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## CELLS

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# RECLAIMING NORMALCY

Discourse(s) of Healing in Language, Literature,  
Culture and Translation Studies

## BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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### **Graphic Medicine: Comics in the Time of Covid**

**Abstract:** What does it mean to materialize history? Representation designates how we view and understand our world and how we take on memories of recent events. As comic scholar Hillary Chute notes in *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*, comics make the “twisting lines of history legible through form” (27). The visual-verbal narrative of comics materializes our recent past and gives it a physical shape accessible to the reader. The sensory experience of both reading and seeing the comic narrative allows for an affective visualization of the world. As Ernst Jünger points out, visual representation is used to express our cruel way of seeing and has become the lens through which we view traumatic events (40). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century our reliance on visual representation in the form of “picture stories” has become ever more prevalent. As technology and cultures continue to advance, images remain a powerful tool of memory transmission and cultural healing.

In this paper I analyze a series of comics from *Covid Chronicles*, a comic anthology about the Covid-19 pandemic, to Lucie Langston’s personal Covid chronicles, *Through the Dunes*, which was selected by the New York Times among the most memorable illustrations of 2020. At its core this paper investigates the role that graphic narratives play as a tool for regaining a sense of normalcy and cultural healing. In short, comics *show* us how we remember, particularly in our current golden age of documentary, where recording and archiving become more and more prevalent. As technology and cultures continue to advance, images remain a powerful historical anchor. The experience of both reading and seeing the narrative allows for an affective visualization of the past. The comic medium serves as an essential gateway, acting as a transferential space between the past and the present, making it possible to visualize a deeply affective shared experience.

**Keywords:** comics, graphic novel, Covid chronicles.

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### **The National Covid Memorial Wall as a Translation Site**

**Abstract:** Sherry Simon defines her concept of “Translation Sites” – places that include monuments, bridges, markets and museums – as polyglot places “shaped by conversations across languages” (2019: 1). These sites are public spaces inscribed by historical, cultural, linguistic exchanges. This paper will describe and analyse one such site, the National Covid Memorial Wall in London, discussing the cultural significance of the location, the creation of the Memorial and its role in memorialising the loss of life since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Emphasis will be placed on the linguistic component and its multilingual nature. In its broadest interpretation, the “language” of the Wall can be read in the light of Gary Gumpert and Susan Drucker’s comment: “Memorials [...] are cultural indicators that represent the interaction of context and people” (2018: 238): in this sense, the memorial becomes a translation site.

**Keywords:** National Covid Memorial Wall, memorialising the loss of life, cultural indicators, translation sites.

### **The Role of Binge-watching during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Abstract:** The goal of this study is to delve into Netflix and other streaming services users' various binge-watching tendencies in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak in order to see how the pandemic changed habits of watching TV. During the Covid-19 lockdown, consumers had more free time to engage in these watching habits and streaming services had more opportunities to increase their profit. This study explores the motivational reasons, volume of media consumption, and negative features linked with binge-watching on such streaming services during the Covid-19 outbreak, but also the short-term and long-term effects such rise in streaming services subscriptions may have on individuals and society, both mentally and financially.

In this work, I used an exploratory research design, and primary data were collected using an online survey with a semistructured questionnaire. The questionnaire was simple in design and easy to follow, which attracted more participants.

According to the findings, the majority of respondents use their laptops to binge-watch streaming services, with those using mostly their TVs following close by. Furthermore, they have stated that a large number of shows accessible on streaming services encourages them to watch for longer periods of time. However, the respondents "only" binge-watch streaming services for "just" over 70 hours per month. Finally, the majority of respondents cited "the one more episode syndrome" as the most difficult component of becoming Covid-19 epidemic marathon viewers on Netflix and similar streaming services.

Streaming services are both the past and the future of our society and this paper shows just how much they have affected us and our daily habits in midst of a once-in-a-lifetime experience, such as a pandemic.

**Keywords:** binge-watching, Covid-19 pandemic, digital media, streaming services, lockdown, Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime.

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### **Trust and Confidence in B&H Media: Covid-19 Aftermath**

**Abstract:** The omnipresent division in the majority of issues in Bosnian and Herzegovinian (B&H) society does not manage to escape the media coverage topics, even those that are related to high-ranking government officials. Apart from the fact that various types of influence are visible in radio and television coverage, newspapers are also succumbing to personal and partisan control, thus making them a playground for readers' comments rather than a source of information and a place to turn to when information is needed.

