



Teaching Crossroads

15th and 16th IPB ERASMUS WEEKS

Edited by

Elisabete Silva | Clarisse Pais | Luís S. Pais



Teaching Crossroads

15th and 16th IPB ERASMUS WEEKS

Edited by

Elisabete Silva | Clarisse Pais | Luís S. Pais

Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

Title: Teaching Crossroads: 15th and 16th IPB Erasmus Weeks
Editors: Elisabete Silva, Clarisse Pais, Luís S. Pais
Publisher: Instituto Politécnico de Bragança · 2020
5300-253 Bragança · Portugal
Tel. (+351) 273 303 200 · Fax (+351) 273 325 405
www.ipb.pt
Development: Serviços de Imagem do Instituto Politécnico de Bragança
Cover design: Soraia Maduro
Number of copies: 15
ISBN: 978-972-745-283-5
Online version: <http://hdl.handle.net/10198/22387>

Contents

<i>Elisabete Silva, Clarisse Pais, Luís S. Pais</i>	
Preface	7
EDUCATION.....	9
<i>Iuliana Barna</i>	
Didactic game - an effective means of developing the language in autistic children.....	11
<i>Marcin Krawczak</i>	
<i>Maciej Laskowski</i>	
Teachers' communication behaviours as a source of conflict on the example of the secret curriculum.....	23
<i>Paulina Koperna</i>	
Sociotherapy as a support for social and emotional development of preschoolers and elementary school children	35
LITERATURE	55
<i>Tatjana Šepić</i>	
Becoming a Writer – Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne Brontë	57

Preface

Education has undergone many changes and adaptations due to the uncanny times we live in caused by the pandemic that spread to the world in the first months of 2020. Speaking and writing about the effects of Covid-19 in all areas of life has become a common practice if one thinks of the numerous reports and news put forth by the media about the impact of the virus on people, on the economy, on work and school. No one knows for sure the consequences of Coronavirus. We can only focus and reflect on its short-term effects. Apart from realising that Covid-19 has taken its toll on people, it has forced us to readjust our lives in an unforeseeable way. Working and studying from home became a common practice of life put on hold. Lockdowns, enforced differently by the governments, have tried to bring the pandemic under control to drop transmission rates. In addition, they have dictated (the temporary) course of education and business. Online classes, online meetings, via Zoom or the Microsoft platform Teams, for instance, have given way to a virtual environment to which schools and universities had to adhere.

To avoid letting ourselves to be under the sway of Covid-19, we have to carry on with our so-called normal lives, under all accepted constraints, and try to deal with this new situation the best we can. That means that one has to continue teaching, learning and doing research in the search for knowledge, new challenges to unravel less explored fields, and, ultimately, to find a balance between life and work.

Starting this preface with the mention of the pandemic was neither innocent nor purposeless. As teachers and researchers, we felt we had to convey a message to all the people involved in the field of education and research. We must resolutely not fear the virus and fight it by doing what we know best. Despite the need to abide by safety rules, we have to continue working.

Regarding education, we can already draw some conclusions about the effects of the pandemic throughout these last ten months. Schools and universities have made all the efforts to overcome the constraints caused by Covid-19, facilitating the work of teachers/lecturers, educators, and researchers by fostering collaborative work and technology-enhanced learning. If, on the one hand, many complained about a myriad of negative aspects, namely the reduction of class interaction, technological devices and network problems, on the other, some bravely embraced the idea of going online, despite all the obstacles they would encounter. Overall, everyone adapted and continued working, upholding their beliefs in democratic education.

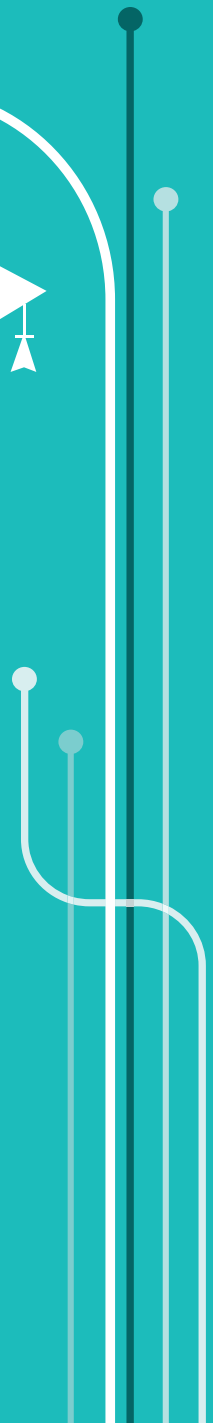
Conferences have also been postponed, cancelled, or transferred to an online context. The Erasmus Week, which was to be held at the IPB in May this year, was regrettably cancelled. Teaching Crossroads was not put off by the virus. It hasn't stopped the publication process since May last year. As such, we are pleased to have this year's edition ready, comprising some of the works presented during the 15th and 16th IPB Erasmus Weeks.

Finally, we would like to thank the authors who kindly sent us their works to be published, undergoing a thorough review process. Consequently, our last word of appraisal goes to the reviewers who helped us to keep the quality level we aim to maintain. We do hope that both students and teachers enjoy reading the texts published in this number, in the sense they find common teaching intersections that will benefit them throughout the teaching-learning process.

The editors
Elisabete Silva
Clarisse Pais
Luís S. Pais



Education



Didactic game - an effective means of developing the language in autistic children

Iuliana Barna

iuliabarna@yahoo.com

*Dunarea de Jos University of Galati
Romania*

Abstract

This paper presents the cognitive, social and psychological profile level of the language specific to autistic preschoolers who have a form of mental retardation. Preschool age is a crucial stage in the correct stimulation of speech. There are quantitative and qualitative changes that aim at acquiring the correct pronunciation, establishing the basic lexicon, the appearance of the inner language, the diversification of the forms of communication, the intensification of the cognitive language functions. Individualized programs are introduced by therapists and specialists in behavioural education within the standardized therapies developed in environments specially designed for autistic children. However, in my opinion, the support and implementation of psycho-pedagogical intervention programmes in schools, kindergartens, for children diagnosed with autism, which include alternative therapies based on the didactic game method, contribute to their language stimulation, intellectual development and integration into the social group.

Keywords: *autism, communication disorders, didactic game, preschool age.*

Introduction

From the first descriptions of autism, Kanner (1943) pointed out perceptual disorders and the existence of behavioural deviations, including the view of children suffering from this syndrome. Subsequently, the clinical description of perceptual disorders in autism gradually became richer. Cognitive research itself began in the late 1960s. Mention may be made of Metz (1976), who highlighted these children's preference for high-frequency sounds, and of James and Barry (1988), who experimentally demonstrated the existence of abnormally high sensitivity to a certain type of perceptual stimuli in autistic children.

Autism has recorded an alarming increase at the world level, statistics claiming that 1 child out of 68 (1 out of 61 according to other studies) is born with this disorder (autism is more frequent in the case of boys than in that of girls – a 4:1 ratio). Under the category of autistic spectrum disorders fall, according to DSM-IV-TR, the infantile autism, the Rett syndrome, the childhood disintegrative disorder, the Asperger syndrome and the pervasive developmental disorder, without other specifications (atypical autism or PDD-NOS) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

One of the aims of cognitive research on childhood autism is to demonstrate the possibility of assessing the intellectual level of these children, most often considered untestable. Considering that the responses of autistic children are difficult or even impossible to obtain, the possibility of subjecting such children to psychometric tests requires an extremely judicious test choice and significantly patient examiners.

The vast majority of autistic children have an intellectual deficit, according to De Myer (1981), 75% of them have an IQ below 52 and only 2.6% higher than 85. According to Rutter (1985), 1 / 5 to 1/4 of the autistic people have a normal IQ.

The memory of autistic children does not seem to be deficient. On the contrary, they are sometimes able to memorise, very precisely, general situations they were confronted with, but not details about single events and happenings. These children may even seem to be endowed with exceptional memorising abilities. However, their memory is more gestalt than discursive or symbolic. Hermelin and O'Connor (1970) showed that, unlike children with mental disabilities, autistic children can equally memorise sequences of words, unstructured or structured images, but fail to use the meaning of a suite of words to memorize it. These aspects may be solid evidence of either a semantic or categorical memory disorder.

Autistic people are supposed to have a good memory: they store well, the accuracy of some memories in some areas proves this. What is, in fact, problematic is their ability to classify and/or decode information.

It is estimated that about a third of the autistic people fail to acquire any language structure and another third develop only rudimentary language structures. The aspects of preverbal (prelinguistic) communication disorders are the following: the absence of the indicating gesture; communicative gestural poverty; gestural and mimicry deficits which accompany language (being here the absence of facial

expressions, smiles, which normally accompany a dialogue, autistic people do not even know how to interpret such expressions seen in others).

A classification of language disorders takes into account possible levels of language achievement and comprehension. Thus, reference may be made to language achievement at the following levels:

- Phonological - most often, autistic children do not have articulation deficits, but develop their phonological system at a slower pace than normal ones;
- Morphosyntactic - researchers have highlighted differences in morphology and syntax of the autistic children, such as poor use of morphemes corresponding to verbal tenses and articles, which seems to indicate a slower development.
- Semantic - a level which is significantly affected in the case of autistic children.
- pragmatic - the social use of language is extremely disturbed, by a reduced spontaneity of language, with accidental verbal expressions, the absence of an apparent intention to communicate, deficient adaptation to the roles of a conversation, non-observance of politeness rules, waiting for the moment to speak, rigidity and a maladaptation of the language concerning the context or the task.
- prosodic - the existence of anomalies such as intonation monotony, with an increased percentage of high frequencies, with hypo- or hypernasality, with poor control of voice volume, rather a form of aphonia.
- echolalia - very common, being sometimes the only linguistic achievement of autistic children.

Frith and Happe (1997) concluded that autism lacks two important elements of productive language, one being obvious in dialogue and the other in general language. In dialogue, autistic children seem unable to extend the interlocutor's previous comment, and if it is about language in general, they do not seem to know how to construct a story. Both observations suggest an inability to codify the arguments of action in a structure.

My intention in to present the means of educational intervention on a number of 10 autistic children, with specific behavioural disorders and differentiated cognitive evolution, as part of a complementary therapy that I have gradually observed, without being directly involved, to the purpose of finding out the role that the didactic game has at the level of language acquisitions.

1. Analysis of therapeutic modalities

A series of studies have shown that autism cannot be cured (although some authors have stated otherwise), but the amplification of both intellectual and emotional deficits can be avoided.

Moreover, a retrospective of some parental interviews suggests that many autistic children show significant gaps in the development of motor, language and communication skills in their first two years of life. The difficulty of interpreting these interviews resides in the necessity to distinguish between delays which are manifestations of general intellectual retardation and delays or deviations which are specific manifestations of autism.

The treatment of autism calls for a multi-disciplinary approach, requiring the close collaboration between the doctor, psychologist, educator and parents. Every child is a different, fragile and sensitive human being; it, therefore, requires a personalised treatment, established according to the medical, intellectual and psychoeducational assessments (Cucer, 2010).

The main goal of any treatment is to improve children's core behaviors. In most subjects, who show obvious signs of developmental delay, the first treatment premise could be to encourage the development of language skills, autonomy, and of social and learning skills. Another area in which most autistic children need help is related to improving behavioural symptoms: hyperactivity, isolation, stereotyping, self-stimulation, and/or aggression.

Considering the specific features of autistic children, learning structures should be organised into individualised and personalised programmes.

In terms of learning characteristics, autistic children do not understand the verbal explanations of what will happen next; they do not remember the sequences of events, so they will not be able to anticipate anything; they feel uncomfortable not knowing what will happen next; they encounter difficulties in any change due to the uncertainty of what will follow; their activity is dependent on the framework in which the learning took place. In addition, autistic children have difficulties in organising themselves beyond the known space, in making choices (trying several things at once), in initiating the game alone with a toy, in knowing how to use materials independently. Autistic people also have problems understanding group instructions: they cannot follow group directions (which means that they need separate, individual instructions), they do not understand words from instructions, songs, activities, they cannot wait for a long time without having any feedback and they cannot anticipate when their turn is. Under the circumstances, unforeseen changes in the programme, the absence of the teacher or therapist may create problems or confusion in autistic children.

Therefore, in setting up individual programmes, the children's favourite activities should be alternated with those that they like less or do not like at all. Thus, an activity that the child does not like must be planned before another that is preferred by the child, because in time, he/she will come to value the one that was initially unpleasant.

By looking into the language disorders present in autistic children, one may note that they are similar to aphasia specific disorders. For the young student, the

greatest drawback is the written language. Hence, at the cognitive level, dyslexia and dysgraphia appear in different forms:

- inability to write graphic signs and impossibility of recognising letters;
- difficulties in composing words, even if there is a personal way of writing graphics and letters;
- errors in the transcription of oral language into written language, these being also called dysphonographs.

Some of these mistakes occur due to the conflict that arises between insufficiently developed skills in terms of the receptive language in autistic children and the oscillations experienced at phonetic and phonological levels. (Chirila M., Mendelovici A., Milici R, 2015, p. 42)

In autistic children, severe language disorders are accompanied by disorders of evocation, generalization, reception and transmission, interpretation of the message. In turn, oligophrenia or psychosis impede language development, with specific dystonias occurring. Consequently, some of the speech disorders are determined by the intellectual deficit, but they can also influence some intellectual development to a great extent.

The long-term objectives that emerge from here are: achieving the goals at the educational, behavioural and social level, identified in the individualised educational plan; developing basic communication skills and the ability to communicate primarily with others; establishing a primary attachment relationship between the child and the significant people around him; educating family members in the sense of accepting the child's deficiency and establishing realistic expectations from their behaviours; engaging in imitative games with simple rules; educating children to accept changes in nature or the environment; elimination of all self-aggression behaviours.

Furthermore, the short-term objectives (at an individual level) would be: evaluating intellectual and cognitive level; conducting a language assessment; performing a neurological and neuropsychological test; ensuring the cooperation of the parents on the intervention plan, individualized therapy according to the test result; increasing spontaneous verbalisations in the relationship with the therapist; increasing the frequency of communication and interaction with the others; reducing the frequency and severity of outbursts of anger and mood changes; diminishing and, as far as possible, total elimination of acts of self-aggression; participation in games or activities with parents or other children at least 30 minutes daily; developing basic skills, personal autonomy and independence; developing working abilities that allow the child to channel interest to useful activities in a positive way.

2. Methods for testing the development level of the child with autism

Speech therapy is a complex process that takes place in stages. Regarding correction methods, the literature and practice prove that generally valid methods

cannot be applied in all disorders and cases. The therapy is strictly individualised (Stancila, 1994, p. 224, Tudose, 2007, pp. 42-66). The basic method in speech therapy is imitation, but although it is based on the imitation reflex, which is the simplest mechanism, it is not sufficient and effective in all cases, because it involves increased attention, focus, the children's collaboration and understanding of the purpose of the activity. Autistic preschoolers have limited attention with minimal concentration and are reluctant at first, unwilling to exert sustained effort, and get bored quickly. The method of imitation must be supported by several other methods and procedures designed to act not only on speech but also on the whole personality.

Therapists have performed a finding experiment by means of applying a series of tests enabling researching *the psychological age of language knowledge level*. The minimum chronological age of the children is 4 years and the maximum age is 7 years.

The test for identifying the psychological age of language (Alice Descoedres) was applied to each subject. As presented in table 1, it consists of seven subtests, covering (Vrasmas, E., & Oprea, V., 2003):

1. *Objects with contradictory properties* (in their actual state or image). E.g. The image of a large mushroom and a small one; the image of an old man and a young man. The image of a happy child and a sad child. The number of exact answers is recorded.
2. *Filling in the gaps in a spoken text*. The child is explained to that he will be told a short story, and where the story stops the child is supposed to say the right word. The number of correct answers is recorded.
3. *Repeating numbers*: The child must repeat the numbers said by the educator. If the subject does not understand, the number is repeated 3 times, but the respective series is no longer considered. If he can only repeat the first series, he receives the coefficient 2, for the second series, the coefficient 3, for the third series - 4, for the fourth - 5 and for the fifth series, the coefficient 6. The coefficient of the last series reproduced correctly is recorded.
4. *Knowledge of six objects*: What is it made of? house \Rightarrow (at least three materials: brick, wood, cement). The correct answers are recorded.
5. *Opposites without objects or images*: easy \Leftrightarrow hard; cheerful \Leftrightarrow (sad, indisposed, unhappy). Eight terms are set out. The child will say the opposite terms. It is marked from 0 to 8, according to the exact answers.
6. *The name of 10 colours*: Red, green, black, pink, white, purple, grey, yellow, brown, blue. The colours are presented and the child is asked to name them. The therapist notes the answers from 0 to 10 according to the correct number of the children's answers.

7. *Knowing the meaning of verbs*: Series I: coughing, rubbing, winning, throwing, washing, breathing; Series II: to write, to bend, to swing, to get up, to jump, to push (something).

The test has two series of six verbs each. Series I: The educator mimics and the preschooler has to name the verb. Series II: The student is asked to express the meaning of the verbs by action. The results marked from 0 to 12, according to the number of correct answers, are to be recorded.

Table.1: Calculating the psychological age of language

Test	Age coefficient				
	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years
I. Opposites (with objects and images)	4	5	6	8	12
II. Gaps	2	3	4	6	8
III. Numbers	3	3	4	5	5
IV. Materials	3	4	5	6	6
V. Opposites (without objects and images)	4	5	6	7	8
VI. Colours	2	3	4	6	8
VII. Verbs	4	6	8	9	11

The purpose of the finding stage provides estimating the level of language development, determining the specific personality traits in children, determining the types of errors in the lexical act. In this case, a set of tests was applied to examine the oral language as well as the Bovet¹ reading test to detect speech disorders and types of errors in the speech act (*Vrasmas, E., & Oprea, V., 2003*).

