

Rozália Klára Bakó, Gizela Horváth (eds.)

ARGUMENTOR 6

# MIND THE GAP!

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SIXTH ARGUMENTOR CONFERENCE

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## ARGUMENTOR 6



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Mind the Gap!

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Editors:

Rozália Klára BAKÓ  
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@ The editors and the authors

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# ARGUMENTOR 2020: MIND THE GAP!

## Introduction

*“Mind the Gap!” The iconic phrase introduced in 1968 on the London Underground epitomizes the multiple divides that separate us along economic, social, cultural, digital, gender, age, racial, and geographical lines. The term is often used to highlight tensions and disruptions in the social fabric, disparities of income, education level, cultural background, or social status. The first step of bridging the gap between discourses and practices, social and cultural differences is understanding them, expressing them properly [Alexander, 2019]. Doris Salcedo’s art installation at Tate Modern [2007] – a series of cracks on the Turbine Hall floor – reminds us that there are more than “six degrees of separation” between us [Watts, 2004]. With the expansion of social media platforms we are more exposed than ever to the global cultural landscape, and meanwhile locked up in our own digital bubbles. We welcomed presentations dealing with disruptions in the social fabric along social, political, cultural, educational, digital, gender lines; research projects exploring circumstances, effects, dangers and blessings of an accelerating world. Papers presenting rhetorical, artistic tools deepening these gaps, as well as successful or failed attempts to bridge them were most welcome.*

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When we announced the conference call presented above on 6 February 2020, the world was a different place than it is today. Little did we expect that a global pandemic will paralyse our daily lives, block our

travels, and shift our teaching and research activities online. This forced digitalization has unveiled further, unexpected gaps. Two of the thirteen studies presented in this conference volume are related to these Covid-19-generated gaps. Authors come from different parts of the world: Hungary, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and the United States.

The first chapter's topic is the knowledge gap, viewed from philosophical, linguistic, and sociological perspectives. The second chapter is dealing with social and political gaps on local and global level. The third chapter of the conference volume – images and gaps – takes a more focused view on literature, theatre and fine arts.

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## KNOWLEDGE GAPS



# A GAP BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY THE CASE OF SENSUS COMMUNIS [COMMON SENSE] AND ITS ENEMIES\*

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From the beginning of Western thought, it is usual that the philosophers identify themselves and their knowledge as an opposite of other prestigious knowledge forms of their epoch and their society. A classic Greek philosopher distinguishes himself from poets and sophists; likewise, his modern colleagues distinguish themselves from the sciences, from literature, or they do so from the public forms of thinking, out of the strictly defined academic sphere. This distinction is focused both on the difference between the knowledge forms with an emphasis on the uniqueness of philosophy, and on the declaration of the need of a special institutional network for philosophy. The planned contribution offers a detailed case study about a trend in European

philosophy that identifies itself as an opposite of common sense. The first section of the analysis of this phenomenon is focussed on several German classics, especially on Hegel's well-known argumentation against the common sense, the role of the same concept in Kant's thought, and the interpretation of the specialities of the German tradition of *sensus communis* in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. Hungarian specialities of the common sense tradition will be detailed in the next section, with a comparison of the German and Hungarian cases. In the concluding section, we will describe the consequences of the distinction of professional philosophy from common sense, for the social role of philosophy in general.

**KEYWORDS:** *Gadamer, German philosophy, Hegel, Hungarian philosophy, Kant*

\* This writing is based on my Hungarian lecture held online, within the series of the seminars of the Department of History of Philosophy and History of Ideas of the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest, on 21 May, 2020, entitled *A *sensus communis* hagyománya a magyar gondolkodás történetében [Tradition of Sensus Communis in the History of Hungarian Thinking]*. I express my acknowledgments for the participants at the seminar for the inspiring questions and commentaries.

My paper was written within the framework of the research project entitled *The tradition of "sensus communis" in the Hungarian thought: Philosophy and the public realm; public philosophy, national philosophy, national characterology* [NKFI-1 K135638].

“Oh my dear common sense!  
What high rank did the Lord give you?”  
[Erdélyi 1981: 43]

## 1. Introduction

At first, the picture of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s classic historical analysis of the role of *sensus communis* in the (mainly German) *Geistesgeschichte* will be outlined. This will be followed by a short overview of the history of the same concept in modern philosophy as a special answer to a challenge of the changed structure of communication. Following that, it will be shown the usage of this concept by Hegel as a negative point of orientation for his philosophical self-identification. Later, a concise history of the Hungarian tradition of common sense will be offered. In the next section, János Erdélyi’s Hegelian attack against *common sense* will be demonstrated, in his *The Present of the Inland Philosophy*, formulated as a critique of Gusztáv Szontagh’s philosophy. In the end, Szontagh’s answer and the relevance of this debate today will be mentioned.

## 2. Central-European Tradition of Sensus Communis in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Interpretation

Gadamer has an inevitable role in the revival of the tradition of *sensus communis* within the framework of self-interpretation in the *Geistesgeschichte*. This concept has an eminent position amongst the *guiding concepts of humanism* just after the fundamental term of *Bildung [culture]*, in the initial chapters of his *Truth and Method*. Although Gadamer’s approach is based on a historical retrospection, his work cannot be considered as a work of history of philosophy; it was not the author’s aim either. It is interesting to read how he interprets the history of this tradition, as a narrative of submergence into unimportance, from a special German point of view of the post-war period. Although Gadamer speaks about the German tradition as an opposite of the example of “England and the Romance countries,” his ideas can be extended in this (and only in this) context to all the philosophical cultures east to the English-French model, including the Hungarian one. Consequently, Gadamer’s argumentation is important for the history of Hungarian philosophy, and as a theoretical and methodological background too. The core of the decline of this concept is based on the process of depoliticisation; he formulated it in the following form:

Whereas even today in England and the Romance countries the concept of the *sensus communis* is not just a critical slogan but a general civic quality, in Germany the followers of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson did not, even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, take over the political and social element contained in *sensus communis*. The metaphysics of the schools and the popular philosophy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – however much they studied and imitated the leading countries of the Enlightenment, England and France – could not assimilate an idea for which the social and political conditions were utterly lacking. The concept of *sensus communis* was taken over, but in being emptied of all political content it lost its genuine critical significance. *Sensus communis* was understood as a purely theoretical faculty: theoretical judgment, parallel to moral consciousness [conscience] and taste. [Gadamer 2006: 24]

Within German culture, Gadamer sees the possibility of preservation of “critical significance,” exclusively in the writings of the authors of Pietism. It is not by accident that in these years Gadamer was involved in research of the œuvre of Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782). His study for the modern edition of this author’s Latin work on *sensus communis* was published between the first and the second edition of his *Truth and Method*. Gadamer emphasizes the significance of Pietism in the following way:

And yet there is one important exception: *Pietism*. It was important not only for a man of the world like Shaftesbury to delimit the claims of science – i.e., of *demonstratio* – against the »school« and to appeal to the *sensus communis*, but also for the preacher, who seeks to reach the hearts of his congregation. Thus the Swabian Pietist *Oetinger* explicitly relied on Shaftesbury’s defence of the *sensus communis*. [Gadamer 2006: 24]

Later he repeated and emphasized his idea of the difference between the depoliticised German common sense and the civic content of this concept in other countries in the preface for the second edition:

In Germany [which has always been pre-revolutionary] the tradition of aesthetic humanism remained vitally influential in the development of the modern conception of science. In other countries more political consciousness may have entered into what is called the »humanities«, »lettres«; in short, everything formerly known as the *humaniora*. [Gadamer 2006: xxvi]

According to Gadamer's train of thought, this German restriction of the *sensus communis* achieved its top in Kant's aesthetics. Kant's concept is purely aesthetic, free from moral and political contents; and in this form is influential on later generations:

Similarly, when Shaftesbury took up the concept it was, as we have seen, also linked to the political and social tradition of humanism. The *sensus communis* is an element of social and moral being. Even when this concept was associated with a polemical attack on metaphysics (as in Pietism and Scottish philosophy), it still retained its original critical function. By contrast, Kant's version of this idea in his *Critique of Judgment* has quite a different emphasis. There is no longer any systematic place for the concept's basic moral sense. As we know, he developed his moral philosophy in explicit opposition to the doctrine of »moral feeling« that had been worked out in English philosophy. Thus he totally excluded the concept of *sensus communis* from moral philosophy. [Gadamer 2006: 29]

Gadamer interprets Kant's concept of *sensus communis*, formulated in § 40 of the *Critique of Judgment* as a kind of degradation, by the following words:

When, however, we are really concerned with the ability to grasp the particular as an instance of the universal, and we speak of sound understanding, then this is, according to Kant, something that is »common« in the truest sense of the word – i.e., it is »something to be found everywhere, but to possess it is by no means any merit or advantage«. The only significance of this sound understanding is that it is a preliminary stage of cultivated and enlightened reason. It is active in an obscure kind of judgment called feeling, but it still judges according to concepts, »though commonly only according to obscurely imagined principles«, and it certainly cannot be considered a special »sense of community«. The universal logical use of judgment, which goes back to the *sensus communis*, contains no principle of its own. [Gadamer 2006: 30]

Later, he formulates the other side of Kant's ideas, the public aspects of taste and a concept of *sensus communis* in the following way:

Thus when Kant calls taste the true common sense, he is no longer considering the great moral and political tradition of the concept of *sensus*



communis that we outlined above. Rather, he sees this idea as comprising two elements: first, the universality of taste inasmuch as it is the result of the free play of all our cognitive powers and is not limited to a specific area like an external sense; second, the communal quality of taste, inasmuch as, according to Kant, it abstracts from all subjective, private conditions such as attractiveness and emotion. [Gadamer 2006: 38]

Gadamer's reading is plausible, because it is true that Kant identifies the *common human understanding* and the [aesthetical] *power to judge*, and in the well-known § 40, he also makes pejorative notes on the *common* [*gemein* and *vulgar*] *human understanding*, a.k.a. *common sense*. [Kant's work will be quoted from a more modern English translation than the one used in the English version of Gadamer's work.]

[This] *common human understanding* [*gemeine Menschenverstand*], which is merely man's sound [[but] not yet cultivated] understanding, is regarded as the very least that we are entitled to expect from anyone who lays claim to the name of human being; and this is also why it enjoys the unfortunate honour of being called common sense [*sensus communis*], and this, indeed, in such a way that the word common [*gemein*] (not merely in our language. Where it is actually ambiguous, but in various others as well) means the same as *vulgar* – i.e., something found everywhere, the possession of which involves no merit or superiority whatever.

Instead, we must [here] take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account [a priori], in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgment with human reason in general and thus escape the illusion that arises from the ease of mistaking subjective and private conditions for objective ones, an illusion that would have a prejudicial influence on the judgment. [Kant 1987: 160]

Based on the same locus, Kant's opinions can be interpreted in another way, as well, differently from Gadamer's reading. In this similarly plausible interpretation, Kant's main endeavour is to clear the classic concept of *sensus communis* from several connotations of the *common human understanding* [*gemeine Menschenverstand*], and to emphasise the social connotations of this term. Kant's formulation that *common* means here *shared* is able to remind us the political potential of the original term. If the *common* [*gemein*] *human understanding* [*Menschenverstand*] means something *vulgar*, we should avoid the

usage of the German term and its equivalents in modern languages, and use the Latin term where the adjective *communis* does not have the pejorative connotation of *gemein*. In other words, we should save the *gemeine Menschenverstand* from its vulgarity and put it into the rank of *sensus communis*, including the social aspects of the later one. We can observe here not only the depoliticisation of the concept, but also the hidden preservation of its political aspect. It is symptomatic that 20<sup>th</sup> -century philosophers like Hannah Arendt, find the core of the political philosophy in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. If they discovered the political content in Kant's aesthetics, it must be covered earlier, at least, in a hidden form, probably in the context of the Kantian interpretation of the tradition of the *sensus communis*.

Returning to Gadamer's interpretation, and summarising his opinions, the German tradition of *sensus communis* at first restricted to the aesthetics, later its content become gradually more and more empty, and it evaporated in the end both in the philosophical scholarship and in the open sphere of the cultural discourse. Gadamer's narrative is surprising in a way, because he offers a detailed analysis of Hegel's role, in other loci of his book. It is important that the previous chapter about *culture [Bildung]* is mainly based on Hegel's interpretation of this concept and on his usage of this term. Hegel's figure and his role in Gadamer's masterpiece are important for us because the concept of *common sense* was an important *negative point of orientation* for him; he defined the characteristics of philosophical thinking *against* common sense. In his argumentation, the main German representatives of the tradition of *sensus communis* were the same figures who were discussed in Gadamer's historical reconstruction in the same role; also, they are the authors of the German *Popularphilosophie* and *Pietism*. It seems that Hegel represents a definite gap in the history of the *sensus communis*; we can say that this term *did not evaporate*, but Hegel *exterminated* it, at least, in professional philosophy. It is interesting that Hegel's role in the extermination of *sensus communis* does not appear in Gadamer's historical analysis. Hegel's opinions on the *sensus communis* and Gadamer's several notes on the Hegelian philosophy will be discussed later, in a separate chapter; before that a summary of the modern history of the concept of *sensus communis* is due, but from a special point of view. In the following section, the modern history of this concept will be discussed in its communicational context; *sociability* as an element of the modern meaning of this term will be linked with the ideal typical *target audience* of the philosophers on common sense.

### 3. The Modern Concept of *Sensus Communis* as Part of the Reflection on the Structural Turn of Philosophical Communication

The revival of the concept of *sensus communis* in modern philosophy cannot be understood without an analysis of the challenge concerning the self-interpretation of philosophy, based on the structural turn of scholar communication. This structural turn is double; on the one hand, it is the change of Latin to modern national vernaculars; on the other, it is a change of institutional network. Philosophy leaves schools and appears in new forums, such as the columns of the newly-established scholar periodicals in national languages, meetings of foundations, societies, and saloons. Amongst these new institutions, academies have a distinguished role both as forums scholars can meet and as organisers and supporters of books' and periodicals' publication. [This function of the Hungarian Scholarly Society was definitely important.]

As for the interpretation of this new communicational situation of philosophy and its changing target audience, several theories appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, amongst them well-known ideas of classics. In German philosophy, the most familiar ones are Herder's historical analysis of the changing structure of *Publicum* in his *Letters on Humanism*, and Kant's double twin-concepts. On the one hand, he distinguishes between *private and public usage of reason*, and *philosophia in sensu scholastico* and in *sensu cosmopolitico*, on the other. Both reflections refer to the role of the philosopher, with a rethinking of the meaning and social role of philosophy itself. According to Herder, philosophers must consider the changing structure of their target audience when they are speaking to this audience, and offer a theoretical description of the change of its structure. However, Kant proclaims the liberty of the *public* usage of reason on the one hand, and he regards *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico* as an ideal of the philosophical thinking, on the other. However, as a professor of a German university, he used his reason for a kind of *philosophia in sensu scholastico*, based on a *private* contract, at the same time. The situation described by his double twin-concepts is his own personal situation reflecting both his strictly prescribed obligation as a professor and his liberty of publication of his works. However, this description is based on his personal experiences; the principle of philosophical thinking rooted in it is universal and fits his moral philosophy.

However, the first theoretical answer to the communicational turn was the revival and reinterpretation of the term of *sensus communis* in

the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with complex prehistory and long reception. The antique sources of this term are highly diverse in themselves, from Aristotle's *common intellect* [*koinos nous*] through the different terms used in various periods and branches of the Stoics to the well-known Latin version formulated by Cicero, which is an interpretation in itself. The modern revival of this term is attached to the name of Shaftesbury, who was familiar with the philological details of the history of his chosen guide concept, both in Greek and in Latin, according to the testimony of his influential essay entitled *Sensus Communis* [Shaftesbury 1709], especially in the philological notes of its second edition [Shaftesbury 1737]. He quotes a locus of Juvenal when the Roman poet uses the term *sensus communis* [Sat. 8.v.73]. Later, in his own interpretation of this concept, he emphasises the civic and social context, formulated in the following way:

Some of the most ingenious Commentators, however, interpret this very differently from what is generally apprehended. They make this Common Sense of the Poet's, by a Greek Derivation, to signify Sense of Publick Weal, and of the Common Interest; Love of the Community or Society, Natural Affection, Humanity, Obligingness, or that sort of Civility which rises from a just Sense of the common Rights of Mankind, and the natural Equality there is amongst those of the same Species. [Shaftesbury 1709: 61]

The *Greek Derivation* does not refer in here either to a well-known term of the Aristotelian epistemology, or an expression of the Greek Stoics, but to a neologism of an author of the late Stoic philosophy, Marcus Antonius who was not a native Greek speaker. He uses this word to characterize his foster-father. It is symptomatic that modern translations can mirror its meaning only by long paraphrases. In the following part the original term and two English translations will be quoted; the long one is a widespread version in the modern English scholarship, Casaubon's version was known already in Shaftesbury's lifetime:

ἡ κοινονοημοσύνη [Marcus Aurelius Imperator *Ad se ipsum* l. 16. 2.] "he considered himself no more than any other citizen;" [*Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius*, translated by George Long.] "his moderate condescending to other men's occasions as an ordinary man. [*The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, translated by Meric Casaubon.]

Marcus Aurelius' term is obscure in a way, and it was not in the core of the philosophical vocabulary at any time. For Shaftesbury, the terminological issues were clear, but he solves them elegantly, by a single philological note:

It may be objected possibly by some, particularly vers'd in the Philosophy above mention'd, that the κοῖνος νοῦς, to which the Κοινονοημοσύνη seems to have relation, is of a different meaning. But they will consider withal how small the distinction was in that Philosophy, between the ὑπόληψις, and the vulgar αἴσθησις; how generally Passion was by those Philosophers brought under the Head of Opinion. (Shaftesbury 1737: 105)

Based on the train of thoughts and Shaftesbury's attached philological notes, we can say that he searched an antique term with an authority of a classic, which had cognitive, aesthetical and moral aspects together, but the most important connotation is a respect for others. We should consider the consequences of our acts upon others and we should respect others' opinions in the formulation of our judgements. This sociability was not characteristic in the antique antecedents of this concept before Marcus Aurelius; in the classical antique epistemology, there is a cognitive human faculty that is common in every human being, but which appears and works individually. In the modern revival of this concept, the moral and social aspects form the core, a term is needed that can describe the thinking of the new audience of philosophy, recruited from educated persons, but which functions out of schools. In this new term, judgements on truth, beautiful, and [moral] good are connected with each other, and they are characterised by public mentality. Humans of *common sense* are sensitive to the events of the community, including politics, and they are inclined to make judgements together, in a continuous and mutual reflection upon the opinions of each other. This modern tradition of *sensus communis* become a dominant trend in the Scottish *common sense school*. Within a few decades, they developed the moral philosophy [Smith 1776], aesthetics [Blair 1783], and a synthesis [Reid 1785] of this school; and it always functioned as a public philosophy of Scottish and British intellectual life.

This public, social aspect of the modern revival of *sensus communis* is emphasised in Gadamer's classic interpretation as well:

By *sensus communis*, according to Shaftesbury, the humanists understood a sense of the common weal, but also »love of the community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness.« They adopt a term from Marcus Aurelius, *koinonoemosune* [*koinonoēmosyne*] – a most unusual and artificial word, confirming that the concept of *sensus communis* does not originate with the Greek philosophers, but has the Stoical conception sounding in it like a harmonic. [Gadamer 2006: 22]

Later, in the Continental, mainly German, reception of the idea of *sensus communis* a gradual emergence of the aesthetical elements can be observed, that went as far as dominance and hegemony, in connection with the appearance of aesthetics as a separate philosophical discipline, at first in the German scholarship. It did not mean that the German followers of the English and Scottish masters have forgotten the public, social aspects. This trend of German philosophy was entitled *Popularphilosophie*, with a reference to the public aspects of the Latin term *populus*. The model of a well-known author of the *Popularphilosophie*, Johann August Ernesti was *populus Romanus*, the political community of the Roman citizens with suffrage, in the description of his own German ideal typical target audience [Ernesti, 1762: 153]. However, this German intellectual community makes purely aesthetical judgments, its model is a political community; consequently, on this aesthetical community, a would-be German political community can be based. There was an important terminological consequence of the new German context of the *common sense* tradition. It is trivial for English speakers that *common sense* is just the English version of *sensus communis*; but the German equivalents can differ from the original term, as it was demonstrated above in the quoted locus of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Manfred Kuehn, in his monograph on the German reception of the Scottish *common sense* philosophy, exemplifies the appearance of the German terms for the *common sense* by the œuvre of Johann Christian Lossius [1743–1813]:

Thus, just like Beattie, he rejects a formal definition of common sense and proposes as the only possible alternative a nominal definition through an enumeration of the objects and characteristics of common sense. Again, just like Beattie, he begins his discussion with a consideration of the different sense of »common sense«: *sensus communis*, public sense, *koinonoemosyne*, *koinai doxai*, etc. The only exception is that he also deals with the German *gesunde Vernunft* and its cognates. [Kuehn 1987: 96]

Two years after the work referred in the abovementioned quotation [Lossius 1775], Lossius published a separate German monograph on the *gesunde Vernunft* [Lossius 1777], and he was not alone with his German philosophical vocabulary. We can consider that at the time Kantian critical philosophy and Hegel's early works appeared, German philosophical terminology contained several expressions of its own for the English *common sense* and the Latin *sensus communis*. From this point of view, the connection between the new German terms and their Latin and English models was not evident, and later the same situation occurred with the Hungarian equivalents that are partly mirror-words of the German vocabulary.

#### 4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Critique of Sensus Communis

Hegel opposes the *speculation* and the *sound intellect* as early as the creation of his first serious philosophical work entitled *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. He devotes a separate chapter to this topic entitled *relation of Speculation to Common Sense*. His concrete opponent is Reinhold in here; and Hegel in his argumentation identifies Reinhold's opinions and the ideas of the German *Popularphilosophie* of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which was really based on the concept of *common sense*, inherited from the abovementioned Scottish tradition. A clear dichotomy emerged in here and a hierarchy of the speculation and the common sense that become characteristic in all of his œuvre:

For this reason, speculation understands sound intellect [gesunde Menschenverstand] well enough, but the sound intellect [gesunde Menschenverstand] cannot understand what speculation is doing. [...] Common sense [gesunde Menschenverstand] cannot understand speculation; and what is more, it must come to hate speculation when it has experience of it; and, unless it is in the state of perfect indifference that security confers, it is bound to detest and persecute it. [Hegel 1977a: 99-100]

Hegel's terms for common sense, in accordance with the German philosophical vocabulary of his epoch, are *gesunde Menschenverstand*, *gemeine Menschenverstand*, or if the meaning is clear from the context, *Menschenverstand* without adjectives. It should be noted here that these expressions emerged in the German reception of the Scottish *common sense* school, especially in the German *Popularphilosophie*, as

it was mentioned above in the case of Lossius, and one of them, *gemeine Menschenverstand* was used by Kant, as well. [The widespread English translation quoted above, creates further terminological problems when it uses two equivalents for *gesunde Menschenverstand*, namely *sound intellect* and *common sense*.] Consequently, Hegel in here attacks in a way both the ideas and vocabulary of his opponent, Reinhold, and the ones whom he regarded Reinhold's ancestors. We can find the motif of *common sense* as a stubborn and anti-theoretical phenomenon; which will be significant especially in the Hungarian reception of these Hegelian ideas:

In particular, ordinary common sense [*gemeine Menschenverstand*] is bound to see nothing but nullification in those philosophical systems that satisfy the demand for the conscious identity by suspending dichotomy in such a way that one of the opposites is raised to be the absolute and the other nullified. This is particularly offensive if the culture of the time has already fixed one of the opposites otherwise. [...] Common sense [*gesunde Menschenverstand*] is stubborn; it stubbornly believes itself secure in the force of its inertia, believes the non-conscious secure in its primordial gravity and opposition to consciousness; believes matter secure against the difference that light brings into it just in order to reconstruct the difference into a new synthesis at a higher level. [Hegel 1977a: 101–102]

Later, in the preface to his early masterpiece entitled *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he opposes *insight* as the result of the theoretical thinking and the emotive approach to the aim of *edification*, in the framework of the actual status of the *self-conscious spirit* in the process of historical development. The representatives of the emotive approach to him are partly the authors of the theoretical works of the early Romanticism, partly the German *Popularphilosophie*, and partly the religious enthusiasts of his age:

[A]t the stage which self-conscious Spirit has presently reached [...] now demands from philosophy, not so much knowledge of what it is, as the recovery through its agency of that lost sense of solid and substantial being. Philosophy is to meet this need, not by opening up the fast-locked nature of substance, and raising this to self-consciousness, not by bringing consciousness out of its chaos back to an order based on thought, nor to the simplicity of the Notion, but rather by running together what thought has put asunder, by suppressing the differentiations of the No-



tion and restoring the feeling of essential being: in short, by providing edification rather than insight. The 'beautiful', the 'holy', the 'eternal', 'religion', and 'love' are the bait required to arouse the desire to bite; not the Notion, but ecstasy, not the cold march of necessity in the thing itself, but the ferment of enthusiasm, these are supposed to be what sustains and continually extends the wealth of substance. [Hegel 1977b: 4–5]

In his same work, Hegel returns to the topic of the roles and characteristics of the *common sense* in details, based on this general description. For example, in the subchapter entitled *Reason as Lawgiver*, he explains that in the formulation of the moral laws *common sense* runs into a contradiction. In this special case, the relationship between *theoretical thinking* and *common sense* is the same as it was shown in general, in the *Preface*.

Later, in the introduction to his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, in the subchapter entitled *Philosophy Proper Distinguished from Popular Philosophy*, he extended the term of a concrete trend of history of philosophy, i.e. German *Popularphilosophie* to a timeless concept of a method of thinking from Cicero through Pascal to the religious enthusiasts and mystics. In these quite different authors the only common element is a concept of the *common sense* linked with *moral sense*. It is the same characteristic that excludes them from the narrow, Hegelian, concept of real philosophy. Hegel argues for their exclusion in the following way:

But the drawback that attaches to this Philosophy is that the ultimate appeal even in modern times is made to the fact that men are constituted such as they are by nature, and with this Cicero is very free. Here the moral instinct comes into question, only under the name of feeling [...]. Feeling is first of all laid hold of, then comes reasoning from what is given, but in these we can appeal to what is immediate only. Independent thought is certainly here advanced; the content too, is taken from, the self; but we must just as necessarily exclude this mode of thinking from Philosophy. [Hegel 1892: 93]

In conclusion, we can declare that the tradition of *common sense* is present in the whole of Hegel's *œuvre*, as a *negative point of his philosophical self-definition*. In his opinion, the tradition built on this concept is a part constantly present in human culture as a *sub-philosophical level of thinking*. He identifies the common German expres-

sions for *common sense* with the long philosophical tradition of *sensus communis* and excludes both of them from his concept of philosophy. [As it was demonstrated above, Kant's way was different; he observed a difference between the meanings of *gemeine Menschenverstand* and *sensus communis*.] However, Hegel attacks both the terminology and the ideas of his opponents, and as it was mentioned above, it was not conscious; the German equivalents of the *common sense* introduced by his opponents were regarded by him as common German words out of the scholarly vocabulary of philosophy. Consequently, the problem of the difference between terminologies has not appeared in explicit form in this discourse, as opposed to the case of the Hungarian Hegelians as it will be discussed later.

As mentioned above, Gadamer's historical interpretation did not touch Hegel's role in the extermination of the concept of *common sense* from professional philosophy; however, he discusses Hegel's ideas in detail on important loci of his masterpiece. At the end of this chapter, we must touch upon Gadamer's two notes on Hegel relevant from the point of view of the relationship between Hegelianism and *common sense*. Gadamer's first *guiding concept* is *Bildung* [culture] that is described by him based on Hegel's writings. In Gadamer's interpretation, the Hegelian concept of *Bildung* is linked with *spirit* as something beyond the *immediate human knowledge*:

Even in this description of practical *Bildung* by Hegel, one can recognize the basic character of the historical spirit: to reconcile itself with itself, to recognize oneself in other being. It becomes completely clear in the idea of theoretical *Bildung*, for to have a theoretical stance is, as such, already alienation, namely the demand that one »deal with something that is not immediate, something that is alien, with something that belongs to memory and to thought«. Theoretical *Bildung* leads beyond what man knows and experiences immediately. [Gadamer 2006: 12]

Later, in the last chapter, Gadamer discusses the historical meaning of the term *speculative* in German philosophy that has an important role in Hegel's thought as well. The essence of the content of this term, in his interpretation, is something opposite to the *dogmatism of everyday experience*:

If we now use the word »speculative« as it was coined by philosophers around 1800 and say, for example, that someone has a speculative mind

or that a thought is rather speculative, behind this usage lays the notion of reflection in a mirror. Speculative means the opposite of the dogmatism of everyday experience. A speculative person is someone who does not abandon himself directly to the tangibility of appearances or to the fixed determinateness of the meant, but who is able to reflect or – to put it in Hegelian terms – who sees that the »in-itself« is a »for-me«. [Gadamer 2006: 461 – 462]

Based on these loci, it can be concluded that Hegel's thought is the opposite of any usage of *common sense*, in Gadamer's interpretation, as well; however, here it is not the term *common sense* or a synonym that is used. In other words, Gadamer considers Hegel's thought as contrary to *common sense*, but he did not attribute significance to Hegel's explicit opinions concerning this concept. What is relevant to the topic of the present writing is that the motifs of *immediate human knowledge* and the *dogmatism of everyday experience*, as expressions linked with *common sense* in Hegel's philosophy, will have a significant role in the critique of the *common sense* written by the Hungarian Hegelians.

## 5. The Hungarian Tradition of Common Sense

The tradition of *common sense* emerged in two subsequent periods in the history of Hungarian thinking. In professional philosophy, it appeared within the framework of the Hungarian controversy on Kant [1792–1822], in József Rozgonyi's works. Rozgonyi, based on his education in Utrecht and Oxford, was engaged in the Scottish common sense philosophy. He formulated his critique of Kant based directly on the opinions of the contemporary Scottish *common sense* philosophers. However, his booklet was published in 1792, though it was written earlier, before he could read Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. It is interesting that in his interpretation Kant and the Kantians identify *common sense* with *vulgar thinking* [*sensus vulgi*]. Although he did read the *Critique of Judgment*, he attributes to Kant a real Kantian idea that becomes well-known based on the § 40 of the *Critique of Judgment* what was quoted earlier in the context of Gadamer's historical interpretation:

If the Kantians meant common sense the same what the abovementioned Scottish philosophers do, e.g. Aristotle's ☒☒☒☒☒☒ ☒☒☒☒☒☒, Cicero's *naturae iudicia*, i.e. the immediately evident propositions, which are the

fundaments of every demonstration, [...] by other words, principles, what can be neglected by words, but must be followed by the whole of life and by the constant rationality of the acting, and involuntary recognised; in this case I do not know who could neglect the common sense. [...] The Kantians mean common sense the perception of the crowd, which perhaps can be unreasonable. But the abovementioned excellent Scottish philosophers have never recognised the common sense in this meaning. In their discourse, the perception belongs both to the philosophers and to the crowd. [Rozgonyi 2017: 39]

Si quod Kantiani per sensum communem id, quod Scoti illi philosophi intelligant, v. g. Aristotelis κοινὰ δόξα, Ciceronis naturae iudicia seu propositiones immediate evidentes, quae fundamentum praebent omni demonstrationi, [...] principia, quae si quis ore neget, toto vitae tenore et agendi rationi constanti vel invitus affirmare cogitur, nescio, qui possint cum reiicere? [...] Kantiani per sensum communem sensum vulgi quandoque absurdum intelligunt. Sed tali significato eximii illi Scoti sensum communem nunquam acceperunt. Sensus ille, de quo hi disputant, acque philosophorum ac vulgi est. [Rozgonyi 2017: 39]

In the same period within the academic sphere, the concept of *common sense* plays an important role in the field of *aesthetics* which became an independent philosophical discipline at the same time. Although it is a highly interesting and significant field of research, discussing it would be beyond the scope of the present paper. Recently a lot of fruitful research has been conducted in this field, [for a representative volume of the recent results see Balogh–Fórizs 2018].

At the same time outside the academic sphere, in the realm of public thinking, despite the important role the German *Popularphilosophie* had in the transfer of ideas, direct contact with the Scottish tradition was constantly present, as well. For example, József Kármán's articles often refer to German authors who were probably known to his target audience; however, the motto of his program for the reform of national culture is a paraphrase of the expressions in the Scottish Enlightenment [*politeness and refinement; a nemzet csinosodása*].

The second period of the emergence of *common sense* in Hungarian thought was parallel with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Continental revival of the Scottish school signed by the new French translations of the most important authors. The two periods are not divided into two separate parts in Hungarian intellectual history; it was not a revival of a forgot-

ten philosophy, just a rejuvenation of a continuously present system of ideas. It is symptomatic that an important debate in the Hungarian intellectual life of the Reform Era, entitled *Age of Epic versus Age of Drama*, was provoked by a book review of a new Hungarian version of an aesthetical work by the Scottish school [Blair 1838].

The author of this book review, Gusztáv Szontagh, is the same person that was the target of János Erdélyi's critique in his attack against the philosophical usage of *common sense*, in favour of a Hegelian self-understanding of Hungarian philosophy [Szontagh 1839a]. Szontagh's position as an author is symptomatic as far as the consequences of the turn of the structure of scholarly communication are concerned. In his entire career, he acted as a public intellectual, not as a member of the education system. His lifeworld consisted of the Hungarian cultural and scholarly press that developed during his early career at the same time the Hungarian Scholarly Society was founded. [It is quite symptomatic, but accidentally his first writing was published in the year the Hungarian Scholarly Society – later renamed Hungarian Academy of Sciences – was founded]. Later, the members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences offered him the forum and infrastructural background needed to work, but not a livelihood. He received the current publications of the Academy and a certain amount of handwriting paper every year which was a significant help at that time; also, he had the right to participate at the academic meetings and lectures which, in his lifetime, were not yet festive events but quite real scholar forums. A part of his rights and obligations was to evaluate the applications for various awards. He became a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with a regular income only several months before his death; as an intellectual, he earned his living by writing his entire career. At the beginning of his career, there was a serious Hungarian scholar press, but his generation could remember the narrower circumstances of the previous period, and a significant amount of Hungarian scholars' works was still published in Latin. Consequently, due to his personal position, he could understand the institutional and communicational background of the vivid intellectual life of the Hungarian Reform Era. The conscious reflection on the real and ideal role of philosophy in the newly-established modern national culture is a characteristic feature of all 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian philosophy, especially of Szontagh's works. This is a consequence of the turn in the structure of scholarly communication. The Hungarian philosophers' aim is to transcend school philosophy and achieve *philosophia in sensu cosmopolitico*; but they were writing in Hungarian when he

abandoned the Latin school of philosophy. The extension of the national audience of philosophy goes hand in hand with the loss of the aristocratic, but working universality of the academic sphere. Although the paradox of this new situation was characteristic of the entire European philosophical life, it was clearly and thoroughly formulated in the smaller national cultures of East-Central Europe, e.g. in the Hungarian one. When Szontagh tends to define the role of philosophy and his role as a philosopher, he cannot avoid the question of his relationship with the national culture. The role of [Hungarian] philosophy is a theoretical critique of every phenomenon in the life of the nation, including economy, social changes, political events, opinions, and programs in his opinion, which fits his activity as a critic. Hungarian philosophy will be developed as a synthesis of these theoretical critiques; and philosophical critique has a fundamental role in the creation of the modern Hungarian culture, economy, and political community. In his philosophy, he is consistent with this program; his *first propylaeum* about the possibilities and ideals of the Hungarian philosophical revival of his time is decidedly based on the texts of his book reviews published earlier [Szontagh 1839b]. Based on the evidence of his second propylaeum, it is clear that his previous works aim to establish a social and political philosophy [Szontagh 1843]. The *common sense* tradition as a basis to define the role of Hungarian philosophy and his own task was obvious to him because it was not unknown phenomenon in the Hungarian intellectual life; in addition to that, there was a Continental revival perceptible in the years of his intensive philosophical self-teaching; but the most important reason was that this philosophy fitted well his role as a public intellectual who speaks philosophically about public affairs to a national audience outside the academic sphere. Szontagh was not engaged to the Scottish school as Rozgonyi was in the previous generation; in particular, their relationship to Kantianism was different. Szontagh's thought was based on highly divergent sources. For example, in his memoirs, he expressed his negative opinion about the whole post-Kantian German philosophy; in his opinion, Fichte was not a good inheritor of Kant and he attributed a kind of obscurity to Schelling; he attacked Hegel's philosophy especially that of the Hungarian Hegelians in published form only. The top of his Hegel-critique was the so-called *Hegelian trial* [1838–1842].

The personal background of Szontagh's thought and his self-interpretation is the philosophical understanding of the role of a *public intellectual*. It was clear for him that this role was not possible on the Hungarian scene in the previous generation [in his memoirs, Szontagh

illustrates this with Kazinczy, who almost went bankrupt because of his high post costs caused by Kazinczy personally organizing the forums for Hungarian culture; later Szontagh could earn a living writing for more developed forums.]. His conscious reflection on the structure of scholarly communication includes descriptions of the dangers of the creative intellectuals' new lifeworld as well. An extended and autonomous sphere of cultural production creates a separate world made of words and paper as a simulacrum of the real world, and a scholar can easily lose his way in it. A modern intellectual can easily change reality with its description, or model, especially if the description is incarnated in written words, i.e. in a form of communication familiar to him. This new machinery of cultural production is a dominantly *male world*; consequently, the alienation from reality appears at first as a non-realistic image of the female characters in the fictional literature in Szontagh's book reviews. Generally speaking, the author who lost his way in the paper-world of words cannot see the *female face of reality*. Another form of description of the same intellectual behaviour is a *metaphor of illness* based on personal experiences. According to this metaphor, the alienation in the paper-world causes somatic symptoms; it is the reflection of the objective reality onto the subjectivity of the intellectual. Szontagh gradually found the figure of the intellectual alienated in the world of mere words, in every sphere of praxis and theory. In his satiric short story, written in the last years of the Reform Era, he describes three typical [Hungarian] figures as fellow-travellers of the narrator on a journey in a dream. The first one is a poet who exchanges reality with the world of his poems; the second one is a political speaker who mistakes his rhetoric for the political possibilities, and the third is a philosopher who lost his way in his own terminology. The fellow-travellers remained in the dream when the narrator woke up because they fit the world of dreams and not reality [Szontagh 1845]. In Szontagh's reviews of philosophical works, it is clear that in his view Hungarian Hegelians were typical examples of this trap intellectuals might fall into; they identify their automatized terminology with reality and they do not describe or interpret the reality itself. After the revolution, he concretises what he means by the alienation in the paper-world made of words in the context of controversy about early Hungarian history; and it is clear that this controversy is connected to the national self-critique that followed the revolution [1850–1852]. His critique is actually focused on several historians, but it can be extended to the Hegelian philosophy of history as well. In here, the alienation from the objective world and

the creation of a paper-world made of words means that not only do historians underestimate or neglect the data of archaeology, historical climatology, and geography as well as disregard the existing data on the culture of the Eurasian nomads, but they also create difficult narratives from rare written sources, eminently from single ethnonyms with obscure reading. It is interesting to quote at first Szontagh's memoirs written at the beginning of this controversy and after that cite his published discussion paper. [His memoirs remained in manuscript and were published just a few years ago.] In his memoirs he writes generally about Hungarian scholars of his epoch, however, he illustrates his point with the specialists of early Hungarian history:

A lot of Hungarian scholars [...] [c]ultivates a field of research, but he does not cultivate the human in himself. He becomes a scholar, but his knowledge is warped, because it does not make him an erudite man. He always sits in his study room and researches to gain the respect of his scholar-peers. The continuous sitting and room air destroys his body; his stomach is bad, he has sleeping problems and nervous diseases, and in the end he falls into hypochondria. Sometimes it happens for a certain research, which cannot achieve their aim, like e.g. the explication of early Hungarian history. He made all his life meaningless and miserable for nothing. Hungarians have Eastern blood; consequently, they can deeply submerge into their studies. A full submerge into a thought is the main requisite of wisdom amongst Eastern wise men. [Szontagh 2017]

In his discussion paper, the virtual world constructed from books and ideas guides us to the fairy tales of history. It is notable and quite rare in the Hungarian discourse of this epoch that both the Hungarian and the Slovakian speculations about the early history of these nations are evaluated using the same method, and scholars can become examples of the same dangerous collective illusion:

If my fellows, who formulated their opinions against me, did not submerge into the vortex of idealism i.e. fantasies, yet, because of their enthusiasm and fervency, it was caused by their inborn gumption, and not by their definite will. But they are going to be characterised by the feature of an armchair scholar, that is the implication in the fictional world of books and ideas. If they went far away in this path governed by the pure zeal; they can arrive to the mysterious fairyland where István Horvát and Kollár discovered so many Hungarians and Slovaks. [Szontagh 1851]



Here it is enough to mention only István Horvát's speculation about early Hungarian history; it is the identification of the Scriptural *Girgasits* [Jos 3,10; 24,11] with the ancestors of the Hungarians. In the theology of history, the name of Girgasits is a quite common example of the power of the Lord of history who can cancel nations totally, only *their mere names remains*. In Ján Kollár's poem, the sweetheart of the poet, a daughter of a Lutheran pastor of the Saale-valley in Upper-Saxony appears as a descendant of the ancient Slavic tribes of this land who had really existed here many centuries ago; and she becomes the symbol of the possibility of the re-Slavisation of the local population based on the right of blood, following their Germanisation in the past centuries.

### **6. János Erdélyi's Hegelian Attack against Common Sense**

In the time of the Hegelian trial, Erdélyi was a participant of the same intellectual life of Pest as Szontagh; based on his aesthetical writings, Erdélyi was elected member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the Department of Philosophy, and he attended the same scholarly meetings as Szontagh did. Surprisingly, he did not show any interest in the Hegelian philosophical controversies at this time. The *Hegelian trial* was over a few years before the revolution of 1848, and after that, in the post-revolutionary epoch, Hegel was forgotten everywhere in Europe. Under these circumstances, Erdélyi's endeavour to reformulate Hungarian philosophy based on Hegel is unusual two decades after the *Hegelian trial*, in a post-revolutionary period. When he formulates his critique of the *Hungarian harmonistic philosophy* and the usage of the concept of *common sense* in the middle of the 1850s, he was silently witnessing the *Hegelian trial* [1838–1842], and the abovementioned controversy on early Hungarian history [1850–1852]. He correctly assesses that these controversies are the collisions of the same opinions in different fields, and he is conscious of the significance of the problem language poses within these arguments, both in terms of the lingual model of reality and that of the scholarly vocabulary within these arguments. Based on these antecedents, he regards the new argument provoked by him as the *retrial of the Hegelian trial*, and in his argumentation, he focuses on the language and terminology of philosophy.

The first eight chapters of János Erdélyi's well-known work entitled *Present of the Inland Philosophy* was published on the columns

of *Pesti Napló* as a series of articles in 1856; next year he published a completed version as a separate volume. One of his main opponents, János Hetényi died a few years before that (†1853), Szontagh died a year after the publication of Erdélyi's work (†1858). Due to these biographical conditions, Erdélyi and Szontagh could not develop a detailed argument; it did not have a formal end: Szontagh reflected on Erdélyi's critique, Erdélyi formulated his reply, but revoked the manuscript after Szontagh's death, and it was published as late as the 20<sup>th</sup>-century edition of Erdélyi's works.

According to the interpretation formulated in Erdélyi's work, the previous period in Hungarian philosophical life was dominated by the *Hungarian harmonistic philosophy* of János Hetényi and Gusztáv Szontagh; the guiding concepts of this philosophy were *usefulness in life*, *popular elocution* and *nationality*, and all these three expressions were based on the concept of *common sense* and a philosophical tradition based on this idea. Erdélyi unveiled these guiding concepts as preconceptions, erroneously formulated requirements of philosophy. In his opinion, the requirement of *nationality* fits the belles-lettres as a particular phenomenon of the culture that expresses emotions, but it is alien from philosophy which expresses the universality of thinking:

The principle of nationality is continuously strong in poetry, weaker in religion and utterly ceases later in philosophy. It is the teaching of cultural history, as well, that is actually an image of the human spirit manifested in the chain of events. [Erdélyi 1981]

He argues that the requirement of the *usefulness in life* is fulfilled by thinking based on *speculation* rather than on *common sense*:

Spirit is useful in life, because it contains all the singularities, opposites and contradictions as hidden destroying and boiling, stating and negating elements because it is the way of becoming. This point is the top of speculation where all things are opposites or syntheses of the opposites. A purely distinctive thinking, frozen in its distinctions will never achieve these heights. Consequently, the common culture, the so-called common sense realizes »inconsequence« in its greatest men in every country but does not care about higher correspondences. [Erdélyi 1981]

As far as the present writing is concerned, the most important part in which the requirement of *popular elocution* is unveiled:

I can see that people are afraid of the idealism concerning language and common sense. They defend language against science. I believe that on the level of the development where our popular philosophers are they do not need a precise terminology to explain their thoughts, and they can be satisfied by the service of the common language. [Erdélyi 1981]

The essence of Erdélyi's statement is that the terminological norms of his opponents are contrary to the requirements of a professional vocabulary of philosophy. Against the root of every problem, *common sense*, as a possible starting-point of philosophical thinking, he offers three arguments. The first and the second one are linked to each other; he attributes to his opponents a usage of the concept of the *common sense* as contrary to the development of the human thinking; consequently, he derives every retrograde inclination, underdevelopment, contra-enlightened behaviour:

Why is preferable the continuous recommendation [...] of something what does not need learning, just knowing, by common sense? Oh, my dear common sense! What high rank did the Lord give you? But, whether common sense can easily be compatible with superstition, ignorance, stagnancy, all the moral and material wrong, till the pest? [Erdélyi 1981]

His third argument is based on his interpretation of the history of philosophy. Erdélyi restricts the long tradition of *common sense* philosophy to the Scottish school, and describes it as an *obsolete*, *anachronistic* and mainly *parochial* phenomenon in Western thought. It is strange to read today his lines about the end of English philosophy with Hume and the world-wide victory of Hegelianism if the reader is familiar with the philosophical circumstances of the time the text originated. From a special Hungarian point of view, it should be mentioned that several British philosophers from the post-Humean period were well-known in the Hungarian philosophy of the Hungarian Reform Era, amongst them Jeremiah Bentham was the most important one. [In his text, Erdélyi uses the ethnonyms 'English,' 'Scottish' and 'British' as synonyms; sometimes 'the Scotsmen' means the authors of the Scottish *common sense* school.]

In philosophy, common sense appeared one hundred years ago in Scotland in a short but effective role" [Erdélyi 1981], "The philosophy of com-

mon sense emerged and declined suddenly. After Hume, who was sceptical about empirical experiences and offered a novelty for the progress of philosophy, we cannot speak about English philosophy from the point of view of history of philosophy. [...] Both the Scottish school and Kant appeared after and against Hume; Scottish philosophy remained a local phenomenon, but Kantian philosophy occupied the world. [Erdélyi 1981]

Of course, in Erdélyi's view, the ending point of the history of philosophy is not Kant but Hegelianism. Every local philosophical culture must be developed to the level of this Hegelian end of philosophy; in the Hungarian case, an explicit Hungarian Hegelian philosophy must be evolved from the Hegelian content encoded in the structure of Hungarian language. It can be demonstrated philologically as well that Erdélyi's train of thoughts is based on Hegel, but he uses a different method here. According to Hegel, the tradition of *common sense* is a constant part of the history of human thinking on a low level, below philosophy. Erdélyi regards it as a phenomenon of a particular period of the history of philosophy, in his argumentation of the interpretation of *common sense* philosophy as obsolete and anachronistic. The most significant difference is the emphasis of the role of language and the importance of the scholarly vocabulary in Erdélyi's writing. He argues that the Hegelian statement that professional philosophy cannot be built on the concept of *common sense*, is linked to an utterance emerged in the Hungarian discourse, namely, that the language of the Hungarian *common sense* philosophers does not meet the requirements of scholarly [Hungarian] vocabulary of philosophy. This idea is not fit for the whole of the tradition of the *sensus communis* as it appears in Hegel's history of philosophy; e.g. it is hardly demonstrable that Cicero's usage of the scholarly vocabulary of philosophy was oblivious and inaccurate. This direct connection of the requirements of a *professional philosophy* and a *scholarly vocabulary* is a characteristic of Erdélyi's Hegelian argumentation, adapted to the Hungarian conditions. Its causes are the experiences of the Hungarian linguistic reform on the one hand, and his relationship to language that was radically different from the ideas of his opponent, Gusztáv Szontagh, on the other.

