muodostamaa verkostomaista koherenssia. Vind-sanan ympärille kietoutuvan kuvallisuuden voidaan myös tulkita mitä suurimmassa määrin ilmentävän Carpelanin avonaisuuden poetiikkaa ja sille tyypillistä ambivalenssia, kokoavuuden ja avonaisuuden rajan purkautumista.<sup>17</sup> Perinteisesti tila ajatellaan suljettuna entiteettinä ja Carpelanin ullakot kokoavatkin sisälleen loputtomilta tuntuja määriä vanhaa ainesta. Toisaalta Carpelanin poetiikassa tilaa rajoittavien seinien konkretia murtuu, jolloin tila avautuu taivasta ja avaruutta kohti ja tuuli saa vapaasti puhaltaa sisään. Tämä piirre tulee korostuneesti esiin esimerkiksi *Jag minns att jag drömde* -teoksen novellissa ”Stormen” (16–21). Siinä myrsky ja tuuli saavat myyttilliset mittasuhteet, kun koulun katto repeytyy irti ja vintille sadan vuoden aikana arkistoidut ainekirjoitukset lentävät ulapalle keltaisena pilvenä. Tuuli herättää avonaisuuden ja vapaasti virtaavan ilman mielikuvia. Samaan aikaan Carpelanin teosten alkutuulella on myös konkreettinen ikiullakon muotonsa. Tila ja tuuli ovat vastakohtapari, jotka luovat dynaamista jännitettä teosten temaattiselle kentälle. Toisaalta ne myös vaihtavat paikkaa ja sulautuvat yhteen tarkkoja määritelmiä ja rajoja paeten. Näiden esimerkkien valossa ikivintin kuva rakentuu koko Carpelanin tuotantoa hyödyntävänä kuvallisena verkostona. Semanttinen yhteisalue muodostuu teoksen edetessä ja lisäksi täydentyy, kun sitä tulkitaan kirjailijan muun tuotannon kontekstissa.

Jos tässä luvussa analysoitua metaforista kokonaisuutta halutaan lukea arkistometaforan rajoitteita etsien, voitaisiin todeta esimerkiksi ullakolla lojuvien lehtien edustavan muistoja varsin pelkistävällä ja harhaanjohtavalla tavalla. On kuitenkin tärkeää ottaa huomioon ullakkometaforan esiintyvien epäloogisuuksien ja ristiriitaisuuksien kuvausvoima ja laajemmassa tekstikokonaisuudessa hahmottuvien yhteyksien luomat merkitykset. Tällöin muistamisesta rakentuu arkistoinnin ajatuksesta liikkeelle lähtien uutta luova, vieraannuttava ja muuntuva kuva. Lisäksi tämän kuvan tulkinnassa on olennaista olla tietoinen sen rakentuminen omaa keinotekoisuuttaan ja illuusioluonnettaan hyödyntäen.

Tulkitsen, että ikiarkisto-metaforan ilmaisuvoima perustuu konkreettisuuden illuusion lisäksi myös toisen perinteisen metaforan toimintamallin kyseenalaistamiselle. Muisti saa metaforassa konkreettisen hahmon, mutta on syytä myös kysyä, mistä ikiarkisto saa Carpelanin avonaisuuden poetiikkaa ilmentävät elementtinsä. Kyseessä on muistin abstraktion aineellistamisen lisäksi konkreettisen tilan purkautuminen abstraktiksi. Tulkitsenkin perinteisen metaforamallin mukaisen kuvattavan, eli muistin tuottavan kuvaa, eli konkreettista tilaa määrittäviä merkityksiä. Tilasta tulee kokoavan lisäksi avautuva, muuntuva ja menneisyyttä prosessoiva. Näin kuvattavasta ja kuvasta

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<sup>17</sup> Myös Hellgren (2014, 185) esittää *Urwindin* ullakon olevan ambivalenttiudessaan samalla sekä piilopaikka että avonaisuuden käsitteeseen liittyvillä merkityksillä latautunut tila.

muodostuva metaforan teoreettinen rakenne problematisoituu, kun ullakon avulla ei ainoastaan kuvata muistia, vaan myös muistin avulla ullakkoa. Näin tulkinnassa nousevat esiin myös tilan käsitteen määrittelyyn liittyvät kysymykset.

Ikivintiksi kutsumani semanttinen yhteisalue rakentuu tekstin pinnan tason ilmaisuista. Se kattaa koko runsaslukuisen joukon ullakolle sijoittuvia esineitä, ääniä ja tuoksujia. Toisaalta nämä muistiin metaforan kautta liitetyt elementit konstruoivat myös abstraktimman tason semanttista yhteisaluetta, jonka tulkitsen rakentuvan analyysissä esiin tulleista vastakohtapareista ja niiden välisestä jännitteestä. Keskeisin näistä on binäärinen, eli toisensa poissulkeva, vastakohtapari abstrakti–konkreettinen. Tämän lisäksi voidaan hahmottaa myös muuntuvuuden ja pysyvyyden, läsnäolon ja poissaolon sekä äänen ja hiljaisuuden väliset jännitteet. Näiden vastakohta-asetteluiden kyseenalaistuminen ja ainakin osittainen purkautuminen kuitenkin mahdollistuu metaforan osien, lähde- ja kohdealueen, välisen suhteen problematisoitumisen myötä. Perinteisessä arkistometamorassa abstrakti määritellään konkreetin avulla, mutta tässä yhteydessä myös konkreetti määritellään uudelleen abstraktin avulla, läsnäolo poissaolon avulla ja niin edelleen. Tällainen dynaaminen muuntuvuus ilmentää Carpelanille tyypillistä kategorioiden rajojen kyseenalaistumista. Muistia kuvataan kohdeteoksessani hyvin ilmaisuvoimaisesti ja metaforisen representoinnin mahdollisuudet esiintuoden. Konkretiaan viittaavien kuvien ryöpystä muistin olemus palautuu tulkinnankehän myötä abstraktiin ja ambivalenttiin, mikä puolestaan nostaa esiin muistin kuvaamisen vaikeuden ja jopa mahdottomuuden.

Analyysissäni on soveltamieni metaforateorioiden osalta korostunut, että pelkkien paikallisten metaforisten ilmausten tulkinta on harvoin mielekästä, sillä monin paikoin metaforat ovat tunnistettavissa jopa ainoastaan laajemmassa teos- tai tuotantokontekstissa. Tässä mielessä sekä kognitiivinen metaforateoria että semanttinen yhteisalue ovat toimineet analyysin työkaluina. Turusen (2010; 2011) käsitteen avulla on kuitenkin mahdollista hahmottaa metaforisuuden eri tasoja ja niiden aineksia laajemmin kuin pelkälle käsittemetaforalle perustuvassa analyysissä. Voidaan todeta, että myöskään semanttinen yhteisalue ei sinänsä riitä mallintamaan Carpelanin arkistometamoraa. Sen avulla pystytään kuitenkin havainnollistamaan, kuinka kohdeteokseni kuvallisuus poikkeaa prototyypin metaforan rakenteesta tai klassisesta arkistomallista.

Olen tähän mennessä nostanut artikkelissani esiin useita erilaisia variaatioita arkistometamorasta ja analysoinut niiden eroavaisuuksia ja toisaalta kytkeytymistä toisiinsa. Rinnakkaiset ja toisiinsa limittyvät kuvat rakentavat muistiarkiston ideaa, mikä tapahtuu kumulatiivisesti teoksen edetessä ja lisäksi laajemmin Carpelanin koko tuotannon kontekstissa. Orgaanisuuden tematisoituminen korostaa muistamiseen liittyvää syklisyyttä, joka niin ikään näyttäytyy tyypillisenä piirteenä metaforisen diskurssin muodostumiselle. Voidaankin todeta analysoitujen metaforien tuottavan kertomuksen tyypistä rakennetta, joka synnyttää fragmenttien välille jonkinlaista

koherenssia ja jatkuvuutta. Seuraavassa luvussa keskityn analysoimaan muistelun kertomusten ja metaforien suhdetta.

## 5 Kertomuksen ja metaforan suhde

*Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanissa keskeisenä muistelun välineenä toimii kirjoittaminen. Teoksen alaotsikko ”Tomas Skarfelts anteckningar” määrittelee tekstin minäkertojan muistiinpanoiksi. Kirjoittamiseen ja kirjoituspöydän ääressä istumiseen on useita viittauksia (esim. *BU*, 17). Minäkertoja Tomaksen kirjoitusprosessi on muisteleva ja omaelämäkerrallinen. Samalla se on myös nykyhetken tarkastelua ja ennen kaikkea omaa itseä määrittävää identiteettiprosessia: ”Jag annoterar mig” (*BU*, 14). Brockmeierin (2015) termein voidaan puhua autobiografisen prosessin läpikäymisestä ja narratiiviseen muistikäsitykseen liittyvästä autobiografisesta muistamisesta. Esittelen seuraavaksi tarkemmin, mitä Brockmeier tarkoittaa narratiivisella muistikäsityksellä ja suhteutan kohdetekstejäni vuorostaan ajatukseen muistista kertomuksena.

Brockmeier (2015, IX) käsittää kertomuksen olennaisena välineenä ja elementtinä yksilön omaelämäkerrallisessa prosessissa: ”-- kertomus on ihmisen tärkein autobiografisen merkityksenmuodostuksen tapa. Se on identiteettimme kieli.” Muistamisen ja muistelun liittyessä erottamattomasti yksilön identiteetin rakentumiseen ajatus muistista kertomuksena tuntuu luonnolliselta. Narratiivinen muistikäsitys kuitenkin esittää arkiston tai muistin biologisuuden ajatusta hyödyntävät kuvaustavat rajoittavina:

Muistamisen ymmärtäminen menneisyyttä luovasti rakentavaksi prosessiksi edellyttää kirjaamiselle ja varastoinnille perustuvien mallien ylittämistä paitsi käsitteellisesti myös vertauskuvallisesti ja kerronnallisesti. Muistamisen prosessi ei rajoitu yksilöön ja hänen aivotoimintaansa, vaan ilmenee kulttuuristen ympäristöjen sosiaalisissa ja ruumiillisissa käytännöissä. (Brockmeier 2015, 91, suom. NJ).

Brockmeierin projektia luonnehtii erityisesti arkistometaforan ja narratiivisen muistikäsityksen vastakkainasettelu. Hän näkee arkistometaforan jäykästi koodaamisen, varastoinnin ja uudelleen esiin ottamisen vaiheisiin rajoittuvana konseptina, kun taas narratiiviselle muistikäsitykselle rakentaen muistamista voidaan kuvata niin, että sen prosessuaalisuus, muuntuvuus sekä sosiaaliset ja kulttuuriset ulottuvuudet huomioiden.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Brockmeier (2015, 91–96) mainitsee arkistometaforan vaihtoehtoina myös muita muistia kuvaavia metaforia. Tällaisia ovat esim. aivojen toimintaa jäljittelevät metaforat, kuten muisti ravintolana tai itseohjautuvana orkesterina sekä diskursiiviset ja internetin verkostoituneelle toiminnalle perustuvat metaforat. Brockmeierin mukaan nämä ottavat arkistometaforaan verrattuna paremmin huomioon muistin toiminnan monimuotoisuuden. Hän kuitenkin katsoo narratiivisen muistikäsityksen omaavan eniten potentiaalia arkistometaforalle pohjautuvan ajattelumallin murtamiseen.



Myös Groesin (2016, 19) toimittamassa tuoreessa artikkelikokoelmassa konstruoituu ajatus klassisen arkistometaforan rajoittavuudesta. Teoksen kirjoittajat painottavat kuitenkin – Brockmeierista poiketen – muistin fyysisyyttä ja biologisuutta ja sanoutuvat irti käsityksestä muistista kollektiivisena ominaisuutena. Muisti nähdään kykyinä prosessoida menneisyyteen liittyvää subjektiivista informaatiota.

