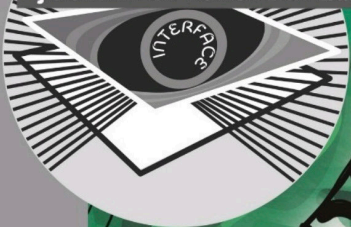


INTERFACE

-JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

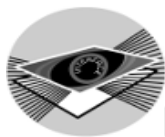


GUEST EDITOR
Patrizia Piredda

19

Autumn
2022

POLITICS,
IDEOLOGY,
AND THE
DISCOURSE
OF DISEASE



INTERFACE

—JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

ISSN: 2519-1268

Issue 19, Autumn 2022

Published on November 30, 2022

Guest Editors

Patrizia Piredda (University of Oxford)

Editor-in-chief: Vagios, Vassilis (National Taiwan University)

Editorial Board

Yen, Ting Chia (National Chengchi University)
Blanco, José Miguel (Tamkang University)
Chang, Wen Hui (Chung Yuan Christian University)
Leipelt-Tsai, Monika (National Chengchi University)
Tulli, Antonella (National Taiwan University)

Advisory Board

Takada, Yasunari Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo
Chang, Han Liang Professor Emeritus, National Taiwan University
Kim, Soo Hwan Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Finglass, Patrick University of Bristol
Kim, Hyekyong Inje University

Assistant

Lu, Yi-Chin

Cover Design

Karen Dellinger
(metalarmcupcake@gmail.com)

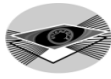
The Journal is published three times a year (February, June, October) by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University.

All correspondence should be addressed to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University, Roosevelt Rd., Section 4, No. 1, Taipei 106, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Phone: +886-2-33663215

Fax: +886-2-23645452

© 2022, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University. All rights reserved.



Issue 19 (Autumn 2022)

Table of Contents

Editorial

Politics, Ideology, and the Discourse of Disease

PATRIZIA PIREDDA1

Articles

Wortschatz in der Coronavirus-Pandemie im Chinesischen und Deutschen:
Lebensmetaphern, Kriegsmetaphern und die sozialen Bedeutungen

SHELLEY CHING-YU DEPNER7

Metaphors of Plagues in Shakespeare's Plays

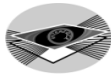
IRIS H. TUAN45

The Use of Foucault's and Schmitt's Theories and War Metaphors in the Political
Narratives of the COVID-19 Pandemic

PATRIZIA PIREDDA67

Between Fiction and History: Telling the Plague in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the
Plague Year* and Alessandro Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*

DAVIDE CROSARA & GIANLUCA CINELLI93



EDITORIAL:

Politics, Ideology, and the Discourse of Disease

PATRIZIA PIREDDA

University of Oxford

Concepts and notions formed in the fields of medicine have always been used in politics and ethics as metaphors to define good societal models, manipulate public opinion, consolidate prejudices, and gain power. The connection between political power, rhetoric and medicine is therefore ancient and profound. The concept of disease has been often used to attack domestic and foreign enemies, to criticise society as a sick “body”, and to legitimise political action (often repressive and violent) as a necessary “surgical” measure to remove the cause of the social illness. War has even been called the “hygiene” to clean the world, while otherness has been labelled in derogatory and judgmental ways aimed at legitimising others’ subjugation, correction, or even elimination. On the other hand, a broad debate on public health is key to the construction of good societies as far as health is recognised as a universal right. Although prevention, public education, and the ethical conception of medical treatment as a complex physic-psycho-cultural issue are acknowledged as pillars of a modern idea of health, these approaches are often far from being practised. The relationship between politics, ideology, and disease becomes then blurred and more profound insight into such a relation is a desideratum.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the political discourse on the pandemic developed worldwide. The first speeches were delivered by the then-Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, since Italy was the European country where the epidemic struck first and most violently in February-March 2020. Conte’s words triggered an avalanche of emotional speeches aimed on the one hand at informing about the gravity of the growing

INTERFACE

pandemic, and on the other hand at reassuring the population through slogans in favour of social distancing and restrictive measures, which in a few months became the most widespread practice in all countries affected by the epidemic. Slogans such as “I’m not afraid of the virus”, “I’m staying at home”, and “everything will be fine”, were then gradually borrowed, used, and integrated with new formulas in other countries.

Language and social practices are inseparable. The glue that binds them is made up of beliefs, prejudices, and theoretical-practical knowledge. In the present issue of *Interface*, we propose 4 articles that question the relationship between language and social practices by paying attention to various questions: in the event of a pandemic, what kind of relationship is established between language and practices? What role do metaphors have and what practical purpose do they have in political discourse and in the mass media? What role do ideology and critical thinking play in understanding the pandemic? How was the pandemic experienced and interpreted in the past? Do historical-literary representations from the past help us understand and manage the pandemic in the present?

Two articles reflect on the language used during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The other two reflect on the representation of the epidemic by analyzing some texts of the historical-literary tradition of early modern Europe by Shakespeare, Defoe, and Manzoni. The countries involved in the first two contributions are Germany, Italy, England, and Taiwan. Shakespeare’s and Defoe’s England and Manzoni’s Italy are instead the geographic contexts of the historical-literary analysis. The first two articles pay particular attention to the problem of metaphor in the discourses on Covid-19; the third article examines the presence of the plague in Shakespeare’s texts, and the fourth finally unfolds a comparative reflection on the relationship between narrative, politics and society during the plague of London (1655) and Milan (1630).

In the article **Wortschatz in der Coronavirus-Pandemie im Chinesischen und Deutschen: Lebensmetaphern, Kriegsmetaphern und die sozialen Bedeutungen**, Shelley Ching-yu Depner investigates the emerging vocabulary of the epidemic in Taiwan Mandarin and German.

Mandarin and German data are collected from the *Taiwan News Smart Web* and the German *DWDS* database (*Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart*), respectively. The research questions are the following: (a) What metaphors are used in the new expressions and what are the underlying source domains of the metaphors? (b) What social meanings are revealed by these metaphors? And (c) what are the different impacts of the epidemic on Taiwanese and German societies? The results of the study indicate that the common source domains of the two languages are {war}, {daily life}, and {emotion}. Both languages make good use of various metaphors in their new words, such as ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, and metonyms.

In the article **Metaphors of Bubonic Plague in Shakespeare's Plays**, Iris H. Tuan analyses how the plague affects William Shakespeare's plays, not only as an event and experience that influences the practice itself of writing but also by penetrating the writer's style in form of metaphors of lovesickness and moral decadence. The plague hit London from autumn 1592 to May 1594, and when Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, around 1599-1602, he still remembered the terror. Moreover, when London theatres were shut to prevent the spread of the disease, Shakespeare oriented towards poetry by composing a relevant part of the corpus of his sonnets. By applying the methodology of close reading borrowed from New Criticism, the author argues that Shakespeare used the plague as a literary metaphor and expression at least in three ways: first, the plague as a metaphor for a curse and a literary expression of the fatal disease; second, not only as a description of the disease but also as a metaphor of moral decadence; third, as a literary expression of lovesickness. Shakespeare's commitment to writing even in times of uncertainty and seclusion provides us with a positive encouragement to keep optimistic attitudes by writing, especially for those who are involved in this activity as professionals, i.e. scholars, writers, researchers, and journalists.

In the article **The Use of Foucault's and Schmitt's Theories and War Metaphors in the Political Narratives of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

INTERFACE

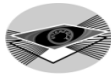
Patrizia Piredda investigates the use of language and metaphors in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in connection to surveillance, state of emergency, and critique of values. The author unfolds a critical analysis of two different perspectives that have been applied in the political narratives as interpretative models of the Covid-19 pandemic: Schmitt's crisis of values and Foucault's critique of surveillance, integrated with Giorgio Agamben's reflections on the state of emergency. By analysing Schmitt's and Foucault's theories, the author claims that Schmitt's theory was often referred to uncritically and applied to the pandemic mechanically, to support or challenge the political decision of introducing social restrictions. Conversely, the use of Foucault's theory is more adequate to build a critical understanding of the complex scenario of the Covid-19 crisis. Foucault's historical interpretation of the relationship between power, discourse, and pandemics highlights that such relation is always intrinsically ideological and that language of politics has always a manipulative function that must be critically deconstructed. The last part of the article is devoted to discussing how the war metaphors were used to persuade people to accept the restrictions and to divert attention from important political and social problems, such as the crisis of public health systems.

In the article **Between Fiction and History: Telling the Plague in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Alessandro Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*** Davide Crosara and Gianluca Cinelli investigate two classical texts on the plague written by Daniel Defoe and Alessandro Manzoni, who represent two exemplary case studies of the European reflection about language, power, and pestilence in the context of Enlightenment. The aim of the article is to show that with their books, both authors intend to "fortify" their readers' moral strength by representing the legacy of previous outbreaks of the plague. Defoe explicitly enacts such purpose by anticipating a pestilence at its peak (he writes in 1722, when the plague is already raging in France) that would call Londoners to be brave, responsible, resilient, and to react to the threat as a collective body. Manzoni pursues a more theoretical end as far as his essay appears at a political standstill for northern Italy and the city of Milan, in 1840, a condition which makes it look somewhat

EDITORIAL

anachronistic in its appeal to criticise the reckless abuses that political institutions (and their functionaries) may perpetrate in times of danger. Defoe and Manzoni offer a sharp and severe analysis of humanity before and after the plague. Their gaze illuminates the paranoid attitudes, the contradictions and the moral dilemmas generated by the pandemic event. The historic-literary example of these authors offers several suggestions to understand the present, from the psychology of conspiracy theorists to the experience of changing habits – in private and in public – by isolation, fear, social distancing, suspicion, and the abnormal perception of political power as a coercive force that pursues ends that often stand in open contrast with self-perception, social identity, and ethics.

[received on November 23, 2022
accepted on November 25, 2022]



Wortschatz in der Coronavirus-Pandemie im Chinesischen und Deutschen: Lebensmetaphern, Kriegsmetaphern und die sozialen Bedeutungen

SHELLEY CHING-YU DEPNER
National Cheng Kung University

Abstract

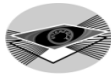
Das Coronavirus hat eine weltweite Pandemie ausgelöst, sowie auch der Wortschatz im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie sind geprägt worden. In diesem Artikel wird der entstehende Wortschatz des Chinesischen und Deutschen mit dem Schwerpunkt auf den entsprechenden Metaphern untersucht. Die Datenquelle sind *Taiwan News Smart Web* und *DWDS* (Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart). Ziel der Analyse der Metaphern ist es: Erstens, die Kategorien der Metapher und Quellbereiche hinter den Metaphern werden untersucht. Zweitens, derzeitiges Leben der Menschen während der Pandemie in den beiden Gesellschaften—Taiwan und Deutschland, werden verglichen. Schließlich werden wir die Unterschiede zwischen Taiwan und Deutschland berücksichtigen. Eine Vielzahl von Metaphern taucht in den neuen Wörtern auf. Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass die gemeinsamen metaphorischen Domänen beider Sprachen {Krieg}, {Alltag} und {Emotion} sind; z.B. Metonymie (Mundschutz, jiā líng 加零 ‘plus Null’), ontologische Metapher (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b; 2003) (Coronasünder, sǐ chéng 死城 ‘tote Stadt’), und strukturelle Metapher (Corona-kabinett, liè wū 獵巫 ‘Hexenjagd’). Chinesisch und Deutsch haben auch ihre eigenen unverwechselbaren Quellbereiche. Aus diesem Wortschatz können wir die Interaktion zwischen Menschen und die soziale Dynamik in der Pandemie erkennen, die durch die Metaphern des Lebens und Krieges dargestellt werden.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Coronavirus, Neologismen, Metaphern, Lebewesen-Forschung, Sprache und Kultur, gesellschaftliche Bedeutungen

© Shelley Ching-Yu Depner

Dieses Werk ist lizenziert unter einer [Creative Commons Namensnennung - Nicht-kommerziell - Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 4.0 International Lizenz](#).

<http://interface.org.tw/> and <http://interface.ntu.edu.tw/>



Taiwan Mandarin and German coronavirus neologism: Life and war metaphors and their social connotations

SHELLEY CHING-YU DEPNER
Nationale Cheng Kung Universität

Abstract

The coronavirus has caused a global epidemic and many new words have emerged. In this paper, I study the emerging vocabulary of the epidemic in Taiwan Mandarin and German. The Mandarin and German data are collected from the *Taiwan News Smart Web* and the German *DWDS* database (Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart), respectively. The research questions are as followings: (a) What metaphors are used in the new words and what are the underlying source domains of the metaphors? (b) What social meanings are revealed by these metaphors? And (c) what are the different impacts of the epidemic on Taiwan and German societies? The results of the study indicate that the common source domains of the two languages are {war}, {daily life}, and {emotion}. Both languages make good use of various metaphors in their new words, such as ontological metaphors, structural metaphors and metonyms. Taiwan Mandarin and German also have their own unique source domains. For example, the German {sports} (*Geisterspiel* 'ghost-contest = a contest without audience'). In the neologism, we see the interaction between people as well as the social dynamics in LIFE IS WAR.

Keywords: Coronavirus, neologism, metaphors, life-form study, language and culture, social connotation

© Shelley Ching-Yu Depner

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

<http://interface.org.tw/> and <http://interface.ntu.edu.tw/>

Wortschatz in der Coronavirus-Pandemie im

Chinesischen und Deutschen: Lebensmetaphern, Kriegsmetaphern und die sozialen Bedeutungen

Corona-Pandemie ist das Wort des Jahres 2020 und *Wellenbrecher* im Jahr 2021. *Wellenbrecher* steht für „alle Maßnahmen, die getroffen wurden und werden, um die vierte Corona-Welle zu brechen“ ([Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache](#)).¹ Covid-19, ein neuartiges Coronavirus, das seit Ende 2019 einen weltweiten Ausbruch verursacht, ist der Verursacher dieser Pandemie. Die Sprachproduktion konzentrierte sich während dieses kurzen Zeitraums der Corona-Pandemie routinemäßig auf COVID-19 (Tan et al., 2020). So wurden beispielsweise Wörterbücher wie das DWDS und das Oxford English Dictionary mehrfach um Begriffe ergänzt, die im Zusammenhang mit COVID-19 stehen. Die Freigabegeschwindigkeit ist viel kürzer als das übliche Aktualisierungsintervall für neue Wörter. Die Sprachwissenschaftsgemeinschaft muss dieses sprachliche Phänomen ernst nehmen. Dies ist das Ziel der vorliegenden Studie. Anhand dieses neuen Wortschatzes und der darin verwendeten Metaphern wollen wir analysieren, wie die Pandemie die taiwanesischen und deutschen Gesellschaft beeinflusst, verändert und inspiriert haben.

Die Ziele unserer Studie sind folgende: (a). Welche metaphorischen Sprachtechniken werden in diesen Neologismen für die Kommunikation verwendet? (b). Welche Art von pandemischem Leben drückt diese Metaphern aus? (c). Was sind die Unterschiede zwischen Taiwan und Deutschland?

¹ Eine frühere Version des Artikels wurde auf der Konferenz *Pandemics & Plagues, Languages & Literatures* (INTERFACEing 2021) vorgestellt. Die Autorin bedankt sich bei den beiden Gutachtern für ihre Anregungen und bei Frau Christine Saur für das Korrekturlesen des deutschen Textes. Die Autorin allein ist für eventuelle Fehler verantwortlich.

INTERFACE

Im Folgenden wird zunächst ein Überblick über die vorhandene Literatur gegeben. Dann werden die Quellen unseres Sprachmaterials vorgestellt und die theoretische Methode dieser Studie erläutert. Anschließend werden die Metaphern in den pandemischen Neologismen analysiert und die soziale Dynamik der Pandemie im Hinblick auf die wichtigsten Quellbereiche der Metaphern diskutiert. Schließlich wird eine Schlussfolgerung gezogen.

1 Literaturübersicht

In diesem Abschnitt befindet sich einen Überblick über die Forschungsstand zu Neologismen, krankheitsbezogenen Metaphern und Sprachforschungen über Corona-Pandemie.

Die Schaffung neuer Wörter spiegelt neue Erfahrungen der Sprachbenutzer wider (Behera & Mishra, 2013; Steinberg & Sciarini, 2013). Insbesondere die Fortschritte der Internet- und 3C-Technologien in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten haben zu einer großen Anzahl von neuem Vokabular geführt (Roig Marin 2016; Lehrar, 2003; Liu & Liu, 2014). Bei Neologismen geht es nicht nur um die Linguistik, sondern auch um den Bereich, zu dem der Neologismus gehört (Peprnik & Jaroslav 2006). Das heißt, dass der neue Wortschatz nicht nur bedeutungsvolle sprachliche Symbole ist, sondern auch „Produkte von Konzeptsystemen“ (the products of a conceptual system)(Nikadambaeva et al., 2019, p. 72-73) sind. Sie sind die neuen kulturellen Erfahrungen. Wie Baig (2019) argumentiert, erfüllen sprachliche Ausdrücke nicht nur den Zweck, kommunizieren, sondern auch die persönlichen Ansichten des Sprachnutzers. Es gibt zahlreiche Studien, die die internationale Bedeutung der Verwendung von Sprache für Kommunikation hervorheben (Grzega, 2021b; Lowe, 2018; Johnston-Robledo, McHugh & Chrysler, 2010; Clark & Clark, 1977). Auch die Corona Pandemie hat zu einer großen Anzahl von neuem Vokabular geführt. So analysieren Piller & Li (2020) mehrere wichtige Sprachen, in denen die WHO (Weltgesundheitsorganisation) Nachrichten über den Ausbruch von Covid-19 veröffentlichte. Später führen Samo et al. (2022) eine Studie mit einem

Sprachkorpus durch, der aus der Notfall-Lernplattform der WHO in 6 Sprachen stammt. Die Menschen wollen sich Gehör verschaffen, und so stellt Mackiewicz (2010, p. 3-4) fest, „Nirgendwo im Web sind die Meinungen der Menschen deutlicher zu erkennen als auf Websites“ (Nowhere on the Web are people’s opinions more evident than in Web sites). Khalfan et al. (2020) untersuchen die Beziehung zwischen Sprache und Denken in Bezug auf 25 neuen Twitter-Wörtern im Zusammenhang mit Covid-19. Grzega (2021a) untersucht Wiktionary, ein mehrsprachiges, freien Inhaltswörterbuch, und stellt fest, dass Wörter mit Bezug zum Coronavirus die Definition und Beispiele in anderen Einträgen prägen. Regelverstöße werden sogar von hochrangigen Autoren begangen und treten auch bei Lemmata auf, die nichts mit dem Coronavirus zu tun haben, insbesondere im Deutschen und Französischen.

Darüber hinaus sind die Ergebnisse von Karachina (2020) bedenkenswert. Sie geht davon aus, dass die Schaffung von Wörtern weitgehend von kulturellen Merkmalen bestimmt wird. Zu diesen kulturellen Merkmalen gehören politische und ideologische Faktoren sowie die Ausbreitung von Krankheiten (Depner, 2021). Auf diese Weise spiegeln die Corona-Wörter die neuen Erfahrungen der Sprachbenutzer und die neuen Veränderungen in der Gesellschaft wider. Andererseits drücken Sie die Entwicklung der persönlichen und sozialen Wahrnehmungen der Sprachbenutzer aus. In der gleichen Art und Weise erforschten Kitsa et al. (2021) der Pandemiemeldungen in Ukraine, beobachteten Thompson et al. (2021) und Gbashi et al. (2021) die Sprachen von afrikanischen Ländern. Es ist erkennbar das, dass Neologismen ein wichtiger sprachlicher Anhaltspunkt sind, und die Corona-Neologismen Ausdruck zahlreicher gesellschaftlicher Veränderungen sind. In der vorliegenden Arbeit untersuche ich die Corona-Neologismen, um herauszufinden, welche metaphorischen Sprachmittel zur Kommunikation derzeit verwendet werden und welche Art von pandemischem Leben diese Metaphern ausdrücken.

Die Metapher ist eine rhetorische und ausdrucksstarke Methode, bei der Menschen Assoziationen und Vorstellungskraft verwenden; ein rhetorisches und expressives Mittel, das A als Mittel (vehicle) benutzt,

INTERFACE

um B (tenor) zu beschreiben und zu illustrieren. Die Metapher ist eine kognitive Methode, um von einem kognitiven Bereich auf einen anderen „projizieren“ (mapping). Sie beruht auf der Ähnlichkeit der beiden (unter anderem Richards, 1965; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Die Metapher ist nicht nur eine Metapher, sondern auch eine spezifische mentale Zuordnung, die das Denken, die Argumentation und die Vorstellungskraft der Sprachbenutzer in ihrem täglichen Leben beeinflusst (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Sweetser, 1990; Gibbs & Steen, 1999). Es gibt einen Unterschied zwischen Metapher und Metonym, auf den wir im nächsten Abschnitt (Daten und Methode) eingehen werden.

Die Sprachwissenschaft verfügt über eine Fülle von Forschungsergebnissen zu Metaphern. Infektionen mit dem Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 verursachen Symptome und Krankheiten. Im Folgenden wird ein Überblick über Metapher und Krankheit gegeben. Sprachbenutzer verwenden häufig Metaphern, um Krankheiten auszudrücken, und die Komplexität von Krankheiten treibt auch die Verwendung von Metaphern in diesem Bereich voran. Beispielsweise spiegeln die Ergebnisse von Sontag (1989), Nerlich (2004), Pritzker (2007), Aksan und Kantar (2008), Ribeiro et al. (2018) die Tendenz von Sprachbenutzern wider, Metaphern zu verwenden, um Krankheiten auszudrücken. Pritzker (2007) führte eine Studie zum Sprachgebrauch von Patienten mit Depressionen durch. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass chinesische Sprecher (die Teilnehmer an dieser Studie waren Chinesen) verwenden häufig die konzeptuelle Metaphern DAS HERZ IST DER BEHÄLTER, DAS HERZ IST DER AKTEUR und DER AKTIVE ERLEBENDE. Zusätzlich zu den gängigen Metaphern verwendeten 92 % der Teilnehmer die Herz-Metapher, um ihre Gefühle und Gedanken zum Thema Depression zu beschreiben. Metaphern können die Erklärung von Krankheiten vereinfachen. Andererseits untersuchen Aksan und Kantar (2008) die metaphorische Verwendung von Krankheit und Emotion. Sie vergleichen die Konzeptualisierung von Liebe im Englischen und Türkischen. Aus den türkischen Metaphern der Liebe geht hervor, dass sie sich in der Regel auf die Liebe als OPFER, SCHMERZ und LEIDEN beziehen, was im Englischen nicht üblich ist.