## 7. Szontagh's Answer

Differences of the approaches concerning Erdélyi's and Szontagh's language were never discussed explicitly. Szontagh's reflection on Er-

déli's critique was not focused on the linguistic expression of philosophy. [His article was entitled *Hungarian Philosophy: Answer to János Erdélyi's Work Entitled "Present of the Inland Philosophy"*; see Szontagh 1857.] At first, he referred to Erdélyi's notes about the Scottish *common sense* school as an obsolete and local phenomenon and as a root of the Hungarian *common sense* philosophers, e.g. Szontagh himself. In Szontagh's opinion, Erdélyi is a follower of an obsolete system of philosophy, he did not realise in his intellectual solitude at Sárospatak that Hegel's philosophy died in Germany as well; consequently, it cannot constitute the foundation of any contemporary Hungarian philosophy that inclines to be in synchrony with the universal trends. The core of his argumentation is to demonstrate the dichotomy between their approach of the essence and self-understanding of philosophy and their different principles concerning the role of human thinking and cognition. Erdélyi, in his argumentation for an ideal of philosophy as an academic discipline, regards human thinking and cognition as *values in themselves*, and he unwittingly separates them from *social praxis*. Szontagh's approach is the opposite, he formulates in his last writing the embeddedness of human thinking in the activity quite clearly: "[A] philosopher does not think purely for the sake of thinking; on the contrary: a human is thinking and investigates the truth for the right acting" [Szontagh 1857].

Based on his previous works, it can be declared that he includes the right *political* acting in the concept of *right acting*. According to him, decisions and programs of the politicians on the one hand, and a philosophical critique of this political praxis, on the other, cannot be observed separately. From this point of view, we should reinterpret Gadamer's opinions about the depoliticisation of *common sense* in the Central European tradition, at least, in the Hungarian case.

## **8. Conclusions**

Does this ancient argument, swooned in its beginning, have any consequences or conclusions today? The significance of this debate is based on the long survival of Erdélyi's several topics in the modern discourse. At first, the lack of the reflections on Erdélyi's solitude in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century secondary literature is conspicuous. Erdélyi is alone with his Hegelian ideas in Europe, but he regards Hegel's philosophy historically successful and triumphant. [His single possible Hegelian ally was Ľudovít Štúr; however, their national and political convictions were antithetical. But Štúr died in January, 1856, before Erdélyi wrote his work.]

Although modern researchers were informed about the post-revolutionary “Hegel-free” decades, for them Hegel was an inevitable starting-point, again, whether they were part of a school of neo-idealism, or the Marxism that found its way back to its roots in German classic philosophy. Erdélyi’s demand of a professional and speculative philosophy that was formulated contrary to the embeddedness in praxis was appropriate for the endeavour to establish a professional philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For researchers of the ideological topics of the *everyday consciousness, everyday language* and the like, in the Communist era, Erdélyi’s critique of the backwardness of *common sense* seemed to be familiar, as well.

Erdélyi’s most enduring topic was the development of the Hegelian idea of the dichotomy of *emotion* and *cognition*. In Erdélyi’s thought, it appears as the dichotomy of the belles-lettres which expresses particular emotions and philosophy which expresses universal thought, with the conclusion that belles-lettres can express nationality by particular emotions, but philosophy can be only universal. The consequence of this topic was the creation of a *deep gap* between the thinking about the political community called nation and the long oblivion of the possibility of a public philosophy embedded in and reflected onto the social and political praxis.

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# GENDER GAP IN THE PROCESSES OF SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE. A CASE OF POLISH WIKIPEDIA

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The notion of gender gap was used in the economy, education, and many other domains, to refer to phenomena of unequal treatment of females and males, resulting in different outcomes in terms of salary, school grades, and other material or immaterial goods [Pinker 2009, Morris 2012]. This idea has been applied to Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that "anyone can edit." Despite its openness and the liberty of correction and contribution, Wikipedia manifests several epistemic biases, such as gender and racial bias, geographical imbalance, ideological bias, and many others. It has been noticed that the whole project is inevitably marked by systematic, epistemic bias. Gender bias in Wikipedia is closely related to the gender gap in the group of its users. According to investigations among

its editors only 10-15% is female. Another aspect of the Wikipedia gender gap is the small number of biographical entries on women in comparison with men. This phenomenon is related to the apparent demand for higher notability threshold for women. Moreover, the biographies of men and women are constructed in a different manner and of different elements: the latter concentrates more on family life, whereas the former on public activities [Wagner, Graells-Garrido, Garcia, Menczer. 2016]. In the present paper, some ways of detecting and pointing out the gender gap in Wikipedia will be presented. The sample of the material under scrutiny will be taken mostly from the Polish language version of the online encyclopedia, but also from other versions for comparison purposes.

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**KEYWORDS:** *Wikipedia, gender gap, bias, encyclopedia, internet*

During a great part of the history of human civilization, knowledge was monopolized by a narrow group. In traditional tribe culture, the most secret medical and religious knowledge belonged to a shaman. In developed centralized big cultural formations such as ancient Egypt, only the group of priests had means to elaborate and profit out of their arithmetical, astronomical, and astrological knowledge they developed, protected, and kept in secret. The idea of equal access to knowledge and education has its origins in the 18th-century movement of Enlightenment and became one of the fundamental pillars of modernity.

The symbol of the approach inspired by Enlightenment was Encyclopedia. It aimed at embracing and publishing the entire human knowledge from the point of view of the rational philosophy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The work of which we give the first volume today, has two objects: as Encyclopedia, it must expose as much as possible, the order & the sequence of human knowledge; as a Systematic Dictionary of Sciences, Arts & of Crafts, it must contain the general principles on each Science & on each Art, either liberal or mechanical, which are the basis, & the most essential details, which make the body & the substance. [Diderot 1751]

The self-definition of Wikipedia is not far from that. It defines itself as “an online free-content encyclopedia project that aims to help create a world in which every single human can freely share in the sum of all knowledge” [About n.d.]. The process of creating Wikipedia content is based on open collaboration, that in turn is explained in the corresponding entry as “any system of innovation or production that relies on goal-oriented yet loosely coordinated participants who interact to create a product [or service] of economic value, which they make available to contributors and non-contributors alike” [Open collaboration. n.d.]<sup>1</sup>.

It may seem that “the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit” as one can read on the front page of Wikipedia, should lead to the production of a socially negotiated, democratic and balanced database of knowledge, where everyone is able to find a place to present her/his point of view. Nothing more wrong. Researchers quickly noticed that Wikipedia, similarly to other projects based on open collaboration, is characterized by several biases, which barely makes it an authoritative source of knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> This is actually a quote from a scientific article [Levine 2014: 2].

One of the “five pillars” of Wikipedia editing proclaims that “Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view” [Five pillars n. d.]. Nonetheless, researchers as well as Wikipedians themselves discovered plenty of examples of neutrality violations on Wikipedia, among them gender bias. In the following paper, I will try to show some examples of these phenomena in the Polish language version of Wikipedia.

### ***Gender gap of Wikipedia***

The problem of the gender gap is one aspect of gender inequality, characterizing various domains of human social life. Since 2006 the World Economic Forum issues a Global Gender Gap Index Report every year. The authors of the Report introduce Gender Gap Index

as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress over time. The index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, education, health and political criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups. [Global Gender Gap Report 2020: 8]

The notion has been widely used by researchers approaching questions of gender inequalities — among other topics — in traditional societies of India [Somjee 1989], in Afrika [Njuki, Sanginga 2013], in Japan [Steel 2019], in agriculture [Quisumbing et al. 2014], in the economy [Besen-Cassino 2018], in education [Morris 2012]. The latter’s publication concerns “the “new gender gap” in education: “the significantly lower achievement of boys as compared to girls” [Morris 2012: 1]. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of gender gap cases are related to the discrimination of women.

The gender gap may concern different aspects of one domain, as in the case of education. On the one hand, boys have lower achievement as compared to girls, but still, the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 states that: “Based on data from the LinkedIn platform, women are under-represented in six of the eight micro-clusters with the highest employment growth rate [people and culture, content production, marketing, sales, specialized project managers, data and AI, engineering and cloud computing]” [5].

In addition to the notion of gender gap [and other gaps, such as technology gap or a communications gap, conf. Dictionary n.d.] there is also the concept of gender bias. The latter is even more popular in the literature. Dozens of diverse biases had been investigated: hindsight

bias, cognitive biases, participation bias, publication bias, media bias, gate-keeping bias, advertising bias, concision bias, corporate bias, mainstream bias, partisan bias, structural bias to mention but a few. The relationship between these approaches can be seen in part in the fact that the gap is quantitative while the bias is qualitative. The gap seems to be something more obvious, definite, and determined than the bias — a hazy, barely discernible tendency. Assuredly, these two notions inter-lapse and the phenomena they designate may have mutual consequences. I will try to clarify this vague wording with examples later. Wikipedians use mostly the term of bias, as in the Wikipedia article titled “Gender bias on Wikipedia,” devoted to the topic, but the gap is not absent either.

### *State of the Art*

One of the first voices on the topic of gender inequality on the Internet was that of Susan Herring. The researcher opposes the notion of gender neutrality of computer-mediated communication:

In many respects, the Internet reproduces the larger societal gender status quo. Top-level control of Internet resources, infrastructure, and content is exercised mostly by men. The largest single activity on the Internet - the distribution of pornography - is not only largely controlled by men, but casts women as sexual objects for men’s use. The sexualization of women carries over into ostensibly neutral domains, such as recreational chat and personal homepages. In serious contexts, such as academic discussion groups, women participate and are responded to less than men. Moreover, it appears to be necessary for women to form their own groups to address their interests, suggesting that the default activities on the Internet address the interests of men. This evidence points to the persistence of gender disparity in on-line contexts, according to the same hierarchy that privileges males over females off-line. [Herring 2003: 218]

Already in 2003, when the English language version of Wikipedia counted less than 200 000 articles<sup>2</sup>, Susan Herring pointed out several phenomena that can be perceived as different faces of the gender gap. They persisted until now, even if transformed. First of all, it is a gender gap in the sense that most technology users are men. Research-

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<sup>2</sup> In May 2020 it contains more than 6 000 000 articles.

ers estimate the number of women among Wikipedia contributors to be between 13%-16% [Hill et al. 2013; Konieczny 2018]. It is actually “not bad” in comparison to the female participation in the open-source movement [FLOSS] that is between 1.1%-1.5% [Reagle 2013].

One of the early studies on the topic was based on the survey conducted among students on their usage of Wikipedia and lead to the conclusions that

Male students were more likely to discount the risks involved when using Wikipedia information compared to their female counterparts. Furthermore, male students had higher ratings than female students regarding most aspects of Wikipedia, including outcome expectations, perceptions about its information quality, belief in the Wikipedia project itself, emotional states while using Wikipedia, confidence in evaluating information quality, and further exploration. Finally, there was no gender difference regarding the number of years of Wikipedia use. However, male students reported having more positive experiences with the information quality of Wikipedia than their female counterparts. [Lim 2010: 212]

A weak point of the method of survey is that it says more about the convictions of the respondents than about the respondents themselves and their real behavior.

An analysis of the factual contribution of users is deprived of this defect. Such is the approach of a Shyong [Tony] Lam and his team. Researchers analyze edits of registered Wikipedians who declared their gender, which makes 2.8% of the general number of contributors [Lam 2011: 3]. They try to verify the hypothesis, such as “Male and female editors focus on different content areas,” “Coverage of topics with particular interest to females is inferior to topics with particular interest to males,” “Females tend to avoid controversial or contentious articles,” “Female editors are more likely to have their early edits reverted,” “Female editors are more likely to stop editing and leave,” “Wikipedia when being reverted as newcomers,” “Female editors are less likely to be blocked” [Lam 2011: 2-3]. Since the research sample of user activity was collected from a small minority of registered Wikipedians who declared their gender, there is no doubt that the data is biased because it is limited to persons exhibiting very untypical attitude towards their gender, thus who are markedly radical in their psychological features and their views.

Another team of researchers formulates hypotheses seeking gender differences “in confidence in one’s expertise, with women expressing greater lack of confidence than men,” “in comfort with editing such that women will express greater discomfort than men with editing other people’s work in Wikipedia,” in that “Women will respond more negatively than men to criticism in Wikipedia” and that “Women will report less discretionary time than men” [Bear et al. 2016: 256-257]. One could suspect that the sheer construction of such research can exhibit gender bias. This research was based on a survey conducted by the Wikimedia Foundation in 2008. The survey was completed by voluntary participants, 1/3 of whom were Wikipedia editors, either occasional or regular. This, again, is definitely not a representative sample of the community of Wikipedia editors.

The second face of the Wikipedia gender gap is the way women are represented in the medium in question. As for the Internet in general, they are usually objectified in the form of objects of male sexual desire. Herring recalls that in the mid-90s searching Internet with the word “women” brought numerous pornography sites [Herring 2003: 214]. The phenomena consisting of representing females from a certain perspective may be identified with gender bias *sensu stricto*. Researchers remark that biographies of women contains usually more facts connected to sex and marriage than men’s [Graells-Garrido et al. 2015]. They indicate also “A strong bias in the linking patterns [that] results in a network structure in which articles about men are disproportionately more central than articles about women” [Graells-Garrido et al. 2015: 165].

Somewhere in between these two forms of the gender gap is the coverage of biographical information about women and topics regarding women. One of the first interventions regarding gender imbalance of Wikipedia compared it with Britannica and found no huge differences:

We conclude that Wikipedia provides better coverage and longer articles, and that it typically has more articles on women than Britannica in absolute terms, but we also find that Wikipedia articles on women are more likely to be missing than are articles on men relative to Britannica. [...] While Wikipedia has more biographies of women than does Britannica in absolute terms [...], Wikipedia tends to be less balanced in whom it misses than is Britannica as seen in the percentages of missing articles. [Reagle 2011: 1155]

This investigation was strictly quantitative and was limited to data possible to express in numbers, such as the number of the articles or their length. One of the famous examples of coverage gaps in Wikipedia was the biography of Donna Strickland. The article on the topic was created on 2 October 2018<sup>⊗</sup> [Donna Strickland: Revision history n. d.], exactly on the day Donna Strickland received the Nobel Prize in Physics. Indeed, high entrance threshold for a possible object of a biographical entry in Wikipedia. Actually, her biography was created on 7 March 2014 at 6:18, but it was deleted four hours later for the reasons of “Unambiguous copyright infringement,” which satisfies the criteria for speedy deletion [conf. Deletion log n.d.]. Donna Strickland most probably has become a victim of the “Matilda Effect,” which leads to diminishing and even covering the role of women in scientific researches.

Margaret W. Rossiter coined the term “Matilda Effect” after the Robert K. Merton concept of “Matthew Effect” in science. The idea is based on the biblical quote from the Gospel of Matthew 13:12 saying that who has a lot, will be given more, but the one who has not much, will be taken away from. Merton remarked that there is a tendency to attribute to famous scientists merits of their less famous colleagues. The same goes for female collaborators, as in the case of Lise Meitner, a long-term collaborator of Otto Hahn, who alone had subsequently been awarded Nobel Prize for fast nuclear fission [Rossiter 1993: 329]. Rossiter names the effect after the name of Matilda Joslyn Gage, 19<sup>th</sup>-century feminist, free thinker, one of the authors of *Woman’s Bible* [Rossiter 1993: 336].

Other researchers try to look a bit into the content of the articles too. “Male sociologists [...] are more than twice as likely to have a page on Wikipedia [16 percent] than their female colleagues [7 percent] [...]. Similarly, white sociologists are twice as likely [14 percent] to have a page than others [7 percent]” [Adams 2019: 7] — a recent study announces. Early research on gender bias in Wikipedia concludes: “Coverage of topics with particular interest to females is inferior to topics with particular interest to males” [Lam 2011: 2].

Yet another approach is represented by Joseph Reagle. This researcher and hacker collected material from his long years of participation in online communities of Wikipedia and Open Source and drew a bitter conclusion: “Despite the values of freedom and openness, the free culture movement exhibits the same (or worse) imbalance in female participation as the computing culture from which it arose,” since “Nerd and geek identity have historically been understood as being both white and masculine” [Reagle 2013].

To sum up above reflections we can order different forms of gender gap in Wikipedia as follows:

1. participation gap
2. content bias
  1. quantity gap: biographical coverage, but also proportion of presence of women and men on the front page of Wikipedia etc.
  2. quality bias: the way of representation

One should frame the problem under consideration into the broader context of gender main-streaming and gender participation. Because of our own specialization as a literary researcher I will concentrate on the question of women and men representation rather than participation. The problem of gender imbalance of our culture started to attract the attention of researchers relatively recently. The imbalance concerns every-day or professional life, as well as fictional worlds of literary works and movies. "Male as a norm," "It's a man's world" — the idea that governs not only social, but also artistic reality — is still valid in our days.

The question of presence of women in fiction is a part of a more general, critical gender revision of the literary and art canon. A smart, quasi algorithmic tool was provided as a Bechdel-Wallace test. It was created in 1985 as a joke in a comic strip

titled 'The Rule,' in which a woman tells her friend that for her to watch a film it has to meet three conditions. It has to have [1] at least two women in it [2] who talk to each other [3] about something besides a man. This, it is implied, excludes the majority of movies to be found playing in a main-stream cinema. [van Raalte 2015: 16]

Surprisingly often in a movie, there is just one female character, which Katha Pollitt names the Smurfette Principle [Pollitt 1991]<sup>3</sup>. The phenomenon is evident, especially in movie posters. Moreover, the female character usually behaves stereo-typically and there is always some kind of erotic tension between her and the main male character of the movie.

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<sup>3</sup> Hereby I would like to thank Ms. Sophia Balicka for this clue.



## *Method and approach*

So far, so good – however, one may observe that the position of the speaking subject is not innocent and that the present discourse by myself [K.G.] is inevitably determined — and biased — by my own conscious and unconscious presumptions as a representative of the male gender. A male researcher’s opinion on women’s representations will inevitably be skewed and false as representing the outer perspective of domination and oppression. A reply to this objection could be a remark that gender studies embrace all the possible gender variations and that male is a gender too. Moreover, many representations of women are connected to strictly-determined male roles of macho not every man is willing to identify with. A tool of gender oppression has usually a double blade, as we will see in the following part of the paper.

The researcher’s avoidance of his own biases is an impossible challenge. This difficulty could be partly solved by a comparative approach, i.e. measuring the bias of Wikipedia content by comparing different language versions of the same article. But even a comparative analysis gives only relative results. Despite this fact one can aspire to some kind of objectivity by applying a simple principle of symmetry, presuming that the questions of gender should be presented equally from both male and female sides occupying the same amount of space and having the same visibility. Future researches should include more elaborated and detailed data including the entire spectre of possible gender identities.

My methodology is based mostly on the micro-analysis of the content of Wikipedia articles. Contrarily to the most popular line of research based on numerical data such as word frequency, I will read the text, almost like any ordinary Wikipedia reader. The difference is due to my taking notes and applying a critical perspective. I will not be able to process a lot of data, but I am supposed to encounter a lot of interesting examples of biases. They are situated on the level of discourse as it is perceived by a common Wikipedia reader. This perspective was overlooked by previous, predominantly quantitative, researches. I concentrated mostly (but not exclusively) on the best-exposed parts of the body of Wikipedia article: on the first paragraph and on the graphic material accompanying and completing textual content. I contrasted it with other language versions of the article, mostly English, but in many cases also Russian, German, French, Spanish, and Italian. I am not excluding quantitative reflection, sometimes taking into consideration such data as the length of an article and frequency of a term.

## Research Sample

As the source of data for my analysis, I have chosen 22 articles from the Polish language version of Wikipedia related to the topic of gender. The version of articles I studied was that of 15 June 2020. The research sample is collected in a table, in the three columns presenting entries connected to women, men, and to no specific gender, respectively.

Table 1 Research Sample

<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>No Specific Gender</b>
Feminizm	Maskulinizm	Aborcja
Kobiecość	Męskość	BDSM
Kobieta	Mężczyzna	Cisseksualizm
Matriarchat	Patriarchalizm	Determinacja płci
	Patriarchat	Gender
	Hipoteza o wyższości mężczyzn	Gender mainstreaming
		LGBT
		Płeć
		Role płciowe
		Różnice psychologiczne między płciami
		Seks
		Seksizm

As one can see, the choice of the entries is not at all random. On the contrary, I concentrated on a few most important gender-related notions, with a special interest in topics controversial in Poland. Therefore, the results cannot under any circumstances be considered as a general diagnosis of “gender health” of Polish Wikipedia. The research is aimed at finding new, unknown forms of bias on the level of a particular entry. In further perspective, the results can serve as the basis for a future, more precise, quantitative, algorithmic, digital approach.

## Results: Propositions for Classifying Wikipedia Gender Biases

Analysis of first paragraphs of the Polish Wikipedia entries above enumerated has revealed plenty of biased content — biased in various manners, hidden in different aspects of the text. The entire spectrum of heterogeneous phenomena has fallen into several groups according to criteria applied. I will limit my attention to two criteria: carrier (medium) and rhetorical strategy.

### Biases by Carrier

First of all, there are a few areas in which biases may be encoded — a few separated carriers, or media. The most obvious case is a biased statement provided in the textual content of the article. There are, however, possible some other, less visible, and ostensive biases such as those hidden in the length of the article, in the percentage of space reserved for coverage of a particular topic, or in the selection of accompanying graphical materials.

As for the first category of textual content bias, further explanation is not needed; moreover, in the subsequent analysis, many examples of bias of this kind will be mentioned. As for the second category, biases incorporated in the size of the text, we shall refer to an example of the entry “Kobieta” and “Mężczyzna.”

Table 2. Length of Article

1.	Language	Pl	Ru	It	Fr	Es	De	En
2.		Kobieta	Женщина	Donna	Femme	Mujer	Frau	Woman
3.	Length [bytes]	5276	123705	15507	102600	32816	50349	72201
4.		Mężczyzna	Мужчина	Uomo	Homme	Varón	Mann	Man
5.	Length [bytes]	14057	54165	17847	26239	28802	16454	18864
6.		K/M	Ж/М	D/U	F/H	M/V	F/M	W/M
7.	Proportion	38%	228%	87%	391%	114%	306%	383%
8.		Kobieta	Женщина	Donna	Femme	Mujer	Frau	Woman
9.	Length [%]	100%	4%	34%	5%	16%	10%	7%
10.		Mężczyzna	Мужчина	Uomo	Homme	Varón	Mann	Man
11.	Length [%]	100,00%	26%	79%	54%	49%	85%	75%

The table summarizes the length of the articles on *woman* and *man* in different language versions of Wikipedia. The third and the fifth row contain the sizes of respective language versions of the articles “Kobie-

ta” [Woman] and “Mężczyzna” [Man]. The unit is a byte that corresponds approximately to one letter of the text, but this value includes also commands of Wiki syntax, which are not displayed on the screen. They are, however, quite good approximations of how long the text of the entry is. In the seventh row, the length of the articles on women compared to the length of the article on men is expressed as proportions. The value corresponding to Polish Wikipedia is the smallest in the research sample. The value, 38%, means that the size of the article on female gender is a bit more than 1/3 of the size of the entry on male. Only Polish and Italian Wikipedia articles on women are shorter than the one on men. In all the other cases, articles on women are longer than articles on men, up to three times longer in the case of French and English Wikipedia.

The ninth and tenths rows consist of the values of the lengths of Polish articles “Kobieta” [Woman] and “Mężczyzna” [Man] against the background of other language versions of Wikipedia. Both articles are more developed on non-Polish platforms, but the gap is especially elevated in the case of “Kobieta”<sup>4</sup>.

As for the next kind of bias, namely the proportion of the text and thus, readers’ attention, an entry “Różnice psychologiczne między płciami” [“Sex differences in psychology”] will provide a very instructive example. In the English version of the entry, the abbreviation “IQ” is cited only twice, in the context of the research conducted in 2007 which stated that the results of research on the gender difference in IQ level are ambiguous and open to interpretation. The Polish version of the entry contains a long and detailed analysis of the problem, citing a lot of sources and researches, which makes up the bigger part of the article.

Table 3 Proportion of length of text

1.		Różnice psychologiczne między płciami	Sex differences in psychology
2.	Length [bytes]	40929	102049
3.	“IQ” occurrences	22	2
4.	Proportion	0.54‰	0.02‰

<sup>4</sup> These results, however, should be interpreted carefully, at best in comparison with the distribution of similar entries, such as “Kobiecość” [femininity] and “Męskość” [masculinity] that exhibit somehow contrary tendency and may contribute to this phenomenon.

The first row contains data on the size of both language versions of the article. The second row, the number of "IQ" occurrences, and the fourth row, the proportion of the latter expressed as permil, show the saturation level of the concept in the text. The resulting value is 26 times bigger in the Polish version.

Finally, the last form of bias classified as carrier would be graphical content. A very good example will be provided by the already mentioned entry "Kobieta" [Woman]. A pictorial part of this entry consists of two pictures. First one is a "Woman Montage," which contains 20 pictorial representations of "famous women," from Queen of Sheba and Venus, through Mother Teresa and Grace Hopper, computer pioneer, to Elizabeth I of Tudor and Florence Owens Thompson, a photographic icon of the Great Depression in the USA in the 30s. The second one is "Pregnancy 26 week.jpg," subtitled "Kobieta w ciąży" [A pregnant woman]. The young woman is completely nude and shown from the waist up in profile. This very same photo [in a much smaller size, though] contributes to the graphical accompaniment of the English version of the entry as one of the 26 pictures. It appears as the ninth picture in the row. The first one is "Woman mechanic working on engine.jpeg," entitled "A woman inspecting an engine." One should remark this detail. She is not an unqualified, physical worker, but an inspector, most probably an engineer. She is as young as the woman from the pregnancy photo. Unlike her, she is not only dressed but is also wearing protective clothing and a mask, has a discreet makeup, carefully arranged hair and clips. A message of the Polish version of the article, the message whose collective author is the Polish Wikipedia community, is clear: for a woman, there are two ways, either become famous, or pregnant.

### ***Biases by Strategy***

Another criterion that proved effective in ordering the collected material was the criterion of rhetorical strategy. During the analysis of the research sample, several rhetorical figures were encountered, concerning both textual, as well as graphical content. I am enumerating them according to increasing visibility and ostentation, partly related to increasing expressive power: concealment [omission], obsolete sources, camouflage [noise], presupposition/implication, open text, and drastic content.

### *Concealment, or Lost In Translation*

This strategy has a purely negative character since it does not involve adding to the content, but simply removing it. It is ordinary censorship in which when translating an entry from a foreign language some passages are omitted.

To understand better how it works, let us take a closer look at the first four sentences of the entry “Feminizm” [“Feminism”] from the Polish language version of the Wikipedia and contrast it with the English version of the article. To make it shorter, instead of the sentences I will evoke their themes<sup>5</sup>.

Table 5.

No	Polish	No	English
1 <sup>st</sup>	Aims of feminism	1 <sup>st</sup>	Aims of feminism
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Assumptions of the feminist worldview	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Assumptions of the feminist worldview
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Activities of feminist organisations	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Postulates for practical action
4 <sup>th</sup>	More on these activities	4 <sup>th</sup>	Activities of feminist organisations
5 <sup>th</sup>	-	5 <sup>th</sup>	More on these activities

The table above presents the topics of introductory sentences [i.e. above the box “Contents”] of both the Polish and English versions of the entry on feminism. The gap in the box for the fifth sentence of the Polish version means that the introductory part counts only four sentences. Nevertheless, as the topics and even the structure of subsequent sentences suggest, one is a translation of the other. The direction most probably was from English to Polish. If so, there is an obvious omission. The fourth sentence, in general, on the practical implications of feminism, has been lost in translation. The “satanic verse” of the entry “Feminism” goes as follows: “Efforts to change that include fighting gender stereotypes and seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men” [Feminism n.d.]. This sentence was impossible to swallow for the editors of Polish Wikipedia.

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<sup>5</sup> Theme, or topic, as contrasted with the comment — rheme, according to the terminology of the Prague School.

In the exact same manner, the second sentence of the entry on sexism became its “satanic verse.” It says “Sexism can affect anyone, but it primarily affects women and girls” [Sexism n.d.] and has also been excluded by the editors of the Polish Wikipedia. I guess an anthology of such gender “satanic wikiverses” would be an interesting and informative reading.

### ***Obsolete Sources***

Another strategy used by the authors of biased content on Wikipedia is citing obsolete and no longer valid sources. That is the case of an entry “Seks” [“Human sexual activity”] and “Matriarchat” [Matriarchy].

The first one contains a chapter “Badania zachowań seksualnych” [Research on sexual behaviour]. The content of the chapter is based in great part on the Kinsey report from 1948 and 1943 and research by Masters and Johnson published in 1966 and 1970. There is no doubt that the views presented there will be more conservative than the ones based on more recent sources. In the English version of the entry, the Kinsey report is mentioned only once, in one sentence, while Masters and Johnson are absent.

Another example concerns one particular controversy, namely the hypothesis of prehistorical matriarchy, which to this day is an open and complex question on the border of science and politics. The Polish Wikipedia article on matriarchy cites as a source works of Feliks Koneczny, Polish historian and philosopher active before World War II and known for his conservatism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism.

### ***Camouflage***

Sometimes “problematic” content that contradicts Wikipedia editors’ world view is presented in a disguise and is covered by unnecessary complexity of the message or sheer informational noise.

An introductory sentence to the entry on cisgender can serve as an example of a bias hidden in a camouflage of stylistic chaos. In the English version, we find a short and clear definition: “a term for people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth” [Cisgender, n.d.]. Polish version brings such a formulation: “expression regarding descriptions of gender identity, where personal experience related to it is consistent with the sex that was assigned to the person at birth”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> “wyrażenie dotyczące opisów tożsamości płciowej, gdzie osobiste doświadc-

Saying easy things in a complex way is most probably aimed at discouraging people to get deeper into the topic.

An example of sheer informational noise one can find in the graphical framing of an entry "Role płciowe" [Gender roles]. The first photo embedded in the article is "Bagpipe performer.jpg," a male dressed in kilt and playing a musical instrument. No need to say, that it does not appear in any other analysed language version of Wikipedia. In the English and the Russian language version of the article, the first graphical illustration of the entry is a series of photos showing "Men and women in non-traditional gendered occupations" [Gender role n.d.]. The photo of a male wearing a kilt as an introductory illustration to the question of gender role is information noise impeding access to the knowledge on this subject.

### *Presupposition*

Textual strategies, like the ones described above – e.g. concealment, obsolete sources, etc. – are not easily visible, since obscurity is one of their main assumptions. Stylistic camouflage is more ostentatious because its function is to distract the reader's attention and direct it elsewhere. The next rhetorical strategy, presupposition, is not overt either. I understand it here loosely, as an implication of a message. It is not the main topic of the message, but a side comment, smuggled on an occasion.

An example of this phenomenon can be provided again by an entry "Kobieta" [Woman]. The second and the last sentence of the introduction to the entry said: "In biology, it is assumed that differences in the genotype of a woman and a man determine the sexual dimorphism of human"<sup>7</sup> [Kobieta n.d.]. This formulation implies that there are two different genotypes: a genotype of a woman and the genotype of a man.

The English version mentions genetics in one of its four-paragraph introduction saying: "Typically, a woman has two X chromosomes and is capable of pregnancy and giving birth from puberty until menopause" [Woman n.d.]. This way of expressing the idea of genetic difference is less definite due to the word "typically." The difference is actually

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czenia z nią związane są zgodne z płcią biologiczną, która danej osobie była przypisana w momencie urodzenia"

<sup>7</sup> "W biologii przyjmuje się, że różnice w genotypie kobiety i mężczyzny determinują dymorfizm płciowy człowieka."



evoked [“two X chromosomes,]” which makes it less “demonic” than the unspecified “differences in the genotype of a woman and a man” [Kobieta n.d.].

The German version sounds a bit like an amplified Polish version: “Development as a woman is genetically determined by a pair of chromosomes XX and the lack of the Y chromosome necessary for male development, which controls the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics”<sup>8</sup> [Frau n.d.]. However, the formulations are much less firm, because “bedingen” [en. require, determine] seems less strict than “determine” [de. bestimmen, feststellen].

The French version: “Its genetic sex or genotypic sex is determined by the presence of two X chromosomes [and / or by the absence of the SRY gene] on the twenty-third pair. The embryo is however physiologically undifferentiated until the seventh week of pregnancy”<sup>9</sup> [Femme n.d.]. This approach is similar to the English and German ones, focusing on the difference. Moreover, it notes that sex difference appears at some stage of fetal life.

The Spanish, Italian, and Russian versions do not mention genetics in the introductory part of the entry on *woman* at all. To summon up this example: covering genetic differences and presenting their central role in defining the term implies stressing and overestimating the importance of gender differences.

Another example involving presupposition would be a graphical accompaniment of the entry “Gender.” The first photo in the Polish language version of the entry is titled “Man and woman in formal wear” [Gender n.d.] — may very well be a wedding photo. Their height and clothes are different, displaying a play on the contrast of their black and white clothes. The English version embeds in this place “A Gender symbols intertwined,” the implication of which is close relation and connection between genders.

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<sup>8</sup> “Die Entwicklung als Frau ist genetisch bedingt durch ein Chromosomenpaar XX und das Fehlen des für die männliche Entwicklung notwendigen Y-Chromosoms, durch die die Entwicklung primärer und sekundärer Geschlechtsmerkmale gesteuert wird.”

<sup>9</sup> “Son sexe génétique ou sexe génotypique est déterminé par la présence de deux chromosomes X [et/ou par l’absence du gène SRY] sur la vingt-troisième paire. L’embryon est cependant physiologiquement indifférencié jusqu’à la septième semaine de grossesse.”

Let us take a closer look at the logo used by the Polish Wikipedia community as a symbol for the template “Feminizm.” It is woman-power symbol — a clenched fist in Venus sign [Feminizm n.d.]. In the English version, the role of the template is played by a box leading to the whole Feminism portal. The logo is basically a Venus sign, with no fist. Here femininity does not need to show the fist.

These are only a few from many examples of more or less obvious presupposed or implied gender-biased content I encountered during the investigation of the research sample.

### *Open Text*

A yet more ostentatious strategy is the direct formulation of a biased statement — open text. In such cases, biased content is included in the body of the article. Usually, it is placed somewhere deep in the text, but sometimes it takes a more exposed position as the introductory part of the article.

A good example of this textual phenomenon is the entry “Seks” (Human sexual activity). The first part of the introductory sentence of the entry consists of a concise characterization of the notion in question. It goes as follows: “entirety of behaviors resulting from sex drive and aimed at satisfying individual sexual needs of a person”<sup>10</sup> [Seks n.d.]. The English version of the article starts with such formulation: “the manner in which humans experience and express their sexuality” [Human sexual activity n.d.]. In this case, the bias is explicit in the limitation of the variety of functions human sexual life can play in human life.

Another, quite shocking example, is an entry entitled “Hipoteza o wyższości mężczyzn” (Hypothesis on the supremacy of men). It’s beginning states: “Hypothesis on the superiority of men - an assumption about the psychological, especially intellectual advantage of men in the species *H. sapiens*, which would have a biological basis” [Hipoteza o wyższości mężczyzn n.d.]. As we can see from the lack of decision as to the choice of term, the editors are not sure whether they refer to a hypothesis or an assumption. In the following part of the entry, several sources from after 2000 documenting and supporting the above-mentioned “hypothesis” were cited. Bias is not covered here, on the contrary — it is proposed as mainstream discourse. This entry was deleted

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<sup>10</sup> “ogół zachowań wynikających z popędu płciowego i mających na celu zaspokojenie indywidualnych potrzeb seksualnych człowieka”

on 8 December 2019. Nevertheless, its content has been incorporated into the article “Różnice psychologiczne między płciami” [Sex differences in psychology].

### ***Drastic Content***

The final and most expressive way of smuggling bias into Wikipedia article I found during this investigation was a type of content that can be classified as drastic. I guess it deserves to be treated separately, even though I can provide only one example.

It is a part of the entry on abortion as the first one [out of two] pictures accompanying quite an elaborate article [96 233 bytes]. The picture is entitled “The embryo after opening the fallopian tube with an ectopic pregnancy approximately 7 weeks after fertilization” [Aborcja n.d.]. Let us take a closer look at the content of the photo. It has a quite long description. This is a part of it:

This photo of an opened oviduct with an ectopic pregnancy features a spectacularly well preserved 10-millimeter embryo. It is uncommon to see any embryo at all in an ectopic, and for one to be this well preserved [and undisturbed by the prosecutor’s knife] is quite unusual. [Uthman 2001]

What we can learn for sure is that it is not a usual image related to abortion, but a very particular case: ectopic pregnancy. Moreover, the illustration is not typical even for this particular case of ectopic pregnancy. What we see is not false, but it is not the truth either.

The second image used here is an abortion laws map, displaying the legal status of abortion in the world. Poland is a single yellow stain [“Prohibited with exceptions for maternal life and health, rape, and fetal defects;”] on a uniform blue background of Global North [“Allowed on request”]. No other reviewed language version links to the picture of ectopic pregnancy.

### ***Conclusions***

The results collected above raise many questions, doubts, but also some conclusions. Is the method applied a good tool for bias detection? For sure, I did not enumerate all the possible forms of biases. Classifications by the carrier and by the rhetorical strategy are just two

out of many possibilities. Another way is a systematic presentation according to function, such as performative, commercial, ludic, etc. Undoubtedly, there is much more to discover, that is only a matter of the number of articles analysed. As for the 22 articles analysed here, they were chosen partially from a variety of articles discussing controversial topics, in which the number of manifestations of bias seems substantial and worth further investigations. I hope I showed that not only quantitative and digital but also qualitative and traditional approaches can teach us something about Wikipedia.

Communication technology, as well as computer media, is not gender-neutral. Historical, political, and social conditions influenced strictly technical, computer-mediated communication. Human culture and human behaviour determine the way humans use technology. I wanted to demonstrate that this has a lot of consequences. One of them is a form and content of the knowledge stored and published on the internet on Wikipedia portals. Open and free knowledge happened to replicate discriminatory discourse, playing rather a performative, than a constative role. The fact that we are able to perceive inaccuracies and distortions suggests that we live in the era of breakthroughs.

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# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPES OF BILINGUALISM IN MINDREADING ABILITIES

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Cognitive psychology and experimental philosophy researches have focused on various aspects of the development of children's mindreading abilities. Privileged access to mental states is the ability to access our intentional states directly while we form representations of other people's mental states only via their behaviour or their verbal statements. We expect others to have immediate access to their intentional states, and to be able to verbally account for them. This is called attribution of privileged access. In understanding mindreading mechanisms we have to take into account second-order beliefs, in other words, we have to consider what people think about other people's thoughts.

This paper aims to present the development of mindreading abilities in bilingual children. My research questions are: 1] at what age do bilingual children acquire the attribution of privileged access to mental states? 2] are there any differences in development between the various types of bilingualism? 3] is the attri-

bution of privileged access a special case of second-order mental state attribution? I hypothesize is that the attribution of privileged access appears between the age of 4 and 5. It appears sooner in the case of balanced bilingual children than in that of Hungarian-dominant bilinguals. 166 Hungarian-Romanian children, aged between 4 and 7 participated in two experiments. Experiment 1. was designed to test the ability of attribution of privileged access to mental states while experiment 2. tested second-order mental state attribution. Children had to listen to different stories and answer questions about the characters' mental states. The results support the hypothesis that the attribution of privileged access to mental states develops faster in bilingual children. There was no relationship between attribution of second-order mental states and that of privileged access attribution. This supports the idea that these phenomena are different, and they develop separately.

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**KEYWORDS:** *mindreading, mental state, second-order belief, bilingualism*

## 1. Introduction

Access to our thoughts and desires, i.e., privileged access, is a well-known term in both philosophy and cognitive psychology. Privileged access to mental states is the cognitive process that allows us to access our own mental structures. Also, attributing privileged access refers to the fact that in our interaction with others, we presume that the other person can also access their own mental states and can account for these [Kiss, Jakab 2014; Jakab, Kiss 2018]. It is widely agreed that knowledge about our mental state is of different nature and superior to the knowledge of others' mental state [Alston 1971; Borgoni 2018]. Actually, this different nature means that we have direct access to our own mental state (be it perception, mood, feeling, belief, desire, will, memory, imagination, etc.), whereas access to that of others is indirect. Another characteristic of privileged access is that it is immediate and discriminative, i.e. not only does the "I" think about its own states as different from others, but also knows them better. Finally, another trait of privileged access is its awareness [Wright 2015].

Understanding others' minds is as important in our social effectiveness as access to our own states. In this respect too, our own mentalization processes are in the center given that we can deduce others' mental state based on knowledge of our own ones. Doing this, we step from intrapersonal understanding towards the interpersonal one [Meltzoff 2005]. This can be seen as a process in which understanding the other happens through self-understanding: I understand you because I think you are like I am. Other authors believe that we are able to understand ourselves and our mental states through understanding our environment, i.e., we do exactly the opposite: we understand ourselves by understanding others [I understand myself because I think I am like you]. In this, imitation has an important role, the child imitates grown-ups' behaviour, and later this behaviour is mirrored by the adult. Eventually, the child will see again its own behaviour when it imitates the other person [Prinz 2005].

The first to deal with the attribution of privileged access on a theoretical level was Jürgen Habermas [1984] who presented the ideal speech situation in his pragmatics-related study. This stipulates that in any conversation, individuals suppose that the partner has access to their own mental state and can even give an account of these. This also means that the theory of the ideal speech situation does not suppose about the partner that he/she can have unconscious, inaccessible



mental states [Kiss, Jakab 2010]. The fact that we suppose that the individual takes responsibility for one's behaviour means that we also suppose the existence of one's awareness of oneself because based on these does one behave in a certain way. This also implies that there is a difference between self-knowledge and knowing others [McDonald 2002].

In order to understand social functioning and be able to participate in them, it is not enough to recognize the other's mental state and attribute mental states to them. We need to take into consideration what individuals think about others' thoughts and what others think about the individual's thoughts. The first is known as second-order theory of mind ability, while the latter is known as higher-order theory of mind ability [Perner, Wimmer 1985]. When attributing second-order mental states, not only do children have to understand that another individual perceives the situation in a certain way [first-order theory of mind], but also the fact that an individual has thoughts about others' mental states [second-order theory of mind] [Zaitchik, Tager-Flusberg 1994]. Therefore, in second-order theory of mind tests one must get to the second level of representation of assumptions, i.e. understand one's belief about another person's attributing assumptions, e.g., *Tomi believes that John believes that it is raining outside.*

In their experiment, Perner and Wimmer [1985] studied children's second-order theory of mind abilities. The experiment was based on principles similar to those that false-belief tests were based on [Wimmer, Perner 1983] and they tested 5-10-year-old children. In the second-order theory of mind test, the participants listen to the story of two characters: John and Mary are playing in the park when they see the ice cream truck. Both find out that from the park the truck will go in front of the church but neither knows that the other also possesses this piece of information. The test question focuses on what John thinks where Mary will go to buy ice cream. In order to answer the question correctly, children need to understand that John does not know anything about what Mary knows in connection with the relocation of the truck. The results indicate that children begin to understand second-order theory of mind questions at the age of 6 and by the age of 7-9 this ability is mostly fully functional. It has also been demonstrated that children perform better, and are able to answer correctly sooner, if we add various additions to the story, like something to aid children's memory or asking the test question in the story right after the moment in which the subjects need to understand second-order assumptions.

Thus, results suggest that there are two years between the formation of the first-order theory of mind ability and that of the second-order theory of mind [Perner, Wimmer 1985]. Perner and Howes [1992] had demonstrated that smaller children are able to attribute assumptions to another person, but they can hardly answer self-reflection questions from the other person's point of view and they also find it difficult to recognise another person's assumptions of a third party's thoughts. In the latter type of questions, even many 6-year-old children's answers were incorrect.

The explanation behind the difficulties to answer second-order theory of mind questions could be, on the one hand, children's linguistic deficiency due to which they do not understand complex questions easily. It is also possible that children encounter difficulties because they have to process too much information, hence the level of development of second-order theory of mind abilities remains hidden. Finally, it is possible that the level of cognitive development of children should allow them to understand the recursive nature of mental states [Zaitchik, Tager-Flusberg 1994]. Zaitchik and Tager-Flusberg [1994] argued that these difficulties can be overcome and children are able to understand second-order assumptions if changes are implemented in the experiment. For this reason, in their experiment they used a shorter story and added more aiding questions. The changes were necessary because they proposed that the children cannot process the great amount of information in the traditional test. The authors concluded that even preschool children have the conceptualization ability needed to understand recursively embedded mental states. Similarly, Coull, Leekam and Bennett [2006] also concluded that a simplified second-order test leads to better results in the age group of 5 and 6, and that due to the introduction of aiding questions, 4 and 5-year-olds can also provide correct answers. Therefore, the support given in completing the task plays a pivotal role in the usage of second-order mentalization, the second-order mentalization processes can even be controlled with these, thus the findings are comparable to Piaget's views on development [i.e., assimilation and accommodation, Piaget, Inhelder 1999] and Vygotsky [i.e., the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky 1967] [Papera et al. 2019].

Hollebrandse, van Hout and Hendriks [2012] tested verbal and non-verbal second-order theory of mind skills in 6-9-year-old children and found that the subjects perform better in verbal experiments assessing second-order theory of mind. They inferred from this that the

level of language development influences second-order mentalization. The authors also propose that the development of grammatical representations influences children's performance in second-order theory of mind tests.

There have also been attempts to develop second-order theory of mind ability (Arslan et al. 2015; Arslan et al. 2017). The results show that children can learn to answer second-order theory of mind questions if they have prior training in which they received feedback related to their answers and were explained the correct answers. What is more, in order for them to learn, it was enough if they received feedback without explanation. These findings suggest that the cognitive development of 5-6-year-olds facilitates the functioning of strategies necessary in second-order mentalization, however, due to inexperience, children do not use these. The authors found that the children, who were capable of first-order mentalization but did not perform well in the second-order theory of mind test, use the strategies applied in the first-order mentalization. As opposed to this, the findings of de Villiers, Hobbs and Hollebrandse [2014] show that the answers of a large percentage of 5 and 6-year-old children showed reality bias. Since participants in the experiment had different economic and educational background, the diverse results may indicate that low socioecological background influences children's performance, more precisely, it is a constraining factor in the development of this ability.

The attribution of privileged access, second-order and higher-order mentalization testing in the case of bilinguals has not been extensively researched so far. Although the development of understanding first-order false beliefs in the case of bilinguals has been investigated (Kovács, 2009; Farhadian et al. 2010; Gordon Millett, 2010; Nguyen, Astington, 2014; Diaz, Farrar, 2017), research assessing higher levels of mentalization has not been conducted.