The selected samples were applied at the beginning of speech therapy and after its completion.

3. Test results

The result of the evaluation for the 10 children tested showed that: 75% of autistic children have dyslalia, *i.e.* deformation, substitution, omission, replacement or inversion of certain sounds in spontaneous or reproduced speech, and the psychological age of language is less than their chronological age and only 25% have the age of language close to chronological age. Some children's setback can be determined by the present cerebral dysfunction, but also by social causes: the lack of concern of the family for the child's development or the lack of integration in a social group.

¹ Bovet D. *QI et Démence: un Nouveau Test. Adaptation française du NART [IQ and Dementia: a new test. A French adaptation of the NART]. Mémoire de cours pour la formation d'orthophonistes, Université de Neuchâtel, 1991*

4. atMethods of educational intervention: the didactic game

Among the educational interventions scientifically validated, there are behavioural interventions, such as: ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis); learning environment structuring programmes; language and communication-focused interventions (PECS); development of social and occupational skills (Posey, Stigler, Erickson and McDougle, 2008).

To improve the language and the special abilities, we proposed in these standardised therapies the fundamental method specific to early education, namely the didactic game.

In the didactic game, the educator needs to have the competence to capitalise efficiently on this method in language development. In preschool education, one can use a wide range of games such as:

- a) didactic games for skill training in pronouncing the sounds correctly: these games may include the introduction of words naming characters or objects known in real life.
- b) didactic games for the correct pronunciation skill learning from a phonetic point of view. Autistic preschoolers may be asked to divide simple and practical words into syllables and the educator should also insist on word-formation skills with a given initial sound.
- c) didactic games for consolidating the skills to use nouns in the singular and the plural correctly, etc.
- d) didactic games that involve objects. Playing with different objects and materials, especially with toys, the child develops visual, tactile-kinesthetic and auditory sensations and perceptions. Children will better perceive size, colour, shape, weight, distance, position, movement.
- e) **didactic games involving the child to associate the graphic elements given with the number of words or syllables.**

Most educational games are intended to enrich children's vocabulary with common nouns that name: objects and phenomena perceived directly in the surrounding nature and social life, names of objects needed in life and activities, main rooms with necessary objects, body parts, personal hygiene items, clothing, footwear, food, means of transport, seasons and phenomena, domestic and wild animals, frequently met plants and some of their components, some aspects of the work and social life carried out by their parents.

In the observational-ascertaining research, whereby we evaluated the 10 children with autism, we took into account the following categories of variables:

- a) the independent variable: didactic games for language stimulation;
- b) the dependent variable: the level of language development after the application of didactic games in therapy.

The results obtained at the level of improving the verbal language following the strict application of the standardized therapies, expressed by qualifiers, can be seen in figure 1.

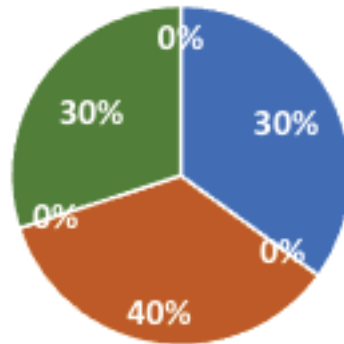


Figure 1: Receptive - expressive language: **advanced**, **good**, **weak**

Figure 2 shows the results obtained at the level of improving the verbal language following the application of the didactic game within the standardised therapies, expressed by qualifiers.

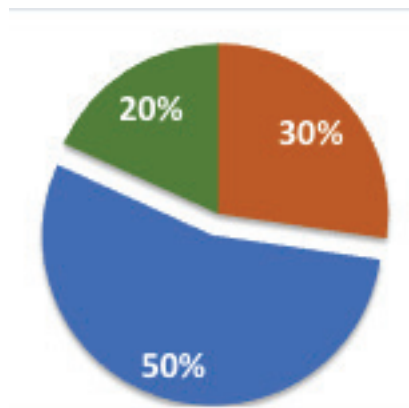


Figure 2: Receptive language - expressive: **advanced**, **good**, **weak**

It is necessary to apply complex therapeutic intervention from an early age to avoid further gaps that may occur between the child's chronological age and the language age, thus avoiding severe forms of cognitive and socio-emotional retardation (Barna, 2018).

The didactic game helps us organising the intellectual activity of the children in the most pleasant, attractive, accessible and efficient forms. Even if by the structure of the didactic game, the autistic is determined to observe certain rules, the game

action produces joy, pleasure, contributing to the satisfaction of various needs of the child: the need for movement, the need for knowledge, the need to establish relationships with others (stimulated in this case). Over time, the game changes the initial unsafe, inhibited, or deficient behaviour in a playful, less rigid manner as often happens in standardized therapies. It stimulates and shapes the affective-emotional processes, enriching the emotional life of the children, helping them to handle their emotions and thus the verbal language can be stimulated.

Conclusions

Language development involves widening the sphere of knowledge following life experience. It means acquiring new skills that contribute to the establishment and consolidation of verbal behaviour. In this sense, the didactic game is a valuable means of training and educating the autistic child. In this case, on a social level, the affective behaviour is improved, and five autistic children have expressive language acquisitions, which makes us assert that there is partial, but progressive cognitive development.

The development of autistic children with language disorders takes place based on the same physical and mental development needs specific to a typical child.

This approach allows for optimising the identification of alternative therapies and educational activities based on didactic games that can lead to the improvement of the verbal behaviour of autistic children and provides a psycho-pedagogical prerequisite for their preparation for school.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-IV [Internet]. 4th ed. Washington (DC): American Psychiatric Association; 1994 [cited 2010 Mar 8]. 866 p.
- Barna, I. (2018). Language and Communication Disorders of Autistic Children. An Interdisciplinary Approach, *Education Facing Contemporary World Issues*, Volume LXVII, Pages 1- 2235 (15 August 2019), The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS.
- Barry RJ. & James AL. (1988). Coding of stimulus parameters in autistic, retarded, and normal children: evidence for a two-factor theory of autism. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 6, 139-149.
- Bench, J. and L. Metz (1975). Stimulus complexity, state and infants' auditory behavioural responses, *British Journal Dis. Commun.*, 10, 1, April, 52-60.
- Bench J, Collyer Y, Mentz L, Wilson I. (1976). Studies in infant behavioural audiometry II: Six-week -old infants. *Audiology*, 15, 302-314

- Cucer, A. (2010). *Psychocorrection of language disorders through complex therapy actions*. Chişinău: Ed. Print-Caro.
- Chirilă M., Mendelovici A., Milici R. C. (2015). *Dyslexia - the teacher's and parents' guide*, Iaşi: Spiru Haret.
- Kanner L. (1943). Autistic Disturbances of Affective Contact. *Nervous Child*. 2, 217–50
- Kanner L. (1971). Childhood Psychosis: a Historical Overview. *Journal of Autism and Childhood Schizophrenia* 1, 14-19.
- McDougle, C.J., Stigler, K. A., Erickson, C. A., & Posey, D. J. (2008). Atypical Antipsychotics in Children and Adolescents with Autistic and Other Pervasive Developmental Disorders. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 69, 15-20.
- Stancilă, C. (1994). *Therapy of language disorders*. Bucuresti: E.D.P.
- Tudose, F. (2007). *Fundamentals of medical psychology*. Bucuresti: Fundatia România de Maine.
- Vrasmas, E. & Oprea, V. (2003). *Set of tools, samples and tests for the educational assessment of children with disabilities*. Bucuresti: UNICEF.

Teachers' communication behaviours as a source of conflict on the example of the secret curriculum

Marcin Krawczak

mkrawczak@puss.pila.pl

*Stanisław Staszic University of Applied Sciences in Pila
Department of Philology
Poland*

Maciej Laskowski

mlaskowski@puss.pila.pl

*Stanisław Staszic University of Applied Sciences in Pila
Department of Philology
Poland*

Abstract

School has been one of the most cardinal and influential of all public institutions in society. Naturally, it is hardly conceivable that there is such a thing as a school free from conflicts. These conflicts, in turn, are generated among others by various communication behaviours of a whole spectrum of teachers: from idle, frustrated, and compassionless, on the one hand, to – unlikely though it sounds – committed, inventive, and knowledgeable, on the other. Therefore, the subsequent article's chief goal is an attempt to present typical communication behaviours of

teachers in the school institution, which lead to conflicts in the teacher-student dyad. Further, the paper looks at the problem from the position of students. This perspective seems to be particularly interesting, as it is them that the school serves in the first place. Ultimately, the study is set against the background of the so-called secret curriculum, which notion will also be demonstrated in the article, alongside other terms that prove helpful in the discussion.

Keywords: *teachers' communication behaviours, the school institution, conflict at school, the secret curriculum.*

1. Introduction

The school is one of the most significant institutions in the public sphere, the essence of which is education and upbringing in society. The vast majority of people go through the following stages of education, from elementary school, through junior high school to high school.

In general, kindergarten and university can also be included in the category of school as an educational institution. Although they are not the subject of this discussion, it is worth mentioning that both the kindergarten (excluding five- and six-year-olds) and the university share the fact that attending them is not compulsory. The situation is different with the above-mentioned types of schools; the Polish law, for example, has made a certain distinction in this respect. The universal education process is subject to two obligations: the first one is schooling, which presupposes the need to attend elementary and junior high school (i.e. from the age of 7). Although the law does not specify the upper end of compulsory schooling, it can be deduced that the second obligation, to learn, obliges one to continue it from 7 to 18 years of age, i.e. to reach the age of majority (Journal of Laws of 2004, no. 256, item 2572).

The comprehensive development of pupils is the ultimate idea of the school and the fundamental direction of its activity. The social space in which educational actions take place abounds in myriads of communication collisions, and their end result may be unknown. In the teacher-student relationship, there are special types of interaction starting from the exchange of polite forms through didactic activities to solving problems. This last aspect is at the centre of the ongoing considerations. It is therefore not a revelation to say that among such a number of mutual communication interactions there must be some disciplinary difficulties. For many it remains obvious that students are the source of conflict by disturbing the harmony of the educational process. The authors of the following article take a polar opposite position, saying that teachers are the subject that can cause conflict. The purpose

of this article is therefore to examine the communication behaviour of tutors that may be a source of conflict from the perspective of students.²

2. Space and communication behaviour

Determining the significance of communication behaviours should be placed against the background of the broader concept of the public space. This term is taken differently depending on the field of research in which it is used. For instance, physicists see space as a reservoir of natural phenomena that ensures their existence (Speake, 1979, p. 308). Geographers characterise it as a relationship between a series of events subject to time and all processes (Blaut, 1961), and, for architects, space is represented as an experience of humanity extracted from the natural world (van der Laan, 1983, p. 11ff).

The social aspect of space has been included in the research of Madanipour (1996), Woolley (2003), Puppel (2004), and Tonnelat (2010). All the cited researchers are of the opinion that the most important purpose of space is to serve the community, for space cannot exist without the presence of individuals who have been identified as communicators for the purposes of this article. Therefore, communication behaviours should be interpreted as verbal and non-verbal actions initiated and developed during communication acts (Puppel, 2004, p. 4). The teacher is therefore one of the communicators who uses appropriate vocal-auditory and tactile-visual modalities in their communication behaviours occurring in the public space of the school.

Along with the definition of communication behaviour, the concept of conflict should be explained. Sobol (1995, p. 582) states that it is “a clash of interests, views, disagreement, dispute, collision” [from Latin *conflictus* – collision]. Although the quoted notion is explained in general formulations, it also illustrates the extent of particular antagonisms.

3. Institutionalality of the school

The school belongs to the kind of institutions that combine different dimensions of public spaces. These spaces are contextual backgrounds in which the most various communication collisions with specific purposes take place. Understanding the position according to which the school abounds in the most important types of space is vital to remember that the most dominant are the following: agora/forum, arena, home, lecture hall, theatre, temple (Puppel, 2008).

The agora/forum is one of the historically oldest public spaces. The Athenian agora, the main market of Greek policies, was the meeting place of the Ecclesia, i.e. a gathering of full member citizens. The Ecclesia was the power

² Bibliographical references and possible citations have been translated by the authors of the text [MK, ML] and marked in this way, unless otherwise indicated.

in ancient Athens and, as mentioned, consisted of full citizens, that is to say, excluding women, slaves, people deprived of civil liberties and, as Glowacki (2005, p. 258) adds, people found guilty of godlessness, abuse of parents and young men who did not complete military service. Although the idea of Athenian democracy was far from the modern idea of equality of citizens, at that time this form of statehood was perceived as a social phenomenon. In addition, being the cradle of rhetoric, the Athenian agora became a place where classical oratory practices flourished. Particularly noteworthy is the concept of *parrhesia*. Colloquially, it is an honest and open statement, close to veridicality, which was supposed to characterize all citizens and constitute a kind of uncompromising truthfulness emphasizing their equality and freedom of thought (Saxonhouse, 2006, p. 88). In a word, every full-fledged citizen of Athens could freely make his proposal on the agora, criticising all unreasonable (in his mind) statements. In addition, Foucault (1983, p. 4) notes that *parrhesia* is a kind of criticism, expressed in relation to oneself or to others, during which the *parrhesiastes* is in a position of inferiority to the interlocutor. This application of the term *parrhesia* will soon be discussed in relation to the school institution.

The school institution is an adequate example of the agora/forum, as it serves as a space for the exchange of language and non-language resources. Both tutors and students present their communication skills and are subject to mutual evaluation. The school/agora enables it to continue its main social mission, which is the comprehensive development of the student. The development occurs basically as a result of communication transactions for which the school is a formal place for these exchanges. *Parrhesia* in school occurs especially in situations where the student does not agree with the teacher's attitude. By expressing his/her position, the student becomes a *parrhesiastes*, as in the school's institution the teacher is in a superior position. The discrepancy that arises with a difference of attitudes gives rise to conflict and hostile mutual attitudes when, in addition, it is articulated in a confrontational and tactless way. The teacher's role is then to relieve the tension and listen to the student with such an approach that will show him/her the true intentions and the unforced desire to solve the problem together. This joint search may consequently prove to be a significant stimulus to the intellectual and emotional headway of the maturing student, although at first s/he may not notice it.

The arena is a space where communicators are not the ones competing, but rather the aforementioned language and non-language resources. When the participants of the communication act are an educator and a student and there is a verbal exchange between them, other passive participants evaluate the communication attitude of each of the two interlocutors involved in the act. Moreover, these passive observers assess language and non-language

resources *per se*. Sometimes it happens, for instance in Poland, that a single communication act in the classroom between communicators can lead to collisions of resources in the arena space, contributing to physical repercussions. And despite the fact that this solution to the conflict is considered drastic, the teacher stands in a lost position in it, as any kind of such intervention can result in removal from the workplace, even if the student is clearly guilty of the conflict.

The home is an essential space whose quality will determine the communicator's later ability to interact with other public spaces. Augé (1995, p. 108, after Descombes, 1992, p. 163) perceives the space of home as primarily founded on communication values of rhetorical provenance, stating that the communicator is at home when s/he freely understands the rhetoric of those with whom s/he lives; when s/he is able to convey his/her position without undue difficulty and to grasp the arguments of his/her interlocutors with equal ease. The boundaries of the home as a space appear when the communicator's interlocutors do not understand the motives of his/her actions and gestures, complaints that s/he expresses, or admiration that s/he manifests. Theoretically, the school should be a continuator of the pedagogical values initiated in the family home. Such a statement would assume that all families function in a healthy way and flawlessly fulfil their educational tasks. Unfortunately, quite often the educational process does not proceed as expected. The conflict that can arise at school, apart from peer misunderstandings, also includes teacher-student relationships. Among the most important reasons for this conflict there are two: 1) the aforementioned pathologies of the family home, which set such standards of behaviour that cannot be applied in the school institution, and 2) the ordinary difference between the rhetoric of the family home and that of the school (represented by teachers of given subjects) as an expression of natural dissonance between worldviews, maturity, formal restrictions between teachers and students, etc. The home is undoubtedly the most rudimentary of public spaces. It is a matrix on which communication behaviour patterns are printed, although their final shape is not only the responsibility of communicators, but it is also moulded by society (including school), and their final result cannot be fully predicted.

The lecture hall – or, in the case of secondary school, the classroom – is another type of the public space. The focal point of each classroom is the teacher's desk, from which the vector of communication activity flows and from where the teacher should initiate communication acts. In a figurative sense, the lecture hall has the features of the aforementioned space-*agora*/forum, for it guarantees the physical dimension in which communication takes place. In addition, the school as an institution can be a vestibule for further higher

education (for those who decide to continue it), where future students will literally learn about the tangible space for their further educational advancement.

The ubiquity of the theatre's public space is special, because theatricality can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to every aspect of human life (Davis & Postlewait, 2003, p. 1). The theatre is a sphere that realises the real attributes of communication intentionally exposed. Imitating the environment belongs to the inherent properties of man and consists in adopting social roles. Children acquire these roles by imitating parents or teachers. In this way, they shape their personality. Ówiklińska-Surdyk and Surdyk (2012, p. 46) refer to Mead (1975, p. 224), explaining this phenomenon as follows:

The organization of universal attitudes in a given group creates a complete personality. Man has a personality because he belongs to some community, because he/[she] incorporates the institutions of this community into his/[her] behaviour. He/[She] uses language as a means of achieving personality; then, through the process of adopting the various roles that everyone else provides, the attitudes of community members are adopted. This is – in a sense – the structure of human personality [MK, ML].

A developing child tries to apply those learned behaviours that bring him/her rewards from the environment and avoid those that could expose them to punishment. Children learn what communication behaviours are expected by given groups of communicators and which ones are socially acceptable. When they go to upper secondary school, they are already familiar with many types of behaviour that they have previously studied and displayed. However, any new environment is a challenge and, as with non-native cultures, it may be that current behavioural patterns are incomplete, maladjusted or simply failing during interaction. Difficulties accumulate, because nowadays we are dealing with the depreciation of values. Virtues and arguments have degraded, so both the student and the teacher are forced to put on masks. This issue will be discussed further.