Edellisissä luvuissa tekemäni analyysin valossa ajatus arkistometaforasta yksinomaan rajoittavana, sulkeutuneena ja kehityskelvottomana rakenteena kuulostaa melko vieraalta. Analyysissäni olen osoittanut, että Carpelanin proosassa esiintyvät arkistometaforat ylittävät monin tavoin Brockmeierin niille määrittelemää toimialuetta. Niiden avulla kerronnallistetaan muistojen säilömistä ja uudelleen käyttöönottoa, mutta ne implikoivat myös muistelun prosessuaalista luonnetta ja vaikeasti määriteltävyyttä. Luonnon kiertokulkua ja syklisyyttä korostavat metaforiset ilmaukset kuvaavat muistelua orgaanisena prosessina. Konkreettisen tilan murtuessa arkiston groteskissa kuvauksessa taas korostuu muistiin liittyvä konstruktivisuus ja vieraus. Niin ikään analysoimassani MUISTION ULLAKKO -metaforassa yksi semanttista yhteisaluetta määrittävä tekijä on muuntuvuuden ja pysyvyyden välinen jännite. Tässä valossa Brockmeierin esittämä arkistometaforan jäykkyys ja rajoittuneisuus kyseenalaistuvat. Samalla kyseenalaistuu myös arkistomallille ja narratiivisuudelle perustuvien muistikäsitysten välisen jyrkän erottelun mielekkyys.

Kiinnostavaa Brockmeierin teorian ja kohdeteosteni rinnakkain tarkastelussa on myös Carpelanin romaaneille tyypillinen tapa tuoda autobiografinen prosessi eksplisiittisesti esiin kirjoittamisen hetkiin, vaikeuksiin ja mielekkyyteen liittyvien viittausten ja pohdintojen kautta. Brockmeierilla (2015, 99) autobiografisen prosessin luonteen ytimeen johtavat kysymykset siitä, voidaanko muistoa koskaan tarkastella puhtaana muistona ilman siihen liittyviä tulkintoja. Narratiivinen muistikäsitys huomioi, että asioiden muisteluun liittyy aina muistelun hetkessä tehty tulkinta menneestä ajasta suhteessa senhetkisiin olosuhteisiin. Tällä tavoin yksilö muistellessaan luo omaa kertomustaan, joka on jatkuva muokkaamisen ja tulkinnan prosessi.

*Blad ur höstens arkiv* -romaanin Tomaksen kohdalla autobiograafiseen prosessiin liittyvä tulkitseminen tulee esille syksyarkiston keräämisenä: menneistä asioista, muistojen sekamelskasta pyritään tulkitsemaan ja järjestämään itselle ymmärrettävää ja itseä määrittävää kokonaisuutta. Myös pohdinnat siitä, mikä on muistelun arvoista ilmentävät muistelun prosessissa tehtävää valintaa: ”Vad vill jag spara?” (BU, 79). Muisteluun liittyvä tulkinta tulee vielä eksplisiittisemmin esille romaanissa *Benjamins bok*, jossa minäkertoja kuvaa omaa kirjoittamisen ja muistelun prosessia tolka-verbiä käyttäen: ”Tolka den orörliga tiden till dofter, färger, synintryck, landskap, gator, torg” (111). Ilman autobiograafisen prosessin myötä tehtyä tulkintaa menneisyys on vain paikalleen jämähtänyttä, liikkumatonta aikaa. Tulkinnan myötä se kuitenkin tulee yksilölle jälleen

merkitykselliseksi ja herää eloon erilaisina aistihavaintoina ja tiloina. Menneisyyden tulkitseminen voidaan nähdä sen kerronnallistamisena. Minäkertoja luo kertomusta menneisyydestään ja kertomuksen muodon avulla muistojen aihiot muokkautuvat muistoiksi, jotka ovat itselle ymmärrettäviä ja omilta tuntuja. Niistä tulee osa kertojan autobiografista prosessia, osa eräänlaista kokemuskapasiteettia, joka elää ja muuntuu prosessin edetessä.

Muistia kuvaavat arkistometaforat ja muistin kertomuksellisuutta korostavat ilmaisut nivoutuvat Carpelanin proosassa monin tavoin toisiinsa. Esitän, että kohdoteoksessani arkistometafora käytetään joustavasti ja muistin kerronnallisuutta korostavalle käsitykselle rakentaen. Tällöin muistin arkistoina toimivat tilat vapautuvat konkreeteista rajoista ilmaisemaan identiteetin muodostumista ja muistelun prosessia. Muistelua kuvaavien metaforien toistuminen ja sen myötä korostuva kerronnan syklisyys myös osaltaan korostavat muistin prosessuaalista luonnetta.

Carpelanin muistelevien minäkertojien autobiografinen prosessi konkretisoituu usein tekstissä jonkinasteisena päiväkirjamaisuutena. Minäkertojan kirjoitusprosessiin tehtyjä viittauksia esiintyykin lähes kaikissa Carpelanin myöhäisissä romaaneissa.<sup>19</sup> Esimerkiksi *Urwind*-romaanin minäkertoja muistelee Anne Päivärinnan (2005, 64) mukaan ”päiväkirjamaisesti” leikitellen samalla kyseisen genren rajoilla: ”*Urwindin* päähenkilön Danielin tajunta rakentuu muistelun ja kirjoittamisen suhteessa, joka jatkuvasti problematisoituu paitsi ajan, myös kielen tasolla”. Minäkertoja viittaa tekstiinsä päiväkirjana: ”Jag skriver en dagbok för dig, du får den som en del av mig när du kommer tillbaka” (*Urwind*, 7). Samalla hän kuitenkin rikkoo välittömästi yksityisyyden illuusion (fiction of privacy), jonka Cohn (1978, 208–209) määrittelee päiväkirjamuodolle keskeiseksi elementiksi. Daniel nimittäin osoittaa kirjoituksensa toiselle henkilölle, poismatkustaneelle vaimolleen.

Kokoavasti voidaan todeta, että päiväkirjan kirjoittaminen toimii muistelun kehyksenä tarkastelemisani Carpelanin myöhäisissä romaaneissa. Samalla kirjoittamiseen viittaavien kohtien voidaan tulkita rakentavan MUISTELU ON KIRJOITTAMISTA - käsittemetafora. Päiväkirjamuoto sekä päiväkirjan kirjoittamisen tematisoituminen voidaan myös tulkita yhtenä esimerkkinä arkistometaforasta, jonka pääkomponentit ovat kirjoittaminen, varastoiminen ja uudelleen käyttöönotto. Säilöväenä tilana toimii päiväkirja kansien sisään rajoittuvine sivuineen. Tässä mielessä voitaisiin ajatella, että kyse olisi perinteiselle arkistometaforalle perustuvasta muistia kuvaavasta rakenteesta. Kuitenkin päiväkirjan olemusta tarkemmin tarkasteltaessa voidaan todeta, että sen ominaisuudet ulottuvat tämän metaforakehikon ulkopuolelle. Päiväkirjan sivuja selatessa

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<sup>19</sup> Ensimmäinen päiväkirjamuotoa hyödyntävä romaani on *Axel* (1996), joka pohjautuu osin myös dokumentaarille aineistoille. *Benjamins bokin* minäkertoja puhuttelee tekstiään päiväkirjana: ”Jag tar dig, dagbok, med mig. Så har jag alltid en samtalspartner” (120). Myös romaanissa *Berg* viitataan useasti minäkertojan kirjoitusprosessiin, mutta päiväkirjan piirteiden hyödyntäminen on viitteellisempää.

muistot ovat helposti saatavilla – olettaen, että kirja ei ole syystä tai toisesta vioittunut, vaan kaikki sivut ovat tallessa. Muistojen varastona päiväkirja on sen sijaan varsin vajavainen, sillä sen sisältämä aines on fragmentaarista ja kirjoitustilanteen värittämää (ks. esim. Cohn 1978, 208–209; Brockmeier 2015, 37). Päiväkirjametaforaan liittyy vahvasti kerronnallinen ja selittävä kehys: mitä ja miksi kirjoittaja on valinnut kirjaan kirjattavaksi, millainen kirjoitustilanne on ollut ja millainen representaatio muistoista näin ollen on saatavilla.

Brockmeier (2015, 84–86) toteaaakin, että metafora ei tyypillisesti esiinny yksinään, vaan pikemminkin osana jotain diskurssia, tietynlaisten kertomusten ympäröimänä. Useimmiten metaforat on upotettu niille tyypilliseen narratiiviseen ympäristöön – Carpelanin proosassa esimerkiksi päiväkirjan kirjoittamista, arkistoinnista tai kääntämistä selittäviin ja motivoiviin kertomuksiin. Metaforilla on narratiivista potentiaalia, joka voimistuu entisestään useamman metaforan muodostaessa figuratiivisen verkoston. Metafora myös tarvitsee toimiakseen narratiivisen selityksen, joka sitoo sen osaksi diskursiivista ympäristöään. Olenkin tässä artikkelissa analysoinut tällaisia verkostoja, metaforisia kokonaisuuksia tai diskursseja. Koen Brockmeierin ajatuksen kertomusten ympäröimästä metaforasta varsin toimivana. Väitän kuitenkin analyysiini viitaten, että myös arkistometaforan narratiivinen tai kertomuksellinen potentiaali voimistuu, kun se ympäröidään perinteisen arkistomallin rajoja kyseenalaistavilla kertomuksilla.

## 6 Lopuksi

Analyysini pohjalta Bo Carpelanin *Blad ur höstens arkiv* -teoksessa voidaan kokoavasti tulkita rakentuvan kaksi arkiston kuvaa: Yhtäältä minäkertoja kokooa itselleen syysarkistoa, valikoitua muistojen kokoelmaa. Tähän arkistoon liitetään tekstissä syklisyyttä ja orgaanista muuntuvuutta korostavia metaforisia ilmauksia. Toisaalta tekstiin konstruoituu rakennusmainen arkisto, joka sisältää seulomatonta muistojen dataa. Arkiston konkreettiset puitteet ovat hajoamispisteessä ja muutokselle alttiita – ajoittain arkisto laajeneekin kollektiiviselle tasolle, maailmankirjastoksi. Nämä kaksi kuvaa näyttävät tekstissä rinnakkaisina, mutta etenkin limittyvinä ja myös sekoittuvina. Tämä kuvallisten ainesten kirjo ja joustava esiintymistapa ovat Carpelanin kerronnalle tyypillisiä piirteitä. Ne havainnollistavat myös kohdeteoksessa rakentuvan arkistometaforan potentiaalia kuvata muistamista moniaineksisenä ja alati muuttavana prosessina.

Carpelanin avoimuuden poetiikan tarkastelu analyysin rinnalla vahvistaa ja syventää tulkintaa arkistometaforan muuntuvuudesta. Kohdeteokseni kiinnittyy voimakkaasti Carpelanin kirjallisuuskäsitykselle ominaiseen vastakohtien välisten jännitteiden hyödyntämiseen ja valmiiden kategorioiden kyseenalaistamiseen. Erityisesti

arkistometaforan tulkinnassa tematisoituu konkreettisen ja abstraktin välinen jännite ja sen purkautuminen.

Olen tässä artikkelissa todennut, että kohdeteoksessani arkistometafora rakentava aines muodostaa kumuloituessaan kertomusta muistuttavan rakenteen. Brockmeierin (2015, 84–86) teoriassa metaforan ja kertomuksen suhde näyttäytyy pitkälti yksisuuntaisena kertomusten tuottaessa metaforalle narratiivista potentiaalia. Analyysiini viitaten esitän metaforan ja kertomuksen suhteen kulkevan myös vuorovaikutteisesti toiseen suuntaan. Pelkällä muistin narratiivisen olemuksen abstraktiolla ei yksinään ole sitä ilmaisuvoimaa ja sisältöä, jonka konkretiaan sitova ja asioita yhdistelevä metafora mahdollistaa. Arkistometaforan ja ylipäätään metaforan voima piilee sen tarjoamissa havainnollistavissa raameissa, jotka kuitenkin voidaan rikkoa. Juuri tämä rajojen ylittäminen onkin analyysissäni osoittautunut tyypilliseksi Carpelanin tekstien tavaksi kuvata muistelun prosessia.

## Kiitokset

Tämän artikkelin kirjoittamista ovat rahoittaneet Suomen kulttuurirahaston Pirkanmaan maakuntarahasto sekä Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura.