## ***2. Aims, Research Questions and Hypothesis***

The aim of the present research is to determine at which age bilingual children are capable of attribution of privileged access and by comparing the results of each age group, I propose to map the characteristic features of age. Another aim is to learn what the traits of second-order theory of mind ability are. The results may indicate whether attribution of privileged access is a specific case of second-order theory of mind ability or a competence that can develop on its own. The data

will be compared based on the type of bilingualism of children in order to study the characteristics of theory of mind skills of bilingual children from a new perspective.

The research questions are: 1) When and how do children attain the ability of attribution of privileged access? 2) How is the ability of attribution of privileged access regarding mental states related to the development of second-order theory of mind ability? 3) How do these cognitive questions evolve in the various bilingual groups and age groups respectively; is there any difference between the performances of the two different types of bilingualism?

The hypotheses of the present research are the following: 1) attribution of privileged access is not yet developed in 4-5-year-olds, but 6-7-year olds can easily operate this competence; 2) attribution of privileged access is an independent cognitive ability, i.e., it does not relate to the second-order theory of mind ability; 3) the results of Hungarian – Romanian bilingual children who show early, balanced linguistic competences, are better than those of early, but dominant Hungarian bilingual children.

### **3. Participants**

166 Hungarian-Romanian bilingual children participated in the research. The children were aged between 4 and 7, their mean age was 71.61 months ( $SD = 13.16$ ). In the test group 38 children were 4 years old ( $M = 54.36$  months;  $SD = 3.53$ ; 20 boys, 18 girls), 42 children were 5 years old ( $M = 65.16$  months;  $SD = 3.26$ ; 16 boys, 26 girls), 43 children were 6 years old ( $M = 75.74$  months;  $SD = 3.47$ ; 22 boys, 21 girls), and 43 children were 7 years old ( $M = 89.02$  months;  $SD = 3.01$ ; 24 boys, 19 girls). The children come from regions in West of Romania (Partium, Banat, and Sălaj), from a wide range of small and large settlements, and have an average socio-economic background. All of them show normal hearing and neither of them has been diagnosed with intellectual disability or learning disabilities. For permission to record data, perform the experiments, and process the data anonymously, I have asked for signed written consent from the parents.

Children's linguistic abilities were determined with the help of the questionnaire (scoring 0 to 10) parents filled out. This shows that balanced bilingual children's command of both Hungarian and Romanian are close to one another, parents gave a mean of 9.11 points ( $SD = 1.03$ ) to their children's linguistic competence of Hungarian and 8.28

points [ $SD = 1.07$ ] to that of Romanian. In the dominant Hungarian bilingual group parents rated children's command of Hungarian 9.44 points [ $SD = .75$ ], while the mean of that of Romanian was 3.2 [ $SD = 2.07$ ] [see Table 1.]. As far as command of the Hungarian language is concerned, there is no significant difference between the balanced and the dominant bilingual group:  $F(1,164) = 5.53, p < .001$ , in terms of command of Romanian language there is a significant difference:  $F(1, 164) = 376.69, p < .001$  [one-way ANOVA test].

Table 1. Linguistic Competence in Hungarian and Romanian in Bilingualism Groups

Bilingualism type		Hungarian Language	Romanian Language
Dominant	Mean	9.44	3.20
	No. of cases	88	88
	SD	0.75	2.07
	Median	10.00	3.00
	Min.	7	0
	Max.	10	10
Balanced	Mean	9.11	8.28
	No. of cases	78	78
	SD	1.03	1.07
	Median	9.50	8.00
	Min.	7	5
	Max.	10	10
Total	Mean	9.28	5.59
	No. of cases	166	166
	SD	0.90	3.04
	Median	10.00	6.00
	Min.	7	0
	Max.	10	10

Based on this, children who are dominant speakers of Hungarian and come from monolingual families formed the dominant group, in which the mean age was 71.77 months [ $SD = 13.3$ ]. There were 88 children altogether in this group: 20 were 4 years old ( $M = 53.75$  months;  $SD = 3.46$ ; 14 boys, 6 girls), 20 children were 5 years old ( $M = 64.40$  months;  $SD = 2.76$ ; 11 boys, 9 girls), 25 children were 6 years old ( $M = 76.64$  months;  $SD = 3.66$ ; 14 boys, 11 girls), and 23 children were 7 years old ( $M = 88.56$  months;  $SD = 2.77$ ; 12 boys, 11 girls). Children

from mixed families with a balanced command of both languages fell into the so-called balanced group, in which the mean age was 71.43 months ( $SD = 13.03$ ). In the balanced group, there were a total of 78 children. 18 of them were 4 years old ( $M = 55.05$  months;  $SD = 3.58$ ; 6 boys, 12 girls), at the time of the research 22 children were 5 years old ( $M = 65.86$  months;  $SD = 3.58$ ; 5 boys, 17 girls), 18 children were 6 years old ( $M = 74.50$  months;  $SD = 2.85$ ; 8 boys, 10 girls), and 20 children were 7 years old ( $M = 89.55$  months;  $SD = 3.26$ ; 12 boys, 8 girls).

#### 4. Research Method and Design

##### 4.1. The First Experiment – Testing attribution of privileged access

I used the methods of the Bartsch and Wellman [1989] experiment modified by Kiss and Jakab [2014] to observe children's ability to attribute privileged access: children listened to three short, mundane stories, and then answered three questions asked by the investigator regarding the mental states of the protagonists of the stories.

In the first part, children listened to the following story: *She is Anna. Anna is looking for her cat. The cat has hidden under the chair. But Anna is looking for it under the piano.* For easier comprehension, I used puppets to illustrate the story. The first question in the test was: *What do you think, why does Anna do that?* Children are supposed to name a mental state as an answer to this question. This means that the participant can attribute a mental state to the protagonist. Based on the coding I used, the answers can be grouped as follows: [1] Does not know; [2] Names a mental state [e.g. "She looks for it there, because she **thinks**, it is there."]; [3] Refers to action [e.g. "She looks for it because she **wants to play** with it."]; [4] Reference to the physical environment of the characters [e.g. "Because **there is a lot of space under the table.**"]; [5] Perception [e.g. "Because she **cannot see** her cat."]; [6] Other.

Next, the researcher showed two similar puppets (identical with the puppet seen at the beginning of the story), both uttered a sentence in the first person singular as follows: Puppet 1: *"I thought my cat was under the piano,"* puppet 2: *"I thought my cat was under the chair."* The researcher asked which puppet was Anna. If the child picks the right puppet, we may infer that they can attribute a mental state to the protagonist.

The second story was the following: *She is Zsuzsi. Zsuzsi is looking for her cat. The cat hid under the chair. But Zsuzsi is looking for it under*

*the piano.* Two test questions follow the story: 1) *What do you think, why does Zsuzsi do that?* 2) *What do you think, if we asked Zsiuzsi why she is looking for her cat under the piano, what would she say?"* The first question assessed attribution of mental state, whereas the second assessed attribution of privileged access to mental states. All answers were noted, coded, and then classified. Besides this, I marked one point all answers that identified a mental state.

The third story was about a little boy: *He is Sanyi. Sanyi would like to find his dog. The dog is hiding either in the garage or on the playground. Sanyi believes the dog is on the playground.* There are two test questions to this story as well: 1) *What do you think, where is Sanyi going to look for his dog, in the garage, or on the playground?* 2) *What do you think, if we asked Sanyi why he is looking for his dog in the garage/ on the playground, what would he say?"* For the first test question every correct answer [naming mental states] is marked one point, incorrect answers or "I don't know" are worth zero points. With the second test question, I studied the characteristics of children's attributing mental states, and I marked one point each instance they named a mental state so that the answers be comparable among each other.

The second and third experiments were coded similarly to the first one.

#### *4.2. The Second Experiment – Testing second-order theory of mind*

In the second experiment, I carried out the second-order theory of mind skills test by Perner and Howes [1992]. The experiment was translated to Hungarian by Kiss and Jakab [2014] who did the test with monolingual Hungarian children. During the test, two stories were heard, both had three characters: Mary, John, and John's mother. The experimenter illustrated the story with pictures. In the experimental conditions, the children bring some chocolate home and John places it on one of the shelves, but Mary does not know whether he put the chocolate on the upper shelf or the lower one. While John is away, and without him knowing, his mother moves the chocolate onto another shelf. Thus, John does not know where the chocolate is either, though he thinks he does. In the control experiment, the story is similar but the mother does not intervene, the transfer is not realized. In both the experiment and the control situation two control questions are asked followed by the test questions. The story used in the experiment was the following: *John and Mary have just come back from the shop with a*

box of chocolate. They have to put the chocolate away until they finish dinner. Mary says to John: "I have to go to the library now, can you tell me, where you are going to put the chocolate?" John's answer: "I will put it either on the upper shelf or on the lower one." Mary leaves. John decides to put the chocolate on the upper shelf and then goes to play in the park." The first control question I asked the participants was: *Does Mary know where the chocolate is?* Following this, the mother takes the chocolate from the upper shelf and puts it on the lower one, this is the so-called transfer episode. *"While Mary and John are away, the mother takes the chocolate from the upper shelf and puts it on the lower one."* The control question that referred to this part was: *"Does John know where the chocolate is? Yes or no?"* This is followed by the test questions: 1) *"Think question: What does John think, where is the chocolate? On the upper shelf or the lower one? 2) "Self-reflection question: What would happen if we found John in the park and asked him: "John, do you know where the chocolate is?" What would he say: yes or no?" 3) "Question that refers to another person: What would happen if we found Mary in the library and asked her: "Mary, does John know where the chocolate is?" What is Mary going to say? In the control story only the second control question changes [Does John know where the chocolate is?] because in this case, the transfer does not take place.*

We also used a second version of the test in which the target object were wooden blocks, in the transfer episode the mother moves them from one bag into another one of a different colour. The story and the test questions were used randomized. In the first version, the wooden block story was the control condition and the chocolate story was the experimental condition, in the second one it was the other way around. The order of the three test questions was as varied as possible. All correct answers, both in the control and the experimental condition, were worth one point.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. First Experiment

I tested attribution of mental state and understanding privileged access with three stories. In their answer to the first test question of the first story, 38.9% of Hungarian dominant bilingual children named a mental state, 18.2% invoked an external circumstance, 15.9% named an action, 11.4% were unable to answer why Anna is looking for her cat



under the piano. The answers of 9.1% of the group were in connection with perception, 4.5% of the children answered something else, and 1.1% answered the question based on their own external reality. In the balanced bilingual group, 53.8% of the participants named a mental state, 15.4% an action, 11.5% identified an external circumstance, 9% of the children could not answer the question, 5.1% indicated perception, and 2.6% gave answers based on reality or different answers.

According to age groups, in the dominant bilingual group 25% of both the 4-year-olds and the 5-year-olds could name a mental state. 48% of the 6-year-olds and 56.52% of the 7-year-olds could attribute a mental state to the main character. In the balanced bilingual group, 27.77% of the 4-year-olds, 40.9% of the 5-year-olds, 77.7% of the 6-year-olds and 70% of the 7-year-olds named a mental state. The other possible answers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Attributing Mental States in the Age Groups  
[1<sup>st</sup> story, 1<sup>st</sup> Test Question]

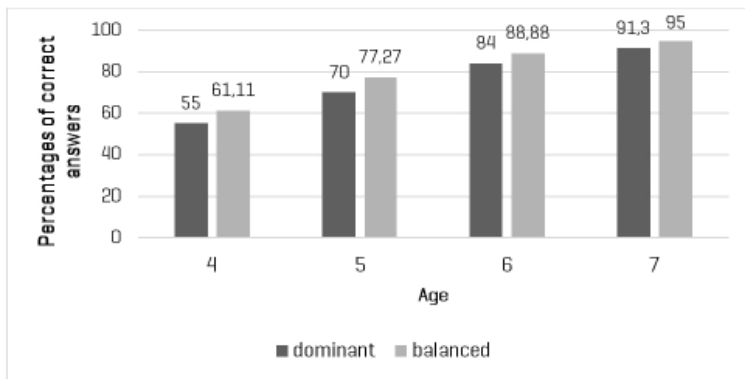
Bilingualism Type	Answers	%			
		4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Dominant (N = 88)	<i>I don't know</i>	15	10	12	8.69
	<i>Action</i>	25	25	12	4.34
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	25	25	4	21.73
	<i>Perception</i>	0	15	16	4.34
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	0	0	4	0
	<i>Other</i>	10	0	4	4.34
	<i>Mental state</i>	25	25	48	56.52
Balanced (N = 78)	<i>I don't know</i>	16.66	0	22.2	0
	<i>Action</i>	27.77	22.72	0	10
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	11.11	18.18	0	15
	<i>Perception</i>	11.11	4.54	0	5
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	5.55	4.54	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	0	9.09	0	0
	<i>Mental state</i>	27.77	40.9	77.7	70

The second test question assessed the ability of attribution of privileged access. In the dominant bilingual group, 76.1% of children chose correctly the puppet that represented Anna in the story based on the main character's report. 80.8% of the balanced bilinguals answered

correctly. The result of the one-way ANOVA test did not show significant difference in the performance of the two groups as far as attribution of privileged access is concerned.

Since the homogeneity of variance test showed significant difference [ $F(3, 84) = 11.71, p < .001$  – dominant bilinguals,  $F(3, 74) = 12.35, p < .001$  – balanced bilinguals] based on the family type, hereafter I used the Welch-test and the Games-Howell post hoc test to calculate the significant differences. Based on this, in the dominant bilingual group there is significant development with respect to age groups:  $F(3, 84) = 3.02, p < .001$ , while in the balanced bilingual group there was no significant difference according to age group. The reason is supposedly the ceiling effect because in all age groups performance develops as age progresses [see Figure 1].

Figure 1. Percentages of Correct Answers by Age Groups and Type of Bilingualism [1<sup>st</sup> Story, 2<sup>nd</sup> Question]



As far as the second story is concerned, the correct answers to the first test question indicate the existence of the ability to attribute mental state, while those to the second question indicate the capability of attribution of privileged access. To the first test question of the second story, 31.8% of Hungarian dominant bilingual children answered naming a mental state, 25% referred to external circumstances, 20.5% named actions, 10.2% gave answers related to perception. In the group, 9.1% of the children did not know the answer, 4.5% of the children answered something else, and 1.1% answered the question based on their own external reality. In the balanced bilingual group 53.8% of the participants named a mental state, 15.4% an action, 11.5% identi-

fied an external circumstance. 7.7% indicated perception, 5.1% gave other answers, and an equal number of participants could not answer the question. Neither of the children referred to reality in their answer.

According to age groups, in the dominant bilingual group, 25% of the 4-year-olds and 30% of the 5-year-olds could name mental states. 36% of the 6-year-olds and 34.78% of the 7-year-olds could attribute a mental state to the main character. In the balanced bilingual group, 27.77% of the 4-year-olds, 72.72% of the 5-year-olds, 72.22% of the 6-year-olds, and 70% of the 7-year-olds named a mental state. The other possible answers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Attributing Mental States in the Age Groups  
[2<sup>nd</sup> Story, 1<sup>st</sup> Test Question]

Bilingualism Type	Answers	%			
		4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Dominant (n = 88)	<i>I don't know</i>	15	10	0	4.34
	<i>Action</i>	5	40	12	26.08
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	35	5	24	34.78
	<i>Perception</i>	10	15	16	0
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	0	0	12	0
	<i>Other</i>	10	0	0	0
	<i>Mental state</i>	25	30	36	34.78
Balanced (n = 78)	<i>I don't know</i>	5.55	4.54	11.11	0
	<i>Action</i>	33.33	0	11.11	5
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	5.55	13.63	0	15
	<i>Perception</i>	22.22	4.54	5.55	0
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	0	0	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	5.55	4.54	0	10
	<i>Mental state</i>	27.77	72.72	72.22	70

The second test question assessed the ability of attribution of privileged access. In the dominant group 30.7% of the participants named a mental state, 25% indicated external circumstance, 17% pointed to action, 10.2% answered *I don't know*. The answers of 8% of the children were in connection with perception, 4.5% of them answered based on their reality, and 5.7% gave other answers. In the balanced bilingual group, 55.1% of the participants named a mental state, 20.1% pointed to an external circumstance. 7.7% indicated perception, and an equal

number of participants could not answer the question. Furthermore, 5.1% gave different answers while 3.8% identified an action. Neither of the children referred to reality in their answer. According to the one-way ANOVA test, there is significant difference between the two groups:  $F[1, 164] = 10.56, p < .001$  [Welch-test].

Based on classification according to age groups, in the dominant bilingual group 15% of the 4-year-olds and 20% of that of the 5-year-olds could name mental states. Also, 44% of the 6-year-olds and 39.13% of the 7-year-olds could attribute a mental state to the main character. In case of the balanced bilingual group, 33.33% of the 4-year-olds, 36.36% of the 5-year-olds, 72.22% of the 6-year-olds and 80% of the 7-year-olds named a mental state. The other possible answers are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Attributing Privileged Access to Mental States in the Age Groups [2<sup>nd</sup> Story, 2<sup>nd</sup> Test Question]

Bilingualism Type	Answers	%			
		4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Dominant (n = 88)	<i>I don't know</i>	15	10	12	4.34
	<i>Action</i>	15	25	8	21.73
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	25	30	16	30.43
	<i>Perception</i>	0	15	16	0
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	10	0	4	0
	<i>Other</i>	20	0	0	4.34
	<i>Mental state</i>	15	20	44	39.13
Balanced (n = 78)	<i>I don't know</i>	11.11	4.54	16.66	0
	<i>Action</i>	11.11	0	0	5
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	16.66	45.45	5.55	10
	<i>Perception</i>	22.22	4.54	5.55	0
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	0	0	0	0
	<i>Other</i>	5.55	9.09	0	5
	<i>Mental state</i>	33.33	36.36	72.22	80

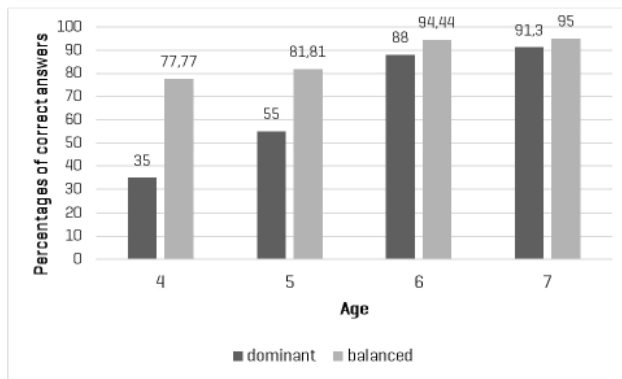
Considering age development in the bilingualism groups, only balanced bilinguals show significant development. The one-way ANOVA test indicates the following values:  $F[3, 74] = 5.28, p < .004$  [Welch-test]. However, in the Games-Howell post hoc test, there is difference

between the 4-year-olds and the 7-year-olds ( $p < .01$ ) and between that of the 5-year-olds and 7-year-olds ( $p < .01$ ).

Answers to the first question of the third story indicate that in general, participants recognized what the main character's behavioural consequence was going to be, namely, where he would look for his dog. In the the dominant bilingual group 69.3% children answered correctly, while in case of the balanced bilinguals 87.2% did so. Levene's test revealed significant difference:  $F(1,127) = 36.22$ ;  $p < 0.001$ . The result of the one-way ANOVA test showed significant difference in the performance of the two groups:  $F(1, 164) = 8.18$ ,  $p < .006$  [Welch-test].

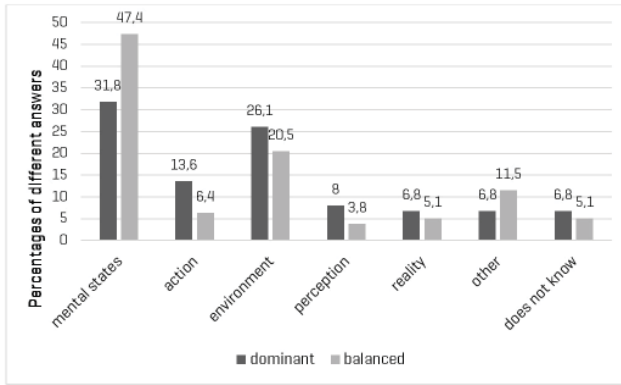
Based on the age groups, the homogeneity of variance test showed significant difference [ $F(3, 84) = 16.21$ ,  $p < .001$  – dominant bilinguals,  $F(3, 74) = 6.24$ ,  $p < .001$  – balanced bilinguals]. In the dominant bilingual group there is significant development with respect to age groups:  $F(3, 84) = 8.61$ ;  $p < .001$ , while in the balanced bilingual group there was no significant difference related to age group. One possible reason could be the ceiling effect, given that in the balanced bilingual group even the 4-year-olds answered correctly in general [see Figure 2].

Figure 2. Percentages of the Correct Answers by Age Groups and Type of Bilingualism [3<sup>rd</sup> Story, 1<sup>st</sup> Question]



As far as the second test question of the third story is concerned, 31.8% of the dominant bilingual children named a mental state, while in the balanced bilingual group 47.4% children did so. The other possible answers are shown in Figure 3. From the point of view of family types, there is little significant difference between the two groups:  $F(1, 164) = 4.25$ ;  $p < .041$  [Welch-test].

Figure 3. Attributing Mental States in the Bilingualism Groups  
[3<sup>rd</sup> Story, 2<sup>nd</sup> Question]



In the dominant bilingual group, 25% of both the 4 and 5-year-old children, 36% of the 6-year-olds, and 39.1% of the 7-year-olds could attribute a mental state to the main character. In the balanced bilingual group, 27.77% of the 4-year-olds, 31.81% of the 5-year-olds, 61.11% of the 6-year-olds and 70% of the 7-year-olds named a mental state [Table 5]. The results indicate age development in the balanced bilingualism group:  $F(3, 74) = 3.73, p < .018$  [Welch-test]. The Games-Howell post hoc test shows difference between the 4-year-olds and the 7-year-olds [ $p < .04$ ].

Table 5. Attributing Mental States in the Age Groups [3<sup>rd</sup> story, 2<sup>nd</sup> test question]

Bilingualism Type	Answers	%			
		4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Dominant (n = 88)	<i>I don't know</i>	10	10	4	4.34
	<i>Action</i>	20	20	8	8.69
	<i>Physical environment of the character</i>	20	15	36	30.4
	<i>Perception</i>	5	10	4	13.04
	<i>Reality of the child</i>	10	5	8	4.34
	<i>Other</i>	10	15	4	0
	<i>Mental state</i>	25	25	36	39.1

<b>Balanced (n = 78)</b>	<b><i>I don't know</i></b>	5.55	0	11.11	5
	<b><i>Action</i></b>	0	13.63	5.55	5
	<b><i>Physical environment of the character</i></b>	16.66	45.45	11.11	5
	<b><i>Perception</i></b>	11.11	0	5.55	0
	<b><i>Reality of the child</i></b>	11.11	0	5.55	5
	<b><i>Other</i></b>	27.77	9.09	0	10
	<b><i>Mental state</i></b>	27.77	31.81	61.11	70

## 5.2. Second experiment

In the experiment assessing second-order theory of mind skills, participants were shown a control and an experimental situation. Both stories had two control questions in order to assess whether the children remember the story appropriately and to check whether they had paid attention to it. When answering the control questions both bilingualism groups performed quite well [see Table 6].

Table 6. Percentages of Correct Answers in Memory Questions

<b>Bilingualism Type</b>	<b>Control Condition</b>		<b>Experimental condition</b>	
	<b>Question no. 1.</b>	<b>Question no. 2.</b>	<b>Question no. 1.</b>	<b>Question no. 2.</b>
Dominant	96.6	98.9	100	95.5
Balanced	100	98.7	100	97.4

In the dominant group, the mean of answers to the control condition test question was 2.31 ( $SD = .87$ ), that of the balanced bilingual group was 2.6 ( $SD = .76$ ). In case of the experimental condition, the mean performance of the dominant bilingual children was 2.11 ( $SD = 1.01$ ), and that of the balanced group 2.44 ( $SD = .9$ ). The classification based on age groups also shows this tendency, namely, that completing the control condition was the easy task in both groups (Figures 4 and 5). Taking into consideration the overall marks, there is little significant difference between the groups in both the control and the experimental condition. In case of the control condition, the ANOVA-test displayed the following results:  $F(1, 164) = 4.99$ ;  $p < .027$ . In the control condition the difference between the two groups was:  $F(1, 164) = 5.07$ ;  $p < .026$ .

Figure 4. Age Development of Second-Order Theory of Mind in Control and Experimental condition [Dominant Bilingual Group]

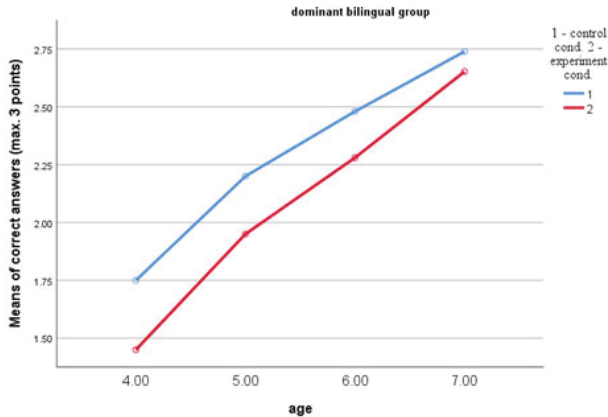
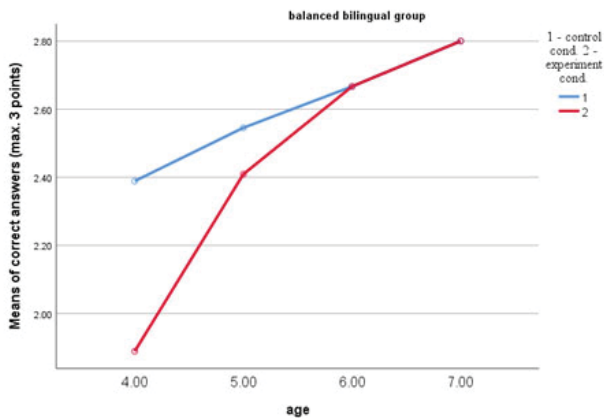


Figure 5. Age Development of Second-Order Theory of Mind in Control and Experimental condition [Balanced Bilingual Group]



The overall marks indicate that age development takes place in both groups. In the case of the control condition, there are significant differences in several age groups in the dominant bilingualism group:  $F(3, 84) = 5.47$ ;  $p < .003$ . According to the Games-Howell post hoc test, there were significant differences between the performance of 4-year-olds and 6-year-olds, and between that of the 4 and 7-year-olds ( $p <$



0.01]. There was no significant difference between the age groups in the balanced bilingualism group.

In the case of the experimental condition, there is significant difference between the age groups of the dominant bilingual children:  $F(3, 84) = 6.43, p, < .001$ . Based on the Games-Howell post hoc test, the results of the 4-year-olds and the 7-year-olds differ [ $p < .001$ ]. At this variable the balanced bilingual group showed little difference in terms of age:  $F(3, 74) = 3.03; p < .04$ . Based on the results of the Games-Howell post hoc test, the results of the 4-year-olds and those of the 7-year-olds differ significantly [ $p < .001$ ].

To the *think question* [What does John think where the chocolate is?] the majority of the children in both groups could answer. In the case of the control condition, the mean of the correct answers was 89.9%, while in the experimental condition it was 89.8%. In the balanced bilingualism group, the mean correct answer in the control condition is 91%, while in the experimental condition it is 93.3%. The *self-reflection question* [What would John say if we asked him?] proved to be more difficult given that in the dominant group the proportion of correct answers in the control condition was 73.9%, while in the experimental condition it was 70.5%. In the control condition in the balanced bilingualism group, 88.5% of the children answered correctly, while in the experimental condition the mean correct answer was 79.5%. The question *reflecting on the other person* proved to be the most difficult one [What would Mary answer: does John know where the chocolate is?]. In the dominant bilingual group, 68.2% answered correctly in the control condition, while 54.5% in the experimental condition. The performance of the balanced bilingual group in the control condition was 79.5%, in the experimental condition it was 71.8% [see Figure 6].

In terms of family type, I identified significant difference in two types of questions. In the control condition, there was significant difference in the answers to the self-reflection question:  $F(1, 164) = 6.01; p < .015$  [Welch-test]. In the control condition, I found significant difference between the two groups in terms of the question reflecting on the other person:  $F(1, 164) = 5.43; p < .021$  [Welch-test] [Table 7].

Figure 6. Percentages of Correct Answers for Each Test Question in Both Bilingual Groups

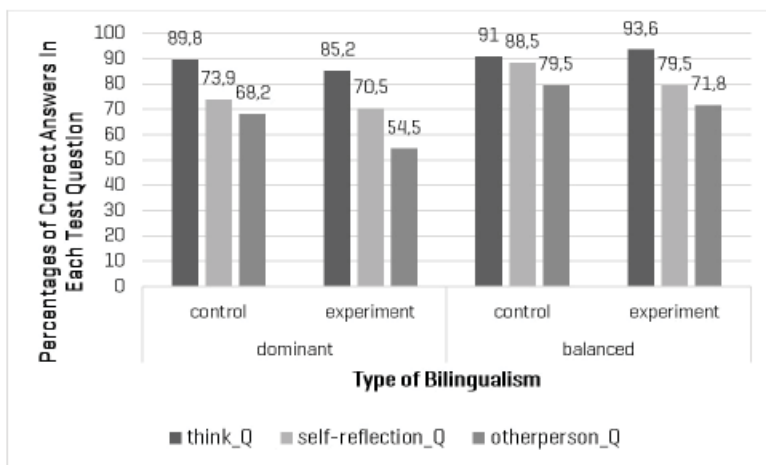


Table 7. Differences According to Bilingualism Type at Each Test Question

		F	df1	df2	Sig.
Control condition [think Q.]	Welch	.074	1	163.337	.786
Control condition [self-reflection Q.]	Welch	6.012	1	158.203	.015
Control condition [other person Q.]	Welch	2.772	1	163.930	.098
Experimental condition [think Q.]	Welch	3.141	1	155.101	.078
Experimental condition [self-reflection Q.]	Welch	1.809	1	164.000	.180
Experimental condition [other person Q.]	Welch	5.430	1	163.929	.021

The two-way mixed ANOVA [3 positions X 4 age groups, in case of both family types] statistically shows in the dominant group the effect of age in some question types asked in control condition:  $F(3, 84) = 5.77$ ;  $p = .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .171$ . In case of balanced bilinguals, the results did not show any difference. The performance in the test questions within the group was also significant; in this respect, there is significance in both groups:  $F(3, 84) = 20.53$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .196$  [dominant];  $F(3, 74) = 6.53$ ;  $p = .013$ ,  $\eta^2 = .081$  [balanced]. The effect between age and the results of the test questions was not significant. I did the the two-way

mixed ANOVA [3 positions X 4 age groups, in case of both family types] with respect to the experimental condition too. In the dominant group, the effect of age in certain question types can be perceived on the level of statistics:  $F(3, 84) = 7.02$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .201$ . In case of the balanced bilinguals, the results are the following:  $F(3, 74) = 4.08$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .142$ . The results of performance in the test questions within the group was also significant, in this case both groups displays significance:  $F(3, 84) = 30.19$ ;  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .264$  [dominant];  $F(3, 74) = 22.24$ ;  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .231$  [balanced]. The effect between age and the results of the test questions was not significant.

In terms of the Pearson correlation coefficient, I did not find significant correlation between the first experiment's question that assessed attribution of privileged access [*Which puppet is Anna?*] and second-order theory of mind self-reflection question [control and experimental condition]. All these prove that the two phenomena appear to develop independently from each other and the capability of attribution of privileged access is not the sub-category of second-order theory of mind ability.

## **6. Conclusions**

The aim of my research was to study certain aspects of the theory of mind skills of bilingual children. Although the role of bilingualism in false beliefs has been investigated [Kovács 2009; Farhadian et al. 2010; Gordon Millett 2010; Nguyen, Astington 2014; Diaz, Farrar 2017], to the best of my knowledge no research has been conducted regarding second-order theory of mind and attribution of privileged access. I proposed first that attribution of privileged access is not yet developed in 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds, but 6 and 7-year-olds can operate this competence easily. The research result partially confirmed my hypothesis, since naming mental states is relatively difficult even for 6-7-year-old children, though the results revealed significant differences concerning the type of bilingualism. Thus, it may be inferred that while only around 30-40% of dominant Hungarian bilingual children name mental states at the age of 6 and 7, the proportion is 60-70% in case of balanced bilinguals; therefore, in their case, the ability of attribution of mental state is presumably developed. The results of dominant bilingual children have the same tendency as those of monolingual children from Hungary [Kiss, Jakab 2014].

My second hypothesis is that attribution of privileged access is an independent cognitive ability, i.e., it does not relate to second-order theory of mind ability. Since I found no correlation between the results of the first question in the first experiment and the results of the self-reflection question in the second experiment, I believe that the two abilities develop independently and are independently operating mechanism.

I also proposed that the results of Hungarian – Romanian bilingual children showing early, balanced linguistic competences are better than those of early, but dominant Hungarian bilingual children. This hypothesis was confirmed in both experiments and can be related to the results of international research on the theory of mind skills [mostly false beliefs]. There are multiple explanations as to why children who become bilingual in their early childhood and regularly use both languages in various situations perform better in the theory of mind tests. These explanations can be classified into three groups. One of them justifies the bilinguals' advantages with the degree of development of the executive functions, i.e., bilinguals use more effectively the inhibitory and control processes [cf. Goetz 2003; Kovács 2009]. Another reason refers to socio-pragmatic competences. This suggests that bilingual children perform theory of mind tasks better and earlier because they are more susceptible to the others' point of view, they acquire the ability to change the point of view very early [cf. Rubio-Fernandez & Glucksberg 2012; Fan et al. 2015]. The last explanation proposes that the metalinguistic awareness of bilinguals is more developed and this facilitates the theory of mind performance to conscious attention [cf. Doherty, Perner 1998; Doherty 2000; Diaz, Farrar 2017]. We can conclude that it is worth mapping bilingual children's theory of mind skills in order to investigate the reasons behind faster development and how we could benefit from this in forming children's general cognitive abilities, use of language, and social effectiveness.

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# LOST AND FOUND: CONNECTED LEARNING UNDER LOCKDOWN

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We explore learning practices during the Covid-19 lockdown in a small university campus from Romania. The pandemic has turned our lives upside down, bringing fear and anxiety, changes in daily habits, and meanwhile a great learning opportunity. For those of us lucky enough to shift from offline- to online working mode, the home-office setting has taught meaningful lessons about resilience, personal networks, and solidarity. The digital turn is more difficult to cope with for baby-boomers and generation X, while generations Y and Z should

have encountered fewer difficulties. Was e-learning a positive experience for our students during lockdown? We propose a scan of the opportunities and challenges of online courses, seen through the lens of students and educators. From 15 March 2020 to 31 May 2020 we used the e-learning facilities of the G-Suite provided by Google. The present case study is based on desk research and empirical analysis: 16 online interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted with university students and educators in May 2020\*.

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**KEYWORDS:** *Covid-19, lockdown, digital inclusion, e-learning, Romania*

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## 1. Digitization in Romania in the European Context

The Covid-19 pandemic should not have caught Romania unprepared at least from a technical point of view, if we look into the fast pace of connectivity development in the country. Infrastructural access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) has improved significantly, including broadband internet access, fast and superfast internet, and 5G preparedness. However, poor digital skills and the lack of proactive governmental policies to develop them led to poor results when it comes to integrating e-services in people's daily lives. Meanwhile, there is a significant gap between urban and rural connectivity in Romania: 75% of the urban households can access the internet, yet only 49% of rural families have this opportunity [ANCOM 2020].

The main infrastructural developments in 2019 were broadening access to 4G mobile internet, and steps made towards 5G readiness.

Table 1. Internet Penetration (IPE) in Romania (2017-2019)

Indicator	31.12.2017	31.12.2018	31.12.2019
Fixed IPE for 100 households	57.7	61.7	63.8
Mobile IPE for 100 inhabitants: 3G, 4G	82.8	86.7	87.4

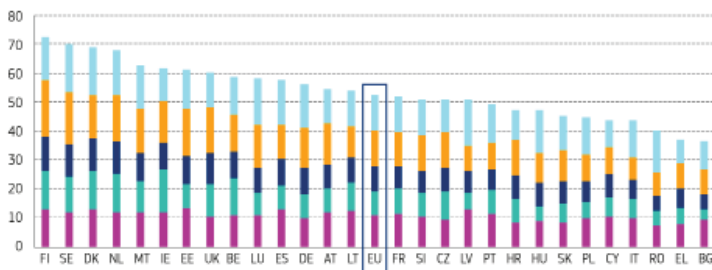
Source: ANCOM [2020]

If we look at the European context, Romania is still lagging behind in terms of digital literacy and cultural practices related to internet use. The *Digital Economy and Society Index [DESI]* is a systematic and relevant measure of the digitization in the European Union [EU] along five criteria, and several indicators<sup>1</sup> [European Commission, 2020a]:

- *Connectivity* refers to broadband internet access;
- *Human capital* focuses on basic and advanced digital skills among the population;
- *Use of internet services* refers to online content and transactions' availability;
- *Integration of digital technologies* relates to e-business and e-commerce, and
- *Digital e-services* include e-government and e-health facilities.

<sup>1</sup> For the full list of indicators, consult EC2020b and EC2020c.

Image 1. Digitization in the EU in 2019<sup>2</sup>



Source: EC 2020a

According to the latest report [EC 2020c], Romania ranks 26<sup>th</sup> out of 28 EU countries, with Finland on the top of the list, as shown in the tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Table 2. Connectivity in Romania, Finland, and the EU

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
<b>Fixed broadband take-up</b> Mbps % households	66%	57%	78%
<b>Mobile broadband take-up</b> Subscriptions per 100 people	86%	154%	100%
<b>5G readiness</b> % of assigned spectrum	21%	67 %	21%

Source: compiled based on EC 2020b, EC 2020c

While Romania ranks better than Finland for fixed broadband take-up, both countries score below the EU average. Mobile broadband take-up is significantly more advanced in Finland than in Romania, as well as 5G readiness.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020 DESI report is based on 2019 data.

Table 3. Human Capital in Romania, Finland, and the EU

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
<b>At least basic digital skills</b> % individuals	31%	76%	58%
<b>Above basic digital skills</b> % individuals	10%	50%	33%

Source: compiled based on EC 2020b, EC 2020c

Digital literacy is very low in Romania due to the lack of formal multimedia education in the country. A top notch ICT infrastructure is a challenge if there is little education on how to use it, research shows [Bakó 2019]. However, Romanian authorities have contracted **98 million Euros in EU funds** for developing digital management systems in schools, and for creating open educational resources – an important step towards developing digital literacy in high schools [EC 2020a, 9].

Table 4. Use of Internet Services in Romania, Finland, and the EU

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
<b>Internet users</b> % individuals	72%	93%	85%
<b>News</b> % internet users	55%	85%	72%
<b>Social networks</b> % internet users	82%	70%	65%
<b>Doing an online course</b> % internet users	4%	22%	11%
<b>Banking</b> % internet users	11%	95%	66%
<b>Shopping</b> % internet users	29%	77%	71%

Source: compiled based on EC 2020b, EC 2020c

Significantly less Romanians than Finns use the internet, read news online, do an online course, or use ICTs for banking and shopping as part of their daily routines. The low level of digital literacy explains why smart use of ICTs is rather a privilege of the young, urban and educated population than a facility for everyone. No wonder that small and medium-sized enterprises are also lagging behind in integrating digital technologies in their workflow, as shown in table 5.

Table 5. Integration of Digital Technologies in Romania, Finland, and the EU

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
<b>Electronic information services</b> % enterprises	23%	43%	34%
<b>Big data</b> % enterprises	11%	19%	12%
<b>Cloud services</b> % enterprises	7%	50%	18%

Source: compiled based on EC 2020b, EC 2020c

Romania has performed well in the area of big data service integration, but poorly in that of cloud services. In terms of digital public services, the country performed well in terms of e-government users, and poorly in those of providing services as basic as ensuring pre-filled online forms – shows table 6.

Table 6. Digital Public Services in Romania, Finland, and the EU

Indicators	Romania	Finland	EU average
<b>E-government users</b> % internet users needing to submit	82%	94%	67%
<b>Pre-filled forms</b> Score [0 to 100]	10	82	59
<b>Online service completion</b> Score [0 to 100]	70	96	90
<b>Open data</b> % of maximum score	57%	76%	66%

Source: compiled based on EC 2020b, EC 2020c

Digitization of the economy and society takes time: even if infrastructure can be developed on a fast track, people’s habits, mentalities and attitudes cannot be “switched on” instantly. Living in a networked society brings about both opportunities for participation and risks of being left behind [Castells 2004; Jenkins 2006; Rainie-Wellman 2014; Westera 2013].

## 2. Who is Left Behind in Romania? Gaps and Steps

The United Nations’ report on e-government [2018, 34] has identified multiple digital divides, listed alphabetically as follows: access, affordability, age, bandwidth, content, disability, education, gender, lo-

cation, migration, mobile, speed, and useful usage. When we look into the efforts to bridge the gap between the haves and the have nots, it is important to mind the complexity of internet affordances and the role school can play in helping vulnerable groups and individuals who fall behind [Bock–Macgilchrist 2019; Helsper 2008; Meneses–Mominó 2010].

Van Dijk [2020] has defined three types of access to ICTs: *physical access*, *material access*, and *conditional access*. His definition of “physical access is the opportunity to use digital media by obtaining them privately in homes and publicly in collective settings” [48]. Material access is a broader term, encompassing “all means needed to maintain the use of digital media over time, including subscriptions, peripheral equipment, software and print necessities.” In an even broader definition, it also includes availability of material resources to pay for computers, courses, and subscriptions. Conditional access is defined as a set of permissions to enter specialized web sites and applications either by payment, or by status [i.e. membership of organizations or activities].

While physical and material access are improving constantly in Romania as shown in section 1, conditional access – related to digital literacy and a high level of ICT integration in organizational practices – is still to be improved. The Covid-19 pandemic is a good example of speeding up such processes: Google granted free access to its Meet videoconferencing service, enabling students and educators without a G-suite subscription to use the Classroom and Meet applications in an integrated manner. According to educators’ and students’ reports, this was a positive online learning experience.

Being connected is the “new social operating system” [Rainie–Wellman 2014: 7], and yet, only half of the rural households have functional internet connectivity, and only one third of the Romanian population has basic digital skills [ANCOM 2020; EC 2020c]. The rural, the elderly, the less educated, the disabled and the poor are more likely to be disconnected in a country with good ICT infrastructure and striking inequalities [Bakó 2016, 2019]. An emotional letter sent by a 14-year-old girl to her mayor in rural Romania, asking for a smartphone to learn during Covid-19 lockdown, went viral and hit the global mainstream media [Gherasim 2020].

The *accessibility standards*<sup>3</sup> as developed by the World Wide Web Consortium’s [W3C] are aimed at making the internet available to more users, by giving them options and settings according to their needs:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

enlarging fonts, choosing languages and media channels (text, audio, video), personalizing content – like the *BBC News* mobile application<sup>4</sup> feature called *My News*: users can opt for major topic areas such as Economy, Environment, or regions: Europe, Asia, Africa, etc. Making ICTs more accessible is a core issue for scholars and practitioners, as more and more user categories are engaged in online activities (Abou-Zahra-Brewer 2019; Duarte-Fonseca 2019; Fichten et al. 2020; Heiman et al. 2020; Lazar 2019; Seale-Burgstahler-Fisseler 2019; Seale 2020; Sloan-Horton 2019).

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of working, learning, and keeping in touch with each other. While before March 2020 most activities were organized offline, with asynchronous digital channels as important ways to make them operational – web sites, blogs and vlogs, and above all, emails –, the Coronavirus lockdown created an opportunity for adults and elderly people to learn and adopt synchronous communication channels via applications like Google Hangouts [Android], FaceTime [iOS], Webex, Jitsi, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams and Zoom – as videoconferencing systems. Home office settings and e-learning practices were instantly adopted around the world, and Romania was no exception.

### **3. E-learning in Universities: A Research and Development Agenda**

Adopting and integrating ICTs in education has happened gradually, starting with the internet era in the mid-nineties. Using computers as tools of preparing and delivering educational content was a first step, followed by more organic ways of building learning processes around the multimedial and interactive features of a network society. Higher education was the fastest adopter of e-learning tools and platforms, given the digital literacy requirements involved in using them – therefore a systematic analysis of e-learning in universities is a relevant research topic (Fichten et al. 2020; Gentile et al. 2020; Heiman et al. 2020; Mayer 2017, 2019).

E-learning is more than transposing offline systems in online environments, experts say. It is rather a new paradigm of interacting in educational settings, with new values, methods, and actors (Mehta et al. 2019; Lazar 2019; Onete et al. 2020; Seale 2020). The tone for this new paradigm was set by Siemens' *theory of connectivism* (2005).

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<sup>4</sup> [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=bbc.mobile.news.uk&hl=en\\_GB](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=bbc.mobile.news.uk&hl=en_GB)

He conceptualized the principles of connectivism defined as a new learning paradigm in the internet era:

- diversity of opinions is a must;
- connecting information sources is necessary;
- non-human appliances have also a role to play;
- knowledge capacity is more important than current knowledge;
- for continual learning we need to nurture our connections;
- linking fields, ideas, and concepts is a key skill;
- accurate, up-to-date knowledge is critical;
- choosing what to learn is part of the learning process.

Most learning theories emphasize the importance of a three-dimensional interaction of learner with the course content, co-learners, and the instructor [Choudhury–Pattnaik 2020] – an important element of teaching practice, as shown in the case study below. During COVID-19 lockdown, remote learning tools, methods and challenges presented a wide variety of cases worldwide, depending on access, skills, and proactivity, research show [Kristóf 2020].

#### *E-learning during lockdown in a small rural university campus*

Case study data were collected during May 2020 via online interviews and focus group discussions. Eleven university students and five faculty members were asked questions about the shift from offline to online learning, and more in-depth discussions related to learning experiences during lockdown were conducted via three online focus groups with university students from first-, second-, and third year of study<sup>5</sup>. Participant observation notes and public information posted online related to the campus digital switchover were also used for the case study.

From 16 March to 31 May 2020 our university had a fast and radical shift from offline to online teaching due to the Coronavirus pandemic, by using the G-suite services provided by Google. Students and educators were provided with tutorials on how to use this platform by the IT department, and for those who needed offline assistance, an on-site training session was also provided on the university campus.

Educators were instructed to create online classrooms, and all classroom codes were sent to the students by the campus secretariat. After a two-week period of adaptation and reshuffle of teaching materials, methods and applications used, educators reported positive

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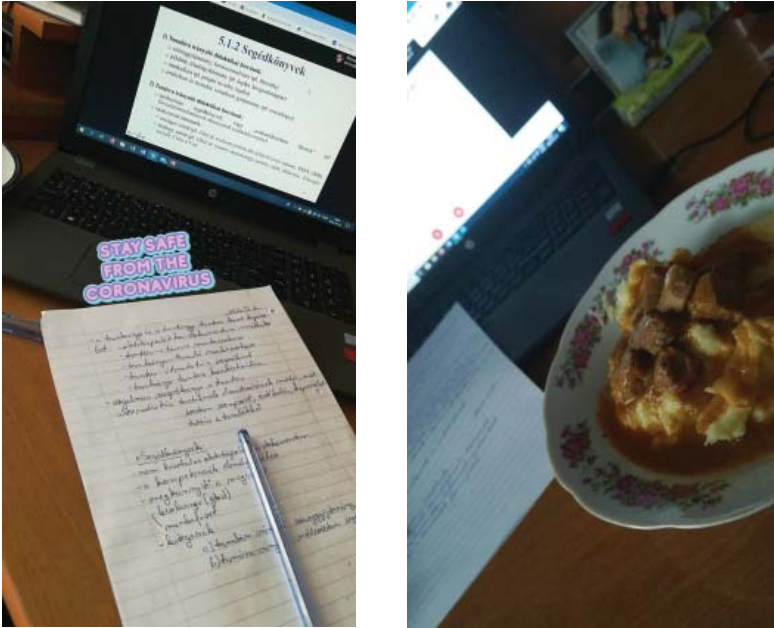
<sup>5</sup> using the Google Meet and Google Classroom applications



experiences in terms of students' attendance, interactivity and motivation. The baby-boomer generation has had more difficulties during these weeks, but given the institutional and collegial support, it was not reported as a frustrating experience.