The last of the public spaces cited by Puppel (2008) is the temple. The temple is a place of worship commonly associated with ritual behaviours reserved for the sacred sphere; consequently, building associations with the school may not be relevant. This is not so, however, because the tutor, especially for early schoolchildren, is the same authority for pupils in school as a priest for the congregation in the temple. A child who starts school in elementary school in his/her imagination lifts the teacher to a pedestal of admiration and uncritical trust. It may happen even to the extent that a school supervisor can replace the authority of a mother or father, at least for some time. This property of authority disappears naturally, as the child matures and goes to upper secondary school. The situation changes so much that the student questions not only the authority of the teacher, but also parents' appli-

cable laws, established patterns of behaviour, in a word, almost the whole world. On the one hand, this is positive because doubt is a manifestation of independent thinking and mental development. On the other hand, anarchist attitudes towards everything and everyone can lead to absolute maladjustment.

The above considerations regarding the presence of the selected public spaces in the school's institution are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Source: based on Puppel 2008

Public space	Institution of school
agora/forum	exchange of language and non-language resources of teachers and students, as a result of which the attitudes of the abovementioned communicators are evaluated
arena	as above, but in addition, the language and non-language resources are subject to evaluation (including the assessment of the quality of communicators' statements)
home	theoretically, a continuator of pedagogical values initiated at home
lecture hall	spatial properties; vestibule for higher education in the physical sense
theatre	accepting and playing social roles; applying learned communication behaviour patterns
temple	in early school education, absolute faith in the authority of the teacher, then questioning that authority

In ecolinguistic terms, the school should function as a guarantor of the associative communication order, which promotes positive elements of communication implemented in aspects such as: donating, choosing and comparing, and should be based on the openness of that environment aestheticising the overall communication space. If the school environment is dominated by dissociative, closed and invasive order, and additionally inflamed by conflicts, then negative elements prevail in the communication space, and they cause disharmony, anxiety, disagreement and discouragement in all the entities involved in the action (Puppel, 2012, p. 17ff).

Having discussed the types of public spaces, one should look at the ritual behaviour and the mask theory in force in the school's institution.

4. Rituals and the secret curriculum

A social entity that aims to transform itself from an organisation into an institution must construct its own rituals that are to ensure it a generational continuation of its activities and the ability to transfer its resources. The school is such an institution, for it developed a range of rituals. Basically, the ritual should be characterized by the following attributes: 1) be symbolic, 2) be culturally inspired, 3) be limited to specific communication contexts, 4) be repetitive, 5) be staged, 6) be structured, 7) be defined by the character of a given institution, 8) provide satisfaction in the

intellectual and/or emotional sense and/or maintain social harmony (Krawczak, 2014, p. 84).

The last point of the ritual's description indicates its use. It is worthwhile to cite the concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), for which the school institution is a concrete illustration, and which is necessary to maintain social harmony. Jenkins (2002, p. 104) briefly defines symbolic violence as imposing symbols and meanings on messenger groups in such a way that they consider them to be sanctioned and legitimate. An example of the implementation of symbolic violence is the "secret curriculum" (Suchocka, 2011, p. 295 after Okoń, 2001, p. 316). It is a set of norms and values affecting young people, informal and unsanctioned, the result of which may be positive or not and it depends on the students' abilities, the teacher's skills and the educational policy of the school. The interpretation of the secret curriculum is the result of family home culture, peer relationships, and general social interaction, including the role of the media. Suchocka (2011, p. 296) gives examples of symbolic violence implemented in a latent programme, which is quoted below in the words of this author herself:

- applying bans;
- setting boundaries;
- demanding that you follow instructions;
- pushing beliefs and attitudes;
- requiring adequate interpretation of the teacher's expectations and responding appropriately;
- specifying time;
- establishing testing and examination system;
- defining space functions;
- displaying teacher's monopoly of knowledge;
- stigmatising students – gender labelling, creating unequal opportunities for students with different property statuses;
- using the contents of school textbooks that carry a specific view of the world in tasks and commands that appear to be neutral in their outlook.

These premises at some stage of the educational process must cause conflict-forming behaviour. The question is whether rituals help to alleviate emerging conflicts or, quite the opposite, inflame them. Goffman (1967), Levi-Strauss (1981, p. 681), and Durkheim (2001, p. 40) present different positions on this matter. Levi-Strauss (1981), as the creator of the intellectual concept, states that the purpose of the ritual is to fill the emptiness arising as a result of the excess of life experiences that should be prioritised. This kind of ritualisation of the public space is offered by the school institution through the symbolic violence mentioned above. It should be noted here that categorising intellectual experiences may deprive the student of the ability to think spontaneously. It happens so, because s/he puts him/her in learned reflections

on what is expected and acceptable from him/her, and arbitration in this struggle, of course, is fulfilled by the teacher with his/her learned beliefs.

Durkheim's (2001) emotionalist conception maintains that the ritual is an expression of shared emotions experienced by the community, which tends to emerge harmony from the pandemonium of social relations. Durkheim gives the primacy of the community over the intellectuality of the individual by pointing out that emotions can be shaky; therefore, it will be necessary to redefine the current meanings of rituals that are subject to ever-changing cultural circumstances. This role of ritual is also implemented in the school's institution. As one of the most significant institutions in the public space (and the ideology of each institution is the constitution of some form of social order), it is an example of micro-community with established patterns of behaviour guaranteed by the activity of communicators-teachers who maintain and instil this order for students. As a rule, teachers aim to harmonize social relationships and exemplify approved behaviour; notwithstanding, they can often leave out exceptional individuals with an extraordinary personality in this process.

At this point, the issue of masks mentioned earlier should be recalled, which is why the focus of this article is the dramatic perspective of Goffman (1967). This scholar deals with everyday life situations, in which communicators play their social roles depending on the context, specificity of a given communication act, and profession performed. Importantly, all this takes place in the strictly defined cultural framework of a particular community. Goffman draws on theatre terminology by citing the key concepts of his theory: 1) performance – a way of presenting the communicator's personality as a result of interaction with the recipient or a group of recipients that takes place on stage (in a space where communication behaviours are played with the intentional and conventional manner of communicator), 2) backstage – private communicator space, which other communicators do not have access to, where the actor playing his/her role can temporarily remove the mask; also the space in which strategies of future communication behaviours are constructed, 3) the audience – the recipient or group of recipients of the communicator's performance, 4) role – a pattern of communicative behaviour corresponding to the intention of the communicator and to the convention imposed by the dimensions of a given culture; knowledge about the use of different masks in different situations (Ćwiklińska-Surdyk & Surdyk, 2012: 49). The way communicators operate against the backdrop of the cited dramatic perspective will help to bring the following example:

performance - a teacher explaining a grammatical structure to a student

[scene] a classroom

backstage – teachers' room

audience – other students

role – patient and forgiving teacher guided by pedagogical values taking into account the imperfections of the developing student

The teacher, in accordance with the cultural expectations of society, such as the Polish one, plays the role of an educational supervisor as specified above. The space in which communication acts occur is a classroom filled with students. The educator must therefore be aware of the fact that his/her behaviour is constantly being evaluated by others (even temporarily passive) communicators. When s/he communicates knowledge to the student in an accessible and understandable way, it means in practice that s/he played his/her part according to the book and kept the recipient's perception of his/her duty. Yet, when the transfer of knowledge becomes arduous, as a consequence the teacher's competence may be challenged (although rarely such negation is articulated directly by students). The teacher's mask may be broken due to such circumstances. The continuation of the performance will be their backstage behaviour, though it will bare the actual mask inaccessible to the previous recipients. Then the teacher can share his/her position, for instance, or critically express his/her mental abilities with other teachers.

The cited example is just one of many combinations of hypothetical communication acts in which messengers put on masks to fulfil social roles. In the school institution, exposing the mask usually leads to substantive consequences manifesting in questioning the teacher's skills and authority – two essential attributes of the profession. This may result in a conflict dictated by the teachers' desperate desire to rebuild their students' faith in the abilities of such teachers.

5. Conclusions

Institutional education is a momentous and a long-lasting stage in a person's life. The sheer number of teacher-student communication interactions taking place in the school institution must, by definition, lead to communication collisions. There is every sign to surmise that students are not the only source of conflicting situations in the school environment. In fact, not infrequently it is teachers themselves – or, more precisely, their communication behaviours – that bring about the clash. It can be assumed that this responsibility falls on the educator all the more, for s/he administrates the public space of the school to a large extent, applying proper vocal-auditory and tactile-visual modalities. Moreover, when handling antagonisms at school, it is essential to take into consideration the kinds and complexity of public spaces, of which the most critical are agora/forum, arena, home, lecture hall, theatre, and temple, as Puppel (2008) puts forth. Another conclusion is that for the school to become and stay harmonious, the educator ought to realise that in the public space there are various ongoing rituals with the symbolic violence at the head. Once aware of this phenomenon, teachers need to adroitly manoeuvre themselves and their students out of the conflicting situations. Finally, performing various social roles in the school environment requires actors to wear various social masks for the part of the teacher, which habitually spurs reservations about the teacher's competence and confidence. Again, reaching a consensus in the tea-

cher-student relationship here requires from the former skilfulness, experience, and determination.

References

- Augé, M. (1992/1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London/New York: Verso.
- Blaut, J. M. (1961). Space and process. *The Professional Geographer*, 13, 1-7.
- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. C. (1977/1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publication.
- Ćwiklińska-Surdyk, D. & Surdyk, A. (2012). Człowiek jako aktor na scenie życia. Teorie G. H. Meada i E. Goffmana a narracyjne gry fabularne. *Homo ludens*, 1(4), 45-62.
- Davis, T. C. & T. Postlewait, T. (2003). Theatricality: Introduction. In T. C. Davis & T. Postlewait. (Eds.), *Theatricality* (pp. 1-39). Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Descombes, V. (1987/1992). *Proust: Philosophy of the novel*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1912/2001). *The elementary forms of religious life*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Glowacki, K. T. (2005). The Athenian Agora. In P. F. O'Grady (Ed.), *Meet the philosophers of Ancient Greece* (pp. 257-264). Farnham, England, and Burlington, USA: Ashgate.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual – essays on face-to-face behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Jenkins, R. (2002). *Pierre Bourdieu* (revised edition). London: Routledge.
- Journal of Laws of 2004 No. 256, item 2572, as amended. Article 15 para. 1 of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system.
- Krawczak, M. (2014). The dynamics of institutional identity as expressed by the inner – and outer – communicators in their communicative behaviours, Tom VI. *Scripta de Communicatione Posnaniensi*. Seria: Prace Naukowe Katedry Ekokomunikacji UAM. Poznań: Zakład Graficzny UAM.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1971/1981). *The naked man: Mythologiques*, Vol. 4. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Madanipour, A. (1996). *Design of urban space. An inquiry into a socio-spatial process*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Mead, G. H. (1975). *Umysł, osobowość, społeczeństwo*. (tłum. Z. Wolińska). Warszawa: PWN.

- Okoń, W. (2004). *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*. (Wyd. IV). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak.
- Puppel, S. (2004). An outline of a domain-resource-agent-access-management (DRAAM) model of human communication: Towards an ecology of human communication. *Electronic Journal "Oikeios Logos"*, 1, 1-27.
- Puppel, S. (2008). Human communicative universe: On the revolutions of communicative spheres or on the human communicator as "The Lord of the Rings". *Unpublished paper read at the University of Warmia and Mazury, Poland*.
- Puppel, S. (2012). Zarys asonansowego modelu piękna w komunikacji ludzkiej. *Scripta Neophilologica Posnaniensia*, 12, 17-22.
- Saxonhouse, A. W. (2006). *Free speech and democracy in Ancient Athens*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sobol, E. (Ed.). (1995). *Słownik wyrazów obcych*. (Wyd. I). Warszawa: PWN.
- Speake, J. (Ed.). (1979). *A dictionary of philosophy*. London: Macmillan.
- Suchocka, A. (2011). Przemoc symboliczna jako element ukrytego programu kształcenia polskiej szkoły. *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Marynarki Wojennej*, 4.
- Tonnelat, S. (2010). The sociology of urban public spaces. In H. Wang, et al. (Ed.), *Territorial evolution and planning solution: Experiences from China and France* (pp. 1-10). Paris: Atlantis Press.
- Van der Laan, D. H. (1983). *Architectonic space*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Woolley, H. (2003). *Urban open spaces*. London/New York: Spon Press.

Sociotherapy as a support for social and emotional development of preschoolers and elementary school children

Paulina Koperna

paulina.koperna@up.krakow.pl

*Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Educational Sciences
Poland*

Abstract

The contemporary world is full of fast, dynamic and constant changes. Those include changes in lifestyles, models of relationships and families. The modern world is also full of challenges for children and young people who have to cope with a range of possibilities, choices and requirements. These factors may result in problems with functioning in various situations, especially in social ones. Sociotherapy is a type of psychological and educational influence, that can help young people in developing social and emotional skills, facilitating the act of creating relationships and improving their personal abilities and traits. What is worth noticing is that elements of sociotherapy can be used in everyday school situations, enhancing teachers and pupils' work in a successful and effective manner. In the article a short theoretical background about sociotherapy and examples of useful exercises, that teachers can use in their classroom, are presented.

Keywords: *sociotherapy, school relationships, efficient teacher, sociotherapy methods and forms*

Introduction

The contemporary world is full of dynamic and constant changes in almost every area of life. Nowadays the reality is fluid, defying clear definitions and allowing many different interpretations, each of which can be justified and valuable (Bauman, 2006). The changes cover not only the fields of politics, economy and modern technologies, but also related to socio-cultural functioning, including relationships. Moreover, they do not constitute a spectrum of independent phenomena. On the contrary, they create a system of connected vessels, interacting with each other. The problems of globalization, turbo-capitalism and consumerism affect individuals and their functioning in everyday life (Łukasik, 2013). Modern technologies, especially those related to social media, shape mundane life. As a result of these global trends, new ways of social functioning are emerging. Among them we can distinguish new lifestyles and models of social relations, Present-day lifestyles and relationship models are characterized by great diversity and malleability, which is a reflection of global changes. Many people live faster and faster, “in immediacy”, according to the, 3x fast” rule - *fast food, fast sex, fast car* (Melosik, 2006). On the other hand, an opposing trend, of people who choose slow life, is gaining popularity (Kramarczyk, 2018).

The 3x fast rule style is based on consumerism, and its opposition is associated with an ecological approach and the principles of zero / less waste. The drive for success and career is opposed to the trend of withdrawing from the “rat race” and rivalry. Slow life followers do not want to make a great career. They focus on self-development, self-awareness and mindfulness. Between the ends of this continuum, determined by these extreme lifestyles, there is also a whole range of intermediate ones from which people choose what is right for them, what is more appealing to them at the given moment. The modern world is therefore characterized by an almost unlimited number of possibilities, choices, and decisions that every person must make every day.

It should also be noted that the above-mentioned lifestyles (which certainly do not close the list of possible ways humans function currently) also determine models of relations and families. It seems that the traditionally conceived family is giving way to new types of relationships. Nowadays, there are many reconstructed, patchwork families. many people undertake raising children on their own as an only parent. What is more, the interpersonal relationships often are superficial. They are based only on the use of social media, bypassing direct contact. On the other hand, the social media enable growth of well-functioning local communities, assistance groups, groups that exchange goods and services, or people concentrating around the same interests. It is also worth noting that the reality of modern world based on the principles of globalization, easy movement, travel or abundant employment opportunities

(not only associated with migration, but also with the possibility of online work) and modern technologies cause that societies stop to be hermetic and become more and more multicultural. It allows people the opportunity to establish relationships with people from all over the world, expanding the range of potential social and cultural experiences.

Challenges for children and young people

The changes outlined above generate huge challenges for children and young people. The trends of global changes influence lifestyles of young people and models of their relationships. They are also affected by trends related to consumerism and *fast life*, which is reflected in phenomena such as YOLO (You only live once) or FOMO (fear of missing out). ‘You only live once’ is the slogan promoting the approach focused on enjoying life as much as possible and taking the most of the opportunities given in the world, even if the activities are silly or slightly dangerous. This statement is associated with the movement in the world of unlimited access to information, goods, services and opportunities. ‘Fear of missing out’ is the fear of being disconnected- from the network, from information and important events (Jupowicz-Ginalska, Jasiewicz, Kisilowska, Baran, Wysocki, 2018). It is the fear that in the multitude of various possible activities, entertainment and information (thanks to unlimited access to the Internet) people can miss something, that in their subjective opinion could be valuable, and they could not experience it because of making another choice. This phenomenon is also associated with the desire to participate in as many activities as possible, which is unfortunately unavoidably connected with participating in them superficially. Dan Herman used this term for the first time in the mid-1990s to describe fear of not using all available options and at the same time losing the expected joy because of exhausting all these options (Jupowicz-Ginalska, Jasiewicz, Kisilowska, Baran, Wysocki, 2018). A. K. Przybylski and his research team characterize the concept of FOMO as “overwhelming fear that other people are experiencing very satisfying experiences in which I do not participate” (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, Gladwell, 2013). Blackwell and his research team in turn define FOMO as fear of the fact that “others play without you” (Blackwell, Leaman, Tramosch, Osborne, Liss, 2017). FOMO can be described more generally because the problem is not only about entertainment or social media. It also includes a certain desire to be in constant communication with others, the psychological need to belong (Jupowicz-Ginalska, Jasiewicz, Kisilowska, Baran, Wysocki, 2018). If it remains unsatisfied, then it can lead to mood swings and overall lowered level of life satisfaction, that are correlated with involvement in social media (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, Gladwell, 2013; Jupowicz-Ginalska, Jasiewicz, Kisilowska, Baran, Wysocki, 2018). Young people are also struggling with information overload and the necessity to

respond to many different stimuli from the outside world. The constant feeling of being obliged to respond to stimuli may cause problems with coping with information overload. Children and adolescents (but also adults in this situation) are more nervous, distracted and have difficulty concentrating on traditional skills such as comprehensive reading or writing, which is still required by the school or workplace (Carr, 2013; Jupowicz-Ginalska, Jasiewicz, Kisilowska, Baran, Wysocki, 2018).