The presentation will deal with an analysis of articles about the visit of the member of the tripartite Presidency of B&H to Russia in June 2022, and the way the visit was reported in the B&H press as well as commented by the readers. The articles are to be valued with the aid of Bell's (1995) "news values (NV)" (negativity, prominence, consonance, impact, novelty, superlativeness, and personalisation) and readers' comments summarised in accordance with the impact of the analysed NV. The preliminary hypothesis argues that the B&H general public does not have confidence in news reports and it will openly show their dissatisfaction with the reports produced regardless of the content of the news. Moreover, the dissatisfaction will be aimed at personal/partisan types of reporting, regardless of the content produced.

**Keywords:** news values, B&H newspapers, readers' comments, confidence, trust.

### **The Healing Power of Theatre and Dramatic Literature**

**Abstract:** Dramatic literature in performance and theatre have been recognized as cathartic, transformative, socially relevant and engaging art since the conception. In the first systematic aesthetic treatise on literature, written in the 4th century BCE, Aristotle claimed “the purification of tragic acts” (25) as one of the functions and ultimate goals of tragedy. In subsequent periods of the development of Western drama and theatre, stage performances became used either as a tool of more upfront and exciting (religious) education and indoctrination, or as a form of popular entertainment, an arena where average citizens could hear honest comments about daily life and then current affairs. This recognition of the pervasiveness of theatre and transformative power of drama came with the downside of various manifestations of attempts to control and outright prohibit performances (in both Colonial America, Renaissance England and Modern Britain). In 1938 Thornton Wilder expressed his conviction that “the theatre was the greatest of all the arts” (vii) and that “of all the arts theatre is best endowed to awaken this recollection within us” (vii), despite his discontentment with 1920s and 1930s illusionist theatre/drama in the US. In the latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, performing arts were successfully exploited to foreground certain socio-political issues or as a tool to educate its target audience on (and unravel) the insidious workings of hegemonies.

What this paper examines is how theatre and dramatic literature can be employed not as a form of religious indoctrination, social criticism or a means to advance a political cause, but rather as effective instruments of personal healing. To that end a series of such instances will be reviewed and reader-response criticisms of MA students in the University of Sarajevo Anglophone Literature and Culture Programme to T. Wilder’s *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth* will be discussed.

**Keywords:** theatre, anglophone drama, reader-response criticism, *Our Town*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*.

### English Pronunciation Model Selection – Making Healthy Choices

**Abstract:** Standard British English pronunciation has been a desirable target for many EFL speakers for many decades, including those in Serbia. A gradual shift from Southern British Standard (SBS) to an amalgam variety of English has been noticed in Serbian EFL speakers in the past decade. This novel amalgam variety includes some of the traditional General American pronunciation features generally not explicitly taught in a Serbian EFL classroom, alongside with other phonetics features that are the result of L1 transfer. In order to shed some more light on the amalgam variety of English that they tend to speak, a group of university students majoring in English, is asked to read a short passage that contains a number of key words whose pronunciation differs in SBS and General American (GA). R-fullness (students pronouncing their r's in all phonetic contexts) and t-voicing (the realization of /t/ as a voiced sound in words like *city*, *beautiful*, etc.) have emerged as the most unstable phonetic characteristics in Serbian EFL learners' oral production. Possible reasons behind the emergence of these phonetics features in Serbian EFL production are elaborated on, with some insight into where this amalgam variety is heading to, considering the omnipresent changes that affect English as a global language even in native speakers of English.

**Keywords:** Standard British Standard (SBS), General American (GA), amalgam English, t-voicing, rhoticity.



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**“Pray you, turn your eyes upon me:”**

**Pericles’s and Prospero’s Pilgrimage to the Virgin Mother**

**Abstract:** The Virgin Mary was a figure of pivotal importance in the Middle Ages. Despite Protestantism’s deliberate marginalization of the Virgin, the figure remained a constant influence in the Early Modern period. This influence is evident in Shakespearean drama, which abounds in female characters who strongly emulate the Virgin Mary in their pure virginity on the one hand, and healing potential on the other. The ability of these Shakespearean female protagonists to heal and restore is more prominent in the late romances, particularly in *Pericles* and *The Tempest*. Pericles’s conventional quest has often been understood as a pilgrimage that revolves around the Virgin figure. Similarly, Prospero’s journey towards the restoration of his own rightful position can be seen as a pilgrimage that revolves around the Virgin figure of his daughter.

This paper aims to analyse Pericles’s and Prospero’s respective quests not only as monomyths using Joseph Campbell’s concept of the monomyth but also as pilgrimages to the figure of the Virgin Mother, who will heal and restore the worthy. To this end, Julia Kristeva’s feminist post-structuralist theory shall be used as the Virgin Mother is a figure of central importance in her theories. According to Kristeva, the Virgin Mother is a consolidation of a mother, wife and daughter, and it is only through this consolidation that the spiritual bond with the son can lead to healing and restoration, which both Pericles and Prospero achieve at the end of their respective quests.