Students have reported positive learning experiences as well, which is not surprising from generation Z. However, those who had connectivity problems due to poor ICT infrastructure in rural areas were less satisfied with the e-learning opportunities during lockdown. More than a third of our students live in rural areas, and at least a quarter of the students participating in this research have experienced internet shutdowns or connectivity issues during classes.

Image 2. Student's Working Space during Lockdown<sup>6</sup>



A SWOT-analysis of the e-learning experience has resulted in the following ideas from the students: the key positive elements were comfort, availability, the quality of teaching materials provided by the educators, the relaxed and familiar atmosphere, and the friendly, informal,

<sup>6</sup> digital storytelling exercise on lockdown experiences

supportive learning environment. As for negative experiences, the lack of face-to-face interactions kicked in after the first month of e-learning; technical issues were also reported as problematic for those with poor connectivity in rural areas. Screen fatigue was also reported as a problem, and the need of classical tools and platforms: this need was fulfilled by some students by reading more from paper-based books, whereas others pursued intense outdoor activities such as gardening, biking, hiking, walking.

In terms of opportunities and threats, students reported a good family- and institutional support, as well as possibilities to learn in new ways by using online platforms, such as Redmenta, Mentimeter, or developing their skills in using familiar platforms, such as YouTube, or educational blogs on WordPress. Challenges and fears were related to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the perspective of forced social distancing. Students had to socialize offline - thus, meeting colleagues in person was an unfulfilled need highlighted by respondents.

As for the educators, their opportunities and challenges depended both on age, subject taught, and ease of online interactions: the most positive experiences were students' motivation and participation, and the most negative impact was related to testing knowledge as they used to in safe, familiar, controlled offline environments. The need to shift to oral examinations and skills-based evaluation was unfamiliar to a third of the educators who gave feedback.

## ***Conclusions***

A crisis situation generates specific and exceptional solutions. It is the way forced digitalization of university teaching was treated by key stakeholders, i.e., a worst case scenario. We teach online because we must. Resilience and solidarity kicked in, as presented in the case study: given the pandemic and the need to make things work, key stakeholders - educators, students and organizers gave their best to make it work. First we felt lost, then we found the tools and ways to make things work, by connecting old practices with new opportunities.

However, we are not yet fully prepared: e-learning is more and less the shifting from offline to online spaces. It also requires new attitudes and values, as Siemens [2005] explained: participation and empowerment of all in the common, connected learning process.

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## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GAPS





# THE ENTREPRENEURIAL GENDER GAP

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The analysis is based on the data of a large-sample (N=1176) questionnaire survey conducted among male and female entrepreneurs in Szeklerland, based on a personal survey and a representative sample by county, settlement type and ethnicity (2018). One half of the respondents are women and the other is men. In addition to the survey, four focus group interviews were conducted to learn about the circumstances of starting and running a business, as well as to map the challenges of being an entrepreneur. The analysis focuses on the non-explanatory role

and is based on a comparative approach: it seeks to present gender-differentiated patterns of entrepreneurial motivations and behaviors, yet although the gender of the entrepreneur appears as a key explanatory variable it is not limited to women.

The results of the research show that there are differences between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of, for example, income or business-related plans, and very often the very unequal division of tasks in family, child-rearing and household tasks is one of the determining factors.

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**KEYWORDS:** *entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, gender gap, Szeklerland, quantitative research*

## ***1. Introduction***

In most developed, industrialized countries, the female population makes up a large proportion of the active workforce, and this is increasingly becoming the case among entrepreneurs as well [Drew-Humbert 2012; Huarng et al. 2012; Eib-Siebert 2019], even in an Eastern European country like Romania the number of women starting businesses and the social attention given to this phenomenon have been increasing in recent years [Geambașu- Gergely 2019]. Entrepreneurship often emerges as an alternative career model for women, giving them the opportunity to perform professional tasks and pursue self-fulfillment, but at the same time not requiring them to give up family responsibilities. They can maintain self-employment and gain economic skills while continuing to carry out family or other caregiving responsibilities [Gergely 2013a, 2013b]. At the same time, entrepreneurship offers a gender-neutral career path where gender equality is fully realized [Henry-Marlow 2014]. That is, there is, in principle, no glass ceiling here: gender does not prevent advancement. On the other hand, traditional gender roles and role expectations can be discouraging. They can hold back the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship more than they do in other jobs [Haggqvist et al. 2018]. It turns out that work is still very gendered and that time requirements are the biggest threat to experiencing work-life balance, which has a harmful effect on well-being. The idea that women can start a business to achieve better coordination of household and parenting tasks is a kind of trap; that is, it has negative effects on women in the long run. Women tend to work in sectors that are considered feminine, moreover to work part-time, or telework full-time from home, practices which only increase women's maternal and caregiving responsibilities and related social expectations, undermine the credibility of women's entrepreneurship [Braches-Elliott 2016], and hold women back in the same way as the glass ceiling phenomenon in organizational life.

## ***2. Social Context and Literature Review***

While around the world the gender gap is diminishing and gender convergence is closer than ever before [female labour force participation rose spectacularly after World War II], the gender gaps in several labour markets are still persistent [Humlum et al. 2017: 6]. Even if it seems that women can already become whoever they want to be, stud-

ies show that there is a difference regarding men's and women's choice of fields in the labour market. Women tend to self-select into specific occupations and fields, for example, into those in which the depreciation of human capital is slower [Humlum et al. 2017: 6]. They often enter occupational fields in which even if one is absent for an extended period [for example, because of childbirth], wages do not decrease significantly [Humlum et al. 2017: 6]. Also, women's behaviour can be characterised as more risk-averse than that of men, and those who are more risk-averse tend to enter occupational fields with stable but lower earnings [Humlum et al. 2017: 8].

The majority of start-ups and established businesses as well are small business structures in Romania, especially those run by women [Krobath-Weiss-Wellner 2018; Gropoșilă et al. 2018]. The conventional image of an entrepreneur is still of a workaholic man with a technical or business educational background, who dedicates more than eight hours daily to his business [Gropoșilă et al. 2018; Geambașu-Gergely 2019]. National statistics show that women's activity on the labour market is high in Romania; however, the female entrepreneurship rate shows the opposite: sectorial segregation is accentuated, and women are excluded from the "cutting-edge" entrepreneurial sectors (e.g., IT, tech design, construction, automotive). Responsibility for this segregation can be attributed to governmental policies that stimulate female entrepreneurship and the lack of mentorship programs. Also, initiatives that encourage female entrepreneurship are lacking in educational institutions. The last factor, which is also significant, is the lack of child-care services [Krobath-Weiss-Wellner 2018; Gropoșilă et al. 2018]. We believe this deficiency is one of the main reasons that starting a business is not an appealing career path for women, or that even if they start a business, they want to keep it on a small scale [Gergely 2019].

In discussing the gender gap in entrepreneurship, we cannot overlook national and European social and family politics that are shaping and determining the possibilities of women and their impact on family models [González et al. 2000; Frazer 2016]. Culturally determined mentalities and socialized stereotypes often influence women to consider entrepreneurship as a career model. And even if women plan to become entrepreneurs, they encounter more difficulties than men do. The gender-specific division of labour [household, caregiving, education, social management, etc.] determines their career opportunities, so for women, part-time entrepreneurship or small business can appear as the better [or only] choice [Gergely 2013a; Krobath-Weiss-Wellner 2018].

In Romania, after the socialist era's gender neutrality [Magyari-Vincze 2006]—four decades during which the perfect communist woman could work even in heavy industry—there arrived post-socialist gender blindness [Magyari-Vincze 2006]. During the decades of communism, the gender wage gap should not have existed in Romania. But what about the decades of a transitional social-political atmosphere? In Romania in the public statistics cannot capture the gender gap regarding unemployment rates. However, after 1989 the husbands' involvement in long-term transnational migration has increased [Bodó 2008], while wives have had to manage the double role of caregiver and employee. And the gender inequalities, the rediscussion of the positions and tasks remain an unsolved problem.

Neoliberal gender regimes can be characterised by national labour-market strategies that have an impact on the female employment rate, the quality of and eligibility for social services and social protection, and of course, the importance given to the educational and health sectors. The gender regime, on the one hand, highlights the role of women (and men); nevertheless, it has an important role in the formation and preservation of the present situation by defining the gender relations in a given institution, such as family, school, workplace, politics, or the public sphere. Neoliberal gender regimes seem to reinforce the traditional gender division of labour by placing caregiving activities on women. Caregiving activities such as maternal leave, childcare, and the nursing of the elderly or other family members – on women [Gregor-Kováts 2019]. Regarding childcare, studies show that two factors profoundly affect women's participation in the labour market: [1] the number of children and [2] the age of the youngest child [Gregor-Kováts 2019, 93; Frey 2002, 13-14].

The GEM Monitor [2016/2017] concludes that the entrepreneurial gender gap persists in many regions of the world. However, in Europe, it is even more accentuated than in Asia or Latin America: in Europe, the female entrepreneurial rates are low and the parity as well. In Europe, on average, the female entrepreneurial activity rate is at less than 60% the rate of men, and there are no economies where women start at higher rates business than men, but not even at equal rates [GEM 2017]. According to a cross-country study [Geambaşu 2019], in which data were analysed – among other six European countries: Austria, Iceland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, and Spain –, while in these countries the ratio of entrepreneurs was around 5%, in Romania, in 2018 this ratio was just around 1% [Geambaşu 2019: 9]. Besides the fact that in all seven

countries in 2018, women who were working on their own were under-represented, the study also highlights that Romania is among those European countries, where the gender gap is the largest regarding to the self-employed population [Geambaşu 2019]. According to the data from The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor from 2016/2017, Romania can be compared along with different indicators with those calculated for our larger regions, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. We can see that Romania had in 2016 a high female TEA<sup>1</sup> rates, higher than the regional average, and this is the result of a positive process: ever since 2014 this female TEA rate has increased with 14%, which was more than the double of the regional average [6%]. As far as established business activities are concerned, there is a rate above the average percentage which increased after 2014 as well.

Table 1. Data on Female Entrepreneurship in Romania in 2016

Period	Indicators	Romania	Europe and Central Asia (regional average)
2016	Female TEA	7.5%	6.3%
	Ratio F/M TEA	0.5	0.6
	Female TEA Necessity [% of TEA Females]	26.4%	25.0%
	Ratio F/M intentions	0.7	0.6
	Entrepreneurial intentions Female	25.1%	12.4%
	Female Established Business Activity	5.7%	4.7%
Change from	Female TEA	14%	6%
2014 to 2016	Female Necessity	-12%	-12%
	Female Intentions	-7%	2%
	Female Established Business Ownership	11%	0%

Source: The author's compilation from GEM 2017 data.

<sup>1</sup> The TEA (Total Early Stage Entrepreneurial Activity) rate includes all the nascent or new entrepreneurs, those who are preparing to start a business or have started one for at most 42 months ago [GEM 2017].

A higher female entrepreneurial intention level can be observed: in 2016, Romanian women show firm entrepreneurial intention: double of the regional average [even if in this matter there was a decrease]. In other words, a lot of women intend to start a business, though not all intentions will fructuate in a business venture, and usually, more women than men may be dropping off in the transition between the different entrepreneurial phases [GEM 2017: 29].

### ***3. Data Collection***

The methodology of the research is mosaic-like, and it is based on several pillars. However, in this analysis, we rely only on one source: our paper is based on a 1,200-person personal-survey-based quantitative research of 600 male and 600 female entrepreneurs whose businesses are registered in Szeklerland. In the representative sample, both speakers of Hungarian and Romanian entrepreneurs from the region were included.

We defined an entrepreneur as a person who owns an officially registered enterprise and operates it alone or with a partner. In the research, we deliberately omitted interviews with self-employed entrepreneurs, so we did not interview owners of PFA, II, AI, or IF legal entities. At the same time, we did not ask the directors and managers [administrators], only the owners, and co-owners.

The survey research took place between July and November 2018. The questionnaire collected information about the company as well as about the entrepreneur. Our main topics were the entrepreneur's experience and activity in the labour market, entrepreneurial opinions, challenges of work and private life, networking, and future plans and ideas.

The goal was to collect answers from 600 female entrepreneurs and 600 male entrepreneurs. The final database contained 1,176 answers. The sampling unit was the company, and in the case of one company, the questionnaire was to be completed by one owner. Exceptions, however, were cases in which there were both female and male owners in the same firm: in these companies, two owners were surveyed, but only if one was male and the other female.

### ***4. Is the Firm a "She" or a "He"?***

While many entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs claim that an enterprise has no sex, meaning it does not matter whether the owner

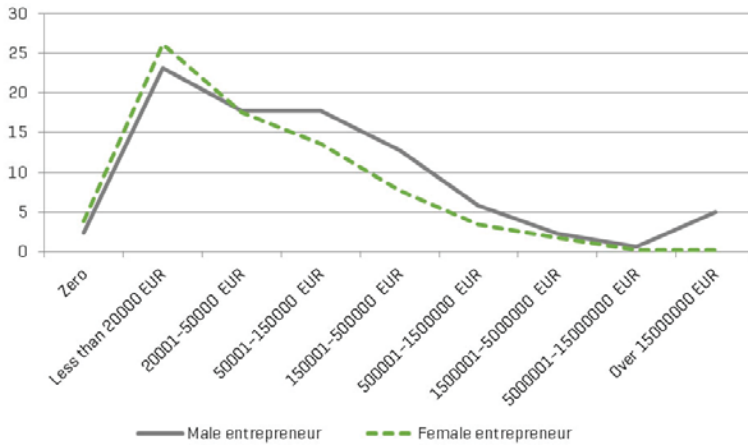
is a man or a woman, the numbers speak for themselves, especially in terms of profit. Data reveal that female-majority-owned firms are a little smaller and have a slightly lesser financial return [Geambaşu-Gergely 2019]. Although the difference is small enough to seem of minor statistical significance, the discrepancy appears in a trend-like, consistent way.

#### *4.1. Of Modest Means*

The size of a company can be objectively measured based on two indicators: the number of employees and the size of the firm's return. Depending on how many people the company employs, we can talk about micro- (up to nine employees), small (10–49 employees), medium (50–250 employees), or large enterprise (more than 250 employees). Alternatively, we can classify business size according to a company's sales in a calendar year. Based on the data obtained from the research questionnaire, we can say that the vast majority of firms in Szeklerland are micro- and small enterprises [Geambaşu-Gergely 2019]. Some entrepreneurs own a company that has no employees at all [this is the case with 70 of the 1,176 business owners]. In our sample, the proportion of micro- and small entrepreneurs is 98%. Also, only 17 medium-sized entrepreneurs and four large entrepreneurs were included in the sample. All 21 of these were male.

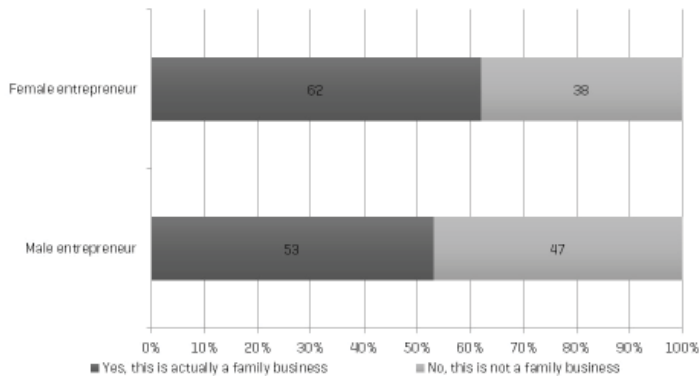
Based on the firm's return, the share of micro-enterprises becomes even higher: four-fifths of the firms reported a return of up to €1,500,000. Firms run by women entrepreneurs had a lower return than those run by men, with almost a quarter (22%) having a return of over €150,000 in the last year, a proportion of just over a tenth of the women (13.3%). In addition to this, it should be noted that more female entrepreneurs reported zero return than men did. Women also had a higher rate of non-response to the question regarding the company's return: one in four women did not indicate an exact number or category concerning the company's 2017 return. Overall, the proportion of those for whom these proved to be very sensitive questions and who did not want to answer was one in five entrepreneurs. In contrast, while the proportion was 17% for men, it was 26% for women.

Figure 1. The Company's Return According to the Gender of its Owner [%]  
 [Nm = 511, Nf = 415]<sup>2</sup>



Slightly more than half of the businesses were family businesses in practice. When asked whether they considered their business to be a family business, 58% of the validly responding entrepreneurs [N = 1131] answered yes. More owners of companies operating as a family business were women than men [chi-square = 9.2,  $p < 0.01$ ]; two out of three women said their firm functioned as a family-run business; almost half of the men answered the same.

Figure 2. Is your business a family business? Percent by Gender [N = 1131]



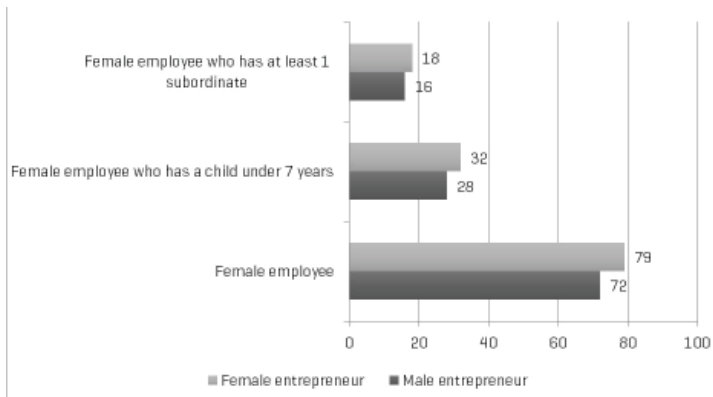
<sup>2</sup> Nm = number of male entrepreneurs; Nf = number of female entrepreneurs.



## 4.2 Female Solidarity?

We have already mentioned that the majority of entrepreneurs surveyed had few employees: two out of 10 entrepreneurs employed zero to nine people (81.9%), and only 1.5% of them employed 50 or more. As far as employees are concerned, there is an interesting correlation between the gender of the business owner and the number of the company's female employees. Women entrepreneurs seemed to employ more women [chi-square = 5.5,  $p < 0.05$ ], and women entrepreneurs also tend to occupy a higher rate of women with small children. However, we did not find a gender difference regarding female employees in management positions, so it is no longer true that companies with female owners are more likely to have a higher proportion of female managers and middle managers.

Figure 3. The Number of Female Employees According to the Entrepreneur's Sex [%] (N = 884, N = 920, N = 1033)

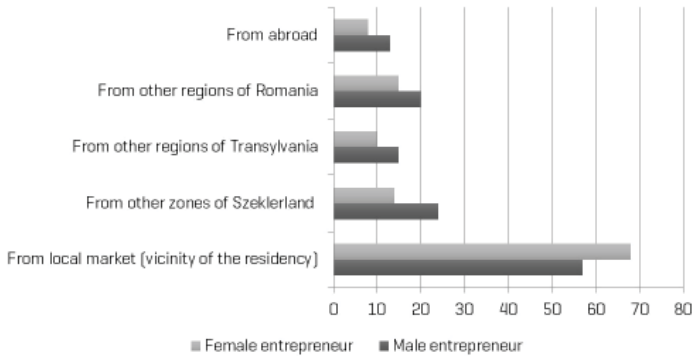


## 4.3. Only within the Comfort Zone

Our research results show that for the vast majority of enterprises in Szeklerland, the local market is the dominant and often the only one place sale: on average, enterprises derive almost two-thirds of their income from their place of residence. The second most common source of income is sales that are not local but still within the borders of Szeklerland. Interestingly, anyone who expands beyond the local and regional market enters the entire Romanian market rather than that of

Transylvania. On average, however, only 12–16% of companies’ income comes from markets outside Szeklerland. When examined according to the gender of the business owner, it seems that female entrepreneurs operate mostly on the local market; they are much less likely to enter foreign, Romanian, Transylvanian, or even Szeklerland markets than male entrepreneurs.

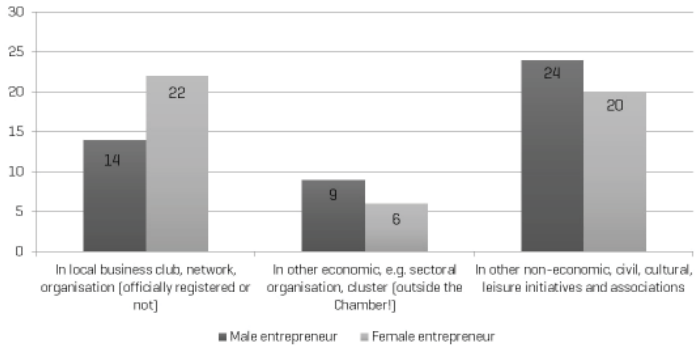
Figure 4. The Firm’s Territorial Source of Incomings in 2017, by Gender (%)



#### 4.4. Networking?

Slightly more than a tenth [12.8%] of entrepreneurs were members of some formal or informal business organisation, club, or group, and even fewer were members of other economic or sectoral organizations or some sort of vocational cluster: 8%. Slightly more people were already connected to other associations and non-governmental organisations without economic purposes, but here too, only two out of 10 entrepreneurs [23%]. We did not find gender, age, or county to be decisive in this regard. Although we saw a slightly higher proportion of male entrepreneurs affiliated with any of these organisations, associations, or groupings, statistically, this was not significant.

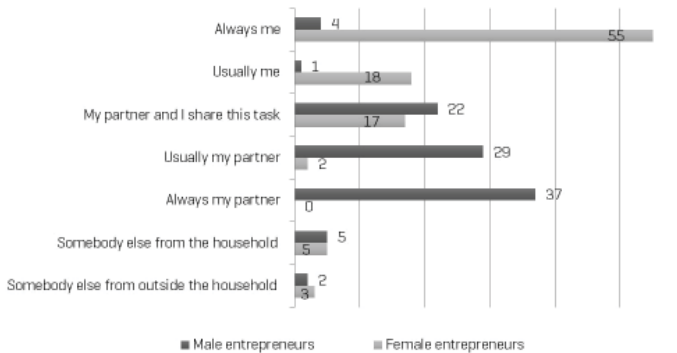
Figure 5. Entrepreneurial, Professional, or Civic Membership by Gender  
 (N = 1148, N = 1136, N = 1145)



#### 4.5. To Share or Not to Share ...

This question was also one of the milestones of our research, in connection with which we asked the opinions of those who lived in a relationship and were bringing up at least one small child under seven years of age. We asked them to tell us who performed a particular activity, mainly related to caring for young children, at home in their family. We found that the most outstanding question was the one referring to who stayed at home with a sick child. We saw that nine out of ten respondents who chose “always me” were women.

Figure 6. Who stays at home when a child is sick? — by Gender [%] (N = 489)



Half of the female entrepreneurs [55%] responded that they always stayed home, and an additional one-sixth [18%] that they usually stayed home themselves. It means that three-quarters of the women entrepreneurs [with small children] put their daily tasks aside. They either took care of their sick child, took them to the doctor, or just stayed home with them since they could not take them among other children [nursery, kindergarten, school] due to the very often contagious illness. Of male entrepreneurs, 4% said they would always stay home if their children were ill. Similarly, while not one female entrepreneur would say that her partner would always stay at home with the child, 37% of male entrepreneurs said that their wife or partner stayed at home with a sick young child every time. Of the women, 85% said they would take care of a child on sick days, while 22% of men said the same. The greatest difference in this respect seemed to be between male and female entrepreneurs: family responsibilities and caregiving for small children are always a priority for women, but not for men.

Regarding the division of labour within the family, we noted a rather traditional gender division of roles as a general feature: Cooking and washing dishes were always or usually performed by three-quarters of the female entrepreneurs in their households. Nearly two-thirds of the female entrepreneurs reported that their husbands or partners either always or usually made minor repairs around the house and that every tenth female entrepreneurs' husband or male partner was in charge of shopping.

Table 2. The Division of Household Tasks of the Female Entrepreneurs [%]

Usually whose task is this?	Respondent		We divide this	Her partner		Someone else		Total	N
	Always me	Usually me		Usually my partner	Always my partner	From the household	From outside the household		
1. Cooking	54	22	14	2	1	3	4	100	479
2. Washing dishes	52	20	21	2	1	2	2	100	426
3. Shopping	33	15	41	7	2	1	1	100	480
4. Cleaning	44	16	27	2	1	2	8	100	472
5. Minor repairs in and around the house	6	3	14	34	30	4	9	100	478

6. Tracking expenses and income	30	9	50	4	6	1	0	100	476
7. Organisation of joint programs	23	9	64	1	2	1	0	100	477

Basically, organising family activities was shown to be a task that most people performed with their male partners: two out of three women entrepreneurs said this was the case. Half of the women reported that the household's expenditures and income were also monitored jointly, and shopping tasks were shared by four out of ten women entrepreneurs. Only one in five women said they shared the dishwashing, and 14% shared the cooking. Based on the data, there seemed to be two types of activities that women entrepreneurs use to outsource, one of which is minor repairs around the house. The other, which neither they nor their husbands or male partners do, but not even their mother, is the cleaning. This is true for 8% of women.

#### *4.6. Equality: Between Dream and Deed*

The last question in our questionnaire was designed to determine how entrepreneurs see the issue of whether the sex of the firm's owner predestines him or her for more success. The answer surprised us perhaps the most: most women share the same view of most men that there is no difference between the chances of male and female entrepreneurs. Although nearly a quarter of the entrepreneurs believed that men have a better or much better chance of starting a career in entrepreneurship, few entrepreneurs – mostly women – believe that women are more likely to be more successful in the entrepreneurial sector.

We did not find any regional differences in this area either: entrepreneurs in all three counties<sup>3</sup> had a similar opinion, i.e., seven out of 10 entrepreneurs did not say there were gender differences, and stated that women and men had an equal chance of success. However, we found a correlation in terms of age: younger entrepreneurs seemed to have a slightly lower "belief in equal opportunities" than older people did, and a higher proportion of those believed that male entrepreneurs have a better chance [chi-square = 14.5,  $p < 0.05$ ].

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<sup>3</sup> Covasna, Harghita and Mureş Counties.

Figure 7. Are Male and Female Entrepreneurs' Chances for Success Different?—% Proportion by Gender (N = 1137)

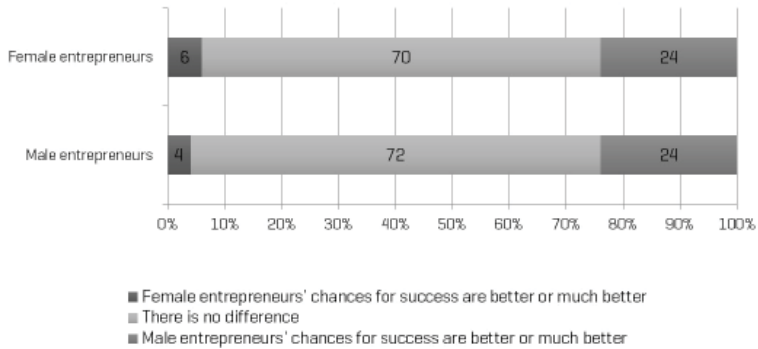
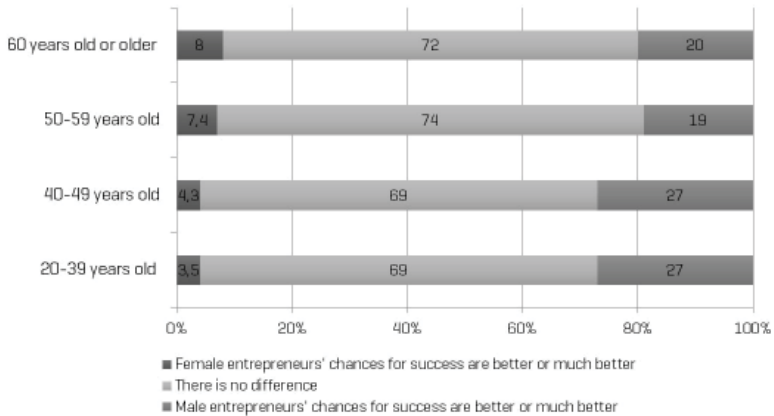


Figure 8. Are Male and Female Entrepreneurs' Chances for Success Different?—% Proportion by Age (N = 1105)



Of the entrepreneurs under the age of 50, 28% respectively 26% believe that men are more likely to succeed as entrepreneurs compared to 19% of respondents in their 50s. Only 4% of the youngest generation, entrepreneurs in their twenties and thirties, think women have a better chance, while those aged 60 and over 60 think this in an even bigger proportion [7% and 8%].

#### 4.7. One Small Step for Female Entrepreneurs, a Bigger Step for Male Entrepreneurs

Most people plan to improve the quality of their business’s technology: two out of three entrepreneurs want to do so for sure, probably before 2022. The least-often planned improvement is the creation of new premises, and there were also only a few plans to use new channels for sales or procurement. If we take a closer look at the numbers, we can see that there are significant differences between men and women: not in terms of what they are planning—the ideas are very similar—but in terms of proportions. While almost a third of men were definitely planning to create jobs and increase the number of the employees, barely a quarter of women were making similar plans. Regarding the new premise of the firm: every fifth male entrepreneur was planning to create a new headquarters [19%], but only every eighth female entrepreneur [12%] was doing the same. The biggest discrepancy—a difference of almost 10%—was in regard to the capacity of expansion plans. In terms of planning to strengthen social ties, the numbers are closest to each other: here the rate is only 2% higher in the case of women than in that of men.

Table 3. List of Developments/investments the Entrepreneur Considers Making during the Next Three Years % (Male: N = 604, Female: N = 552)

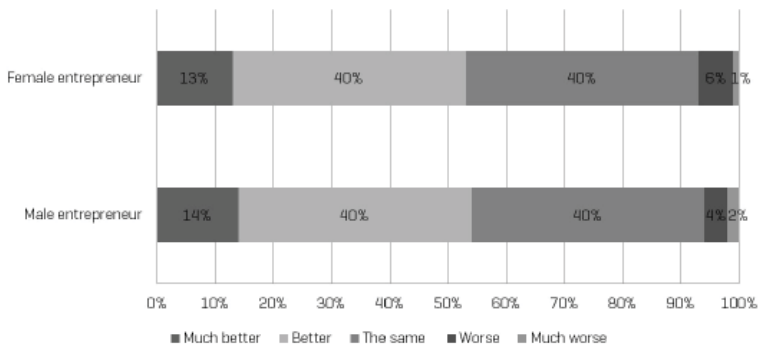
	Male [N = 604]	Female [N = 552]
1. Product development	33	28
2. Introducing a new product or service	36	33
3. Expansion of capacity	33	23
4. Quality development of technology	37	29
5. Use new sales channels	31	24
6. Use new procurement channels	24	21
7. Establishment / strengthening of economic cooperation	28	22
8. Strengthening social relations	29	27
9. Job creation, increasing employee count	32	24
10. Employee training	29	23
11. IT developments	35	26

12. Make internal operation more transparent	30	27
13. Improving operational processes	39	36
14. Establishment of a new premises	19	12

Therefore, we can say that female entrepreneurs plan similarly to male entrepreneurs, only with less confidence and more discouragement. More among them are insecure or plan less or postpone developments and investments.

It also turned out that entrepreneurs in Szeklerland – both male and female entrepreneurs – are mostly optimistic about the future: 53% of women and 55% of men said that their company’s situation would get better or much better in three years.

Figure 9. In Your Opinion, What Will the Situation of Your Company Be in Three Years’s Time?—by Gender [%] (N = 1128)



## 5. Conclusions

Part of the picture that emerges of female entrepreneurs is, of course, hardly surprising: on average, they are around 46 years old, slightly older than their male counterparts, married, but have fewer children than male entrepreneurs. Their personal and family incomes are also lower, which seems to strongly correlate with the fact that women run younger and smaller companies, with fewer employees and less turnover. The entrepreneurial strata in Szeklerland seem to be quite homogeneous regarding male and female firm owners. However,



female entrepreneurs start and operate a firm with the lower fund and on a smaller scale than men. An important result of the survey is that although they can hire fewer people overall, they are slightly more committed to female employees with small children; in a woman-owned firm, it is more likely for mothers with small children to work. Of course, this result can also be a consequence of sectoral segregation.

At the same time, we have repeatedly been confronted with the fact that it is not the entrepreneurs' sex that is the most determining factor, but rather age: in several issues, the differences were between younger and older entrepreneurs rather than between male and female entrepreneurs. Yet it is clear that there is much less free energy and time available for women entrepreneurs, as most are mothers, and many are raising young children. Therefore, women can devote less time to their businesses, and presumably, because of this, their plans are smaller, more modest, and shorter-term. Women tend to produce for the narrower, more local market. It is even less typical to join networks than for men, but a significant change in 8 years.

Looking at 3-year business plans, women definitely and consistently plan lower than men. However, it is surprising that they do not perceive these factors as making running the business a bit more difficult for them. Instead, most of them think that they have an equal chance in this field as men do; in fact, a few of the female entrepreneurs believe they have better chances of succeeding than men do. Therefore, we can conclude that female entrepreneurs consider the world of entrepreneurship is gender-blinded – the data do not prove this, yet they do not find the career more difficult.

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# MIND THE ETHICAL CONSUMPTION GAP? CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOURS IN SECOND-HAND SHOPS

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The motivations for shopping in second-hand shops/thrift shops are various: treasure hunting, economic constraints, localization of branded products at a good price point, distinction, ethical-environmental issues, etc. The article presents the summary of qualitative research [focus-groups] conducted among the students of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania in 2017-2018. The investigation was focused on students' fashion- and clothing related consumption practices, so the research questions were also targeted towards interviewee's preference for shopping in second-hand shops and whether the penchant for such

shops has anything to do with ethical consumption. The results showed that, indeed, second-hand shops are very much preferred by the students, but the motivation for shopping at such sites is not to be found in the ethical narrative. The interviewees opt for second-hand shops because of scarce financial resources or because of the lack of other shopping alternatives. Ethical motivations were rather sporadic. On the contrary, second-hand shops were seen as offering opportunities for clothing-accumulation. Thus, paradoxically, the picture reveals the case of ethical consumption gap.

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**KEYWORDS:** *consumption, second-hand shop, brand, status*

## *Methodological Introduction*

The article presents the results of a qualitative investigation the aim of which was to explore in students' approach to fashion and clothing, to understand their linguistic repertoires, concepts, and narratives about fashion and clothing, to reveal the articulation of their opinions and to observe the interactions on various issues of fashion (Nistor 2016). The qualitative method of my research took the form of focus-groups and aimed to reveal meanings, understandings, and deeper narratives on the topic of fashion and clothing [e.g., what fashion means for students, the fashion brands and sites for shopping they prefer, how they acquire information about fashion, whether they practice any form of ethical consumption, etc.].

Focus-groups represents a specific qualitative method because they rely on small, convenience samples, and they are frequently used in inductive approaches when researchers aim to explore the socially constructed reality. The qualitative feature of the technique also means that the data registered during the discussions are in essence qualitative [i.e., texts, audio-visual materials, etc.], and they are analysed mostly through qualitative tools (Vicsek 2006).

I used an inductive approach through which I aimed to understand the researched phenomenon from the participants' perspective. To investigate the research questions, I opted for the focus-group methodology and followed a bottom-up research strategy; so, I did not want to test existing theories, although in generating the primary set of question, in conceptualizing the interview guide I also relied on several prior findings of the literature, which thus provided the "lenses" for my research [cf. Kawamura 2011].

Focus groups were conducted among the students of the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, between 2016 and 2018. Sapientia University is a university where teaching takes place in Hungarian language, and the university has three campuses located in Miercurea Ciuc, Târgu-Mureş, and Cluj-Napoca, i.e. in small and medium-sized towns and a large city. Thus, focus-group participants were students of each of these three campuses. In total, there were conducted eight focus-groups across the three sites to reveal students' narratives regarding their fashion and clothing-related behaviours and representations<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Later, the research was broadened with an online questionnaire and with another student population [see Nistor, 2018, 2020 – in press], but such investigations are not the focus of the present article.

The sampling for each of the groups was convenience sampling since probability sampling is neither specific nor necessary for qualitative investigations [Nickel et al., 1995 – quoted by Kamenidou et al. 2007]. Participants were invited to participate through student mailing lists and social media groups; in such platforms, a short description was provided about the topic, venue, and time of the event. Students were informed that the theme of the focus group is to discuss their attitudes and practices in terms of fashion-related consumption, and they were informed that participation is voluntary and that their opinions will be anonymized. Students had to pre-register by-email, and later on, they received a mail of confirmation of participation. This registration helped to realize a “pre-group screening” [Jegethesan et al. 2012] through which I was able both to pick homogenous respondents [e.g., from the same campuses] and to maintain a sort of heterogeneity [e.g., gender ratio, specialization ratio], etc. A lot more students pre-registered there, but eventually, they appeared in lower numbers at the sites. However, in each case, group sizes could be arranged so that they fit the recommendation of the literature, i.e., six-eight participants make up each group. The group sessions lasted about 1 –1.5 hours. The groups were moderated by the author; the discussions were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The analyses of the narratives were based on the transcribed texts [see Nistor 2018, 2020].

The general interview guide followed the so-called “funnel approach” [Vicsek 2006], which means that the questions started from more general themes and ended with more specific topics on fashion and clothing [see in detail Nistor 2018, 2020]. Much of these questions remained during each group, but the flexible questioning meant that once a group raised a specific topic, this was introduced in the forthcoming group, respectively once the results of the online survey became available some of these results were discussed during the groups.

Several questions of the focus-groups targeted the preference for shopping clothing items in second-hand shops and whether such a penchant can be related to ethical consumption motivations. The article summarizes the results of the research obtained concerning these questions.

### ***A Short Theoretical Introduction***

The literature on second-hand shops revealed various reasons both for frequenting and avoiding such shops. Roux and Korchia [2006] contend that environmental concern, price-consciousness, especially

in the context of economic constraints, socialization (when items are bought from flea markets), nostalgia (e.g. vintage clothes), the rejection of consumerism, smart shopping (getting branded products at a good price), and search for uniqueness are among the major reasons for frequenting second-hand shops. The same aspects were outlined by Xu et al. (2014), Yan et al. (2015), etc. who all insist on the separation between the “need” and “choice” factors when referring to second-hand shopping: indeed, buying from second-hand shops can be a necessity in the case of consumers living on small budgets, who do not have other opportunities for shopping, but it can be also a lifestyle choice in terms of voluntary simplicity and adventure-seeking, i.e. a form of hedonistic consumption in situations when consumers are literally digging for treasures in such shops. The already mentioned authors also insist on those obstacles that prevent consumers from buying clothes from second-hand shops, e.g.: contamination, fear from transmitting germs and diseases, lowering self-esteem by wearing clothes previously worn by others, a form of dispossession (i.e. borrowing other people’s identity – cf. Roux and Korchia, 2006).

Fashion and clothing production are among the most polluting industries in the world. Additionally, both the consumption of clothes in the form of over-consumption, impulse-buying, etc. lead to high amounts of solid wastes. On the other hand, and especially in the context of today’s post-modern world in which we can see the co-existence of many different lifestyles, the literature mentions various ways in which consumers are becoming more responsible in their consumption choices. These options can range from buying of eco- or ethical clothes, i.e. products of certain brands which are responsible in terms of their social and environmental aspects (i.e., they do not use child labour, do not exploit workers, use recycled materials, etc.), to down-shifting their consumption choices in the form of buying less and less frequently and sticking to a so-called capsule wardrobe, reusing and recycling their clothes in the form of DIY projects or second-hand and flea-markets, etc. (Fletcher 2008; Reiley-DeLong 2011).

Thus, the linkage between second-hand shops and ethical, environmental consumption seems taken-for-granted. For instance, Yan et al. (2015) investigated the case of second-hand fashion shopping among US college students, and they showed that second-hand shoppers are more environmentally friendly, more price-conscious, and more concerned with their uniqueness. Therefore, second-hand shopping has a complex motivational basis among US college students.



However, some findings are more cautious. The ethical consumption gap concept [Carrington–Attala 2001] warns us that consumers' attitudes towards responsible consumption is rarely translated into congruent behaviour, either because of the lack of resources (e.g. information and knowledge, financial possibilities, availability of options) or because fashion and clothing consumption imply a huge amount of hedonism, self-gratification, and contention for social acceptance which can off-center sustainable consumption [Gam 2011]. The literature suggests that despite the environmental knowledge of the millennials, they have only limited information in connection with clothes-related environmental behaviours [Hiller Connell 2011]. In their study among US college students, Hill and Lee [2012] found that even if students care for the environment in general, they lack the knowledge which allows them to put in practice their environmental concern in terms of fashion consumption.

Some authors approach the problem of fashion, fast fashion, and the accumulation of clothing items from the perspective of values. Materialism, for instance, is quoted as one of the sources of compulsive and impulse shopping. Roberts and Jones [2001 – quoted by Goldsmith et al. 2012] consider that those who have a positive attitude towards material products see products, including fashion items, as instruments for showing status, and they tend to accumulate more and more products in order to enhance their status. This was also the conclusion of the texts written by Eastman et al. [1999 – quoted by Goldsmith et al. 2012] and Loulakis and Hill [2010 – quoted by Goldsmith et al. 2012], which were based on studies among US college students: both analyses found that materialistic values lead students to purchase a larger quantity of [branded] clothing because in this way they perceive they can better signal their social position to others. As far as second-hand shops offer clothing items at lower prices, there arises the question of whether students use these places for accumulation or for practicing a form of environmentalism.

### ***Summary of the Research Findings***

The focus-groups showed that shopping malls, together with second-hand shops/outlets are the most favourite sites for shopping. These three sites are not mutually exclusive: students make use of each of them simultaneously. Besides representing an important source of information about fashion, online shops are also preferred for shopping. Such

platforms are used for their convenience: online shops are always open and can be accessed from everywhere, they offer various possibilities for browsing, selecting favourites, zooming the pictures to see the clothes in detail and offer detailed information about sizing and the composition of the clothes' material. Online shops also multiply the possibilities for shopping, especially in situations when online platforms are perceived as being more convenient [in terms of prices, time saving, shops' availability, etc.] than other shopping sites [cf. Greenpeace 2017].

In the following sections, I am going to summarize the results of the research in what concerns the preference for second-hand shops<sup>2</sup>. Obviously, second-hand shops have both their fans and contesters. According to Roux and Korchia (2006), second-hand shops and outlets are preferred for various reasons, out of which the lower price of the products and the lesser availability of other shops [e.g. in the case of the Miercurea Ciuc-based campus] represent the major slice. This means that second-hand shops and outlets provide instant gratification for users by offering them the possibility to buy the clothes due to their affordable prices compared to the malls, where the higher prices deter consumers from shopping. The option to shop in such places can be explained through the so-called "need" and "by-default" factors, rather than through the choice factor. That is, students opt for shopping in second-hand shops because they lack the resources to shop elsewhere and they do not opt for second-hand shops based on some kind of critical narratives [see the distinction made by Yan et al. 2015]. Indeed, there occur situations in which choice is a major motivation, but such cases cannot be generalized across the interviews. In any case, when choice is the motivation, then the preference for second-hand shops is tied to the need for uniqueness, better trust in imported products, adventure-seeking [i.e. treasure hunting], or lifestyle options in terms of ethical and environmental shopping.

Second-hand shops are very good options for buying better-quality clothes compared to those which can be found in malls. I think that the same brands make better-quality products for the West... Thus, outlets and second-hand shops sell products which come from the Western market; so, you can get better products from there....

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<sup>2</sup> The results regarding students' preferences for various sites of shopping were published previously [see Nistor 2019a] or are currently in press [Nistor 2020 – in press]. Consequently, this piece is a short summary of the same results.

This is one thing only. The other issue is the price. I do not have a budget to afford to buy the clothes from the mall. Then, I go to outlets and second-hand shops and try to find things there that I like.... I often find branded products, such as Hilfiger, which are very highly-priced otherwise.

Plus the uniqueness. You can find unique clothes there; I mean, not those mass-produced items from the mall.... Even if there are the same brands as in the mall, the fact that you cannot find an entire set of similar clothes is very appealing for me. I do not like to look like everybody else. I think that I am fashionable, but 90 percent of my clothes are from second-hand shops. I am also asked where I bought my clothes from because they seem nicer and more stylish than those from the mall. And if you don't like these generic brands, you can find vintage there which is in fashion now. [excerpt from a focus-group discussion with students from Sapientia University – Cluj-Napoca campus]

We do not have so many options, except for going to second-hand shops. But I like this. When I need to chill out, I go to a second-hand shop; I like to look for treasures. I've found really nice things at really good prices in second-hand shops. [participant from a focus-group discussion with students from Sapientia University – Miercurea Ciuc campus]

According to the literature [Roux-Korchia 2006], second-hand shops are also linked to narratives in which they are rejected based on reasons of vanity and hygiene associated with previously worn clothes but also due to respondents' "incapacity" for hunting treasures. Outlets, on the other hand, are blamed for having pieces from past seasons, which are thus not so fashionable, but they do not fit the criteria of vintage either.

I don't know how others do that, but I do not have enough luck... I've tried several times to buy something from a second-hand shop, but I did not find anything. Others probably have a talent. I just do not have a talent for searching.

Me neither. But I also think that those clothes are not hygienic. When I think that someone else has previously worn that piece of clothing, I imagine that person, his/her environment, and... I just do not want to wear those clothes. [excerpt from a focus-group discussion with students from Sapientia University – Târgu-Mureş campus]

I feel like I am hurt in my vanity. When I think that other people have previously owned and worn those clothes, I do not have an appetite for

wearing those clothes. It happens that I find brand new clothes there, then I buy them, but previously worn clothes are just not my cup of tea. I try to find other ways of being environmentally friendly. This thing with second-hand clothes does not fit me. [participant from the focus-group discussion with non-student Generation Y participants from Miercurea Ciuc]

The interviewees also mentioned in their narratives sites like online consignment stores, vintage markets, yard sales, etc., but these were sporadic and cannot be considered typical sites for shopping. What can be concluded is that the preferred places for shopping are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, interviewees mix between these sites according to their preferences: those for whom brands and latest trends are more important [i.e., the more fashion-involved consumers] tend to narrate about their preference for malls and online shops; price-conscious shoppers opt for outlets and second-hand shops and so do those for whom brands are important but due to their limited budgets cannot afford other sites for shopping except outlets/second-hand shops. The latter are preferred also by the members of music subcultures and by those – albeit not very numerous – respondents for whom fashion and consumption in general are repugnant ideas. Besides these clear types, there exists the general tendency of open-mindedness in connection with each of these three places of shopping; interviewees tend to combine them usually based on the criteria of price and availability, but situational factors like hanging out in a mall, browsing online, seeing if they find something in a second-hand shop are also important motivations for impulse shopping from one place or another.

The answers to the question regarding students' ethical-environmental attitudes towards clothes revealed that only a few participants had already thought about their closet in critical ways. In other words, they tried to reconsider their consumption habits, either by developing frugal consumption [deliberately buying fewer clothes], refusing fast-fashion brands, or opting for second-hand shops.