Sontag (1978) prangerte an, wie die Sprache Krebs und Tuberkulose mit emotionaler Degradierung in Verbindung brachte, und sie wies darauf hin, wie Kriegsmetaphern AIDS stigmatisierten. Sontag (1989) plädiert außerdem für die Vermeidung von Metaphern und die Verwendung einer nicht-metaphorischen Sprache. Dies hat die Forschung über die Sprache der Krankheit angeregt. Ihr Buch *Krankheit als Metapher* (*Illness as Metaphor*, 1978) und die Argumente über die Metaphern, die Krebs mit der AIDS-Krise (1989) in Verbindung gebracht werden, haben so wohl Aufmerksamkeit als auch Kritik hervorgerufen. Christopher (1989) schrieb zum Beispiel, dass es „schwer zu sagen ist, was Frau Sontags Standpunkt ist“ (Ursprünglicher Text: „hard to tell what Ms. Sontag’s point of view is“). Robinson (1989) stellte fest, dass „die Krankheit selbst, und nicht die Art und Weise, wie wir über sie sprechen, die wahre Quelle ihres Schreckens ist“ (Ursprünglicher Text: “the disease itself, and not the way we talk about it, is the true source of its horror”). Wir werden die Punkte von Sonntag auf der Grundlage unserer Forschungsergebnisse im Rahmen der vorliegenden Studie am Ende des Artikels kommentieren.

Tatsächlich wurde die „Killer“-Metapher (Koteyko, Brown & Crawford, 2008, p. 250) bei der Beschreibung von Krankheiten in den Medien so oft verwendet, dass in den Nachrichtenberichten Killer-Bug (*killer bug*), Killer-Grippe (*killer flu*), Killer-Stamm (*killer strain*) usw. zu lesen sind. Laut Byrne (2012) wurde der Begriff „nationale Pandemie“ erstmals 1666 wörtlich verwendet, doch gab es mindestens im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Pandemien, die als Beulenpest und später als „Schwarzer Tod“ bekannt wurden. Der Begriff Schwarzer Tod tauchte jedoch erst im späten 17. Jahrhundert auf. Die Metapher des Schwarzen Todes verwendet das Wort Farbe (Schwarz) als Metapher. Die moderne Medien spielen eine zentrale Rolle bei der Berichterstattung über Krankheiten. Während die britischen Medien Ebola unterschätzten und als ausländische Krankheit einstufte (Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002), wurde in den britischen Medien der Rinderwahnsinn (BSE) der Regierung und den Landwirten angelastet, weil man Ausländern keine Schuld geben könne (Washer, 2006). Krankheit wird auch oft mit Gewalt in Verbindung gebracht. Die britischen Medien berichteten von einem Krieg ge-

INTERFACE

gen die Maul- und Klauenseuche (Nerlich, 2004) und machten SARS zum „Killer“ (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005).

Darüber hinaus verwendeten die britischen Medien die Metapher der Reise der Vogelgrippe, um deren ausländischen Ursprung zu suggerieren. Die Medien rechtfertigten die Maßnahmen der Regierung mit der Metapher des Krieges, um die Vogelgrippe zu erklären (Koteyko, Brown & Crawford, 2008).

Sprachwissenschaftler haben auch die Metaphern untersucht, die mit Coronavirus-Ausbrüchen in verschiedenen Sprachen verbunden sind, z. B. im Spanischen (Rico & Herrero, 2020; Grzega, 2021b; Sengupta, 2022), im Französischen (Mace, 2021; Kogteva, 2021; Lahlou & Rahim, 2022), im britischen Englisch (Tisdall, 2020; Marmaras, 2022) und im amerikanischen Englisch (Pillar, 2020; Prekazi, 2021). Die derzeitige gemeinsame Forschung weist auf eine Reihe verschiedener metaphorischer Beschreibungen hin, wobei der Krieg die vorherrschende Metapher ist. In dieser Ansicht, Rajandran (2020) untersucht, wie der malaysische und der singapurische Premierminister das Virus durch eine Metapher konzeptualisierten, auch unter dem Titel „Langfristiger Widerstand gegen den Krieg“ (A Long Battle Ahead). Er wies darauf hin, dass die Medien die politischen Führer daran erinnern, keine Kriegsmetaphern zu verwenden. Der Grund dafür ist, dass eine solche metaphorische Verwendung die Ideologie des Sprachbenutzers implizieren und Auswirkungen auf die reale Welt haben kann. Aus diesem Grund wird ein sorgfältiger Sprachgebrauch untersucht (z.B. Bridge, 2020; Brady, 2022). Andererseits konzentriert sich Gui (2021) in seiner Studie auf die mediale Darstellung der Corona-Pandemie im sozialen und kulturellen Kontext Chinas. Er stellt fest, dass metaphorische Kriegsdarstellungen im Korpus dominieren. Die moralischen Werte des „Schicksalsgemeinschaft“ werden sowohl wörtlich als auch metaphorisch dargestellt. Während die meisten Länder der Welt heute eine Lockerung durchführen, beharrt die chinesische Regierung auf ihrer Null-Covid-Politik, und weit mehr als 21 Millionen Chinesen sind derzeit eingeschlossen in lockdown (1.9.2022, Financial Times).

Für die entsprechenden Studien in Deutschland gibt es Forschungen von Petrenko et al. (2020), Depner (2020), Wolfer et al. (2020), Kuße (2021), Grzega (2021a), Grzega (2021b), Litvinova & Shustova (2021), Roettcher (2022), Vonderlin et al. (2022) usw. Laut Depner (2020), zu Beginn der Pandemie, wenn Deutsche sich treffen, begrüßen sie sich mit Faust- oder Ellenbogenstoß, und später vermeiden sie es sogar, die Faust oder Ellbogen zu berühren. Sie stehen weit voneinander entfernt und halten einen sozial sicheren Abstand für Begrüßungen und Gespräche ein. Menschliche Interaktion und Kontakte haben sich verändert. Wie sieht es mit den Interaktionen zwischen den Menschen aus, die in den neuen Corona-Wortschatz zum Ausdruck kommen? Diese Schilder AHA ist zum Beispiel eine Abkürzung für „Abstand + Hygiene + Alltagsmaske“, die in Deutschland überall zu finden ist. Später kommt die Ergänzung zu dem AHA-Regel noch „AHA + L“, was Lüften dazu geführt ist. Sonst ist noch „AHA + L + A“, sowie regelmäßiges Lüften und die Corona-Warn-App nutzen.

Über die Pandemie wurde früher weniger geforscht, und noch weniger wurde die aktuelle Sprache zweier Gesellschaften mit sehr unterschiedlichen Übertragungsraten der Corona-Pandemie verglichen. Taiwan war das letzte Land, das von der WHO während der vergangenen SARS-Periode aus der Pandemie-Zone ausgelistet wurde. Welche kulturellen Botschaften werden durch die Metaphern in dem neuen Wortschatz über die Corona-Pandemie derzeit in Taiwan und Deutschland vermittelt? Dies ist der Schwerpunkt der vorliegenden Arbeit.

2 Daten und Methode

Der chinesische Corona-Wortschatz wurde aus den Corona-Berichten der wichtigsten Zeitungen und Berichte in Taiwan zusammengestellt. Viele der Materialien sind im *Taiwan News Smart Web* verfügbar. Die Datenbank wurde von Smart Web Producer aufgestellt und enthält 13 Zeitungen vom September 1940 bis heute und wird täglich um neue Nachrichten ergänzt. Derzeit sind 624 chinesische Wörter gesammelt worden. Das deutsche Material wurde aus den deutschen Zeitungen

INTERFACE

und Berichte zusammengestellt. In der DWDS-Datenbank werden auch neue Begriffe für Coronavirus-Pandemie registriert. Das DWDS (Das Wortauskunftssystem zur deutschen Sprache in Geschichte und Gegenwart) auch bekannt als das Digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, wurde von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften erstellt. Bis heute (3.8.2022) sind insgesamt 432 Corona-Pandemie Wörter registriert.

Der Grund für die Verwendung dieser beiden Quellen ist der folgende: Die Pandemie läuft bereits seit mehr als zwei Jahren. Zu dem Zeitpunkt, als die Forscherin mit der Untersuchung begann, waren Datensammlungen zur Pandemie Wortschatz nicht systematisch verfügbar. Die Sammlung im DWDS ist im Wesentlichen für die linguistische Forschung zugänglich, während eine solche Sammlung in Taiwan Mandarin Online-Datenbanken nicht verfügbar war. Allerdings bot *Taiwan News Smart Web* umfangreiche Nachrichtensammlungen zum Abrufen der entsprechenden Begriffe, um sie mit den deutschen zu analysieren und zu vergleichen. Bei der Analyse des sozialen und kulturellen Kontextes, in denen diese Wörter verwendet werden, stütze ich mich auf taiwanesishe und deutsche Zeitungen, Fernsehnachrichten, Ankündigung der Regierungen und die Beobachtung der Autorin vor Ort in diesen beiden Ländern.²

Ob ein neues Wort eine Metapher ist, hängt von dem Kontext ab, in dem das Wort oder seine Bestandteile ursprünglich verwendet wurden, d. h. davon, ob diese Bestandteile überhaupt eine Grundbedeutung außerhalb von Pandemie haben, weil sie Situation A (Grundbedeutung-Kontext) zur Beschreibung von Situation B (Pandemie-Kontext) verwendet.

² Seit Beginn der Pandemie ist die Autorin die Hälfte der Zeit in Deutschland (15 Monate zwischen 2020 und 2021) und die andere Hälfte in Taiwan, einschließlich eines kurzfristigen Forschungsprojekts für das Ministry of Science and Technology. Dieser Artikel basiert auf Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen aus erster Hand, die die Autorin während der Pandemie in Taiwan und Deutschland gemacht habe.

Zum Beispiel wurde das Wort *zhǐ huī guān* 指揮官 ‚Kommandant‘³ ursprünglich im Zusammenhang mit der Armee verwendet, wo ein General ein Befehlshaber im Krieg war, daher ist sein Ursprungsgebiet {Krieg}. Der Begriff wird derzeit im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie (Zielbereich) verwendet, und ist somit eine Metapher für den Pandemie-Wortschatz. In ähnlicher Weise werden *lǜ sè dēng hào* 綠色燈號 ‚Grünes Licht‘, das ursprünglich aus dem Verkehrsbereich stammt, und *ān xīn lǚ guǎn* 安心旅館 ‚Sicheres Gästehaus‘, das dem Tourismusbereich zuzuordnen ist, nun im Zielbereich der Pandemie verwendet, was wir sammeln müssen. Manchmal wird ein Wort als Folge der Pandemie geprägt und hat keinen „ursprünglichen“ Quellbereich, wie im Fall von *liè wū* 獵巫 ‚Hexenjagd‘. Die Hexenjagd ist eine Metapher für die „Verfolgung oder den unvernünftigen Angriff auf eine Person oder Einrichtung mit einer bestätigten oder auch nur vermuteten Diagnose“, wobei zwei Mitteln verwendet werden: „Jagd“ und „Zauberer, Hexer“, und ist eine Metapher des Chinesischen Pandemie-Wortschatzes.

Die deutschen Pandemie-Metaphern werden auf die gleiche Weise beurteilt. In der deutschen Sprache gibt es viele neue Wörter für Pandemie, wie z. B. *Coronaparty*, eine Zusammensetzung aus Corona (Pandemie) und Party (Feier). Der erste Teil ist eine Terminologie, aber der zweite Teil des Ursprungsbereichs ist jedoch die alltägliche Freizeitgestaltung, so dass dieser Begriff eine pandemische Metapher ist. Es ist zu beachten, dass einige pandemische Neologismen gleichzeitig zwei oder mehr Quellbereiche (source domain) umfassen, z. B. *dūn mù* 敦睦 ‚Wohllwollen fördern‘ (eine tägliche Tat) in *dūn mù jiàn* 敦睦艦 ‚Wohllwollen-Flotte‘ gehört zu dem Quellbereich {Leben} und *jiàn* 艦 ‚Flotte‘ gehört zu {Militär}. Daher kann dieses Wort in allen für die Analyse

3 Konvention:

Eintrag	Beschreibung	Beispiel
chinesische Beispiele	Lautschrift Chinesische Zeichen ‘Übersetzung’	zhǐhuī guān 指揮官 ‘Kommandant’
deutsche und englische Beispiele	Kursivschrift	Coronaferien
konzeptuelle Metaphern	Kapitalisierung	HAPPY IS UP
Quellbereich	mit Klammern	{Alltag}
sekundärer Quellbereich	Eckige Klammern	[Leben]

INTERFACE

relevanten Quellenbereichen erscheinen, wobei er gesondert behandelt wird.

Entsprechend den unterschiedlichen kognitiven Rollen von konzeptuellen Metaphern unterteilen Lakoff & Johnson (1980b; 2003) diese in strukturelle Metaphern, ontologische Metaphern und orientierende Metaphern (structural metaphors, ontological metaphors, orientational metaphors). Eine strukturelle Metapher ist die Verwendung eines strukturierten, klar definierten Konzepts, um ein anderes Konzept zu verstehen, z.B. ARGUMENT IST KRIEG (ARGUMENT IS WAR), indem der abstrakte Zielbereich des Arguments durch den konkreten Quellbereich des Krieges verstanden wird. Lakoff und Johnson unterteilen ontologische Metaphern in drei Kategorien: Menschen, Stoffe und Behälter. Z.B. LEBEN IST LEER (LIFE IS EMPTY) (1980a, p. 462), vergleicht das abstrakte Konzept des Lebens mit einem Behälter, der voll oder leer sein kann. Die Orientierungsmetapher ist eine Metapher, die durch die Verwendung von Raumbegriffen wie „oben/unten“, „vorne/hinten“, „an/aus“, „tief/unten“ usw. gebildet wird. Beispielsweise wird bei GLÜCKLICH IST OBEN (HAPPY IS UP), TRAUERIG IST UNTEN (SAD IS DOWN) das räumliche Konzept von „oben/unten“ zur Beschreibung von Stimmungen verwendet.

An dieser Stelle ist es notwendig, auf den Unterschied zwischen Metapher und Metonymie einzugehen. Bei einer Metapher wird ein Begriff durch einen anderen ersetzt, und diese Ersetzung beruht auf einer spezifischen Analogie zwischen zwei Dingen oder Bereichen, z. B. *Johan ist ein Schwein* (Johan ist eine Person, während ein Schwein ein Tier ist). Während ein Metonym oft eine Teil-Ganzes-Beziehung ausdrückt, z. B. *a term paper* schreiben, eines Semesterarbeits; das Papier ist Teil des Berichts, d. h. das Material, auf dem der Inhalt gelesen werden kann. Kognitive Prinzipien, die das menschliche Denken strukturieren, wie z.B. menschlich > nicht-menschlich, ganz > teilweise, konkret > abstrakt, sichtbar > nicht-sichtbar (Langacker, 1993), bestimmen die relative Bedeutung einer Entität oder eines Bereichs (Depner, 2022). Metonymie ist ein referenzieller Transfer, der auf der räumlich-zeitlichen Kontiguität zwischen einer Entität und einer anderen beruht (Panther

& Radden, 1999; Traugott & Dasher, 2002). Metapher kann Metonymie beinhalten und als Sammelbegriff für Metonymie dienen (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Kiełtyka, 2019; Kövecses, 2013).

Die Wörter, die im Kontext der Pandemiemeldung auftauchen wurden mit den folgenden Schritten gesammelt: Wir bestimmen die Bedeutung dieses Wort, nehmen sie in unseren Korpus auf und beobachten dann, ob sie eine zugrundeliegende Bedeutung (den Quellbereich) haben. Grundlegende Bedeutungen sind spezifisch und eindeutig, weil sie ursprünglich (vor der Pandemie) in Gebrauch waren und weil sie vertraut sind. Manchmal bezieht sich die zugrundeliegende Bedeutung auf die körperliche oder kulturelle Erfahrung einer Person (vgl. Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Wenn der Bereich des Ursprungs oder der Metapher identifiziert ist, wird das Wort als Metapher gekennzeichnet. Dann wird das Detail der Metaphern analysiert.

3 Metaphern in Corona-Pandemie Neologismen

Im Folgenden werden zunächst die chinesischen Neologismen analysiert, dann die deutschen und schließlich die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in der Verwendung von Metaphern zwischen den beiden Sprachen verglichen.

3.1 Chinesisch

Im Pandemiewortschatz der chinesischen Sprache wird eine große Anzahl von Metaphern verwendet. Die grundlegenden metaphorischen Quellbereiche sind {Krieg}, {Alltag} und {Emotion}. Der Bereich {Krieg} kann in drei Unterbereiche unterteilt werden: in der Armee, in der Stadt und an der Grenze. Das Coronavirus ist eindeutig zu einem gemeinsamen, unsichtbaren und gefährlichen Feind in der Kriegsführung geworden. Der neue Wortschatz umfasst zum Beispiel *zhàn yì* 戰疫 ‚Pandemie-Krieg‘ (Beispiel 1), *zhǐ huī zhōng xīn* 指揮中心 ‚Kommandozentrale‘ (Beispiel 2), *zhǐ huī guān* 指揮官 ‚Kommandant‘, *kàng*

INTERFACE

yì 抗疫 ,Anti-Pandemie‘, huà xué bīng 化學兵 ,Chemiesoldat und die dūn mù jiàn duì 敦睦艦隊 ,Woolwollen-Flotte‘.

In den Städten gibt es Neologismen für {Krieg} wie dùn liáng 囤糧 ‘Lebensmitteln-Hortung‘ (Beispiel 3), dùn huò cháo 囤貨潮 ,Hortungswelle‘ (Beispiel 4), qiǎng gòu 搶購 ,wegschnappen‘, fēng chéng 封城 ,Lockdown‘, sǐ chéng 死城 ,tote Stadt‘, chū rù jìng guǎn zhì 出入境管制 ,Einwanderungskontrolle‘, dēng jī jiǎn yì 登機檢疫 ,Bericht zum Nukleinsäuretest vor dem Flug‘, jí zhōng jiǎn yì suǒ 集中檢疫所 ,zentralisierte Quarantäne‘ usw. Natürlich gibt es einige der neuen Begriffe nicht nur im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie (z. B. zhǐ huī zhōng xīn 指揮中心 ,Kommandozentrale‘) oder sie kommen in Taiwan nicht vor (z. B. fēng chéng 封城 ,Lockdown‘). In manchen anderen Ländern ist sie jedoch tatsächlich noch im Gange und wurde in Taiwan für die Pandemie häufig verwendet.

- (1) Miàn duì yì qíng...dì fāng xié shǒu wéi xià bō zhàn yì zuò hǎo wàn quán zhǔn bèi
面對疫情...地方攜手為下波戰疫做好萬全準備
‘Der Pandemie ins Auge sehen... Die lokalen Behörden arbeiten zusammen, um sich auf die nächste Welle des Pandemie-Krieges vorzubereiten.’ (8.12.2021, China Daily News)
- (2) Zhǐ huī zhōng xīn: Zì wū rù jìng kě miǎn chí yīn xìng zhèng míng
指揮中心：自烏入境可免持陰性證明
‘Kommandozentrale: Einreise aus der Ukraine kann vom Besitz eines Negativtestes befreit werden.’ (26.2.2022, China Daily News)
- (3) Shì yín yù gè guó chóng qǐ mào yì huó dòng, yōu duō guó dùn liáng shāng hài gōng yìng liàn
世銀籲各國重啟貿易活動 憂多國囤糧傷害供應鏈
‘Weltbank drängt Länder zur Wiederaufnahme des Handels, Lebensmittelhortung in vielen Ländern beeinträchtigt Lieferketten.’ (19.4.2020, Liberty Times Net)
- (4) Dùn huò cháo bù zài, mín shēng tōng lù jīn nián tiǎo zhàn dà
囤貨潮不再 民生通路今年挑戰大
‘Hortungswelle ist nicht mehr existent, eine Herausforderung für den Zugang der Menschen zum Lebensunterhalt in diesem Jahr.’ (18.3.2021, Commercial Times)

Das Wort *fēng chéng* 封城 ‚Lockdown‘ (wörtlich heißt ‚die Stadt versiegeln‘) wird als Metapher verwendet, insbesondere im Fall der Metonymie: bei der das Ganze (Menschen, Aktivitäten), einschließlich Schulen, Institutionen und Geschäfte, durch einen Teil (Stadt) ersetzt wird. Der Unterschied in der gesellschaftlichen Freiheit und der politischen Haltung zwischen den Begriffen ist auch offensichtlich (Depner, 2021). Es gibt noch eine andere, subtilere Metonymie. Krieg ist gefährlich, und auch wenn die Länder inmitten von Epidemien Not leiden, sprechen sie nicht über heikle Wörter wie Krieg. Im entstehenden Wortschatz, zwischen dem Gebrauch von Metapher und Metonymie, wird jedoch eine andere Form von {Krieg} unsichtbar und unbewusst ausgedrückt. Dies hat sich zu einem Quellbereich für Metaphern und zu einem sprachlichen Phänomen der Metonymie entwickelt. Rajandran (2020) stellt fest, dass der Premierminister von Singapur, Lee Hsien Loong (14.04.2020), COVID-19 als „gemeinsamer unsichtbarer Feind“ (common invisible enemy) bezeichnete, eine Metonymie, die das Ganze durch den Teil ersetzt.

Der Quellbereich {Krieg} selbst ist auch eine Metonymie. Musolff (2016) merkt an, dass Metaphern oft Szenarien vermitteln können. Kriegsszenen werden oft als Hinweis auf Krankheiten verwendet (Koteyko, Brown & Crawford, 2008; Nerlich, 2004; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Sontag, 1989). Sprachbenutzer können das Coronavirus mit der Metapher des Krieges beschreiben. Die Erfahrung, mit der Pandemie zu leben, hat sie dazu gebracht, diese kognitiven Assoziationen und Anwendungen zu entwickeln, und das Szenario {Krieg} wird so zu einem Quellbereich. Sprachbenutzer nutzen diesen kognitiven Austausch, um ihr Verständnis zu vereinfachen und den Kommunikationsprozess zu verkürzen.

Einige der neuen Wörter, die in der Pandemie verwendet werden, waren ursprünglich für andere Zusammenhänge reserviert, wie z. B. Früher war die *chū rùjìng guǎnzhi* 出入境管制 ‚Einwanderungskontrolle‘ nur eine Maßnahme zur Bekämpfung der illegalen Einwanderung. Das *qiǎnggòu* 搶購 ‚aufschnappen‘ wurde sonst in Kriegszeiten verwendet. Aber es ist schwer, den Kaufrausch zu vergessen, der zu Beginn der

INTERFACE

Pandemie herrschte.