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# Creating Characters in Multimodal Narration: Comics and Picturebooks in the Hands of the Translator

Riitta Oittinen and Eliisa Pitkäsalo

Comics and picturebooks are multimodal forms of artistic expression communicating through the combination of the modes of the verbal, the visual and the aural. Comics and picturebooks are not far removed from each other: they both include not only images and written texts but also verbal and visual characterisation such as sound effects, speech bubbles, bodily gestures, postures and facial expressions, all of which reinforce the joint effect of the words and images. The aural mode is triggered during the reading process: while picturebooks are often read aloud, the illusion of aurality in comics is created in a more subtle way. Through these different modes, the reader experiences the joint narration of the verbal, the visual and the aural. This process makes the reader believe in and get an understanding of the characters and their background. In our article, we examine how characters are built and situated in time, place and culture. In this way, the overall multimodal effect of visual and verbal language makes the reader complete the gaps in narration. We illustrate this phenomenon using Risto Isomäki, Petri Tolppanen and Jussi Kaakinen's graphic novel *Sarasvatin hiekkaa* (2008, *The Sands of Sarasvati*, 2013) and Elena Agnello and Adrie Le Roux's picturebook *I am Alex* (2016, *Minä olen Alex*, 2016).

**Keywords:** characterisation, interplay of the verbal and the visual, reading experience, translation of multimodal texts

## 1 Introduction

Narration is a central issue of all translation. This phenomenon can be described through Mikhail Bakhtin, who discusses the dialogical nature of all narrations (Bakhtin 1990, 426–427). Any reading experience consists of the voices of different writers, illustrators, and audiences in the past, present and future. Human words are never created in a vacuum and every detail carries a meaning (Oittinen 2000, 126, 164). Translators always start their work as readers not just of words but of illustrations, too. The dialogics of translation includes both the traditional task of translating words into words and translating words into images and the other way around (Jakobson 1989, 55). This task of translating texts also covers the creation of stories for different media, such as transforming novels into graphic novels. Thus, we understand translation as multifaceted rewriting.

The present article deals with the modes of the verbal, the visual and the aural in the translation of comics and picturebooks. On the one hand, comics and picturebooks share

many features, such as a story told in both verbal and visual languages. On the other hand, there can be significant differences, such as the audience and the use of texts (being read aloud or silently). We focus on how a story is created and, in particular, how characters in the stories are built by using verbal and visual means. We examine how the illusion about life, either real or fantastic, is created in the translation of multimodal texts. We discuss the differences and similarities of comics and picturebooks and the means the writer, the illustrator and the translator can use when creating characters in multimodal texts of this kind. Comics and picturebooks are both iconotexts, generated by the interplay of the modes of the verbal (words) and the visual (images). Their multimodality also consists of the aural mode in the sense of an “inner ear”: without hearing concrete sounds, the reader is able to sense the sounds and voices even if they were marked only typographically by using the means of the verbal or the visual language, such as sound effects. Moreover, picturebooks, and sometimes comics, too, are read aloud, which gives them a more concrete aural aspect. In the translation of the two, comics and picturebooks, it is inevitable that the translator is able to interpret the modes and their meaning-making of texts to be translated.

In addition, the readers of comics and picturebooks have a key status: any choices made by the authors, readers or translators of multimodal texts need to be pondered on from the viewpoint of readership. In translation, the voices of authors, illustrators, translators, and audiences intertwine, resulting in the creation of new meanings. What is relevant here is the translator’s awareness of the future readers of texts to be translated: for example, in the translation of picturebooks the translator’s reader image (child image) is relevant (Oittinen 2004, 4).

Our joint research questions are: 1) How is a character depicted through different modes: what is expressed in words, what in pictures? 2) How do different modes support each other, or are they in contradiction with each other? 3) How do the ethical thematics of the works show in the characterisation? 4) What has happened in translation: has the relationship of the verbal and the visual changed? In our analyses, we present some examples from both situations of rereading and rewriting, looking at the visual, the verbal and the aural of the originals and translations.

## **2 Comics and picturebooks**

There are several definitions of comics, such as *medium*, *language*, *semiotic system* or the like. However, the problem of categorisation has lead theorists to refer to the genres of comics rather than comics as one genre. In other words, the art form with its sequential images can be categorised, for instance, as comic strips, short graphic novellas or graphic books regarding the length of the art form, or, for example, as fictional, instructional, or

educational according to their primary function (entertainment vs. instruction) (Zanettin 2008a, 5–6).

The genres of comics can also be seen as literary genres using the means of visual language. This leads to dividing the comics in categories such as journalistic comics, horror comics or autobiographical comics, or, more specifically, superhero comics, war comics or erotic comics indicating the contents of the narration (Bramlett et al. 2016, *passim*). The themes of various literary genres are expressed in comics visually. As Scott McCloud (1994, 9) considers, “[comics are] juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.” A comic book consists of consecutive panels and possibly written text, pictorial symbols, sound effects, and other effects attached to the images in various ways. Therefore, comics are a versatile art form that combines techniques from literature and visual arts, and it is possible to utilise research methodology related to different art forms in order to study comics. This can be done by borrowing methods from narratology and textual research, as well as from semiotics or visual culture studies. Methods from film studies can be applied for example when analysing still images, image layout, and various effects that imply a resemblance between comics and films (Herkman 1998, 94–95; Borodo 2016, 68–70).

Picturebooks, too, fit into several categories, which makes them as difficult to define as comics (Lewis 2001, *passim*). In different databases, even the definitions of picturebooks may vary: some definitions are based on the share of the verbal and the visual information in a work of art, whereas some others are based on the strength of the visual influencing the verbal. Some databases, for example, do not list any illustrated books as picturebooks, and some others list both illustrated books and so-called picture books as “picturebooks.” (Oittinen 2004, 18–35.) According to several definitions (Harainen 2002, Heinimaa 2001), we may also look at a picturebook as an object of manufacture: due to printing technology, a picturebook usually has 32–48 pages. Picturebooks – as well as comics – may be black-and-white or multi-colour or both, and one way or the other they form narrative entities (at least in the reader’s mind). Picturebooks may be fairytale books, storybooks, ABC books, or toybooks. (Oittinen, Ketola, and Garavini, 2018).

There are also several other aspects involved, such as the different kind of voices: on the one hand the voice of the author, the illustrator and other experts, and on the other, the adult reading the story to the child. An author writes and an artist illustrates the story, the audience (child and adult) interprets the images, and it is in society where the stories are found. There is the image itself, comprising a number of smaller images, and there is the medium affecting the images. The images can also be cut up into basic elements, not only by elements such as dots, lines, shapes, volume and scale, but also into elements according to direction, lighting, perspective and proportion (Berger 1998, 45–46; 51–69).



By using different styles and textual devices, picturebooks can break boundaries and widen their scope remarkably. Barbara Bader (1976 in Lewis 2001, 137) places picturebooks within even a wider scope: “A picturebook is a text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and, foremost, an experience for a child.” As Perry Nodelman (1999, 69–80) points out, we could define a picturebook as the “province of the young child,” using many styles, codes and textual devices. Even though picturebooks are often considered as a genre, others maintain the opposite: picturebooks may “be of any genre, including history, fantasy, nonfiction, and poetry” (Oittinen, Ketola, and Garavini, 2018).

### **3 Characteristics of visual language: reading narration into life**

Reading is the key issue in translating comics and picturebooks. As readers of multimodal texts, we need to be aware of several conventions. For example, when we read a multimodal text in black and white, we use our imagination and add the missing information, the colours, to the picture. In this way, images are intertwined into a multimodal entity to be understood. (Spink 1990, 60–62; Oittinen 2000, 32, 101). In comics, the visual and verbal contents can be combined in several ways. Scott McCloud (1994, 153–155) offers seven categories of various word–image combinations: word-specific, picture-specific, duo-specific, additive, parallel, montage and interdependent combination. Juha Herkman (1998, 59) simplifies McCloud’s categorisation and divides the word–image combinations into four functions: an illustrated text may be based more on words than on images or quite the contrary; there may also be collaboration between the verbal and the visual, or the visual may stand in controversy with the verbal message.

At first, the translator reads the text to be translated and imagines the future readers and their reading experiences; second, the real target audience reads the translated text and understands it in their own way. When reading a book with illustrations, the reading process gets more complicated. According to the *Gestalt* psychologist E. H. Gombrich (1998, 99), reading pictures concerns not only the artist creating the images but also the ways we see the images and the reasons behind them, such as ethics, morals, values and emotions. He, too, underlines the importance of culture and conventions and their influence on our ways of seeing.

We read texts for different purposes, such as for translating them, and the purposes have an influence on how we read the texts. This is how the American scholar Louise M. Rosenblatt (1978, 23) describes two different reading strategies: aesthetic and efferent, the first reading being aesthetic and the latter efferent. The strategies differ in both time and experience: on the one hand, in aesthetic reading, the reader’s whole attention is concentrated on the experiences s/he has while reading; on the other hand, in more analytical readings, what comes after the reading is important. Of course, even a translator

may read for many different purposes but when reading for translation purposes, a translator's reading experience is certainly efferent (Oittinen 2000, 26–29). Moreover, the situation of using picturebooks – when reading silently or reading aloud – is unique. Every time we read we bring something different to the situation, and at the same time a translation never fully depicts what there is in the original text.

When starting a translation task, a translator needs to ask: “What kind of verbal, visual, and stylistic information have I got? What kinds of moods, attitudes, and feelings have I found?” In this way, the stories in comics and picturebooks become alive during the reading experience. The panels in comics and page-openings in picturebooks create a narrative continuum. The drawings include not only images and written texts but also many graphic signs, such as speech bubbles, speed lines, and sound effects as well as graphic and pictorial symbols. They all reinforce the joint effect of the combination of words and images, which creates a story, a narration. The gutter between the panels in comics and the turning of the pages in picturebooks are gaps for readers to fill in according to their expectations and previous knowledge of the world. (Zanettin 2008a, 13; McCloud 1994, 68; Groensteen 2013, 52–54). Susan Bassnett points out that readability and an understanding of “the full meaning” of a text go together with filling in the gaps (Bassnett 2002, 36–37). The visual and verbal clues illustrated in the panels and page-openings guide the reader in this process.

The clues conveyed by images and words are essential in this meaning-making process, because comics and picturebooks are written in two languages: verbal and visual (see Cohn 2013). It is important to be sensitive to this, especially from the perspective of the reading experience in general, but also from the angle of translating illustrated texts. Whether the reader understands the text or whether the translator's work is successful depends on the competence of the target reader or the translator. Is s/he capable of reading the visual and verbal messages as one unity? (Celotti 2008, 43; Kaindl 2011, 39)

According to McCloud (1994, 99), in comics, time and space are divided by panels, and the shape of panels plays an essential role in the narrative. The conventional shape of a panel is rectangular, and any diverging shapes can be used to emphasise the significance of the events depicted in the panel. The size and, in particular, the width of a panel in comics usually illustrate the duration of the event: a tall and narrow panel signifies a shorter length of time, whereas a wide horizontal panel decelerates the action or even stops the course of events (McCloud 1994, 101–102). McCloud's reading refers to the definition of the classic type of comics, which has been discussed for example by Groensteen (2013, 40). Groensteen (2013, 40.) also discusses the more sophisticated type of comics operating “in a register that is more poetic than narrative.” In this type of comics, the size and form of panels are not necessarily related to time. Illustrators of picturebooks, on the other hand, often borrow techniques from comics, such as dividing time and space by page-openings. For example, characters moving from one place to

another, is often depicted by using a rectangular shape. Groensteen (2013, 52) even claims that “[s]ome illustrated children’s books could quite reasonably be called comics.”

Since the panels in comics do not include real-life motion (except for webcomics), the sense of motion must be created in other ways, such as by using speed lines, broken panel borders, or even by using the means of the nonverbal communication of the characters, such as gestures and postures (Pitkäsalo 2016b, 57). Another tool to depict motion is to use sound effects. These effects can sometimes overlap panel borders. Effects travelling across panels indicate the direction of motion and sound, and they connect the events of separate panels more closely (Herkman 1998, 45–46, Manninen 1995, 38). In picturebooks, too, we can find similar features. For example, in Mélanie Watt’s *Scaredy Squirrel* series (e.g., *Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend*, 2008) the author-illustrator borrows many techniques and ideas from comics, such as the use of panels and sound effects, or symbols expressing astonishment and fear. In any event, her books can still be clearly defined as picturebooks.