Thus, even if at a first glance, the fact that much of the interviewees buy their clothes from second-hand shops can be considered a form of sustainability, in reality, the situations indicate the existence of the ethical consumption gap. Indeed, buying clothes from second-hand shops is a trend among the interviewed, but in many cases, this type of consumption is motivated by other reasons [financial scarcity, i.e., the so-called need factor] than environmental or ethical consciousness. Thus, buying clothes at lower prices from second-hand

shops often leads to overconsumption, to the accumulation of high amounts of clothes [which are than rarely worn]. As some of the interviewees declare, second-hand shops offer them a form of reward: as far as they are not able to buy pricy, high-fashion clothes, at least they can buy more clothes. Interviewees are oriented towards accumulation, having a huge amount of clothes translates for them as a form of fashion-possession [cf. Kelemen-Erdős-Kőszegi 2017]. Thus, second-hand shops offer a way to handle fashion in the case of financially constrained consumers rather than be an avenue for escaping consumerism.

I go to second-hand shops in those days when they are offering their products at discount prices because in this way I am able to buy more clothes... I love to have many clothes, and acquiring them at a good price allows me to buy more. [participant from a focus-group discussion with students from Sapientia University – Miercurea Ciuc Campus]

I think all of us visit second-hand shops because we do not have money... I think that all these kinds of ecological ideas are not relevant here. Buying clothes from ethical shops, such as fair trade, cost a lot, we cannot afford it. [participant from a focus-group discussion with students from Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca campus]

In those sporadic cases when interviewees manifest their pro-environmental or ethical attitudes regarding their clothes, they refer to the shortcomings of fast fashion in terms of child labour, work equity, and consumerism. These people provide narratives about how and why they have shifted from buying fast-fashion products to other forms of ethical consumption.

I think we are more sustainable. Like in a taken-for-granted way. We, rockers, dress differently, we do not follow fashion, we follow our musical tastes, so we do not need so many clothes. And in most of the cases we acquire our clothes from second-hand shops, which I think is a better option than buying from the mall. When I need a leather jacket, I do not go to H&M, as they also have leather jackets, but there is a huge difference between their jackets and an original, biker jacket... So, yes, I think I am more ethical in my choices. [participant from the focus group with self-identified members of subcultures from Sapientia University – Miercurea Ciuc campus]

Students were hardly knowledgeable about fast-fashion brands' sustainability-related initiatives [e.g. the existence of environmentally-conscious collections of certain brands]; however, they mentioned several forms of recycling among their environmental-friendly practices, mostly giving the unused, unnecessary clothes to relatives or people in need. This can be quoted as a form of altruism, a way through which they become adherents to a good cause while they also declutter their closet to make space for additional acquisitions. Such donating behaviours can be interpreted as a form of "warm-glow" effect: by giving their clothes, people are doing good, but they also get the impression that they have a prestigious status that allows them to do so. Moreover, making space in the closet by giving to others, and also in order to let new items come in, exempts people from guilt, gives them a sort of warm-glow effect [see Andreoni 1990]. Thus, giving unused clothes to others should be interpreted very carefully because it may constitute a form of impure altruism, a form of egocentric behaviour, at least in a context that is mostly empty in terms of environmentally-friendly fashion-related behaviours.

## *Conclusions*

The narratives of the focus groups mostly accentuated how youngsters put in balance their budgets and their fashion and brand preferences. Consequently, outlets and second-hand shops are preferred throughout campuses, even in Cluj-Napoca where students have plenty of possibilities for hanging out in malls, they prefer to shop in outlets and second-hand shops because this way, they can buy more clothes at more affordable prices. Thus, visiting these shops can be interpreted as a form of consumerism, accumulation, and self-gratification when the respondents live on a limited budget.

Albeit not a dominant strategy, visiting second-hand shops can also be a way of self-expression and anti-consumerism. Such participants feel less constrained by trends and brands, and thus they can allow themselves to be more selective in combining their outfits. For some of them, the manifestation of the anti-consumerist lifestyle through clothes is also a form of self-expression.

The majority of the participants have a favourite brand, and most of these are fast-fashion brands [Nistor 2019b]. Even if the literature has many arguments in the direction of blaming these brands for their low quality, poor environmental performance, homogeneity, etc., the

majority of the respondents see these brands through the lenses of prestige: they think that such brands can bear quality, durability, and, above all, they are perceived as cool brands. Youngsters speak about these brands in appreciative ways and associate them with success, prestige, and social status. Thus, brands are important building blocks of the image, social status, and are signals of success, as the findings of the focus-group research suggest as well (Nistor 2018, 2020).

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# APOCALYPTIC MEMES BETWEEN SERIOUS AND DERISORY

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Internet memes as complex pictorial-textual devices of argumentation readily adapted to the recent currents of apocalyptic upheavals and general interest in the final things throughout the social media, especially with the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic. Apocalyptic beliefs penetrated popular culture – both as re-emerging religious ideas and as worried interest in disaster phenomena. Concerns for man-caused nuclear, pandemic, environmental global plagues coexist with skeptical criticism of apocalyptic mentality. Internet memes, as creative expressions of Doomsday anxieties [or hopes] and criticism of such beliefs, use the same set of figures [devils, beasts, demons, zombies, aliens, planets, mutant viruses] and motives [heavenly and infernal spaces, paradisiac and cataclysmic landscapes, dystopian cities], together with eve-

ryday elements and usual meme templates. Also, there are countless memes which not only criticize but also make fun of all this interest in Apocalypse, deeming the phenomenon itself derisory. These image-and-word combinations, with viral dissemination and mutations throughout the World Wide Web, created and spread by the prosumers, represent both sides of the apocalyptic interests. What differentiates them? Are there any specific editing and argumentative techniques characteristic to one or the other type of rhetoric? Is there any gap between the audiences of these apocalyptic memes? This paper aims to present and analyze some examples from all three sets of memes as expressions of the anxious, tragic frames, the comic, ironic-critical frames, along with the satiric frames of apocalyptic rhetoric in digital popular culture.

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**KEYWORDS:** *digital memes, visual rhetoric, apocalyptic and ironic tone, tragic and comic frames, bricolage apocalyptic*

*Dedicated to the jays chattering around in the garden all day, all along the writing of this paper. They kept me good company.*

## **Introduction**

Internet memes as complex, pictorial-textual devices of argumentation readily adapt to the recent currents of apocalyptic upheavals and general interest in the final things throughout the social media, especially with the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic. Apocalypse, the set of prophecies and beliefs in the End of Days and Final Judgment, has penetrated popular culture since the turn of millennia (and even before) – both as religious convictions and as scientific interest in cosmic cataclysms. Concerns for a man-caused nuclear, or epidemic or environmental global Doom impregnated every aspect of contemporary culture – maintaining both a paranoid/enthusiastic committed, large audience, and also a probably as large group of skeptical critics of this apocalyptic mentality, while others mock and disregard the whole phenomenon. On the other hand, social media, transforming the ways of communication and creativity, offers a newly evolved means of instant and highly influential expression through the genre of digital memes. These visual-and-textual combinations, with viral dissemination and mutations throughout the World Wide Web, created and spread by the prosumers, represent both sides of the described apocalyptic interest. This research note – as the first part of a longer investigation project – presents some examples of memes from all sides of the apocalyptic paradigm in digital popular culture.

Discourses about the Apocalypse or “The End of the World as We Know It” [Wojcik 1997] have densely penetrated popular culture in the last decades of the past century, and even more in the new millennium – both as re-emerging religious ideas and as worried interest in disaster phenomena. Concerns for man-caused nuclear, pandemic, environmental global plagues coexist with skeptical criticism or deriding of apocalyptic mentality. At the same time, as worries become louder with any new threatening phenomenon of symbolic calendrical date, or imagined alien invasions, so do the critical counter-apocalyptic discourses both in mainstream and popular media. These discourses are mirrored through the memes produced by the digital generation in social media. Similarly, just like in the wider background apocalyptic discourses, we can observe a wide gap between the serious, sin-

ister, and the alarmist meme-reflections on the one hand, and critical, sometimes playful, but most often derisory reaction-memes, on the other hand. Adapting Landes's [1996, 1998, 2011b] metaphors of "roosters" and "owls" for alarmist, respectively, sober, skeptical apocalyptic rhetors, this paper distinguishes between "rooster memes" and "owl memes," adding a third [sub]category: "jays" to the latter, for the memes mocking the entire phenomenon.

### ***Apocalypse: Rhetoric***

In earlier studies [Hubbes 2017, 2018] I emphasized that not only are there various apocalyptic types of rhetoric, but Apocalypse itself can be considered a way of rhetoric: both in the sense of the original meaning of the Greek word '*Apokalypsis*': 'revelation,' 'revealing,' and in its form of manifestation as visual-textual argumentation and persuasion too. Originally denoting a genre of religious literature, Apocalypse draws its name from the Revelation of John, the last book of the Bible, in which the writer uses highly complex images to express the unseen heavenly realm and to present future events revealed to him by angelic or divine beings. His visions – especially those representing images of God, the heavenly court, or celestial apparitions [see Figs. 1 and 3] – are actual hierophanies or theophanies [heavenly signs or figures revealing hidden transcendent meaning, the manifestations of the sacred] [see Eliade 1961]. Also, his eschatological prophecies concerning the end-time tribulations [see Fig. 3], the end of the world and the coming new creation are described in powerful visual rhetoric, full of symbolic images hard to decipher and interpret [not only] for the uninitiated. The Book of Revelation, and in its wake the entire apocalyptic literature can be considered a rhetoric of spectacular imagery that is based on symbolic representations of the transcendent world, or transfigured allegories of this world. On the other hand, apocalyptic mentality, beyond being a "sense of an ending" [Kermode 1966], the expectation of the Millennium and the dread of Doomsday, is essentially a continual search for and interpretation of "signs" [Eco 2003], which herald the expected final events [see Fig. 16]. Thus, the Apocalyptic [noun – cf. Hubbes 2017] is a matter for both rhetorical and semiotic analysis.

Apocalyptic however, is not only a rhetoric and a world view – it is a mental and spiritual paradigm [Hubbes 2016], built on an archetype [Frye 1957; Edinger 2002], or more precisely, on an archetypal cognitive structure of the imaginary [Boia 2000] or a psychological com-

plex [Strozier and Boyd 2018]. In this respect, it is not just an obsolete residual mindset or a worn out religious rhetoric, which persists in a secularized world; on the contrary, it survives and adapts to traditionally non-apocalyptic cultic-spiritual, scientific, political-ideological, secular, even anti-religious environments, omnipresent in countless variations in the contemporary global popular culture. As Barry Vacker [2012] deliberates: the Apocalypse itself is a meme<sup>1</sup>. Richard Landes [2011a], using “millennialism” as a synonymous term for apocalyptic, states: “To use the language of evolutionary epidemiology, millennialism is a *meme* programmed to spread as rapidly and pervasively as possible. Under the right — apocalyptic — conditions, that meme can spread at epidemic speeds and breach the public transcript with explosive force” [9 - highlight in the original].

### ***Memes: Rhetoric***

Obviously, the Apocalypse can be considered a meme in the classical sense of the term, as coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins [1976 [1989]]. Dawkins originally conceptualized the ‘meme’ on the analogy of the biological ‘gene’ – as small units of cultural transformation, self-replicating and -propagating in similar way as the genetic information bits. Describing the meme as a self-copying ‘replicator,’ he drew his new term from the Greek word ‘mimeme’ “that which is imitated” [Dawkins [1976 [1989]]<sup>2</sup>, and brought examples for it: “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” [Dawkins [1976 [1989]]. These memes are cultural elements, which are copied and propagated due to the basic human behavior of imitation: ‘mimesis,’<sup>3</sup> considered by the ancient Greeks one of the foundations of art. The imitative nature of memes, as cultural copycats is

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<sup>1</sup> Or rather, as he develops it further, a ‘metameme’ “The most complex memes — such as religions, ideologies, ecology, consumerism, or apocalyptic world-views — can be thought of as *metamemes*.” [Vacker 2012:13]

<sup>2</sup> “‘Mimeme’ comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like ‘gene’. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme. If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to ‘memory’, or to the French word meme. It should be pronounced to rhyme with ‘cream’.” [Dawkins 1976 [1989]:np]

<sup>3</sup> Cf. René Girard’s ideas about the emergence of human culture itself from the mimetic behavior [mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry, mimetic conflict] [Girard 1972].

not an isolated “human-only” phenomenon though; among others, another biological concept, the “mimicry” [“deceiving copying”] supports the evolutionary importance of imitation not just in the animal kingdom, but in the flora as well. Memes, however, in their original interpretation, are not only replicant imitations, their endurance, variability, and ability to propagation is just as important as their replicability. It is in this direction that Dawkins [1991/1993] later developed his theory of memes: he compared them to viruses [both biological and cybernetical], especially the phenomenon of religion; an idea further exploited by Richard Brodie [1996 [2009]]. Vacker’s [2012] conception of Apocalypse as meme (or metameme) enters into this train of thoughts, conceiving religion itself as viral meme.

However, the main focus of this paper is on apocalyptic memes, not on Apocalypse itself as a meme, which means that we discuss [digital] memes about a meme. For this approach, we have to go beyond the original interpretation of memes as cultural entities and consider the phenomenon in its newer aspect, in the view of communication sciences.

Following the initial enthusiasm surrounding Dawkins’s brand new term, the forming discipline of memetics produced not only schools of interpretation, insightful studies [e.g. Blackmore 1999, Dennett 1995, Brodie 1996 [2009]] in human culture and society, but also opened up for academic controversies regarding the correctness and usefulness of the term “meme” in the field of social sciences [Pölcz 2016].<sup>4</sup> Beginning with the nineties, however, memetics went through a not entirely unexpected turn. While several scholars have added new interpretations [Dennett 1995], or expansions for the original terms<sup>5</sup> “meme” and “memeplex” [e.g. Blackmore 1999], and also new expressions, like “teme” [from technical meme - see Blackmore 1999], the really new development came with a short 1994 article, in which Mike Godwin elaborated the so-called Godwin’s Law<sup>6</sup> and the idea of “memetic

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<sup>4</sup> Pölcz refers among others to Maurice Bloch, Kalevi Kull, Adam Kuper, Dan Sperber [all 2000] as critics of the Dawkinsian cultural memetics. Still, I will not deliberate here upon this topic, because it is not relevant for this paper.

<sup>5</sup> A good collection of traditional memetic terms is offered by Glenn Grant’s Memetic Lexicon [1990]: <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/MEMLEX.html>

<sup>6</sup> “I developed Godwin’s Law of Nazi Analogies: as an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one” [Godwin 1994:np].

engineering” applied to internet discourses. Among the first new approaches, the merit of this article was to direct memetics towards a new territory: the Internet.

Based on the same principle of replication, propagation and mutations, the new type of digital memes evolved in parallel with the renewed discipline of Internet memetics. Many social media or communication researchers tried to grip and define the new concept of the meme in its new forms and new context. One of the simplest definitions states that “an Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” [Davison 2012: 122]. Another, more complex approach defines the Internet memes as

a unit of information [idea, concept or belief], which replicates by passing on via Internet [e-mail, chat, forum, social networks, etc.] in the shape of a hyper-link, video, image, or phrase. It can be passed on as an exact copy or can change and evolve. The mutation on the replication can be by meaning, keeping the structure of the meme or vice versa. The mutation occurs by chance, addition or parody, and its form is not relevant. An IM depends both on a carrier and a social context where the transporter acts as a filter and decides what can be passed on. It spreads horizontally as a virus at a fast and accelerating speed. It can be interactive [as a game], and some people relate them with creativity. Its mobility, storage, and reach are web-based [Hard disks, cell phones, servers, cloud, etc.]. They can be manufactured [as in the case of the viral marketing] or emerge [as an offline event taken online]. Its goal is to be known well enough to replicate within a group. [Castaño Díaz [2013, np]

Ryan Milner [2012] highlights the following essential aspects of Internet memes: replicability and remix, increased interactivity, and reach<sup>7</sup>; adding that “[u]ltimately, memes are exemplars of participatory media because they are created and circulated by you” [Milner 2012, 22] Wiggins and Bowers [2014], who interpret memes as a social media genre, conceiving them as digital artefacts and oppose Dawkins’ conception of the meme, reach to the conclusion that

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<sup>7</sup> “For meme collectives, reach means a whole slew of artifacts to draw from, a new audience to share creations with, and increased life and fame for memes that catch on. Thanks to reach, the sketches and scrawls produced by meme creators can take on a life of their own. Memes can be reappropriated as they’re spread across context.” [Milner 2012: 21-22]

[u]nlike the traditional conception of genre, as a text [or utterance] of repeated forms and literary moves, genres are activities that guide and alter the dynamics of human culture. In this sense, the meme, viewed as a genre, is not simply a formula followed by humans to communicate, but is a complex system of social motivations and cultural activity that is both a result of communication and impetus for that communication. Genres, therefore, are central to understanding culture. [Wiggins–Bowers 2014: 8]

Limor Shifman, one of the leading experts in the field, defines Internet memes in the following way: “[a] a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which [b] were created with awareness of each other, and [c] were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users” [Shifman 2014a: 41].

The original factors of replicability, variability, spreadability did not disappear, but new features were taken into account. Adapting to the nature of digital memes circulating on the Internet, scholars of digital memetic emphasize the fact that Internet memes are essentially a social mode of interaction and expression. Beyond the viral [virus-like] aspect, memes are a consciously used tool to express and share reactions, opinions. It is exactly the conscious and intentional usage along which Lankshear and Knobel [2019] oppose the new concept of meme against the classical:

the concept of internet memes that had emerged by the late 1990s was very different from Dawkins’ original conception. Internet memes were identifiable as online artefacts made up of so many different kinds [and degrees] of innovative riff around some [often recent] originating event or other artefact. Internet memes were, basically, texts [images, words, etc.] that were deliberately modified in ways designed to catch attention and be passed on and further modified. And they were typically short-lived [at least in terms of evolutionary scale]. Dawkins himself refers to this appropriation of his ideas as having hijacked the original idea of memes. [Lankshear–Knobel 2019: 43–44]

As they continue based on Olivia Solon citing Dawkins, they make their point:

It was a change whereby ‘instead of mutating by random change and spreading by a form of Darwinian selection, they are altered deliberately

by human creativity. Unlike with genes [and Dawkins' original meaning of 'meme'], there is no attempt at accuracy of copying; internet memes are deliberately altered.' (Solon 2013 in Lankshear-Knobel 2019: 44)

I would like to call the attention here to an even more distinctive aspect of Internet memes: they are not only consciously and deliberately altered [and shared], but, in the first instance, *consciously and deliberately created*: to argue, manipulate, and persuade, or only to entertain. Ultimately: they constitute an emerging multimodal language. In this respect, besides being a well-defined genre, the digital meme is primarily: rhetoric.

Several scholars have approached internet memes as rhetoric. Part of a wider concept of Internet rhetoric, memetic is conceived both as a form of producing digital discourses and as a device to analyse these discourses. Zhao Ding (2015) investigated the rhetorical construction of Asians' and Asian Americans' representative identities by examining meme images and texts, with regard to their content, rhetorical components, and structure; and defined the memes as persuasive discourses for entertainment, spreading stereotypes, and online activism. Van Wassenhove (2017), while analyzing Singaporean reaction memes to a critical situation, proposes that Internet memes are a form of rhetoric the average netizen can use to bring socio-political messages across. He interprets Internet memes as "a set of related images and words which meaning can only be understood when read together, representing a bigger argument formed from the images," to communicate with the wider audience of online community, and he adds that the audiences may become "the rhetors too when they share such memes on their social media accounts to express their own thoughts, taking 'ownership' of the meme" (van Wassenhove 2017: 2). Lankshear and Knobel (2019) reviewing the evolution of digital memes in the past three decades, identified trends and tendencies starting from innocent, playful humorous memes of the first wave through the brutal, insensitive trolling to the strong politicization of the more recent years where memes have become powerful divisive weapons directed against ideological opponents. Heidi Huntington (2015) also emphasized the subversive nature of memes, seeing them as discursive devices able to question, criticize, disarm, and undermine extant discourses. On the other hand, Golya (2018) and Berszán (2020) examining contemporary and classical art memes, view Internet memes as artistic rhetoric, also as art *per se*. They both point out the creative force of the memes'



visual rhetoric, capable not only to subvert but also to reinterpret aesthetical canons or surrounding social realities, and thus engage a real revitalizing dialogue with their public and their subjects alike.

A collaborative community of rhetoric scholars at the University of Michigan proposed the approach of memetic rhetoric through the Bakhtinian terms of heteroglossia, carnivalesque and ambient affiliation.<sup>8</sup> Eric Jenkins [2014] analyzed FAIL/WIN memes through the approach of visual rhetoric, identifying rhetorical modes. Huntington [2015], in her short essay presenting the possibilities of meme discourse analysis described visual rhetoric approach, alongside semiotic analysis, as one of the best methodologies to investigate social media memes. The rhetorical approach thus allows us to analyze Apocalypse memes as artefacts of argumentative discourses.

### ***Genres and Types of Internet Memes***

For the purposes of this article, it is necessary to pin down a brief typology of Internet memes. From the various classifications I have chosen three typologies because they serve best the rhetorical approach. For start, I refer to the simplest division. Adapting a visual rhetorical perspective, Wiggins and Bowers [2014] distinguish *videos* and *image macros* [pictures with inscription]. They also offer an overview of the stages of formation of digital memes: from a great variety of *spreadable media* [audio, visual, textual content published and shared throughout the participatory media platforms of the Internet] certain contents are selected, highlighted, most often altered and shared as *emergent memes*, becoming ultimately rapidly spreading [and mutating] *memes*.

Ray Milner [2012] compiles a more sophisticated system of meme typology. On first level, he distinguishes between *remixed images* and *stable images*. Remixed images can be either *single images* or *stacked* [multiple] *images*. Single remixed images may take the form of *annotated images* [textual addendums interacting with an image - see here Figures. 5, 12, 17, and 18 in the Annexes], *demotivationals* [parodical image and text mix of “motivational” posters that frame images in a black box - see Fig. 6], *image macros* [text over image, often containing a premise and a conclusion,<sup>9</sup> or sometimes a punchline, and the

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<sup>8</sup> [http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/DigitalRhetoricCollaborative/index.php/Memetic\\_Rhetoric](http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/DigitalRhetoricCollaborative/index.php/Memetic_Rhetoric) [nd]

<sup>9</sup> On Internet meme as *enthymeme*, I will deliberate in the continuation of this

images themselves are usually chosen from large stocks of photos or graphic materials - Figures 1, 2, 4, 7, also cf. Fig. 14, as well as Figs. 17 and 18), *shops*, [slang short for "Photoshops" - a crafted new image from altering a picture or combining elements of multiple other images - Figures. 2, 6, 8, 11, as well as cf. Figs. 17 and 18] or *graphical texts* [text without any image, over a simple or colored background - Fig. 9]. Stacked or "multiple remixed images" add a layer of complexity to the remixed images: they may come in the form of *Rage Comics* [combination of several *Rage Face* drawings and texts, usually forming a story - Figures 10 and 18], or as *stacked stills* [macros or annotated stills combined into multi-panel images - Fig. 11 and cf. Fig. 18]. Stable images may appear as *drawings* [animated images, including web comics - Fig. 12 and cf. Fig. 17], *graphs* [visualized data, often infographics from popular press - Fig. 13], '*memes IRL*' [photos of memes 'in real life' - Fig. 14], *screenshots* [often from social media dialogues, or screenshots from text editors, data apps - Fig. 15], and *unannotated photos* [photos objects, places, individuals, random events, becoming often raw materials for macros - Fig. 16] [Milner 2012: 84-87].

Limor Shifman [2014a] approaches digital memes from multiple perspectives. On a first level, she discusses them according to the dimensions of *content*, *form*, and *stance*: that is, the specific content of a media material with regard to both the ideas and the ideologies conveyed by it, the concrete form in which it appears to our senses [e.g. audio, or visual, or audio-visual], and the ways in which communicators position themselves in relation to the content, its semantic codes, the receivers, and other potential communicators [Shifman 2014a, 40-41]. With regard to the origin or production of memes, Shifman [2014] distinguishes three meme genres: *documentation* of "real-life" moments [e.g. photo fads, flash mobs - irrelevant or this paper], explicit *manipulation* [remix] of visual or audiovisual mass-mediated content [reaction Photoshops - Fig. 6, lipdubs, misheard lyrics, recut trailers - these latter cannot be exemplified in this paper due to their audio or animated, motion video nature], and *new meme-oriented content* [LOLCats - Fig. 8, rage comics - Figures 10, 18, and stock character macros - Fig. 5, cf. Fig. 17] [118].

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research; I only mention now the fact that these digital memes usually consist of only one single unit [be it any complex] in which the logical argumentation often cannot [or is not intended to] be fully elaborated as in traditional verbal rhetoric; thus, one or both premises are often lacking, or left to the visual argument [pictorial content].

Apocalyptic discourses densely permeate popular culture and social media in the post-millennial milieu, and digital memes mirroring these discourses have grown so abundant that we can hardly find any memetic types or genres missing, as the examples of the empirical findings will demonstrate below.

### ***Apocalyptic Memetic Rhetoric***

Before turning to the proper presentations, however, we have to return for a short discussion concerning the various types of apocalyptic rhetoric, and their forms of expression in the digital media. Dino Enrico Cardone [2007] discusses how online recombinant [bricolage] apocalyptic discourses bear an inherent subversive nature - both because of the subvertivity of the Internet itself as medium and because of the subversiveness of apocalyptic rhetoric *per se*. However, Cardone himself points out based on Stephen O'Leary's work [1994] *Arguing the Apocalypse*, that there are basically two modes of apocalyptic rhetoric: a comic frame and a tragic frame, which applies, obviously, to online apocalyptic narratives as well. As O'Leary explains, borrowing the terms from Kenneth Burke's [1937] attitudes towards history, named after poetic categories, the tragic frame of apocalyptic rhetoric means an acceptance of the eschatological prophecies, a deterministic view of history and inevitability of evil, while the comic frame of apocalyptic discourses denotes the human potential of overcoming evil, and postponing or allegorizing the apocalypse.<sup>10</sup> It is important however to re-

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<sup>10</sup> "As interpreted through the tragic frame, the Apocalypse is a closed symbolic system in which each element of the myth signifies a particular historical or political referent. Such an interpretation reduces time to a linear structure of necessity. The comic frame interprets apocalyptic symbolism as open rather than closed, emphasizing the multivalence of symbols and repudiating their simplistic identification with historical referents; in this interpretation, time is structured as cyclical or episodic, and the absolute necessity of history is replaced by an open horizon of possibility." [O'Leary 1994:200], and below: "Argument in the tragic frame defines evil in supernatural terms, placing history temporarily in the control of demonic powers that can only be overthrown by catastrophic divine intervention. Such argument structures time by the expectation of a predestined End in the immediate future. Argument in the comic frame defines evil in human terms of ignorance and fallibility, assigning to human beings the task of overcoming the world's ills and thereby ushering in the apocalypse. Comic apocalyptic argument may structure time by postponing

fer here to Burke's original conception of attitudes expressed in poetic terms, since besides the comic and tragic frames invoked by O'Leary, Burke defines other attitudinal frames as well: "frames of acceptance," which point towards ways in which people accept or deal with the given situation - to which belong [together with the comic and the tragic] the heroic [epic] and the lyric frames, and "frames of rejection," by which people reject [or: change] the situation - here we can find the elegiac, the satirical, the burlesque, the grotesque, and the didactic [propagandistic] frames [Burke 1937]. Not only the comic or tragic frames of rhetoric, but also Burke's several other attitudes of interpretation or frames of argumentation, especially categories of rejection, can be observed in the Apocalypse memes investigated.

Another bivalent approach resembling O'Leary's tragic and comic frames of apocalyptic rhetoric is provided by Richard Landes' [1996, 1998, 2011] metaphorical terms of "owls" and "roosters" for apocalyptic rhetors - a definition worth citing:

Roosters crow about the imminent dawn. Apocalyptic prophets, messianic pretenders, chronologists calculating an imminent doomsday—they all want to rouse the courtyard, stir the other animals into action, shatter the quiet complacency of a sleeping community. Owls are night-animals; they dislike both noise and light; they want to hush the roosters, insisting that it is still night, that the dawn is far away, that the roosters are not only incorrect, but dangerous—the foxes are still about and the master asleep. [Landes 1996 np]<sup>11</sup>

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the date of the apocalypse, by claiming the date is unknowable, or by employing allegorical interpretation to apply prophecy to history in a way that threatens no disruption of the episodic pattern of historical time. Whether the symbols of prophecy are interpreted as references to distant future events or as allegory, the net effect is the same: the audience is prevented from reading any ultimate historical meaning into the calamities of the present, which are experienced not as signs of an imminent catharsis but as episodic setbacks to the progress of God's people. With regard to substantive content, then, apocalyptic argument in the tragic frame locates the cause of evil in supernatural forces and tends toward the establishment of a date that is fixed and imminent, while argument in the comic frame tends to locate the cause of evil in human error and to postpone the date or render it irrelevant." [O'Leary 1994: 204-205]

<sup>11</sup> In a later article he adds to this: "The roosters, the apocalyptic prophets of imminent transformation-catastrophe, utopia, both crow about the dawning day, calling all to awaken for the great battle, to prepare for judgment. The owls,

Landes' "owls" then can be connected in a broad sense with O'Leary's apocalyptic rhetoric in the comic frame of acceptance, while the "roosters" might correspond to the tragic frame of apocalyptic rhetoric. Translated to the recombinant environment of digital apocalypse-related discourses, we can link prophecies about imminent global catastrophes, setting dates for Doomsday or the Rapture of the saints, the global hype around the 2012 Mayan Apocalypse, the catastrophic climate change, a possible alien invasion or Zombie outbreak, and other alarmist End-of-the-World narratives with "roosters" and the tragic frame of apocalyptic rhetoric. On the other hand, countless skeptical discourses are circulating on the Internet, debunking articles and videos, criticizing the former ones, offering rational explanations and scientific argumentations - these are corresponding to "owls" and the comic frames of apocalyptic rhetoric. These same attitudes can be identified in the Apocalypse memes abundant in social media.

However, we can observe a third attitude growing ever louder on the platforms of social media, one that not only criticizes religious millennialist ideas, but mocks them and makes them derisory, just as often it criticizes and mocks doomsday-alarmism based on scientific data [e.g. climate worries, economical or demographical fears], or coming from political mass media, or just simply from the spirit of the times. This third attitude is humorous, ironical, sometimes playful, but most often sarcastic or cynical, and while still critical and subversive, it turns against the entire phenomenon and the heated debates around it in the global popular culture. It could be easily paired with Burke's [1937] attitudes of rejection: the satirical, the burlesque, and the grotesque frames. Adapting Landes' metaphoric idea, I would propose a third bird to continue his 'ornithological' line: one notorious for its mocking and trickster nature - the *jay*. In this train of thoughts, jays are noisily and playfully chattering about the end of the world, and other catastrophic phenomena, laugh at the apocalyptic prophets and sometimes at their critics as well, who take them and debate them too seriously; jays, as in real life, are mimicking and mocking and deceiving roosters and owls, just as any other birds alike. "Jays" then would be those digital meme

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the conservative elite committed to social stability, hoot for silence, warning in hushed tones that the night is still long, the foxes about, the master asleep. [...] The owls, then, would have us believe that the roosters are all Chicken Littles. The roosters, in turn, would have us believe that the owls are all ostriches with their heads in the sand." [Landes 1998: 129]

producers, who create and share subversive contents adopting a satirical, ridiculing stance, often copying and altering, “subverting” other memes, by which they make fun of any kinds of apocalypse-related discourses on the Internet.

### *Apocalypse Memes*

In this part of the paper, I present some examples of Apocalypse memes primarily view of digital and visual rhetoric. Since neither the limits of the article nor the present phase of data processing in my research project makes possible a full inventory of the findings, not even a deep and complex analysis of the presented Apocalypse meme samples, I restrain myself to bring one or two characteristic examples for the memetic genres, classes, and types, as well as for the theoretical issues discussed above.

For my research project I started collecting in November 2019 Apocalypse memes through Google and Bing search engines, combining search terms “meme” and “Apocalypse,” “apocalyptic,” “Doomsday,” “End of the World” and similarly related words primarily in English (but also in other languages known by me). I have continued data collection and database building ever since to this date (July 2020), with no intention of closing it yet, because the research is only in its initial phase. My primary fields for data collecting were social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Tumblr, Pinterest, as well as various meme generator sites, where I also looked for and found (sometimes by accidentally stumbling upon) not only individual memes, but a good number of topical collections and user groups as well. At the moment of writing this research note (16.07.2020), I have got a database<sup>12</sup> of 213 memes (and counting), selected from several hundred online memetic media materials related to Apocalypse.

In this paper, I present only 18 out of the 200+ meme pool classified in the first instance according to their topic on the one hand, and on the other hand, I group them according to their rhetorical-attitudinal frame (roosters, owls, jays). These 18 memes are selected to represent or exemplify the most common meme genres and categories discussed in the theoretical part. When selecting the memes to be pre-

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<sup>12</sup> For general orientation, I make this Apocalypse meme database publicly available on the blog site of our SEMEISTOS Research Group, via this link: [https://semeistos.wordpress.com/?page\\_id=132](https://semeistos.wordpress.com/?page_id=132)

sented, I paid particular attention to choose from the most likely topics concerning the apocalyptic discourses. Thus, these memes not only represent the generic or classification aspects but also mirror the most recurring apocalyptic topics in all three rhetorical frames of attitude according to Landes [1996, 1998, 2011b], O’Leary [1994] and Burke [1937]. The order of selection aspects for the presentation I follow is the classification provided by Milner [2012] and Shifman [2014].

The first meme presented belongs to remixed images [see Fig. 5] chosen from *The Internet’s Best Memes on the Mayan Apocalypse* selection on the site abcnews.com. It is a *single annotated image* depicting the character Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) from the movie *Back to the Future II* on a black background [taken out of context]. The texts say: “I know the world wont [sic] end in 2012 because Marty McFly travelled to 2015.” McFly’s remark in a dialogue bubble: “It’s the power of LOVE” [referring to the love story plot in the movie]. This meme circulating on a couple of social media platforms [Pinterest, Facebook] is an ironical criticism towards alarmist discourses setting the date of Apocalypse for the year 2012 [originating probably from the same year]. Expressing a critical anti-apocalyptic stance in comic frame, it belongs to the “chorus of the owls” [For other *annotated image* memes see also Figures 12, 17, and 18.].

The second meme presented here [see Fig. 6], also belonging to the single remixed images, is a so-called *demotivational* [Milner 2012], downloaded from the *me.me* site - a social media platform for creating and sharing memes. Created by anonews.co [as the copyright mark shows], it consists of a digital art picture in black box depicting falling meteors filmed or photoed by a great mass of people holding their smartphones. The picture is framed by the text: “What I imagine everyone will do // at the end of the world” As explained by Milner [2012]: “‘Demotivationals’ remix image and text in a parody of ‘motivational’ posters that frame images in a black box. They add two levels of white text: a primary clause placed in larger font size over a supporting clause” [85], the second line being a punchline - in this case: “at the end of the world.” As the meme suggests, people would act like mindless fools in an apocalyptic situation. It is a critical, parodistic meme, its irony directed not against an [implicitly accepted] apocalyptic discourse but turned towards the irrational human behaviour [seen as characteristic for the digital generation]. As the category itself suggests, the meme is an expression of sarcasm - in Burkean terms [1937], and it might be interpreted as burlesque, caricaturically exaggerating people’s foolishness - thus it may be added to the “chorus of jays.”

The third example, an *image macro* [Fig. 7], that is, a picture with overlaid text - belonging to the category of single remixed images - is a meme widely circulating on numerous social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Pinterest, Facebook, and many other less known sites), primarily in politically oriented networks. The meme, created on eatliver.com [as the watermark shows] by an anonymous author, consists of a still image from *The Walking Dead* TV-series showing zombies, with a white uppercase text, saying "IF THERE'S EVER A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE AND THEY START EATING US // LIBERALS WILL TELL US THAT WE NEED TO BE TOLERANT OF THEIR DIETARY PREFERENCES." While sarcastic indeed, this meme belongs rather to the "rooster chorus" in the tragic frame of apocalyptic discourse, its criticism directed overtly against the liberals: in essence [implicitly accepting a potential/ fictional zombie apocalypse] it points towards the "real life" mass migration situation perceived as apocalyptic scenario [see Hubbes 2018]; which, in the view of the [most probably alt-right] memetic rhetor, is dealt with scandalous and threatening irresponsibility by liberal ideology. It is a perfect example of subversive alter-apocalyptic rhetoric. [For other *image macro* type memes see also Figures 1, 2, 4, also cf. Fig. 14, as well as Figs. 17 and 18]

The next meme is a *shop* [slang short for Photoshop] [see Fig. 8], also belonging to the category of remixed single images. Containing no text, it is a photoshopped image of a grumpy (white Persian) cat head appearing among menacing heavy storm clouds hanging low over a large harbor city. The name of the meme is "Cat Apocalypse," but I found among the several variants the label "CATastrophe" as well. It is circulating on many social media platforms (among others, on Twitter, Imgur, Imgflip, Quora, Pinterest), but it possibly originates from 9GAG [watermark: Via 9GAG.com], where it figures as a 2017 meme template - however, there are unmarked variants already from 2013 elsewhere. Although the meme most often appears without any inscription, its sharers or commenters usually add titles, comments with apocalyptic connotations, and we can find also variants as image macros or annotated images with texts involving apocalyptic connotations [termed 'reaction photoshops' by Shifman 2014]. As a meme template, it is a good example also for *emergent memes* described by Wiggins and Bowers [2014]. The pure, text-less image is a playful ironic meme, allowing an interpretation of allusion to the Second Coming where Christ or God appears in glory among the clouds. In this latter sense, it may be considered a jest, thus, it belongs to the satirical frame of apoca-



lyptic discourse, to the rhetoric of “jays.” [For other memes based on Photoshop techniques see also Figures 2, 6, 11, as well as cf. Figs. 17 and 18.]

Figure 9 is a *graphic text*, a meme genre listed by Milner (2012) among the single remixed images. It consists of a red colored text on a black background: “Dear Everyone, I hate to break it to you, but the world did end. You all exist only in my mind now. So be nice or I’ll send your ass to the cornfield,<sup>13</sup> or make your head explode, or some other shit like that. Sincerely, your new god.” The meme appears on Know Your Meme (and nowhere else), and its origin entry is dated December 21st, 2012 [with totally 243 views]. Composed as a letter, it formulates the thoughts of a fictional 2012 Doomsday believer.<sup>14</sup> The irony lies in the presumed cognitive dissonance of the believer, caused by the awaited and unfulfilled prophecy of the 21 December 2012 apocalyptic event, who as a result of his/her disappointment dismisses the entire world, rather than accept the failure of his/her expectations. The meme is an ironical criticism directed against the so called Mayan Apocalypse preppers, and it is an example of the comic frame of [post-]apocalyptic rhetoric, thus belonging to the “chorus of roosters.”

With the next meme, we pass to the category of stacked or multiple remixed images [Milner 2012]. Figure 10 is an example of *rage comics* [a combination of several *rage face* drawings and texts, usually forming a story]. It consists of four ‘talking heads’ [one bearded stock figure head tripled plus one panicked rage face] turned by pairs towards each other as in dialogue. The text in the dialogue appears as short subtitles under each head: “February: ‘Covid starts bro’ / ‘Nooo, we’re all gonna die’ // July: ‘Covid cases 10M bro’ / ‘Hai la mare’ [Romanian: ‘Let’s go to the seaside’]”. The meme is an alteration of the “What’s Covid, bro?” 9GAG meme template [which again is a modification of earlier templates]. As we can deduct from the last line of dia-

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<sup>13</sup> “Send to the cornfield” is a social media slang expression meaning “to make someone vanish” - a reference to the episode ‘It’s a Good Life’ of the *Twilight Zone* TV-series, where a mutant boy sends with a wish anyone displeasing him to a limbo-like void named The Cornfield. (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cornfield>)

<sup>14</sup> The signature: “Sincerely: your new god” allows interpreting the fictional character as a New Age believer, as many of them linked the date 12.21.2012 of the presumed Mayan Apocalypse to a spiritual leap of humanity to a higher state of being. [In this regard see Hubbes 2021, forthcoming]

logue, it was created in a Romanian language environment (originating from 5th July, from the Facebook account named 'Festivalizat.ro'). It is a parody and at the same time criticism of both the initial panic related to the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic and the latter carelessness and irresponsibility of many Romanians disregarding the official health regulations. Mocking the exaggerated 'apocalyptic alarmism' observed in the media and public opinion alike [expressed by the crying rage face and the lament "we're all gonna die"] this meme belongs to the "owl rhetoric." [For another meme involving *rage faces* see also Fig. 18]

The next meme [Fig. 11] is a wonderful example of *stacked stills* [belonging to the category of multiple remixed images - Milner 2012]. The meme consists of nine movie posters [among them *Cloverfield*, *Aftershock*, *Doomsday Prophecy*, *Category 7*, *War of the Worlds*, *Aftershock*, *Day After Tomorrow* - horror/catastrophe movies] all involving the Statue of Liberty being destroyed, and the inscription: "If the Apocalypse ever happens // stay away from the Statue of Liberty." The meme [created originally on Facebook.com/MeFunnySideUp - as watermark shows] appears on two meme sites [me.me, awwmemes.com]. It is a satirical criticism of the predisposition of Hollywood catastrophe movies to depict cataclysmic or apocalyptic events through or involving the destruction of the Statue of Liberty, a symbol of freedom and an icon of America [ultimately of the Western civilized world]. The criticism attacks both the brutal abuse of the Liberty-symbolism and the fear-mongering apocalyptic propaganda of the movie industry [by piling up the examples of the blockbusters of the later decades], while the irony is a wink towards the fellow netizens. It is an example of rejecting, ridiculing attitude of "jays." [For another *stacked still*-like meme see also Fig. 18]

From among the stable [unaltered] image memes listed by Milner [2012] I present here some examples only briefly. First, a *drawing* [Fig. 12] from memecenter.com, showing a comic picture of a grumpy old Mayan smoking (!), with a dialogue bubble text: "We didn't say anything about the Apocalypse bullshit, idiots..." [it may be considered "owl" rhetoric] [also cf. Fig. 17]; next a *graph* [Fig. 13] - extremely popular on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks - which makes fun of apocalyptic expectations [anarchy, zombies] by contrasting them to reality [home office, no toilet paper]; an 'IRL' meme [offline meme, 'in real life'] called 'Rapture Bombing' [originating from the Tumblr blog "FuckYeahDementia"], showing clothes laid down on a sidewalk arranged in human form, which is a call for pranking: "Rapture Day prank:

on Saturday, May 21, 2011 take some of your unwanted clothes and shoes... // ... and leave sets of them arranged on sidewalks and lawns around town.”, mocking the Premillennialist Rapture<sup>15</sup> believers [“jay rhetoric”]; a *screenshot* meme (Fig. 15) showing, as its title suggests, an “iPhone Weather Forecast: Cloudy With a Chance of Apocalypse” [ADaddyBlog.com - Michael Schmid]: the weather forecast screenshot is modified for Friday, December 21, 2012, to 666 Fahrenheit degrees, and the ‘sunny’ icon to an explosion - this, again is a mocking [“jay”] of the Mayan Apocalypse believers; and finally, an *unannotated photo* (Fig. 16) which shows a photo of a Hungarian language flier [a printed paper left on the street] heralding the collision of two comets as the Sign of the Apocalypse,<sup>16</sup> this last meme being a “rooster” type prophecy.

Of course, these meme types often merge into complex memes. I present here two complex memes bearing the characteristics of multiple types: compound of both photoshop and drawn images. The first is an *annotated remix* meme (Fig. 17). Offering an ironic explanation of why the 21st December 2012 Apocalypse did not happen, it shows a heroic Santa Claus on his reindeer-pulled sleigh rushing towards the threatening comet, with the battle cry: “For the children!” Connecting the two unrelated discourses in a single picture, into a single event makes them ridiculous and renders satirically both aspects into the world of fairy tales. It represents the “rhetoric of jays.” The second one (Fig. 18) is based on *stacked stills* combined with *rage faces*, dialogue bubble texts [as in *annotated images*] and text insertions typical for demotivationals. It consists of four pictures piled over each other vertically, the first three using a [visual] rhetorical technique of crescendo [closing in from an atomic blast in the distance, a burning town, and last a burning house], while the last is a counterpoint [a photo of a quiet sunlit street] with two *rage face* heads [“pokerfaces” as empha-

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<sup>15</sup> “In spring of 2011, Christian evangelist Harold Camping declared May 21st, 2011 as *The Rapture*, the day when those who follow the Christian faith will be taken to live eternally in a place called “heaven”, leaving the rest of the non-believers behind.” [https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/rapture-bombing]

<sup>16</sup> The Hungarian text of the flier: “Két üstökös ütközni fog! A Világ Királyának jele feltűnik majd az égen! Tíz napra való élelem és gyertya legyen otthona-inkban! www.nagyfigyelmeztetes.com ” [English: “Two comets will collide! The Sign of the King of the World will show up in Heavens! We shall have food and candles enough for ten days in our homes!”] As in interesting fact, neither the meme, nor the link given in the flier can be reached [or traced back] at the moment of writing this article.

sized by the red inscriptions below them] “talking”: “Nice day... Huh?” / “We really need to stop biliving [*sic*] in this Apocalypse prophecy stuff.” This “pokerface” serious meme is a criticism towards the apocalyptic alarmism in contemporary popular culture, opposing to it a soothing call to realism, thus can be interpreted as an “owl” rhetorical attitude.

## *Conclusions*

The aim of this paper was to present the preliminary findings of a longer research project concerning the nature of apocalyptic rhetoric and its modes (or frames) in social media, and to present some examples of Apocalypse memes from the point of view of memetic analysis according to the genres and typologies provided by literature.

Apocalypse is not just revelation, but by its nature of revealing - making overt something and propagating it through verbal and visual expression - it is a way of rhetoric. At the same time, apocalyptic rhetoric itself may address its audience in various ways, or modes: as Stephen O’Leary [1994] and Richard Landes [1996, 1998, 2011b] have shown, primarily in two registers: in a tragic frame prophesying doom and viewing human history in a determinist, finite way, its propagators adopting an alarmist attitude, termed “roosters” by Landes, and in a comic frame emphasizing the importance of human agency, based on “worldly” realism, convincing with a soothing argumentation, a stance called in Landes’ terminology as “owls.” Nevertheless, the topic of Apocalypse itself seems to be approached ever often recently by a mocking, deriding attitude, not only religious apocalypticism, but secular ideas of the End-of-the-World mentality so prevalent in contemporary popular culture and mass media - for this stance, I proposed the metaphor of “jays” [covering the attitudes of Burke’s poetic frames of satire, burlesque, and grotesque].

On the other hand, the idea of Apocalypse, the idea of the End of the World, as a “sense of an ending” [Kermode 1957] may be conceived as a meme - as Richard Dawkins [1974] originally interpreted the term “meme” coined by him. Memes however are not only culturally copied and propagating ideas, as many critics of the nascent discipline of cultural evolutionary memetics have shown. In the sense adopted by communication and media scholars, memes are messages, information units circulating on the Internet, and they are a new form of rhetoric adapted to the digital environment. Memes are rapidly reacting to the phenomena and problems raised by the offline reality and media,

and in the era of the Internet, they assure a way of persuasion and entertainment through self-propagating, mutating ideas, forms of visual rhetorical argumentation. Apocalypse is such an issue, thriving in the contemporary media milieu - and memes inspired by the topic are reinforcing subversive criticisms of the current dominant discourse. Apocalyptic memes are elements of both religious and anti-religious argumentation. Religious apocalyptic memes are usually dark, menacing, and pessimistic. Secular apocalyptic memes are usually subversive, ironic, sarcastic, grotesque, humorous - jolly memes of apocalypse. This paper presented examples of apocalypse memes from all the discussed aspects, as expressions of the anxious, tragic, and the comic, ironic-critical, and satirical deriding frames of apocalyptic rhetoric in digital popular culture.