Der zweite grundlegende Quellbereich ist {Alltag} und seine sekundären Quellbereiche sind: [Leben], [Verkehr], [Reisen] und [Krankheit]. Eine Coronavirus-Lungenentzündung *xīn guān fèi yán* 新冠肺炎 ‚Coronavirus-Lungenentzündung‘ ist eine Krankheit, es scheint, dass dieser letzte sekundäre Quellbereich unnötig ist. Jedoch sind wie *wú zhèng zhuàng* 無症狀 ‚asymptomatisch‘ und *qián fú qī* 潛伏期 ‚Inkubationszeit‘ wichtige Begriffe im Zusammenhang mit der Corona-Pandemie. Sie sind Corona-Neologismen, die von der allgemeinen Krankheit auf die Coronavirus-Lungenentzündung projiziert (map onto) wurde. *Dài zài jiā* 待在家 ‚Zu Hause bleiben‘ ist auch ein gängiger Begriff in der Pandemie. Depner (2018) diskutiert die morphologische Entwicklung von *zhái nán* 宅男 ‚Kontaktarmer man‘ und *zhái nǚ* 宅女 ‚Kontaktarme Frau‘. Damals waren Kontaktarme Personen eher abwertend gemeint. Man sollte sich bewegen, Sport treiben oder Freunde besuchen und nicht zu viel zu Hause bleiben. Bei der derzeitigen Pandemie sollten die Menschen jedoch „zu Hause bleiben“. Dieses „neue Wort“, das im normalen {Alltag} (Quellbereich) zum [Leben] (sekundärer Quellbereich) der Menschen gehört, erhält also im Kontext der Pandemie (Zielbereich) eine andere Bedeutung und Krisendimension.

Von *jiā líng* 加零 ‚plus Null; Null Covid-Fälle zu verzeichnen‘ (Beispiel 5a) zu *jiā líng* 嘉玲 ‚Name einer Frau‘ (Beispiel 5b) ist die Verwendung von Homophonen als Brücke eine Personifikation. *Jiā líng* 加零 und *Jiā líng* 嘉玲 werden gleich ausgesprochen. Die Verwendung des Letzteren für das Erstere ist eine spielerische und witzige sprachliche Fähigkeit der Taiwanesen. Die *zuàn shí gōng zhǔ hào* 鑽石公主號 ‚Diamantenprinzessin‘ (the Diamond Princess) ist ein Kreuzfahrtschiff, auf dem sich in den Anfangstagen der Pandemie Infizierte an Bord befanden, die zu *qún jù gǎn rǎn* 群聚感染 ‚Clusterinfektionen‘ führten. Der Begriff verwendet auch die Personifikation (Prinzessin-Schiff), die eine gängige Metapher in der Sprache ist. Ein weiteres neues Wort *1968APP* wurde ursprünglich für Autobahn in Taiwan verwendet, um den Autofahrern Echtzeit-Straßenbedingungen zu liefern. Als Reaktion auf die Pandemie wurde es hinzugefügt, um eine Warnfunktion für Hotspots

bereitzustellen. Für einige Hotspots, werden Warnungen in verschiedenen Farben verwendet, um vor übermäßigen Menschenmassen zu warnen.

Der dritte grundlegende Quellbereich ist {Emotion}. Der Begriff *mì qiè jiē chù zhě* 密切接觸者 ‚enge Kontakte‘ (Beispiel 6) könnte sich auf das Objekt einer Zuneigungsbekundung oder auf eine Person beziehen, zu der ein großes Vertrauen besteht. Jedoch im Fall der Pandemie bezieht sich dieser Begriff auf: jede Person in einem geschlossenen Raum, die während des Auftretens der Symptome längeren direkten Kontakt (mehr als 15 Minuten) mit einem hochwahrscheinlichen oder bestätigten Fall hatte. Oder, medizinisches Personal und Familienmitglieder, die mit dem Patienten zusammenleben, die ihn gepflegt haben, mit ihm zusammen waren oder ohne angemessenen Schutz mit Atemwegssekreten oder Körperflüssigkeiten in Kontakt gekommen sind (Abteilung für Seuchenkontrolle, Ministerium für Gesundheit und Wohlfahrt,⁴ 2022). Von der sentimental Seite bis hin zur Quelle der Krankheit trägt dieser Begriff nun eine nervenaufreibende negative Bedeutung. Nach Eckert (2008), Hock & Josepf (2009) und Beaton & Washington (2015) ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass der Bedeutungswandel eines Wortes im Bereich der lexikalischen Erschließung negativ (Pejoration) geworden ist.

- (5) a. Gāo xióng shì lián 52 tiān jiā líng, cān yǐn nèi yòng fàng kuān miǎn gé bǎn, jiān jù
 高雄市連52天加零 餐飲內用放寬免隔板、間距
 ‘Kaohsiung City hat 52 Tage in Folge Null Covid-Fälle zu verzeichnen, Gaststättengewerbe befreit von Trennwände und Abstände.’ (5.10.2021, Liberty Times Net)
- b. Yòu jiàn jiā líng lián 26 tiān wú běn tǔ bìng lì, jīng gè xiàn shì pínggū, gè hángyè kě jiě fēng.
 又見嘉玲 連26天無本土病例 經各縣市評估 各行業可解封
 ‘Kaohsiung City hat 52 Tage in Folge jiā líng (Null Covid-Fälle zu verzeichnen). Nach Auswertung durch Landkreise und Städte, Lockerung in Sicht für alle Branchen.’ (9.5.2020, China Times)
- (6) Mì qiè jiē chù zhě bào zēng, rì běn zhèng fǔ nǐ jiāng gé lí tiān shù suǒ duǎn wèi 7 tiān

⁴ 衛生福利部疾病管制署 (Department of Health and Welfare, Agency for Disease Control), Taiwan.

INTERFACE

密切接觸者暴增 日本政府擬將隔離天數縮短為7天

‘Die Zahl der engen Kontakte hat stark zugenommen, die japanische Regierung plant, die Zahl der Quarantänitage auf 7 Tage zu verkürzen.’ (28.1.2022, Liberty Times Net)

- (7) Yīn yīng bào fù xìng lǚ yóu, lǚ yùn zhōng xīn kuò jiàn, zēng shè 790 píng kōng zhōng huā yuán

因應報復性旅遊 旅運中心擴建 增設790坪空中花園

‘Als Reaktion auf den Vergeltungstourismus fügt die Erweiterung des Tourismuszentrums einen 790 Quadratmeter großen Himmelsgarten hinzu.’ (28.12.2021, China Daily News)

Auch *bào fù xìng lǚ yóu* 報復性旅遊 ‚Vergeltungstourismus‘ (Beispiel 7) ist ein Ausdruck von {Emotion}, ebenfalls ein neuer Wortschatz, der eine besondere Sprachtechnik verwendet ist. Sie äußert Hassgefühle bis zur Rache, ist ein emotionales Ventil für die Pandemie und eine Gelegenheit für Inlandsreisen in dieser Zeit. Ein Wort kann auch eine Vielzahl von Emotionen ausdrücken, wie z. B. *sǐ chéng* 死城 ‚tote Stadt‘ für Trauer und Angst, *liè wū* 獵巫 ‚Hexenjagd‘ für Wut und Angst und *jiā líng* 加零 ‚plus Null‘ für Freude und Beruhigung. Die *sǐ chéng* 死城 ‚tote Stadt‘ ist auch eine Personifikation Metapher, die den „Tod“ als Metapher für die am sichtbare leere Stille verwendet. Sie ist eine ontologische Metapher und drückt ein intensiveres Gefühl von Trauer und Angst aus. Darüber hinaus verwendet der Begriff *liè wū* 獵巫 ‚Hexenjagd‘ die beiden *liè* 獵 ‚Jagd‘ und *wū* 巫 ‚Hexe‘, um die „Verfolgung oder den ungerechtfertigten Angriff auf eine Person, die diagnostiziert oder nur verdächtigt wird, diagnostiziert zu sein“ als Ausdruck von Wut und Angst zu beschreiben. Die metaphorische Verwendung von Mitteln „Jagd“ und „Hexe“, um auf die eigenen inneren Gefühle zu verweisen. Weiterhin ist die Verwendung des Wortes *lián rì líng què zhěn* 連日零確診 ‚Null-Diagnose in Folge‘ ursprünglich eine Metonymie, weil das Ergebnis von Dingen durch eine Zahl ersetzt wird. Andererseits entwickelt sich die Bedeutung dieses Wortes von neutral zu positiv und ist auch eine semantische Entwicklung namens Melioration. Dieses „Null-Diagnose“, auch wenn es nur das Ergebnis eines Tages ist, ist die tägliche Erwartung aller Taiwaner und die tägliche Hoffnung der Welt seit mehr als zwei Jahren. Wir werden im nächsten Kapitel näher über die Zahl diskutieren.

3.2 Deutsch

Die grundlegenden metaphorischen Quellbereiche im Pandemiewortschatz der deutschen Sprache sind ebenfalls die drei grundlegende Quellbereiche: {Krieg}, {Alltag} und {Emotion}, aber viele der Metaphern und Projektionen unterscheiden sich von denen im Chinesischen. Die deutsche Kategorie des Krieges hat die Sekundäre Quelldomäne: im [Militär], in der [Stadt], an der [Grenze] und in der [Regierung]. Im [Militär] gibt es *Risikogebiet*, *explosionsartig*, *Exit-Strategie*, *Gesichtsschutz*, *Schutzkleidung*, *Notbetreuung*, *Notbetrieb*, *Durchseuchung*, usw. In den [Städten] sind wegen des {Krieges} *Ausgangsbeschränkung*, *Ausgangssperre*, *Ausgangsverbot*, *Ausgehverbot* usw. verwendet; diese Begriffe wurden in Deutschland tatsächlich während der Pandemie verwendet und sind vor Kurzen noch Teil des Lebens der Menschen, so werden diese Begriffe auch in die Kategorie Leben eingeordnet. Das heißt, diese neuen Begriffe, die in Kriegszeiten (Quellbereich) in der Regel staatliche (sekundärer Quellbereich) Auslegungen waren, müssen nun in der Corona-Pandemie (Zielbereich) für die Alltagsleben umgesetzt werden.

Viele von dem Sekundäre Quellbereich [Grenzen] wie *Einreisesperre*, *Einreiseverbot*, *Ausreisesperre*, *Grenzkontrolle* sind gleich wie im Chinesischen. Je nach geografischer Lage gibt es auch spezifischere Neologismen, wie z. B. *Grenzkontrolle* (Beispiel 8). Die Ergebnisse der Analyse der chinesischen und deutschen Metaphern spiegeln die Erkenntnisse der Linguisten in der oben erwähnten Literatur wider, dass Kriegsmetaphern häufige Metaphern für die aktuelle Coronavirus-Pandemie sind: Spanisch (Rico & Herrero, 2020), Französisch (Mace, 2021), usw. Die vorliegende Arbeit fügt Deutsch und Chinesisch in die Liste ein.

Deutsch verwendet viele orientierende Metaphern (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), in Bezug auf die Orientierung, z.B. *Exit-Strategie*, *explosionsartig*, *Ausgehverbot*. *Ausgehverbot* (Beispiel 9) ist nach außen, *Einreiseverbot* (Beispiel 10) ist nach innen, und *Durchseuchung* ist durch. Auch die Rolle und der Beitrag der deutschen Präpositionen bei der Wortbil-

INTERFACE

dung kann hier beobachtet werden. Sie tragen nicht nur zum Ausdruck von Bedeutung bei, sondern hat auch eine bildliche Dimension (z. B. die Richtung). Dadurch wird die Bedeutung der Wörter klar und die Konstruktion der Wörter einfach und flexibel. Derzeit gibt es z. B. acht Corona-Neologismen im DWDS, die aus der Präposition „aus“ gebildet sind.

- (8) Deswegen sind seit Anfang der Woche die verschärften Grenzkontrollen und Einreisebeschränkungen zu einigen unserer wichtigsten Nachbarländer in Kraft. (18.3.2020, Rede von Angela Merkel)
- (9) ... wo im Mittel von sieben Tagen mehr als 100 von 100.000 Einwohnern infiziert sind, da herrscht ab 22 Uhr Ausgehverbot. Das betrifft momentan 85 Prozent aller Landkreise in Deutschland. (22.4.2021, Deutsche Welle)
- (10) Das Einreiseverbot für andere ausländische Reisende mit gültigen temporären Visa zahlreicher Kategorien besteht nicht mehr. (12.2.2022, Auswärtiges Amt)

Affixe spielen bei der Wortbildung eine ähnliche Rolle wie die Präpositionen. Sie verleihen dem Gebrauch deutscher Metaphern einen besonderen Charakter. Übliche Affixe im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie sind *Not* (z.B. *Notbremse*, *Notfallpatient*), *Risiko* (z.B. *Risikobewertung*, *Risikogruppe*), *Krisen* (z.B. *Krisenkabinett*, *Krisenmanagement*), *Schutz* (z.B. *Gesichtsschutz*, *Mund-Nasen-Schutz*) usw. Für die Grenzverteidigung heißt es „Ein(reise)-“, „Aus(reise)-“, für die Regierung „-kabinett“, „-programm“, „-strategie“, „-manager“, usw., wobei „-kabinett“ eine strukturelle Metapher ist, die das Abstrakte konkret beschreibt. Die strukturelle Metapher ist eine gängige Metapher. Weitere solche Metaphern (wie z.B. *CorCooning* und *Balkonien*) werden wir im Abschnitt 5 erklären, weil sie mit einem bestimmten Lebensstil zu tun haben und den Unterschied zwischen Deutschland und Taiwan aufzeigen können.

Der nächste Sekundäre Quellbereich ist [Schulen]. [Schulen] gehören zu einem speziellen Sekundärer Quellbereich, und die Wörter hier sind alle Maßnahmen, die in besonderen Zeiten ergriffen wurden, also werden sie als {Krieg} eingeordnet, sie gehören natürlich auch zu den {alltäglichen} Aktivitäten. Das heißt, diese Wörter sind normalerweise

se [Schul-] (Sekundärer Quellbereich) Politiken, die nur während des {Krieges} (Quellbereich) umgesetzt wurden, und jetzt müssen sie während der Pandemie (Zielbereich) übernommen werden. *Schulschließung, Schulöffnung, Homeschooling, Durchschnittsabitur, Corona-Abitur, Kita-Schließung, Kindergartenschließung, Ausgangsbeschränkung, Kontaktbeschränkung* alles geschah in der Corona-Pandemie. Sie sind Maßnahmen für den Fall außergewöhnlicher Umstände. Allerdings wird seit dem 15.02.2021 *Schulöffnung* in verschiedenen Bundesländern durchgeführt. Auch die Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel⁵ hat Öffnungsschritte in einem Interview mit dem ZDF im Februar 2021 (2.12.2021, Heute Journal) die Möglichkeit einer schrittweisen Öffnung gegeben. Der jetzige Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz äußerte Lockerungsplänen „ab sofort die Corona-Regeln nach und nach lockern. Zuerst werden die Regeln für private Treffen und beim Einkaufen gelockert.“ Und das ist der erste Schritt der Lockerungen (16.2.2022, Die Bundesregierung).

Der zweite grundlegende Quellenbereich ist {Alltag}, mit den Sekundärer Quellbereiche: [Leben], [Masken], [Verkehr], [Freizeit] und [Impfung]. In den Sekundärer Quellbereich, die sich auf das [Leben] beziehen, ist zu erkennen, dass sie fast alle auf körperliche Bewegung und menschlichen Kontakt beschränkt sind. *Einmalhandschuh* ist eine Metapher für Qualität (Ahrens, 2002), d.h. eine Metapher für die Eigenschaften der Handschuhe, die zum Gebrauch geliefert werden. Das Wort *Corona* selbst ist zu einem neuen Affix geworden. Die Bedeutung des Wortes *Corona* in DWDS ist: „[umgangssprachlich]⁶ entsprechend der Bedeutung von Coronavirus; [metonymisch] durch das Coronavirus hervorgerufene pandemische Infektionskrankheit, durch das Virus verursachte Pandemie, damit verbundene Krise, Maßnahmen des Seuchenschutzes o. Ä.“ Entweder umgangssprachlich oder metonymisch, *Corona* kann vielen Wörtern hinzugefügt werden. In unserem gesammelten deutschen Material sind 6,26% (26/415) solcher Fälle enthalten. Dadurch werden ein Ereignis oder eine Aktivität mit einer ganz anderen Form und einem anderen Inhalt dargestellt, z.B. *Coronaparty* (Beispiel 11), *Coronaferien*, *Coronasünder* (Beispiel 12), *Coronademo*,

5 Angela Merkel war Bundeskanzlerin vom 22. November 2005 bis zum 8. Dezember 2021.

6 DWDS kennzeichnet die Merkmale der registrierten Wörter mit eckigen Klammern, z.B. [umgangssprachlich] und [bildlich].

INTERFACE

Coronaimpfstoff. *Coronademo*, *Corona-Abitur*, *Coronaimpfstoff*. Sie erscheinen in verschiedenen Sekundärer Bereichen, wie [Leben] (*Corona-App*), [Verkehr] (*Coronaradweg*), [Freizeit] (*Coronaparty*). Einige dieser Wörter sind unerwartet (*Coronaparty*, *Corona-Abitur*) und einige sind aktualisierte Versionen von Alltagsaktivitäten (*OP-Maske*, *Impfstoff*), die die noch aktuelle Situation in Deutschland und das Leben in der Pandemie widerspiegeln. Der *Coronasünder* ist auch eine besondere Metapher für die oben besprochene ontologische Metapher; „Sünder“ kommt aus der Bibel, ursprünglich ein religiöser Begriff, und wird auf die Pandemie übertragen, um „Person, die sich während der durch das Coronavirus verursachten Pandemie nicht an die speziell für diese Situation gültigen Gesetze und Verordnungen (besonders zum Schutz vor Ansteckungen) hält“ (DWDS) zu bedeuten. Dies steht im Gegensatz zu einem neuen Begriff im Bereich des Sports, dem *Geisterspiel* (Beispiel 13), bei dem das Wort „Geist“ in Bezug auf den Lebensgeist verwendet wird. *Geisterspiel* bezieht sich auf eine leere Zuschauertribüne, Sportveranstaltungen ohne Zuschauer. Das heißt, ein leeres Stadion, das dem Spiel eine gespenstische Atmosphäre verleiht. Diese Metonymie umfasst Teil (unsichtbare Wesen) für das Ganze (leere Zuschauertribüne). Deutsche Corona-Neologismen machen reichlich Gebrauch von Metaphern verschiedener Art und erweitern gleichzeitig das Vokabular der Sprache.

- (11) Polizei beendet Coronaparty in Saarbrücken – Auch Gaststätte in Freiburg geräumt. (7.3.2021, Nürnberger Blatt)
- (12) Das bunte Treiben der Coronasünder: Partys, gefälschte Zertifikate und immer wieder Probleme mit Tennisspielen. (17.1.2022, Badener Tagblatt)
- (13) Nachdem zahlreiche Großereignisse weltweit wegen des Coronavirus abgesagt wurden, sind auch immer mehr Sportevents betroffen. In der FußballBundesliga wird es zum ersten Mal Geisterspiele geben, auch das Debüt des neuen Handball Nationaltrainers Alfred Gislason am Freitag in Magdeburg wird voraussichtlich ohne Zuschauer stattfinden. (10.3.2020, Die Zeit)
- (14) Berliner Nahverkehr: Mehr als eine halbe Million Euro Bußgelder gegen Maskenmuffel. (23.7.2021, Tagesspiegel)

Der dritte große Quellbereich ist ebenfalls {Emotion}. *Maskenmuffel*

(Beispiel 14) drückt die Unzufriedenheit über die Abneigung gegen das Tragen einer Maske aus. *Ansteckungsgefahr* spricht von Angst. Einige der Corona-Neologismen im DWDS sind „scherzhaft“, „ironisch“, „abwertend“, „unangenehmes“ markiert. Sie sind auch emotionale Ausdrücke während der Pandemie, wie *Balkonien* (scherzhaft), *Lügenpresse* (abwertend), *Inzidenz* (unangenehmes). Schaut man sich diese neuen Wörter jedoch genauer an, haben viele von ihnen einen direkten Bezug zu Leben und Tod, wie etwa *Sterberisiko*, *Todesrate*, *Sterblichkeitsrate*, *Übersterblichkeit*, *Existenzangst*. Jedoch, drei der fünf neuen Wörter, die DWDS in 2.2021 hinzugefügt hat, beziehen sich auf [Impfung], *Impfzentrum*, *Impfpflicht*, *Impfgegner*, was einen Wendepunkt in der Krise darstellt. Deutschland ist eines der Länder, das am schnellsten einen Impfstoff gegen das Coronavirus entwickelt hat, wenn nicht das Erste.

4 Vergleich zwischen Chinesisch und Deutsch

Zusätzlich zu den oben genannten Metaphern, die beiden Sprachen haben auch ihre eigenen Quellbereiche, wie z. B. {Natur} im Chinesischen und {Sport} im Deutschen. Einige Details sind im Folgenden aufgeführt. Die chinesische *shāng wù lǚ yóu pào pào* 商務旅遊泡泡 ‚Geschäftsreise-Blase‘ (Beispiel 15b), *méi huā zuò* 梅花座 ‚Pflaumenblütenkonstellation‘ (Pflanze), *tiān wǎng* 天網 ‚SkyNet‘ (Himmelsgewölbe) ‚, *zhuān'àn shì jīngjì pào pào* 專案式經濟泡泡 ‚projektbezogene Wirtschaftsblase‘, *dùn huò cháo* 囤貨潮 ‚Horten-Tide‘; Horten‘ und *fēn liú* 分流 ‚separate-fließen; Umleitung (Wasser)‘ sind alle mit der Natur verbunden. Die folgenden Wörter sind im DWDS mit der Kategorie „Sport“ gekennzeichnet: *Gesichtsmaske*, *Gesichtsschutz*, *Mundschutz*, *Neustart*, *Personaldecke*, *Rückholaktion*, *Geisterspiel*. Im Grunde hätten sie unter dem Quellbereich der {alltäglichen} zusammengefasst werden können, aber ihre große Zahl und ihre Besonderheit machten es von Bedeutung, der Quellbereich {Sport} metaphorisch gesondert zu diskutieren. *Gesichtsmaske*, *Mundschutz* werden hier als {Sport} eingeordnet, aber ich würde Chinesisch *dài kǒu zhào* 戴口罩 ‚eine Maske tragen‘ in die Kategorie [Verkehr] einstufen. Das liegt da-

INTERFACE

ran, dass man in Taiwan beim Sport normalerweise keine Maske trägt. Für die üblichen Sportarten in Taiwan sind keine Masken erforderlich, allerdings tragen die meisten Motorradfahrer auf den Straßen Taiwans Masken, um den Wind und die schmutzige Luft abzuhalten. Es ist auch anzumerken, dass es weder an deutschen Corona-Neologismen mit Bezug zur {Natur} fehlt (z. B. *Babyelefant*, zweite *Welle*) noch an {Sport} bezogenen Wortschatz im Chinesischen (z. B. *gé lí bǐ sài* 隔離比賽 ‚isoliertes Spiel‘, *zì dòng huà zhí bō sài shì* 自動化直播賽事 ‚automatisiertes Live-Spiel‘). Die Anzahl der identischen Metaphern ist jedoch wenig und bildet keinen deutlichen Quellbereich.