Moreover, sounds and voices activate narration, since they may be made “audible” by the readers even if they cannot hear them in reality. Dialogue and any other forms of speech in comics are usually written in speech bubbles, varying in the shape and size of the letters according to the volume of the speech. The speech and voice effects can be added to the drawings in picturebooks, too. Both in comics and picturebooks, motion and action may be created by using various effects describing sound. These types of sound effects can help emphasise dramaturgically high points, lending them a cinematic sense of motion (Huitula 2000). In comics, complicated scenes can be depicted swiftly and in a simplified manner, which McCloud (1994, 42–43) considers to be the strength of expression in comics.

#### **4 Means of characterisation**

The characters (people, animals, objects) in stories may be created in several ways, for characterisation is based on the verbal, visual, and aural information. A character has a certain kind of disposition and temperament and a certain kind of visual appearance: s/he is thin or fat or red or gray. Characters move and speak in a certain way and have a certain role to play. They also have a certain background, and are given a certain name, which is why certain things happen to them (Bertills 2003, 51; Oittinen 2004, 101–104).

A proper name in fiction gives a character personality and substance, offering the reader an idea of the internal relations of the characters in the story (Bertills 2003, 72). Proper names may also be totally imaginary, such as Milne’s Eeyore and Disney’s Heffalump, or they may depict a character, such as Lindgren’s Pippi Longstocking. Proper names are seldom translated in literature for adults; on the other hand, in picturebooks, characters

often get a translated name. Translated names are also of great importance for child readers: translated or otherwise domesticated names give them the possibility of identifying themselves with the characters. In every case, the whole entity of a book and a story has a strong influence on what translators do with names.

In the core of fictional narration, a character, or a group of characters, usually communicate in some way (Borodo 2015, 24). When characters are depicted visually, the movements, facial expressions, gestures, postures, and mutual relationships are interpreted and described in a manner which is not far removed from those of film narration, such as close-ups and full-frame images. When readers see a series of still images placed in a row, they conceive the impression of motion. In the same way, an impression of sound, such as a character's voice, can be experienced in a reading situation. The illusion of a character's voice is created by different visual means, such as sound effects and contents of speech bubbles, as well as nonverbal communication (Pitkäsalo 2017).

The layout of the drawings and the gestures, postures and facial expressions of the characters in turn reveal the reactions of the characters, or even the nature of their relationships. This kind of nonverbal communication either supports the discourse or sets the contents of the visual and verbal in conflict. In this way, the reader's impression of the characters' emotions and physical state or the relationship between the characters is confirmed; the reader can also consider the conflict between the verbal and the nonverbal communication as it would play out in a real-life situation (Pitkäsalo 2016b, 440).

In other words, the nonverbal communication of the characters in comics and picturebooks is based on both the characters themselves and the narration. Gestures and facial expressions are means to express emotions or attitudes: facial expressions, in particular, seem to be universal, at least those used to express so-called basic emotions, such as anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. These basic emotions are generally viewed to be independent of culture, language and age. There are naturally innumerable emotions and expressions, as McCloud (2006, 84–85) contends: a comic book artist can illustrate the gamut of emotions by combining basic expressions, such as anger and sadness meaning betrayal. The nonverbal communication also supports – or contradicts – the oral communication. Additionally, as Schneller (1992, 216) points out, nonverbal communication replaces verbal communication if the purpose is to avoid using words, or if the words are not enough to express emotions. In other words, nonverbal communication also has a social function. Through facial expressions and gestures, it is possible to show a character's desire to collaborate or show empathy (Schneller 1992, 216).

Gestures and postures substantiate the emotions of the characters in a communicative situation and also depict their mutual relationship, such as friendliness, indifference or

suspicion (Borodo 2015, 24). Gestures are culture-bound, which means that they are used in different cultures for different purposes. Hand gestures, for instance, may carry different meanings, such as a finger pointing to a person's temple: according to cultural differences, this may signify "you are clever", "you're stupid", "you're crazy", "I think", "I remember" or "Think!!" (Schneller 1992, 226) In multicultural interaction, gestures may carry different meanings: one meaning may be expressed using many different gestures (Schneller 1992, 215). Recognising gestures and facial expressions is of great importance especially when translating into such languages that are culturally far removed from the cultural background of the source text or when translating a book for a culture the verbal and visual contents of which seem to be in contradiction with each other. The nature of characters can also change even radically if the gestures, postures or other nonverbal communication is performed in a different way compared to the source culture's interpretation.

According to Fernando Poyatos (1983, 286) there are situations where only gestures and postures express the speaker's "true meaning". In these situations, it is possible for the character's speech and her/his nonverbal communication to be in contradiction with each other. In fiction, where both speech and nonverbal communication are depicted in words, it is possible to explain this contradiction. Yet in comics – and in picturebooks, too – where speech is delivered in writing and gestures, and where expressions and other nonverbal communication are depicted visually, it may be risky to show readers the contradiction and make them confused and bewildered (Pitkäsalo 2016b, 448).

All in all, the translator of comics and picturebooks must consider the target culture's system of signs since the meanings behind the symbols are adopted and thus culturally specific. In most cases, the translator cannot interfere with the actual image (Zanettin 2008b, 206). Instead, in the translation of comics, translators receive a template, into which they can insert only the translated text. In picturebook translation, a similar template is given to the translators to fit in their text within the space given in the co-print. If a panel includes culture-specific, nonverbal messages that the target language reader cannot comprehend, the translator must have the capability to transfer the visual content into the target language's linguistic and cultural environment through words alone. However, words tend to fail in expressing the combined multimodal content of art and text. Thus, as the message conveyed by the image is lost, the combined meaning is not transferred to the reader – or at the very least, it will fall short of the original. In the following, we apply the above ponderings to two cases of verbal, visual and aural interaction in comics and picturebook translation.

## 5 Revisiting Sergei and Alex

At the very beginning of the article, we defined translation as rewriting, as a versatile process taking place not just between languages but even between modes, visual and verbal. In other words, our scope of looking at translation covers different combinations of words, images and sounds. As examples, we are using Risto Isomäki, Petri Tolppanen and Jussi Kaakinen's graphic novel *Sarasvatin hiekkaa* (2008, *The Sands of Sarasvati*, 2013) and Elena Agnello and Adrie le Roux's picturebook *I am Alex* (2016, *Minä olen Alex*, 2016). The main reason for our choice is that both of the works deal with notions of values and ethics. While *The Sands of Sarasvati* conspicuously ponders on global warming and the melting of ice, *I am Alex* concentrates on the differences and similar values of all human beings. In our analysis, we are especially focussing on how the characterisation of the main protagonists, Sergei and Alex is built in the narration.

In our article, we take a closer look at the original books and their translations. We define translation not only as interlingual transaction between verbal languages, but also intersemiotic translating, such as translating pictures into words. We show how the verbal, visual and aural modes interact in two kinds of translation analyses. We are interested in how characterisation is built in the exchange of different modes in a graphic novel and a picturebook. We examine how all this is mirrored in, on the one hand, the translation, and on the other, the translation process. This standing causes a difference between the analyses of our material: a translator always needs to pay attention to the audiences of both the source as well as the target versions, while in this analysis of the finished translation – depending on the research questions and method – the audience is not necessarily as relevant a question. The method used in both analysed examples incorporate a close reading of the verbal and the visual while also pondering on the aurality and dialogics (Bakhtin 1990, 426–427) of a graphic novel and a picturebook.

In our analysis, we understand characterisation as being created during a reading experience of multimodal texts. In general, the aural is understood in two ways in the analyses: in a concrete sense in picturebook translation, where texts are often read aloud, and in a more abstract sense, when the illusion of sound is created in the reader's head. However, in our analysis, the characters are also developed through the aural mode, when texts are read aloud or silently. In the following, we are focussing on the characterisation of our two main protagonists, Sergei and Alex, in the multimodal entity of visual, verbal and aural modes.

## 5.1 Graphic novel *The Sands of Sarasvati*

The graphic novel *Sarasvatin hiekkaa* (2008) by Petri Tolppanen and Jussi Kaakinen is based on Risto Isomäki's eco-thriller of the same title (*Sarasvatin hiekkaa*, 2005). The English translation *The Sands of Sarasvati* (2013) was made by Lola Richards and Owen F. Witesman. *The Sands of Sarasvati* introduces a group of scientists who are investigating the changes in the different states of water and sand at the bottom of the oceans, in the glaciers of Greenland and the different kinds of geological forms in The Bahamas, Canada and Finland.

The original story of the examined graphic novel is mainly based on scientific facts and includes a large amount of scientific jargon, which is typical of science fiction as Markku Soikkeli (2015, 10) observes. The examined graphic novel – as a metamorphosis of the original novel – is a good example of rewriting a story: due to its visuality, a graphic novel is a particularly apt channel for science fiction, because many of the events that would require the description of special vocabulary can simply be portrayed in single panels or in a series of panels.

When we read and rewrite a hard-fact novel like this, we have to be aware of the main characteristics of science fiction as a genre, including the eco-thriller, for example. The specialty of the genre today seems to be the way in which the actual theme of our present-day world discourse is represented, and in the way, it is discussed through the alienated fiction worlds of sci-fi literature. As a science editor and an environmental activist, Risto Isomäki has also published several non-fiction books and articles on environmental affairs and the development of the Third World (Kirjasampo, n. d.). In his novels – ecological thrillers and sci-fi novels – he continues dealing with issues such as gender equality as well as racial equality.

In our analysis, we ponder on the relationship between the visual and verbal modes regarding the characterisation of Sergei, the main protagonist. The aim of the analysis is to show, in which way the development of Sergei is depicted visually, and how the verbal and aural modes give support to or deviate from this picture. Furthermore, we show how the typical themes of sci-fi literature mentioned above have been visualised in the graphic novel examined and how these themes appear in the creation and development of a character.

The analysis of *The Sands of Sarasvati* focuses on the characterisation of one protagonist, Sergei Savelnikov. The character's speech, inner thoughts and action are mostly expressed by combinations of the visual and the verbal modes, such as words in speech bubbles and sound effects marked with letters. Instead, the physical description, emotions and reactions are depicted by the postures, gestures and facial expressions of the characters. On the one hand, our analysis introduces Sergei Savelnikov as a multilevelled

character; on the other, it shows the difficulties the translator of comics may confront. In the following, we will first briefly describe the plot of the book. Thereafter we will take a look at the characterisation of Sergei.

The story begins with “Part 1: Water and Sand” in the Norwegian Sea in the 2020s, where the Russian oceanographers observe the changes occurring at the bottom of the sea. Later, a group of archaeologists study the ruins at the bottom of the Gulf of Khambat, and the Russian deep-ocean researcher Sergei Savelnikov joins Indian (ocean) archaeologist Amrita Desai and her group. Together they try to explain how a ruined city got submerged off the coast of India. In Part 1, the reader meets with the Finnish researcher Kari Alanen, who is marvelling at the enormous rocks first in Eleuthera and later in Finland. In “Part 2: Sand and Ice,” the reader is taken to Greenland, where the Philippino glaciologist Susan Cheng observes the changes in the ice sheets. Meanwhile, Sergei Savelnikov and Amrita Desai are visiting the ruins in the old towns in India, and Kari Alanen visits the Canadian researcher John Thaw to discuss the connection between the rocks in Eleuthera and Finland and the drumlins in Canada. Water and sand seem to have something to tell us about the Flood and lost civilisations. In “Part 3: Ice and Water,” different storylines converge, and from these seemingly unrelated observations, a frightening picture of a possible terrifying fate of mankind is beginning to take shape.

Regarding the main plot of the book, the central protagonist is Sergei Savelnikov, whose character is shaped both visually and verbally. The main issues of Isomäki’s political project are discussed parallel with building Sergei’s character: in fact, this mostly happens with respect to the developing relationship of Sergei and Amrita. Racial and cultural equality, as well as environmentalism and the development of the Third World are all issues that can be found as themes in the dialogue of Sergei and Amrita, while the development of Sergei’s individual character is depicted more or less visually. The aural dimension of the story can be imagined by its readers, who add the tone, pitch and volume to the characters. In the panels analysed, there are no sound effects, which could direct the reader in interpreting the characters. In this analysis, on the basis of the verbal and visual contents, we can give reasons to the volume and rhythm of the characters’ voices. However, through the method of close reading, it is not possible to define the tone or pitch of the characters, because they are based on the reader’s individual experiences only. As the translator is a reader of texts, too, her/his interpretation of multimodality may influence the characterisation.