**Keywords:** Virgin Mother, Kristeva, Campbell, monomyth, Pericles, Prospero.

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**General American or General Knowledge?  
Exploring the Attitudes of Serbian EFL Students  
Towards the General American Variety of English**

**Abstract:** Though Southern British Standard (SBS) used to be the preferred model variety in Serbia, recent research has shown that General American (GA) has emerged as a more common preference with younger generations of Serbian EFL speakers. The aim of this paper is to examine attitudes towards General American and determine whether this standard variety of English has replaced Southern British Standard in higher education. For this reason, this research study will focus on Serbian EFL students in their final year of Bachelor studies at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. The study participants are asked to complete a questionnaire that combines the matched-guise technique with Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The questions focus on the assessment of model speakers' traits classified into social status and social closeness and the assessment of GA in a classroom context. The purpose of this specific set of questions is to determine how GA affects the students' perception of GA speakers, as well as their attitude towards GA as a means of instruction.

**Keywords:** General American, language attitudes, Serbian EFL speakers, model varieties, variety acquisition.

### **Cultural Schizophrenia in English Renaissance**

**Abstract:** In this paper we will dive into the problematic nature of erotic love in the English Renaissance, and especially, the English Sonnet. The term “cultural schizophrenia” is taken over from Fredric Jameson’s work, and it is applied here as a tool in an effort to deal with stylistically difficult uses of metaphors, similes, conceits in selected poems. The love alluded to in poems by Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser and Donne, just to name a few, is heavily contextualized within Plato’s dialogue *The Symposium*, as well as Plutarch’s similar dialogue *Erotikos*. Therefore, “love” is never understood as an isolated, purely personal, phenomenon. It is part of what should be termed ancient Greek “philosophy of Eros”. The sonnet form, copied from Petrarch’s work and introduced into England, preserved its form and rigid structure, however, the nature of the argumentation within poems is largely different than its original.

This paper will try to initiate an investigation into the stylistic and philosophical complexity of the Renaissance poetry of Eros from the postmodern stand point. Through the analysis of stylistic structures within poems, the aim is to bring to light the underlying never changing philosophical context in which personal amorous experiences are contained within the sonnet form.

**Keywords:** Renaissance, sonnet, Plato, Fredric Jameson, postmodernism.

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### **The Medicamentous Power of Metanarratives: Containment, Confinement and Force Fields in Fiction and Reality**

**Abstract:** The public and private media-spheres of the extant and moderately post-Covid day-to-day routine have been systematically and designedly inundated with cautionary discourse. These preferred and strategized rhetorical blueprints are easily identifiable in the prevalent output promulgated by mainstream outlets. This paper centres around the salient facets of the conceptually propaedeutic domains of safety and salubrious behavioural predilections underscored with a view to ministering to the hypothesised communal welfare. Specific framing strategies are believed to have been employed to channel metaphorically-tailored communiqués for the purpose of delineating a new ideological pathway and overarching cultural re-coupling. The process of enkindling correspondences between two or more domains bulks large in creativity and ensuing perceptual matrices. These practices are part of the more general process of framing/domain-setting.

Consequently, domains are construed as cognitive entities, representational spaces, conceptual complexes of varying levels of intricacy and organization. Medically-suffused parlance steadily and markedly morphs into a pervasive communicative pattern asserting itself as integral part of common culture. The volte-face towards what used to be relegated discourse begs the question as to the tendencies and extent of these ongoing processes.

This small-scale probe will draw on thematically pertinent features extracted from online English-based newspaper services in a concerted attempt to dissipate hypothetical misconceptions regarding the analytical and notional alignments. Equal weight will be attached to the source domains of confinement, containment and protective force fields in fiction so as to delve into the subject matter from a comparative stance. The corpora serve as a launch pad laying the groundwork for the theoretical elaboration and scaffolding by means of which the research tenor will be navigated in the complementary enquiry into the willpower paradox and various operants put to use at need.

**Keywords:** metanarratives, conceptual metaphors, confinement, containment, force fields, cautionary discourse, health and healing.

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**Modernity and Anxiety of Healing.  
The Recovery of Nature in Anna Banti's Works**

**Abstract:** In the works of Anna Banti (1895–1985) the opposition between the contemporary world, in which the protagonist is forced to live, presented as asphyxiated and unsatisfactory, and the natural one is frequently emphasized. The moments in contact with nature allow the Bantian characters to reflect on their social condition, without necessarily being offered a way of redemption or a definitive escape. There is also at least one case, namely the short novel *Je vous écris d'un pays lointain*, where the civilization of the future, composed of dehumanized individuals, complete slaves to technological progress, has annihilated the animal and plant world. For the protagonist, then, the rediscovery of nature represents a real healing, the return to a life in opposition to the dominant one, as well as the redemption of individual morality. According to the strategies of criticism and textual analysis, the aim of the proposal is to analyze some selected works of Anna Banti, so as to be able to reflect on the relationship – now virtuous, now lucidly disconsolate – of the individual characters with the natural world.