Darüber hinaus haben beide Sprachen auch ihre eigenen einzigartigen Metaphern für die Corona-Pandemie. Es gibt so eine Metapher in den chinesischen – *shùn shí zhōng* 順時中 ‚für Shih-chung; im Uhrzeigersinn‘ (Beispiel 16), die bedeutet „Chen Shih-chung (den Minister für Gesundheit und Wohlfahrt Taiwans) zu gehorchen.“ Diese Metapher hat ihren einzigartigen und vielschichtigen kognitiven Hintergrund. Sie entsteht durch die gleichzeitige Verwendung vertikaler und horizontaler Denkweisen: vom Zeitbereich über die Person (Herr Chen Shih-chung) bis zur Pandemie (Herr Chen ist der Kommandant der Pandemie). Die Metapher beruht auf Homophonen (*shí zhōng* 時鐘 ‚die Uhr‘ = *Shí zhōng* 時中 ‚Shih-chung‘). Wenn dies ein neues Wort ist, das zuerst von Bürgermeister Ke von Taipei City verwendet wird (wie im Beispiel 16 steht), ist Herr Ke sich natürlich nicht der Fähigkeit der Sprache in seinem Kopf bewusst, Metaphern zu erweitern, was die kognitive Sprachfähigkeit jedes (Mutter-)Sprechers ist. Wort Ersteller und Zuhörer kommunizieren miteinander und die kognitive Sprachfähigkeit ist die Begabung des Menschen, die Sprache kreativ zu verwenden.

In ähnlicher Weise hat das Deutsche neue und interessante Metaphern wie *CorCooning* und *Balkonien*. Wie oben erwähnt, dass *CorCooning* und *Balkonien* gängige Strukturmetaphern sind. In den Neologismen sind sie nicht nur Metaphern, sondern auch innovative Lebensformen in dieser Zeit. *CorCooning* ist die Abkürzung von *Corona* und *Cocooning*, die sich aus der Hälfte jedes Wortes zusammensetzt. Die beide bedeuten, dass sie aufgrund des Coronavirus in ihr Zuhause zurück-

kehren müssen. Das spezifische *Cocooning* „Kokon“ wird verwendet, um auf die Lebensanforderungen von „innerhalb der Grenzen des Hauses leben“ zu verweisen. Die Wortbildung ist kraftvoll, die semantische Bedeutung bildhaft. Das andere Wort *Balkonien* ist von *Balkon*. Auf DWDS ist aufgezeichnet, dass *Balkonien* nicht erst jetzt neu ist: es erschien bereits in die Bild Zeitung „Das Geld reicht nur für Ferien in ‚Balkonien‘“ (2.8.1967). Heute ist es auch für Abgeschiedenheit während der Pandemie, also in Urlaub auf meinem eigenen Balkon.

Zum Abschluss dieses Abschnitts vergleiche ich Chinesisch und Deutsch mit einer gemeinsamen Metapher, das mit Zahlen zu tun hat. Vom Beginn der Pandemie bis heute ist das Thema wichtig, über das die Menschen jeden Tag etwas wissen wollen, das sind die heutigen Zahlen. *Null* (Beispiel 17) ist ein neues Wort im DWDS für die Pandemie, das bedeutet: „1. durch die Ziffer 0 dargestellter mathematischer, physikalischer o. ä. Wert oder darstellbare Menge, Zahl. 2. [bildlich] Ausgangspunkt, Anfang einer Entwicklung, eines Vorgangs; Zustand oder Stand, in dem noch nichts erreicht oder vorhanden (aber auch nichts verloren) ist. 3. [übertragen] den Ausgangspunkt, ersten Abschnitt einer Entwicklung oder den ersten einer Reihe von Fällen, Ereignissen darstellend.“ Wir sehen, dass das Wort DWDS registriert, die erste Bedeutung ist die ursprüngliche Bedeutung, die zweite und dritte sind im Falle der Pandemie. Was die metaphorische Bildung betrifft, so verwenden beide Sprachen die Zahl „Null“ im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie in besonderem Maße, wobei das Chinesisch sie numerisch (*líng què zhěn* 零確診 ‚Null bestätigt‘, *líng hào bìng rén* 零號病人 ‚Nr. Null Patient‘) und dann metaphorisch (*jiā líng* 加零 ‚Null hinzufügen‘) in Taiwan verwendet. Das Deutsche gebraucht sie metaphorisch (Startpunkt, Entwicklung), wie im DWDS mit der zweiten (bildlich) und dritten (übertragen) Bedeutung das Wort aufzeichnet.⁷ Diese numerische Metapher hat außerdem sowohl ihre sprachliche und kulturelle Bedeutung als auch ihre Bedeutung in der Zeit der Pandemie, die in den folgenden Kapiteln als Abschluss dargelegt wird.

7 Eine ähnliche Verwendung gibt es im Sport vor der Pandemie, z. B. *Die Null muss stehen* verwendet man, wenn man sich auf die gegnerische Mannschaft bezieht und hofft, dass der Gegner die Null hält und der Ball nicht ins Tor geschossen wird.

INTERFACE

- (15)a. Guī huà guān guāng pào pào jī zǔ yuán suō duǎn jū jiǎn tiān shù, fǎng yì sōng bǎng.
規劃觀光泡泡 機組員縮短居檢天數 防疫鬆綁
‘Bei der Planung von Besichtigungsblase verkürzen die Kabinenpersonal die Anzahl der Tage für die Quarantäne zu Hause.’
(26.2.2021, China Daily News)
- b. Xīn jiā pō fáng yì lǚ guǎn shè shī wèi xuǎn dìng, shāng wù lǚ yóu pào pào yán hòu shí shī
新加坡 防疫旅館設施未選定 商務旅遊泡泡延後實施
‘Singapurs Anti-Pandemie-Hoteleinrichtungen wurden nicht ausgewählt, und die Einführung von Geschäftsreise-Blasen wurde verschoben.’ (9.2.2021, Economic Daily News)
- (16) Tái běi shì zhǎng kē wén zhé jìn lái shù dù zhàng shàng wèi fú bù zhǎng Chén shí zhōng, tā shàng wǔ shòu fǎng shí biǎo shì, wǒ men xiàn zài dōu yào shùn shí zhōng (shùn shí zhōng), bù yào nì shí zhōng (nì shí zhōng), wǒ men xiàn zài shùn shí zhōng jiù hǎo le.
台北市長柯文哲近來數度槓上衛福部長陳時中，他上午受訪時表示，「我們現在都要順時鐘(順時中)，不要逆時鐘(逆時中)，我們現在順時鐘就好了。」
‘Der Bürgermeister von Taipeh, Ko Wenzhe, hat mehrere Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Minister für Gesundheit und Wohlfahrt, Chen Shih-chung. In einem Interview am Morgen sagte er: „Wir müssen jetzt alle im Uhrzeigersinn gehen (für Shih-chung), nicht gegen den Uhrzeigersinn (gegen Shih-chung), wir sollten einfach im Uhrzeigersinn gehen.“‘ (24.2.2020, United Evening News)
- (17) Das Ziel ist die Null: keine Neuinfektionen mit dem Coronavirus, keine schweren Verläufe, keine Toten – zumindest im Idealfall. (10.2.2021, Spiegel)

6 Schlussfolgerung

Die Diskussion um Metaphern von Corona-Neologismen zeigt die durch das Coronavirus verursachte Pandemie, die Massnahmen Taiwans und Deutschlands auf die Pandemie und die Lebensart der zwei Länder in der Pandemie. Die Pandemie hat die Regierungen zu politischen Maßnahmen gedrängt. In der Hoffnung, die Ausbreitung des Virus zu stoppen, so dass die Neologismen zusammen mit den Entscheidungen und der Politik zum Leben erwachen. Dementsprechend verändert sich auch das Leben der Menschen. So können die Neologismen die gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen und Veränderungen offenlegen, wie frühere Studien gezeigt haben, die wir oben besprochen haben. Ein Vergleich der Neologismen offenbart unterschiedliche Lebensarten der jeweiligen Länder. Zu diesem Punkt werden die drei Forschungsfragen beantwortet. Erstens, welche metaphorischen Sprachtechniken werden in diesen Neologismen für die Kommunikation verwendet? Die gemeinsamen metaphorischen Domänen beider Sprachen sind {Krieg}, {Alltag} und {Emotion}. Zweitens, welche Art von pandemischem Leben drückt diese Metaphern aus? Wie wurden derzeitiges Leben der Menschen und aktuelle gesellschaftliche Stimmungen ausgedrückt. Wir werden sie ausführlicher beantworten und dementsprechend die dritte Frage beantworten, was die Unterschiede zwischen Taiwan und Deutschland sind. Später wird darauf eingegangen, was der Grund für die Unterschiede sein könnte. Abschließend wird dieser Artikel auf die Argumentation von Spahn auf der Pressekonferenz Bezug nehmen, bevor wir ein abschließendes Statement abgeben.

Die Antwort auf die erste Frage lautet, dass die gemeinsamen metaphorischen Domänen beider Sprachen {Krieg}, {Alltag} und {Emotion} sind. Es wurden außerdem verschiedene metaphorische Strategien verwendet, z.B. Metonymie (*Mundschutz*, *jiā líng* 加零 ‚plus Null‘), ontologische Metapher (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b, 2003) (*Coronasünder*, *sǐ chéng* 死城 ‚tote Stadt‘), und strukturelle Metapher (*Corona-kabinett*, *liè wū* 獵巫 ‚Hexenjagd‘). Beide Sprachen bedienen sich allerlei Metaphern und erweitern zudem den Wortschatz der beiden Sprachen.

INTERFACE

Jedoch viele der Metaphern und Projektionen unterscheiden sich in den Sprachen. Zum Beispiel gebraucht Deutsch viele ontologische Metaphern, wodurch *Corona* selbst zu einem neuen Affix wird. Gleichzeitig verwendet die deutsche Sprache viele Orientierungsmetaphern, um die Rolle und den Beitrag der Präpositionen bei der Wortbildung des Deutsch hervorzuheben. Bildliche (z. B. Richtungsweisende) Unterstützung wird hinzugefügt, dadurch wird die Bedeutung des Wortes klar und die Konstruktion des Wortes einfach und flexibel. Auf der anderen Seite, ist im Chinesischen die Verwendung von Metonymie üblich, wo erweiterte Personifikation Metaphern mit dem Sprachmerkmal vieler Homophone kombiniert. Diese Sprache verwendet die Phonetik, um die Semantik zu ausdehnen. Chinesisch ist keine phonetische Sprache und Deutsch ist keine Hieroglyphensprache, doch in den neuen Wörtern der Pandemie zeigen beide Sprachen die Kreativität der Sprache. Es ist eine andere Art von Kreativität in der Pandemie. Metaphern besitzen Kraft und können sowohl die unterschiedliche sprachliche Belastbarkeit als auch die menschliche Erkenntnisfähigkeit und Stärken offenbaren.

Für die Antwort auf die zweite Forschungsfrage, Sowie derzeitiges Leben der Menschen und aktuelle gesellschaftliche Stimmungen wurden ausgedrückt. Die Regierungen müssen die Freiheit der Menschen einschränken, da das Leben der Menschen ernsthaft bedroht ist. Taiwan von der *zhǐ huī zhōng xīn* 指揮中心 ‚Kommandozentrale‘ über die *dūn mù jiàn duì* 敦睦艦隊 ‚Wohll wollen-Flotte‘ bis hin zur *wài jiāo pào pào* 外交泡泡 ‚diplomatischen Blase‘. In Deutschland sehen wir von *AHA*, das *Kurzarbeitergeld*, bis hin zum *Impfzentrum* und *Montagsspaziergang*. Sie sind soziale Notwendigkeit angesichts der Pandemie. In Taiwan konnte durch ein Reiseverbot die grenzüberschreitende Übertragung des Virus verhindert und die infizierte-Zahl reduziert werden. Das langfristige Reiseverbot hat jedoch auch dazu geführt, dass sich die Menschen langweilen und sich auf die Aufhebung des Verbots freuen. Als die Pandemie in Taiwan unter Kontrolle gebracht wurde und die Regierung die Reisebeschränkungen lockerte, kam es zu vielen Inlandreisenden, der Begriff, der wir gesammelt haben, heißt das *bào fù xìng lǚ yóu* 報復性旅遊 ‚Vergeltungstourismus‘. Die folgenden Begriffe gibt es auch nur im Chinesischen, nicht im Deutschen: *jiǎn yì lǚ guǎn* 檢

疫旅館 ‚Quarantäne Hotel‘, *ān xīn lǚ guǎn* 安心旅館 ‚Sicheres Gästehaus‘, *méi huā zuò* 梅花座 ‚Pflaumenblütenkonstellation‘ unter andern. Im deutschen finden wir eine andere Auswirkung von Impfstoffen auf die deutsche Gesellschaft, *Maskenmuffel*, *Impfgegner*, *Impfpflicht*, usw.

Hier sehen wir auch Unterschiede, die die letzte Forschungsfrage beantworten. Es gibt in der Tat vielerlei Kämpfe der Menschen, wie den aktuellen *Montagsspaziergang* (eine wöchentliche Versammlung von Menschen, die gegen die Müssnahmen so wie Impfpflicht protestieren). Darüber hinaus fehlen auch *Balkonien*, *Coronasünder* und *Coronaparty* im Chinesischen aus Gründen der Kultur. Deutsche und chinesische Corona-Neologismen und Maßnahmen sind im großen Ganzen gleich, allerdings ob sie gründlich durchgeführt werden, spielt eine wichtige Rolle in der Pandemie. Menschenrechte und Individualismus wiederum sind die entscheidenden Faktoren, die die Pandemie vorantreiben. Die deutsche Regierung legt großen Wert auf persönliche Freiheit und psychische Gesundheit (Depner, 2021). Das Ergebnis deckt sich mit den bisherigen sprachwissenschaftlichen Forschungsergebnissen, wonach die Deutschen eher die Idologie des Individualismus vertreten (sieh z.B. Dumont, 1994; Hsieh, 2006; Faust, 2018), so ist beispielsweise die Freiheit, eine Maske zu tragen, in Taiwan und Deutschland sehr unterschiedlich. Seit der Corona-Pandemie wird man in Taiwan bestraft, wenn man beim Ausgehen keine Maske trägt. Dies wird in Deutschland nicht durchgesetzt. In beiden Ländern gibt es Regeln für die Quarantäne, aber die Ernsthaftigkeit, mit der sie umgesetzt werden, verrät das Ergebnis. Die unterschiedlichen nationalen Bedingungen sind natürlich der Hauptgrund. In Deutschland leben 33,7 % der älteren Menschen allein, in Frankreich 37.5% und 33.5% in der Schweiz (Statistical office of the European Union, 2017), die Bundesregierung will das Leid der Isolation nicht noch verstärken.

In der Vergangenheit war Taiwan das letzte Land, das von der WHO aus der SARS-Pandemie Zone herausgenommen wurde. Aber die Maßnahmen und Ergebnisse der Corona-Pandemie in Taiwan wurden von anderen Ländern geschätzt. Die Taiwaner haben etwas gelernt, und jetzt haben sie etwas, von dem andere lernen können. Der Report-

INTERFACE

er befragte den damaligen Gesundheitsminister Spahn, zu dieser Situation (Spahn, Drosten und Wieler zur Corona-Lage Pressekonferenz, 22.1.2021): Es gibt Länder in der Welt, die in der Pandemieprävention gute Arbeit geleistet haben, warum folgt Deutschland nicht diesem Beispiel? Antwortet Herr Spahn: Jedes Mal, wenn jemand die Pandemieprävention in Deutschland mit den anderen Ländern vergleicht, fällt es ihm schwer. Einige Länder, die bei der Pandemieprävention gute Arbeit geleistet haben, wie Australien, Japan, Taiwan und Südkorea, sind entweder Inselstaaten oder Halbinselländer. Es ist einfacher, Pandemien in einer solchen Situation zu verhindern, wenn die Menschen in ihr Land fliegen müssen, aber Deutschland liegt mitten in Europa. Herr Spahn meint, dass die Maßnahmen der einzelnen Länder je nach Situation und geografischer Lage unterschiedlich sein.

Metaphern heben Dinge hervor und verbergen gleichzeitig andere Dinge; Metaphern wirken auf eine Weise, die wir nicht erwarten oder vorhersehen. Dennoch kann die linguistische Forschung über sie zu einer Einigung kommen und sich weiterentwickeln, wenn auch manchmal mit Kritikern oder sogar Krisen. Wir haben oben den Ansatz des Soziologen Sontag (1979, 1989) besprochen. Wir sehen, dass die Metaphern der Corona-Pandemie das Argument von Sontag (1989) widerspiegeln, dass Metaphern ein militärisches Flair angenommen haben, als sie feststellte, dass die „Bemühungen, die Sterblichkeit durch eine bestimmte Krankheit zu reduzieren, als Kampf... als Krieg“ (1989) bezeichnet werden. Sontags Metaphern über AIDS zeigten, dass die Betroffenen als „Risikogruppe“ (1989) angesehen werden, was auch in den Metaphern der Corona-Pandemie deutlich wird, wie z. B. in den deutschen *Risikogruppe* und Mandarin *jí zhōng jiǎn yì suǒ* 集中檢疫所 ‚zentralisierte Quarantäne‘. Als Sontag ihre Forschungen veröffentlichte und *Krankheit als Metapher* (1979) und *Krebs als Metapher* (1989) bezeichnete, war das kurz bevor Lakoff & Johnson (1980b; 2003) die konzeptuelle Metapher entwickelten. Die konzeptuelle Metapher, die Methode der vorliegenden Studie, basierte auf der Quell- und der Zieldomäne. Es ist auffällig, dass die Ansätze der Wissenschaftlern in der Tat in einer kontinuierlichen Weise sind. Das heißt, Sontags *Krankheit als Metapher* nimmt tatsächlich die Position der Zieldomäne ein, in der Krank-

heit hervorgehoben wird. Andererseits nimmt *Krebs als Metapher* die Krankheit (Krebs) als Quellbereich (das verborgene Ding), um andere Weltereignisse zu beschreiben. Darüber hinaus sind beide Bereiche in unseren Corona-Metaphern deutlich sichtbar und aktuell.

Der Höhepunkt der Omikron-Welle⁸ ist überschritten. Bund und Länder und Bundeskanzler Scholz haben wichtige Lockerungen der Corona-Maßnahmen bis Mitte März beschlossen (16.2.2022, Berliner Zeitung). Gesundheitsminister Lauterbach erläutert zur aktuellen Coronasituation und äußert: Wir sind noch nicht wirklich in sicheren Gewässern (18.2.2022, Tagesspiegel). Scholz drückt aus: Nach zwei Jahren wird alles wieder besser sein, und wir haben es verdient. Er rief die Menschen jedoch zur Vorsicht auf und sagte, sie sollten weiterhin Masken tragen. „Die Pandemie ist noch nicht vorbei“ (16.2.2022, Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz). ZDF heute begrüßt es mit der Überschrift „Abschied und Neuanfang“ (18.2.2022).

Um zusammenzufassen, das {Krieg}-Szenario kann ideologische Orientierungen überschatten, sowohl {Alltag} als auch {Emotion} vermitteln derzeitiges Leben der Menschen und aktuelle gesellschaftliche Stimmungen. Die Auswirkungen und Veränderungen, die sich im Zusammenhang mit der Pandemie ergeben, können zu neuen Erkenntnissen und Möglichkeiten führen. Wir lernen in dieser Zeit zu einem sehr hohen Preis. Die unsichtbaren Lebewesen – das Coronavirus – hat unser tägliches Leben durcheinandergebracht und viele Todesfälle und Schmerzen verursacht. Jetzt werden die Länder wie das Neologismen – *null*, weist, neu anfangen.

⁸ Das Omikron ist eine Variante des Coronavirus seit Ende 2021, der sich schneller verbreitet als Delta-Variante ist.