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## Annexes



Fig 1. - John's Vision of God from Revelation 22:13. Apocalyptic meme from makeameme.org, source: <https://makeameme.org/meme/i-am-the-0o63t2>

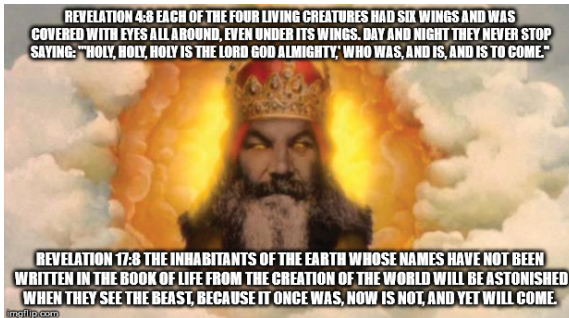


Fig. 2 – Meme constructed as a Vision of God [Theophany] inspired from the Apocalypse. The texts are from John's Revelation 4:8 and 17:8, the image however, is a still from Monty Python's movie *The Holy Grail*. The interplay of the texts and the background image explain the ironic title of the meme: *God the Beast!* Generated on [imgflip.com](https://imgflip.com/), Source: <https://imgflip.com/i/1d749o>





Fig. 3 – Meme representing John’s vision of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, based on Revelation 6:1-8. Digital artwork by Matchack [Michał Matczak] for an RPG game. Starting as a spreadable media, it rapidly grew into an emergent meme, a meme template. Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/matchack/art/Four-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse-272846959>



Fig. 4 - ‘Brexit and Remain Campaign // Latest Prediction’ - meme based on the spreadable media i Fig. 2. Created on memegenerator.net. Source: <https://memegenerator.net/instance/68804022/apocalypse-shade-brex-it-and-remain-campaign-latest-prediction>.

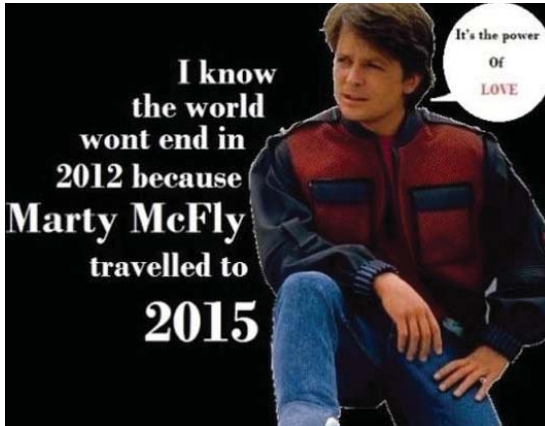


Fig. 5 - Single annotated mixed image. Source: abc.news.com <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/slideshow/funny-memes-end-world-18027284/image-18027494>



Fig. 6 - Demotivational meme. Source: me.me <https://me.me/i/what-i-imagine-everyone-will-do-at-the-end-of-4043795>



Fig. 7 - Image macro. Created by: eatliver.com, source: <https://me.me//if-theres-everazombieapocalypse-and-they-start-eating-us-liberals-will-3499401>



Fig. 8 - [Photo]shop meme. <https://9gag.com/gag/aReQNL5?ref=deeplink>

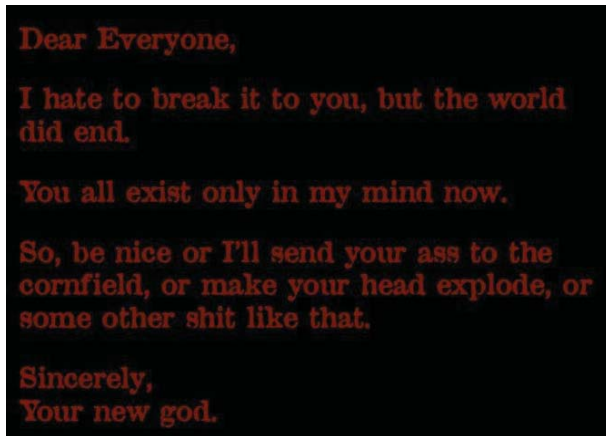
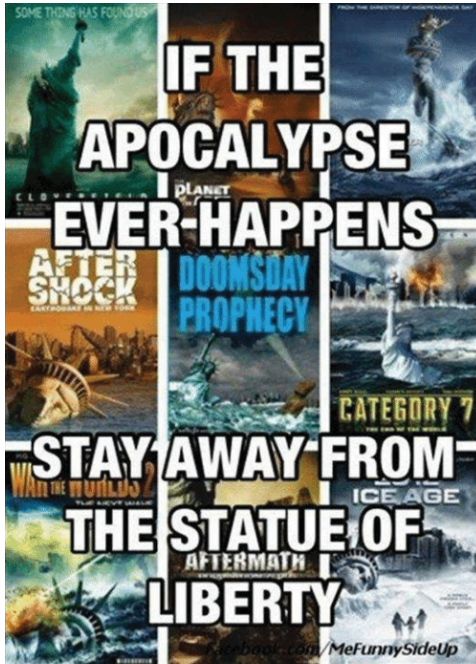


Fig. 9 - Graphic text meme.  
<https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/463769-december-21st-2012>



Fig. 10 - Rage comics meme. Created by: Festivalizat.ro, source:  
[https://m.facebook.com/festivalizat.ro/photos/a.360234271290368/627924641187995/?type=3&source=57&refid=526\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=EH-R](https://m.facebook.com/festivalizat.ro/photos/a.360234271290368/627924641187995/?type=3&source=57&refid=526__tn__=EH-R)



Good point

Fig. 11 - Stacked stills meme. Origin: Facebook.com/MeFunnySideUp, source: <https://me.me/i/something-has-foundus-if-the-apocalypse-lan-ever-happens-doomsory-3946371>

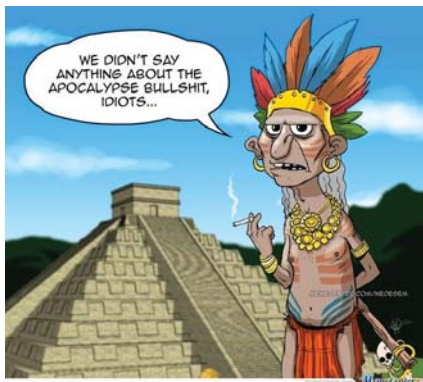


Fig. 12 - Drawing meme. Source: Memecenter.com/Nedesem <https://www.memecenter.com/fun/999013/mayans>

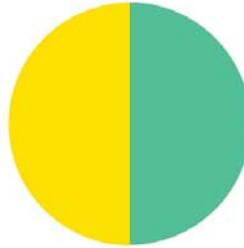
# THE APOCALYPSE

WHAT I EXPECTED



● ANARCHY  
● ZOMBIES

WHAT I GET



● HOME OFFICE  
● NO TOILET PAPER

Fig 13. - Graph meme. Source: <https://imgur.com/r/TrollXFunny/7sw77Ff>



Fig. 14 - 'IRL' meme. Origin: Tumblr blog "FuckYeahDementia",  
Source: Rapture Bombing, KnowYourMeme.com <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/125031-may-21-2011-rapture>



Fig. 15 - Screenshot meme.

Source: ADaddyBlog.com [Michael Schmid], December 19, 2012  
<https://adaddyblog.com/cloudy-with-a-chance-of-apocalypse/>



Fig. 16 - Unannotated photo.

Source: [https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/bfpWjEXNWS0tbe9t3QdCsb\\_JhCnhbxOP1gHezh-8KEar\\_Or4hE6Ku3oVZGku5MLet4H1A=s151](https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/bfpWjEXNWS0tbe9t3QdCsb_JhCnhbxOP1gHezh-8KEar_Or4hE6Ku3oVZGku5MLet4H1A=s151)



For The Children! by nedesem - Meme Center

Fig. 17 - Complex meme. Created by Nedesem on Memecenter.com, Source: awwmemes.com <https://awwmemes.com/i/for-those-who-wonder-why-the-apocalypse-didnt-happen-thanks-ef685cfbb45648a7a35ecb763a805a09>



Fig. 18 - Complex meme. Created on Memecenter.com Source: <https://www.memecenter.com/fun/999567/worlds-end>



# THE NSU-TRIAL AND THE MODERN COURT IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPLEX DEMOCRACIES\*

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I will examine the trial of the German neo-Nazi terror-group, the National Socialist Underground (NSU), in light of the critical theories of modern publicity.

The NSU-trial [begun in May 2013] was placed in the centre of German publicity not only because the case shed light on the everyday bias existing in German society against people with an immigrant background, but it also highlighted the anomalies of German authorities. I turn my attention to the very problematic preparation of the trial that leads to conflicts; on the one hand, between the court and citizens with a Turkish back-

ground, on the other hand, between the court and journalists. I argue that the problematical decisions of the court and the reaction of the society and publicity, cannot be explained only by the single failure of the court. I demonstrate that we can examine this problem against the background of normative theories of democracy. From this point of view, we can argue that an increasing gap resulted between the interpretation that the court shapes its own role in the context of democratic publicity and the real communicative tasks of the court in complex democracies.

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**KEYWORDS:** *NSU, judiciary, publicity, deliberative democracy, normative theories*

\* The study was written with the support by the Research Scholarship of Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg [iASK].

I will examine the trial of the German neo-Nazi terror-group, the National Socialist Underground [NSU] from the point of view of the critical theories of modern publicity. I will show that the NSU-trial [started in May 2013] was placed in the centre of German publicity not only because the case shed light on the everyday bias existing in German society against people with an immigrant background, but it also highlighted the anomalies of German authorities. I turn my attention to the very problematic preparation of the trial that leads to conflicts on the one hand, between the court and citizens with a Turkish background, on the other hand, between the court and journalists. I argue that the problematic decisions of the court and the reaction of the society and publicity cannot be explained only by the single failure of the court. I demonstrate that we can examine this problem from the point of view of normative theories of democracy. From this point of view, we can argue that an *increasing gap* resulted between the interpretation that the court shapes its own role in the context of democratic publicity and the real communicative tasks of the court in complex democracies.

I examine the relationship of the modern judiciary and the contemporary civil publicity from the point of view of one special story: the trial of the German neo-Nazi terror-group, the National Socialist Underground [NSU]. The members of the NSU established a complex neo-Nazi network until the early 2000s, and they committed ten racially motivated murders between 2000 and 2007. Eight of ten victims came from Turkish families, one had a Greek background; they were all shot with the same gun. The members of the NSU committed a bomb attack and one bank robbery as well.

The German authorities had many failures during their investigation of the NSU: the state authorities handled the murders as separate cases; they dismissed the possibility of racist motivations, and attributed the killings to migrant drug cartels; the family members of the victims were often suspected of the murders. Since the general picture articulated in the publicity that these were conflicts of families with a migrant background or the cases of reckonings between immigrant families, the terms “kebab murders” or “döner murders” [Döner-Morde] were frequently used by the press. Maybe it is not necessary to emphasize how derogatory and racist-like expression these were against people who lost their family members by crimes committed by unknown perpetrators.

The fact that an extremist right-wing terrorist network and a little terrorist cell that committed the homicides existed came to

light only in 2011. It happened when two members, who were also responsible for the murders, committed suicide, and Beate Zschäpe, the central person of the later NSU-trial, surrendered on 11 November 2011. After the suicide of the two members, police officers found a video serial made by the members of the terrorists, which provided a “careful documentation” of the preparation of the murders and the functioning of the terrorist group.

The NSU-trial [started in May 2013] was soon placed in the centre of publicity, not only because the case shed light on the everyday bias existing in German society against people with an immigrant background, but it also highlighted the anomalies characteristic of German authorities and institutions; these anomalies are called by the civil society “NSU-Komplex.” I do not deal with every element of the “NSU-Komplex” in my article but I argue that the NSU trial is very interesting from the point of view of the criticism of modern publicity.

This is why I first turn my attention to the preparation of the trial. According to the first criticism against its preparation, it was very problematic that the court of Munich considered only the questions of security when it chose and prepared the venue of the trial. Therefore, the claim of the German and the international media to invite more press-agencies from a wider scope remained disregarded. The court reserved only 50 seats for journalists in a relatively small courtroom. Furthermore, the seats were doled out in a very questionable process. The press agencies should apply for accreditation, but the agencies did not have the same chance to apply for the places. The court had awarded the 50 seats on a “first-come, first-served” basis. The different kinds of press-agencies were informed at different times about the “call for press accreditation,” so none of the representatives of the Turkish or international press [who were especially interested in the result of the trial] won accreditation.

In April 2013, it seemed that there was an irresolvable contradiction between the viewpoint of the Turkish and German publicity that both were afraid that the German authorities manipulated the process and the viewpoint of the court watching over the “undisturbed and secured process.” The court argued that the independence of the jurisdiction would be in danger if the court revised its previous decision and started a new accreditation process under the pressure of the press and the publicity. Many German and Turkish organizations, along with members of the Bundestag and Abdullah Gül, then President of Turkey, articulated their hopes that more journalists would

get seats in the courtroom, or that another redistribution of the seats would be initiated that would allow for the presence of Turkish press as well.

After the constitutional complaint of a Turkish newspaper called "Sabah," The Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe judged ultimately against the Munich court's accreditation process. After that, the beginning of the trial was delayed and 10 seats were allotted to the foreign press, out of which six seats went for the press that represented the place of origin of the victims. The other seats of the courtroom were distributed by the rules of a complicated "lottery system." Another heavy debate resulted from the designation of "quotas" according to which the new distribution was achieved. Televisions, radios, weekly journals could be represented by a large number of journalists in the courtroom but the ca. 350 daily newspapers of the country had to share only eight seats of the room ["Freier Journalist" 2013]. Well-known newspapers, „Zeit," „Stern," „Tagesspiegel" and „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" were not given any seats at the trial at all. Martin Lejeune, an activist, and freelance journalist, after having lost his previous accreditation in the second accreditation process, submitted a constitutional complaint about the violation of „a right to information" of the press due to the small size of the Courtroom and about the decision that video live streaming from the courtroom was not allowed. From our point of view, it is more important that he wrote many popular blog-posts about the problem that the Munich court neglected the point of view of an entire generation that received all information from online websites and that had political discussions only on online platforms. [The complaint of the freelancer journalist was rejected by the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe and the distribution of the press-quotas remained unaltered.]

### ***Democracy and Deliberation***

Thus far I have described the situation in which publicity found itself during the organisation of the NSU trial. In the second part, I argue that the problematic decision of the court and the conflict of the court and the heterogeneous publicity can be analysed from the point of view of normative theories of democracy fruitfully. I believe that from this point of view we can argue that the court was not able to interpret its role and its task in the context of democratic publicity. However, a question remains: from the perspective of which normative theory can

we interpret the connection of the jurisdiction and the democratic publicity in an appropriate way?

First of all, I focus on Jürgen Habermas's deliberative theory. According to Habermas, the legal norms always have a "double character": it expresses not only the legislator's and the citizen's universal claim to autonomy, but it also expresses the values of a very changeable particular society and the pragmatic conditions of the members' coexistence. First of all, Habermas [1996] argues from a very radical democratic point of view: if the members of the whole society did not join [directly or with the help of mediators] to the process of legislation, the whole system of rights could not be perceived by the members as an integrant part of their social life [284-5]. On the other hand, if the addressees of the law are not able to understand themselves as authors of law as well, members of political society will lose their autonomy: they have to live under rules not created by them in a transparent, reasonable process. According to this deliberative idea, the democracy based on the varied, plural discourses of citizens and the system of rights are not able to provide freedom for citizens without each other; therefore, democracy and constitutional state conceptually complement each other [Habermas 1996: 296-7]. However, in the real life of existing democracies there is always a real danger that the "rule of law" becomes a constitutional state without democracy. In this state, our life is coordinated by formal rules, which allow of us personal freedom; but we do not feel the spirit of laws and we have no insight into the process of legislation and enforcement of laws.

In his theoretical works about the relationship of law and democracy Habermas does not deal with the special problem of jurisdiction and democratic deliberation; however, we can argue that the idea of deliberative democracy makes high demands on jurisdiction. From the perspective of the deliberative theory of democracy, the court is one of the most important institutions of the constitutional state, which tries to receive information from as various sources as possible. This means that it is not sufficient if the court carries out its duties only with the careful enforcing of procedural norms and systematic regulations. The court always needs to communicate the causes of its decisions towards the citizens very efficiently, and it always has to take into consideration the changes of publicity. I would even say that it has to build a connection with the broader publicity and detect and measure public opinions. Its judgment could not be influenced by the pressure of public opinion [it would be a kind of "judicial popu-

lism”]) but it has to make its reasons understandable in the context of opinions formed in publicity.

From the perspective of the deliberative theory of democracy, it was a serious problem that selection in the original accreditation process had a symbolic meaning: the court did not regard equally all the possible value perspectives that could have been relevant by the interpretation of the forthcoming decision. Furthermore, the points of view of representatives of the judiciary and the legitimate claim of publicity [in Habermasian sense: the potential “authors” of laws] did not meet, and this led to tensions in a democracy that tried to satisfy the requirements of widespread communication.

### *The Problems of Transnational Publicity*

Apart from the implications of the theory of deliberative democracy, I also consider another problem: the court disregarded the fact that it should have sent its messages and explained its decisions in a publicity in transition. Nancy Fraser in her work *Scales of Justice* (2008) focuses on the tendencies of contemporary publicity and strives for the revision of the well-known critical theories of publicity. She analyses Habermas’ book *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* as the most significant work about civil publicity: it inspired many social scientists to formulate a deep criticism against the publicity of their own society. She detects two kinds of criticism inspired by Jürgen Habermas: the criticism of the legitimacy and the criticism of the efficacy of publicity.

“Legitimacy criticism” seeks to answer the following question: which techniques are used by the elite or the groups that consider themselves as a depositary of civil publicity to exclude other social groups. Also, which social groups have only formal rights [or no rights at all] to be involved in public affairs but do not have any power to shape it. Finally, “legitimacy criticisms” also tries to trace the systematic boundaries that hinder the participation of all relevant stakeholders as free and equal in decision making. In contrast, “efficacy criticism” seeks to answer the question of whether the institutionalized power shows sufficient sensitivity to the activity of publicity formed on the territory of a certain state. And: whether opinions, arguments, judgements of the members of society can be translated into the language of legislation, and whether they can influence the functioning of the executive power. Authors of “efficacy criticism” radicalise Habermas’s thesis about “ten-

dencies of refeudalisation,” that claims that because of tendencies of expansive bureaucratisation and mass communication influenced by political parties there are more and more effective means to neutralize public political opinions (Fraser 2008: 81-2). Nancy Fraser emphasizes that despite the important differences, the two kinds of criticism have a substantial common ground: the addressee of both kinds of criticism is the state power that exercises sovereignty on a given territory: a sovereign which acts in the common interest of the citizens in principle but which does not perform its tasks perfectly. From the perspective of this approach, publicity is produced by the citizens whose residence and social space equal to the terrain of the legitimate power of the state. According to this approach, these citizens define themselves as *demos*: as a political community that is able to articulate its aims as a general will or general interest, and which imposes its requirements on state power in order to transform the general interest to law and enforce it (Fraser 2008: 81-2).

Fraser (2008) argues that this approach of publicity historically presupposes the establishment of more or less unified national states. The ideology of the modern nation-state and the consciousness of belonging to a nation mobilised individuals with varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Prosperous national economies created the conditions of the establishment of a communication infrastructure that networked the domain of the whole centralized state; and which connected isolated “speakers” to be “publicity” in the modern sense. This is why the criticism of publicity can hardly be separated from the “Westphalian” or nation-state framework: the well-known criticisms of publicity based on the idea that the decision has been taken in the discourse of citizens can be directly “translated” into the language of the administrative power (83).

Nancy Fraser (2008) argues against Habermas and his followers, as she states that the public has changed significantly under the influence of multiculturalism and globalisation process in such a way, that it is not possible to establish an adequate critical theory of publicity on the idea of classic “civic publicity” anymore (86). According to Fraser, we can experience in contemporary society that it is not sufficient if the individuals and institutions of the constitutional state transmit their messages to the classic civic publicity; and it is not sufficient to use only the channels of communication of classic bourgeois societies like the printed press in national languages. Furthermore, Fraser argues that the borders of publicity are not identical to the borders of the

society of citizens who define themselves as critical decision-makers. On the one hand, the problems that must be discussed and must be regulated usually “don’t stop at the borders.” And even if most of the problems in principle could be handled locally or with the sources of the territorial state, there is not any immobile citizenship of unchangeable composition that is only interested in the solution of the problems.

### *The Phenomenon of Transnational Terrorism*

Henceforth, we can argue that “terrorism” and “far-right extremism” serve as examples for problems that do not affect only the citizens who live in the state within the borders of which the crime has been committed. Discourses and orientation beyond national borders are important, even if the present researches usually have ended with the conclusion that far-right groups that have become known do not establish an international network, and they often follow radically different aims and usually use different methods.

To mention only the most obvious dividing lines: there are crucial differences in motivation between the Norwegian terrorist Breivik and the NSU. While the former has not got any party-background, it confronts with the Nazi-movements [according to his writings], and it announces a “nationalist crusade,” the latter openly defines itself as a Nazi movement and is clearly related to the Party NDP [the most significant ultranationalist and neo-Nazi Party emerged after 1945]. Similarly, there can be significant ideological differences between the “New-Wave” anti-immigrant movements - that emerged mostly in Western-Northern- and Southern Europe, the members of which broke with the tradition of anti-Semitism during their fight against multiculturalism, - and the movements in Eastern- and Central Europe that follow the far-right symbolism of the period between the two world wars. Beyond the differences in motivation, it is also obvious that the persons or groups that committed the most serious attacks acted more or less separated from each other, either “lonely” or in smaller groups, but not by using the infrastructure of an international far-right terrorist network - in contrast with the former far-left or Islamist terrorists.

Nevertheless, the extremist organizations that originally function isolated and follow different aims can learn from each other because of their very active presence on the internet; therefore, we can suppose that they will commit attacks according to common patterns. Similarly, we cannot exclude that they will establish a broader international network



over time. A good example of their relationship beyond ideological differences is the letter that was written by Breivik in 2012 to Beate Zschäpe in which he called her a “fellow martyr” and he encouraged her to continue their common “conservative revolution” [“*Martyrs*” 2012]. Presumably, a group of phenomena emerges for the solution of which debates and exchange of experiences are needed beyond the borders of national states.

It is also important that in many cases the victims of European far-right terrorists are migrant workers who have family relations in several countries. We would rightfully expect that the citizens of those countries from which a large number of workforce arrives in Western Europe are very interested in these terror cases. From this perspective, we can express criticism not only against the court that prepared the process of the trial but against many actors and constituents of the publicity as well. Concerning the Hungarian case, the Hungarian press did not give sufficient weight to the NSU affair. A more interesting fact is that one of the rare reports on the NSU trial was published in the newspaper “*Népszabadság*” [that was the main left-liberal newspaper in Hungary] with the title “The neo-Nazi terrorist and the German constitutional state was brought before the Cadi” [Márton 2013]. Cadi is the magistrate or judge of a traditional Turkish court or a Sharia court. Maybe it is not necessary to emphasize that it is a very displeasing title, having in mind that the presence of the Turkish press was fully reasonable and legitimate, even according to the norms of the western Constitutional States or democratic publicity.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Despite our criticism that we expressed from the side of democratic publicity, we can also accept the position that protects the court, since it claims that the point of view of the public cannot be the only criterion according to which the court has to consider its tasks during the preparation of the trial [Müller 2013]. We should have in mind the negative example of the trial of the far-left terror group Rote-Armee-Fraktion [RAF] between 1975 and 1977, during which the defendants deprived the trial through their theatrical political declarations and pronouncements and the continual provocation of the judge. It is also an acceptable argument that the witnesses would feel intimidated if live video or voice streaming happened; the live streaming would offend the human dignity of participants [“*Bundestagsdienst*” 2013] and could influence the outcome of the trial. On the other hand, we can ar-

gue that the judge must be aware of the fact that the judicial decision gains its weight only in a transparent process that considers the aspects of publicity as well [Platthaus 2013]. That is why I argued that the Munich Court was not able to meet the expectations of the sensitivity for problems and the transparency that is required by a deliberative democracy. On the other hand, it was also a problem that the court had to communicate the reasons for its decisions not only in the context of the classical civil publicity but in a public in transition. In that situation, it became apparent that the persons who were affected by the case were not identical with the political society of the territorial state.

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# HEIL, TWITTER: SOCIAL MEDIA, ACCELERATIONISM, AND EXTREMISM

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Certain social media platforms, such as Twitter, have created a form of fascism that extends beyond the purview of government and into the private sector. This presentation looks into right-wing Accelerationism in the United States and beyond and how this relates to white supremacy and other forms of fascism and extremism. As Monteiro [2019] claims, the world is working as it supposed to, but it is not working well. He goes on to cite Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey allowing far-right provocateurs such as Donald Trump and Richard Spencer to espouse a hateful ideology that is inconsistent with Twitter's Terms of Use. Steven B. Katz's notion of how technology impacts the language used to talk about fascism will

also be addressed to augment Monteiro's argument. Moreover, as Kenneth Burke addressed fascist rhetoric in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" [1939], the world finds itself in yet another battle against this type of harmful ideology. This presentation, using the work of Monteiro, Burke, Katz, and others, seeks not only to expose these practices but also offers ways we can combat this type of harmful and divisive ideology. Using practices such as education, direct action initiatives including but not limited to trolling and détournement, the presenters intend to engage the audience with the tools they need to recognize and resist fascist tendencies on social media.

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**KEYWORDS:** *accelerationism, détournement, fascism, rhetoric, social media*

## **1. Introduction: Mind the gap!**

*So interesting to see “Progressive” Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world [if they even have a functioning government at all], now loudly.....*

*....and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run. Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how....*

*....it is done. These places need your help badly, you can't leave fast enough. I'm sure that Nancy Pelosi would be very happy to quickly work out free travel arrangements!*

*- A series of Tweets from Donald J. Trump directed at Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. July 14, 2019.*

Twitter, the social media platform founded on March 21, 2006, by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams, ranks in the top three websites with over 535,672,329 visitors each month [Hardwick 2020]. As a result of the immense and divergent peoples regarding to religious, racial, and ethnic distinctions that use this platform – as well as variations in worldviews and Weltanschauung – has prompted Twitter to adopt a specialized set of terms of use to mitigate speech that may be interpreted as hateful. However, despite these rules of conduct, far-right, fascist, and racist ideologies proliferate both covertly and overtly with little to no action on Twitter's part. Why would an organization create a set of definitive guidelines governing “hateful conduct” and not enforce those guidelines when they are violated? This paper, through rhetorical analysis, examines the role of Twitter and its endorsement of the promotion of these hateful ideologies as a by-product of unfettered capitalism run amok. Part of this unfettered capitalism is the theory of Accelerationism. Originally, Accelerationism as a philosophy is embedded in Marxist thought and in the notion that capitalism, as

an intense and volatile force, will eventually run its course and destroy itself without outside interference. However, the philosophy now has several different interpretations and is used by many fringe groups on varying ends of the political spectrum. For this paper, we focus on extreme right-wing Accelerationism.

Since the election of Donald J. Trump in 2016, extreme right-wing and alt-right groups have attached themselves to the concept of Accelerationism as a way to keep and guarantee a white majority in the United States. This attachment can be seen through the analysis of several social media spaces, notably that of Twitter and Instagram. Extreme right-wing groups believe that a collapsing of society as we currently know it will allow for a white majority to prosper. Political, social, and economic unrest, they believe, will usher in a new white ethnostate. As we will later discuss, this infatuation with Accelerationism is already influencing the upcoming presidential election in the United States, with Tuesday, November 3 set as the day Americans will cast their vote to determine if Trump will remain in office. The want and obsession of an American white majority are often rooted in resentment, anxiety, and fear – all complex emotions that fringe groups exploit in their followers. The fear of a non-majority white America is often referred to as majority-minority and is a talking point for many of these fringe groups and organizations. The concept of majority-minority has been gaining traction since 2015, when Richard Alba, a professor at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center, began researching future projected US Census data. Alba speculates that whites might no longer be a majority in the future, and this projection took on a life of its own (Shaw 2020). Although statistics about a non-white majority are speculative, alt-right and fringe groups have fully attached themselves to the cause, using majority-minority as a platform to push their supremacist agendas. Using fear as a rhetorical device in the majority-minority argument, these groups are able to garner followers under the guise of white erasure. This fear of white erasure was represented in the 2017 Unite the Right Rally event, also known as the Charlottesville Riots, which took place in Charlottesville, in the US state of Virginia over the weekend of August 11-12, 2017. During the rally, one of the common phrases heard was that of “They will not replace us!” “They” is, of course, being any non-white individual residing in or wishing to reside in the United States.

The upcoming election is augmenting Accelerationism, as are current events like the ongoing protests that have erupted in the United

States following years of systemic racism and oppression. The deaths of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Breonna Taylor, in Louisville, Kentucky, are two individuals out of many, and the ongoing protests and riots serve as a synecdoche for the much larger issues of inequality that have afflicted the United States since its founding. 2020 seems to be a breaking point, as systemic racism has kept a stronghold on the country. For example, in 2016, two other African American individuals were unfairly killed by police, also sparking outrage. Both Alton B. Sterling and Philando Castile were shot and killed in July 2016. Sterling was shot at close range in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Following news reports, Sterling was thought to be someone else that matched a description of a man wearing a red shirt that was selling CDs outside of a convenience store [Lopez 2016]. Even after Sterling had been fully immobilized on the ground, he was still shot multiple times by police [Lopez 2016]. Philando Castille was killed in front of his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter as he was trying to reach for his license after he was pulled over for a faulty brake light in St. Paul, Minnesota [Croft 2017]. Castille was complying with orders as he told the officer he was armed, but that he was simply reaching for his identification [Croft 2017]. Even after conveying this information to the officer, and fully complying with what the officer was asking for, he was still shot. Sadly, many more examples could be added here. The ones chosen are meant to reflect on and expose a much larger issue. Racist killings are also found outside of the realm of the police, with an example being domestic terrorist Dylann Roof. On June 17, 2015, Roof took the lives of nine African Americans at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, USA. Roof's attack served as a type of tipping point in terms of Accelerationism and white supremacy, promoting some white supremacists to elevate Roof to a "Martyr" type status. Elevating and promoting violence is all part of the current Accelerationist agenda.

As Daniel L. Byman articulates in "Riots, White Supremacy, and Accelerationism," white supremacists are reveling in the current protests, seeing them as a way "to accelerate civil disorder." They view this acceleration of civil disorder as a solid attempt to dismantle the current political system, resulting in extreme polarization on one side or the other [Byman 2020]. Within this schema of intense polarization, no space in the middle exists. This means no room for dialogic exchange or discourse. Byman explicates why this polarization is the ultimate goal – individuals that would usually occupy the middle ground would be forced



to pick a side. Adherents of Accelerationism believe that these more moderate individuals would side with white supremacy if and when they are given the chance. This theory – of Moderates, Centrists, or Libertarians – eventually choosing the side of the extreme right, is discussed at length in the edited collection *A Fair Hearing: The Alt-Right in the Words of Its Members and Leaders*. For example, the book, especially in its first section, “The Alt-Right in Context,” delineates how those affiliated with the alt-right movement talk at length about why they constantly and consistently use memeing as a means of disseminating their ideology. The alt-right believes that the constant exposure to their memes will result in a crossing over into extremist ideological territory. This is also discussed at length in Daniel Friberg’s essay titled *Metapolitics*, found in the last section of *A Fair Hearing*, which explicates the alt-right’s plans for a *Counterrevolution*, as it is titled in the book. In his essay, Friberg poorly draws on the theory of philosopher Alain Badiou, using a simplistic definition of metapolitics as being talk about politics itself. As Friberg delineates the strategy of the alt-right, their approach becomes increasingly discernible. They “engage in metapolitical warfare through memes, podcasts, blogs, books, alternative media outlets, ‘trolling,’ and real-world activism” [Friberg 2018: 179]. As we articulate, these memes, podcasts, and other posts are put “on blast,” meaning they are disseminated persistently and widely.

Why are memes such an invaluable rhetorical device in promoting extremist views on online forums? According to Linda K. Börzsei, a researcher of New Media and Digital Culture at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, memes exist as a “way of communication and genre” [Börzsei 2013: 2], especially among subcultures. Moreover, the means by which memes are created, replicated and transmitted appeals to practitioners of internet culture. Because many members of the alt-right and other emerging far-right movements most likely fit a demographic that came of age with the internet as a common household utility, spreading information, including extremist propaganda through memes is second nature.

As Börzsei [2013] also notes, the means by which memes are created falls under the purview of the so-called “digital native.” She argues that the accessibility and evolution of creative software, most notably Adobe Photoshop, as well as online meme generators, has ushered in a means of creation that is intuitive, easily transmitted, and able to be remixed to adhere to a rapidly changing popular culture [10]. As popular culture evolves rapidly, the ability to quickly adapt to these changes

or to influence cultural shifts becomes paramount. Internet culture notwithstanding, speed has seemingly always been a trademark of fascism, beginning with the Italian Futurists. Additionally, Paul Virilio, describing the Night of Long Knives, alludes to both the speed of the swastika becoming a symbol of oppression and the speed of fascist colonization: “the sinister adventure of Hitler’s ‘Brown Shirts,’ the Sturmabteilung, would precede the German mobilization for total war. Like them, the sans-culottes are dromomaniacs, ‘couriers of terror’” (Virilio and Bratton 2006: 45).

Analysis of several social media platforms indicates that white supremacists are currently engaging with Accelerationism and promoting this content to garner followers for their cause. Benjamin Noys traces the history of Accelerationism and draws several parallels that could be superimposed onto the technological fascist element lurking within social media. Noys begins this lineage with F.T. Marinetti and the Italian Futurists, with their love of speed and technology as the “Ur-form of Accelerationism” (Noys 2013: 14). Noys [2013] notes that the Futurist Manifesto contains several references to speed and technology, especially in Points Eight and Nine where Marinetti writes favorably of the creation of “velocity which is eternal and omnipresent [Point Eight]” and “the importance of military speed” outlined in Point Nine [15]. Marinetti [2007] also imbues us with a sense of aesthetics in his love of speed and technology in Point Four of his manifesto:

We affirm that the beauty of the world has been enriched by a new form of beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car with a hood that glistens with large pipes resembling a serpent with explosive breath...a roaring automobile that seems to ride on grapeshot – that is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace. [13]

Noys [2013] also postulates that Marinetti was quite taken by what he calls the “general anti-humanism” exhibited by Marinetti, in which he declared that “those who are weak and sick [will be] crushed, crumbled, pulverized by the relentless wheels of civilization” [15]. The only saving grace, Noys [2013] notes, is through submitting to the “cruel razors of velocity” [15]. In a similar vein, the philosopher Nick Land [2019] hypothesizes a “dark twin of the net” known as “The Crypt” [557]. In *The Crypt*, Land [2019] promotes an Accelerationist view where “Gibsonian ‘flatlining’ is transmuting from exotic fiction into pop-cult and mass-transit system” [557]. While it is not especially obvious, The

Crypt contains parallels to the “Dark Web,” where cryptocurrency, sale of illegal drugs and weapons, murder for hire, and other apparatuses of the collapse of societal norms are purportedly readily available. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to speculate whether or not far-right extremism has a presence in the Dark Web, it is plausible that the preoccupation with dehumanizing and speed, especially the speed that is afforded by technology, maybe making forays into more mainstream areas of internet culture.

This is not surprising, as the authors of this essay have noted that members of the alt-right are often under forty years old and are skilled in the mores of internet culture and its manipulation. One example of this internet cultural manipulation can be found on platforms such as Instagram, where users like kekistan\_accelerationismcorps post memes like the altered “Doge” meme, with a gun superimposed under the image of the famous Shiba Inu with the words “The First Rule of Hate Crimes is to Have Fun.” Here we see a reference to “Kekistan,” a fictional country created by users on the 4chan board Politically Incorrect, which is abbreviated as /pol/ [Mare 2015]. Another post by user kekistan\_accelerationismcorps honors Duncan Socrates Lemp, a martyr for the Boogaloo movement. Lemp was killed in a police raid in Montgomery County, Maryland, as a SWAT team descended on his home he shared with his parents [Morse 2020]. Lemp was believed to have illegal firearms in his possession [Morse 2020], and he was also a known member of the far-right extremist group Three Percenter militia [Sommer 2020]. “Boogaloo Boys,” or “Boogaloo Bois,” are members of a recent movement that seeks to spark a second American Civil War, with their traction and influence growing following the recent Black Lives Matter marches and protests following the shooting and killing of Breonna Taylor and subsequent killing of George Floyd. Additionally, this paper explores methods to combat hateful ideologies via social media in order to festinate the eradication of hateful ideologies being directed towards intended audiences through direct action, détournement, trolling, and educational initiatives.

In order to understand *how* these hateful ideologies proliferate on social media platforms like Twitter, we must ask the question: *Why* does Twitter allow such atrocities to their interface in the first place? According to their Hateful Conduct Policy, Twitter is unequivocal in their stance on the issue:

Hateful conduct: You may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories.

Hateful imagery and display names: You may not use hateful images or symbols in your profile image or profile header. You also may not use your username, display name, or profile bio to engage in abusive behavior, such as targeted harassment or expressing hate towards a person, group, or protected category. [Twitter 2020]

While the Hateful Conduct Policy is unambiguous in what Twitter considers violations of this policy, enforcement of these policies can be considered opaque. An exemplar of Twitter's opaqueness considering this policy can be determined through the mere existence of Richard Spencer's Twitter account. Spencer is the president of the National Policy Institute (NPI), a far-right organization that exists as an "... independent organization dedicated to the heritage, identity, and future of people of European descent in the United States and around the world" [National Policy Institute 2020]. Spencer's current Twitter profile proudly states he is "Banned in the UK," and his photo background is a collage portraying, what appears to be, the remnants of ancient Greece. Spencer and NPI have receded into relative obscurity since the Charlottesville, Virginia Riots in 2017 and after Spencer allegedly made the following remarks in a video posted to alt-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos's now-defunct Twitter account:

Little fucking kikes. They get ruled by people like me. Little fucking octo-rooms. My ancestors fucking enslaved those little pieces of fucking shit [...] Those pieces of shit get ruled by people like me. They look up and see a face like mine looking down at them" [Spencer 2017; Wilson 2019].

While the original post of this example no longer exists, it and others of its ilk still haunt us digitally. Moreover, with recent events following the death of George Floyd and the current controversy surrounding the removal of Confederate statues and monuments, Spencer's Twitter account seems to be experiencing a small resurgence. Even as Spencer has relegated his recent past Tweets to focus on President Donald J. Trump's perceived failures, his coterie of followers are categorical in

stoking the fires of racial inequality. For example, a Twitter user who uses the handle “Groyper Lee” [ @ComandoGroyper 2020] – named in part after the term *groyper*, which according to Ico Maly, consists of what can best be understood as:

a [new] network of young radical Christian conservative activists, shit-posters and trolls circling around the Twitter account of @thatgroyper. Many of them use ‘Groyper’ in their profile name. They are white nationalist, deeply conservative, Christian new right revolutionaries opposing the US alliance with Israel, LGBTQs and the left in General.” The Groyper network is also known to coordinate targeted harassment against ‘cucks’ and ‘faggots.’ [Maly 2020]

In addition to the racist overtones that such a name can elicit, the imagery many of these accounts appropriately further reinforce these attitudes. For example, the profile image on the Groyper Lee account features the assumed far-right icon Pepe the Frog against a backdrop of the Confederate battle flag. The “Lee ” of Groyper Lee is named after Confederate General Robert E. Lee, a fixture of Confederate and Southern United States history who has reached almost spiritual status among his followers. The larger background photo on this Twitter account features the Confederate battle flag with a rifle superimposed over the flag. Moreover, Groyper Lee’s account features a pinned post from May 30, 2020, that is most likely a reaction to the current racial unrest in the United States that reads, “Remember...The establishment is more than willing to allow you, and your family to be butchered in order to appease niggers” [ @ComandoGroyper 2020]. A tweet from user @Dack Stevon simply reads “Fuck George Floyd” [ @Dack Stevon 2020]. If we are to concede that Twitter’s Hateful Conduct Policy is legitimate on its face, then we must also question how these sentiments and accounts are flourishing within the digital public sphere. Other recent posts include a retweet from Aspen B., username @trueaspenblue, which shows a burning abyss. Accompanying the disturbing photo, the tweet reads, “In celebration of LGBT month, here’s a fantastic picture of LGBT people. Beautiful” [ @trueaspenblue 2020]. The image evokes the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, where Hitler targeted gay men and women alongside others he deemed not part of his Aryan agenda. Again, we see a significant nod to violence without any interference from Twitter’s Hateful Conduct Policy.

Perhaps among the most bizarre appropriations in bigoted symbolic texts is embodied in an unlikely form: that of a frog. Pepe the Frog, the brainchild of internet cartoonist Matt Furie, began in 2005 in Boy's Club cartoons (Grinberg: "Pepe the Frog designated a hate symbol by ADL"). Pepe, a frog crudely rendered in the graphical software application Microsoft Paint, has since morphed beyond his frames within Boy's Club, and along with Richard Spencer, has become among the most recognizable figures of the alt-right. How this mostly inoffensive comic-cum-meme became a symbol of the new face of American fascism and bigotry is, at best, shrouded in mystery. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), citing a profile of Richard Spencer from Mother Jones, offers little clarity:

Spencer says Pepe could also be seen as the reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian frog deity, Kek: "He is basically using the alt-right to unleash chaos and change the world," he says, looking slightly annoyed when I crack a smile. "You might say, 'Wow,' but this is literally how religions arise." [SPLC 2016]

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is quick to point out that not all Pepe memes are bigoted (Grinberg 2016). However, as previously noted by Barthes [1978], the obtuse meaning here may be the result of a "radically violent pleasure," one in which the cultural meaning has been dissipated or lost (9). Further, we may view this loss of meaning as what Barthes has also described as "death" experienced by the author. In the case of Pepe, Furie's association with his irreverent creation has been "distanced" as this particular text has been radically transformed from a casual comic making the rounds of Reddit and 4Chan and thrust into the visual lexicon of far-right ideology (Barthes 1978: 143-145). Furie himself, while probably unaware of the authorial death predetermined for him by Barthes, lamented the transformation of Pepe in an opinion editorial piece in *Time*. Furie traces his distancing from his beloved frog through the advent of internet culture in politics as a means of enticing Millennial voters (Furie 2016, "Pepe the Frog's Creator: I'm Reclaiming Him. He Was Never About Hate"). While it is admirable for Furie to make the promise to reclaim Pepe's ethos as one of "an inside joke and a symbol for feeling good" (Furie 2016), it appears that given the transformation of this once-cherished character that this rebirth is an exercise in futility.

Equally as bizarre are the online communities that celebrate Pepe as a subaltern figure, subject to the hegemony of the liberal conspir-

acy dominating online discourse. This form of cultural production has resulted in a digital third space that is concerned with the product of social relations and is political [Licona 2012: 11]. Among the most popular of third spaces are places known as Kekistan, a portmanteau of the ancient Egyptian god of chaos, Kek [who takes the form of a frog], and an allusion to an overt Orientalist mythos that seeks to marginalize theocratic Islamic nations. In particular, The First Church of Kekistan, formerly Kekistan First, a Facebook page with 2,344 followers as of the time of this writing, has a decidedly *anti-anti-fascist* [ANTIFA] ethos. The posters on the page refer to the 2017 clashes between the alt-right and ANTIFA at the University of California at Berkeley as “the Battle of Berkeley,” and echo parentheses and swastikas are prominently displayed [Facebook: “The First Church of Kekistan”]. While mostly referred to in regard to the Othered in scholarly discourse, the rhetorical strategies exploited on this page are reminiscent of what Adela Licona [2012] situates as a borderland, “a potentially fertile place/space for the reinvention of new subject formations, new cultural formations, and new political formations” [12]. While this particular page has an overt alt-right bent to it, other pages, either out of ignorance or sheer disingenuousness, attempt to distance themselves from white supremacist connotations. However, most of these pages, whether or not unambiguous in their allegiance, still adhere to a supremacist aesthetic.

The Kekistan Flag is a prominent feature of many of the pages devoted to far-right extremist ideology. Even from a cursory inspection, it is clear that the standard shares several traits that are commonly associated with a white supremacist aesthetic. Most notably, the Kekistan flag shares an almost identical layout as German War Ensigns from 1938 to 1945. The Celtic Cross, which comprises a substantial portion of the picture plane is quite evident. Four lily pads, in the upper left field of the Kekistan Flag, are arranged in a manner that suggests the Iron Cross of the German Ensign.

The lack of action on Twitter’s part concerning these overt displays of a decidedly fascist aesthetic is troubling, especially considering how texts that propagate and support such extreme violence are circulated. As Jenny Edbauer Rice [2005] delineates in *Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies*, texts that circulate have the unique ability to condition and transform. The circulation of hate-fueled violent rhetoric on Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms has been left to its own devices, gaining rhetorical force as these tweets are posted, pinned, and re-tweeted.

The onslaught of these tweets reinforce the concept of extreme right-wing Accelerationism, with “Acceleration 2020” becoming a common phrase to dictate what these groups want to happen in the current election year. We, the authors, speculate this propensity towards an Accelerationist outlook seeks to expedite a breakdown in society to the point that overt racism and fascism, up to and including violence, will be a normalized practice in a disintegrated society. Moreover, the sustained social media posting and lack of regulation serve to uphold these sentiments and to spread the ideology of these groups, with users being exposed to content incessantly. As those in the alt-right suggest, this constant exposure to memes serves as a mechanism to garner followers, while also attempting to attract those individuals who might identify as more moderate or libertarian.

The dilemma we witness with Twitter is by no means sui generis, especially in terms of late capitalism. As Steven B. Katz [1992] points out in his seminal article *The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust*, the technical, and by proxy, the *technological*, has long been a vehicle to express unmitigated racism and bigotry. Through Katz’s rhetorical analysis of a Nazi memo describing extermination vans, we the readers are made aware of the relative ease and detachment that the anonymous memo writer demonstrates in arguing for the *acceleration* of eradicating human life. Through the use of technical jargon arguing for a technological shift in the manner that human lives may be ended, the writer successfully reduces these lives to descriptors such as “loads” and “pieces” [Katz 1992: 255–256]. The writer further dehumanizes those who were to meet their fate gassed in a cargo van by describing their excrement and organs as “dirt” and the murderous act as being “processed” [Katz 1992: 255–256]. As Katz [1992] indicates, the memo describes, all too logically, “the necessity for technical improvements to the vans being used in the early Nazi program of exterminating the Jews and other ‘undesirables,’ just months before the Final Solution of gas chambers and death camps was fully operational” [256]. The language of the memo, predicated by reliance upon the technological to remove the proximity of humanity, and by extension *humaneness*, acts as a precursor to how platforms such as Twitter have the capability to dehumanize others.

Considering that while we may not be able to regulate the thoughts that permeate groups or to legislate the convictions individuals may have, we would be remiss not to consider how these ideologies are able to proliferate or how these bigoted sentiments are allowed to ex-



ist carte blanche on social media platforms like Twitter. Mike Monteiro, a self-described “immigrant and designer” who “writes and speaks about design responsibility around the world” [Monteiro quatrième de couverture], offers some insight through a lavish critique of Dorsey and Twitter’s motivations for allowing racially insensitive accounts and content not to only exist, but to flourish. In a self-published treatise on the moral turpitude running roughshod through Silicon Valley, Monteiro – who used to occupy office space across from Dorsey, et al in Twitter’s salad days [Monteiro 2019] – references Dorsey’s deference to *engagement* despite the potential for harm that exists as a corollary to this type of enthrallment [Monteiro 2019: 10, 124, 141, 154]. To put it another way, what Monteiro [2019] describes as the “strip mining of humanity for engagement” [124] can be viewed as simply denigrating people as a means to generate profits for shareholders.