Another problem that young people face nowadays is the urge to be successful, first at school and then at work. They function in a world where only success matters. An indicator of this success in school (a high level of intellectual development) is shown by good marks. It is rarely noticed that school success measured by grades can be affected by many disorders in social or emotional development. It also seems that, especially for parents, emotional well-being or high social competence of their children at school are not valued as highly as their intellectual development. In the context of proving their intellectual skills and obtaining good grades, weak and average students, or those with specific learning difficulties, despite many attempts, are unable to achieve high results. It may result in earlier described problems and ostracism. Furthermore, many psychologists in Poland pay attention to the problem of young people who are increasingly experiencing psychological difficulties, for example, if they are suffering from depression, feel a high level of anxiety, or feel isolated in dealing with their problems (Raczkowski, 2017). The percentage of young people's suicide in Poland is also high (Ostaszewski, 2018), which may indicate that young people, experiencing various types of difficulties, cannot cope with them and experience taxing emotions. In the era of rush to success, it is therefore necessary to pay attention not only to cognitive and intellectual development, but to social and emotional improvement as well.

Issues connected with ecology and climate change are also important for young people. The actions of young activists, such as Greta Thunberg, indicate that young people feel responsible for the fate of the planet and they want to act now to stop harmful human activity. An example of such activity may be youth climate strikes organized in many countries, including Poland (*Youth Strike for Climate*) and happenings. By expressing such activity, young people indicate not only that they feel the need to respond to threats, they are responsible, but also that they want to have a part in creating the reality around them, understood not only as a natural environment, but also as a social reality.

Importance of social and emotional development

The phenomena outlined above show that schools or institutions taking responsibility for the development of children and young people should – in accordance with international and national recommendations as far as education is concerned – focus on the comprehensive development of children and young

people. This means that, in addition to caring for intellectual development, a lot of attention should also be devoted to shaping the socio-emotional competences of young people. Increasingly pedagogues and teachers from school and universities claim the most important skills are those which are connected with the ability of building relationships, creating trust (including social trust) and skills necessary to function in society (Matczak, 2001; Martowska, 2012). These competences include, among others:

- Making a team and ability of working in a team (cooperation);
- Communication skills;
- Dealing with stress and functioning well under pressure;
- Solving problems (including interpersonal conflicts, making compromise);
- Motivation, responsibility;
- Creativity;
- Being positive and kind;
- Organizing skills;
- Willingness to self-development.

Numerous researchers as well as decision-makers in the European Parliament and the Council of Europe pay attention to competences related to the ability to cooperate or problem solving (also interpersonal problems) and communication skills as key competences (Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning (2018/C 189/01)). There is pointed out that those are competences that are especially desired in the labor market. In addition, a high level of social and emotional competence allows for the creation of satisfying relationships with others, which in turn is not without significance for the general level of satisfaction with life in society, and therefore the mental well-being not only of the individual but also of entire social groups.

In view of the above, as well as in the context of global phenomena outlined in earlier parts of the article and in the face of many possibilities and available ways of life, the question arises: what possibility of supporting young people has a teacher or educator at school in this postmodern reality? Sociotherapy can come with help.

Sociotherapy as a method of work with children and youth

Sociotherapy is a method of treatment of children and young adults' behavioral and emotional disorders during group meetings. In other words, sociotherapy is a psychological help aimed at children and adolescents. Its roots are in psychotherapy, psychoeducation and interpersonal training (Sawicka, 1998, p. 10).

Its main goal is to increase social skills and emotional competences. Moreover, it is also psycho-corrective and prophylactic activities. In the course of sociotherapeutic group meetings, teachers or coaches can strengthen the personality of

children and young people, equip them with necessary competences, mainly social and emotional ones, facilitate socialization processes or prevent of social exclusion and addictions, as well.

Sociotherapy is also based on positive feedback and relationships in groups. Sociotherapeutic classes or courses are largely based on the fact that the trainer - teacher or pedagogue - manages the group's work and group process in such a way that the group can carry out activities related to eliminating behavioral or emotional difficulties of participants. The biggest change can happen thanks to a peer group, with good, substantive support of a trainer, often appearing as an "example" - a person modeling desirable behavior. J. Strzemieszcy indicates that "sociotherapy consists in creating conditions for children (social experiences) enabling the sociotherapeutic process to take place (changing the thoughts about reality, behavioral patterns and emotional releasing)" (Strzemieszcy, 1993, p. 45).

To facilitate the understanding of sociotherapeutic process I will focus on points that can be treated as the essence of sociotherapy (Sawicka, 1998). The first point is the elimination or reduction of behavioral disorders resulting from psychological/emotional trauma and organization of the positive, corrective situations. The second point is indicating the importance of noticing that the source of behavioral disorder may be psychological or emotional trauma (Sawicka, 1998). The behavioral disorder though is the behavior, which is generally inconsistent with the expectations of adults, aimed at protecting the individual from (successive) unpleasant experiences. Sociotherapists point to the characteristic features of behavioral disorders: stereotypical opinions, inadequacy, harmfulness to the person and the environment (other people) and the presence of negative, unpleasant emotions. They are usually closely connected with generalized cognitive judgments or thoughts about reality (regarding the world, others and themselves). They affect not only the personal traits or appearance but also the ability to fulfill tasks in school, professional and daily life.

There are three main aims of sociotherapeutic courses or classes: educational, therapeutic and developmental. Educational goals include learning a variety of issues that will help participants (ranging from preschoolers to adolescents) to function more efficiently in society and deal with a variety of problems. The participants of sociotherapeutic classes are often children and adolescents experiencing difficulties in functioning in society, as well as school difficulties, which are often the result of not only specific learning difficulties, but also a low level of social skills or even a lack of knowledge about them. Among the educational goals can be distinguished, for example: learning to recognize emotions, learning the mechanisms of addiction, developing conflict management skills. They are focused on supporting the process of gaining knowledge about themselves and others and boosting the process of understanding the social world. It results in changes in behavior that can protect children from mental trauma (Sawicka, 1998). An important task of sociotherapy is also to support class participants in the development and comprehension of

mechanisms governing the real world, which is why achieving developmental goals is also important (Sawicka, 1998; Strzemieczny, 1993). They are related to the age of participants and their needs and interests. While implementing developmental goals during classes, development of interests and passions, meeting the needs relevant for participants from a given age group are taken into account (for example: the needs for creativity, physical activity, self-expression, being with peers, acceptance, social approval, adult support or social activity) and tackling issues relevant to the group (Sobolewska, 1993). According to Sawicka (1998) “In formulating developmental goals, account should be taken of the needs of class participants, the regularities of personal, social and moral development of children and young people, and the social and educational situation of individual participants of the group” (p. 16). Therapeutic goals are related to work on behavioral disorders and emotional releasing connected with difficult experiences of participants that caused mental trauma. Trauma is a “stressful experience of a highly traumatic or disturbing nature” so Zimbardo and Ruch (1996, s. 687) contend, which can be caused by difficult one-time experience or long-term unpleasant experiences. In sociotherapy, as noted earlier, it is important to correct difficult behaviors that have their own psychological background and are accompanied by unpleasant emotions, such as anxiety, anger, feelings of harm or loneliness and specific judgments about reality: about the other (adults and peers), the world and people themselves. “It is assumed that they are the result of past or current difficult emotional states that the child could not or cannot cope with” (Sawicka, 1998, p. 16). In order to reach therapeutic goals, the following situations should be created:

- 1) social situations during group meetings that will provide course participants with corrective experiences opposite to the content of traumatic experiences, as well as experiences compensating for deprivation experiences,
- 2) situations that allow emotional releasing,
- 3) situations conducive to learning new socially desirable skills should be organized.

It is important that in the case of young participants, trainers or educators do not focus on encouraging them to relive difficult situations, but on releasing tensions through activities that allow to reveal blocked emotions during classes. It is important, therefore, that the participants in the group meetings can afford to laugh, cry or scream and that they can experience positive emotions. To sum up the main understanding of sociotherapy, Strzemieczny stressed: “sociotherapy is determined by the purpose of the class. If the main purpose of working with pupils is to create a corrective experience for the disorder (...), then these are sociotherapeutic classes” (Strzemieczny, 1993, p. 45).

There are also three main parts of sociotherapeutic process: 1) the emotional releasing, 2) changing cognitive judgments/thoughts about reality, and 3) teaching new behaviors and psychological, social and emotional skills.

Through the sociotherapeutic process it is possible to experience the emotional releasing. Young participants of sociotherapeutic classes very often struggle with difficult emotions that they have to control on a daily basis. Emotions associated with the experience of failure in school situations, misunderstanding by adults (not only parents, but also teachers) or the unpleasantness associated with difficulties in peer relationships are difficult emotions that are not easy to deal with. In the course of sociotherapeutic classes there is a place to work with this type of emotions. Educators or teachers care not only for a friendly, trusting, safe atmosphere, enabling emotional releasing, but also for the organization of appropriate activities and games aimed at getting rid of difficult emotions (e.g. anger or sadness) on the one hand, and on the other, on awakening and developing emotions such as joy and happiness. A very important element of the sociotherapeutic process is the change of cognitive judgements about the reality. By using contradictory content, the person who leads the group and the group, modeled in the right way by the educator or trainer, cause a slow change of a person's judgments about reality – thoughts that accompany him or her about themselves in the context of difficult situations. The participant's thoughts about the reality usually accompany a very low assessment of one's own competences or a negative assessment of others' attitudes towards a given person. Contradictory content is the verbal communication, messages which are in opposition to the participants' thoughts about other people, tasks or thoughts about themselves. In other words, they are positive messages, opposite to those that the participant may have heard earlier from others, or messages strengthening, for example, self-esteem. They should be, of course, true and adequate to the participants and based on their strengths, found earlier, during the diagnosis. By repeating such messages, the participant can concentrate on the positive sides of himself, on his strengths and gradually change his previous judgments about reality. It is important not to focus on the negative, pejorative sides of the functioning of the world and the social environment and try to show the participants the brighter side of the world. Teaching new behaviors and social skills occurs in the course of specially organized, planned exercises, carried out in the course of workshops, which can also take the form of social skills training. These exercises sometimes involve organizing appropriate educational situations, called corrective situations. The essence of those corrective experiences consists in

different behavior of the environment, which does not confirm the child's expectations and ideas arising from his previous experiences and selectively confirmed by him, which is associated with the process of generalization, [but in] providing the child with such experiences around which he will be able to rebuild the image of himself. (Kratochvil, 1981, s. 293)

During those experiences, participants of sociotherapeutic classes have the opportunity to gain positive experiences with others, practise social skills in safe conditions, and then – for example on the occasion of cultural or sports outings – to test themselves in natural social conditions. Corrective situations involve arranging the situations in such a way that the participants can strengthen their skills, experience positive emotions and receive feedback in the form of a positive message about themselves. Organizing corrective situations is nothing more than providing participants with positive experiences during which they can believe in themselves, increase their self-esteem, convince themselves that they are not alone, that they are accepted by others whom they can rely on. Positive experiences operate on the principle of reinforcements, which increase the motivation to repeat socially desirable skills, thanks to which there may be a correction of behavior, a change in behavior patterns previously assessed as socially undesirable. Therefore, work in a sociotherapeutic group consists in organizing activities so that changes can take place not only in behavior patterns, but also in thinking about reality. Moreover, it also allows participants to release from difficult emotions. It is worth noting that well-organized sociotherapeutic work is based on an accurate diagnosis of participants, during which examples of disturbing behaviors, possible emotions experienced by participants and their possible judgments about reality are described in detail. An extremely important element of sociotherapeutic diagnosis is the construction of contradictory content and educational corrective situations.

Sociotherapeutic classes can be part of classes for all groups of children and adolescents – as exercises or activities supporting social and emotional development or as activities enhancing strengths or self-esteem. However, they are addressed especially for a group of children and youth experiencing various types of difficulties. Very often children and young people start to attend sociotherapeutic classes as a result of a court judgment, the action of a guardian or school counselor's decision. These are often children with school difficulties (for example, children with specific learning difficulties that cause them to constantly experience failure and difficult education situations, which in turn may generate aggressive behavior or who have school difficulties from environmental neglect), hyperactive or aggressive children. Participants of the classes may also include young people with other emotional problems, for example, shy children, as well as those at risk of social exclusion or from socially excluded environments, including families with various problems (alcohol problem, violence, incomplete family, etc). These adverse environmental conditions affect the socio-emotional development of children and youth and their understanding of the world around them. Structured sociotherapeutic classes can be run by certificated sociotheraputists especially in sociotherapeutic day-care rooms and during sociotherapeutic projects and camps.

Sociotherapeutic classes have a certain structure, related to the work with a group as well as the group process and are based on important principles. Sociotherapeutic

meetings involve the implementation of specific goals that result from the main goals set for a given group. The goals are achieved by choosing the proper games, exercises or activities. The structure of classes is related to the stages of working with the group: 1) the period of formation of the group, 2) the main stage of work with the group and 3) preparing the group to complete its functioning – closing the group. During the first stage, the participants get to know each other, integrate and set group norms. There are some rituals and rules that are important for a group. During this period, it is particularly important to build participants' confidence in the leader and participants in each other, to create an atmosphere of security, kindness and empathy. During the second stage, proper work takes place, based on the implementation of the assumed therapeutic, educational and developmental goals. The third stage is very important due to the fact that in the course of group meetings, often very strong relationships and high integration are created between the participants of the classes. The ending of formal, structured meetings often raises strong emotions. At this stage, ways of contacting participants outside formal meetings should be developed. What is more, during the closing classes there should be time for "strengthening positive feelings, summary of acquired skills with an indication of the possibilities of their use in everyday life outside the sociotherapeutic group, giving each other positive, warm feedback (...), giving each other gifts. It is also time to gather and summarize feedback on the class cycle (Sawicka, 1998, p. 21).

During group work, it is extremely important to monitor the group process and the dynamics of the group's functioning. At first, difficulties may arise due to the fact that the participants do not know each other, do not trust each other, feel uncomfortable and introverted and behave as in a new, formal situation. Therefore, the first meetings often take place in an atmosphere of tension, resentment and even hostility. Often teachers or educators who run the classes can be met with reluctance by the participants. Children or young people can check teachers' limits or negate their proposals of activities by showing no interest in participating. Then it is worth paying attention to a certain "stabilization" in which the participants agree to the educators' proposals. There are various forms of cooperation not only between the participants and the educators, but also between the participants themselves and orientation towards exercises and activities. Then relationships within the group are created and the level of trust increases. The next phase of the group's development indicates its integration, a certain openness is formed, and group norms crystallize – work on achieving goals becomes possible. During the next phase, the crisis, conflicts may arise that may even disturb in conducting classes. They originate from current relations in the group (also between the participants and the educators), specific events at a given moment or various types of fears of the participants regarding e.g. rejection by the group. It is very important to respond to them properly, not ignore them, but to support their solution and treat them

as opportunities for learning new social skills. If the group copes with the crisis phase, then it is possible to move on to the next phase. Then the group can solve problems or work together and constructively on specific skills or competences. Then the way of communication changes (towards a more open dialogue), there is a focus on current events in the life of the group, without remembering past events, also increases the competences and capabilities of participants in the field of cooperation, tolerance or independence. Then it is possible to talk about the actual effects of working with a sociotherapeutic group.

For effective work to be possible, it is extremely important, however, to implement it based on important principles and to establish and adhere to the group code, which should apply throughout the entire period of working with the group. The basic principles in sociotherapeutic work include: 1) affirmation, 2) close contact (also physical) – it is important, because experiencing a difficult situation in close contact does not become a traumatic situation, 3) openness – to others, their emotions and experiences, and 4) existence of norms which are valid for children and leaders (teachers, pedagogues, educators) and are important for achieving the goals. Those norms can be called also as “The Group Code”. Those four principles and developing “The Group Code” not only facilitate the work of educators, who can refer to their compliance in the event of solving problems in conducting classes or during conflict resolution, but also have a corrective function. Attaching importance to compliance with rules that have been established for the well-being of everyone and result from respect for them and their acceptance makes the participants feel safe. They are aware that compliance with the rules by everyone is in their mutual interest and breaking them will be met with response – not only from the educator, who monitors the work of the group, but often also from other participants. Participants know that if they break a rule it will not go unresponsive, just like when a rule is broken against them. It is worth highlighting that “The Group Code” contains rules relating to the physical and mental security of participants, the opportunity to listen to them, keeping group secrets and regularity of meetings. It is also important that they contain standards on how to communicate effectively, including non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2015).

Although sociotherapy classes are run by certificated sociotherapists, its elements can be entered during regular classes or activities at school or kindergarten. They can be useful in everyday educational work with students at school, school day-care room or kindergarten. Then the person who leads the classes (educator, pedagogue or teacher) should focus on strengthening the social skills of his pupils and on providing them with positive experiences – whether educational or social. These experiences, characterized by a positive message, full of contacts with friendly, trustworthy people build in children and youth minds a picture of a safe and friendly world, in which people accept each other and are helpful and kind. These are important experiences for everyone.