INTERFACE

Literatur

- Ahrens, K. (2002). When love is not digested: Underlying reasons for source to target domain pairings in the contemporary theory of metaphor. In Y. E. Hsiao (Ed.), *Proceedings of the First Cognitive Linguistics Conference*. Cheng-Chi University, Taipei.
- Aksan, Y., & Kantar, D. (2008). No wellness feels better than this sickness: Love metaphors from a cross-cultural perspective. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 23(4), 262–291.
- Baig, Y. A. (2019). A discourse analysis of speeches delivered by the prominent Indian politicians on important official forums. *Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)*, 5(1), 49–61.
- Beaton, M. E., & Washington, H. B. (2015). ‘Slurs and the indexical field: The pejoration and reclaiming of favelado ‘slum-dweller’’. *Language Sciences*, 52, 12–21.
- Brady, A. (2022). “Language and Radiological Reporting.” *Structured Reporting in Radiology*. Springer, Cham, 1–19.
- Bridge, G. (2020). *Sweet Distress: How our love affair with feelings has fuelled the current mental health crisis (and what we can do about it)*. Crown House Publishing.
- Byrne, J. P. (2012). *Encyclopedia of the Black Death*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO.
- Clark, H. H., & Clark, E. V. (1977). *Psychology and language*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Department of Health and Welfare, Agency for Disease Control. (2022, March 8). COVID-19 FAQs. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov.tw/Category/QAPage/B5ttQxRgFU-ZIRFPS1dRliw>
- Depner, S. C. Y. (2018). The development of a quasi-suffix. *NCUE Journal of Humanities*, 17, 45–58.
- . (2020). “German culture in the Covid-19 pandemic: Songs and neologism”, *Conference on Intimacy Development in the Post-2020 Pandemic Era*, Kaohsiung, Shu-Te University, Nov 15.
- . (2021). German Culture in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Songs and Neologism. *Foreign Language Studies*, 33, 1–30.
- Dumont, L. (1994). *German ideology: From France to Germany and*

- back. University of Chicago Press.
- Eckert, P. (2008). Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12, 453–476.
- Faust, M. (2018). Theorizing German and Chinese Culture Standards: An Emic Approach to Explain Cultural Differences from a Yin Yang Perspective. *China Media Research*, 14(4), 24–36.
- Gbashi, Sefater, Oluwafemi Ayodeji Adebo, Wesley Doorsamy, & Patrick Berka Njobeh. (2021). Systematic Delineation of Media Polarity on COVID-19 Vaccines in Africa: Computational Linguistic Modeling Study. *JMIR medical informatics*, 9(3), e22916.
- Gibbs, R. W., & Steen, G. J. (eds.). (1999). *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Grzega, Joachim. (2021a). From Corona party to Coronapaniek: Cross-linguistic critique of COVID-related contributions to Wiktionary. *Language@ Internet*, 19(1), 1–12.
- . (2021b). The linguistic impact of coronavirus on online service offers in Spain as well as France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(1), 31–42.
- Gui, Lili. (2021). Media framing of fighting COVID-19 in China. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 43, 966–970.
- Hock, H. H., & Joseph, B. D. (2009). *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship* (2nd ed.). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hsieh, S. C. Y. (2006). A corpus based study on animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(12), 2206–2222.
- . (2022). Conceptual metonymies and metaphors at the morphological level: From Mandarin affixoids to social communication, In Alexandra Bagasheva & Nelly Tincheva (eds.) *Figurativity across Domains, Modalities and Research Practices*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 34–57.
- Joffe, H., & Haarhoff, G. (2002). Representations of far-flung illnesses: The case of Ebola in Britain. *Social Science and Medicine*, 54(6), 955–969.
- Johnson, M. (1987). *The body in the mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

INTERFACE

- Karachina, O. E. (2020). Language of Pandemic: Linguistic and Cultural Aspects. *Russian Linguistic Bulletin*, 2(22), 45–48.
- Khalfan, M., Batool, H., & Shehzad, W. (2020). Covid-19 Neologisms and their Social Use: An Analysis from the Perspective of Linguistic Relativism. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 6(2), 117–129.
- Kiełtyka, R. (2019). Patterns of metaphor-metonymy interaction in animal-specific complex lexical units. *Linguistica Silesiana*, 225–256.
- Kitsa, M., & I. Mudra. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 on the Economic Media Literacy in Online Media. *Медиаобразование*, 17(2), 290–300.
- Kogteva, E. V. (2021). Analysis of Expressive Lexical Means In French Customs Discourse During The Covid-19 Pandemic. *Современные исследования социальных проблем (Modern Studies of Social Problems)*, 13(4), 457–471.
- Koteyko, N., Brown, B., & Crawford, P. (2008). The dead parrot and the dying swan: The role of metaphor scenarios in UK press coverage of avian flu in the UK in 2005-2006. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 23(4), 242–261.
- Kövecses, Z. (2013). The metaphor-metonymy relationship: Correlation metaphors are based on metonymy. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 28(2), 75–88.
- Kuße, H. (2021). The linguistic landscape of the coronavirus crisis in foreign language didactics by using the example of German. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 99, 1–10.
- Lahlou, H., & Rahim, H. A. (2022). Conceptual metaphors in North African French-speaking news discourse about COVID-19. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(3), 589–600.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77(8), 453–486.
- . (1980a). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77(8), 453–486.
- . (1980b). *Metaphors we live by* (1st ed.). University of Chicago

- press.
- . (2003). *Metaphors we live by* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago press.
- Lakoff, G., & Turner M. (1989). *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Langacker, R. W. (1993). Reference-point constructions. *Cognitive Linguistics* 4, 1–38.
- Lehmann-Haupt, C. (16 January 1989). “Books of The Times; Shaping the Reality of AIDS Through Language”. *The New York Times*.
- Lehrer, A. (2003). Understanding trendy neologisms. *Italian Journal of Linguistics*, 15, 369–382.
- Litvinova, T. I., & Shustova, I. N. (2021). The peculiarities of functioning of coloristic metaphors of the German media-political discourse of the pandemic period. *Russian Linguistic Bulletin*, 2(26), 22–27.
- Liu, W., & Liu, W. (2014). Analysis on the word-formation of English netspeak neologism. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(12), 22–30.
- Lowe, N. K. (2018). Words matter. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing*, 47(1), 1–2.
- Mace, E. (2021, September 23). Nous ne sommes pas en guerre, nous sommes en “care”. *The Conversation*. Retrieved 31 March, 2023, from <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02565213/document>
- Mackiewicz, J. (2010). Assertions of expertise in online product reviews. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 24(1), 3–28.
- Marmaras, E. (2022). Negativity and Positivity around Mental Health Discourses during the Covid-19 Pandemic in British Newspapers: A Corpus-Driven Study. Student thesis, School of Arts and Communication, Malmö University.
- Musolff, A. (2016). *Political Metaphor Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Nerlich, B. (2004). War on foot and mouth diseases in the UK, 2001: Towards a cultural understanding of agriculture. *Agri-*

INTERFACE

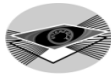
- culture and Human Values*, 21(1), 15–25.
- Nikadambaeva, K., Sabitova, N., Abdunazarov, O., & Saipov, U. (2019). Monografia Pokonferencyjna. *Science, Research, Development*, 17(1).
- Panther, K.-U., & Radden, G. (1999). Metonymy in language and thought. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Peprnik & Jaroslav (2006). English Lexicology. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackeho v Olomouci.
- Petrenko, D. A., Likhachev, E. V., & Chernyshova, M. V. (2020). Linguistic Means in Image of COVID-19 (German Political Discourse in Media). *Nauchnyi dialog*, 7, 194–209.
- Pillar, R. (2020, April 2). Trump is wrong: Don't call the coronavirus crisis a 'war'. Retrieved 25 May, 2020, from <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/trump-wrong-dont-call-coronavirus-crisis-war-140117>
- Piller, I., Zhang, J., & Li, J. 2020. Linguistic diversity in a time of crisis: Language challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Multilingua*, 39(5), 503–515.
- Pragglejaz Group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22(1), 1–39.
- Prekazi, P. C. Z. (2021). The Language of Covid-19. *International Scientific Journal Monte*, 4(2), 152–157.
- Pritzker, S. (2007). Thinking hearts, feeling brains: Metaphor, culture, and the self in Chinese narratives of depression. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22(3), 251–274.
- Rajandran, Kumaran. "A Long Battle Ahead': Malaysian and Singaporean prime ministers employ war metaphors for COVID-19." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* 20.3 (2020): 261–267.
- Richards, I. A. (1965). *The philosophy of rhetoric*. Oxford University Press.
- Ribeiro, B., Hartley, S., Nerlich, B., & Jaspal, R. (2018). Media coverage of the Zika crisis in Brazil: The construction of a 'war' frame that masked social and gender inequalities. *Social Science and Medicine*, 200, 137–144.
- Rico, S. & Herrero, Y. (2020, March 22). ¿Estamos en guerra? Re-

- rieved 25 May, 2020, from <https://ctxt.es/es/20200302/Firmas/31465/catastrofe-coronavirus-guerra-cuidados-ciudadanos-ejercito-alba-rico-yayo-herrero.htm>
- Robinson, P. (22 January 1989). "AIDS and Its Metaphors". *The New York Times*.
- Roettcher, M. (2022). Wissenskommunikation zwischen Information und Unterhaltung: Ein medienlinguistischer Vergleich der TV-Wissensmagazine Quarks (WDR) und Galileo (ProSieben) am Beispiel ihrer COVID-19-Berichterstattung. Student thesis, Institut für Übersetzungswissenschaft und Fachkommunikation, Universität Hildesheim.
- Roig-Marín, A. (2016). 'Blended' Cyber-Neologisms: New words show how our world is changing. *English Today*, 32(4), 2–5.
- Samo, G., Zhao, Y., Guasti, M. T., Utunen, H., Stucke, O., & Gamhewage, G. (2022). Could Linguistic Complexity Be Automatically Evaluated? A Multilingual Study on WHO's Emergency Learning Platform. *Studies in health technology and informatics*, 289, 196–199.
- Sengupta, P. (2022). Language, communication, and the COVID-19 pandemic: criticality of multi-lingual education. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 1–14.
- Smart Web Producer (2022). *Taiwan News Smart Web*, Taipei: Transmission Books & Microinfo Co.
- Smith, C. A., Johnston-Robledo, I., McHugh, M. C., & Chrisler, J. C. (2010). Words matter: The language of gender. *Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology*, 361–377.
- Sontag, S. (1978). *Illness and Metaphor*. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.
- . *AIDS and its metaphors*. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.
- Statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat). (2017, September). A look at the lives of the elderly in the EU today. Retrieved 31 March, 2022, from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/elderly/index.html>
- Stevenson, A. (Ed.). (2022, March). Oxford dictionary of English. Retrieved 25 May, 2020, from <https://www.oed.com/>
- Sweetser, E. (1990). *From Etymology to Pragmatics*. Cambridge:

INTERFACE

- Cambridge University Press.
- Tan, K. H., Woods P., Azman H., Abdullah I. H., et al. (2020). Covid-19 Insights and Linguistic Methods. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 26(2), 1–23.
- Thompson, R. GA, Nutor, J. J., & Johnson, J. K. (2021). Communicating awareness about COVID-19 through songs: an example from Ghana. *Frontiers in public health*, 853, 1–12.
- Traugott, E. C., & Dasher, R. B. (2002). Regularity in semantic change. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vonderlin, R., Biermann, M., Konrad, M., Klett, M., Kleindienst, N., Bailer, J., ... & Bohus, M. (2022). Implementierung und Evaluation einer Telefonhotline zur professionellen Ersthilfe bei psychischen Belastungen durch die COVID-19-Pandemie in Baden-Württemberg. *Der Nervenarzt*, 93(1), 24–33.
- Wallis, P., & Nerlich, B. (2005). Disease metaphors in new epidemics: The UK media framing of the 2003 SARS epidemic. *Social Science and Medicine*, 60(11), 2629–2639.
- Washer, P. (2006). Representations of mad cow disease. *Social Science and Medicine*, 62(2), 457–466.
- Wolfer, S., Koplenig, A., Michaelis, F., & Müller-Spitzer, C. (2020). Tracking and analyzing recent developments in German-language online press in the face of the coronavirus crisis: cOW-IDplus Analysis and cOWIDplus Viewer. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 25(3), 347–359.

{received September 14, 2022
accepted November 25, 2022}



Metaphors of Plagues in Shakespeare's Plays

IRIS H. TUAN

National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University

Abstract

This paper discusses the significance of Shakespeare's plays which contain bubonic plague in light of our disastrous situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation of bubonic plague is found to be reflected in the Bard's plays, for example, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Life of Timon of Athens*, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *King Lear*. Besides, the widely discussed lawsuit occurred in late 1603 might have influenced Shakespeare's writing about *King Lear*. This paper, utilizing New Criticism close reading, provides an informative overview of Shakespeare's life in the shadow of plague and his references to the disease in his plays. This article argues that plagues and pandemics can work as metaphors to symbolize diseases, moral decadence, and lovesickness.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Literature, Plagues, Pandemics, COVID-19

©Iris H. Tuan

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

<http://interface.org.tw/> and <http://interface.ntu.edu.tw/>

Metaphors of Plagues in Shakespeare's Plays

COVID-19 pandemics nowadays can let us recall the plagues in William Shakespeare's plays, in which Shakespeare uses the plague and the pandemic as metaphors to symbolize not just diseases but also lovesickness and moral decadence. Many literature works are related to pandemics and plagues, such as Gabriel García Márquez's Spanish novel *El amor en Los Tiempos del Cólera* (in English: *Love in the Time of Cholera*) uses plague as a metaphor for the protagonist poet Florentino Ariza's lovesickness in the love triangle. Plagues and pandemics also happened several times in Shakespeare's time. From history, what can we learn from William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the great dramatist in the U.K. in English Literature, during his time on pandemics?

The situation of plagues is reflected in the Bard's plays. In 1592 when the plague hit London, theatres across the city were closed. From autumn 1592 to May 1594 no new plays were demanded in London due to the serious plague. There were no theatre performances during pandemics. Thus, Shakespeare turned to write poetry; his narrative poems "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece" were finished around that plague period. When the plague in 1603-4 prevented the new king James I's coronation celebrations, Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*. When Shakespeare was in quarantine in the summer of 1606, he might have written *King Lear*.

I argue Shakespeare used the plagues as literature metaphors and expressions at least in the three ways: first, the plague as a metaphor for a curse and a literary expression of the fatal disease; second, not only as a description of disease, but also as a metaphor of moral decadence; third, literature expression functions as lovesickness. This article will, after offering a literature review, explore the three ways Shakespeare used the plagues as metaphors; will discuss the expression of the plagues in Shakespeare's plays; will provide comments on Julie Taymor's film *Titus* (1999), a postmodern adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, and will draw the conclusion.

1 During COVID-19 and Its Variants, We can Learn from Shakespeare during the Bubonic Plagues

1.1 Literature Review

The fundamental research methodology applied for this study is the textual and intertextual analysis of various materials ranging from scenes and contents of Shakespeare's plays, journal articles, books, book chapters, commentary articles, newspapers, interviews, to social media, with a focus on English-language comments and Shakespearean research. This article also adds the perspective of ecocriticism, such as Simon C. Estok's *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare*, especially on my interpretation of Shakespeare's plays connected with the descriptions of natural world, human nature, environment, and plagues. "Sex and the City: An Ecocritical Perspective on the Place of Gender and Race in *Othello*" written by Breyan Strickler uses ecocriticism and feminist literary methods to investigate Shakespeare's *Othello*. Consisting of land and sea, Dan Brayton (2012, p. 197) in the book *Shakespeare's Ocean* proclaims:

Forever drawn to water, Shakespeare was acutely aware that humanity and salt water are strangely allied; as Melville would later put it, ours is a "terraqueous globe," and "meditation and water are wedded forever." The aesthetic possibilities of water constitute a sort of metaphorical undertow throughout the plays and poems, drawing our attention to marine phenomena at the most unlikely moments".

Shakespeare used the metaphors of sea and land in his plays and poems in Brayton's view of going toward a terraqueous ecocriticism. Furthermore, Gabriel Egan's book *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* discusses ecocritical volleys about a confluence of genetics, nuclear fission, and geology. The benzene ring is similar to the Globe Theater in structure in terms of ecocriticism and Shakespeare.

INTERFACE

In history, in Shakespeare's time, in 1582, 1592-93, 1603-04, 1606, and 1608-09, there were outbreaks of plague in the 16th century and the early 17th century. Shakespeare used the years between 1606 and 1610 to write and produce good plays, including *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. J. Leeds Barroll III, the theatre historian, also validates the above discovery. Barroll's book *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* indicates in the first half of the book that Shakespeare's writing can be demarcated by his exposure to the environmental factors, including the plagues in London. Barroll (1991, p. 16) asserts that Shakespeare "wedded himself to an artistic form whose conceptualization could be delimited by social factors". Among the social factors, there were some restrictions on the theatres during Shakespeare's time, for instance, closures due to plagues, Lenten closures, closures at times of state mourning, and as a method of crowd control, especially in political emergencies. Besides, as Denise Cuthbert (1993, pp .132-133) notes in her book review of Barroll's book: "Plague, the pathologies of rat flea, and bacillus and the public health measures used to contain their effects are the subject of Chapter 3, which adopts the *annaliste* method in examining the activities of Shakespeare and his fellows in 1603 when the great plague came to London".

As the closures in Shakespeare's time during the plagues, since December 2, 2019 up to the present, the restrictions of quarantine, social distancing, and lockdown, shutdown of the national borders, and cancellation and decrease of international flights are adopted as some of the methods to face the outbreak of COVID-19 and its variants, such as Delta and Omicron. Even though many people are afraid of death that they get vaccine shots, however, currently, there are still some people who have doubts about the efficacy and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine shots. According to Stephen Greenblatt (2020):

Shakespeare seems to have shared Nashe's skepticism that there would ever be a medical solution to the plague— "Physic himself must fade" and, from what we know of the science of his time, this pessimism was justified. Instead, he focused his at-

tention on a different plague, the plague of being governed by a mendacious, morally bankrupt, incompetent, blood-soaked, and ultimately self-destructive leader.

Shakespeare might also have skepticism about the so-called medical solution to the plague at that time. It is a universal theme and skepticism toward the pandemic solution with COVID-19 and then with the plague.

1.2 Shakespeare in Plague Quarantine

In social ecology, plagues affect human sustainability related to the natural environment and political ruling coronation. Shakespeare had kept writing even during the plagues. The other example is that when the plague in 1603-4 prevented the new king James I's coronation celebrations, Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*. Shakespearean scholar Emma Smith in *The New York Times* indicates that Shakespeare particularly wrote about the audiences who live with the plague. The third example is that when Shakespeare was in quarantine from the plague outbreak in the summer of 1606, he may have been working on the play *King Lear*. Back to our real world now, when COVID-19 made many countries in the world lockdown in 2020, people get bored in quarantine to wonder what we can do while staying at home. To learn from history, not only Shakespearean scholars but also news and social media, such as Andrew Dickson in *The Guardian*, started to tell the story that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* in quarantine in the early 17th century when the plague seriously made the theatres shut down (Dickson 2020).

Moreover, as Andrew Dickson (2020) reports: "Between 1603 and 1613, when Shakespeare's powers as a writer were at their height, the Globe and other London playhouses were shut for an astonishing total of 78 months – more than 60% of the time". A similar shut-down situation has happened during COVID-19 from 2019 up to very recently. Dickson sums up to guess Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* during the plague quarantine. Therefore, we can learn from Shakespeare during the outbreaks of the bubonic plague, try to survive by keeping positive writing.

INTERFACE

Furthermore, in “Shakespeare Wrote His Best Works during a Plague” Daniel Pollack-Pelzner (2020) also expresses the same opinion. Pollack-Pelzner’s idea is remarkable, for he thinks the Broadway shutdown could turn out to be suitable for plays. According to Shakespeare’s experiences, when London theaters were closed, he and his troupe, The King’s Men, had to depend on royal supports, gifts, and touring performances in the provinces during the first decade of King James I’s reign to make a living. However, plagues and COVID-19 may also in this peculiar way create literary works.

From history, we can learn from the Bard to get a clue about performing arts living with plague to learn from their experiences to cope with the current difficult condition of COVID-19 and COVID-19 variant viruses. We should learn from Shakespeare, who knew how to adjust to the plagues. “Write while you wait out the closure; lean on wealthy patrons for bailouts; exploit your rivals’ demise”, as Daniel Pollack-Pelzner comments in, “Shakespeare Wrote His Best Works during a Plague” posted on *The Atlantic*.

1.3 Shakespeare Wrote Poetry and Plays on Pandemics

Shakespeare wrote poetry, for example, the poem *Venus and Adonis*, in 1593 when plagues shut down the theaters. Shakespeare also wrote many plays, as Shapiro suggests, for instance, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* when theaters were closed in 1606. In this perspective, the plagues and COVID-19 might give Shakespeare and the people time and opportunities for creative literary works.

As the Chinese proverb says: “The stones of those hills may be used to polish gems.” It means that “some advice from others may help one’s defects.” We can learn from Shakespeare’s experiences. In 1593 the theatres in London in England were closed because of the bubonic plague. I find this scene is shot at the beginning of the film *Shakespeare in Love* in which shows Shakespeare as well as the theatre practitioners were in predicaments. This point is also made by Ling-Hua Chen (2003, p. 164).

2 Plague as a Metaphor for a Curse and Ecophobia

2.1 Plague and Pandemics Work as Metaphors

Shakespeare uses the plague as a metaphor for a curse and a literary expression of the fatal disease. Bubonic Plague Stopped the Letter Delivery in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare's well-known play *Romeo and Juliet* (written around 1595) contains the famous line from the character Mercutio, "A plague o' both your houses!" (III. i), reflecting the curse of plague. Besides, Friar John could not deliver Friar Laurence's important letter to Romeo because: "Where the infectious pestilence did reign, / Seal'd up the doors, and would not let us forth; / So that my speed to Mantua there was stay'd." (V. ii) Due to the infectious plague, the confined friar could not deliver the letter to Romeo. He also could not get anyone to return the undelivered letter to Friar Laurence to let him know the problem. Romeo did not know Juliet just feigns to be dead in sleeping but is not dead. This unfortunate mistake causes the star-crossed lovers' tragic fate to commit suicide for each other. Although the plague does not kill them, the problem of the plague causes the forced quarantine, the prohibited social distancing, and the profound social disruption which altogether bring the young lovers' deaths.

Shakespeare uses the plague not only as a description of disease, but also as a metaphor of curse of moral decadence. Shakespeare's play *The Life of Timon of Athens* and *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* are two good examples to validate the insights.

In Shakespeare's play *The Life of Timon of Athens*, Timon orders:

Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high-vised city hang his poison
In the sick air.

(IV. iii. 109-111)

Timon, the rich and benevolent Athenian noble, was cynical to hate humans after making use of those fair-weather friends to be broken.

INTERFACE

Timon gives Phrynia and Timandra gold to ask them to keep doing their job as prostitutes in Athens so that they can bring more mischief. He commands the prostitutes to lure men in and give them diseases. Here the plague is like moral decadence for Timon, later becomes a misanthrope hermit, who wants to see the city's destruction due to those decayed and maleficent people.

Moreover, Shakespeare uses the plague metaphor as a curse of the ungrateful people's moral decadence, because they betray the hero who just saved their lives from the enemies' invading army in the beginning of the play. In Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, Martius enters cursing to revile at the plebeians, the general body of free Roman citizens:

All the contagion of the south light on you
You shames of Rome! you herd of – Biles and plagues
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd
Farther than seen, and one infect another
Against the wind a mile!"

(I. iv. 30-34)

Shakespeare uses the expression of plague to let Martius want it to fall to the city of Rome to make them contagious by the disease. It is a pity that the Roman citizens are not grateful to the hero Coriolanus who won several wars on the battlefield for Rome, but make the bad-temper hero in exile.

Furthermore, as cursed fate, Macbeth fears the repercussions if he kills King Duncan may arise to "plague the inventor." (I vii) Besides, Shakespeare also uses the plague to curse the bad human nature of no filial piety. In Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, we can find evidence that when the character Gloucester tells Lear the Duke of Cornwall will not see him, he screams to curse his daughter Regan and her husband Cornwall with "Vengeance, plague, death, confusion" (II.iv.90). Besides, Lear berates Regan as:

But yet art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
or rather a disease that's in my flesh,

TUAN

which I must need(s) call mine. Thou art a boil,
a plague-sore or embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood.

(II. Iv. 221-225)

Shakespeare compares the children who do not obey filial obedience with a disease. King Lear compares his daughter Regan to a disgusting plague sore in his skin to tolerate trying to live with. I apply the ideas of ecocriticism to refer to what Simon C. Estok says in his book *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (2018) and online speech (2021) about “ecophobia is the survival instinct gone mad” to interpret this play. While King Lear is mad to cry and curse loudly in the storm in the wilderness, the outside natural environment is also a superb literature metaphor for the representation of the inside cruel, realistic, and ungrateful human nature.

Shakespeare is related to ecocriticism in all kinds of phobia. “Falling under the rubric of ecophobia,” as Estok cites Michael Pollan’s term “germophobia (Pollan 2013, p. 297). Also known as microbiophobia,” “Mysophobia,” “verminophobia,” “bacillophobia,” and bacteriophobia” (Estok 2019, pp. 473-474). However, fear and phobia as they are. “A cynical view might have it that those doing this puny new - ism with an old and established giant such as Shakespeare are like parasites, like the ‘flea that dare eat his breakfast on the lip of a lion’” (Henry V, III, vii, 145–46) (Estok 2011, p. 124). Hope to “hold off disease and death” (Pollan 2013, p. 296). For those who attempt to do ecocriticism upon Shakespeare is not easy, this article just suggests to open possibilities for Shakespearean research, such as finding the historical law documents in the connection with Shakespeare’s plays.