Allowing white supremacists and fascists to promote their agendas at the contravention of the tenets of human decency for Silicon Valley to genuflect at the altar of capitalism is an ethical crisis writ large. While people like Dorsey and venture capitalists are able to generate profits from racism-cum-engagement, for the social media user, the fruits of late capitalism offer an additional layer to the bug/feature diptych. Referencing Alan Moore’s *V for Vendetta*, Mark Fisher [2018] clues us in to the notion of a “postmodern fascism is a disavowed fascism” [165]. Fisher [2018], building from the concept of “refusing identification while pursuing the political program” [165] illustrates the ease with which the postmodern, disavowed fascist may conceal his true agenda and identity. In a topology populated with screens, one can easily engage in racist or fascist ideologies virtually and be completely divorced from those dogmas in the so-called *meatworld*. The aforementioned Groyper Lee, because of the disavowal afforded by the relative obscurity of platforms like Twitter, is free to espouse hateful ideology from his or her smartphone while simultaneously presenting him or herself as someone who does not necessarily harbor a predisposition towards extremist views concerning race or politics. The covertness granted by the ability and willingness to disavow one’s self makes the hate more dangerous. It simultaneously festers beneath the surface of society and circulates openly within internet subcultures, feeding on the carcass of like-mindedness and pushing the carrion through a worldwide system for others to feast upon and digest until the day that covertness can be exuviated like a molted snakeskin.

Given the relative ease that social media platforms give white nationalists and other extremists a venue to propagate their views with near-anonymity and disavowal of their worldviews, what – if anything – can be done to combat this? While many in Silicon Valley can be best described politically as some variant of the American version of *libertarian*—which transcends a broad spectrum ranging from Anarchism to Classical Liberalism—suggesting censorship is a guarantee to elicit great resistance from those who create the platforms on which these hateful ideologies proliferate. Personal freedom, including that which pertains to speech, is a sacred commodity to many who consider themselves *Americanized* libertarians. Censoring “hate speech” or other viewpoints is simply out of the question, especially when it affects engagement (or, what we all know is the bottom line), despite the acknowledgement that there is indeed a problem. Considering that it is unlikely that the creators of these platforms will engage in any meaningful actions to combat what is indeed a growing problem, other users of these platforms are tasked with the concept of engaging those who espouse hateful ideologies, often through direct action. Direct action has long been a means of fighting fascism, such as the anti-fascist efforts of 43 Group, which was formed in March 1946 by Jewish military veterans in Great Britain [Bray 2017]. Perhaps less violent, and more in concert with digital media platforms, methods to combat the spread of these extremist views can be found in the practices of groups such as the now-defunct *Situationists Internationale*. The most widely known of these practices was *détournement*.

*Détournement*, a form of media hijacking, or more explicitly, using the medium against itself, represents an interesting methodology to address such extremism. Through a Communist and bohemian lens, Guy Debord, Ivan Chtcheglov, and Raoul Vaneigem, among others, sought to further the destruction of culture in post-World War II Europe [Wark 2015: 2, 13]. As Brian Gaines [2019] – from an essay published in the edited collection, *Exquisite Corpse: Studio Art-Based Writing in the Academy* – has argued, “the Lettrists and Situationists offer a critique of advanced capitalism as not being able to mask the degradation of society” [107]. Keeping this critique of advanced capitalism – which can be viewed as Accelerationist – in mind, Gaines [2019] posits that such practices can be a viable means to an end in “using tools of oppression against itself” [108]. Because capitalism can be viewed as a tool of oppression – albeit a polycentric one in the case of digital technology and especially in the case of extremist ideologies in the Twit-

terverse – using social media tools qua social media as a means of co-opting messages is possible. Kevin Munger, a Graduate Research Associate of the New York University [NYU] Social Media and Political Participation [SMAPP] lab and PhD candidate in the Department of Politics at NYU, inadvertently demonstrated how détournement can be an effective strategy for combating extremist speech by creating bots – an automated software application to perform certain tasks – to alert accounts when their speech violated the Hateful Conduct Policy. Echoing the sentiments of this essay, Munger [2016] has noted that “Physical distance, anonymity and partisan bubbles online can lead to extremely nasty behavior.” Munger’s [2016] experiment has concluded that while behaviors were modified by a user’s interaction with a bot, there was, however, an increase in what he terms nasty behavior when a bot that represented differently racially was used on an unsuspecting user engaging in the nasty behavior. While this experiment did not quite yield the results Munger had hoped for, it can be viewed as a positive sign for future research to combat extremism online.

Overall, we have provided the beginnings of a framework for addressing how certain social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, have created a form of racism and fascism that extends beyond the purview of government and into the private sector. We also discuss the underpinnings of right-wing Accelerationism in the United States and beyond, showing how these underpinnings relate to and bolster white supremacy and other forms of fascism and extremism. Harkening back to the ideas of Mike Montiero, the world is working as it is supposed to, but it is not working well. As we suggest, détournement is a suitable methodology that can be used to address and combat digital fascism. As Maik Fielitz and Holger Marcks suggest, digital fascism occurs in spaces that warrant freedom of speech, but restrictions are needed [Fielitz and Marcks: 2019]. We address these restrictions, while also suggesting that the medium be placed against itself. While this essay suggests a method for combating extreme and far-right ideologies in digital spaces, Fielitz and Marcks posit that digital fascism is not predicated upon party structure [Fielitz and Marcks: 2019]. We propose that although digital spaces are very much fragmented, amongst these fragments there is an eclectic cohesiveness that is gaining momentum to promote far-right Accelerationism. While at the time of this writing using these social media platforms to combat extremist tendencies that these same platforms seem to engender is a relatively novel idea, new methods of online anti-fascist and anti-racist practices will emerge.

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## IMAGES AND GAPS





# ORBITOR BY MIRCEA CĂRTĂRESCU AND THE CRACK IN SYMMETRY

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Mircea Cărtărescu's three-volume saga, *Orbitor* [2007] is one of the most magnificent novels of contemporary literature. *Orbitor* is the story of a young man named Mircea – the author of the novel has the same name as the novel's protagonist- who is born, lives, and survives in Bucharest.

The author has a very intense, detailed, accumulative, and baroque style. He uses vast and detailed interdisciplinary terminology, covering many branches of science from neurology to Christian theology, from Eastern mysticism to anatomy, from quantum to lepidopterology, from psycho-geography to memory studies.

However, this fantastic density is a representation of a pathological gap and crack

in symmetry where unity, balance, and truth all are shattered. The reason for this pathological gap and crack in symmetry is Communism and the suspicious death/disappearance of Mircea, the Protagonist's twin brother, Victor, when he was a little boy. This inexplicable loss is the cause of the tragic fate and trauma of Mircea the Protagonist, his family, Romania, and even of the whole world. However, with the collapse of the Communist Regime, a miracle happens in 1989 – Romania becomes a free country; Mircea and Victor reunite again. Thus the gap disappears, symmetry is reestablished. In this study, Cărtărescu's *Orbitor* Trilogy will be examined focusing mainly on photography and memory as a descriptive method.

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**KEYWORDS:** *Mind the gap, Mircea Cărtărescu, Orbitor, Memory, Photography*

## 1. Introduction: Mind the gap!

“Mind the gap” is the context of the sixth Argumentor Conference [2020] and as stated in the conference call, this expression is an announcement- still in use- in London Underground since 1968. The phrase belongs to the engineer Peter Lodge and it has been vocalized by the actor Oswald Lawrence. “Mind the gap” means literally “watch out for the space between the train and platform” and eventually this warning can also be a metaphorical expression of any real or existential gap or crack.

Mircea Cărtărescu’s *Orbitor Trilogy* offers rich possibilities in order to sample and discuss the topic. In *Orbitor Trilogy*, Mircea Cărtărescu narrates the story of Mircea – the author of the novel has the same name as the novel’s protagonist – and his family living in Bucharest during Communist Ceaușescu’s regime in Romania through an intense symbolism and iconological richness. The text of the *Trilogy* has a kaleidoscopic structure with many variable focuses. Photography and memory are merely two of them.

On the one hand, through the text, ‘photography’ has been used remarkably as an object of nostalgia, memory record, the potential for metaphysical meaning, and a dramatic element. On the other hand, Cărtărescu writes very unusual definitions about the past and the future. In this context, the act of remembrance becomes an existential struggle on its own for the protagonist of *Orbitor*.

Literary works, within intertextual relations, provide various perspectives of criticism and in this way, they enrich our vision. Literature is a principal component of photography theory and the natural environment of memory studies. Therefore, the *Orbitor* is an exceptional text to discuss and verify the various functions and meanings of photography and memory.

Thus, for example, just as Milan Kundera’s *Unbearable Lightness of Being* [1984] is a theoretical source for Kitsch in the context of cultural studies, furthermore as Haruki Murakami’s *Killing Commendatore* [2018] is a theoretical source for metaphor and idea concepts in the context of philosophy, Mircea Cărtărescu’s *Orbitor* could be also a theoretical source in photography theory and likewise in memory studies.

At this point, it is necessary to underline a methodological problem related to photo theory and memory studies because almost anything can be the subject of photography and memory, and researchers in this field can easily enter the area of other disciplines – especially

Literature and Linguistics. Besides, some points may be overlooked when the translated version of a literary work is read rather than the original text. Being a polyglot can be a practical solution, but it is not always helpful. It is dramatic to study Romanian literature and to read Mircea Cărtărescu's novels without knowing Romanian. However, *Orbitor Trilogy* is a contemporary cultural treasure, despite sometimes intuitively understood by amateur readers of literature.

*Orbitor I* [1996] was published in 2014, *Orbitor II* [2002] was published in 2016 translated to Turkish by Sunia Iliaz Acambet from Romanian, and *Orbitor III* [2007] was published in 2020 translated to Turkish by Hüseyin Tüzün from German. The author's other books published in Turkish include: *Nostalji* [1993] translated from German by Hüseyin Tüzün [2017] and *Travesti* [1994] translated from Romanian by Leila Ünal [2013].

## 2. Literary Matters

Mircea Cărtărescu, one of the most important representatives of postmodern literature, was born in Bucharest in 1956. He is a multi-faceted person, poet, novelist, literary critic, exceptional reader, and academician. His PhD thesis is on Romanian Postmodernism [Borbély 2013]. He is the owner of several international literary awards.

*Orbitor* is the life and survival story of a young man named Mircea – the author of the novel has the same name as the novel's protagonist – and includes some autobiographical elements, testimonies about the history of Romania and memory records of the city of Bucharest. The events cover generally the historical period between the early 1950s and 1989, the year of the collapse of the communist regime in Romania and mainly take place in Bucharest. The protagonist's father is Costel whose family's origins extend to Poland and his mother is Maria whose family's origins extend to Bulgaria.

### 2.1. Accumulation

The style of *Orbitor* represents the aesthetic of accumulation. The trauma of missing one's twin brother, childhood fears, the Oedipus complex, the complex psychology of adolescence, the hospital nightmares/nightmare hospitals, freakiness of Herman, Cedric's New Orleans/voodoo culture and Amsterdam/bordello connections, damnatio memoriae of the painter Desiderio Monsú, Orbitor map of the commu-

nist world of Ion Stănilă, the Communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Securitate and totalitarian repression create cosmic, pathological cracks and gaps in Mircea's life, in his mind, in Bucharest, Romania and in the whole world. The polyphonic choreography of the *Trilogy* has a broad historical and global perspective. The author's detailed depictions and accumulative narratives represent these cracks and gaps in question. As the hypertextual grid intensifies, the textual content begins to spread and deepen.

## 2.2. Butterfly

The meaning of *The Butterfly* is questioned in the novel through the phenomena of a myriad of butterflies, from the giant butterfly in the fairy tale of Mircea the Protagonist's mother's migration story to the form of a butterfly in the cross-section of our spine, from dichotomies such as Man-Woman, Life-Death to the Rorschach test. As stated in the book: "Because, according to the Hellenes, the butterfly is the true symbol of the soul" [Cărtărescu 2020: 545]<sup>1</sup> and it has a symmetrical structure:

The most complicated witchcraft of our mind, symmetry remained the world's most irritating phantasm. He created butterflies everywhere... Every mirror was a butterfly, the edge of the mirror glass was the body of the butterfly, and both worlds – each was a design for the other, because it was not only the size but the most complex structure of the mind – were colorful stretched wings over the World. [Cărtărescu 2020:556]<sup>2</sup>

If we compare, how Roland Barthes's famous book *La Camera Chiara* [*Camera Lucida*] is a mathesis singularis that explores the ontology of photography – by an explication of the author himself [Barthes 1980:10] – likewise, *Orbitor* is also a mathesis singularis, which explores the ontology of the butterfly.

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<sup>1</sup> "Çünkü Hellenler, ruhun gerçek simgesinin kelebekler olduğunu söylemişlerdi" [Cărtărescu 2020:545].

<sup>2</sup> "Zihnimizin en çetrefilli büyücülüğü olan simetri dünyanın en tedirgin edici fantasmaı olarak kaldı. Her yerde kelebekler yarattı...Her ayna bir kelebektı, ayna camının kenarı kelebeğın gövdesıyđı ve her iki dünya da – her biri diğeri için bir tasarımıdı, çünkü ölçü olan yalnızca irilik değıil, zihnın en karmaşık yapıyıdı-dünyanın üzerine rengarenk gerilmiş kanatlarıdı" [Cărtărescu 2020:556].

### 2.3. Chaos

Cărtărescu is the author of chaos. For instance, the following quotation can be read in this context of chaos:

When and why did symmetry break down? ...The future that consists of alienation, estrangement and cooling has divided the first Earth into thousands of pieces... opening ugly wounds on the body of the totality of existence. A night of pus covered every speck, black and despairing schizophrenia. [Cărtărescu 2014: 78]<sup>3</sup>

Despite the chaos, schizophrenia, and the gap between existence and reality in general, there is still an open door:

“... super-symmetries exist. The Cosmos itself is reflected in a super-mind whose basis is memory” [Cărtărescu 2014: 79]<sup>4</sup>.

This super-mind is “Akasha.” This is a theosophical design and transcendental memory mechanism. The time of Akashsa is the present time. Akasha is a kind of parallel universe and database that contains records of all individual and universal information. It is a source of energy and wisdom, power, and potential of meaning. Akasha records illuminate the past and history [Kayserilioğlu 2019:33].

### 2.4. Transgression

*The Trilogy* contains stories of death, perversion, depravity, madness, misery, violence. However, in a transparent transgression environment, none of those situations are named, nor are their definitions pronounced directly. The events are intuitively realized only through related impressions, vibrations, and conjectures. This understanding of evil – without judgment and controversy – directly reveals a jarring traumatic interaction. Mikhail Bakhtin describes that perception orga-

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<sup>3</sup> “Simetri ne zaman ve niye bozuldu?...Yabancılaşma, uzaklaşma ve soğuma olan gelecek, ilk yerküreyi binlerce parçaya böldü, varoluşun bütünlüğünün bedeninde... çirkin yaralar açtı. İrinli bir gece her zerreyi kapladı, siyah ve ümitsiz bir şizofreni” [Cărtărescu 2014: 78]

<sup>4</sup> “...super-simetriler mevcut. Kosmosun kendisi...temeli hafıza olan super bir akılda kendi içinde yansıyor” [Cărtărescu 2014: 79]

nization in the context of Dostoevsky's description of death as follows: "One's self – consciously perceived death does not exist for anyone... death in Dostoevsky's world is always an objective phenomenon for other consciousness...death does not finalize anything because death does not affect self-consciousness – the most important thing in this world" [Bakhtin 2015: 379]. This description can be applied to death as well as other transgressive environments as stated above. Thus, once again, an interactive, compassionate, and of course, polyphonic realist connection occurs from the story of the individual to the drama of the human family.

In general, contemporary transgressive art – including body art, performing art, visual arts, photography – takes its power from Menippea. Hence, in *Orbitor Trilogy*, in the carnivalesque – in a Bakhtinian way-axis of Ștefan cel Mare Street – mainly, transgressive acts and situations are criticized by historical consciousness and humanist approach. In the context of Menippea, Bakhtin states as follows: "The adventures of truth on the Earth take place in the main roads, brothels, thieves' bins, taverns, marketplaces, prisons, orgy rites of secret cults etc." [Bakhtin 2017: 214].

## 2.5. *Mise en abyme*

Within developing events, Mircea the Protagonist becomes a young man and begins to write everything. Hence, *the Orbitor Trilogy* also involves the process of writing. Thus, it can be asserted that *Orbitor* has a textual *mise en abyme* structure in the book-within-book form.

In this regard, Mircea the Protagonist describes himself in the manner of a biblical dialogue/monologue in such a way that: "You reflected me into this unreadable book that Mircea wrote on Mircea and he wrote on Mircea again..." [Cărtărescu 2020: 436]<sup>5</sup>. Besides, as Mircea the Protagonist approaches the end of the book and with the realization of the miracle, he makes the following determination: "you are, at the same time, the whole of your own story" [Cărtărescu 2020: 433]<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> "Mircea'nın Mircea üzerine, onun da yine Mircea üzerine yazdığı bu okunmaz kitabın içine yansıtın beni..." [Cărtărescu 2020: 436].

<sup>6</sup> Sen, aynı zamanda kendi öykünün bütünüsün" [Cărtărescu 2020: 433].

### 3. Memory Matters

#### 3.1. Remembering the future

Do not forget to record and write what is happening! These actions are the eternal solution formula to get rid of the danger and harm of cracks and gaps, individually and socially. In line with his fantastic realism and demiurgic voyeurism, Cărtărescu creates surreal and theological discourses on historical events or minor details of everyday life. Hence he occasionally conceptualizes the phenomenon of oxymoron in his texts. For instance, in this sense, the following question is asked in the novel: "The memory of the past exists in all of us, but how many of us remember the future?" [Cărtărescu 2014: 82]<sup>7</sup>

Remembering the past is a normal situation, but remembering the future is a paradoxical expression, and when it is first considered, it eventually looks like an exceptional situation. However, it is still possible to remember the future; to exemplify, Ernst Bloch has developed a dialectical process accordingly and he can guide us:

Primarily, everybody lives in the future, because they strive, past things only come later, and as yet genuine present is almost never there at all. The future dimension contains what is feared or what is hoped for; as regards human intention, that is, when it is not thwarted, it contains only what is hoped for. Function and content of hope are experienced continuously and in times of rising societies, societies they have been continuously they have been continuously activated and extended. [Bloch 1996: 4]

This is a particular state of consciousness and we need to have two features if we want to remember the future: I- Utopian mind, II. Not-yet conscious: "The Not-Yet-Conscious is thus solely the pre-conscious of what is to come, the psychological birthplace of the New" [Bloch 1996: 116].

Vincent Geoghegan, one of the theorists elaborating on this subject and studying Bloch, makes the following statement in his article titled "Remembering the Future":

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<sup>7</sup> "Geçmişin hafızası hepimizde mevcut fakat aramızdan kaçımız geleceği hatırlayabiliyoruz?" [Cărtărescu 2014 : 82].

My past memories will have a constitutive role in the forming of my present and future perceptions. ...I enter the future with a body of assumptions and preoccupations located in memory. The infinite range of possible futures is winnowed down to my possible futures through this interactive process. In this sense I can be said to be 'remembering the future. [Geoghegan 1990: 54]

### 3.2. Nostalgia

However, there is a delicate point here. Totalitarian mentality and its anti-humanist consequences have turned Marxist utopia into a dystopia. The same mentality builds its future design on the vandalistic destruction of the past, the rejection of historical facts, and the manipulation of memory records. Thus, history always betrays geography. Therefore, the future will acquire a new and catastrophic character and 'now' becomes an environment of chaos.

Hence, "The past is everything, the future is nothing, time has no other meaning" [Cărtărescu 2014: 77]<sup>8</sup>. This slogan-expression is repeated several times throughout the pages of *The Orbitor Trilogy*. This situation is truly a complex one. On the one hand, personal and collective memory records are generally in danger. On the other hand, nostalgic sensitivities can be addictive. Besides, as underlined in the novel:

Memory is the time of the timeless kingdom. Love is the space of placeless space. They are cores of our existence, contrasting but also so similar, united over its great symmetry and cancelling it in the form of a single great emotion, nostalgia. [Cărtărescu 2014: 82]<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the contradictory nature of nostalgia might be defined once again: "Passion of absence is nostalgia ... After all, nothing is the true object of nostalgia" [Givone 1995: 100].

Again, in this context, the importance of memory is strongly expressed: "My memory is the metamorphosis of my life, the mature in-

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<sup>8</sup> " Geçmiş herşeydir, gelecek hiçbir şeydir, zamanın başka anlamı yoktur" [Cărtărescu, 2014: 77].

<sup>9</sup> "Hafıza, zamanı olmayan krallığın zamanı. Aşk mekânsız alanın mekânı.Var oluşumuzun büyük simetrisi üzerinde üzerinde birleşmiş ve onu tek bir büyük duygu şeklinde, nostalji şeklinde iptal eden, zıt fakat aynı zamanda o kadar ben-zeyen çekirdekleri" [Cărtărescu 2014: 82].



sect, whose larva is my life” [Cărtărescu 2014: 91]<sup>10</sup>. In addition to this, it is an individual expression, but its style is poetic like an archaic epigraph. Hence, the *Orbitor Trilogy* is an epic/biblical hypertext based on the Pathosformel design of “Passion and Resurrection” theme.

#### 4. Photography Matters

##### 4.1. Bucharest

Cărtărescu, as an artist, lives a passionate romance with Bucharest throughout his works. There is also a vital link between Mircea the Protagonist himself and the city of Bucharest: “The city can be my artificial body, I can give my name to her...” [Cărtărescu 2014: 283]<sup>11</sup>.

This kind of romance, the existential identification of the artist with his/her city is an aesthetic phenomenon. To illustrate in the context of photography, Eugène Atget systematically took 10,000 photographs of the city of Paris and its surroundings in detail between 1895 and 1927 [Krauss 1996: 43], from monuments to showcases, from parks to interiors, from streets to a barrel organist and similar street workers, he has passionately documented his beloved Paris. Atget is “un imagier” as described by his friend André Calmettes [Newhall 1984: 267]. Cărtărescu is also *un imagier*.

Thus, the city of Bucharest is a very important chronotope for Cărtărescu’s oeuvre and naturally for *Orbitor*. “The artistic integrity of a literary work associated with an immediate reality is defined by a chronotope” [Bakhtin 2017:296]. Thus, as expressed in the novel: “Now when I write these lines... I stand up from my desk and watch Bucharest, my city, my *alter ego*” [Cărtărescu 2014: 128]<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, Bucharest is a particular spectacle “I am the voyeur of my childhood and adolescence” [Cărtărescu 2014: 129].<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Hafızam hayatımın metamorfozudur, larvası benim hayatım olan olgun böcektir” [Cărtărescu 2014: 91].

<sup>11</sup> “...şehir benim yapay bedenim olabilir, kendi adımları ona verebilirim...” [Cărtărescu 2014: 283].

<sup>12</sup> “Şimdi bu cümleleri yazarken...Ayağa kalkıp çalışma masamdan Bükreş’li, şehrimi, alter ego’mu seyrediyorum” [Cărtărescu 2014: 128].

<sup>13</sup> “...çocukluğumun ve ergenlik çağımın voyeur’iyim” [Cărtărescu 2014: 129].

## 4.2. Family Photo

Vernacular photographs are candid memory records. They are generally taken with a simple aesthetic approach and snapshot technique. People posing in these photographs are categorical representatives of both themselves and the human family. Regardless of whom it belongs to, who has taken it, these photographs are the cause of metaphysical curiosity caused by the past and random “here and now” effect [Benjamin 2019: 94]. They are loaded by the flow of time with psychological surprises, cultural signs, punctum points, an inspiring naturalness, and spontaneity for conceptual creativity. Old vernacular photos are particular artefacts, occasionally they also obtain objet-trouvé feature.

Briefly, vernacular photographs have the potential of ambiguous but intense dramatic meaning. In this sense, we read a Benjaminian interpretation of photos: “When we look at photos, the sadness, hopeless imprisonment of that world is revealed to us” [Cărtărescu 2016:591]<sup>14</sup>.

The family photo with Maria, Costel, and their identical twin sons, Mircea and Victor is an important sign. This vernacular photo is a basic dramatic dimension of the text. The mother holds Victor, the father holds Mircea, in their arms. Or, is Victor in fact on his father’s lap, Mircea on his mother’s lap? The photo has a symmetrical composition. However, after Victor’s disappearance, this image becomes fantastically torn in two pieces in a way.

As a complete photo, this image represents perfect symmetry; as an image torn in two pieces, it represents the crack in symmetry. Thus, *Orbitor* is indeed the story of the reuniting of two torn parts of a vernacular family photo. One day, Mircea the Protagonist finds the torn half of that family photo in his mother’s handbag [Cărtărescu 2014: 26]. This is only half of the photo! At this point, there is also an ambiguity because his brother Victor is kidnapped by a prostitute named Coca in 1957; his parents cannot find the child anywhere. However, Costel and Maria, “crazy with despair,” invent another missing story “to survive.” Accordingly, the twins got pneumonia and Victor died in the hospital. It even has a representative tomb. Over time, all this is forgotten, or at least it is not mentioned again [Cărtărescu, 2016: 566].

However, Mircea the Protagonist intuitively always feels the absence of his lost brother in a traumatic way, because, in a sense, he has

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<sup>14</sup> “Fotoğraflara her baktığımızda, o dünyanın hüznü, ümitsiz hapsi bize ifşa ediyor” [Cărtărescu 201:591].

lost his mirror and reflection and this gap causes suffering; from time to time he perceives reality as if he is with his twin in a parallel universe as follows: "There is Victor in every mirror, my dark brother who will show himself in the future" [Cărtărescu 2020: 484]<sup>15</sup>.

Therefore, Coca takes Victor to Amsterdam. The stolen child grows up in Graacht in a brothel, with prostitutes and their customers, in extreme perversion, violence, misery, evil, crime, and madness. However, he has an extraordinary characteristic; he does not suffer any physical pain. Then he enrolls in the Legion and fights as a legionnaire in Algeria, Lebanon, Zaire, and in various parts of the world. These war environments are likewise environments of evil. However, Victor, since childhood, carefully keeps an artefact that's the other half of the above-mentioned photo showing Mother and Victor together. Then, realizing that he is Romanian, Victor leaves Legion and returns to Bucharest in 1987. On the one hand, he is looking for his family; on the other hand, he works in the child pornography industry. The situation is still uncertain and suspicious. Are Amsterdam and the Legion story desire or dream of resurrection? Meta credible/Meta incredible!

Whatever the case, in 1989, during the Romanian Revolution, Victor reappears: "Victor looked at me with his face wet with tears. Thirty-three years had passed. He slowly opened the buttons of his jacket and took his talisman out of his right chest pocket: it was a wrinkled, stained, black and white photograph, from the depths of an impossible childhood" [Cărtărescu, 2020:558]<sup>16</sup>.

Miracles in the sense of personal and social events and radical changes – although it seems generally impossible – save human spirit even if it is designed. However, this time the miracle happens. This time, the miracle happens in *A.D.1989* when the communist regime ends in Romania. Resurrection becomes real. Mircea and Victor reunite by the metaphysical environment of their own twins' infancy photo. Thus, the balance of the universe is restored, the gap disappears, and symmetry is reestablished because the torn pieces of the family photo are finally reunited.

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<sup>15</sup> "Her aynada Victor var, ilerde kendini gösterecek olan karanlık erkek kardeşim" [Cărtărescu, 2020:484].

<sup>16</sup> "Victor gözyaşlarıyla ıslanmış yüzüyle baktı bana. Otuz üç yıl geçmişti aradan. Ceketinin düğmelerini yavaş yavaş açtı, sağ göğüs cebinden tısmımını çıkardı: İmkânsız bir çocukluğun derinliklerinden çıkan buruşuk, lekeli, siyah-beyaz fotoğrafı bu" [Cărtărescu, 2020: 558].

All the heroes of *The Trilogy and Humanity* contemplate the sacred unity and the happiness of this *holy family* – Maria, Costel, Mircea, Victor–in a galactic carnival environment. This scene is described as follows: “That very old photograph suddenly flashed... it removed the time, the space and the structure of causality, revealing only consciousness and only light... with blinding” [Cărtărescu 2020: 560]<sup>17</sup>. It is a contemplative light with a capacity to create an ecstasy! In this point, photography becomes a divine light source beyond being an artifact created by light.

In general, the name of the photographic activity has been photography since 1839. Sir John Herschel [1792-1871] coined this term. Etymologically, is formed by the combination of the words, φῶς [phōs], “light” and γραφή [graphé], “drawing.” Moreover, φῶς [phōs] means “lux” in Latin.

Light is not itself a luminous substance: it is the give and distance of the world, the absolute velocity of the appearing of bodies...It is thus that is lux, the light that used to be called “absolute” or “primary”: the radiant source distinguished from lumen, the secondary or incidental light...lux is folded, modulated and diffused in lumen ... “Photography” means “in-scription of light” and the light here is lux. [Nancy 2006: 171].

#### 4.3. *Photographical Intuition*

In this regard, *The Orbitor* also includes stories of little girls, victims of poverty, and perversion. One of these girls is Anca. She has beautiful blue eyes, and these eyes will remain unchanged for a lifetime like a series of photos. [Cărtărescu 2014: 110]. This metaphor indicates an ontological function of photography: “Photography is a one kind of mummification process [Bazin 1966: 30].

Another little girl is Silvia. One evening, Mircea the Protagonist sees her like a projection image reflected on the wall or a transparent double-exposure returning home with one of the people who exploited this girl. However, he also states that he was astonished in a photograph at that moment [Cărtărescu 2014: 125]. Simultaneously, Silvia is both alive and present, together with her own ghost. It is a haunting

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<sup>17</sup> “...o çok eski fotoğraf aniden yıkıcı bir güçle parladı,...zaman, mekân ve nedenselliğin yapısını ortadan kaldırdı...yalnızca bilinci ve yalnızca ışığı ortaya çıkardı...göz kamaştırarak...” [Cărtărescu 2020: 560].

vision in which the photographic look is conceptualized in the way of Ralph Eugene Meatyard's artistic style.

Meatyard's models are family members – often wearing grotesque masks – and people in the immediate neighborhood. His studio is the ordinary corners, wall bottoms, and gardens of his neighborhood. He uses simple shooting angles, and occasionally shows some experimental performances with techniques such as low shutter speeds, motion blur, and multiple exposures [Anonymous 2017: 1]. After all, it creates an unreal, suspicious, and paranoid atmosphere in Kentucky. The haunting photography genre thus emerges in the language of photography.

#### *4.4. Eidos of Death*

One day, Mircea goes to the hospital for a week, leaving his home for the first time. He likens his anxiety and fear to the feeling of chills he feels when looking at analog vernacular photographs. According to him, emotions, excitements, sounds, and odors were also exposed to the light-sensitive silver nitrate layer together with the images [Cărtărescu 2014: 321]. Photography records a reality and begins to represent and reflect the metaphysical equivalent of the same reality over time. This process opens a fantastic time corridor. In the above-mentioned group photo, people are alive, but they are also living dead: "Photography is...a live image of something dead" [Barthes 1980: 80].

#### *4.5. Camera Lucida*

Another time he watches two little girls – Carla and Bambina – while they are all again in the hospital. However, Mircea the Protagonist is out of the violent naturalist reality of the scene. To elaborate on the situation, he likens his observation on the scene and his position as a spectator to "producing images through camera Lucida" [Cărtărescu 2014: 332]. Camera Lucida is an optical-prismatic drawing tool, patented by William Hyde Wollaston in 1806 in the archeological time of photography. The person who uses this tool both observes and draws the picture without taking his eyes off the subject.

## 5. Epilog

Literature is an unlimited and timeless self-verification environment for academics and intellectuals particularly in chaotic periods of history. At the same time, literature is one of the primary sources of inspiration for artistic creativity in many fields.

The work of Postmodern Art is difficult because postmodern artists and writers look for *New*, new comments, new expressions, new variations, and new combinations in the endless meanders of anachronism. Finding, creating, and representing the *New* requires a lot of energy and courage. Naturally, this “*New*” is not a new indexed future. It is valid for all time modes. It is stated one more time as follows: “The real universe opens between your hands, between the covers of this book” [Cărtărescu 2020: 540]<sup>18</sup>.

Reading *the Orbitor Trilogy* is an interactive adventure because we read just a book, but throughout the novel, the book is conceptualized as a *book*. Then...Ave Cărtărescu omnes sophistae te salutant!

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<sup>18</sup> “Gerçek evren, ellerinin arasında, bu kitabın kapakları arasında açılır” [Cărtărescu 2020: 540].

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Note: The translations in the text were made by me.





[T]HE FACE OF EVERY ONE / THAT PASSES BY ME IS  
A MYSTERY”

METROPOLITAN ATMOSPHERE IN WORDSWORTH'S  
*RESIDENCE IN LONDON* AND BAUDELAIRE'S  
*PARISIAN SCENES*

**DÁNIEL PUSKÁS**

National Library of Foreign Literature and Music Collection,  
Hungary

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In my paper, I would like to compare Wordsworth's "Residence in London" from his autobiographical work *The Prelude* [Book VII] with Baudelaire's cycle entitled "Parisian Scenes" from *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Wordsworth in this book of *The Prelude* deals with the metropolitan discourse, which is contrasted with his poems written about nature and different kinds of landscapes [e.g. Snowdon and the Alps]. In Baudelaire's poetry the shifting of Paris, as it turned from the medieval Paris into the modern one, is a crucial issue, mostly in his cycle called "Parisian Scenes," where the speaker of

the poems is cruising in the city, and his social empathy rewrites Villon's vagabond poetry.

It is a common feature in these texts that both Wordsworth and Baudelaire wrote about people who have the feeling of being an alien in the society [e. g. the homeless, the poor, the blind, immigrants from the colonies, the alcoholic, etc.]. I would like to analyse how Wordsworth replaced the natural scenes with the metropolitan ones and how this change of theme connects to the discourse of sublime, and I compare it with the Baudelairean metropolitan discourse.

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**KEYWORDS:** *Wordsworth, Baudelaire, modernism, homelessness*

## 1. Introduction

In my paper, I would like to analyse how the Book VII in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*<sup>1</sup> focused on the beggar scene at the end of this book (VII. 589–623) [cf. Wordsworth 2014c: 274]. This book of *The Prelude* is called *Residence in London* and, with its metropolitan atmosphere<sup>2</sup>, is in contrast with his poems written about nature and different kinds of landscapes [e. g. Snowdon and the Alps].

It is worth mentioning that the appearance of the metropolitan discourse in Wordsworth's poetry, in some sense, preceded modern literature where the city was an important issue. There are three major versions of *The Prelude*: the two-book version from 1799, the thirteen-book version from 1805, and the fourteen-book version from 1850, which were published shortly after his death, but according to Newlyn's (2003) opinion "recent critical orthodoxy" prefers the text published in 1805 [57].<sup>3</sup>

For Wordsworth's speaker the modern industrial London could not be a cosy place, he is a traveller who came from a rural area and the values he estimates are based on nature where his home is, unlike Baudelaire's speaker who is not a temporary guest in this world but a permanent city dweller [Ahearn 1971: 78]. Wordsworth's speaker misses cohesion in the metropolitan community and for him, it is hard to realise "how men lived / Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still / Strangers, and knowing not each other's names." VII. 118–120 [Wordsworth 2014c: 262; Ahearn 1971: 81], because as he previously mentioned in Book IV: "The face of every neighbour whom I met / Was as a volume to me." IV. 58–59 [Wordsworth 2014c: 212]. This section could be compared with the quote I used in the title of my paper, which lines were written about his experience of being in the crowd: "the face of every one / That passes by me is a mystery." VII. 597–598 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274], so for him the city has a totally different system of symbols that he cannot decode properly with the knowledge of the symbols used in the rural area.

Storch [1970] said that in the metropolis Wordsworth's speaker came across to two of his central poetical insights, which insights are

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<sup>1</sup> For the opening quote cf. VII. 597–598 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274].

<sup>2</sup> There are two books as well in *The Prelude* dedicated to France [Book IX and X in the text published in 1805], but their main issue is the French Revolution and its political and social context, so I will not deal with them in my analysis.

<sup>3</sup> In my analysis I also use the version from 1805.

the world as a spectacle and nature's effect on the social sense [114], but as Ahearn [1971] claimed that his stay in London remained "a stopping place in the poet's journey back to nature" [79]. In London, Wordsworth's speaker encounters the tension between the society and the individual, and for him, the city is an unfamiliar place where the people put themselves to the constant risk and temptation of becoming morally corrupt [Ahearn 1971: 78]. The commercial activity rules over the city that is full of large advertisements and artificial values are disguised as real ones [Storch 1970: 115].

Peter Larkin [2014] said about his speaker that he was a "pre-flaneur" [56].<sup>4</sup> This character preceded Baudelaire's iconic poet figure that is constantly cruising in the city and looking for something to write about. Wordsworth's speaker copes with the feeling of being benumbed by the constant flow of stimuli in the crowd:

And first the look and aspect of the place,  
The broad high-way appearance, as it strikes  
On Strangers of all ages, the quick dance  
Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din,  
The endless stream of Men, and moving things,  
From hour to hour the illimitable walk  
Still among Streets with clouds and sky above

VII. 154–160 [Wordsworth 2014c: 263]

The speaker mentions "The endless stream of Men" and "the illimitable walk" which refer to the experience of the infinite. Jarvis [2007] claims that in the last two lines of the quoted section "the illimitable walk" suggests that "one can never in truth *arrive* anywhere, and thus that one can never, in fact, *go* anywhere either" [italics in the original] [140]. He gives two interpretations of the phrase "Still among Streets": the first one is that it does not matter how far we go in the city, we are

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<sup>4</sup> Bailey also mentioned the similarities with the Baudelairean *flâneur* in *The Prelude*, as an illustration, he quoted the following section: "While thus I wandered, step by step led on / It chanced a sudden turning of the road / Presented to my view an uncouth shape / So near, that slipping back into shade / Of thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, / Myself unseen." IV, 401–405 [Wordsworth 2014c: 220], where the speaker observed his "poetic prey," although this scene happened in a rural atmosphere [cf. Bailey 2012: 159].

still walking among streets, so as the second one suggests although we go far, we are still, so we are motionless [Jarvis 2007: 140].

Wordsworth died seven years before the iconic year [1857] when Baudelaire's *The Flowers of the Evil* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* were published, and both of their authors were put on trial by the censorship; furthermore, this year is considered as the beginning of modern literature. After his trial, Baudelaire changed the focus of his poetry collection from theological issues to social ones, and in 1861 he published a new edition of his book with a new section called *Parisian Scenes* [Chambers 2005: 101]. In Baudelaire's poetry, the shift which Paris underwent, as it turned from medieval Paris into the modern one, is a crucial issue, mostly in his cycle called *Parisian Scenes*, where the speaker is cruising in the city, and his social empathy rewrites Villon's vagabond poetry. Even in impressionist paintings, we could see how important the cityscape became, and how their authors' social empathy was revealed when social problems could become an object of the paintings. Examples of these topics are alcoholism and the cult of absinthe [e.g., Édouard Manet *The Absinthe Drinker* [1859] and Edgar Degas *Absinthe* [1875–1876]], or the immigrants' arrival from the colonies [e.g., Delacroix *Women of Algiers in their Harem* [1834] and Renoir *A Woman of Algiers* [1870]].

In Baudelaire's cycle called *Parisian Scenes*, he protests against the reforms wrought upon by Napoleon III and his prefect Baron Haussmann in order to create the modern Paris, but for Baudelaire, the new Paris will be the space of displacement and it will be linked with the fading medieval Paris [Samuels 2011: 15]: "The old Paris is gone [the form the city takes / More quickly shifts, alas, than does the mortal heart]" [Baudelaire 1998d: 175].<sup>5</sup> James McGowan [1998] says that there is a tension between the classical poetic forms Baudelaire used and the romantic subject of the poems he wrote about, but in the case of imagery and subject he was many times shocking and provocative, which was a modern gesture, but most of the time he used classical form [liv].<sup>6</sup> Baudelaire used the classical metrical structure [e.g., sonnet, eclogue] for his own purposes by adding a radically new subject but he left the structure of rhymes and rhythm untouched, which was a hidden way to

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<sup>5</sup> When I quote from Baudelaire's poems I use James McGowan's translations.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, in the English translation we cannot see this tension properly because in most cases he dropped rhymes in order to avoid distorting meaning, imagery, or meaningful syntax [McGowan 1998: lv].

criticise the actual French regime [Samuels 2011: 14–15]. In his poems, Baudelaire creates a mythical Paris which exists side by side the real one: “City of swarming, city full of dreams / Where ghosts in daylight tug the stroller’s sleeve! / Mysteries everywhere run like the sap / That fills this great colossus’ conduits” [Baudelaire 1998c: 177]. In this world, the modern emptied and burnt-out men are cruising in the streets like zombies, just like in his poem *Danse macabre* where there is a ball where everyone is dead. David Ashford, on the basis of Freudian thoughts, wrote in his monography *London Underground* that modern people have the feeling that “we haunt rather than inhabit the modern city” [Ashford 2008].<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Wordsworth’s London and Baudelaire’s Paris

At the beginning of the section with the beggar of London, Wordsworth describes the city in a way that reminds us of the blurred sketches of impressionist paintings:

O Friend! one feeling was there which belonged  
To this great City by exclusive right:  
How often in the overflowing Streets  
Have I gone forwards with the Crowd and said  
Unto myself, the face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery.

VII. 593–598 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274]

The narrator describes the city as a constantly changing mass, just like many modernist poets did when they wrote about cities as the place of endless stimuli, where people melted into a mass. In Book VII the speaker says that the inhabitants of the city: “Living amid the same perpetual flow / Of trivial objects, melted and reduced / To one identity, by differences / That have no law, no meaning, and no end” VII. 703–705 [Wordsworth 2014c: 276]. These lines could remind us of the two lines of Pound’s (2007) famous imagist poem called *In a Station of the Metro*: “The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough.” [66], but the ending line of the quoted part written

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<sup>7</sup> The cited sentence is in the unit signed with <4>. It is worth mentioning that the noun form of the verb *haunt* means a place frequently visited.

by Wordsworth could be compared to the ending lines of the description of the Alps from the previous book:

[The enumerated elements] Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

VI. 568–572 [Wordsworth 2014c: 254]

In this part, the speaker used nature as the symbol of the divine, the finite refers to the infinite as Ulmer [2006] pointed out that this kind of symbolism takes after the Christian apologetics where the power of God reveals itself in a geographical object [263]. Ulmer [2006] also claims that the last line of the quoted section is a paraphrase of a line taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost* [V. 164–165]<sup>8</sup> that is already a biblical quote [cf. 263]. Wordsworth also used blank verse in his work, *The Prelude*, and iambic rhythm is closer to the rhythm of everyday language.

Burke [1998] says that obscurity is needed for the feeling of terrible when we cannot know the whole extent of the object [54], and the objects with great dimensions are linked to terms of terror [Burke 1998: 53]. We could adapt these thoughts to the metropolitan discourse in which the city is in a permanent change and we are constantly bombarded with various kinds of stimuli, so we cannot entirely apprehend it. This thought about how temporary the inhabitants are in the city is a bit similar to Brecht's poem called *Über die Städte* [On Cities]: "Wir vergingen rasch. Und langsam vergehen sie auch" [Brecht 1967: 215].<sup>9</sup>

Chambers [2005] writes that cities have different historical layers which are the imprints of the events that happened in the recent and remote past, so for the ones who could decode these signs, every layer would be visible despite all the changes that happened to the city [108], just like in Baudelaire's poem *The Swan* where the modern Paris will be the allegory of the medieval one:

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<sup>8</sup> "On Earth join, all ye creatures, to extol / Him first, him last, him midst, and without end" [Milton 1996: 119].

<sup>9</sup> In my rough translation: We passed away fast. And slowly they [the cities] also pass away.

Paris may change, but in my melancholy mood  
Nothing has budged! New palaces, blocks, scaffoldings,  
Old neighbourhoods, are allegorical for me,  
And my dear memories are heavier than stone.

[Baudelaire 1998d: 175]

In Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, the city is described with rapidly changing images whose contours are blurred: "Oh! blank confusion, and a type not false / Of what the mighty City is itself / To all except a Straggler here and there, / To the whole Flock<sup>10</sup> of its inhabitants" VII. 696–699 [Wordsworth 2014c: 276]. When he would like to represent this confusion, he overwhelms the reader with enumerations or cinematic montages to express what is to be constantly addressed:

Here, there, and every where a weary Throng,  
The Comers and the Goers face to face,  
Face after face; the string of dazzling Wares,  
Shop after shop, with Symbols, blazoned Names,  
And all the Trademan's honours overhead;  
Here, fronts of houses, like a title page  
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe

VII. 171–177 [Wordsworth 2014c: 263]

Wordsworth [2014c] begins the beggar scene with the following sentence: "O Friend!" VII. 593 [274], which utterance is a gesture of addressing somebody from the crowd, just like a beggar does in order to get some alms. In a Baudelairean sense, the shared feature in the beggar and the poet is that they are in the streets: a homeless is there because he has nowhere to live and in the busy streets he could ask people for some money, while the poet has no theme to write about, so he is cruising the streets to find something inspiring [but we could compare the poet's character with other marginalised people from the city, for example, rag-pickers, scavengers, and prostitutes]. Like rag-pickers the poet collects and recycles various kinds of cultural fragments: Baude-

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Gill's corrected edition of Ernest de Selincourt's version from *The Prelude [1805]* used the word *swarm* instead of *Flock*: "To the whole swarm of its inhabitants" VII. 699 [Wordsworth 1970: 124].

laire rewrites mythological stories, writes ekphrases from contemporary painters' and sculptors' works, and Wordsworth also recycles his readings from the past and his recent time, he creates an intertextual web, and according to Nawlyn's (2003) opinion, that is the method of Wordsworth getting into contact with the audiences, he imagines and addresses whether they are in the past, present or future [61].

Wordsworth's narrator said that "Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed / By thoughts of what, and whither, when and how" VII. 599–600 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274], so he reflected on the fact that we cannot turn off our eyesight and hearing. Therefore, we have to be under permanent audio-visual stimuli, and we cannot hide from it. The exception is the blind beggar, who could be exempted from the visual stimuli, that is why he is the only fixed point in this section [the city is in a perpetual change and the speaker is walking in the crowd]. In Baudelaire's poem called *The Blind*, the narrator writes about the procession of the blind that they are "vaguely ridiculous, / Peculiar, terrible somnambulists, / Beaming—who can say where—their eyes of night" [Baudelaire 1998b: 187], so no one knows where they are looking which makes it more difficult to get into contact with them. Therefore, we cannot know whether they would like to address us or not due to lack of eye contact, so for the beggar, the only chance to address people is the label with writing on it.

To Wordsworth's speaker, it could be like a state of shock; we could compare this case with Edvard Munch's proto-expressionist paintings (e.g., *Separation* and *The Scream*) in which the person, who is under the effect of shock, is frozen and the things and people surrounding him are rapidly moving and are blurred. Baudelaire's speaker in his poem called *The Seven Old Men* depicts his encounter with seven equally old and ugly men as if he saw a monster or an infernal vision:

Bedazzled, like a double-visioned drunk,  
I staggered home and shut the door, aghast,  
Shaking and sick, the spirit feverous,  
Struck by this mystery, this absurdity!

Vainly my reason reached to clutch the helm;  
The giddy tempest baffled every grasp,  
And my soul danced in circles like a hull  
Dismasted, on a monstrous shoreless sea!