Methods and forms which can be used at school or kindergarten

With the use of methods and forms during classes based on sociotherapeutic elements teachers should provide positive atmosphere, joy and positive emotions and being together with students and teachers during developing social and emotional skills and competences. Among the most popular sociotherapeutic forms which can be used in school or kindergarten conditions are: meetings of “society” (it is the whole group of pupils in class) and meetings in small groups (e.g. groups responsible for tasks or engaged in a conflict or small groups who want to play together); workshops (during which you may work on developing various skills) and celebration important events (e.g. Christmas, Easter, birthdays of participants). The important, useful and the most popular sociotherapeutic methods are: rounds in a circle, working through models of positive behaviors, active methods, art activities (elements of art therapy and music therapy), drama and role playing, playing various games (including board games, sport team games) and relaxation. The everyday activities such as cooking together, tidying up the classroom together or planning and organizing a trip – activities which are done together are also good sociotherapeutic moments. The games and activities based on those methods and forms may be classified into five groups: 1) for introduction, safe, nice atmosphere and building self-esteem, 2) for integration, communication and building a team, 3) for making self-esteem, 4) just for fun and for triggering positive emotions and 5) for closing the group or the meeting. It is significant that the teacher who should be involved in the group process also participates in these games and activities as a role model or a model of positive behaviors as well as a person who ensures compliance with the rules set out in the group. Below there is a description of some examples of exercises and activities which may be useful in conducting classes with the elements of sociotherapy.

Useful exercises and games

For introduction, safe, nice atmosphere and building self-esteem

At the beginning of the school year or conducting a class, it is very important to make a nice psychological atmosphere, full of kindness and safety, to make pupils and a teacher feel comfortable during the group process. It is worth noting that setting clear rules of functioning the group, when teachers and pupils focus on rules of affirmation, good communication and attentiveness are those factors which help creating a good atmosphere in the group. In consequence, being in the nice and safe group, where everyone can be listened to, helps building and increasing self-esteem in pupils. There are some examples of activities connected with the introductory classes and building a nice atmosphere.

1. Making a contract – important rules in a group: a teacher and pupils sit in a circle and discuss about what is important in their everyday contact. They write the important rules on balloons. After that, everyone reads

them aloud and justifies. The teacher or a pupil writes the rules on a big sheet of paper. Each rule can also be written on small sheets of colorful papers and stuck on the big sheet of paper. Below the rules the teacher and pupils sign the contract. During regular meetings everyone can refer to those rules to feel comfortable.

2. Unique welcoming between a teacher and pupils in the classroom: the teacher and pupils create the unique gestures or signs for each child with which they can be welcomed at the beginning of the classes. There can be a hug, a short dance or a sequence of gestures pleasant for children and the teacher.
3. Name crossword: children write their names vertically and create a crossword, using their name as a main word in a crossword. They think of their strengths, positive traits, characteristics and write them in a crossword, using the letters of their name. This is an exercise which may be used in the class where children are able to write.
4. Gordian knot: children and the teacher stand in a circle and close their eyes. Extend their hands ahead and hold hands of others. Then they open their eyes and with holding their hands for all the time, try to untangle the knot.
5. The heart of a bell: the specific aim of this exercise is to increase trust in a group. It should not be conducted at the very beginning, but when children and the teacher know each other a bit. This exercise is addressed rather for older, school children and youth, not for kindergarten children. It is also very important to explain the rules of security before starting the exercise and ensure that children are not going to make jokes and remove themselves from the circle. Children and the teacher stand in a circle. There is one person inside the circle. The person inside starts to move the body and tries “to fall” on the other people. The other people’s task is to hold him/her while he/she “is falling” so that he/she does not really fall down. This exercise may be done with open or closed eyes – it depends on the level of trust in the group and between people.

For integration, communication and building a team

To gain the sociotherapeutic aims and make working with a group effective, it is very important to integrate a group of pupils and a teacher. It is easier to achieve the objectives when a group is a team. That is why the activities related to integration, good communication competences and building a team should take an important place during working with a group – at the beginning of the classes but also when it is necessary – during the regular classes.

1. Shawl: children and the teacher stand in a circle and hold their hands. One of them has a shawl tied loosely through the body. The group moves

the shawl around the circle and does not stop holding their hands all the time. They can help each other, talk and use creativity to do the exercise as a team.

2. A bridge for a teddy bear: children and the teacher stand in a row – now they are the magic bridge. The first person has a teddy bear. Each participant has a sheet of paper – elements of the bridge. There is one span of the bridge more at the end of the bridge. Participants can move only on the sheets of paper and there should be only one person on one sheet of paper. The participants’ task is to help the teddy bear to achieve the second coast of the dangerous river. Participants have an extraordinary power – the last person can change places. Every time there is another “last person”. Instead of the sheets of papers, different objects can be used, for example gymnastics materials like gym rings.
3. Group puzzle “I live in a group, I am unique”: the teacher prepares materials before the exercise: he/she creates jigsaw with the name of a group, the significant sign of the group or the inscription: “We live in a group. Together we can more”, etc. Then the teacher cuts puzzle pieces and gives one piece to each participant. The participants’ task is to draw their unique picture on the blank side of the piece of the puzzle. Then the group does the jigsaw puzzles – there is the name of a group, the significant sign of the group or the inscription on one side and on another there are their unique pictures/drawings.
4. The Dentist: it is a very funny activity, which kindergarten children like most. Children sit in a circle and hold their arms like knots (or walking with someone’s arm) – they are teeth in the jaw. The teacher plays the role of the dentist who wants to pull out a tooth – a selected child. The children’s task is to hold their arms as much as they can. The teacher’s task is to tickle, etc, to pull out “a tooth”. To sum up the exercise emphasizes the importance of being in a group to children.

For enhancing self-esteem

In addition to specific goals, dedicated to a specific group of students, it is always worth making an effort to develop self-esteem among participants. This trait is also related to the sense of dignity and respect. Students who participate in sociotherapeutic classes are usually treated without respect and they lose their sense of dignity and self-esteem. They become quiet, insecure and shy and sometimes even “invisible” for teachers and in society. In their further life they may have problems in the labor market or in making mature and healthy relationships. Working on improving self-esteem helps developing pupils in many ways and the teacher can even “see” how their students “bloom” with self-confidence, creativity and increasing their social and emotional competences. It can be seen even in their

physical posture: children become straighter, not bent, they smile more often, etc. Below there are some activities useful for developing self-esteem.

1. Dancing lottery: Participants and the teacher sit in a circle. They pass the magic pouch on when the music plays. When it stops, participants take out one card for themselves and don't read it. When the music plays – pass the pouch again. The game ends when everybody has one card. Now, they read the cards. On the cards there are some positive characteristic traits and skills written which can characterize participants, for example “You are open minded”, “You are smart”, “You have great ideas”, “You are friendly”, etc.
2. Celebrating the Kindness Day (21st November): the teacher and pupils can create their own way to celebrate the Kindness Day. It can be the day of giving small gifts to each other or doing something kind and nice to others. During this day everyone should be attentive to others, very careful and helpful.
3. Jigsaw of Kindness: the teacher prepares materials before the exercise: he/she creates jigsaw with the drawings of kind situations (for example a son and a dad are painting walls, a girl helps an old lady with the shopping, the boy comforts a friend who fell over, etc.). Then the teacher cuts the puzzle into two pieces and gives one piece to one participant. Participants look for a piece which fits and then make pairs. When everybody has a pair, they sit in a circle and discuss, in which situation people can be kind, nice and helpful.
4. Hearts: This exercise is based on the movie “The Help”, by T. Taylor, 2011. The teacher prepares paper hearts for each child with the inscription: “You are nice. You are smart. You are important.” The hearts may be hidden in the personal children's shelves or in the coatroom. Teacher may also sometimes hide small gifts or sweets in children's jacket pockets – without any occasion, just to develop children's joy and to let them know that there is a kind person who thinks about them positively.
5. Meeting: Children and the teacher sit in a circle. The teacher arranges a situation when he/she tells some sentences to children about a special meeting. He/she tells that there is someone special who children should meet, and this person is very nice, smart, important and unique. But the person is behind the curtain, behind the door. The teacher invites each child to come behind the curtain or the door and... there is a mirror behind the curtain or the door, so each child can realize that the special person is him-/herself. When they come back, they should not talk unless everyone meets “the special guest”. After this exercise there is a round with summary. Children may share their feelings and thoughts then.

Just for fun and for triggering positive emotions

The therapeutic role of fun is well-known in pedagogy and pedagogical sciences. It is also the basic activity of children who can learn through playing and having fun. That is why many sociotherapeutic methods are based on playing and having fun. As it was mentioned, emotional releasing is a very important point of the sociotherapeutic process. During play time, having fun is also possible. Moreover, children can be filled out with positive emotions: joy and happiness. They can laugh a lot and collect positive experiences with other participants – peers and adults – teachers and for example volunteers or instructors. Fun plays an important role in sociotherapy. There are many proposals of games related to fun and positive atmosphere in the group. However, during this kind of games and activities teachers should pay extraordinary attention to those children who have problems with their emotions during failure moments and show them that victory and prizes are not always necessary to have a nice time. Here are some examples of the activities.

1. Shaker – toaster – elephant: children and the teacher stand in a circle. One person is inside the circle – he/she is a conductor/director. There are three figures: *shaker – a person in a middle take hands up and people on both sides spin around; toaster – people on both sides hold their hands and a person inside is a toast and jumps; elephant – a person in a middle creates a trunk and people on both sides – create big ears waving.* Things happen – the figures start to move, when the conductor point the person who is in the middle.
2. A tail of a dragon game: it is an outdoor game, but it may be played also in the buildings. There are two teams: children form two teams and become two dragons: they stand in two rows and hold their shoulders. The last person of each group has a shawl attached to the belt at the back – it is a “tail” of a dragon. The groups’ task is to “tear off” the second dragon’s tail and at the same time protect the group’s own “tail”.
3. Relaxation: relaxation and massage sessions are very nice way to spend time together in a group of people we like. Participants muscles become relaxed but for children it can be also a time when they have a positive, attentive adults taking care of them with whom they can talk individually. In this way, teachers can give them attention and a sense of being important and noticed.
4. Games with balloons: many funny games can be played with the use of colorful balloons. Here there are two of them presented:
 - a. Balloon rivalry: Participants inflate the balloons and tie them to their ankles. Their aim is to protect their balloon and destroy the others’ balloons.
 - b. Water balloon war: It is an outdoor game for hot days, especially in summer. Teacher and the group of children prepare many balloons filled out with water and put them into two boxes (or two places) – in different sides of

the playground, yard or garden. There may be different ways of the game: there may be two teams, or everyone can “fight” with each other. The game aims to “hit” a balloon in another person (throwing the balloon) and protect oneself. There are no losers and winners, it is a game just for fun and to get cooler during hot days.

For closing the group

After regular work during the set of goal-oriented workshops, it is time to prepare the group for closing those regular meetings. In this phase of the group process, there are usually deep relationships between participants and also between participants and teachers. It is crucial to focus on this phase very consciously and help students to go through this stage with the high level of teachers’ attentiveness, because pupils may experience strong emotions. It is an important time to sum up the workshops and the time which participants have spent together and to give the participants proposals of contact after the formal closing of the group. It is also time for praising participants, giving positive feedback and small, personalized gifts to memorize good time spent in the group. Below there are some proposals of activities for closing the group.

1. Sparkle: it is an activity for closing each meeting. Participants and the teacher sit in a circle and hold their hands. The first person (for example a teacher) tells the sentence: *I let the spark of friendship fall into the circle and you let it come back to my hands* and gently squeezes the hand of the person sitting on the right. Then everybody does the same (squeezes the hand) to the person on the right so that “the spark” can come back to the teacher’s left hand.
2. The Tunnel of Kindness: participants make pairs and stand in a row. People in pairs stand facing each other so that there is a tunnel made of participants. Children hold hands up so that other children can pass under them. Children pass through the tunnel one after one. Other children (those who make a tunnel in that moment) tell many nice words, compliments to the person who is passing through the tunnel. Everyone can pass through the tunnel.
3. Circles *I feel good with you, because you are...*: children make two circles – one is inside and the second is outside and stand in front of people from circles. People in the inside circle move right and stand in front of people from the outside circle. They listen to people from the outside circle who tell them something nice, finishing the sentence *I feel good with you, because you are...* When the circle ends moving – participants change the circle – the inside circle is now the outside circle.
4. A postcard: the postcard may be a good idea to close the group and to be a nice gift, referring to the meetings. The teacher prepares the postcards

for each child: writes their names and in the left corner of the postcard he/she writes the beginning of the sentence: *I have had a nice time with you, because you are...* or *I am grateful for you, because...* After that, the teacher asks children to come to him/her and write on the postcards those sentences which children tell about the person who the postcard is addressed for. At the end of the meetings, for example, during the final meeting, the teacher gives the postcards to participants.

Conclusion

Sociotherapy is a way of working with children and adolescents, which focuses on the working on various disorders and difficulties by providing participants with positive experiences. Thanks to positive experiences, children have a chance to reformulate their judgments about reality, about themselves and other people, as well as learn and develop many socially desirable competences. They can also relieve unpleasant emotions and experience positive ones. “The gradual build-up of pleasant, uncomplicated, unmistakable experiences - causes slow and inevitable forgetting of the facts and the legacy of them in the form of oppressive memories” (Han-Ilgiewicz, 1961, p. 221). Elements of sociotherapeutic classes can be successfully used during everyday work with children and young people in kindergarten and school. Many educators, teachers, pedagogues often unconsciously provide their pupils with corrective situations and positive experiences. Sociotherapeutic activity brings purpose and awareness to these activities.

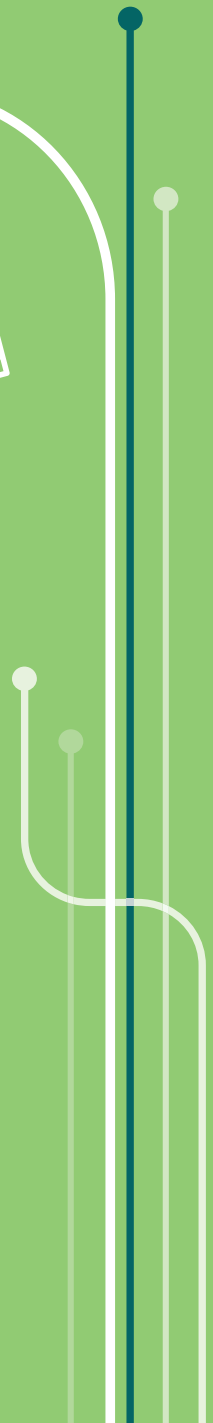
References

- Bauman, Z. (2006). *Płynna nowoczesność*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Blackwell, D., Leaman, C., Tramposch, R., Osborne, C., Liss, M. (2017). *Extraversion, neuroticism, attachment style and fear of missing out as predictors of social media use and addiction*. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 116, 69-72.
- Carr, N. (2013). *Płytki umysł. Jak Internet wpływa na nasz mózg*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Helion.
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, Official Journal of the European Union; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604%2801%29>
- Elliott, J., Place, M. (1998). *Children in difficulty*. London: Routledge (Polish title: *Dzieci i młodzież w kłopotach*, translation: M. Babiuch, Warszawa: WSiP).
- Han-Ilgiewicz, N. (1961). *Trudności wychowawcze i ich tło psychiczne*. Warszawa: PZWS.

- Jupowicz-Ginalska A., Jasiewicz J., Kisilowska M., Baran T., Wysocki A., (2018). *FOMO – Polacy a lęk przed odłączeniem – raport z badań*. Warszawa; <https://www.wdib.uw.edu.pl/attachments/article/1992/FOMO.%20Polacy%20a%20l%C4%99k%20przed%20od%C5%82%C4%85czeniem%20-%20raport%20z%20bada%C5%84.pdf> [access: 28.06.2020]
- Kramarczyk, J. (2018). *Życie we własnym rytmie. Socjologiczne studium slow life w dobie społecznego przyspieszenia*. Kraków: UNIVERSITAS.
- Kratochvil, S. (1981). *Zagadnienia grupowej psychoterapii nerwic*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Łukasik, J. M. (2013). *Doświadczenie życia codziennego. Narracje nauczycielek na przełomie życia*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Martowska, K. (2012). *Psychologiczne uwarunkowania kompetencji społecznych*. Macerata: Liberi Libri.
- Matczak, A. (2001). Temperament a kompetencje społeczne. In W. Ciarkowska, A. Matczak (Eds.), *Różnice indywidualne: wybrane badania inspirowane Regulacyjną Teorią Temperamentu Profesora Jana Strelaua*, Warszawa: Interdyscyplinarne Centrum Genetyki Zachowania UW.
- Melosik, Z. (2006). *Kryzys męskości w kulturze współczesnej*. Kraków: “Impuls”.
- Ostaszewski, K. (2018). *Suicidal thoughts in the context of family situation, and internalizing/ externalizing problems among youth between 14 and 16 years of age* (Polish title: Myśli samobójcze a sytuacja rodzinna oraz problemy inter- i eksternalizacyjne u młodzieży w wieku 14–16 lat). *Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, badania, praktyka*, 17(3), 42–62.
- Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., Gladwell, V. (2013). *Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1841-1848.
- Raczkowski, A. (2017). *Child and teen depression – the phenomenon and the prospect of help* (Polish title: Depresja dzieci i młodzieży – zjawisko i perspektywy pomocy). *Wychowanie w Rodzinie XVI/2017*, no 2, 315 – 329.
- Rosenberg, M., B. (2015). *Nonviolent communication. A language of life*. Encitas, United States: Puddle Dancer Press.
- Sawicka, K. (Eds.), (1998). *Socjoterapia*. Warszawa: CMPPP MEN.
- Sobolewska, Z. (1993). *Zajęcia socjoterapeutyczne dla dzieci i młodzieży - zasady projektowania zajęć*. Warszawa: OPTA.
- Strzemieczny, J. (1993). *Zajęcia socjoterapeutyczne dla dzieci i młodzieży*. Warszawa: PTP.
- Zimbardo, P. G., Ruch, F. (1996). *Psychologia i życie*. Warszawa: PWN.