During the plague, Shakespeare might write *King Lear*. King Lear presents what Shakespeare thought about old age, the explosion of rage, madness, grief, loss of power, authority, house, land, love, eyesight, and sanity. Not only the metaphors of plague have been employed in Shakespeare’s plays, such as *King Lear* in which King Lear curses his two elder daughters who do not have filial piety by using the expression of the

INTERFACE

“plague” as I have stated above, but also the widely discussed lawsuit occurred in late 1603 might have also impacted on his thinking about writing *King Lear*. Concerning the 1603 lawsuit, according to Greenblatt in the book *Will in the World*. The two elder daughters of a doddering gentleman named Sir Brian Annesley attempted to get their father legally certified as insane, thereby enabling themselves to take over his estate. In contrast, his youngest daughter vehemently protested on her father’s behalf (2004, p. 357). The plot of *King Lear* is like the lawsuit case, but also the name of King Lear’s youngest daughter Cordella happened to be the same as the youngest daughter in the lawsuit who tried to save her father from her malevolent vicious two older sisters.

2.2 *Macbeth and King Lear* were written during the Plague

During the isolation, Shakespeare still used time to write several good plays. For example, in mid-July of 1606, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *King Lear* (written between 1605 and 1606) were recognized as the finest plays ever staged. In *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, both plays reflect the situation of plague which made so many deaths in a short span of time. Besides, King Lear is mad at his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, to compare them as “A plague-sore, or embossed carbuncle / In my corrupted blood.” (II iv). The isolation caused by the plague shows in King Lear’s desolate outlook while he shouts in the storm, “Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!” Moreover, King Lear uses the plagues to curse and lament over his two evil daughters with no filial piety: “Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air/Hang fated o’er men’s faults light on thy daughters!” (III iv) In terms of ecocriticism, I think that King Lear’s curse in the storm in the wilderness may also refer to ecophobia. The supporting view can be exemplified as Simon C. Estok (2011, p. 19) also indicates that “*King Lear* is vivid in its foregrounding of environmental unpredictability and in its dramatization of a fear of nature”. Indeed, I agree that Green criticism is beyond of the green forest in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the retreat in the Utopian forest of Arden in *As You Like It*. Ecophobia, fear or loath of the environment, for instance, in my

TUAN

view, is similar to the whale-hunting, the fear and hatred toward the mythical gigantic white whale, *Moby Dick*, the novel written by Herman Melville. Ecophobia is also interwoven with speciesism, homophobia, misogyny, racism, and even the unpredictable disease caused by environmental pollution. It connects with Shakespeare's using plagues as metaphors to express his concerns about humans, human relationship, and human's attitude toward the ecology and environment.

3 Plagues Symbolize Diseases, Lovesickness, and Moral Decadence

3.1 Expressions of the Plagues in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare made good use of the plagues for his literary expressions. The plague phrase in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*: "A plague upon your epileptic visage." Here the word "epileptic" is used in a derogatory. It actively demonstrates that meaning.

KENT (to Oswald)

A plague upon your epileptic visage.

Smile you my speeches as I were a fool?

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,

I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

(*King Lear*, Act 2, Scene 2)

According to Betts & Betts (1998, p. 408): "Syphilis was raging in England and a fear of syphilis gripped Elizabethan England as tightly as our present fear of AIDS". They use textual analysis of Shakespeare's play lines following the use of 'epileptic' to suggest that it is a reference to the "pock-marks of syphilis endemic in Elizabethan England and is not actually a reference to epilepsy itself" (Betts & Betts, 1998, p. 407).

Stephen Greenblatt (2004) also indicates what Shakespeare might be doing during the plagues in his time. Greenblatt indicates that London was an unhealthy place conjoined ravages of epidemic diseases. According to Greenblatt (2004, p. 163):

INTERFACE

The worst of these, bubonic plague, swept through the city again and again, spreading panic, wiping out whole families, decimating neighborhoods. Even in years, spared by the plague, the number of deaths recorded in London's parish records always exceeded the live births.

Plagues happened several times in London to kill many people during Shakespeare's time. Even though there were plagues, Shakespeare had kept writing plays and sonnets, so we can learn from Shakespeare to keep doing some positive things without committing suicide or stop learning something new. As Shakespeare kept busy and wrote successful plays throughout the pandemic, so should literature professors, scholars and performers be doing during COVID-19 and remain positive. When Shakespeare was only thirty-six years old, still young, he wrote plays to be extraordinary in the three major genres in drama—comedy, history, and tragedy.

The value of Shakespeare's tragedy is comparable to Greek tragedy. His *Hamlet* brought forth *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* have been popular on stage and shot into films very often. The story of *Romeo and Juliet* was well known, which can be traced back to, according to *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Shakespeare, 1974, p. 1055), the "use of a sleeping potion as a way out of an unwelcome marriage goes back to the Ephesiaca of the Greek novelist Xenophon in the fourth century A.D." Shakespeare's accomplishment is not just in tragedy and historical plays but also in romances and comedies. In comedy, Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *As You Like It*, which all amused the theatergoers at that time. His *Twelfth Night* goes beyond the genre of comedy. In history plays, Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *Henry V* might surpass the rest of history plays in history plays. Greenblatt points out that Shakespeare's plays *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, and *Richard II* were "published during Shakespeare's lifetime as tragedies" (2004: 296).

Another plague crisis hit London in 1603-1604, followed by the big outbreak in the summer of 1606, forcing theatre shut down (April

TUAN

1606-April 1607). During the serious epidemic from 1603-1604, the horrendous plague even delayed the coronation of the Scottish King James to enter London to rule after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. During the plagues in London, Shakespeare and his troupe had to go on tour performing in the provinces.

3.2 Plagues as Comic Expression of Lovesickness

Plagues are used not just as a curse of disease and as a metaphor of moral decadence as elucidated above, but also are transformed by Shakespeare as an ingenious expression of lovesickness. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare lets the countess Olivia to marvel at how fast the speed she has fallen in love:

How now?
Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Mythinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be.

(I. v. 294-298)

Creepy haunting death no more, here the plague is used as the comic expression of love mock or as everyday mundane language. The formal example is for Beatrice to mock Benedict: "O Lord! He will hang upon him like a disease. He is sooner caught than the pestilence...." (Act 1, Scene 1) in *Much Ado about Nothing*. As I mention and analyze above, this article argues that plague and pandemic can work as metaphors to symbolize diseases and lovesickness, and moral decadence.

4 Plagues in Mundane Language and Exoticization of Others

4.1 Mundane Language

An interconnection between COVID-19 and plagues is that plagues are vocalized in everyday mundane language. Furthermore, in more than special occasions, Shakespeare often uses the expression of plague in his plays to exclaim as everyday mundane language.¹ For instance, “a plague upon it when thieves cannot be true to one another”; “a plague of sighing and grief! It blows a man up like a bladder”; “a plague upon this howling”; “a plague of these pickle-herring!” In Shakespeare’s works, plague is like a familiar phenomenon accepted though unwillingly as an unavoidable situation people might encounter in their lives as ordinary daily lives. In similar vein, there are examples of how COVID-19 has also morphed into everyday mundane language and now forms a part of our ordinary metaphoric lives. For example, “wear masks, wash hands, keep social distancing” as not only public health COVID-19 prevention policy, but also a new fashion trend to choose to wear a mask with a specific color and pattern to match the clothes in our lives and on stage.

Encountering the pandemic and trying to co-exist and live with COVID-19 has become a part of our daily lives until we get back to our normal lives. Bubonic plague’s contagious source was mice², and the origin of the first CoVs might be from bats, and then transfer to birds, and mammals like pigs as Gupta (2020) indicated³ and the film *Contagion* (2011) cinematically predicted.⁴ Shakespearean researches and literature interpretation can be aided by referring to ecocriticism. As Richard C. Hoffmann’s book *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* explores the issues including the treatment of animals and the

1 Regarding the concept of mundane I follow Ju Yon Kim (2015).

2 The scientific evidence that mice is the root of the bubonic plagues can be found in the journal article “Complete Protection against Pneumonic and Bubonic Plague after a Single Oral Vaccination.” Written by Anne Derbise, Yuri Hanata, Manal Khalifé, Elizabeth Carniel, and Christian E. Demeure. *Plos Neglected Tropical Diseases*. Published: October 16, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0004162>

3 The details can be seen in Dr. Akanksha Gupta, co-authored with others. “COVID-19: Emergence of Infectious Diseases, Nanotechnology Aspects, Challenges, and Future Perspectives.” *Chemistry Europe*. First published: 06 July 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1002/slct.202001709>

4 See [Contagion \(film\) - Wikicali.com](#). See also Tuan’s (2020) conference paper.

environment of the natural world can bring about epidemic diseases to result in people's worry about sustainability, climate change, and global warming in terms of ecocriticism nowadays.

4.2 Deaths in *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*

Fatal plagues kill people to cause deaths just as the cruel wars and bloody revenge do in Shakespeare's *Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*. Titus often curses Tamora and her two vicious sons. There is the loath of the Other associated with ecophobia. As Simon C. Estok in the book chapter "Staging Exotica and Ecophobia" in the book *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare* indicates that madness is sometimes referred to "female, monstrous, and polluted," and the "transcodings between the Other and the bestial in discourses of madness," is "at once speciesist and ecophobic," and "there is a generalized environmental loathing implied in the exoticization of early modern Others" (99-110). The Other woman from outside, Tamora, Queen of the Goths; afterwards Empress of Rome, is described as monstrous to seek revenge upon the man Titus who is under her tyrannical polluted empire.

Tamora and her two beast sons (who commit bestially rape) are cinematically represented as if animals. Furthermore, the meat pies made of the cruel barbarous Tamora's two violent sons (who bestially rape Titus' gracious daughter and cut her hands and tongue) certainly distinguish what is human and what is nonhuman on the dinner table. Shakespearean research can be seen not only in the film's adaptations but also in the theater performances. For instance, the famous Oscar Award winner Anthony Hopkins plays well in the title role Titus in Director Julie Taymor's adaptation film *Titus* (1999), a postmodern revenge tragedy of Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*. During COVID-19 outbreak, many theaters, including Broadway, had been closed, and performances had been cancelled. Yet Shakespeare's plays are luckily performed on stage in the theater in Taiwan during COVID-19 as a live performance. For example, the contemporary production *The Madness of Titus Andronicus* (2021, Taipei), adapted from

INTERFACE

Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, was staged in Taiwan from April 16-18, 2021.⁵

5 Conclusion

What can we learn from Shakespeare during his time on pandemics? The answer might be that we can keep positive and optimistic by writing, especially, intellectuals, scholars, writers, researchers, and professors. During the pandemics, Shakespeare was influenced by the pandemics to write several plays. Besides the examples given above, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare let Hamlet give the famous soliloquies:

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world...

(*Hamlet* 3.3.358-60)

Encountering the plagues, pandemics hit London from autumn 1592 to May 1594; when Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* around 1599-1602, Shakespeare still remembered the fatal disease terror. So, he used the character Hamlet to express that at late night in darkness, in the churchyards full of graves, the dead who died of pandemics and sickness from hell spread out their contagious breath, as if a foul disease, in a noxious air atmosphere to inflict the world. Denise Ming-yueh Wang's journal article "Adieu, Adieu, Remember Me: The Death of Hamlet the Dane" also treats the "infectious disease" to show the "imagery of contamination"

5 The Tainaner Ensemble does the production. Director and Playwright Tsai, Chih-Ching narrowed down the scale to use only the six actors and actresses to present Shakespeare's huge bloody revenge tragedy after the Roman war against the barbarian Goths. The revenge between Tamora, Queen of the Goths, and Titus Andronicus, a noble Roman general, against the Goths.

With the aid of technology, this contemporary avant-garde little theatre performance in the proscenium stage also employs the two camera projections. To project the live performances onto the big white screen hanging in the stage background while the actor or the actress is performing as the media TV anchor reports the news at the side of the stage. This performance abounds in contemporary politics; for example, at the beginning of the performance, the presidential candidates Saturninus and Bassianus are running their political campaign, and media are manipulated by the dominant rulers who are corrupt, murders, schemes, mutilations, rape, and bloody revenge. The six-actor cast use the basins with either water or red liquids symbolizing blood to spray on each other with the development of the plot. Many deaths and a lot of blood, cruel revenge one after the other happen to represent on stage by many shocking images full of terror and violence.

TUAN

in the play *Hamlet*. It offers a “suggestive introduction to the idea of contagion as the crucial cause of death in Shakespeare’s day” (2010: 32).

To sum up, when there were plagues and pandemics during Shakespeare’s time, even when theatres were close, Shakespeare kept writing, writing the plays as I mention above, and writing the poetry sonnets. As Harvard University Professor Stephen Greenblatt speculates in the book *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* that Shakespeare might be hired to write the sonnets to encourage the young handsome noble (who might have Narcissism to love no ladies but himself) to get married to have children. Whether for making a living during the pandemic plagues or what, Shakespeare has the will to do it. As Shakespeare in the title of his sonnets, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, announces, he repeatedly has puns on his own first name:

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus.

(Sonnet 135.1-2)

In the 154 sonnets, Shakespeare is smart to encourage the reader to identify the speaker with Shakespeare by using the witty alias. The word “Will” is the short nickname of “William,” Shakespeare’s first name. Besides, I believe that as the proverbs say: “Whenever there is a will, there is a way.” If we have the will to conquer COVID-19, human beings will sooner or later try their best to find a solution to cope with the dreadful COVID-19 and its virus variants which have killed so many people in the world. We can learn from Shakespeare on pandemics to try to survive.

Although Shakespeare’s tone in *King Lear* might sound nihilistic, I think that Shakespeare is not like the binary opposition to be attributed as negative or positive. Instead, Shakespeare in my perspective, is pragmatic and realistic. He knew how to survive to make a living during the bubonic plague without being killed by the pandemic. Moreover, Shakespeare made good use of the plagues to serve as the abundant metaphors and literature expressions in his plays.

INTERFACE

During COVID-19, while not many people wanted to get the vaccine shots to be tested as the experiment mice, Northern California doctors in the U.S. reworked the famous popular musical *Hamilton* track to promote vaccines. The famous lyric rings in your ear, such as: “Don’t throw away your shots.” To learn from their wits, I also rewrite the line in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*: “Vengeance, plague, death, confusion” (II. iv.90) to be: “Revenge, COVID-19, mortality, chaos.” COVID-19 pandemics from 2020 to the present drastically change our daily lives. We can learn from Shakespeare to keep alive and be inspired by the Bard to make this as an opportunity for rest while we wait for proper COVID-19 vaccines to be shot for most of the people who are willing to get shots in Taiwan, America, Europe, and the world to try to co-exist with the pandemic.

The research on Shakespeare and COVID-19 with the reference of ecocriticism can be transformed into resources like rain and water in our literature reservoir. And the humankind in the future generations as treasure database and unforgettable experiences and lessons. We can learn from Shakespeare that even if we face the difficult pandemic situation during COVID-19, we can still develop our talents by keeping social distancing in quarantine. And train our skills to keep doing our jobs well while maintaining our health and productivity. We can read and write to discover what other literary works are connected to pandemics and plagues. We can use languages to express our feelings in writing works which may become literature masterpieces in the future.

What might Shakespeare learn from us? I try to answer the question raised by one member of the audience at the international 2021 INTERFACEing conference at National Taiwan University. I guess that our modern technological progress, advanced medicine, online performances, the Internet, social media, etc., can let Shakespeare (if he could see) be amazed at our marvelous innovative improvement in the 21st century. After all, human beings waited for 150 years to finally have the polio vaccine invented. And now, just after one year, humans have already invented COVID-19 vaccines. Thus, up to the present, when I finish revising to submit this journal paper, I believe that we can still

TUAN

have hope. We can pray that shortly, most/all people will get useful COVID-19 vaccines to confront the contagious dreadful pandemic with less death caused by dangerous COVID-19 pandemic and its variants Delta and Omicron. But there is no vaccine for climate change! Thus, we need to get rid of ecophobia. Just as Shakespeare, we can learn from him to sustain, survive, stay safe and healthy, and keep writing.

This article argues that plagues and pandemics can work for Shakespeare as metaphors to symbolize diseases, moral decadence, and love-sickness. As Richard C. Hoffmann's *Environmental History of Medieval Europe* on social ecology, COVID-19, though contagious might from bats or a biochemical weapon lab experiment (as some people's suspicion), is also relevant to the environment. Therefore, we can reflect on plagues in Shakespeare's plays aided with the theoretical perspective of ecocriticism while living or co-existing with COVID-19 pandemics. Plagues and COVID-19 pandemics, in a way, reflect the environmental pollution, climate change, and contagious problems between species. Still, Nature is utterly indifferent while human nature tries to survive to seek for sustainability to live with the beautiful nature. Shakespeare's plays filled with metaphors of plagues transcend time and space to still shine in the post COVID-19 era.

INTERFACE

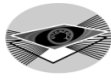
References

- Barroll, Leeds. (1991). *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: the Stuart Years*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Betts Tim, Betts Hannah. (1998). "A Note on a Phrase in Shakespeare's Play *King Lear*: 'A Plague upon Your Epileptic Visage.'" *Seizure* (London, England), Vol.7(5), 407-409.
- Brayton, Dan. *Shakespeare's Ocean*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2012.
- Cuthbert, Denise. (1993). "Politics, Plague and Shakespeare's Theater: The StuartYears." *Parergon*, Vol.11 (1), June, pp. 132-133.
- Dickson, Andrew. (2020, March 22). "Shakespeare in Lockdown: Did He Write *King Lear* in Plague Quarantine?" *The Guardian*. Retrieved Sep. 26, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/mar/22/shakespeare-in-lockdown-did-he-write-king-lear-in-plague-quarantine>
- Egan, Gabriel. *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Estok, C. Simon. (2011). *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . (2018). *The Ecophobia Hypothesis*. New York: Routledge.
- .(2019). "Ecophobia, the Agony of Water, and Misogyny." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. (26):2, 473-485.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. (2004). *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. (2020, May 7). "What Shakespeare Actually Wrote about the Plague." *The New Yorker*. Retrieved Sep. 25. 2021, from <https://www.newyorker.com/contributors/stephen-greenblatt>
- Gupta, Akanksha et al (2020). "COVID-19: Emergence of Infectious Diseases, Nanotechnology Aspects, Challenges, and Future Perspectives." *Chemistry Europe*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/slct.202001709>
- Hoffmann, C. Richard. (2014). *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, Jaecheol. (2017). "The Plague and Immunity in *Othello*."

TUAN

- Comparative Drama*, 51(1), 23-42.
- Pollack-Pelzner, Daniel. (2020, March 14). "Shakespeare Wrote His Best Works during a Plague." *The Atlantic*. Retrieved Sep. 25. 2021, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/03/broadway-shutdown-could-be-good-theater-coronavirus/607993/>
- Smith, Emma. (2020, March 12). "'Out damned spot': The Lady Macbeth hand-washing scene that Became a Coronavirus meme." Penguin.co.uk. Retrieved Sep. 25. 2021, from <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/mar/the-history-behind-the-lady-macbeth-coronavirus-meme.html>
- Shakespeare, William. (1974). *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Strickler, Breyan. "Sex and the City: An Ecocritical Perspective on the Place of Gender and Race in *Othello*." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 12.2 (Summer 2005): 119–37.
- Tuan, Iris H. (2020) "AI, COVID-19, and Law: Take the Film *Contagion* as an Example." *AI in Information Society*. Taiwan Academy for Information Association. Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University.
- Wang, Denise Ming-yueh. (2010). "Adieu, Adieu, Remember Me: The Death of Hamlet the Dane." *Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities*. (29), 31-49.

[received September 18, 2022
accepted November 25, 2022]



The Use of Foucault's and Schmitt's Theories and War Metaphors in the Political Narratives of the COVID-19 Pandemic

PATRIZIA PIREDDA

University of Oxford

Abstract

In the case of the first surge of covid-19, the metaphor “we are at war” was immediately used insofar as it was understandable and easily adaptable to the sanitary emergency of the covid-19 pandemic and therefore determined an emotional predisposition, on the one hand, to abide by the restrictions; but on the other hand, it gave rise to a negative feeling of fear that in turn caused several collateral drawbacks: fear of the other, hunt for the “anointers” who spread the virus, spying on neighbours, lack of solidarity, and mental conditions such as anxiety, depression and phobias.

Starting with these premises, in this paper I will analyse the use of language and metaphors in the context of the covid-19 pandemic in connection to surveillance, state of emergency, and critique of values. I will attempt a critical analysis of two different perspectives that have been applied as interpretative models of the covid-19 pandemic: Schmitt's crisis of values and Foucault's surveillance, which I will integrate with Agamben's reflections on the state of emergency.

The article has two purposes: by analysing how Schmitt's and Foucault's texts and theories have often been referred to uncritically and applied to the pandemic mechanically, to support or challenge the political decision of introducing social restrictions, I will first explain why covid-19 narratives have often been confusing; and second, I will discuss the role that war-metaphors played in persuading people to accept the restrictions and diverting the attention from important political and social problems, such as the crisis of public health systems.

Keywords: Covid-19; Foucault; Schmitt; Metaphor and Covid-19; Political narratives of Covid-19

© Patrizia Piredda

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

<http://interface.org.tw/> and <http://interface.ntu.edu.tw/>

The Use of Foucault's and Schmitt's Theories and War

Metaphors in the Political Narratives of the COVID-19

Pandemic

Metaphors have the special power of influencing opinions, which occurs nonetheless, whether a metaphor rests on reasonable assumptions or not, i.e. on argumentations that, despite their apparent formal correctness, are *de facto* false (D'Agostini, 2010). From the formal point of view, Aristotle was the first to produce an analysis of metaphor, which he describes as “the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy” (1932, i 1457b, 6-7).¹ He considers appropriateness one of the fundamental qualities of metaphors alongside “perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air” (Aristotle 1926, 303, §2 1405b). Perspicuity depends on the fact that a metaphor clearly shows the connections between two things and that its meaning can be apprehended easily and quickly without explanation. The “foreign air” depends on the fact that the metaphorical terms are not used accordingly with their general and usual meaning (in the example of “Achilles is a lion,” the latter term is commonly linked to an animal). And finally, the pleasure is in that we feel happy about achieving new knowledge every time we successfully grasp the meaning of a metaphorical connection. However, the fact that a metaphor is rhetorically well-made and adequate to its context is no guarantee that it will be used ethically.