[Baudelaire 1998c: 181]



Wordsworth's narrator describes the situation with the homeless man, that his appearance interrupted the spectacle of the city life, he used even the words *pageant* and *spectacle* [cf. Wordsworth 2014c: 274]<sup>11</sup> and Baudelaire's translator also used the word *parade* to depict the old men: "I turned my back on this parade from Hell" [Baudelaire 1998c: 181].<sup>12</sup> To describe the moment of being shocked by the sight of poor people, both narrators use a verb which is linked to physical attack, Wordsworth uses the verb *smite*: "Abruptly to be *smitten* with the view / Of a blind Beggar" VII. 611–612 [my italics] [Wordsworth 2014c: 274], and Baudelaire's English translator uses the verb *strike*: "*Struck* by this mystery, this absurdity!" [my italics] [Baudelaire 1998c: 181].<sup>13</sup> However, we could compare it with Burke's [1998] term of astonishment when "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" [53], and he considered astonishment the highest degree of sublime.

The beggar in some sense has some similarities with an epitaph engraved on a tombstone or with an advertisement, as Wordsworth's speaker summarises his encounter with him: "on the shape of this un-moving Man, / His fixèd face, and sightless eyes, I looked / As if admonished from another world" VII. 621–623 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274]. He depicts him as a passive, instrument-like entity, and says about him that he "Stood propped against a Wall, upon his Chest / Wearing a written paper, to explain / The Story of the Man and who he was" VII. 613–615 [Wordsworth 2014c: 274], and even the passive grammatical structures emphasize this passive attitude towards the crowd.<sup>14</sup>

In another poem called *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, he also writes that: "I saw an aged Beggar in my walk, / And he was seated by the highway side" [Wordsworth 2014b: 133]. In his work called *Essay upon Epitaphs*, he writes that in ancient times people buried the dead beyond the walls of the city or the town, and the ancient Greeks as well

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<sup>11</sup> He said: "The reach of common indications, lost / Amid the moving pageant" [VII. 609–610] and "My mind did at this *spectacle* turn round / As with the might of waters" [VII. 616–617] [my italics] [Wordsworth 2014c: 274].

<sup>12</sup> In the original Baudelaire wrote "cortège infernal" [Baudelaire 1998c: 180].

<sup>13</sup> In the original Baudelaire uses the word *blessé* 'wounded': "Blessé par le mystère et par l'absurdité!" [Baudelaire 1998c: 180].

<sup>14</sup> György Fogarasi drew my attention to the fact that the word *prop* also referred to a theatrical and instrumental context.

as the Romans had the custom of burying the dead next to frequented roads [Wordsworth 2014a: 499]. This process has similarities with the method used in the case of commercials and advertisements, whose creators are looking for the most frequented places and the most popular surfaces of media. Beggars and commercials alike are in a liminal position in which they have to beg people to interrupt their journey from one point to another in order to pay attention to them.

### 3. Conclusion

Jarvis [2007] said that Wordsworth's writing about his London experience was not just an attempt to do what modern poets did when they wrote about cities, but for Wordsworth, it meant the difficulty of writing about the modern experience as well [137]. After the encounter with the blind beggar, which is the culmination of the feeling of being separated in the crowd, we could read a description of the city at night: "When the great tide of human life stands still, / The business of the day to come unborn, / Of that gone by, locked up as in the grave" VII. 631–633 [Wordsworth 2014c: 275]. It shows us a radically different side of the city when it grows silent and becomes desolate, as the speaker briefly summarises: "Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty street, and sounds / Unfrequent as in deserts" VII. 635–636 [Wordsworth 2014c: 275].

As a huge contrast, this scene is followed by the description of the bustle of Saint Bartholomew's Fair, which section also begins with the same mocking remarks of the speaker: "what a hell / For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din / Barbarian and infernal!" VII. 659–661 [Wordsworth 2014c: 275]. This fair embodies all unnatural things, "All freaks of Nature" VII. 689 [Wordsworth 2014c: 276], as he comments it, but this grotesque, carnival-like atmosphere works as a parody of the real society [Ahearn 1971: 82], where the fair is described as a huge factory, a living, and pulsing organism:

tents and booths,  
Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast Mill,  
Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides  
Men, Women, three year's Children, Babes in arms.

VII. 692–695 [Wordsworth 2014c: 276]

Baudelaire also used a carnival-like structure in *Parisian Scenes*: in *Danse macabre* there is a ball where there are dead people who act as if they were living ones. His cycle ends with two awakenings: one at the end of the *Parisian Dream*, and another one in the poem called *Dawn*. Unfortunately, awakening in the second part of *Parisian Dream* is not a remedy for the speaker's depressive dreams, it is rather like the awakening in Gogol's and Kafka's works where the protagonist wakes up from his dreams into a nightmare-like reality. The second awakening in *Dawn* also emphasises this incident: "Old Paris rubbed his eyes, woke to the day again, / And gathered up his tools, that honest working man." [Baudelaire 1998a: 211]. It is not as terrific as it was in the case of the individual in the previous poem, but it is also about the inevitable and absurd repetition of modern life which reminds us of Sisyphus' punishment of eternal and useless work that Camus will describe a few decades later. However, if we think of the poem *Skeletons Digging* in the cycle, Baudelaire's message will be gloomier because it is not guaranteed that we will not be condemned to eternal work after our death.

Returning to Wordsworth's work after the Saint Bartholomew's Fair scene his speaker says about the city:

Oh! blank confusion, and a type not false  
Of what the mighty City itself  
To all except a Straggler here and there,  
To the whole Flock of its inhabitants;  
An undistinguishable world to Men,  
The slaves unrespite of low pursuits,  
Living amid the same perpetual flow  
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced  
To one identity, by differences  
That have no law, no meaning, and no end;  
Oppression under which even highest minds  
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free!

VII. 696–707 [Wordsworth 2014c: 276–277]

Jarvis [2007] claims that the concept of the city itself is based on a single ideality and not on the infinite or incomprehensible plurality. This single ideality is the constant self-sameness, i.e., in order to distinguish the differences which "have no law, no meaning, and no end," we have to get out of the perpetual flow of the illusion of plurality. We

could reach this state via the instruments of poetry, with the Muse's help, when we can forget about the perpetual flow of our living [Jarvis 2007: 142–143].

But though the Picture weary out the eye,  
By nature an unmanageable sight,  
It is not wholly so to him who looks  
In steadiness, who hath among least things  
An under sense of greatest, sees the parts  
As parts, but with the feeling of the whole.

VII. 708–713 [Wordsworth 2014c: 277]

We can only reach “the feeling of the whole” not the knowledge of the whole itself as Jarvis claims that paradoxically this feeling of the whole is the opposite of the concept of “one identity” from the previously quoted passage. If we would like to experience this feeling of the whole, we should move our focus from the unity of one identity to the parts as parts. That is the way we can notice the differences which have a law, a meaning, and an end. But we could reach only a limited form of it, as Jarvis says, it is only an under sense not an over sense of the greatest [Jarvis 2007: 143].

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# MINE THE GAP. FINE ARTS IN THE AGE OF PANDEMIC

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The necessary condition for the reception of art is aesthetic distance, which paradoxically relies on direct experience: one has to be there in front of the artwork, has to live the experience. Therefore, the current pandemic and the practice of social distancing, which attempts to slow it down, is a serious challenge for the arts. This text analyses the ways in which artists and the institutions which mediate art react to the conditions caused by the pandemic. I will present some creative practices which turn the adversity of the pandemic into an asset [the White Cuib Facebook project and the series by Sán-

dor Bartha]. So, there are projects which mine the gap [social distancing] and use it creatively. Then I will analyze the practice of some museums and galleries, focusing on the positive examples [e.g., the "Stay at Home Museum"] as well as on the difficulties. The examined cases will reveal the fact that while the artists were able to react in creative ways to the constraints and to create artworks which point beyond the contextual value, art institutions generally attempted merely to get through this period, hoping that they would soon be able to get back to life as usual.

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**KEYWORDS:** *pandemic, COVID-19, social distancing, artistic creativity, online artistic presence*

## 1. Aesthetic Distance and Social Distancing

One of the themes of aesthetic discourse which has preoccupied specialists since the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the issue of “aesthetic distance.” The tone for the discussion was set by the 1912 Edward Bullough study, which discussed distancing and the consciousness of distance as a necessary element of aesthetic experience. It is this distancing that enables us to differentiate between reality and art, respectively, to apply to the various phenomena of life not the criteria of utility and morality, but those of aesthetics. The theoretical foundation of aesthetic distance can be found in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*.

It seems that aesthetic experience, and the experience of art, even more, has a property that could be termed as “disinterestedness” [Kant, 2000]. According to Kant, the enjoyment of beauty is disinterested and not associated either with the interest of reason or predispositions; its enjoyment is not associated with any selfish point of view. Hence, later writings, especially of the analytic tradition, pose the question of the aesthetic experience, which is necessary to experience a phenomenon as art. The essence of this attitude is aesthetic distance: a kind of psychological distancing from the contemplated experience. In order to react aesthetically to it, we must not fully immerse ourselves empathically into the death of Desdemona and cannot view it as something real. Aesthetic distance is the consciousness of the fact that we are not dealing with life but art, and thus we have to react to the experienced phenomena not with action but with contemplation. In a thorough study, P. A. Michelis [1959] discusses the various meanings of aesthetic distance, including its spatial, temporal, and psychological aspects, concluding that “[i]n aesthetic contemplation, the spectator is called on to obtain a distance of spiritual dimensions, where space and time become an ideal space-time” [11]. The issue is more complex in the case of the creating artist, since “[t]he artist must be at the same time close to and removed from his experience; both detached spectator and passionate performer, unimpassioned participant of passion, a disinterested but absorbed contemplator, conceiving yet also judging his work” [Michelis, 1959: 12]. Although George Dickie [1964] has tried to demonstrate that the aesthetic attitude is a harmful myth, it is undeniable that aesthetic distance as the awareness of the difference between art and life remains an integral part of the experience of art.



Why is, then, the issue of aesthetic distance raised in the first place? The answer lies in the fact that, at a superficial glance, artworks and everyday objects, the phenomena of art and the ordinary phenomena of life present themselves to us in the same manner. At the level of the senses, there is no difference between viewing a painting or a bucket of water, between watching a theatre play or our neighbours' fight. At the level of sensory experience, real objects or events stand before us in the same way as the artworks.

This "standing before us" should be understood literally, and its importance must be recognized. Artworks have to be experienced, as it is not enough to just read or to listen to accounts about them. It is not sufficient only to obtain information about a novel, a theatrical play, or a painting – one has to be there to see it, hear it, experience it. It is a basic premise of aesthetics that nothing can substitute direct experience. This is why we travel to Paris and pay the not inconsiderable admission fee to the Orangerie, because it is something entirely different to see Monet's water lilies live than on a screen or in a printed book.

Many of my acquaintances have often complained that due to cultural tourism, they had to buy the tickets to the larger exhibitions and the more famous museums months in advance, had to stand in line for hours, and could not really see the paintings because of the large crowd. As for myself, I could not but welcome this revived interest for theatre, film, music, and the fine arts, which presented itself in the increased attendance of festivals, concerts, and museums, in the boom of cultural tourism. Many people wanted to directly meet art, and for this, they had to travel to it, to be where the painting was, where the installation, the concert, the theatrical performance took place. Aesthetic distance also means that we are there, in direct contact with the artwork, and are aware that what we are seeing and hearing is not everyday reality, but art. However, all this happens only if we are really there. Aesthetic distance is, at the same time, also a kind of presence.

It is for this very reason that the pandemic represents a completely new situation for art, as the method to limit the spread of the virus consists of social distancing. The prescribed distance of 2/1.5 meters, which should reduce the danger of infection, has made it impossible to hold any mass gatherings during the period of the pandemic. At the same time, most governments have temporarily suspended all activities considered as not absolutely essential [food supply and the health sector remained priority areas, receiving further subsidies, and rightly so], while all the rest was moved online [e.g. education]. The arts, as we have

seen before, are mass gatherings, on the one hand [a concert, a theatrical performance or a more prestigious museum exhibition are doubtlessly mass events], and they are not absolutely necessary for mere survival, on the other hand. Due to the cessation of international traffic, events with large, international audiences had to be cancelled, one after the other, and the smaller institutions have also lost their incomes. Because a large portion of the artists lacks a steady income, making their livelihood from events, tenders and the selling of their artworks, the minimally two-month quarantine created a financially difficult situation for many of them. At the same time, it also meant forced inactivity, which was difficult to endure for the artists who could not meet their public. The institutions and participants of the art world have found themselves in a new, dystopic world from one day to the next.

## **2. Mine the Gap**

The situation is/was especially difficult for the fine arts, for which the direct encounter with the artworks, the sensory experience of the artwork, is an essential requirement. Here, I would like to present some initiatives which attempted not to jump over the gap between our normal lives and the special state of the quarantine, or over the social distancing between us, but to exploit it as a possibility.

### *a. White Cuib Project, Dan Perjovschi*

The White Cuib is a gallery from Cluj, with the posters for some of the 2016 exhibitions on the gallery website. The last pictures were taken on a real exhibition, on 11 March 2020. The introductory text of the gallery's Facebook page, dating from 2012, states: "We're a group of friends with a passion for the arts, providing a blank space for whatever matters. In downtown Cluj, Romania" [White Cuib, n.d.]

Dan Perjovschi's exhibition should have opened in the White Cuib on 9 April 2020. Meanwhile, a state of emergency was declared in Romania, museums and galleries were closed, and the planned exhibition had to be reconsidered. The artist reacted thus:

I am adaptable. I don't have any colors, I draw with the pencil. If I don't have a pencil, I can draw with my finger. I don't have a pencil either? I'll wet my finger with some saliva and draw like that... Is my mouth dry? I'll draw in my head. Is the gallery closed? I'll exhibit my works on the windows. I have learned all my life from lacks and mistakes. All I've done as an artist

is to sneak beside and under barriers. I have managed to transform disadvantages into advantages. [...] Now there's the Virus and we've barricaded ourselves in our homes. The empty shelves, the closed borders and the lack of toilet paper are all too familiar for me. I've been here before. The only thing is that now we have freedom of expression. [White Cuib, 2020, p. 23.03.2020]

Thus, the planned exhibition has changed and Perjovschi started a "Virus Journal" on the Facebook page and the Instagram profile of the White Cuib, which subsequently turned into a joint project. Starting with 6 April, the journal functions with four main artists [Dan Perjovschi, Ana Kun, Alina Andrei, George Rosu] and many guests invited from all corners of the world. The project's title was enriched with new connotations: the gallery's name already hinted at the sterile exhibition space of modernist art [White Cube]. Now, the "Cuib" [Nest] also associates the current quarantine situation, in which everyone is enclosed in their "nests," holed up in their homes. The goal of the project is to collect and present to the public the creative reactions and responses of the artists. It is a collaborative project, with many and very diverse participants. During the first week, about seven images were posted daily, but subsequently, the gallery was sometimes enriched, on average, with even 32 new pieces every day. The guests included Brent Birnbaum [New York], Aldo Giannotti [Vienna], David Böhm & Jiří Franta [Prague], Caterina Preda, [Smithville, Texas], Trevor Yeung [Hong Kong], Mischa Kuball [Düsseldorf], Rie Kawakami [Tokyo], Gluklya Pershina [Sant Petersburg], Patrick Roussel [Caen, France], Raimar Stange [Berlin], Quentin Jouret [Toulouse], Hans D. Christ [Stuttgart], Luchezar Boyadijev [Sofia, Bulgaria] Eirini Linardaki & Vincent Parisot [Heraklion, Greece], Daniel Garcia Andujar [Barcelona], Roberto Uribe Castro [Bogota], Raphaël Larre [Toulouse, France], Nedko Solakov [Sofia, Bulgaria], Beagles&Ramsay [Lewisham, United Kingdom]. The majority of the guests invited there were Facebook contacts of Dan Perjovschi. It seems that the organizers of the project are continuously present not only as artists but also as curators, observing the artworks of their colleagues and including the artwork which is thematically and contextually suitable for the virus journal. On the whole, the project ran nine weeks. The sheer quantity of the uploaded pieces is impressive: 1108 images.

It was an admirable project, with fascinating reactions from artists to a situation which – beyond the general fears and inconveniences

– pushes them into uncertainty, shaking the foundations of the institutional system which helps them to survive.

In the following section, I will present one of the projects of the White Cuib, which wittily reacted to the confinement brought by the quarantine.

*b. Sándor Bartha*

Sándor Bartha [1962-] currently lives in Budapest and is a teacher at Partium Christian University from Oradea. He combines various media in his work [drawing, painting, installations, photographs, animations, videos, etc.]. The curfew caught him in his home in Budapest and, from the window of his home, he created a series that reacts to social distancing. His works humorously deconstruct the boundaries between outside and inside, overturn the perspective and the spatial proportions, in fact making it possible for us to experience physical and social space from a completely new perspective. He created photographs for which he used the contingent events going on outside, on the street, and also the instruments from his own space [his finger, a paper house, a magnifying glass, prepared fine art reproductions, etc.]. The English titles also represent a very important part of the artworks.

The first series of images was published on Facebook on 22 April, under the title *I can touch everybody from my quarantine*. The artist photographed the passers-by from his balcony as he touches them with his seemingly giant fingers. The focus is on the passers-by, and the touch is sometimes tender and sometimes menacing. The photographs do not attempt formal perfection: the finger sometimes covers the heads of the passers-by or merely shows a thin strip of them. These works humorously “heal” one of the characteristics of social distancing which is most difficult to tolerate: the prohibition of bodily contact. The photographs show hidden encounters, the touching of strangers, which is strictly prohibited in reality, and they do so in a way that remains a secret for the other party. Sándor Bartha’s humorous and thought-provoking photographs present a constructed situation of the encounter between reality and art. The series continued on 23 April with more photos, more gestures, pointing, and carrying the subjects of the photographs on his palms. On the same day, another series was published, titled *Trying to isolate some of them...*, which alludes to one of the forms of social distancing, voluntary or enforced isolation. For these works, the artist used the plastic cover of a yogurt box, which encloses the passers-by into a circle, while also creating a grid structure lock-

ing them into a cage. One of the photos, enclosing into the imaginary cage a worker doing his job on the lawn, is especially interesting. The worker's efforts become completely futile, he practically cannot even lift his rake, as he bumps into the walls of the cage. The artist plays with his miniature and unknowing subjects, depriving them of their freedom, as an impish and invisible god. On 4 April, the childish play of the impish god continues with the series titled *...or catch them...*, as if the artist tried to catch the passers-by into a glass jar, just as the precious pieces of an insect collection. Sometimes the focus is on the glass trap, and sometimes on the people who unknowingly walk into the traps. The way in which the artist uses the handrails of his balcony reminds the viewer of a puppet theatre: one can almost hear the screams of the kindergarteners: "Look out! Trap!", and the game is even crueller when the artist is preparing to cover a runner with a purple plastic hemisphere, permanently stopping his vigorous movement. The title of the picture [*Trying to escape*] hints at the fact that the game has not been decided yet – the subject tries to escape, he is in pretty good shape, has had a good sprint, and he may succeed.

On 27 April, the artist presented a short video, titled *Summer House on my Window Sill*, in which the small cardboard house placed on his ledge and the man who unloads his parked car in the street become part of the same space. It seems as if the man would have arrived with his family (there are two more people next to the car) at this summer home for a long-awaited vacation. The photographed man is enjoying the happiness that is now forbidden to everyone – but he is unaware of it. On the photograph from 28 April [*Trap*], the man walking his dog has another trap prepared for him: a giant cube, which is now balancing at a corner with its mouse-catching mechanism, yet we can foresee that it will close down upon the individual who is walking his dog otherwise legally. On 29 April, the artist succeeded in collecting three bicycle riders in his jar [*Collecting*], and the comments also reveal that he will let them go after testing, so there should be no worries that his receiving capacity will be exhausted. In order to make the process even clearer, he places a mechanism on his ledge on 30 April, with the inscription "Testing Lab," in which the test subject is walking into. On 1 May, there is another video [*Warning and Stopping*]: a Lego figure signaling to the passers-by that he should stop, and since he does not comply, but tries to move on, he bounces back from the sole of the Lego figure's foot. It is a quite funny, looped little video, with some of the charm of Charlie Chaplin scenes, as if we witnessed

the eternal struggle between the restrictive state authorities and the citizens trying to test the limits of their freedom. It seems as if we cannot help but root for the citizen who does not learn from his mistake and let go of his attempt to move freely. In the series titled *Protecting them by changing their context*, the artist highlights the passers-by and places them into a more acceptable context, such as the La Grande Jatte island, by cutting out Georges Seurat's picture, among the crowd spending their sunny afternoon there. He frees them from their confinement caused by the pandemic, so they can happily mingle with the relaxing crowd, while also protecting them from the risk of infection. This is the last piece of the series, with an optimistic overtone, compared to the possibilities of the present, with the image of the past and the hoped-for future.

The majority of the images show the government poster, stating "Curfew extended" with letters using Hungary's national colors. As long as there is a curfew, ingenuity of art is a way out of anxiety, worry, and emptiness. This project, whose context and the theme is the pandemic, with its means also offered by its restrictions and possibilities, is one of the wittiest artistic responses I have encountered during this period.

### **3. *The Show Must Go On[-line]***

While the artists, as shown by the above examples, can also work from their home, in quarantine, the institutions which mediate art have a much harder time. Museums, galleries, and auction houses have built on the essential necessity of immediate experience, which was made impossible by the sudden social distancing which has come upon us. Exhibitions and art fairs were suddenly cancelled, and museums were closed for at least two months. Many of the numerous art institutions have come into an insecure position, and museums terminated the contract of the staff whose work was directly related to visitors, including museum educators.

In spite of the more than unfriendly circumstances, many institutions have chosen, instead of waiting for the end of the quarantine and to hope for the return of the normal circumstances, to keep in touch with the artists and the public. The most characteristic practices and phenomena of the age of the pandemic:

### 3. 1. *The museums have moved to the world wide web – Google’s “Arts and Culture” project*

Perhaps one of the biggest winners of the pandemic was Google’s “Arts and Culture” project, dating from 2011, which virtually enabled an experience at distance, quite close to direct experience. The project consists of an online platform, which enables viewers through high-resolution images and videos to get acquainted with works of art and cultural artifacts offered by the project’s partner institutions from all over the world.

On the one hand, the Google project offers the possibility to “visit” the museums with the help of Google Street View, to see the rooms and the physical context of the works of art. On the other hand, through Picasa technology, we may view the images in a resolution that is higher than what the naked eye could offer. These are the main functions, to which Google has added some popular ideas, e.g., the “Art Selfie” or the “Create an Artwork Collection.”

Currently, the platform offers access to 2500 museums and galleries, with more than 45.000 art objects [Martinique, 2020]. Most of the museums have not only built in the Google Street View but have also published “stories,” generally presenting some of the artworks in detail. The story may proceed horizontally or vertically, with the images presenting an enlarged view of the story’s current moment. Some museums are present with only one story, while others have more than ten. The Musée d’Orsay, for instance, has published only one story, about the building and the way in which it was transformed from a train station into a museum. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, on the other hand, has 26 stories, The National Gallery of London has 12, and the Rijksmuseum 11 [*Google Arts & Culture*, n.d.]. These stories were probably already published on the platform, but now, due to the pandemic, many more people have visited these websites.

### 3. 2. *Virtual exhibitions*

The galleries which did not want to close down have followed two strategies. One was the virtual gallery, while the other offered the possibility to view the exhibition from the window.

In a virtual gallery, the visitor may walk around the real space virtually, stopping before some of the artworks, which may be approached with varying degrees of success. As for myself, this strategy was quite

a disappointment, and I found the materials uploaded in pdf files more comfortable and instructive; these files offered photographs of the artworks, accompanied by curatorial texts. One of my main dissatisfactions with some of the virtual galleries was that they did not, or hardly explained which artwork we are viewing; the artworks were difficult to approach, and basic information was sometimes missing. My feeling was that this kind of approach was more appropriate for the generations socialized in the world of video games, in addition to the usual, static informational material, centred on texts and images.

The exhibition which can be viewed from the window may be used in cases where the gallery has a larger surface facing the street front. This, of course, is also a forced solution since, in many cases, not only did the galleries have to close but also the potential visitors, heeding the call to “stay home,” or due to the movement restrictions, did not probably consider visiting of exhibitions a necessity in the most severe months of the pandemic.

### *3. 3. Virtual events: exhibition openings, conversations, talks*

One of the online events consisted of live online exhibition openings, with no one else present in the real space than the gallery owner, the person reciting the opening text, and a few technicians. The opening text could be heard in real-time, and the exhibited works could be viewed online. The Kieselbach Gallery from Budapest has opened on 29 April 2020 the „CONTEMPORARIES QUARANTINED - SHOP WINDOW EXHIBITION” with talks from the gallery owner and Krisztián Nyári. The opening ceremony was transmitted live via Facebook, then the edited material was published on their website [*Contemporaries Quarantined - Shop Window Exhibition, 2020*] and also on YouTube. The charming clumsiness of these new attempts could also be witnessed during the opening: Krisztián Nyári’s microphone was muted for a while, so nothing could be heard, and the video recording made with a mobile phone could hardly be considered top quality, so the entire opening had a home-made feeling, characteristic of new attempts and experiments. It is quite difficult to talk to an audience without an actual audience, so we could witness the difficulties of adapting to the new situation of even these “professional players.” The opening also included short videos made by the exhibiting artists of themselves, also at home, with more or less success, without a unified concept, some of them in a tense state, and others didactically, trying to substitute the direct ex-



perience of the images with the visual transmission, confessions, and video messages.

The online sales of the auction houses were also a novelty. It seemed that purchases went on, but this form of art dealership was definitely more favorable to already-known artists, further widening the economic and social divide already characteristic for the art world.

On a positive note, new groupings of the participants have emerged. After the Viennese galleries have organized the “Not Closed” online event, several eastern and southern European galleries have joined forces on a common platform for a one-week project, including virtual interviews, artist talks, studio visits, and a digital exhibition. The “Not Cancelled East x South” joint project presented one artist from each of 17 galleries (*Not Cancelled*, 2020). Isabella Ritter and Katharina Schendl, co-owners of LambdaLambdaLambda viewed the pandemic as a possibility: “Maybe this ‘crisis’ will create some new opportunities and break up the hegemonomies that weren’t really productive anymore.” (*Art Fairs Used to Be Their Portal to the World. Now Galleries in Serbia, Romania, and Other Southeastern European Countries Are Uniting Online*, 2020).

One of the most interesting solutions was presented by the museums of Flemish cities, with the project titled the “Stay at Home Museum,” with five professionals presenting one of the masterpieces of five museums in five episodes. These half-hour footages were uploaded to YouTube, so everyone had the chance to admire them. Van Eyck expert Till-Holger Borchert, Director of Musea Bruges, presented the Ghent Altarpiece, the work of the Van Eyck brothers. The video was uploaded on 8 April, and watched by almost 700.000 people during a month and a half. The director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts from Bruxelles, Michel Draguet, presented one of the paintings of Brueghel. The video was uploaded on 15 April and has 400.000 viewers in one month. Another episode followed on 22 April, in which Ben Van Beneden, the director of the Rubens House led us to the Rubens “art gallery room,” reaching almost 400.000 viewers in one month as well. The video uploaded on 29 April, in which the curator of the Mu.ZEE from Ostend, Mieke Mels talks about one of the paintings of James Ensor, had more than 300.000 viewers during three weeks, and the video of the museum guide Annik Vlemickx, presenting the Hof van Busleyden castle from Mechelen, reached 200.000 viewers in two weeks. I think this is a great initiative, and the number of viewers of these videos would have probably lagged much behind the current numbers if the conditions would have been “normal.” The video of the Royal Academy of Art from London, titled Ex-

*hibition on Screen: David Hockney RA*, uploaded to YouTube on 19 April 2020, has reached 150.000 viewers in one month, while their former videos were watched by much fewer people [a video dating from 2016, *In the studio with David Hockney RA*, had 83.000 viewers, and an interview with Anselm Kiefer has reached 40.000 people]. It seems to me that these expertly made videos in which the museum representatives present some precious artworks, offer a great opportunity for the museums in terms of communication with the public, setting up a genre that could be set forth irrespective of the pandemic.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of art is characterized by directness, being there in the nearness of artwork – thus, the quarantine situation and social distancing presented a great challenge for fine arts. The analysis of the responses to the pandemic from the art world revealed the following:

1. The unusual situations often presented a motivational factor for artists: the restrictions, constraints, and limits have often become instruments for them in coming up with creative responses. Sándor Bartha's project, presented above, has managed to turn the situation of the pandemic and social distancing into an asset, in the framework of a coherent and witty project, in which social distancing is a topic and an instrument at the same time, with witty and humane artworks for coping with an inhumane situation. The White Cuib project, with its approximately one thousand artworks, also supports the hypothesis that artistic freedom and creativity may [also] flourish in times of crisis.

2. The reaction of art-mediating institutions was somewhat more difficult: deprived of their income, most museums reacted with the dismissal of their staff. I have found little data pointing to the fact that museums would have started to produce more online material. The "Stay at Home Museum" initiative of the Flemish museums was a refreshing exception from this perspective. Galleries and auction houses have suffered great losses. The attempts of galleries show that the virtual exhibition opening and the window-exhibition are not more than forced solutions, which did not give rise to ideas that could be carried further in an effective manner. Auction houses have attempted virtual auctions, with limited success. At the end of May, Sotheby's has held an auction that could be termed as "final sales," with the pieces of former auctions offered again at a fraction of their initial cost [Emód, 2020]. It seems that art institutions were less successful in adapting to the new

circumstances, and attempted to somehow live through this period, waiting for the return of the old, “normal” world.

In the following few years we will find out if this expectation was fulfilled, and we will return to the former practices, or we are witnessing the beginning of something entirely new within the art world.

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# MIND THE GAP IN 2020: BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN THEATRE

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The 2019/2020 coronavirus pandemic is believed to be the beginning of the twenty-first century [Barabási] because it is believed to overwrite history. In this line of thought, the way we see and think about life changes; new viruses, testing, periodical lockdowns may turn out to be the new normal. Life, at least what it seemed to be like at the outbreak of the pandemic, ended. The effects of the regulations issued to stop the spreading – lockdown, prohibition of gatherings, closing eating and drinking facilities – led to a lack of any sign of life in the cities. However, it is only life as we knew it that ended; in fact, life adapts and overwrites the old narrative. The new

narrative is not based on the dichotomy of something being either closed or open, alive, or dead, but a new perspective – that builds in both possibilities – is brought into play: e.g., facilities are open [in the online world] while being closed [in the offline one], and theatre exemplifies this to a great degree. I hypothesise is that although theatres were closed down during the lockdown; their activities show that not only are live performances still in demand but also the advent of new modes of production best characterized by the term intermedial relationship. The aims paper to analyze the changes the pandemic triggered in theatre.

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**KEYWORDS:** *postmodernism, intermediality, theatre, pandemic, twenty-first century*

## 1. Introduction

In March 2020 a new lifestyle began as most employees were sent online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. To slow down the spreading of the virus countries around the world introduced lockdown to various degrees. This entailed many changes that most of the world found quite shocking: from schools being closed down and education going online to all services involving direct contact being reduced or altered and moved on digital platforms. In Romania, the state of emergency decree was issued on 16 March 2020 for a month and was later extended for another one on 14 April. The measures formulated in the decree affected all walks of life in order to prevent the spreading of the virus and give time to the authorities to prepare and be able to manage the consequences [DECRET 195 16/03/2020 - Portal Legislativ, n.d.]. On the level of day-to-day business, the decree basically reduced the exercise of certain rights, and the population was asked to stay home. At that point, unheard-of measures became the new norm. Most service providers – hotels, restaurants, and cafés – were temporarily closed. Also, anyone whose type of job and duties made it possible worked online from home. The activity of entertainment industry entities was also curtailed, as theatres, concert halls, cinemas were closed down during lockdown. Hence, the notion of *the end of life as we know it* became the slogan of the entire period. Albert László Barabási claims that 2020 is the beginning of the twenty-first century, as such, the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus rewrites history and whatever comes forth is going to be the new normal [D. Tóth, n.d.]. At the beginning of March, a gap seemed to form between mankind's old way of life and a new one. What is more, that gap seemed quite hard to bridge, i.e., at that time, life seemed to change radically.

Even though we do not yet have the benefit of hindsight to be able to fully assess the consequences of the pandemic, some preliminary evaluation can be done. In many respects, 2020 can easily be considered a watershed. Although at the beginning of its outbreak in March, the pandemic did seem to alter people's way of life radically, what it did was highlight certain perspectives no one was fully aware of, and also change people's way of thinking. For example, until the lockdown, cafés and restaurants were either open or closed. The lockdown challenged the dichotomous nature of the two concepts as most of these facilities offered their products via home-delivery or to-go services. However, new ways did not entirely replace the old ones. Although during

the period of the state of emergency home-delivery services seemed to have replaced going to restaurants and cafés in person, the end of the lockdown period proved that this alternative way has become more popular than it had previously been, and the old ways were not replaced as café and, if possible, restaurant terraces were still visited in person.

The walk of life that has been more radically affected by the lockdown is the arts, in particular theatre. As the numbers of reported cases of infections escalated in Romania, more and more strict regulations were issued as far as the size of the audience allowed to watch a live performance was concerned. Eventually, theatres were closed down, and live performances were prohibited. Theatre companies responded to the new state of affairs by going online to various degrees. Some companies – Tompa Miklós Company of the Târgu-Mureş National Theatre, Szigligeti Company in Oradea, to name only a few – broadcast some of their previous shows on the company's YouTube channel. In addition to that, companies produced short videos that were released on their Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Having in view the activity of the theatre companies in Romania and worldwide, I hypothesise that the pandemic is not likely to rewrite history radically, however, it does reshape the way both actors and the audience think about theatre. The productions presented during the lockdown and in the period closely following it – when rehearsals could be held respecting the protocols of physical distancing – indicate that 1) live performances are still in demand, 2) the increasing presence of an intermedial approach to shows is likely to be witnessed, i.e., live performances will also incorporate film. As in the case of the above-mentioned cafés and restaurants, the old ways do not disappear, i.e., doing live performances will still be in trend. However, a [relatively] new alteration occurs, namely, the intermedial relationship between theatre and film is likely to increase as the camera, i.e., the audio-visual is slowly sweeping in traditional theatre performances. I will illustrate my proposals with three theatre projects: the British National Theatre at Home, "Egypercsek" ["One-minutes"] by Szigligeti Company in Oradea, and also the latter's post-lockdown production, Y.

## ***2. New Perspectives***

What the pandemic has certainly done is change our perspective, and challenge modes of production not only in the arts but also in many other walks of life. Barabási [2020] referred to the pandemic as being

a breakpoint, something that signals the beginning of a different era. It might remind us of Jean-François Lyotard's [1979/1984] concept of the postmodern condition, which in his view, followed the transformations that changed the game rules after the nineteenth century for science, literature and the arts [xxiii]. In his study, Lyotard deals with these changes in terms of the crisis of narratives and defines it as incredulity toward metanarratives [1984: xxiv]. The changes he refers to are linked to the transformation in the nature of knowledge that is not centralized anymore.

Lyotard believed that this sort of transformation in the nature of knowledge forces public powers to revise their relations with civil society. In his view, political and economic events at the end of the day are some of the reasons that make the State reevaluate its position that it had taken since the 1930s. Under these circumstances, the State cannot presume a guiding role as it does not have the necessary command. This loss of control can be attributed to the fact that the information used in decision-making is "more mobile and subject to piracy" [1984: 6]. In other words, information is not solely in the hand of the political elite.

Lyotard's notion of incredulity in metanarratives is interpreted in a wider context by Hutcheon [1988]. In her reading, this skepticism is a sign of lamentation that knowledge is no longer narrative knowledge. In other words, metanarratives are ones that carry stable aesthetic and moral values, and it is the nature of postmodern – she suggests – to refuse to advance or postulate anything stable. Man no longer believes that *meaning*, as such, is either fixed or safe in the hands of one entity.

Hutcheon deals with postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon, and she concedes that *postmodernism* is restricted to European and American culture. In this respect, in her reading, the term eludes a clear definition. She labels it both an over- and under-defined term "accompanied by a grand flourish of negativized rhetoric: we hear of discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentring, indeterminacy, and antitotalization" [1988: 3]. All phrases start with negative prefixes and all words enumerated above connote with change, suggesting some sort of regression compared to the condition that had existed before. She postulates that postmodernism is not a new paradigm – even if it challenged liberal humanism – but "[i]t may mark [...] the site of the struggle of the emergence of something new" [1988: 4]. Hutcheon expands the notion of *new* with examples from literature and the arts focusing on how these works present, revolve around contradiction –



especially since postmodern culture “has a contradictory relationship to what we usually label our dominant, liberal humanist culture” (Hutcheon 1988: 6). Hence, the notion of something new emerging both Lyotard and Hutcheon discuss is analogous to the present state of affairs is that something new emerging.

As far as the arts are concerned, digital technology – as part of the “new” – has already altered both modes of production and those of reception of various cultural products to some extent. Now, the world turning online, it has increased that to an even greater degree. On the one hand, new modes of production and storage are employed; on the other hand, old cultural products are ‘recycled’ both in terms of media of presentation (printed books into eBook format) and in terms of modes expression (Borbely, 2020). The latter refers not only to adaptations but also to theatre performances being filmed and presented on digital platforms.

The relationship between theatre and the media – the term we shall use to stand for film/video – extends beyond filming live productions and presenting this filmed material on various media channels. Actors may create theatre performances with the help of or via film. These productions show the characteristics of *intermediality* which is “a generic term for all those phenomena that [...] in some way take place *between* media. [that is, it] designates those configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media” (Rajewsky, 2011: 46). Media as discussed by Wolf, in this case, refers to a means of communication that has one or more channels of communication and transmits a cultural message through one or more semiotic systems (Borbely, 2020).

Intermediality, a term analogous to intertextuality but signaling cross-medial relationship, “[...] points to an intracompositional phenomenon observable in, or characteristic of, an artefact or a group of artefacts” (Wolf, 1999: 36). In this respect, Wolf discriminates between two types, overt or direct intermediality and covert or indirect one. In the case of the overt or direct relationship, “at least in one instance both media are directly present with their typical or conventional signifiers and if consequently each medium remains distinct and is in principle ‘quotable’ separately” (Wolf, 1999: 40). In his discussion of intermediality, Wolf exemplifies the concept with opera, in which case music and text are present at the same time to the same degree. We believe that a theatre performance that utilizes the camera and projects images so that the live performance and a mediated version exist along each other belongs to this group.

In a somewhat similar line of thought, Rajewsky defines intermedial relationship in terms of degrees of strength between the participating media and thus names three types: medial transposition, media combination, and intermedial reference. The first one refers to one product created in a certain type of media being produced in another, like a film adaptation of a novel. According to this, written text is recreated onto the screen respecting the latter's conventions. Media combination, analogous to Wolf's overt intermediality, supposes the co-existence of two different types of media that combine and both bring their own signifiers. As opposed to the previous category of intermediality in which the conventions of only one of the two media dominate, media combination presupposes the overt presence of both media involved; a theatre performance in which the camera, thus, film is utilized in the performance belongs to this category. Finally, intermedial reference occurs when one of "the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced in another medium or to refer to a specific medial subsystem or to another system" (2011: 52). A simple reference to a film or painting in a literary text falls into this category; however, the author also includes film adaptations of novels in this category because the original text is received along with the film. In this respect, the filmed version of a theatre performance may also belong into this category, since the live show is beside film – especially if several cameras were used to record the performance, hence the final product is not a one-point-of-view documentary, but a film-like artefact.

However, filmed theatre as such is more than that. Whether filmed with one or more cameras, from a static point or moving around the stage, the final artefact works only as a record of the live production. Neither media influences the signifiers of the other one, at least, not intentionally on behalf of the producers. The number of cameras, their position, and their focus influence how the audience watching the filmed artefact receives and interprets the production. However, since the actors do not use the camera on the stage and film is only a means of communication, the intermedial relationship is not a strong, entangled one as it were in a film adaptation of a novel. New modes of production, however, seem to counteract that statement as film/video slowly seeps in theatre productions more organically.

### 3. Intermediality at Play

#### 3.1. Filmed Theatre: Between Intermedial References and Media Combination

What theatres have done during the pandemic: free online streaming of the shows they have recorded. They did physically distanced performances, like Patrick Stewart reciting one Shakespearean sonnet a day during the pandemic on Twitter. Actors could also film themselves at home and the topic varied from one theatre company to another: they filmed themselves at home either in a personal or professional capacity, as a means to keep their audiences engaged.

British theatres were closed on 16 March 2020. *The Economist* reports that the Royal Shakespeare Company – one of Britain’s most well-known theatre companies – is surviving on a quarter of its usual income, mostly made up by an Arts Council grant and philanthropy; the authors of the article add that 70% of the business is likely to get into liquidation by the end of the year. [B.A., 2020]. The situation of British theatres can be rather precarious as not all of them receive subsidies, according to *The Economist*, only one in every third company does and most of them rely on ticket sales, fundraising, and catering [B.A., 2020]. Therefore, the need to keep their audience engaged and ready to lure them back in the halls once theatres open is of paramount importance. Nevertheless, even if theatres will open again, something will have changed in the way the institution is known to have been like before the close in March as Sir Richard Eyre formal directors of the National Theatre claims: “[t]he prediction of a breakdown in the anatomy of British theatre is a real prognosis” [as cited in B.A., 2020].

Professionals and performance studies educators are preparing for a different approach. Matthew Smith, Head of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies declares that recording on video the performances can go two ways: producers may adopt the minimalist approach and place the camera in one position thus recording the performance. The end product will not work as a film but will be a documentary record of what went on the stage. At the other end of the spectrum is the theatre performance that has been conceived as a complete translation of a play, which, thus, will be a worse record of the performance but will resemble film to a greater extent [Smith as cited in Feder, 2020]. A new way of thinking must come into being that will “turn social distancing into social togetherness across distance”

[Smith as cited in Feder, 2020]. The pandemic and the lockdown are seen to have hastened a trend that has already been present in the theatre, namely the use of virtual media together with live performance [Smith as cited in Feder, 2020]. Nevertheless, this may also entail that the audience would appreciate “the unique potency of live, embodied, shared performance” [Smith as cited in Feder, 2020].

The National Theatre in the United Kingdom chose to stream some of its best productions in the past decade via YouTube [*National Theatre at Home While We're Closed | National Theatre on YouTube and NT Collection*, n.d.]. The project, National Theatre at Home has started at the beginning of April and lasts until the end of July, one a play being broadcast for free for roughly a week. One can set a reminder for the premier, and the show can be viewed for free for five days. Notwithstanding, at the beginning of every screening the Theatre reminds the viewers the present situation theatres are in and reflect upon their state: “Theatres around the world are closed and facing a devastating impact from Coronavirus. / Theatre and the arts are a positive force for our community in turbulent times” [Farber, 2020: 00:19-00:22]. Members of the audience are invited to donate via text messages or PayPal. They have also made thirty of their plays available for educational institutions to stream at home that is available for free for UK state-funded teachers.

*Les Blancs* by Lorraine Hansbury, directed by Yaël Farber is a 2016 production of the National Theatre [Farber, 2020]. The central themes of the play are imperialism, racism, and colonialism in terms of the British Empire in Africa. The production has been conceived within the framework of Black Aesthetic using African songs and dances to signify African topics. They use the revolving stage extensively in order to change scenes. One has the impression that everything is in motion almost all the time, and that the production is not static. However, the camera records the show only from the so-called fourth wall, i.e., the point of view of the audience. For this reason, this production is closer to the documentary end of the spectrum of filmed theatre.

On the entertaining, and in the same time film-like, end of the spectrum is *Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Nicholas Hytner and performed in the summer of 2019. Both roving audience that followed the play on foot, and the stage being divided up into huge blocks that were moved around highlighted the “show” nature of the production. In addition to that, characters appeared and moved around in various ways: they were either brought in on the aforementioned blocks, or they rolled around in silks hanging from the ceiling. The audience was

engaged; in fact, they were part of the forest full of fairies, almost as if the members of the audience in the walking pit were part of the play.

### 3.2. Lockdown-driven Filmed Performances

Theatres in Romania were also locked down and live performances were forbidden. In order not to lose contact with the audience that is by far smaller than the audience of the British National Theatre, companies came up with productions that were somewhere between theatre and film. Szigligeti Company in Oradea produced a series of six-episode videos in May during lockdown when meeting in person was still prohibited. The actors did their parts separately, and the video files were later edited, montaged, and broadcast as short films. Each episode came out on the company's Facebook page every third or fourth day in May. The productions present a selection of *One-minute Stories* written by István Örkény. From first-person narration monologue-like texts to dialogues the types of the texts vary. The text itself was not adapted or altered, but only dramatized in the actors' personal environment.

Although no major theme governs the selection, - only Örkény's grotesque humour - fake news does seem to recur in more than one story. The "Hírek és álhírek" ["News and Fake News"] is a montage which starts with the narrator who is filmed outside in a park surrounded by a block of flats, as if speaking to the readership/audience, later a chatroom with nine participants appears on the screen. The participants sit against various backdrops ranging from the wall in their homes to various posters or digital background. As if illustrating that nothing has changed compared to the time when the story was written, the video ends with an old recording of a similarly hilarious fake news report on the end of the world.

Theatre and film combine in the productions while two actors are never in the same place. The setting may be a car - filmed as if both actors were in the same vehicle but the editing clearly suggests the opposite. "Newlyweds Stuck in Flypaper" is filmed and edited to suggest two flies facing each other, one being upside-down and the two participants only sometimes being montaged besides each other. Other stories need to be adapted to a greater extent given that the original story is just an eight-exchange dialogue; in this case, film-like scenes are introduced and montaged together. Altogether the short videos stand somewhere between theatre and film, socio-political realities condition their production which influences their quality as films. Although this form of

theatre does not replace live performance it allows actors and the company to stay in touch with their audience and these productions as well reflect the intermedial relationship between theatre and film.

### 3.3. *The Merger of Theatre and Film*

Y hails a new type of theatre production in which theatre and film do not simply co-exist in the mode of production but influence each other and even merge to some extent in the diegetic world as well. The main character has a camera attached to her head, therefore, her point of view rules the audience's perception. Labelled "initiation in cyber theatre," the production incorporates live-streaming, point-of-view theatre, and point-of-view film [Játéktér, n.d.]. According to the same reviewer, the play allows us to catch up to the twenty-first century and that it signals the birth of a new theatre genre that is not scary anymore because we are slowly getting used to it [Pálffy 2020].

In Y film and theatre work together and go along, therefore the production displays a direct intermedial relationship. However, this relationship is far more complex than that one in the opera – if we are to consider Wolf's example. A more adequate term would be Rajewski's *media combination*, as two different media, theatre and film, are combined. Both of them bring their own signifiers – the performance is created on a theatre stage respecting the conventions of a theatre play; film is also present through the camera on the main actress's head, in addition to the live-streaming of the production.

## 4. *Conclusion*

What seemed to have been an insurmountable gap in March 2020 has proven to be one that Mankind can bridge through adaptation. The hypothesis presented in the present paper was that the 2020 pandemic does not rewrite history, but it reshapes the way both actors and the audience think about theatre. The theatrical output during the lockdown and in the period closely following it, when rehearsals were allowed to be held, indicate both that live performances are still in demand, and that intermedial approach to new performances is likely to be witnessed. The latter entails that live performances will also incorporate film and video. If we have in mind the number of views on YouTube and the additional material in connection with the plays and performances uploaded, in addition to the fact that theatres started

performing live once regulations allowed shows to be held in the open air, demand for live performances has not declined. Notwithstanding this demand, film/video seeps into theatre productions. On the one hand, it is the only way – at least known so far – to show performances during a period of lockdown/physical distancing. On the other hand, it becomes increasingly trendy to use this mode of production as well. The 2020 pandemic seems to have quickened the process of video seeping in theatre, hence intensifying intermedial relationship between theatre and film. Future research is to reveal whether this relationship remains stable and further develops, or whether theatre refrains from combining film in its productions.

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