At the beginning, there are three characters in the research vessel mapping the edge of the continental shelf. Only two of them, Vasili and Natalia, are identified. Sergei will be named as late as on page 6, where a bristly man with a scruffy appearance is introduced as a member of the staff of the research group. Later, his appearance on the first pages is explained: he is mourning his dead wife. This unkempt figure also shows up in the end part of the book, when he is scared of having lost Amrita. On page 52 Amrita and Kari



go for a walk on an island of ice. A snowstorm rises, and Sergei gets worried, which is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Isomäki et al. 2013, p. 54, panel 2.

Visual: Close-up of a smoking Sergei who is quite bristly and untidy and looks extremely worried. The captain of the ship stands in the background.

Verbal: Captain: "Ehem... the men were saying that the island may have broken in two during the storm. The other half could have been driven farther off by the wind." Sergei: "Good Heavens!"

Aural: Sergei speaks to himself. The worried look on his face refers to the volume (loud whisper) and rhythm (slow tempo) of his voice.

Sergei's worrying face and unkempt looks are in harmony with his verbal expression, and also with the aural mode transmitted through the illustration. Showing Sergei as a scruffy figure twice – at the beginning of the story and during the snowstorm – highlights Sergei's inner thoughts: the fear of losing his second wife, too. The Figure 2 shows Sergei in a standstill, with a worried look on his face.



Figure 2: Isomäki et al. 2013, p. 52, panel 7.

Visual: Sergei stands in a snowstorm on the deck. Another figure is standing at the door.

Verbal: Another figure: “Come inside! There’s nothing we can do until morning!”

Aural: Sergei does not respond. The sound of storm is visually depicted.

The lay-out of the panel emphasises the contrasts of the situation described: warm and cold, light and dark, immobility and motion. The request of the figure at the door represents the everyday-world, while the posture of bemused Sergei refers to his withdrawal into his inner thoughts. Without the complementing verbal contents, the image would not transmit the deep worry and sorrow of Sergei. The aural aspect is even more interesting: the reader can not only hear the tempest, but also sense the silence of Sergei.

The translation of the line (Figure 2) shows how the character can be changed during an interlingual transaction: in the original text, the relationship of the two characters is much more formal than in the translation. In the Finnish source-text the figure standing at the door is addressing Sergei formally: “Tulkaa sisään!” (Come inside!) Formality of the original text outlines Sergei’s dignity and the high respect the figure at the door has towards him.

However, the scruffy appearance is only one side of Sergei. Before the threatening scene of a snowstorm, Sergei is shown as a member of the staff of the Shirshov Institute working together with the research group of the NIOT, The Indian National Institute of Ocean Technology (see Figure 5). His appearance has become tidy when he is on an aeroplane on his way to India, and his looks remain the same until he starts worrying about Amrita.

Through the story of Sergei, the actual discourse on our present-day world is represented, including the issue of cultural equality. Sergei and Amrita come from different cultures; their religious backgrounds are different, and in Figure 3 this is also shown from an interesting, and for a European reader, unusual point of view.



Figure 3: Isomäki et al. 2013, p. 37, panels 5–6.

Visual: Close-up of Sergei and Amrita. They look at each other and smile.

Verbal: Amrita: “I’m glad you said that. It would be nice if... if there was something more between us.” Sergei: “Is that a proposal?” Amrita: “Maybe, if you want to take it that way... I’m a divorced woman, which is worse than marrying a pagan, as far as a lot of my relatives are concerned.” Sergei: “A pagan! I’m a Christian!”

Aural: Sergei and Amrita speak smiling. The volume and rhythm of voice are compatible with the situation without any special characteristics.

Without the visual mode, readers would not know how they should understand Sergei’s reactions to Amrita’s consideration that being a Christian is – from a Hindu point of view – equal to being a pagan. While both Sergei and Amrita are depicted smiling, this seemingly contradictory dialogue is read in a literal, and not in a sarcastic, way. The translation directly follows the original text and gives space to the target-language readers to create interpretations of their own: “Pakanan! Minähän olen kristitty.” (“A pagan! I’m a Christian!”)

In general, the text has been translated in a very thorough way, except for the following example, where, despite the strategy of almost a word-for-word translation, the verbal text has become flat and lacks the humour of the original.



Figure 4: Isomäki et al. 2013, p. 55, panel 8–9.

Visual: Sergei arrives on a raft to save Amrita and Kari. Sergei smiles and waves his hand.

Verbal: “Ahoy there!” “Unless you have a previous engagement this evening, I might have a dinner invitation for the two of you!”

Aural: Sergei is shouting. The sound of rain.

The modes collaborate in the translation, but the character of Sergei has changed. In the original Finnish text Sergei is joking: “Jos teillä ei ole muuta tekemistä tänä iltana, niin minulla olisi illalliskutsu teille kummallekin!” In the English version, the equivalent words are expressed, but Sergei’s sarcastic humour has disappeared.

Additionally, the issues of environmentalism, the equality of genders, and the development of the Third World come up in the description of the relationship between Sergei and Amrita. In fact, Amrita is the leader of the research group, which is significant considering the issue of the equality of genders. The equality of Amrita’s and Sergei’s professional competence, and parallelly the equality of their relationship, is clearly shown in images 5 and 6. Yet the meanings of the images alone, without the verbal contents, are far removed from the meanings conveyed in the overall effect of the two modes – visual and verbal.



Figure 5: Isomäki et al. 2013, p. 27, panel 2.  
panel 3.



Figure 6: Isomäki et al., p. 27,

**Visual:** Amrita is standing, Sergei and Athi are sitting. In image 5, Amrita's posture is extremely aggressive: she points her finger at Sergei, and Sergei holds his head. In image 6, Amrita's posture is even more hostile: she leans forward towards Sergei; one hand is elevated, and with the other she points at Sergei. Sergei leans back in his chair; his hand gesture is explanatory or even defensive.

**Verbal:** Amrita: "Sergei, a little explanation would be in order." Sergei: "Well, do you remember when we were talking about flood myths... how common they are? Isn't it strange that the legends of different cultures treat the subject in basically the same way, even before the people of the Americas and Eurasia had any contact with each other? What if the story of a great flood were true, and all of these people..." Amrita: "died in a flood? You can't be serious!" Sergei: "What else would explain the finds?! I believe that some kind of enormous tidal wave came from the ocean and buried the whole city beneath it. That's why there are a lot of bones in front of this wall... people were washed up against it by the water and drowned."

**Aural:** In Figure 5, Sergei looks contemplating (nonverbal communication) and the nonverbal gestures indicate that he speaks slowly with consideration. In Figure 6, Sergei's posture refers to the defensive tone of his voice.



The verbal contents of the two panels override the visual contents, because the nonverbal communication – gestures and postures – is evidently in contradiction with the verbal. Without the verbal contents, the visual would be interpreted erroneously as a scene of quarrel. The main problem of the contradiction between the verbal and visual content is that of nonverbal communication (Pitkäsalo 2016a, 66; Pitkäsalo 2016b, 445, 447–448). Thus the aurality is compatible with visual contents of the panels. Translators have no other choice but to translate the written text, because, usually, they cannot touch the image. By doing so, the contradiction remains, but the gestures and postures of the characters can be interpreted as a depiction of the nature of the characters.

In this example, too, the translators' strategy is to follow the original as closely as possible. For instance, in the Figure 6, the Finnish original goes: "Mikä muu selittäisi löydöt?! Uskon, että mereltä tuli jonkinlainen valtava hyökyaalto joka hautasi koko kaupungin alleen. Siksi tämän muurin edessä oli paljon luita... veden mukana huuhtoutuneet ihmiset puristuivat sitä vasten ja hukkuivat." The English translation follows closely the original text.

In the case of Figure 5 and Figure 6 the dialogue shows us Sergei as a character with the power of reasoning. In this point, the characterisation of Sergei meets with the issue of environmentalism, the main theme of the novel. Sergei puts together the information gathered by the group during the research conducted, and achieves the result that mankind is on the threshold of an environmental catastrophe. Later, he shows his ability to make decisions, even if they seem to be crucial. He speaks with the President of Russia and gives him information that leads to the decision to halt the nuclear plants on the coasts of Europe and the North America (Isomäki et al. 2013, 54).

From the angle of characterisation Sergei is an interesting protagonist: he undergoes a significant change from being a ragged, unkempt man to becoming a trim and tidy researcher. Moreover, during the narrative, Sergei's character builds up as a serious researcher as well as a private person, too. Occasionally, the character is visually almost unrecognisable, because the development is so quick: Sergei gets several roles as a mourning husband, a worrying partner and colleague, a loving and consoling soulmate as well as a serious researcher with the power of deduction. Through all these roles, the comic book artists discuss environmentalism and other ethical issues, including a set of values, and these contents are also conveyed in the translation, even though the verbal and visual contents occasionally seem to be in contradiction.

On the other hand, at some points, it is noteworthy that the verbal contents of the original and the translation are very close to each other. It seems that the translator has trusted the target reader's capability of interpreting the multimodal entity, not only the verbal text but the illustration as well. This may be the reason why the translators have sometimes rendered almost a word-for-word replica.

## 5.2 Picturebook *I am Alex*

*I am Alex* was originally released by the South-African publisher Bumble Books in 2016 and translated into Finnish by Riitta Oittinen the same year. Being originally published in South Africa, with numerous cultures and languages, the book also tells about the ideology of the publisher: the story discusses ways of life and different religions, such as Catholicism and Islam as well as the different origins of people. The characters in the story are black, brown and white and have different attributes – such as *kippa* referring to the Jewish religion – showing their different origins and different sexual orientations. There is, for example, a family with two fathers and a family with one mother and no dad. One of Alex’s friends sits in a wheelchair.

The Finnish publisher of the translation is Pieni Karhu and on its web site (Pieni Karhu 2016) the publisher is profiled as a house for children, advocating reading, tolerating otherness and approving of children – and all people – as they are. This is in harmony with the original intent of the original book: on the front page the reader can find a direct quotation by Nelson Mandela.

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

– Nelson Mandela

The idea of the book clearly shows in the verbal and the visual messages of the story. In the following, we shall take a close look at the verbal and the visual in the original book and its translation.

After the cover and the first page-openings, the book begins by introducing the main character Alex: “I’m ALEX and today is my birthday. / I can’t wait for all of my friends to arrive. / Let me introduce them to you!” (Agnello 2016, n. p.) The picture shows Alex wearing pigtails above her/his ears while smiling and boldly holding her/his hands on the hips.



Figure 7: Agnello 2016, n. p.

Alex has at least two identities, feminine and masculine orientation: s/he looks ambiguously like a boy or/and a girl. The androgynous combination of feminine and masculine are clearly visible in the illustration, where Alex – at her/his birthday party – wears a casual tomboy outfit: a t-shirt, shorts, boots, and spectacles. On the other hand, her/his pigtails make Alex look a bit like a girl, even though, in modern western societies, hair-dos may have no special reference to any certain identity. For this reason, the translator of the book found this an important feature and depicted Alex as a young child (boy or girl). In addition, the English-language original does not refer to Alex as a “he” or “she” but lets the reader of the book guess and decide. Neither does the author reveal Alex’s age.

The book is organised according to the order of visitors coming in, and they are all introduced one by one. Alex first gives their names and then tells something about each of them separately. The friends are both children and adults, and they come from different cultures, nationalities, languages, religions, and ways and walks of life. Alex her/himself is open to all these differences and clearly celebrates them. The book certainly has an agenda: tolerating the foreign and the otherness of different cultures, religions and life-situations.

Alex’s way of presenting the visitors is clear and simple. He introduces his best friend Kaleb: “KALEB is my friend. / He likes to play soccer. Kaleb has two dads, Grant and William.” With these words Alex shows that s/he is open to otherness, respecting all people, whatever their religion, culture or sexual orientation. The atmosphere in the book is very open and easy. In the Finnish translation, the translator aimed at creating a similar image of Alex and a similar easy atmosphere.