In the case of the first surge of COVID-19, the metaphor “we are at war” was immediately used insofar as it was understandable and easily adaptable to the sanitary emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic and

¹ For deeper insight into Aristotle's discussion of metaphor's formalism, see “Persuasion: The Role of Metaphor in Shaping Opinion”, in Piredda (2022).

therefore determined an emotional predisposition, on the one hand, to abide by the restrictions. On the other hand, however, it gave rise to a negative feeling of fear that in turn caused several collateral drawbacks: fear of the other, hunt for the “anointers” who spread the virus, spying on neighbours, lack of solidarity, and mental conditions such as anxiety, depression and phobias, as Burnette (2022) writes.²

Starting with these premises, in this paper I will analyse the use of language and metaphors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in connection to surveillance, state of emergency, and critique of values. I will attempt a critical analysis of two different perspectives that have been applied in political narratives as interpretative models of the COVID-19 pandemic: Schmitt’s crisis of values and Foucault’s surveillance, which I will integrate with Agamben’s reflections on the state of emergency.

By analysing Schmitt’s and Foucault’s theories, I claim that the use of the former is inappropriate to build a critical argumentation of COVID-19. As a matter of fact, Schmitt’s theory was often referred to uncritically and applied to the pandemic mechanically, to support or challenge the political decision of introducing social restrictions. Conversely, I claim that the use of Foucault’s theory is more adequate to a critical understanding of the complex scenario of COVID-19 crisis because his historical interpretation of the relation amongst power, discourse, and pandemics highlights that such relation is always intrinsically ideologically and that language of politics has always a manipulative function that must be critically deconstructed. For this reason I devote the last part of my article to analysing how the war metaphors were used to persuade people to accept the restrictions and to divert the attention from important political and social problems, such as the crisis of public health systems.

² The ineffectiveness of the use of war metaphors has also been demonstrated in other diseases such as cancer (Hauser, 2015 and 2020).

1 Beyond the System of Values: Schmitt's *Die Tyrannei der Werte*

Humankind, being a complex and organised system, aims to maintain social life within the state of welfare, which is to say homeostasis, to ensure that everyone may enjoy a good life. The aim of any agency does not, therefore, limit to preserving life but implies the effort of attaining happiness through the application of basic ethical principles. If, on the one hand, good health, peace, honesty, and solidarity characterise good societies and permit their members to live happily, on the other hand, disease, war, corruption, and egoism characterise evil societies, make life unhappy, and eventually cause society itself to crumble down. These couples of opposites determine, from the ethical point of view, a series of values on which the laws are based and that regulate behaviours and social practices.

All ethical decisions we make in diverse contexts of our lives are based on the values we believe in. This also happened during the first surge of COVID-19, when the population was called to their civic duty, which is based on beliefs and values that we call “objective”, in the sense that they are conventionally valid not only individually but for all those who belong in a given society. One of these values, in a democratic society, is the freedom to move and gather. However, if any disruption of normal social living – e.g. a pandemic – puts lives at risk, then the application of restrictions on those basic freedoms becomes reasonable as far as it is aimed at lowering the danger. During the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, one should not ask if social restrictions were just or necessary but rather if and to which extent such restrictions were or were not effective.

Several authors referred to the jurisdictional theories of Carl Schmitt (Steuer, 2022; Corradetti, 2021; Negroni, 2020; Kotzé, 2020; and Premoli De Marchi, 2012), to argue whether social restrictions were theoretically and legally justified and acceptable: in some cases, Schmitt's theory was used to approve the enforcement of the restrictions, in others to criticize that policy. However, they often referred to Schmitt's theory uncritically, without taking into account the historical context in which it was formulated and for what purpose. Schmitt's theory of the “tyran-

ny of values”, is indeed problematic.

In *Die Tyrannei der Werte*, of 1960, Schmitt makes a stand against Scheler’s ethics of values, which was used after the war to lay down strong moral fundamentals on which Europe and the Federal Republic of Germany should rest. Schmitt believed that the problem of values consists that values always depend on individuals. Therefore, values always exist in a “system of pure perspectivism” and there is no guarantee that they will be used ethically or even that they have any moral content. As Premoli De Marchi (2013, p. 141) writes Schmitt borrows from Heidegger (1950) the idea that values cannot be objective because any value is the result of an act of evaluation, which is always subjective. Since values are such only if actualised, they consequentially imply some degree of aggressiveness because they must be imposed on others – who may base their agency on other values – to become effective in reality.

However, Schmitt’s argumentation is flawed both from ideological and rhetorical points of view. One must bear in mind Schmitt’s involvement with Nazism. In his article, Zeitlin (2020) shows that *Die Tyrannei der Werte* offered Schmitt – who never abjured his Nazi ideological creed – the opportunity to carry on with his campaign for a full amnesty for Nazi war criminals. We must remember that Schmitt was indicted at the Nuremberg trials.³ In 1945 he wrote a defensive document for the trial of Friedrich Flick,⁴ in which he appealed to the principle *nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege* (Schmitt, 2011; Jeutner, 2019). According to this principle, the charges against Flick had to be dropped as it was illicit to accuse a person of a crime that occurred before a specific law existed, which defined the act itself as a crime. He then defended himself in 1947 from “the denunciation *ad personam* presented by Karl Loewenstein, his former colleague, who emigrated in 1933” (Gnoli Volpi, 2003); and again in 1947, when he was questioned by Robert Kempner. In both cases, he was acquitted, although he was forbidden to resume his academic activity so he concentrated his activity on publishing books and articles in newspapers.

3 See the reports in Quaritsch (2000).

4 Flick was one of the most influential entrepreneurs in the German steel industry and an enthusiastic supporter of the Nazi party.

I N T E R F A C E

Zeitlin (2020, p. 2) analyses some columns written by Schmitt but published anonymously in German and European papers, “advocating blanket amnesty for National Socialists accused of war crimes, crimes against the Jewish people and crimes against humanity”. Zeitlin highlights that the author of those columns meant amnesty as “forgetting,” and “also the strict prohibition [*Verbot*] against rummaging around in the past and seeking a cause for further acts of revenge and further claims of reparation” (Schmitt, 1995, p. 219).⁵ According to Zeitlin, the apology of former German officers involved in Nazi crimes continues in *Die Tyrannei der Werte*, where the author criticizes the values as objective and universal. Zeitlin shows that this critique is linked to the sentence of 1958, with which the District Court in Hamburg by referring to the “objective and universal” value of free speech conclusively stated Erich Lüth’s right to publicly call for boycotting Veit Harlen’s movie *Unsterbliche Geliebte* of 1951.⁶ In *Die Tyrannei der Werte*, Schmitt explicitly attacks the validity of the concept of an “objective system of values”, claiming that laws should not be based on a system of values insofar as these are the guarantee of nothing. Schmitt separates ethics and morals from politics and bases his conception of legality, as Apollonius (2014) writes, on the concept of the Hobbesian state, which in Schmitt’s case is historically reflected in the Nazi state. This separation inevitably leads to positions which, while rhetorically argued to sound convincing, are fundamentally biased.

In my opinion, any reflection on politics and laws cannot ignore ethics and its purposes. According to Aristotle, “every state is as we see a sort of partnership, and every partnership is formed with a view to some good” (Aristotle, 1944, 1, 1252a). In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines what good is and writes that there are different kinds of good (friends, health, pleasure, richness, and so on). But he wants to

⁵ Also in Zeitlin (2020).

⁶ Lüth called for a boycott of Harlen’s movie because he was the director of the anti-Semitic movie *Jud Süß* in 1940. Because Harlen had been declared free of all charges in 1949, he stated that Lüth’s claim was illegitimate, which was also stated by the Hamburg Criminal Chamber of the Regional Court in 1951, although this sentence was reversed seven years later when the District Court in Hamburg nullified Harlen’s claim by referring to the objective order of values (objektive Wertordnung), so extending “the applicability of basic rights, like freedom of opinion and expression, into the domain of private law.” (Zeitlin, 2020, p. 8).

understand which is the best and highest good, viz. *the good* that is “desirable for itself”, not “desirable for the sake of some other good”, and for the sake of which “all other goods are desirable” (Kraut, 2022). This good, which everybody agrees to call *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing), must be the object of politics. This, by the laws, determines which actions are allowed and which ones must be avoided to achieve happiness: “The aim of Politics, that is, what is the highest of all the goods that action can achieve Happiness, and conceive ‘the good life’ or ‘doing well’ to be the same thing as ‘being happy’.” (Aristotle, 1999, I, 1095a1-1095a2).

So, if one establishes that the good is the aim of ethics, then the legislation that regulates behaviour must also have the same goal. Consequently, an order of objective value is such only and only if it has as its goal the happiness of every component of society. In this case, objectivity does not have the same meaning as in science, that is, that it can be verified by experimentation, but it means that its rightfulness is so evident – as far as everybody can recognise if an action brings happiness or unhappiness – that it cannot be denied. Schmitt’s argument fails here and it would make sense only if considered from an apologetic point of view: it is a sophism to propose that a political system should not be based on values just because social groups can exist as far as they conventionally accept common values (like life, health, friendship, instruction) on which they found their rights and laws. It is important, therefore, to understand how values are used in political narratives, what kind of persuasion they are aimed at, and what their practical purposes are. Therefore, beyond the use that has been made of Schmitt’s theory by these authors to express their agreement or disagreement with the restrictions, in my opinion, in a context of democratic political culture, it is inappropriate to refer to a thinker who never denied his past Nazi membership.

I would like now to go back to the case of COVID-19 and analyse the concept of health to see what kind of definition was used in political narratives and what their purpose was.

2 The World Health Organization's concept of health: physical, mental, and social well-being

It is undeniable that health is an universal value and has an objective ground, even if its definition is quite complex. In the case of COVID-19, political narratives and decisions have been made based on a partial definition of the concept of health. The suspension of many rights derived as corollaries from the right of individual freedom, on which modern democracies are built, was made possible by considering health from a mere physical perspective, that is, the absence of the disease. In the case of the political decisions made about COVID-19, only the value of physical health was taken into account. Such a value caused many governments to impose regulations aimed at tackling the physical effects of the virus without taking into account other aspects of health, thus contradicting explicitly the Constitution of the World Health Organization, according to which “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”⁷ From this standpoint, the value of health implies the state of general homeostasis of the individual, including the mental state and the influence of social practices on the self-perception as a healthy person in a healthy society. In other words, if we talk about the value of health we must take into account the “perception that the individual has of his or her health insofar as such a perception influences the psychophysical well-being of which health itself consists: then it is not only the technical knowledge of medicine that exclusively defines the state of health of a given individual, but also what that individual feels concerning his or her state of health” (Negroni, 2020, p. 9).

The concept of health today is therefore not separable from that of the quality of life and perception of the individual: it is intrinsically linked to that of equality of opportunity (Kamm, 2001; Abatemarco et al., 2020). It is therefore objective and subjective since health is also influenced by the subject's self-perception. However, there must be a reasonable limit to the subjective perception of health, which must be subject to the ethical principle that individual well-being must not harm that of

7 <http://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf?ua=1>.

others. Since within society the individual is always in a relationship with others, with whom he or she shares habits, beliefs, and norms, the definition of health that includes subjective self-perception must be linked to a system of bioethical values that can be summarized in the principle *primum non nocere*, which imposes the good of the individual and society as the end of all actions.

In the case of COVID-19, political narratives based on war metaphors – with which lockdowns were proclaimed and justified – were based on a partial definition of the concept of health as the mere absence of infirmity. The point is therefore not to discuss whether lockdowns, distancing, and social isolation are not useful to stop the spread of the contagion (the validity of which is evident), but whether these measures have been supported by an adequate health system and based on an adequate system of values concerning the sphere of health.

Before analysing the political narratives reported in newspapers, I would like to highlight the relationship between politics, power, and health, the risk of establishing “sanitary dictatorships” (as in the case of Hungary during the peak of the COVID-19 epidemic), and the concept of biopolitics by considering Foucault’s reflections.

3 State of emergency vs. state of exception

How was it possible to implement such restrictions that not only limited the freedom of individuals but also applied the concept of health in a restricted and partial way, thus creating a state of general social and individual malaise? Many articles by jurists and columnists refer to Schmitt’s (2006) definition of a state of exception, opposing it to the state of emergency, based on the fact that during the pandemic the constitutional rights that underpin the democratic system were suspended. Some authors refer to Schmitt to justify the political decision of suspending rights, the separations of legislative and executive political powers (for example see Scoditti, 2020), and the disproportionate use of decrees; others, instead, refer to Schmitt to criticize the suspension of

I N T E R F A C E

rights, perceived as a violation of the ethical and moral principles of democracy (Pellegrino, 2020). One of the most important contributions to the debate was Giorgio Agamben, who reflected on the concept of “state of exception”, overturning Schmitt’s theory through the mediation of Benjamin’s philosophy, which describes in *Angelus Novus* (1995) the progressive normalization of the state of exception during the first decades of the twentieth century, and Foucault’s philosophy of biopolitics (2004). In *Stato di eccezione* (2003), Agamben sees the modern state as the result of the convergence between totalitarianism and democracy, and he claims that the modern state uses its power to create emergencies in order to maintain a continuous state of tension that can be managed by enforcing authoritarian policies. If this interpretation can be viable to understand certain historical events, such as the surge of terrorism in Italy during the 1970s, it is, however, inadequate to understand the state of emergency as it occurs during a pandemic.

Agamben published in July 2020 a post on his blog referring to Schmitt’s state of exception to reject the position of an anonymous jurist, who “tries to justify with arguments that would like to be legal the state of exception once again declared by the government” (Agamben, July 30, 2020). To Agamben, between a state of exception and a state of emergency “from the point of view of the suspension of constitutional guarantees, which should be the only relevant one, [...] there is no difference” (Agamben, July 30, 2020). Agamben, therefore, does not consider that in Schmitt’s definition of the state of exception there is an intrinsic moral danger since it foresees one “sovereignty, according to which the sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception: if there is some person or institution, in a given polity, capable of bringing about a total suspension of the law and then to use extra-legal force to normalize the situation, then that person or institution is the sovereign in that polity” (Vinx, 2019). This definition inevitably leads to dictatorship. At the beginning in 2019, moreover, Agamben’s claims that COVID-19 was no more than a normal influence and that governments caught the opportunity to establish a new state of exception and apply new forms of control, both of which have turned out to be false (Nancy, 2020). Nonetheless, it is difficult to deny that during the pandemic there was a “rapid expan-

sion of militarized forms of surveillance that cannot be fully accounted for as necessary measures to control the pandemic” (Delanty, 2020). Rather than the state of exception, it was then the state of emergency to be called on a global scale. This implies that any nation, in exceptional circumstances such as a war or a catastrophe (natural such as floods and earthquakes or human such as the explosion of a nuclear power plant) can suspend constitutional rights and implement extraordinary safety measures during the period. of the emergency. Thus, in a state of emergency, the balanced separation of political powers, which guarantees democracy, is momentarily blurred and suspended and the executive institution also becomes legislative. This happened in many states, for example, where the government went on producing decrees for months, thus imposing an unchallenged political vision and strategy to govern the nation during the pandemic.

4 From exclusion to reclusion: *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault

To date, many studies refer to Foucault (2004) to analyse the techniques used by the politics of different governments to exercise their power during the COVID-19 pandemic and to evaluate their aims and effects (some examples: Makarychev, 2020; Horvath & Lovasz, 2020; Marinković, 2021, and Gjerde, 2021). In this part of the article, I focus instead on analysing Foucault’s historical-philosophical study dedicated to investigating under what conditions Europe was able to experience the transition from forms of government that based their power on the practices of exclusion to forms of government that instead practised mainly confinement, observation, and control. For Foucault, this transition is understandable if one observes the evolution of the treatment of infectious diseases, that is, from the politics of leprosy to the politics of the plague. In the chapter dedicated to Panopticism, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1991, p. 195) writes:

First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of

I N T E R F A C E

death, the killing of all stray animals [...] Each family will have made its own provisions [...] If it is absolutely necessary to leave the house, it will be done in turn, avoiding any meeting [...] It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment.

Foucault (1991, p. 198) later shows how the management of the two most common forms of pandemic, leprosy and the plague, resulted in two different models of biopolitics and practices of control, surveillance and social punishment:

The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder had as its medical and political correlative discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of “contagions”, of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.

As Kakoliris (2020, p. 4) notes,

the political dream lurking behind the management of leprosy is the dream of a pure “community”. On the contrary, what lurks behind the management of the plague is the dream of a “disciplined society”. It is the “dream” of a power, which, in the name of containment of the infectious virus threatening the population, is exercised in an exhausting and total manner upon the society as a whole.

In the case of leprosy, containment is achieved by isolating the patients from the rest of society. In the case of the plague, the strategy consists of controlling and isolating every citizen within a specific space where the individual can be controlled and punished by law. On the one hand, we speak of social exclusion; on the other hand, of social division:

If it is true that the leper gave rise to rituals of exclusion, which

PIREDDA

to a certain extent provided the model for and general form of the great Confinement, then the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects. Rather than the massive, binary division between one set of people and another, it called for multiple separations, individualizing, distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification of power (Foucault, 1991, p. 198).

According to Foucault, these two methods were unified in the nineteenth century, producing a socio-political system based on the idea that we can discern what is right and sane from what is wrong and unsanitary by imposing obedience and homologation through punishment.

Foucault sees the perfect example of this fusion of political and ideological strategies in Jeremy Bentham's thought and in particular in the Panopticon, the prison that he designed with his brother Samuel. The Panopticon is a circular prison projected in such a way that a guard placed at the centre of the building can see each prisoner without being seen. In Bentham's utilitarian philosophy, the Panopticon represents the ideal model of surveillance and social control since it induces "in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action" (Foucault, 1991, p. 201). Foucault concludes by comparing the politics of plague control to the politics of social control, however highlighting some differences:

In the first case [the plague], there is an exceptional situation: against an extraordinary evil, power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions; it constructs for a time what is both a counter-city and the perfect society; it imposes an ideal functioning, but one that is reduced, in the final analysis, like the evil that it combats, to a simple dualism of life and death: that which moves brings death, and one kills that which moves. The Panopticon, on the other hand, must be understood

I N T E R F A C E

as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men

(Foucault, 1991, p. 205).

Taking the analogy literally, therefore, leads to false judgments. In Western societies, in my opinion, no attempt was made to establish a state of dictatorship, as some conspiracy theories or extreme fringes of anti-vaxxers claimed (Ferreira, 2020; Fuchs, 2021; and Jolley, 2014). I do not mean to deny that during the first wave of contagion new techniques of control were applied. Jayasınche analyses for example how the UK government (but this is valid at least for all European governments), in order to govern and persuade citizens to follow the restrictive rules, used a set of new calculative technologies, which was a “tailor-made approach to target and prioritise specific population categories. Also, this ‘temporal environment’ required more self-governance principles for citizens compared to the past liberal governance rules; the COVID-19 governance in the United Kingdom stands out very much regarding the bio-politics implemented through authoritarian principles: self-discipline and punishment” (Jayasınche, 2021, p. 9).

However, it eventually became evident that the control strategies failed because they did not prevent the spread of the virus, even if they limited it. In these strategies, therefore, we can see a real attempt to tackle the pandemic but also the desire to divert public attention from another serious problem, namely the weakness of public health systems, which proved inadequate to contrast the pandemic at its peak: as Jayasınche (2021, p. 2) points out in his paper,

“with decades of neo-liberal encroachment through policy reforms and austerity measures, a succession of UK government has allocated inadequate funding and investment in the National Health Service (NHS). This has made them unprepared for high-impact healthcare emergency situations such as that created by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).”

One may therefore wonder whether the rightful call for the state of

emergency was not also used to adumbrate serious structural lack of the healthcare system that almost collapsed when it was no longer possible to grant the service to all citizens, as the epidemic reached its peak. In other words, one may ask if politics, whose aim is to guarantee constitutional rights for all citizens, used power to conceal years of failing public health systems, which has in the long run jeopardised the citizens' universal right to be cared for and cured if sick. Political narratives about the pandemic founded on a partial definition of health and built on metaphors of war, which were repeated *ab libitum* in newspapers around the world, have played a fundamental role in diverting attention and urging people to accept social restrictions.

5 The political discourse about the pandemic: the war metaphors⁸

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread in Europe, political discourse based on war-related metaphors was created. These discourses had a very strong echo in the speeches of the mass media (TV, newspapers, online news and so on) and were aimed at triggering the primary emotion that we feel when we think about an armed, violent conflict: fear, which is, as everyone knows, a powerful means of manipulation. The use of war metaphors reached its peak during those weeks. If one analyses the data collected in the English-speaking countries and gathered in *The Coronavirus Corpus* over the period March-June 2020, one will see that the word *war* was used 40,997 times, while in the period October-December 2020 it appeared 16,476 times, i.e. almost 60% less. The word *frontline* appeared 5,462 times in the spring of 2020 and 1,149 during the second wave (autumn-winter 2020-2021), i.e. almost 80% less.⁹ The main reason for this radical change is that, as happens with all metaphors, also the war metaphors lost their effectiveness due to habituation and the change of context. These metaphor has been extensively used all around Europe (and the world) excluding Germany, where the figures for casualties have been low, the media have used war metaphors as a means to talk about the pandemic only when political or

⁸ This part has been previously developed in (Piredda, 2022).

⁹ www.english-corpora.org/corona/.

I N T E R F A C E

medical releases from other virus-stricken countries were reported. For example on March 4, the *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung* titled “Fight against an unknown foe” (*Kampf gegen einen unbekanntes Feind*) (Rüb, 2020) the news of the epidemic breakout in Italy; and on March 28, the editors of the *FAZ* reported Mr Trump’s words “war on Coronavirus” (Trump “im Krieg”, 2020). The only direct reference to war was made in Germany in the Easter speech on April 11 by President Steinmeier, who stated that “Coronavirus is no war” (*die Corona-Pandemie sei kein Krieg*) but rather a “test of humanity” (*Prüfung unserer Menschlichkeit*) (Steinmeier fordert, 2020).¹⁰ Amongst all the war metaphors that were employed (the virus *is* an enemy or an invisible enemy; hospitals and intensive care units *are* trenches on the frontline; Covid-19 *was* an atom bomb in Lombardy; heroes infected *are* invisible bullets) two were particularly interesting, namely those that represented healthcare staff as soldiers and heroes (e.g. Suárez, 2020; and Castaldo, 2020).