**Keywords:** Anna Banti, nature, modernity, anxiety, healing.

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### **Biopolitical Turn: Covid as Metaphor**

**Abstract:** With no time distance from the Covid-19 pandemic, the body of critical work is yet to be written. The 2020 coronavirus pandemic is not the first, and unfortunately – as the WHO states, the world will face a series of new outbreaks and communicable disease epidemics in the following decades. The *biopolitical turn* contributes to creating an outline of the significant post-Covid theoretical approaches to knowledge production in the pandemic era. Starting from the close reading of the seminal critical work of Susan Sontag – *Illness as Metaphor* from 1978, with its extension *AIDS and Its Metaphors* in 1989, this paper attempts to reveal biopolitics hidden behind the metaphors surrounding illness of Covid-19. The first year of a pandemic was an exceptionally fruitful year for critical thought on the pandemic. Unlike any pandemic, Covid influenced new cartographies, routes, and migrations. No wonder Preciado chose the bold metaphorical statement: “The new frontier is your epidermis. The new Lampedusa is your skin” (Preciado 2020). With various policies and global measures, metaphors of discipline and punishment (Foucault 1977) suddenly became literal. Philosophical polemics between Agamben and Benvenuti blossomed, but also the very term biopolitics (Nancy, Esposito, Agamben) became a central part of the newly edited volume *Coronavirus, Psychoanalysis and Philosophy: Conversations on Pandemics, Politics and Society* (Castrillón, Marchevsky 2021) which also follows works of Kristeva, Irigaray, Mbembe, and other contemporary thinkers. Biopolitics could potentially examine the role and significance of critical theory in the new era of communicable diseases. Production of knowledge in biopolitics demonstrated the urgency of rethinking existing metaphors.

**Keywords:** biopolitics, metaphor, coronavirus, Covid, pandemic, necropolitics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, contemporary theory, migrations.

**The Healing Power of Literary Testimony:  
Silenced Mothers and the “Ghosts” of Repressed Trauma in  
Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Torey Hayden’s *The Sunflower Forest* and  
William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice***

**Abstract:** Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Torey Hayden’s *The Sunflower Forest* and William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* all have in common the decision the female protagonists had to make – kill their children or allow them to suffer through slavery and torture. The acts of infanticide in the aforementioned novels were completed as acts of salvation that caused repressed trauma and irreversible psychological consequences that led to hallucinations, delusions and, ultimately death. Through theories of trauma and testimony, the goal of the paper is to examine the protagonists’ lives decades after the traumatic events and to show the repercussion of remaining silent and not testifying. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub state that “the ‘not telling’ of the story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny” which only further distorts memories and causes psychological harm. The exile of the novels’ protagonists upon being freed from slavery and concentration camps shows that neither spatial nor temporal distancing from the events was enough to overcome and forget the lived trauma. On the other hand, the literary testimony of these authors serves as a means of healing for entire communities stricken by similar circumstances as “ghosts” of the past are revealed and voices are given to those who could not speak for themselves.

**Keywords:** infanticide, trauma, guilt, Holocaust, exile, slavery, testimony.

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## **The Healing Power of Birds in the Poetry of English Romantics**

**Abstract:** Nature-writing in literature started with the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Virgil, who represented the simple life of shepherds “as a desirable alternative to the stress and frivolous consumption of city-dwellers” (McKusick 1991, 228). By escaping into the sublime and beneficial “green world”, the residents of courts and cities were able to resolve their problems and conflicts, realise the true purpose of life, and restore their physical and mental health. In England this literary genre was adopted and further developed by authors such as Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, Herrick, and Marwell, and it reached its peak during Romanticism, when the horrific consequences of enclosure and the Industrial Revolution led to the birth of ecological awareness.

Considering the fact that birds are the most frequently observed of all nature’s creatures, it is no wonder that they have been a topic of many poems which describe various aspects of their life, including their song, physical appearance, behaviour, their ability to fly and, most importantly, their relation with human beings. By analysing some of the poems of English Romantics such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and John Clare, this paper will present different ways in which birds can positively affect human health, especially the state of human mind. This topic will be mostly examined through ecocriticism, which is usually defined as “an Earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glottfelty 1996, xviii). In addition, the paper will employ scientific literature, mostly from the field of environmental psychology, which explores the connection between bird sounds on the one hand and attention restoration and stress recovery on the other. Finally, the paper will look into the medical benefits of nature-based treatments such as sound therapy and ecotherapy.

**Keywords:** nature, birds, birdsong, healing, joy, stress, Romantics, ecocriticism