The translator follows both the original flow of the story and the characterisation of Alex. Over all the page-openings, Alex makes small side comments, such as: “Kaleb says Grant’s little cap is a yarmulke; it is a funny word.” In the Finnish translation a similar atmosphere is kept: “Kaleb sanoo, että Grantin pieni lakki on kipa. Kipa on kiva sana. (Finnish translation) [Kaleb says that Grant’s little cap is a kipa. Kipa is a nice word.] Alex’s character is built by both these short comments and her/his visual image, and they show that Alex has a fine sense of humour. Alex’s character is being built throughout the story-telling: s/he is nice and tolerant but also impatient like an ordinary child. For example, in a scene where s/he has got a book as a present s/he comments: “I can’t wait to read it!”



Figure 8: Agnello 2016, n. p.

Visual: Kaleb and his two dads arrive. Kaleb is holding a present in his hand. Alex smiles and waves his hand.

Verbal: “Kaleb is the first one to arrive! He gave me an interesting book for my birthday – I can’t wait to read it!” Side comment: “Kaleb says Grant’s little cap is a yarmulke; it is a funny word.”

Aural: A car at the background. Alex and her/his friends say “hello”.

This page-opening shows an unconventional family arriving to the birthday party, but the verbal contents focus on details: the present and the yarmulke. In this example, the visual and verbal messages support and complement each other. The Finnish translation of the passage goes: ”Kaleb saapuu ensimmäisenä ja tuo minulle lahjaksi jännittävän kirjan. Voi kun pääsisin lukemaan sitä ihan heti! [Kaleb comes first and brings me an exciting book as a present. Oh how I want to read it right away!] Here the translator has underlined Alex’s excitement and impatience. In the translation, unlike in the original picturebook,

the visual and the Finnish verbal are not in collaboration, because Alex is smiling and looks very happy even if her/his comment shows impatience. In this case, on the basis of the information given through different channels, the aloud-reader may even read the passage aloud in a more impatient voice.

The arrival of Alex’s best friend Vuyo shows another way of understanding aurality.



Figure 9: Agnello 2016, n. p.

Visual: Vuyo and Alex are sitting in a tent. Vuyo is reading and laughing. Alex is holding binoculars and looks serious.

Verbal: “Vuyo is my best friend. He lives with his mom, he says her heart is so big it is as big as a mommy and daddy’s heart. We love to camp indoors and pretend that we are in the wild. Vuyo tells me about their church, which is almost like Lina’s, but they go on Sundays and there is a lady who plays the organ.” Side comment: “Organ is a scary instrument!”

Aural: The reader hears the laughing and chatting as well as the sound of the organ in her/his “inner ear”.

The visual and the verbal modes tell different stories. While the verbal text compares the religions, the image shows Alex and Vuyo playing explorers in a jungle. The aural mode, instead, stresses a small detail on the page-opening, the sound of the organ, which makes the aloud-reader emphasise the side-comment and imitate the sound orally. In the Finnish translation, Alex’s side comment is interesting: “Uruissa on liian iso ääni!” [The organ has far too big a sound!] Instead of the scariness of the instrument in the original text, the translation stresses the strength of the sound: in the Finnish translation Alex is not only a

tolerant and wise character, but also an ordinary child, who may be afraid of strong sounds.

On the following page-opening, Rashida and her family have arrived to the party. The illustrator shows Rashida with her granny, who is wearing an Indian sari outfit. They have given Alex a beautiful shawl as a present.



Figure 10: Agnello 2016, n. p.

Visual: Alex examines the shawl s/he has got as a present and looks quite concentrated.

Verbal: “It makes me feel so very special!”

Aural: No aural contents.

The aloud-reader of the original pays attention to the serious, almost unhappy expression on Alex’s face. At this point, the Finnish translation gives the aloud-reader a hint by explaining the reason for Alex’s expression: “Minä katson huivia tarkkaan. Siitä tulee hyvä mieli.” [I look at the shawl very carefully. It makes me feel happy.] Here the translator has written her text in the form of illustrating the seriousness of Alex’s face: In this way Alex does not seem unhappy about the present but rather puzzled about such a fine gift. In other words, the scene is translated in a slightly different manner now, closely following what is shown in the image.

As to *I am Alex* and its Finnish version in general, the translator has especially pondered on the character/characterisation of Alex and her/his friends. Using the verbal and visual depiction in both the original and the translation, Alex is described as a nice girl/boy with

many different friends. Alex's character is multifaceted: not only friendly and tolerant, but also an ordinary child with likes and dislikes.

As everything is told from the angle of Alex, the English-language writer has been able to avoid the division into the two sexes, the "he" and the "she". So it has been an easy choice for the translator not to tell Alex's sex or age. The storyteller's voice, as well as the verbal and the visual, the child image, and the multiculturalism have all influenced the character of the protagonist Alex.

## 6 Conclusions

In our article, we have pondered on comics and picturebooks, which are enormously interesting multimodal art forms combining the modes of the verbal and the visual. This kind of multimodal texts are created by writers and illustrators, but eventually, they build up during the reading process, in the reader's (and listener's) mind. When translating comics and picturebooks, translators must have, in addition to language skills, a vast set of other skills. They must not only be familiar with the visual language conventions in comics or picturebooks, but they must also be able to analyse and interpret culture-specific elements and other meaning-making features in images including gestures, postures and facial expressions and to convey these meanings into another language and culture. In this entirety, the translator needs to be aware of the issues concerning the readers of the source and target texts.

As our research material, we have used two books, the graphic novel *Sarasvatin hiekkaa* (*The Sands of Sarasvati*) and the picturebook *I am Alex* (*Minä olen Alex*). There are similarities between the two books: in addition to the verbal text, both include the visual and the aural modes. There are also differences: the two books definitely have different audiences. *The Sands of Sarasvati* is full of scientific jargon and the contents may be frightening to children. On the other hand, children are certainly the audience for *I am Alex*. Here, even the publisher's views may have an influence on how the translator sees the target audience.

In our analyses, the characters are created both visually and verbally. The ethical thematics of the two books are reflected in the characters and their mutual relations. The different modes may either collaborate or contradict. This combination then leads the reader and translator of comics and picturebooks to an interpreting level more complex than that of reading and translating literary works without the visual aspect. The reading process of comics and picturebooks even includes the aural mode, as they include contents – speech and other voices marked by letters of effects – that the reader hears with a kind of inner ear. In this sense, the concept of an aural mode can also be used when

analysing the situation of silent reading. Picturebooks are also often read aloud in a read-aloud situation.

To conclude our points, what has happened in the translation is that the characterisation has changed to some extent. This is due to that translators are always readers of their original texts, interpreting them and making translational decisions on the basis of their interpretation. In this process, the verbal and the visual never exist alone but are combined and complement each other. Through these different modes, an illusion is created, leading to different experiences of the verbal, the visual and the aural. This process makes the reader believe in and get an understanding of the illusion, namely the characters and their background and culture.

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# Picturebook Translation as Transcreation

Anne Ketola

Translating multimodal products such as picturebooks is a highly creative enterprise. It may require the translator to recreate verbal material in order to produce a multimodally coherent product for the new target audience. For this reason, some translation scholars now describe this practice as *transcreation* – merging *translation* and *(re)creation* – rather than translation. In this article, I set out to examine picturebook translation in the light of the concept of transcreation. The data of the article consists of two picturebooks authored by Margaret Wise Brown: *The Color Kittens* (1949) and *The Sailor Dog* (1952), and their Finnish translations. My analysis aims to demonstrate that the illustrations of the picturebooks have served as a source of inspiration as well as a point of justification for the radical reformulations of the verbal dimensions of the stories. Based on these observations, I will further develop the definition of transcreation.

**Keywords:** Translation, transcreation, picturebooks, multimodality.

## 1 Introduction

Picturebooks operate on the interface of two different forms of storytelling, the verbal and the visual. Their messages are created in an intimate interaction of words and images, which combine into new conceptual entities by complementing and challenging each other. The process of translating these artefacts from one language to another is a highly creative enterprise, requiring translation solutions that may radically diverge from the traditional standards of the practice. In fact, as concluded by Di Giovanni (2008), the term *translation* does not always fully account for the transfer of multimodal messages from one language and culture to another. Therefore, some translation scholars now employ the term *transcreation* – merging *translation* and *(re)creation* – to describe processes of transfer which call for extensive adaptations of verbal material in order to create multimodally coherent products for a new target audience.

The process of transcreation produces solutions that are “variable, non-uniform and at times non-predictable” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 106); at least when examined from a verbally-informed perspective. So far, the idea of transcreation has been employed to describe translational practices of artefacts such as video games (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013), advertisements (e.g. Pedersen 2014), and media products such as TV commercials and films (e.g. Di Giovanni 2008). In this article I set out to demonstrate that picturebook translation, too, can be examined as a process of transcreation, in which the visual dimension accommodates for highly creative verbal solutions.



The data consists of two picturebooks authored by the renowned picturebook author Margaret Wise Brown: *The Color Kittens* (1949) and *The Sailor Dog* (1952), and their Finnish translations. My analysis aims to illustrate just how much the picturebook stories have changed in the process of bringing them into a new target culture. In particular, I aim to demonstrate that the illustrations of the picturebooks have served as a source of inspiration as well as a point of justification for the radical reformulations of the verbal dimensions of the stories. The method employed in the article could be described as a *multimodally-oriented translation shift analysis*: I analyze the data for translation shifts – notable textual changes – that have taken place during translation and compare these to the visual dimension of the source text, the picturebook illustrations. The consideration of multimodality in the context of translation is gaining more and more importance, as most of the material being translated today is, in one way or another, multimodal (Hirvonen and Tiittula 2010, 1).

I will begin the article by discussing the definitions of translation and transcreation. In particular, I will reflect on whether the use of the term transcreation is justified and how making the distinction between the terms affects the way in which we view the practice of translation. I will then introduce the data, and the method of analysis used to examine it. The two following sections introduce my translation analyses of the data, starting with *The Sailor Dog* and finishing with *The Color Kittens*. I will conclude my article by reflecting on why and how the consideration of the concept of transcreation might benefit translational enquiry in its pursuit to understand the complexity of translation activity, especially the translation of multimodal material. Building on the empirical observations made in the article, I also offer my own working definition of transcreation, to be further discussed and improved in future research.

## 2 Defining translation, defining transcreation

Bassnett ([1980] 2014, 2) proposes that translation can be generally understood as rendering a text written in a source language (SL) into a target language (TL) “so as to ensure that 1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar, and 2) the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted”. Others define translation as a process of transfer. Brislin describes it as “the transfer of *thoughts and ideas* from one language (source) to another (target)” (1976, 1, emphasis added). Similarly, Bell describes translation as “the transfer of *meaning* from a text in one language into a text in another language” (1991, 8, emphasis added). What these definitions have in common is the idea that translation involves taking something that exists in the source language (be it a text, an idea or meaning on a more abstract level) and re-expressing it in the target language. In this article, this is the definition of translation<sup>1</sup> I build my arguments on.

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<sup>1</sup> However, not all definitions of translation maintain this view. Hatim and Mason, for instance, consider translation as “an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, *another act of communication* (which may have been intended for different purposes and different readers/hearers)” (1997, 1, emphasis added). Within this definition, translation could entail replacing a source text message with another message created in the target language. This view of translation would therefore include both translation and transcreation as they are understood in this article.

To sum up, translation is here understood as the process of analysing a text in a particular language, and conveying its essential message into a text in another language. In addition to analysing the text to be translated, a professional translator also considers the presumed needs of the new target audience. This is notably relevant when we translate picturebooks, the main audience of which consists of children. Each decision made during translation is therefore affected by how the translator perceives what is appropriate for the children receiving the translation (Oittinen and Ketola 2014).

The translator of multimodal material examines complex combinations of messages created by and between multiple modes. As a general rule, the translator is only able to modify one of the dimensions of meaning. In the case of translating picturebooks or advertisements, for instance, translation entails changing the verbal part of the multimodal message into a different language. In the case of subtitling TV-programmes or films, translation involves adding a new mode – the subtitles in the form of written text – to the multimodal whole. Even if only one of the modes can be altered, the translator needs to carefully examine and interpret the multimodal entity in order to come up with translation solutions that conform to the messages created by other modes.