Literature



Becoming a Writer – Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne Brontë

Tatjana Šepić

tatjanas@veleri.hr

*Polytechnic of Rijeka
Croatia*

Abstract

In the field of juvenilia, the early writings of the four Brontës, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne, occupy a particular place. Their childhood games produced shared imaginary worlds of Angria and Gondal that became the poetic space from which their individual adult works would be created. In this paper we propose to follow these gifted children in their development from the child writer into the adult writer, and the multiple influences that shaped their literary tastes and inspired their first attempts at writing, from the influence of their family, books and periodicals they read to intellectual and artistic stimuli that came from the context in which they grew up. We are also going to discuss the autobiographical, intra- and intertextual affiliations between their juvenile writings and their mature works, together with the phenomenon of the Brontë myth that continues to develop today.

Keywords: *Brontë siblings, juvenilia, the child writer, intratextuality, intertextuality*

The genre of juvenilia

When we speak of children's or juvenile literature we think of novels, stories and poems created by adults aimed at children and/or teenage audiences. However, besides this kind of literary creation, there is an equally fascinating but largely overlooked field of fiction that also involves children and writing. The genre of juvenilia that comprises stories, plays, poetry and parodies written by major authors when they were still children or teenagers, is valued and considered today as a significant artefact, equal to letters and adult works (Alexander, 2018, p. 5).

Reading and exploring this relatively new genre, scholars and critics, such as Christine Alexander, Juliet McMaster and Ryan Twomey (Alexander & McMaster, 2005, Twomey, 2012), have demonstrated that these childhood writings are interesting both in themselves, and as a valuable insight into the process of becoming a writer.

Even though the period or the year when the author's work is created or published is usually considered as the beginning of his/her literary career, the juvenile writings of famous authors like Jane Austen, Lewis Carroll, Lord Byron or Virginia Woolf, to mention just a few of them, have shown that the talent for writing and the urge to create is not the result of a sudden discovery, but of a long writing progression that often started in their early childhood.

In the context of "heterotextuality" (Stone & Thompson, 2006), i.e. of joint creation of love couples, spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, or friends, a phenomenon not uncommon in the history of literature/art, the name of the Brontë siblings, of Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848), Anne (1820-1849) and their brother Branwell (1817-1848), occupies a particular place since their childhood games produced shared imaginary worlds that became the poetic space from which their individual adult works would be created.

In this paper we propose to follow these four gifted children in their development from the child writer into the adult writer, and to show the autobiographical, inter- and intratextual affiliations between their juvenilia and mature texts. We are going to discuss the formative influence of their family, books and periodicals they read, and abundant intellectual and artistic stimuli that came from the socio-cultural and historical context in which they grew up.

Common readers usually associate the name of the Brontës with the image of all three sisters and their famous novels. Even though Branwell did not achieve a literary success, either during his life time or afterwards, we cannot discuss the Brontë juvenilia without describing and considering his role and contribution to it.

Some critics think that the Brontës' "existing as a single entity" (here we have in mind Charlotte, Emily and Anne) is damaging for their literary output since studying their lives and writings together impedes one to consider the novels for their own merit (Craik, 1968, p. 1). Others emphasise, and we can agree, that looking at them as "a group" is stimulating and interesting just because of the fact that their works issue from the same context. Writing in a confined space of the modest parsonage

household, without “a room of their own”, they managed to produce works that, in spite of some similarities, are radically and strikingly different (Glen, 2007, p. 2).

The death of their mother in 1821, when the youngest sister Anne was only one year old and the deaths of the two eldest sisters in 1825, created an even stronger emotional attachment and a feeling of interdependence among the remaining Brontë siblings. In time, through their games of “dramatic make-believe” (Bock, 2007, p. 35), this attachment was transformed into a spiritual and intellectual bond that marked the beginning of a complex and creative dialogue that continued until their early deaths. It is therefore difficult, sometimes even impossible, to discuss the Brontës separately since their life experience and cultural sources were so interwoven as it was their process of becoming a writer. The collection of poems published in 1846 together with their first novels *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* that came out a year later, all under their pen name Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, were only the result and the peak of a literary apprenticeship that started early in their childhood. These years of “pre-writing” were not only the period of searching for their own authorial voice through different descriptions, narrative techniques, character building and constructing dialogues, but in these early compositions we can discern the elements and “the draft” of their future, mature works.

To study the Brontës’ novels and poetry without taking into consideration the abundant juvenilia that had been developed over nearly two decades, would mean to deprive readers and critics of the clue for their understanding, and to lose both the thread that links their juvenile writings with their published works, as well as the possibility to look closely into their individual literary progressions.

Haworth and the world beyond

As opposed to the myth about the children who grew up socially isolated in the midst of Yorkshire moors, with their eccentric, widowed father, the truth about the Brontës’ childhood years was somewhat different. Haworth was not a gloomy and remote village, and its population savage and inhospitable as they were described in the opening chapters of the biography *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) written by Charlotte’s friend and writer Elizabeth Gaskell.

In the 1820s Haworth was a small, but densely populated and busy industrial town that was rapidly growing. Apart from some charitable and educational societies, it also had a surprisingly rich cultural life. Patrick Brontë went to concerts and other cultural events accompanied by his children. They often walked four miles to the nearby town of Keighly where at the Mechanics’ Institute they attended public lectures on politics, religion, science, history and literature. All this shows that the life of the Brontës was quite normal as opposed to the image created by Mrs Gaskell that many biographers and critics later on simply accepted and perpetuated for over a century, never questioning whether it corresponded to the reality.

It is true that the few acquaintances and friendships the Brontë siblings made while away at boarding schools were never so intense as was the relationship among them and the importance they gave to each other. They shared the same interests and enthusiasms, and were bound together by the joint creation of their secret imaginary worlds. They felt no need to look outside their own home for companionship, emotional or intellectual sympathies. The Parsonage, that might have seemed bleak, modest and cold to their visitors, for the Brontë siblings was a true home and they found it hard to be away from it. Charlotte's words in her letter written in 1841 testify about her feelings for her brother and sisters and her home:

... it is indeed hard (...) to leave home – especially a good home (...) my home is humble and unattractive to strangers but to me it contains what I shall find nowhere else in the world – the profound, and intense affection which brothers and sisters feel for each other when their minds are cast in the same mould, their ideas drawn from the same source – when they have clung to each other from childhood.... (Brontë, 1995-2000, p. 225)

Mrs Gaskell, with her description of Haworth and its inhabitants, tried to account for the strangeness and the unconventional content of the Brontë sisters' novels, as well as for their violence, moral ambiguity, the roughness and the coarseness of the language that shocked contemporary readership and critics. Her portrait, or better a caricature of their father, only added to the image of four motherless children growing up in a repressive and loveless home. E. Gaskell depicted Patrick Brontë as a dominant, harsh and morose person, incapable of giving his children parental love and affection, and thus depriving them of a normal and happy childhood. In reality, he was a compassionate and remarkable man, and no ordinary Anglican priest.

Patrick Brontë was the eldest of ten children born to a poor Irish tenant farmer. After having taught himself to read and write, he became a village schoolmaster at the age of sixteen. His passion for knowledge and his ambition helped him win a scholarship at St John's College, Cambridge. As a young student, he had aspirations towards a military career he eventually had to abandon because he had no political ties and no money. Instead, on leaving university, he was ordained a priest in the Church of England.

In 1820, after the birth of the youngest daughter Anne, the Brontës moved to Haworth where Patrick was given the post of a perpetual curate. A conscientious and dedicated clergyman, he worked hard his whole life for spiritual, but also material welfare of his parishioners. Besides his work, Patrick Brontë found an immense joy in writing, in particular poetry, that gave him, as he declared, "indescribable pleasure" (Gérin, 1973, p. 13). Together with the interest and passion for politics and the admiration for great figures of the Napoleonic Wars,

the little Brontës inherited from their father the love of nature and literature, and his gift and urge for writing.

Neither of the children had a proper formal education, that was not unusual at the time. Apart from several short periods of time spent at different boarding schools, they were mostly educated at home, by their father.

His teaching methods combined formal instruction with walks on the moors where the children would get practical lessons in natural sciences. In the evening he would gather them “for recitation and talk, giving them oral lessons in history, biography or travel”. His unorthodox way of teaching and the intellectual freedom the children enjoyed throughout their early and teenage years, allowed their creative faculties and “budding talents” (Barker, 2007, p. 30) to develop freely. It also gave them the possibility to read whatever they wanted from their father’s library and the libraries of the nearby town of Keighley without any censorship.

The books they read, apart from those commonly found in middle-class Victorian households like the Bible, and the Prayer Book, John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, together with some commonplace textbooks, included all kinds of literature, from the exotic *Arabian Nights*, *Aesop’s Fables*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Macpherson’s *Ossian* to the poetry by Wordsworth and Southey. Patrick Brontë did not even object to their reading Byron and Shelley, two most “notorious and scandalous” Romantic poets. The only thing the girls were forbidden to read were the old copies of *Lady’s Magazine* since they contained “foolish love stories” (Ingham, 2006, p. 70).

Aware of the fact that he had no means to provide for his children financially, and that one day they would have to become self-supporting, Patrick Brontë decided to improve their education by arranging music and drawing lessons. Foreign languages, drawing skills, painting, singing and playing an instrument were the “accomplishments” (Ingham, 2006, p. 53) expected from middle-class girls whether they were to be married or to earn their living as governesses or teachers.

Besides their father and aunt Elizabeth, who came to live with the family after Mrs Brontë had died, another important member of the household was Tabby Aykroyd, their servant. She stayed for more than thirty years in the Parsonage, and in a way supplanted their mother’s place. Indirectly, she influenced the children’s spiritual development and consequently their imaginary worlds. Illiterate, but sharp-tongued, Tabby was a skillful raconteuse. The children would often gather in the kitchen, round the fire, especially in winter time, to listen to Tabby’s stories, local legends, fairy tales and ballads that additionally nourished their imaginary, magical worlds with their superstition and the elements of folklore. Many years later when Emily was writing her novel *Wuthering Heights*, Tabby’s richly flavoured Yorkshire dialect would serve in

the characterisation of Joseph, contributing to our interpretation of him as a moralising and inflexible person, while the character of Nelly Dean would be modelled on Tabby herself.

Rich and diverse oral tradition, the colourful world of Sir Walter Scott's historical novels, the gloomy and dark atmosphere of Gothic fiction and the powerful emotions of Romantic poetry, it all appealed to the Brontë children feeding their already fevered imagination, providing material they could draw from, rewriting it and transforming it into their private and secret imaginary worlds of Angria and Gondal. But their heroes were not only fictional characters. The biographies of great men, military figures, like Johnson, Sheridan and Nelson, the travel accounts of William Parry and Sir John Ross, Arctic explorers, sparked their interest and gave them the possibility to dream of distant places far beyond the narrow world of Haworth and its Yorkshire moors.

Patrick Brontë's interest and active involvement with social, political and religious issues of the day also influenced his children. Reading aloud and discussing the events reported in the local newspapers, such as parliamentary debates on constitutional reforms or the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, were quite common in their home. Many years later Mary Taylor, Charlotte's school friend, remembered that children at Roe Head school "thought her (Charlotte) very ignorant, for she had never learnt grammar at all, and very little geography, but she would confound us by knowing things that were out of our range altogether" (Barker, 2007, p. 30).

The newspapers played an important role in the lives of all members of the Brontë family. But since they could not afford to subscribe to numerous papers and magazines, some of these they borrowed, as for example *Blackwood's*, a very popular magazine the children had been reading regularly since 1825, when Charlotte, as the eldest one, was only nine years old.

The influence and the importance of *Blackwood's*, and later on, from 1831, of *Fraser's Magazine*, have been recognized by many critics and scholars (J. Barker, P. Ingham, S. Davies, C. Bock). *Blackwood's* was a Tory periodical that included all kinds of news and information on current events, public figures, political machinations, scientific achievements, the accounts of travels and explorations, stories, poems, illustrations, literary reviews, translations and advertisements.

The outside world filtered through the eyes and experiences of other people, for the Brontë siblings, took the form of a magical place inhabited by important political figures and influential men, explorers and travellers to far-away and exotic places. Literary and religious texts, newspapers and magazines represented the material from which the "great creating Genii" as they called themselves (Glen, 2007, p. 4), interweaving real and imaginary events and personalities gradually developed Angria and Gondal. This "world

below” (Ratchford, 1949, p. 159) was not going to be only a game, a source of entertainment, or a way to escape from the reality of everyday life in the Parsonage, but also “a laboratory” where the children and later on teenagers developed plots, characters, themes and motifs they would transform and integrate into their mature literary works (Ratchford, 1949, p. xiv).

Angria and Gondal – “a world elsewhere”

The story about a box of twelve wooden soldiers, that Patrick Brontë brought to Branwell as a gift returning from a clerical conference in Leeds in 1826, is well known and can be found in biographies and books dealing with the lives of the Brontës. The gifts that the father brought for the girls, a dancing doll, a toy village and a set of ninepins, are hardly ever mentioned. The wooden soldiers, “The Young Men” as the children named them, became characters in the game they started to create together, and that very quickly was transformed into written stories, poetry, plays, and small magazines. Each child chose a soldier and named it after a famous figure they admired and identified with. Branwell chose Napoleon, while Charlotte named her soldier after Bonaparte’s political rival, the Duke of Wellington. Emily and Anne named their soldiers after Arctic explorers Parry and Ross, whose expeditions they had read about in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. The choice of names is significant since it reflects their interest and knowledge about the Napoleonic Wars, current political issues and exploits, things quite unusual for children at such an early age (Ingham, 2006, p. 5).

In June 1826, “The Young Men” became the characters of “our plays” as Charlotte called their games (Bock, 2007, p. 35). The first “Young Men’s Play” was followed by “Our Fellows’ Play” and “The Islanders’ Play” in December 1827. From the very beginning, the children appeared as a group called Chief Genii, with Talli (Charlotte), Emmi (Emily) and Anni (Anne) under Branni’s (Branwell’s) leadership.

By the year 1829, they were already deeply immersed in “the paracosmic world”³ of the Glass Town Saga and its heroes, and were, at the same time, absorbed in their first attempts at writing. In a minuscule handwriting, imitating printed letters on the tiny sheets of paper measuring only 5.7 cm by 9.5 cm, stitched carefully to obtain small booklets, they started writing, and gradually, over the years, building from fragments the epic cycles of Angria and Gondal.⁴ “An immense amount of

³ Christine Alexander uses the terms “paracosm”, “paracosmic play/world” to describe Branwell’s imaginary world. The term implies “sophisticated alternative realities with their own history, culture, geography, politics, publications, and language”. The Brontë paracosm, in her opinion, has also microcosmic features, i.e. it reflects the larger real world (2018, pp. 5-6).

⁴ The name Angria probably comes from a homonymous family of pirates that operated on the west coast of India in the period between 1698-1756. Emily gave her kingdom the name of a tropical Indian state Gondal in the peninsula of Kathiawar (Ratchford, 1955, pp. 13, 18).

manuscript in an inconceivably small space”, E. Gaskell said referring to Charlotte’s juvenilia (Beer, 1986, p. 19).

Critics have tried to give an explanation for the diminutive size of their booklets. While some believe that the children wanted to keep them secret from adult eyes, others think it was because of the scarcity of paper since they used whatever was available to them, from a scrap of wallpaper, a used salt or sugar bag to a fragment of a book advertisement (Bock, 2007, p. 39). It is true that paper was expensive in those days, and the economy may have been the reason for their small size, but there is another possible explanation. The stories in their booklets and magazines were “written” by imaginary characters so the children adapted them to the scale of toy soldiers. Whatever the motivation was initially for this kind of handwriting, the habit remained and the tiny script is a characteristic of all the Brontë juvenilia.

This small and very often illegible handwriting, that was in addition damaged in places, made studying and interpreting these Brontë manuscripts, including their poetry, difficult. Another reason was that until just a few decades ago, critics and scholars had incomplete and unreliable editions of their manuscripts and a limited access to their original, authentic writings. After the death of Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte Brontë’s widower in 1906, all the juvenile writings, together with the family memorabilia, ended up in hands of individuals who cut the pages, breaking the small booklets into pieces and then sold them separately to collectors and auction rooms. Thanks to the effort of some enthusiasts and scholars, in particular Christine Alexander and Victor A. Neufeldt, who managed to collect pages and pieces of the manuscripts dispersed all across the United States and Britain, transcribing them accurately and publishing them, today we have new, reliable editions that make it possible for both critics and common readers to explore and study the Brontë juvenilia (Bock, 2007, pp. 37, 52).

While Charlotte’s and Branwell’s writings have been mostly preserved, and represent one of the most abundant juvenilia in English literature,⁵ those of two younger sisters, Emily and Anne, have been lost or destroyed by Emily herself. The only thing that is left of the Gondal saga are poems and a few fragments of diary papers and birthday notes with references to the lost Gondal prose texts. What was Emily’s and Anne’s role and contribution in this early phase of common creation can be assumed from some passages in Charlotte’s and Branwell’s manuscript where they describe, for example, the visit of their hero Lord Charles Wellesley to Parry in his palace in Parrysland (Emily’s kingdom) and similar situations that indicate the occasional overlappings of their narratives.

If we consider the closeness, the interdependence and common interests of the Brontë children, based on few but valuable references to the prose literature created by Emily and Anne, we can assume that certain characteristics found in

⁵ Even though what we have today is probably only a third of the original material produced by the two eldest siblings (Gérin, 1973, p. 23).

Charlotte's and Branwell's literary production were also present in the lost writings of the two younger sisters.