At times, making the translation match the rest of the multimodal entity – together with considering its suitability for the new target audience – might require radical reformulation of the original verbal message, even changing parts of it altogether. This brings about a question of whether this reformulation can or should be called translation as defined above. As Di Giovanni (2008, 40) writes, “the term ‘translation’ has proven inadequate to account for processes of transfer where verbal and visual language cannot come apart, as images always determine the semantic content and, ultimately, the perception of words”. As mentioned above, this idea has led some translation scholars to employ the term *transcreation* to describe creative translation practices that require extensive adaptations of verbal material.

The concept of transcreation is not novel in Translation Studies. One of the first publications to introduce the concept (to the Anglophone academic community) was *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999) edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, in which transcreation is linked to Brazilian post-colonial conceptualization of translation as a transformative, cannibalistic undertaking. More recently, the term transcreation has been employed in the context of translating multimodal products, most notably by Carmen Mangiron and Minako O’Hagan (2006, O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013). O’Hagan and Mangiron employ the term to refer to the radical adaptive strategies required in video game localization. They refer the use of these strategies as “translation by invention” (2013, 54). O’Hagan and Mangiron maintain that the term transcreation describes these deliberate transformative approaches better than translation, and that the term “removes the preconceived authority of the original and allows room for another original to be created” (2013, 199).

The way in which transcreation is commonly defined within the translation industry differs from the above; it appears to have become a bit of a buzz word used to advertise translation services that are supposedly more *creative* than others. Pedersen (2014) introduces different

definitions and descriptions of transcreation as it is employed on the websites of companies who advertise providing transcreation services. These sites claim that, unlike “more traditional translation between two languages”, transcreation consists of “transferring the essential message of a text into the target language and culture”; other companies posit that transcreation involves “keeping the attitude and persuasive effect [of the original]” and “using the right cultural nuances” (Pedersen 2014, 59–61).

These definitions describe nothing more and nothing less than all professional translation activity, which always strives to present the essence of the source language message in a way that maintains the spirit of the original and that is culturally accessible for the new target audience. It is therefore easy to understand why a translator might feel frustrated when confronted with the distinction between translation and transcreation. After all, positing that creative translation could or should be called transcreation downplays the creativity involved in all translation activity (Chesterman 2016). One of the most important questions to be addressed in research into transcreation should therefore be whether or not it is really necessary – or, from the perspective of professional translators, even appropriate – to distinguish between the practices of translation and transcreation.

I suggest that the industry-driven definitions quoted by Pedersen have been created with a strong commercial interest. They have most likely urged from a need to distinguish one’s work from that of others’ in a field of arduous competition. Looking at these definitions only, the distinction between translation and transcreation seems unjustified and even unwarranted. However, I suggest that introducing the term transcreation beside translation can serve academic purposes and help us describe the occasionally unpredictable solutions found in picturebook translations and other multimodal translation products.

I emphasize that I do not propose that we should refer to *all* picturebook translation activity as transcreation instead of translation. Instead, I aim to demonstrate with examples that picturebook translation can include radical reformulations of verbal content due to a variety of reasons. The most extreme of these reformulations can hardly be conceptualized as translation: as exemplified in the following section, the translated versions of the books can include entire paragraphs of text that do not have any counterparts in the (verbal) source text. Referring to these modifications as transcreation as opposed to translation might provide us a more flexible conceptual space in which to examine and analyze the changes that have taken place.

### **3 Materials and method**

The data consists of two classic picturebooks written by the renowned picturebook author Margaret Wise Brown, namely *The Color Kittens* (1949) and *The Sailor Dog* (1952), and their Finnish translations, *Maalarikissat* (“The painter cats”, translated by Kirsi Kunnas in 1987) and *Laivakoira* (“The ship dog”, translated by Marjatta Kurenniemi in 1969). *The Color Kittens* is illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen and *The Sailor Dog* is illustrated by Garth Williams. The books have been published in the famous *Little Golden Books* series (*Tammen kultaiset*

*kirjat* in Finland), and have been frequently reprinted since their first releases nearly 70 years ago.

The Finnish translators of the books, Marjatta Kurenniemi (1918–2004) and Kirsi Kunnas (1924–), are among the most celebrated children’s literature translators in Finland. Both are known not only as translators but also as acclaimed children’s book authors. Kurenniemi and Kunnas have both been awarded the Finnish State Prize for Literature as well as the Pro Finlandia Medal of the Order of the Lion of Finland, presented to significant artists and writers in the country – along with various other esteemed awards, prizes and honours (Kirjasampo). Both of the translators’ professional esteem is important to keep in mind when examining their work; the translation solutions, even the most radical and unexpected ones, have been made by someone who is very experienced at translation and very familiar with writing for a child audience.

The analytical method employed in the examples can be described as a *multimodally-oriented translation shift analysis*. Translation shifts refer to notable differences between the original text and its translation or, as John C.A. Catford puts it, “departures from formal correspondence” (1965, 73) that have taken place in the translation process. In the following analyses, I mainly present examples of two different types of translation shifts: *modulation* (translation differs from the original either semantically or stylistically) and *mutation* (translation includes words that do not have a counterpart in the original) (van Leuven-Zwart 1989, 159–169). My analysis consists of identifying translation shifts in the examples, comparing these changes to the way in which the modes of the source text co-create meaning, and reflecting on the possible reasons behind the shifts. Each example displays a source text segment together with its Finnish translation in italics. The Finnish translations are followed by English backtranslations, which have been translated by the author of the article and with the intention of reproducing the Finnish message as literally as is possible. There are no page numbers in the books examined.

As mentioned above, the books analysed here are written by the same author. The most interesting difference between the books is that *The Sailor Dog* is written in prose and *The Color Kittens* is partly written in verse. The translation strategies required for the two source texts are hence largely different. The translation shifts that have taken place in the translation of *The Color Kittens* are mostly related to recreating the verses in a new language. This is a demanding process which requires great creativity from the part of the translator. Many of the translation shifts that have taken place in the translation of *The Sailor Dog*, in turn, are related to explicitation – the translator explaining things that are ambiguous in the source text. Explicitation in translation can be subtle (for instance, improving readability by adding cohesive devices) or more visible (for instance, adding explanatory phrases) (e.g. Vanderauwera 1985, Blum-Kulka 1986). Some translation scholars have proposed that explicitation is always a part of translation; Blum-Kulka, for instance, proposes that “explicitation is a universal strategy inherent in the process of language mediation” (1986, 21), even though this argument has also been criticized (see e.g. Becher 2011). As shown in the examples below, when examining explicitation in picturebook translation, it is interesting to

notice that the explicitation is not always limited to the verbal dimension of the books. The translators might alleviate ambiguity also in regard to the images and word–image interaction.

#### 4 The Sailor Dog – adding details and descriptions

Margaret Wise Brown’s *The Sailor Dog* is a story about a dog who longs to live at sea. He comes across various vehicles – planes, submarines, cars – willing to take him onboard, but he chooses to look for a ship instead. He finally finds one at the seashore, and embarks on a journey to exotic destinations. My analysis of the translation of the book offers four examples, most of which, as mentioned above, are related to explicitation in various forms. The first two examples represent explicitation deriving from interpreting word–image interaction in the illustrated source text; the translator has verbally explicitated details of the story that are only visible in the illustrations. The third example, I argue, is representative of the translator (or the editor) making modifications in the text based on how the needs of the Finnish child audience have been perceived. The fourth example, I suggest, might be related to space constraints imposed by the visual layout of the picturebook page.

##### Example 1

###### **English original**

He found a little submarine.

###### **Finnish translation**

*Tässä on sukellusvene,  
joka on juuri aikeissa  
sukeltaa.*

###### **Backtranslation**

Here is a submarine  
which is just about to dive.

The Finnish translation in Example 1 illustrates a *mutation*: the translation includes information that has no counterpart in the verbal source text. Yet, the added information can be found in the corresponding illustration, which depicts a submarine that is partly under water. The translator has possibly interpreted this as a submarine about to dive, and has added this information to the translation. In other words, the illustration has affected the way in which the verbal element is recreated in the new language. It is also worth pointing out that the Finnish solution “Here is a submarine” makes a much more explicit reference to the illustration than the original; the illustration defines what the word “here” refers to. Word–image interaction in the original sentence and the translation is hence different.

## Example 2

### English original

He found a little car.

### Finnish translation

*Hän kohtasi tiellä auton,  
joka oli täynnä koiria.*

### Backtranslation

On the road he came across  
a car full of dogs.

In Wise Brown's picturebook, the illustration accompanying the sentence presented in Example 2 depicts a convertible car with seven dogs inside it. The Finnish translation of the sentence is another example of a *visually motivated mutation*: the translator has verbalized information that is presented only in visual form in the multimodal source text. Similar changes have also been found in the examination of other picturebook translations (see e.g. Ketola 2016a; 2016b). I propose that this type of explicitation of visual information is not needed in translation for improved text comprehension; after all, the information is also present in the translation in a visual form. Instead, the explicitation may make the translation sound wordy, even clumsy.

## Example 3

### English original

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### Finnish translation

*Mutta kun vähän aikaa oli  
purjehdittu, Turre huomasi,  
että kapteeni olikin jäänyt  
laiturille. Turre oli yksin  
laivassa. Mutta ei Turre sitä  
surrut. Olihan hän  
laivakoira.*

### Backtranslation

But after sailing for a while,  
Turre [Scuppers] noticed that  
the captain had been left on  
the dock. Turre was onboard  
alone. But Turre was not upset  
because of it. He was a ship  
dog, after all.

Example 3 displays a longish addition that has been made in the Finnish version of the story. This addition is related to a part in the original story which some might consider slightly illogical: When Scuppers arrives to the seashore and finds the ship he will embark on, the captain of the ship is standing in front of his ship with a loudspeaker, urging people to get onboard. Scuppers gets on the ship and the ship takes sail. From that point onwards, however, Scuppers is alone on the ship. The original book does not comment on why other possible passengers – or at least the captain of the ship – are not onboard. Yet, a comment has been added to the Finnish translation, explaining that, after sailing for some time, Scuppers realized that the captain of the ship had accidentally been left on the dock and that Scuppers, indeed, was alone on the ship. As mentioned above, explicitation in translation can either be subtle or more pronounced. This addition is an example of a more visible intervention from the part of the translator (or, perhaps, the Finnish editor), who has felt the need to further explain the plot for the Finnish child audience. Adding such a part to the original story means completely recreating a part of it.

#### Example 4

##### **English original**

In his ship Scuppers had a little room.

In his room Scuppers had a hook for his hat and a hook for his rope and a hook for his handkerchief and a hook for his pants and a hook for his spyglass and a place for his shoes and a bunk for a bed to put himself in.

##### **Finnish translation**

*Hän löysi pitkän kaukoputken ja katseli sillä merelle. Aurinko paistoi ja tuuli puhalsi ja Turren oli pitkästä aikaa oikein lysti olla.*

##### **Backtranslation**

He found a long spyglass and used it to look at the sea. The sun was shining and the wind was blowing and Turre [Scuppers] was feeling happy for the first time in a while.

In the English original in Example 4, Wise Brown's writing has a lovely rhythm to it, created with the repetitive structure. The corresponding part of the story in the Finnish translation can hardly be called a translation of Wise Brown's writing: the two text excerpts have almost nothing in common content-wise. In the Finnish version of the book, this excerpt comes straight after the plot-explicating addition discussed in Example 3. It is possible that after making the addition, the rest of the text on the page had to be shortened in order to fit it on the page, and that the translator decided to come up with a new addition to the story instead of trying to shorten the original.

Whatever the motivation behind the solution is, it is obvious that the Finnish version of this part of the story has been completely recreated. I propose that the accompanying illustration (see Fig. 1) has served as inspiration for this creative solution: in the illustration, the dog is standing on the deck of the ship, holding a long spyglass, and smiling as he looks to the horizon. The sun is shining and the wind is blowing, as indicated by the shape of the sails. In other words, the description created for the Finnish version of the story corresponds perfectly to how the scene is depicted in the illustration.