Glass Town was an imaginary magical city situated at the mouth of the river Niger that the Chief Genii built for their heroes who had been shipwrecked on the Guinea coast. After "a very fierce encounter" (Ratchford, 1949, p. 13) with the native blacks, the white adventurers won a victory and started building the city. Soon they went out to explore and conquer the territory, organizing the Glass Town Confederacy that in course of time was transformed into a despotic kingdom of Angria ruled by Arthur Wellesley, Marquis of Douro, the elder son of the Duke of Wellington. And while Branwell's areas were politics and wars, and his descriptions of the government, administration, taxes, transport, military expeditions and the defence system provided the necessary "parameters" (Alexander, 2018, p. 7) of the imaginary world, Charlotte was more interested in describing the characters' love affairs, their gothic romances set in exotic surroundings, and exploring "the degrees and forms of human passion" (Beer, 1986, p. 22).

The world of Angria was populated by a colourful company of politicians, soldiers, artists, writers, scientists, learned women, students, teachers, governesses, lawyers, criminals, spies, jailors, physicians and grave-robbers (Bock, 2007, p. 40). Their imaginary world, between reality and fiction, was the result of "an art of appropriation" (Bock, 2007, p. 39) and creative transformations "in Tolkien fashion" (Ingham, 2006, p. 8) of the material that, as we have seen, came from various sources, from rich and diverse readings, their daily life in the Parsonage to current political and social events. Stories told by multiple narrators, using different narrative techniques and voices giving competing versions of events reflect the children's awareness, already at this early point of their writing lives, of the possibilities that fiction offers (Glen, 2007, p. 4).

We have already mentioned the miniature versions of periodicals based on their much-loved *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's Magazines*, that Charlotte and Branwell wrote for their characters. Not only did they try to reproduce the visual aspect of the original magazines, but also their structure and content. From January 1829 until December 1830 Branwell and Charlotte produced 15 issues of *Branwell's Blackwood's Magazine* and later on *Branwell's Young Men's Magazine*. Each issue consisted of an elaborate title page, an editorial, a critical review of their favourite books, original poems, riddles, stories, commentaries of some current events, advertisements and illustrations.

Glass Town was also "a microcosm of literary culture" (Alexander, 2018, p. 11). It was a world of authors, reviewers, publishers, printers, poets, pamphlet writers, editors, booksellers, and of course, the key element of the modern emerging literary economy – the reading audience. In the city there were two rival printers, publishers and booksellers, Sergeants Bud and Tree, together with numerous authors, famous poetasters obsessed with the Romantic idea of poetic inspiration and

neglected geniuses, social commentators, political satire authors and so on. The “Conversations” series in the *Young Men’s Magazine*, written following the model of “Noctes Ambrosianae” in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, brought discussions of famous Glass Town writers on the latest publications and current events. What is striking in these accounts is the way both Charlotte and Branwell perceive the career of a professional writer as exciting and as problematic at the same time. In their stories the printed word gave power, but did not always guarantee success (Bock, 2007, p. 41). Poets experienced professional failure, public humiliation, or at worst, a tragic end, as it was the case of the warrior poet Henry Hastings, a fictitious character who, in spite of a literary success, became a drunkard and a murderer (Bock, 2007, p. 41; Ratchford, 1949, pp. 146-147). His failure is presented as the consequence of the adverse influence of society and literary glory.

Thus, the imaginary worlds of the Brontë siblings, apart from representing a refuge from the reality and an apprenticeship into the literary career, are also a “stunning representation” (Bock, 2007, p. 34) of the culture of the 1830s, in particular of the print media culture, and closely linked to it, the issues of authorship, publishing and readership, a field where all four Brontës would one day try to construct their identities as professional writers and to earn their living.

When in January 1831 Charlotte left for a Roe Head boarding school near Huddersfield, Emily seized the opportunity and rebelled against Branwell. Two younger sisters broke away from the Angrian game and decided to write their own stories about Parry’s Land and Ross’s Land, that soon became the kingdom of Gondal. Branwell protested against the “seceding” sisters, and wrote about their “heartless desertion” (Ratchford, 1949, p. 65) in *The Monthly Intelligencer* (Glass Town daily newspaper) trying to draw them back, but with no success. From that moment on, the children continued to play and write in pairs, sometimes interweaving their stories, developing interdependent and/or parallel plots.

Gondal is built as an antithesis to Angria, both in the geographical sense and in terms of moral values. While the kingdom of Angria is situated in West Africa, Gondal is a large mythic island in the North Pacific with Regina as the capital. It is a rugged country, with snow-capped mountains, rich with rivers and lakes. Misty and cold in winter, with wild, gusty winds, but bright and full of flowers, heather, green fern, swallows and nightingales in summer.

As opposed to the Angrian ruler, the young Arthur Wellesley, whose character is largely modelled on Byron and his salient qualities, Gondal has a beautiful queen Augusta Geraldine Almeda (A.G.A.), a passionate, impulsive, but also selfish and cruel woman who brings misery to all men who fall in love with her.

Besides love stories, there are also war chronicles of military expeditions, the civil war between Royalists and Republicans, prisoners, the accounts of adventures, explorers and their discoveries, together with the conquests of territories on a newly discovered island-continent Gaaldine in the tropical sea.

While Branwell celebrates patriotism, and his descriptions of military parades are full of pomp and glory, Emily shows war atrocities and their consequences, wounded soldiers, broken bodies, death, devastated countryside and cities, ruined homes. The difference between Angria and Gondal anticipates the difference between Charlotte's and Emily's poetry and novels. The eldest sister in her novels condemns adultery and indulging in luxury, so Jane Eyre refuses to become Rochester's mistress, and Lucy Snowe does not want to wear expensive clothes. But Charlotte's Angrian heroines dressed in silk and other fine clothes live in the "blooming and fragrant paradise" and have numerous love affairs (Ingham, 2006, p. 6).

Emily does not have such double standards. She does not condemn or try to justify either the Gondal Queen Augusta or Heathcliff. The Gondal heroes are, as are the heroes of her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, brave and hardy individuals to whom "loyalty is the highest virtue and treachery the darkest crime", and who value freedom above anything else (Ratchford, 1949, p. 65).

As we have already mentioned, the whole Gondal prose has been lost. It is only poems, mostly Emily's, then a list of the Gondal toponyms written by Anne at the end of *A Grammar of General Geography*, another list, this time Emily's, of the Gondal characters written in pencil in two columns at the top of a piece of paper measuring 10x7.5 cm, together with six short diary papers fragments and four birthday notes that Emily and Anne exchanged in 1841 and 1845, that represent the "signposts" critics and scholars have used in an attempt to reconstruct the lost juvenilia.

The Gondal saga was probably a voluminous material that had been created over the years. Based on few references in the dairy papers, birthday notes and lists of Gondal place names and characters, we can infer that Emily's and Anne's chronicles were relatively well-structured texts with attention paid to details. This kind of preparation and working out an elaborate plan is also typical of their novels, in particular Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, that has been praised for its logical strictness and exactitude with regards to the dates and its probability of detail (Sanger, 1973, pp. 75-88).

"Generations of sleuths" (Davies, 2007, p. 21) have been defeated in their effort to establish the link between the imaginary world of Emily's poetry and her only novel *Wuthering Heights*. We can add here, in their effort to reveal the secret link between her journal fragments on the one hand, and her poetry and the novel on the other. We bring a few lines from one of Emily's diary papers to illustrate their tone and style:

(...) this morning Branwell went down to Mr Drivers and brought news that Sir Robert Peel was going to be invited to stand for Leeds. Anne and I have been peeling apples for Charlotte to make an apple pudding and for Aunts nuts and apples. Charlotte said she made puddings perfectly and she was of a quick but lim[i]ted intellect. Taby said just now Come Anne pilloputate (...) papa opened the parlour door and

gave Branwell a letter (...) *The Gondals are discovering the interior of Gaaldine* Sally Mosley is washing in the back kitchen. (...) The kitchen is in a very untidy state. Anne and I have not done our music exercise which consists of b major. Taby said on my putting a pen in her face Ya pitter pottering there instead of pilling a potato. I answered O Dear, O Dear, O Dear I will directly with that I get up (...)

Emily and Anne, November, the 24 1834 (Gérin, 1973, p. 39)

Brontë scholars could not find an explanation for “the quantum leap” (Davies, 2007, p. 22) from the childish content, poor grammar and spelling mistakes that characterise Emily’s dairy papers to her poetry and the novel. F. Ratchford thought her journal dated 24 November 1834 “commonplace and embarrassingly childish (...) for a girl well into her seventeenth year” (1955, p. 16). S. Davies also finds Emily’s childishness about “sticking by the rascals” (i.e. the Gondals), expressed in a dairy paper written in 1845, only two years before *Wuthering Heights* was published, “regressive, retrogressive” (2007, p. 22). Anne does not share her sister’s enthusiasm in this late journal entry. She declares: “The Gondals in general are not in first-rate playing condition. Will they improve?” (Davies, 2007, p. 22). The youngest sibling, traumatised by her humiliating experience as a governess and her brother’s drug and alcohol dependence, was probably working at the time on her first novel *Agnes Grey*, written in the realistic vein.

For a very long time these autobiographical texts did not challenge the interest of critics, if not as a proof of the existence of the lost Gondal prose. Today, in spite of the poor literary quality of these lines, they represent a valuable document of the everyday life in the Parsonage, and at the same time they reveal the character of its author. Emily records the events of an ordinary family day in a stream of sentences, without any punctuation marks, interweaving the real life with fantasy, the standard language with the Yorkshire dialect. Animated and humorous, it shows a joyful Emily who defies their housekeeper Tabby with a pen, who in turn scolds the girl for wasting her time in writing instead of peeling the potatoes. For Emily, there is no distinction between the exploits of the Gondal characters and Sally Mosley washing the laundry, the world of Gondal coexists with the physical world of the kitchen in Haworth. This passage is a good example that demonstrates the author’s ability “to enter a realistically freckled fantasy land” (Gilbert & Gubar, 1984, p. 257), the ability that will enable her to fuse successfully the realistic with the fantastic in her novel *Wuthering Heights*.

We can only assume that Emily’s role in the Gondal saga was not childish as it may appear when we read her journal fragments. Stories, plays, chronicles, fictional diaries, poems, letters, illustrations, sketches, maps and all kinds of different texts that may have composed the Gondal saga, were an opportunity for both sisters to

experiment with different modes of the authorial self and to brush up their writing skills.

As we have mentioned earlier in the discussion, the key to the reconstruction of Gondal are Emily's and, to a lesser degree, Anne's poems. In particular, those written by Emily represent passionate effusions of the feelings of characters at some crucial moments in their lives. These poems are like great, powerful operatic arias where "we lack the full libretto" but from which we can try to infer the content of the story (Ingham, 2006, p. 78).

The first attempt at the reconstruction of Gondal by Madeleine Hope Dodds in 1923 was followed by Fannie E. Ratchford's in 1955 in *Gondal's Queen, A Novel in Verse by Emily Jane Brontë*, which to this day remains the seminal work for all future studies in that field. She rearranged most of Emily's poems in logical sequence, even those that had no reference to Gondal, to form "a novel in verse" made up of interconnected 'stories' i.e. poems.

As opposed to Ratchford, Edwin Morgan, for example, thinks that Gondal poems are only "masked projections" of a personality trying to put into words its inner conflicts and loves, and that these verses are "among the most personal ever written" (quoted in Ewbank, 1973, p. 237).

The question whether Emily's poems are expressions of her personal feelings or they make part of the world of Gondal and its characters, i.e. of "the personal versus the dramatic", has intrigued critics for decades without arriving at any definite conclusion (Ewbank, 1973, p. 237).

But one may ask where this division between Gondal and non-Gondal verse derives from. In February 1844, Emily started copying out her poems into two separate notebooks, putting the inscription "Gondal poems" on one of them. The other notebook contained poems about homesickness, nature, creative imagination, meditative poems on hope, despair, and transience of all things. C. Day Lewis and Inga-Stine Ewbank see this division, made by the poet herself, as a sign that Emily became aware that Gondal was limiting the field of the human experience she could explore, and that is why she decided to take some of the existing poems or/and new ones, out of the Gondal context (Ewbank, 1973, p. 238). Most critics believe that some poems are more Gondal than the others, even though this division does not necessarily coincide with the division made by the poet herself.

The true value of Emily's poetry lies in the fact that it can be read and interpreted in both ways, as Angela Leighton has pointed out. Read in the context of Gondal, these verses reflect the characters and the events of a larger drama. Taken out of that context, they attain a universal quality that in a subtle way brings one back to the persona of the author-poetess herself (Leighton, 2007, p. 55).

Perhaps we should look at Emily's poetry as her way of exploring different emotions and moods. In that case there is no need to go from the poetry to the novel, trying to reconstruct the Gondal saga. Instead, we can analyse her poems

and identify in them the beginning, the growth and the anticipation of certain ideas, thoughts and feelings that will find their full expression in her only novel.

Certain continuity characterises all Emily's poems, and if we set aside the obvious differences of genre, *Wuthering Heights*, her 'autobiographical' and Gondal poems share the same "landscape of feeling" (Donoghue, 1970, p. 159), i.e. they share some recurring images, figures of speech, rhythms and patterns.

Powerful emotional experiences, as longing for a dead person, or longing for the freedom of the spirit that only death, nature or imagination can bring, are major themes of Emily's poetry. In her poem "Cold in the earth" (Brontë, 1967, p. 222) Augusta Geraldine Almeda, fifteen years after Julius's death, in a passionate effusion expresses her sorrow, pain and suffering for the loss of the beloved person, in the same way Heathcliff is going to grief for his "heart's darling" (Brontë, 1983, p. 70).

In the poem "Thou standest in the greenwood now..." (Brontë, 1967, p. 118) we find the contrast that anticipates the difference between Edgar Linton and Heathcliff:

"(...)

Reply this once - is it that thou
Hast faithless been to him?"

"I gazed upon the cloudless moon
And loved her all the night
Till morning came and ardent noon,
Then I forgot her light -

No - not forgot - eternally
Remains its memory dear;
But could the day seem dark to me
Because the night was fair?

"I well may mourn that only one
Can light my future sky
Even though by such a radiant sun
My moon of life must die".

The Queen A.G.A. sacrificing lord Alfred for her love for Julius tries to justify herself. She loved Alfred as someone can love the Moon, but who can blame her that his attractiveness has faded before the brightness of Julius's sunbeams.

Similarly, Catherine in her exposition on the different nature of her love for Edgar and Heathcliff, says: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him [...]. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire" (Brontë, 1983, p. 121).

In her poem Emily uses nature imagery, “the cloudless moon” and “the bright day” to describe two kinds of love, while in the novel Catherine wants Linton, whose soul she compares to “a moonbeam” and “frost”, and at the same time she cannot live without “lightning” and “fire” that make her feel as one with Heathcliff.

The use of hyperbole at syntax level is another feature of Emily’s poetic style. We could talk of “excess”, of exaggeration, if the characters’ feelings and actions did not live up to the declared (Donoghue, 1970, p. 160):

Though Earth and moon were gone
 And suns and universes ceased to be
 And thou wert left alone
 Every Existence would exist in thee...
 “No coward soul is mine”, Jan. 2, 1846 (Brontë, 1967, pp. 243-244)

A characteristic cadence and the use of contraries, where All becomes One, present in her poem, are repeated in the novel when Catherine speaks of Heathcliff: “If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it” (Brontë, 1983, p. 122).

When critics and commentators describe the style and language of Brontë’s novel *Wuthering Heights* they frequently use the term poetic prose, emphasising the abundance of metaphors, symbols, figures of speech such as assonance and alliteration, together with the rhythm and the lyricism of its descriptive passages.

There are also some recurring verbs, nouns and adjectives Emily uses both in her poetry and novel. We are going to take the word “wild” as an example. It appears at least once in almost one third of her poems and in the novel as well. This adjective, a favourite one with both Gothic fiction and Romantic writers, in Emily’s poetry and prose becomes semantically ambivalent. We find it with positive emotions, associated with the idea of freedom, beauty, romantic feelings, but also with negative emotions, linking the word with something dangerous, voracious and mad.

In her poetry “wild/wildness” is a characteristic of the landscape – of the sea, of the moors and above all, of the wind, and the emotions linked to them. The “wild wind, the wild clouds” that “rush dark and wild” are associated with the “wild anguish of despair” or “passions wild” of the characters (Ewbank, 1966, p. 245). The fusion of human experience and nature, most frequently occurring at the moments of passionate emotional outbursts, deep grief, or intense longing for freedom characterises both Emily’s poetry and prose.

In Catherine’s delirium “wildness” takes the form of yearning for her home at the Heights, her childhood and Heathcliff. In the night when Heathcliff tries to dig Catherine’s body out of the grave “the wild snow (is) blowing outside”, and Nelly

heard him calling Catherine's name "coupled with some wild term of endearment, or suffering" (Brontë, 1983, pp. 210, 362).

It is evident from these examples that the repetitive use of the word "wild" does not give it a static connotation, just the opposite. With its multiple meanings in different contexts it acquires the intensity and the dynamic quality.

Unlike Emily and Anne, Charlotte already towards the end of 1839, i.e. seven years before the publication of their joint volume of poetry, was trying to abandon the world of Angria and overcome her conflicting feelings about it – gratitude and happiness these "reveries" (Ratchford, 1949, p. 107) brought her, and at the same time awareness of the fact that they were preventing her from being part of the real world. This attempted escape and "farewell to Angria" (Ratchford, 1949, p. 148), that Charlotte writes about in her journal, reflect her intense emotions of sorrow, warmth and devotion towards "my friends and my intimate acquaintances, (that) I could with little labour describe to you the faces, the voices, the actions, of those who peopled my thoughts by day, and not seldom stole strangely into my dreams by night. When I depart from these I feel almost as if I stood on the threshold of a home and were bidding farewell to its inmates (...)" (Ratchford, 1949, p. 149).