Figure 1. Scupper on his ship in *The Sailor Dog*. Image copyright: Garth Williams.

This example perfectly illustrates the main argument of my article, namely that not all of the decisions made during picturebook translation entirely fit into the definition of translation *per se*. Comparing the Finnish rendering to the English original as its *translation* might bring about questions of the translator's fidelity to the source text; the Finnish rendering might appear as a substandard translation which does not follow the communicative intent of the original enough. The Finnish rendering presented in Example 3, in turn, does not appear to be a translation at all, since it does not correspond to anything in the source text. However, examining these as instances of transcreation – recreating a story for a new audience – gives more leeway to their interpretation and examination.

## 5 The Color Kittens – recreating a rhyme

*The Color Kittens* is a story about two kittens who enjoy playing with paints. The kittens embark on a quest to create the colour green which is their favourite colour. They start off mixing primary colours and end up creating all the colours in the world. The story is written partly in prose, partly in verse: the story includes a total of ten short poems. The verses have also been translated in verse. This might sound obvious, but it should not be taken as granted;



picturebooks written in verse are sometimes translated in prose (examples can be found, for instance, in the Finnish translations of Julia Donaldson’s rhyming picturebooks). My analysis of the book will focus on the translation of the poems, since they have created the most interesting challenges for the translator. My analysis will also pay attention to the changes in the rhyme schemes – the patterns of rhyme at the end of each verse.

#### Example 5

<b>English original</b>	<b>Finnish translation</b>	<b>Backtranslation</b>
Of a purple land	<i>Voi uneksia kuusta,</i>	One may dream of a moon
In a pale pink sea	<i>joka saarta valaisee,</i>	which sheds light on an island,
Where apples fell	<i>ja kultaisesta puusta,</i>	and of a golden tree
From a golden tree	<i>josta omenat putoilee.</i>	from which apples fall.

Example 5 describes what the kittens dream about during night after a day of playing with colours. The illustration that accompanies the poem depicts a purple island with ten small houses and a large yellow tree with red dots representing apples. The island is depicted in a sea of light pink colour, against a green background with stars and a crescent moon. The rhyme scheme of the original is ABCB which is a so-called simple four-line scheme. The rhyme scheme of the translation is ABAB. Creating these rhymes has required the translator to recreate the part of the story slightly. The reference to the pink sea and the purple land have been omitted. Instead, the translator writes about a moon shedding light on an island. The translator has been able to maintain the reference to the tree with the pears by adding a reference to the moon: the Finnish *of a tree* (“puusta”) rhymes with the Finnish *of a moon* (“kuusta”). This is an excellent example of “translation by invention” as described by O’Hagan and Mangiron above. It is reasonable to suggest that the translator has examined the illustration to look for possible rhyming target language solutions: in the illustration, the crescent moon is right above the island. The rhyme is recreated with the help of the visual; the illustrations offer a reference point on which a new verbal description can be built.

One could also say that the first verse of the translation is slightly easier to understand than that of the original. As mentioned above, the poem describes what the kittens dream about during the night. In the English original, the verse starts directly with “Of”, followed by a list of the things appearing in the dream. The introductory wording, “They dreamed their dream”, is presented three whole pages earlier. In the Finnish version of the poem, the translator has used a more explicit wording, “One may dream of -”. In other words, the translator has used an explicitation strategy to improve the readability of the poem. It is also likely that the recreated verbal description of the scene alters the way in which the reader of the translator inspects and interprets the accompanying illustration. The reader of the translation will probably allot more visual attention to the moon, since its role is verbally emphasized. Further, if examining the illustration in the translated version of the book, one might think that the decision to depict the land as purple and the sea as light pink were the illustrators’ own choices, instead of being a part of Wise Brown’s whimsical story telling.

## Example 6

<b>English original</b>	<b>Finnish translation</b>	<b>Backtranslation</b>
Brown as a tugboat	<i>Ruskeaa kuin höyrylaiva</i>	Brown as a steamer
Brown as an old goat	<i>ruskeaa kuin vanha köyry vuohi</i>	brown as an old crooked goat
Brown as a beaver	<i>ruskeaa kuin majava</i>	brown as a beaver
	<i>ja oksan tuohi</i>	and the bark of a branch

Example 6 also includes interesting, visually motivated modulation. The reference to the ship has been changed in translation from a tugboat to a steamboat. The illustration (see Fig. 2; next page) provides a plausible motivation for the change: the illustrators have depicted the funnel (the chimney on the ship) as notably large, perhaps providing visual emphasis to the fact that the boat is propelled by steam power. The most interesting change in the rhyme, however, has taken place at the very end. The translator has added a verse – the comparison of “[brown as] the bark of a branch” – to the end of the rhyme. This is a mutation, since it has no counterpart in the verbal source text. The rhyme scheme of the original is AAB (or AABC if one counts the word *brown*, printed on top of the illustration, as a part of the poem). The rhyme scheme of the translation is ABAB (or ABABC), similarly as in the previous example. Adding a new verse to the end of the poem has enabled the translator to pursue a certain rhyme scheme more consistently.



Figure 2. Brown items in *The Color Kittens*, as labelled by the Finnish translator of the book. Image copyright: Alice and Martin Provensen.

The Finnish poem reads well: the Finnish word for *bark* (“tuohi”) perfectly rhymes with the Finnish word for *goat* (“vuohi”). The addition of the verse is interesting because it brings about a whole new interpretation for an element in the illustration. In the bottom-right corner of the original illustration, there is a splash of brown colour, resembling a brush stroke, with the word *brown* written on top of it in capital letters. In the Finnish translation, the name of the colour has been superimposed on top of the visual element in Finnish (see Fig. 2). The most interesting thing about the translation is that adding the description of “brown as the bark of a branch” next to this splash of colour makes one interpret it as a piece of bark – which it indeed resembles. This is a fascinating example of how translation may alter the way in which we interpret the illustrations of a book. The solution displays very creative interpretation of the illustration from the part of the translator. The verse might have been extremely challenging to recreate without this addition.

Another, smaller translation shift has taken place in describing the appearance of the goat. In the English original, the goat is simply described as *old*; in the Finnish translation, it is described as *old* and *crooked*. In the illustration, the back of the goat is indeed quite crooked, so the illustration might have motivated this mutation as well. There is no real need for the addition, but the translator might have simply enjoyed playing with words – the solution also flows nicely with the Finnish word for *steam* in the previous verse (“höyry” – “köyry”). All in all, Example 6 demonstrates that picturebook translation can include not only recreating new elements in the

verbal part of the story, but also recreating new interpretations for the visual elements in the illustrations.

### Example 7

#### **English original**

Green leaves  
and red berries  
and purple flowers  
and pink cherries  
Red tables  
and yellow chairs  
Black trees with golden pears.

#### **Finnish translation**

*Vihreitä lehtiä  
ja punaposkimarjoja  
ja kirsikkasarjoja.  
Ja kultaiset päärynät  
oksilla välkkyvät.  
Ja tuostapa löydän  
punaisen pöydän,  
ja keltaiset tuolit  
saat sinä, jos huolit.*

#### **Backtranslation**

Green leaves  
and berries with red cheeks  
and series of cherries.  
And golden pears  
sparkle on branches.  
And there I find  
a red table  
and yellow chairs  
are for you to have, if you'll accept them.

The poem in Example 7 lists items that the kittens paint when they go on a frenzied painting spree. The illustration on the page includes all of the items mentioned in the English poem: green leaves, red berries, cherries (which, curiously, are pale pink instead of the usual cherry pink), purple flowers, a red table and three yellow chairs, and a black tree with large, golden-yellow pears. The pears and the cherries have been decorated with tiny white dots, perhaps in order to create a lively surface.

The Finnish translation of the poem is two verses longer than the English original. The rhyme scheme of the original is ABCBDEE, and the rhyme scheme of the translation is ABBCDDEE. The translator most likely added the verses in order to create this rhyme scheme. Once again, the translation solutions diverge from the original if examined from the perspective of their literal content. The reference to the purple flowers and the reference to the colour of the cherries has been omitted. In the English original, the table and the chairs are simply listed among the items that the kittens paint (“Red tables / and yellow chairs”), but including the names of the objects in a rhyming translation has required the translator to recreate the message slightly, and write about finding and taking the objects instead.

Again, the changes in the verbal dimension of the story may also change the way the reader inspects and interprets the illustration. The reader of the translation might pay less attention to the fact that the tree in which the pears grow is actually strangely black since the colour of the tree is not verbally emphasized in the poem. Further, the reader of the translation might allot more visual attention to the pears since, in the translation, they are said to sparkle. As mentioned above, the pears have been decorated with tiny white dots in the illustration – the reader of the translation might even interpret these dots as shiny sparkles. By changing the words in a multimodal text, we also change how the rest of the modes appear for the reader. Out of the ten poems in the book, five included changes that could be described as instances of transcreation.

## 5 Conclusions

In this article I set out to reflect on picturebook translation in the light of the concept of transcreation, referring to recreating a new verbal message that works in a given multimodal source text context. Translation, as understood in this article, refers to taking something that exists in a source language and re-expressing its essential contents in a target language. With the help of the examples presented above, I have aimed to demonstrate that some dimensions of picturebook translation could perhaps be more readily conceptualized as recreating something new as opposed to re-expressing something already expressed in a source language. I therefore argue that picturebook translation includes instances of transcreation.

As all translation, picturebook translation involves many factors that need to be taken into account, all of which can contribute towards the need to recreate parts of the story. One of these factors is word–image interaction and the need to produce target language solutions that match the message conveyed by the illustrations. If there is contradiction between the words and images of a picturebook, the translator may feel the need to recreate the verbal part in order to eliminate possible confusion (see Ketola 2016b for examples). This, too, is related to considering the needs of the target audience; the translator may wish to produce a text that is as unambiguous as possible, and considering word–image interaction is an important aspect of this when dealing with illustrated texts. Another factor behind picturebook translators’ decisions is the idea of what the child reader needs. In the data, this was most notably demonstrated by the translator’s decision to add explanations to the plot of the book (Example 3). Yet another factor affecting the picturebook translator’s solutions are space constraints: the translation needs to neatly fit in the space reserved for it on the page. The unpredictable target language solutions presented in Example 4 may well be due to space constraints – those inherent in the source text as well as those created by adding a paragraph of text on the same page (see Example 3).

Translating in verse is remarkably challenging activity. In this article I have proposed that picturebook illustrations provide the translator with valuable visual details that can be used as reference when recreating verses. Even though, in a way, the illustrations restrict the translator’s work since the verbal solutions need to match the visual details, the illustrations also act as a soil for creative solutions. Translating in verse is a good example of how much a text may change in translation; of how much recreation or “translation by invention” might be necessary in order to reproduce a poem in a different language. There is undoubtedly great value in translating in verse even if the resulting verse is dissimilar to the original in regard to its literal content.

In the light of the observations gained from the analyses presented in this article, I propose that transcreation could be defined as the radical reformulation of the literal contents of a (part of a) source text in order to make it adhere to:

- **a certain multimodal entity** (interaction with the other modes of the multimodal text on the conceptual level),
- **possible space constraints** (interaction with the other modes of the multimodal text on the level of layout),
- **a specific form of expression** (e.g. creating a translation in verse) and most importantly,
- **the needs of a new target audience** (as perceived by the translator or other parties involved in the translation process).

Adhering to one, some or all of these preconditions may require the translator to radically diverge from the original source text, and recreate parts of it altogether. I propose that this tentative definition can be further examined and improved in subsequent research with the help of more comprehensive and versatile data – it is possible that the phenomenon might appear different when examined from the perspective of other types of multimodal translation data.

It has not been my aim to suggest that “traditional translation” is an uninventive exercise – that *translation* equals a straightforward transfer and everything creative should be labelled as *transcreation*. As I have discussed in the analysis, some parts in the translations do not correspond to anything in the (verbal) source text. If examined by more traditional standards, these might appear as substandard translations and invite one to question the translator’s decisions. I propose that including the concept of transcreation in such discussion can provide Translation Studies with new conceptual tools that can be helpful in understanding the complexity of translational enquiry. Admitting that parts of the story might have to be recreated for the new multimodal context and the new audience gives more leeway to their interpretation and examination.

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