However, in spite of these words, in reality this "farewell to Angria" did not happen suddenly, over night. As it was the case with the other siblings, Charlotte's literary past is going to influence profoundly her mature works. *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, her best novels, but also her less successful ones, can be read as a fusion of her personal experience, literary models and rewriting of the Angrian stories. By comparing characters, scenes, themes and motifs present in her juvenilia with those in her novels, we can observe their development and transformations as the result of Charlotte's growth as a writer.

As with Emily, we are going to give a few examples of intratextual and intertextual affiliations between Charlotte's juvenile writings and two of her novels. Edward Rochester, the main protagonist in the novel *Jane Eyre*, is a typical Byronic hero, largely modelled on Arthur Augustus Wellesley, Duke of Zamorna and Emperor of Angria, with whom he shares numerous traits. Elizabeth Hastings, one of many Angrian heroines, is the projection of the writer herself and the prototype for both *Jane Eyre* and for Lucy Snowe, the main female character from her novel *Villette*. These plain-looking girls deep inside protect their secret, inner self and are, like the author herself, intelligent, highly moral and spirited young women.

In one of her first love scenes, written when she was fourteen years old, Charlotte introduces the character of Lady Zenobia Ellington, a Creole of Latin blood. With her dark, glowing complexion, brilliant black eyes and richly-curled hair, this "most learned and noted woman in Glass Town" seduces the Marquis of Douro (Ratchford, 1949, p. 204). In a similar way Rochester remains impressed by Bertha Mason, "a tall, dark and majestic" woman, splendidly dressed, who flattered him and "lavishly displayed for (his) pleasure her charms and accomplishments". En-

couraged by his own father, he marries Bertha for her wealth and beauty, but also convinced he loves her. Very soon he realizes that his wife, “the boast of Spanish Town” has “outbreaks of violent and unreasonable temper” (Brontë, 1999, pp. 269, 270). Her mental health deteriorates and he is forced to keep her imprisoned in a room off the gallery of Thornfield Hall. In fits of rage she causes havoc, starts the fire, bites and stabs her brother, and finally burns down the house. Lady Zenobia is also given to fits of rage when she cries like a wild beast and throws herself upon her victims hand and foot. In one of these attacks, she tries to kill the Marquis of Douro’s fiancée because of unrequited love. Bertha Mason, “the madwoman in the attic” (Gilbert & Gubar, 1984), represents a direct derivation and an evolution of Zenobia, not only with her physical likeness to the Angrian character, but also in Charlotte’s rewriting and reworking of some dramatic scenes. Rochester’s first wife is also partly based on “an old hag named Bertha” from “The Green Dwarf”, a story based on Scott’s *Ivanhoe* and written by Charlotte in 1833 (Ratchford, 1949, pp. 204-206).

When towards the end of the novel Jane hears the voice of her “dear master” coming from nowhere, it is again rewriting and amplifying of a similar scene in Angrian chronicles when the young Marquis of Douro, in danger of being unfaithful to his true love, is recalled by the voice and apparition of Marian Hume, his sweetheart (Ratchford, 1949, p. 212).

For the Brontë children the worlds of Angria and Gondal represented something that the everyday life in the Parsonage could not give. To Emily, more than to Charlotte and Anne, this “world elsewhere”, the “world below” was much more than a childhood fiction. To her it became and it remained a way of living. Part of these “imaginative soul-journeys” (Davies, 2007, p. 19) Emily shared with no one, except perhaps with her sister Anne, who seems to have found it easier than the other siblings, to break away from that “drug-like dream”, as Sue Lonoff called the world of Angria and Gondal (1996, p. 11).

Both Charlotte and Emily examine their relationship towards reality and fancy, reason and imagination. Even though the Angrian dream brings her bliss and happiness, Charlotte, realizing the hold it has on her imagination, and afraid that she may have fallen into the mortal sin of idolatry, seeks comfort in religion and in friendship (a letter to Ellen Nussey, quoted in Ratchford, 1949, p. 106).

In her poem “O thy bright eyes” Emily describes imagination as “My slave, my comrade, and my King” (1967, pp. 208-209), and inferring from her dairy paper written in 1845 where she says: “The Gondals still flourish bright as ever. I am at present writing a work on the First wars (...)” (Ratchford, 1955, pp. 192-193) it is clear Emily has no intention of renouncing the world of Gondal. Poetry and religion, faith and aesthetics become one and the same thing for her like in the poem “To Imagination” (1967, pp. 205-206). After the negative initial reception of her novel *Wuthering Heights*, Emily definitively rejects “Fame’s altar-stone” and returns to

her imaginary world and to writing poetry, the only true friend that “Faith cannot doubt nor Hope despair” (1967, pp. 208-209).

From the very beginning, the Brontë siblings created their works together, and this continued later on as they were growing up. On the first floor of the Parsonage, there was a small room overlooking the church tower and the graveyard that was used as a playroom and sewing room. It was “the children’s study” (Barker, 2007, p. 28) where the siblings used to write keeping paper on their knees instead of a proper desk. But the space for writing was not limited to this tiny room. Each of them, at certain moments of their lives had felt the need to isolate themselves from the others, and to find a space of their own, the space they could not link to any particular room in the house. Emily, for example, had been secretly writing poetry for years, hiding it in the kitchen cupboard.

Virginia Woolf expresses her fascination and interest for this “closed *feminine* group” and imagines how we “tremble slightly as we approach the curtain and catch glimpses of women behind it and even hear ripples of laughter and snatches of conversation” (quoted in Stoneman, 2007, p. 226).

Different from this romantic image of female group and soulmates, who in the secluded environment create their literary works, for Rachel Ferguson the Brontë sisters are an example how female writers lived without 500£ a year and a room of their own. (Stoneman, 2007, p. 228).

The Parsonage was situated at the top of the hill and was the last house in Haworth. On two sides it was enclosed by the churchyard, the cobbled Church Lane was in front of the house, and beyond it there were only the moors. The family home was, as we have seen, the place where the Brontës’ creative lives started and ended. It was like a source and a mouth of a river at the same time, but it was also a boundary between two worlds – on one side there was Church Lane leading into the main street of Haworth and further on into the civilisation, and on the other side the moors – the world of nature.

The name of the Brontë siblings is commonly associated with the wind-swept moors and wild nature. But when reading Branwell’s and Charlotte’s juvenilia it becomes evident that culture rather than nature is prominent in their early writings (Bock, 2007, p. 39). It is Emily, together with Anne, with whom she shared, in spite of strikingly different temperaments her most intimate thoughts and feelings (Davies, 2007, p. 25), who spent time, whenever possible, in walks on the moor. It is Emily who was “a native and nursling of the moors”, as Charlotte said for her sister (1983, p. 38). And yet, Emily’s and Anne’s mature literary works show that they have taken a radically opposed approach to life and art. Anne’s *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are realistic novels written from “the perspective of a believing Christian, with Evangelical affiliations”, prone to self-examination and truthfulness. Her experience and representation of nature are also different from Emily’s. While Anne in her novels focuses on its “lyrical” side – an image of a

primrose or a harebell, in Emily's poems and the novel, nature takes an epic sweep, fusing beauty and violence, yearning and death, the demonic and the animal with the human (Davies in Glen, 2007, pp. 84, 94).

Life experience as a dichotomy between nature and culture, and the Parsonage as a physical reality standing on the boundary of two worlds, are going to be turned into a symbol in Emily's novel. And while Charlotte and Anne in their works depict the struggle of man to tame his barren, wild self, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* represents nature and culture in constant dialogue, together with the metaphysical restlessness and ontological conflict of these two spheres in their strife to reconcile the dualism of the writer's dialectical world.

The Experience of Brussels and the Belgian Essays

As opposed to her sisters, Charlotte longed to discover the world beyond Haworth, to learn and to experience new things. How strong was her desire "for wings such as wealth can furnish—such an urgent thirst to see—to know—to learn [...]" can be read in a letter to her friend Ellen Nussey written in 1841 (quoted in Ingham, 2006, p. 17). Even though Emily had no such wish "for wings" that would take her away from home, but motivated with the idea of setting up a school together with her sisters, and also wishing to please Charlotte, she agreed to go with her to Belgium. In February 1842 the sisters left for Brussels where they would stay at the Pensionnat Heger in order to improve their knowledge of French, but also German and Italian, music and other subjects necessary to run a school of their own one day.

Biographers and critics wrote a lot about Charlotte's and Emily's stay in Belgium, focusing primarily on their life at the Pensionnat, and on the intellectual and emotional growth this experience brought to the elder sister, and the way she reworked it and transformed it in her two novels, *The Professor* (1847, published posthumously) and *Villette* (1853).

The essays Charlotte and Emily wrote in French during their stay in Brussels, for a very long time received little attention of the Brontë scholars. Written on pieces of paper torn from their notebooks, full of corrections, the *devoirs* were considered just exercises in French and as such, insignificant compared to the sisters' letters, poems and fiction. This was the case until Sue Lonoff collected, translated, edited all the existing *devoirs* of the Brontë sisters, (thirty of them), and published them in 1996 under the title "The Belgian Essays".

Lonoff wanted to show that the *devoirs* were much more than compositions of two pupils learning French, and that both Charlotte and Emily, in spite of the obvious limitations, essays on a given topic and in a foreign language, managed to produce exceptional texts that are far more complex than it may seem at first sight. They are also a valuable source providing insight into their growth as writers and can be linked to their writings before and after the Brussels period.

Charlotte benefited in many ways from her stay abroad. People and places she knew there, cultural events she went to in the capital, Heger's methods of teaching, the books she read, it all left a profound mark on her artistic, intellectual and emotional growth. It also gave her material she drew on for all her four novels. But perhaps the most important influence was the one on her style of writing. Forced to express her thoughts and feelings in a foreign language, under M. Heger's guidance, Charlotte learnt to discipline her writing, to control the structure, the tone, the rhythm of her sentences, and to restrain herself from presenting her ideas through "a coloured glass of metaphor" (Lonoff, 1996, pp. xxi, xxiii).

Emily seemed to have been less responsive to M. Heger's method of teaching that was largely based on imitating other writers' style. In spite of his strict discipline, imposed on both sisters, and Emily's opinion of him as "an autocrat", she managed to maintain the originality of her thought and expression (Lonoff, 1996, p. xxx).

Some critics believe that the influence of M. Heger, and of Brussels in general, on the younger sibling was insignificant (Gérin, 1974, p. 17). It is true that Emily's writing was independent before, and it remained so after Brussels, and she did not, like her elder sister, transform her experience into fiction. And yet, "the Brussels adventure" did influence Emily too, though perhaps in a less visible way. Staying abroad, on the Continent, put her in touch with French and German literature, language and music, as well as with the culture different from her own. S. Davies stresses the importance and influence of German Romanticism on Emily and her novel *Wuthering Heights*, since the movement was "in full spate in the French-speaking countries" at the time the sisters were staying in Brussels (2007, p. 48). Emily's Belgian essays, together with her poetry, dairy papers and her fiction, can be read as a single work where major themes that appear at the beginning, are worked out, developed only to achieve their climax in her only novel *Wuthering Heights*.

"Bell-mania" and the Brontës today

Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell that came out in May 1846 sold only two copies. But the reviews were positive and the sisters did not get discouraged. Next year they offered their "three distinct and unconnected tales" to a publisher. Although Charlotte's first novel *The Professor* would be rejected, and published only posthumously, in October of 1847 her novel *Jane Eyre* came out, followed shortly by Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* in December of the same year.

What happened next was something these three modest girls could not even dream of. Besides the interest of the critics and the reading audience in the novels, they were at the same time trying to reveal the identity or identities of their writer(s). Who stood behind the name of Bell? Was it just one person, two or three? Male or female? The "Bell-mania" (Davies, 2007, p. 2) that hit London in 1847 was very soon transformed into a myth when within the next few years all the Brontë siblings died. Their lives and novels, facts and fiction have become interwoven in

a way to create a “composite” and dynamic myth that continues to develop today (Stoneman, 2007, p. 214). The interest of the Brontë scholars, critics, enthusiasts, common readers is nowadays as strong as ever and has expanded to other members of the family.⁶

For more than 150 years, the critics and readers were primarily focused on the novels written by Charlotte and Emily. However, in the last few decades, academic criticism, in particular the feminist one, has started rereading and reinterpreting the two novels written by the youngest sister Anne, discovering a very modern aspect of her works, in particular the way she addressed the issues of domestic violence, alcoholism, and the inferior position of women in society. It seems that “dear and gentle Anne” (Ingham, 2006, p. 15), as she is usually remembered, has finally got the place and merit she deserves, after being so long in the shadow of her two eldest sisters.

Something similar happened to Branwell and his literary output. In spite of high artistic aspirations and the talent he had demonstrated at an early age, not only for literary creation but for painting as well, he did not possess the strength and perseverance of his sisters to overcome the harsh reality of the world outside Haworth. Gifted, ambitious, but vain, and emotionally unstable, he was given to dissipation and serious depressions. Aware of his own weaknesses and inability to live up to his family’s expectations, he became an alcoholic and drug addict. Apart from a few poems that came out in the local newspapers, Branwell, unlike his sisters, published no books during his lifetime. For all these reasons he has often been perceived as a personal and professional failure. Only recently have some critics tried to restore his reputation by editing and publishing his writings (Stoneman, 2007, p. 231). Carol Bock argues that the quality of Branwell’s poetry was as good as, or even superior to much that was being published at the time. Had he lived longer, in her opinion, he might have had a respectable, or even impressive career as a writer (Bock, 2007, p. 38).

The “web of childhood”, as Charlotte once described the world of dreams and imagination in which she and her siblings wove endless stories, eventually destroyed Branwell, exhausted Emily, bored Anne. Only to Charlotte, this “world below” continued to give comfort and support.

The exceptionally gifted Brontës, with their immense creative energy produced literary works that continue to inspire writers and artists, common readers, scholars and critics alike, keeping the myth alive. In 2016, a five-year programme “Brontë 200 – *Bringing the Brontës to the world and the world to Yorkshire*” started celebrating the bicentenaries of the births of Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne,

⁶ We give just two most recent examples. Sharon Wright wrote a book *The Mother of the Brontës: When Maria Met Patrick* (2019). In November 2019 the University of Sheffield hosted a Symposium on the theme of “Locating the Brontës” that dealt with Patrick Brontë’s personal journey to the curacy in Haworth.

an event that brings together, literally and/or virtually, Brontë enthusiasts from all over the world. This paper is just a small contribution to this “special chapter” in the history of the Brontë siblings.

References

- Alexander, Ch. (2018). In Search of the Authorial Self. In L. Peterson (Ed.), *Journal of Juvenilia Studies*, Vol. 1(2018), International Society for Literary Juvenilia, pp. 3-19. doi: 10.29173/jjs I 26
- Alexander, Ch. & McMaster, J. (2005). *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, J. (2007). The Haworth context. In H. Glen (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 13-33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beer, F. (1986). Introduction. In F. Beer (Ed.), *The Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë* (pp. 7-30). London: Penguin Books.
- Bock, C. (2007). ‘Our plays’: the Brontë juvenilia. In H. Glen (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 34-52). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brontë, Ch. (1983). Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell. In E. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (pp. 30-36). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Brontë, Ch. (1995-2000). *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Margaret Smith (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press.
- Brontë, Ch. (1999). *Jane Eyre*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics.
- Brontë, E. (1967). *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë*, Hatfield, C. W. (Ed.). New York: Columbia University.
- Brontë, E. (1983). *Wuthering Heights*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Corr, P. (1972). *Emily Brontë “Wuthering Heights”*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
- Craik, W. A. (1968). *The Brontë Novels*. London: Methuen & Co.
- Davies, S. (2007). *Emily Brontë*. Horndon, Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd.
- Davies, S. (2007). ‘Three distinct and unconnected tales’: *The Professor, Agnes Grey and Wuthering Heights*. In H. Glen (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 72-121). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Donoghue, D. (1970). The Other Emily. In I. Gregor (Ed.), *The Brontës, A Collection of Critical Essays* (pp. 157-172). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Ewbank, I-S. (1973). Emily Brontë: The Woman Writer as Poet, Their Proper Sphere. In J-P. Petit (Ed.), *Emily Brontë, A Critical Anthology* (pp. 236-247). Penguin Books.

- Gaskell, E. (1975). *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Alan Shelston (Ed.), Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gérin, W. (1973). *The Brontës I: The Formative Years*. London: Longman Group.
- Gérin, W. (1974). *The Brontës II: The Creative Work*. London: Longman Group.
- Gilbert, S. M. & Gubar, S. (1984). Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell. In *The Madwoman in the Attic, The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (pp. 248-308). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Glen, H. (2007). Introduction. In H. Glen (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 1-12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ingham, P. (2006). *Authors in Context, The Brontës*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leighton, A. (2007). The poetry. In H. Glen (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 53-71). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lonoff, S. (1996). Preface. Introduction. In S. Lonoff (Ed.). *The Belgian Essays*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Ratchford, F. E. (1949). *The Brontës' Web of Childhood*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ratchford, F. E. (1955). *Gondal's Queen, A Novel in Verse by Emily Jane Brontë*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Sanger, C. P. (1973). The Structure of *Wuthering Heights*. In J-P. Petit (Ed.). *Emily Brontë, A Critical Anthology* (pp. 75-88). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Stoneman, P. (2007). The Brontë Myth. In H. Glen (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (pp. 214-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stone, M. & Thompson, J. (Eds.) (2006). *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Twomey, R. (2012). "The Child is Father of the Man": The Importance of *Juvenilia* in the Development of the Author. Houten HES: De Graaf.

Teaching Crossroads