The first metaphor is inadequate because, unlike soldiers, healthcare staff do not kill. Their job consists of saving lives by all means. As a consequence, they do not engage any enemy and do not use weapons. The second metaphor, on the other hand, in itself might be adequate. Under the exceptional circumstances and due to the huge commitment required to carry out their duties, as well as considering the high risk of contracting the disease and dying, health care staff have been immediately called heroes. The definition has been so extensively used that on April 24 the *BBC* published an article by Josh Sims entitled “Will coronavirus change how we define heroes?” (2020). The definition of the hero is more or less the same in all dictionaries: “A person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities” (Hero, 2020). Considering their efforts and courage in the face of danger and the extraordinary results that healthcare staff have obtained worldwide since the outbreak of the pandemic, I can say that the metaphor of the medic as a hero is the only good one that has been invented during the crisis. However, although adequate, it also had controversial

10 “Die Corona-Pandemie sei kein Krieg, sagte Steinmeier, ‘sondern sie ist eine Prüfung unserer Menschlichkeit,’ die das Schlechteste und das Beste in den Menschen hervorrufe. ‘Zeigen wir einander doch das Beste in uns.’ Seine Ansprache schloss der Bundespräsident mit den Worten: ‘Frohe Ostern, alles Gute—und geben wir Acht aufeinander.’”

collateral effects: on the one hand, it fed feelings of profound admiration and gratitude for medical staff among the population in all the countries examined in this article; on the other hand, it contributed to diverting the public from considering the real state of disarray and disorganization in which years of expenditure cuts have left the national health systems. This caused the health care staff to react critically and often reject the comparison with heroes.¹¹ Their testimonies speak against the abstract and mythical image of the medic that heroically sacrifices themselves for the nation's sake, as was proposed by politicians and media. Health care staff members individually tried and drew the attention of the public to the real problems of national health systems, often originating from policies of austerity and expenditure cuts. Nonetheless, as soon as the pandemic broke out, the same political administrations were ready to praise health care staff as heroes, without mentioning that their own policies had put them in danger. As to that, we must remember the appalling figures of deaths among health care staff in the most affected countries, like Italy and the UK, as well as the case of suicide of one PTSD-affected doctor in New York (Watkins et al., 2020).

In the most seriously disease-stricken European nations (France, Italy, Spain and UK), health care staff denounced the scarcity of equipment, from the basics—PPE—to technical supplies—ventilators—, and generally blamed politicians for the poor condition of hospitals. For example in France, *Le quotidien du médecin* published on March 21 several testimonies of medics, among which I quote: “Thank you, Mr Macron, but I am no hero. I just want to protect myself and my family with appropriate masks” (Long, 2020);¹² and on April 2, *la Repubblica* published the testimony of a freshly graduated medic who had just started his career as a “COVID-19 medic” and said: “We all agree and have a message: we don't want to be called heroes” (Strippoli, 2020).¹³ Over the whole month of March, several Italian papers denounced that health care staff were not receiving an adequate number of swabs to check if

11 Previously, I studied the use of war metaphors in connection to health, medical staff, and PTSD (2020).

12 “*Merci M. Macron mais je ne suis pas un héros, je veux juste pouvoir me protéger et protéger ma famille avec des masques adaptés.*”

13 “*Siamo tutti d'accordo e abbiamo un messaggio: non vogliamo essere chiamati eroi.*”

they had contracted the virus (example, *La Stampa*, March 17: “In Piedmont tests for politicians and footballers but not for medics” (Zanotti, 2020);¹⁴ *Il Messaggero*, March 24: “Coronavirus, the ordeal of the infected doctors: ‘Tests for footballers, not for us’ (Evangelisti, 2020).¹⁵

In France, *Le Monde* denounced on March 22 the scarcity of basic medical equipment: “Anger builds [...] because everyone is disappointed with the lack of masks and swabs. Masks should be available for everybody and tests for health care staff as well as for patients” (Mandard, 2020).¹⁶ In the UK the *BBC* published on April 21 the article “Coronavirus: NHS and care staff struggling to access tests” (Schraer, 2020). The same situation had been denounced in Spain on April 25, when the *Redacción médica* published the article “We are no heroes, we are precarious workers as we were before the Covid,” whose author exposed the dire conditions of the Spanish health system and stated that “the bass drum of heroism is romanticizing the since ever abnormal precariousness of the professional health system” (Redacción Médica, 2020).¹⁷ These examples of testimonies, of which I have given only part of the examples in this article, have been fundamental: 1) in countering the war metaphors’ emotional effect of fear and the consequent deviation of public attention from the latent problem of the scarcity of investments in public health in the countries I analysed; 2) in allowing the activation of the rational critical process by bringing public attention back to the real situation of hospitals and the working conditions of health workers.

6 Conclusion

According to Toscano, “pandemics need not be thought, by analogy with war, as biological arguments for the centralisation of power” (Toscano, 2020). Even if war metaphors were inadequate to represent the

¹⁴ “In Piemonte tamponi a politici e calciatori ma non ai medici.”

¹⁵ “Coronavirus, il dramma dei medici infettati: ‘Tamponi ai calciatori, a noi no’.”

¹⁶ “La colère va encore monter [...] car il y a un grand ras-le-bol face au manque de masques et de tests. Il faudrait des masques pour tout le monde et des tests pour tous les soignants et toutes les personnes hospitalisées.”

¹⁷ “Y con la matraca del heroísmo se está romantizando una precariedad asistencial y profesional que nunca fue normal.”

PIREDDA

actual state of affairs –i.e. the pandemic is no war, the virus is no enemy, hospitals are no trenches, and healthcare staff are no soldiers–, these metaphors attained nonetheless three major objectives: 1) making people passively accept “state-of-exception” political decisions based on questionable ethical principles; 2) creating new or exacerbating existing social disparities; 3) triggering harmful and unjustified feelings of fear, anxiety and suspicion that have often impacted negatively social behaviours.

In my opinion, in Western countries, therefore, no attempt was made to establish any “sanitary dictatorship”, but rather to divert public attention from serious political and social problems. The use of manipulating rhetoric based on war metaphors and the use of a partial definition of health had the practical purpose of hiding what the pandemic brought to light, namely the crisis of public health systems that had suffered from increasingly conspicuous cuts over decades of mismanagement. Such undermining of public health systems represents a grave danger for a democratic society because good health is one of the fundamental rights and a value that must be provided and granted to all citizens.

References

- Abatemarco A., Beraldo S., & Stroloni F. (2020). Equality of Opportunity in Health Care. *International Review of Economics*, 67, 13-29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12232-019-00342-9>.
- Agamben, G. (2020, July 30). Stato di eccezione e stato di emergenza. <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-stato-di-eccezione-e-stato-di-emergenza>.
- . (2003). *Stato di eccezione*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Apollonio, A. (2014). Il “nemico” e il “partigiano”. Le politiche penali odierne osservate attraverso le categorie concettuali di Carl Schmitt. *Diritto penale contemporaneo*, 1, 149-159.
- Aristotle (1926). *Rhetoric*. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0060>.
- . (1932). *Poetics*. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0056>. (
- . 1944). *Politics*, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greek-Lit:tlg0086.tlg035.perseus-eng1:1.1252a>.
- Benjamin, W. (1995). *Angelus Novus*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Burnette, J., Hoyt, C., Buttrick, N., & Auster-Gussman, L. (2022). Well-Being in the Time of COVID-19: Do Metaphors and Mindsets Matter? *Int J Psychol*, 57(1), 87-95.
- Castaldo, A. (2020, April 8). Medici e infermieri oggi sono i nostri soldati. Quando deporranno le armi dovranno affrontare il dolore. *Corriere della sera*. https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_aprile_08/medici-infermieri-oggi-sono-nostri-soldati-quando-deporranno-armi-dovranno-affrontare-dolore-af999a88-638a-11ea-9cf4-1c175ff3bb7c.shtml.
- Corradetti, C., & Pollicino, O. (2021). The “War” Against Covid-19: State of Exception, State of Siege, or (Constitutional) Emergency Powers?: The Italian Case in Comparative Perspective. *German Law Journal*, 22(6), 1060-1071. doi:10.1017/glj.2021.48.
- D’Agostini, F. (2010). *Verità avvelenata*. Bollati Boringhieri.
- Delanty, G. (2020). Six Political Philosophies in Search of a Virus: Critical Perspectives on the Coronavirus Pandemic. *LEGS*, 156, 1-17.

- Evangelisti, M. (2020, March 24). Coronavirus, il dramma dei medici infettati: “Tamponi ai calciatori, a noi no”. *Il Messaggero*. https://www.ilmessaggero.it/italia/coronavirus_news_medici_contagiati_morti_elenco_tamponi_ultime_notizie-5129064.html.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punish*. Vintage.
- . (2004). *Naissance de la Biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979*. Gallimard.
- Fuchs, C. (2021). Bill Gates Conspiracy Theories as Ideology in the Context of the COVID-19Crisis. In C. Fuchs (Ed.), *Communicating COVID-19. Everyday Life, Digital Capitalism, and Conspiracy Theories in Pandemic Times*. Emerald Publishing, 91-144.
- Ferreira, G. B. (2020). Conspiracy Theories in Times of the COVID-19Pandemic: Populism, Social Media and Misinformation. *Comunicação e sociedade*, 40, 129-148.
- Gjerde L. (2021). From Liberalism to Biopolitics: Investigating the Norwegian Government’s Two Responses to COVID-19. *European Societies*, 23(Suppl. 1), 262-274.
- Gnoli, A., & Volpi, F. (2003, February 28). L’imputato Carl Schmitt. *la Repubblica* <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/02/28/imputato-carl-schmitt.html>.
- Hauser, D. J., & Schwarz N. (2015). The War on Prevention: Bellicose Cancer Metaphors Hurt (Some) Prevention Intentions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(1): 66–77.
- . (2020). The war on prevention. II: Battle metaphors undermine cancer treatment and prevention and do not increase vigilance. *Health Communication*, 35(13), 1698–1704.
- Heidegger, M. (1950). Nietzsche Wort gott ist tot. In *Holzwege*. Klostermann.
- Hero. (2020). Lexico. <https://www.lexico.com/definizione/hero>.
- Horvath M., & Lovasz A. (2020). Foucault in the Age of COVID-19: Permitting Contingency in Biopolitics. *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, 17(1), 144-153.
- Jayasingh, K., Jayasinche, T., Wijethilake, C., & Adhikari, P. (2021). Bio-Politics and Calculative Technologies in COVID-19 Governance: Reflections From England. *International Journal of Health*

I N T E R F A C E

- Policy and Management*, 10(x), 1-9.
- Jolley D., & Douglas K. M. (2014). The Effects of Anti-Vaccine Conspiracy Theories on Vaccination Intention. *Plos One*. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0089177>.
- Jeutner, V. (2019). Pirates in Suits: Carl Schmitt, “Ordinary Businessmen” and Crimes of Aggression. *Nordic Journal of International Law*, 88(3), 459-487. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718107-08803004>.
- Kakoliris, G. (2020). Foucauldian Enquiry in the Origins of the COVID-19 Pandemic Management. *Critique in Times of Coronavirus*, 4-12. <https://criticallegalthin-king.com/2020/05/11/a-foucauldian-enquiry-in-the-origins-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-management-critique-in-times-of-coronavirus/>.
- Kamm, F. M. (2001). Health and Equality of Opportunity. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 1(2), 17-19. DOI: [10.1162/152651601300168843](https://doi.org/10.1162/152651601300168843).
- Kotzé, K. (2020). Responding to Covid-19: Emergency Laws and the Return to Government in South Africa. *Javnost – The Public*, 27(4), 393-406. DOI: [10.1080/13183222.2021.1844503](https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2021.1844503).
- Kraut, R. (2022). Aristotle’s Ethics. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/aristotle-ethics/>>.
- Long, S. (2020, March 21). Covid-19: inquiets, scandalisés, mais toujours mobilisés... dans la tête des médecins en pleine épidémie. *Le quotidien du médecin*. <https://www.lequotidiendumedecin.fr/liberal/exercice/covid-19-inquiets-scandalises-mais-toujours-mobilises-dans-la-tete-des-medecins-en-pleine-epidemie>.
- Mandard, S. (2020, March 22). Premier décès en France d’un médecin hospitalier infecté par le nouveau coronavirus. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2020/03/22/premier-deces-en-france-d-un-medecin-hospitalier-infecte-par-le-nouveau-coronavirus_6034032_3244.html.
- Makarychev, A., & Romashko, T. (2021). Precarious Sovereignty in a Post-Liberal Europe: the COVID-19 Emergency in Estonia and Finland. *Chinese Political Science Review*, 6(1), 63-85.

- Marinković D., & Major, S. (2020). COVID-19 and the Genealogies of Biopolitics: A Pandemic History of the Present. *Sociologija*, 62(4), 486-502.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2020). Eccezione virale. *Antinomie*. <https://antinomie.it/index.php/2020/02/27/eccezione-virale/>.
- Negroni, A. A. (2020), Libertà e Covid-19. Riflessioni giusfilosofiche. *IANUS, Diritto e Finanza. Rivista di studi giuridici*. https://www.rivistaianus.it/forum/covid-19/2020_10_30_Negroni.pdf.
- Pellegrino, G. (2020). Lo stato di emergenza e lo stato di eccezione: una teoria liberale. *Luiss Open*. <https://open.luiss.it/2020/04/11/lo-stato-di-emergenza-e-lo-stato-di-eccezione-una-teoria-liberale/>.
- Piredda, P. (2020). Reality vs. Propaganda. PTSD among Civilian Healthcare Staff and Patients and the Rhetorical Invention of the “War on Coronavirus”. *Close Encounters in War Journal*, 3, 70-95.
- . (2022). War-Metaphors During the Covid-Pandemic. Persuasion and Manipulation, proceeding of the conference, in *The Languages of COVID-19. Translational and Multilingual Perspectives on Global Healthcare*, edited by Piotr Blumczynski and Steven Wilson, Routledge, pp. 48-62,
- Quaritsch, H. (2000). *Antworten in Nurnberg*. Duncker & Humblot.
- Premoli De Marchi, P. (2013). Norms without Values. Philosophical Reflections on Carl Schmitt’s Tyranny of Values. *Phenomenology and Mind*, 5, 138-146.
- Redacción Médica. (2020, March 27). Coronavirus: ‘No somos héroes, somos precarios y lo éramos antes del Covid’. *Redacción Médica*. <https://www.redaccionmedica.com/virico/noticias/coronavirus-no-somos-heroes-somos-precarios-y-lo-eramos-antes-del-covid--2572>.
- Rüb, M. (2020, March 4). Kampf gegen einen unbekanntem Feind. *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung*. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/gesundheit/coronavirus/coronavirus-in-italien-patient-eins-kaempft-immer-noch-ums-leben-16661761.html>.
- Schraer, R. (2020, April 21). Coronavirus: NHS and Care Staff Struggling to Access Tests. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/>

I N T E R F A C E

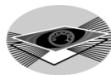
[health-52367708](#).

- Schmitt, C. (1995). Amnestie oder die Kraft des Vergessens. In *Staat, Großraum, Nomos. Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969*. Duncker & Humblot, 218-221.
- . (2006). *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press.
- . (2011). The International Crime of the War of Aggression and the Principle "Nullum Crimen, Nulla Poena Sine Lege". In *Writings on War*. Polity, 125-197.
- Scoditti, E. (2020). Il diritto iperbolico dello stato di emergenza. *Questione giustizia*, 31-36. <https://www.questionegiustizia.it/rivista/articolo/il-diritto-iperbolico-dello-stato-di-emergenza>.
- Sims, J. (2020, April 24). Will Coronavirus Change How We Define Heroes?. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200422-will-coronavirus-change-how-we-define-heroes>.
- Steinmeier fordert Solidarität. (2020, April 11). *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung*, 2020. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/ansprache-zur-corona-krise-steinmeier-fordert-solidaritaet-16721536.html>.
- Steuer, M. (2022). The Extreme Right as a Defender of Human Rights? Parliamentary Debates on COVID-19 Emergency Legislation in Slovakia. *Laws*, 11(2), 17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws11020017>.
- Strippoli, S. (2020, April 2). Il neoassunto all'ospedale di Verduno: "Non chiamatemi eroi, questa è un'occasione per imparare". *la Repubblica*. <https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/02/news/neoassunti-252941864/>.
- Suárez, G. (2020, April 5). Soldados de esta guerra: ancianos con miedo ante un enemigo que no se ve. *El Mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2020/04/05/5e88a806fc6c-83b75e8b456f.html>.
- Toscano, A. (2020). Beyond the plague state. *Historical materialism*. <https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/blog/beyond-plague-state>.
- Trump "im Krieg" gegen das Coronavirus. (2020, March 28). *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung*. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/poli->

[tik/ausland/trump-im-krieg-gegen-corona-mehr-als-100-000-infizierte-in-usa-16700550.html](https://www.spiegel.de/international/usa/trump-im-krieg-gegen-corona-mehr-als-100-000-infizierte-in-usa-16700550.html).

- Vinx, L. (2019). Carl Schmitt. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/schmitt/>.
- Watkins, A., Rothfeld, M., Rashbaum, W., & Rosenthal, B. (2020, April 29). Top E.R. Doctor Who Treated Virus Patients Dies by Suicide. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/27/nyregion/new-york-city-doctor-suicide-coronavirus.html>.
- Zanotti, R. (2020, March 17). In Piemonte tamponi a politici e calciatori ma non ai medici. Il Veneto? Ne ha fatti 7 volte tanti. *La Stampa*. <https://www.lastampa.it/topnews/firme/numbers/2020/03/17/news/in-piemonte-tamponi-ai-vip-e-non-ai-medici-il-veneto-ne-ha-fatti-7-volte-tanti-1.38604701>.
- Zeitlin, S. G. (2020). Indirection and the Rhetoric of Tyranny: Carl Schmitt's *The Tyranny of Values 1960–1967*. *Modern Intellectual History*, 1-24. <http://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf?ua=1>.

[received August 29, 2022
accepted November 25, 2022]



Between Fiction and History: Telling the Plague

in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and

Alessandro Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*

DAVIDE CROSARA
University of Rome "La Sapienza"

GIANLUCA CINELLI
Fondazione Nuto Revelli

Abstract

Daniel Defoe (1670-1731) and Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) represent two exemplary case studies of the European reflection about language, power, and pestilence in the context of Enlightenment due to their respective biographical positioning before and after that philosophical revolution. They both devote to the plague two diptychs (Defoe with the *Two Preparations for the Plague* and *A Journal of the Plague Year* in 1722, and Manzoni with *I promessi sposi* and *La storia della colonna infame* in 1840) that encompass a tension between fiction and history, narrative and the archive. These tensions produce two different approaches to the plague and its narrative and two partially diverging evaluations of the interplay between fact and fiction in relation to such a traumatic event. Nonetheless, Defoe and Manzoni share the attempt to provide rational and truthful insight into the epidemic, its origins, and its social and economic consequences. Their narrators – the witness and the omniscient historian – accept that language cannot domesticate evil and suffering by framing them in an image, and for this reason, they tell their stories by combining different genres and styles, creating hybridised narrative forms capable of challenging the ideological notion of disease beyond the cultural context of Enlightenment. These historical narratives outline a discourse that resonates with the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: The plague in literature; Historical fiction; Daniel Defoe; Alessandro Manzoni; Enlightenment; Betrayal in literature

© Davide Crosara and Gianluca Cinelli

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

<http://interface.org.tw/> and <http://interface.ntu.edu.tw/>

Between Fiction and History: Telling the Plague in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* and Alessandro Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*

The plague and other outbreaks of epidemics were frequent in early-modern Europe, and due to the limited competency of medical knowledge to tackle such scourges effectively, the political institutions tended to enforce drastic restrictions on individuals – the sick and the healthy as well – to reduce the contagion and avoid the spread of the disease. The traditional, almost universally shared interpretation of such events was metaphysical inasmuch as the plague-stricken communities tended to believe in supernatural causes such as God's wrath, extraordinary astronomical events (e.g. the passage of comets), or the malice of humans that would willingly manufacture and spread the deadly disease.

During the eighteenth century, as European culture was deeply transformed by the rationalistic revolution of Enlightenment, philosophers began to question the traditional response to the periodical outbreaks of the plague by criticising Leibniz's theodicy. As Odo Marquard explained, philosophers like Kant and Voltaire stated that humans bear the responsibility of evil as free moral agents, even though such a liability nonetheless requires the presence of God as the logical condition of moral liberty (1973, p. 62-63). It took a major disaster like the Lisbon earthquake (1755) to trigger a debate about the role and meaning of divine providence in the experience of evil and suffering. While Voltaire warned against worshipping the fetish of progress (2009, p. 326-327), Rousseau suggested that progress was a figure of providence (1971, p. 320). The philosophy of Enlightenment, thus, shifted the reflection on suffering and pain from the religious-metaphysical level to that of history (Löwith, 1967, p. 13), through a process of gradual but radical secularization.

Enlightenment, therefore, represents a watershed between two opposed ways of understanding the relationship between epidemics and human societies. What in early-modern Europe was conceived and endured as a scourge, in the face of which the humans were impotent, after the Enlightenment began to be understood as an event that had mechanic and natural causes that were only partially dependent upon human agency. Of course, God was not eliminated from the process leading to the formation of meaning, but individual moral responsibility was more and more recognised as the veritable arena of the fight between humankind and nature.

Daniel Defoe (1670-1731) and Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) represent two exemplary case studies of the European reflection about language, power, and pestilence in the context of Enlightenment due to their respective biographical positioning before and after that philosophical revolution. They both devote to the plague two diptychs (Defoe with the *Two Preparations for the Plague* and *A Journal of the Plague Year* in 1722, and Manzoni with *I promessi sposi* and *La storia della colonna infame* in 1840) that encompass a tension between fiction and history, narrative and the archive. These tensions produce two different approaches to the plague and its narrative and two partially diverging evaluations of the interplay between fact and fiction in relation to such a traumatic event. Nonetheless, Defoe and Manzoni share the attempt to provide rational and truthful insight into the epidemic, its origins, and its social and economic consequences.

Both authors highlight the importance of the narration, from two different points of view: as he wrote his *Journal* when an outbreak of pestilence in England was at its peak in 1722 (the disease had already broken out in France), Defoe chose to represent the London plague of 1665 almost as a chronicler, by positing his narrator H.F. as a witness. Conversely, Manzoni, who wrote his novel and the historical appendix on the trials against the “anointers” between 1821 and 1840, looked at the Milanese plague of 1630 through the eyes of a historian who needs to inform his public about past events and, at the same time, amend a series of wrong historical interpretations of those facts.

I N T E R F A C E

A disturbing and complex notion of betrayal seems to emerge from Defoe and Manzoni alike. It is a multi-layered concept that is introduced as an instrument of historical enquiry and moral judgement. It is also a notion that provokes a captivating interplay between fiction and history in the two authors, a hybridization probably provoked by the catastrophic event itself, and by the necessity to find new means to measure and testify to its magnitude. The events they account for imply betrayal on several levels: political, cultural, moral, and intellectual. It is interesting to note how important the notions of “trust” and “trustworthiness” are for both authors as they speak about the human struggle with the plague and the attitude of the writer attempting to account for such a struggle. In the face of deadly forces, when fear prevails over social norms, legal bonds, and even private and intimate affection, loneliness and sociability assume a new shape and importance. The very fabric and nature of social and interpersonal interaction assume a new structure and people show their true colours. The writer – historian or novelist whatsoever – must on the one hand report positive facts while taking into account, on the other hand, the “intangible” human contribution to the shaping and evolution of the plague, that is, the emotional and moral reaction of people to the epidemic.

Their accounts are, therefore, sharply moralising: both authors intend to “fortify” their readers’ moral strength by representing the legacy of previous outbreaks of the plague. Defoe explicitly enacts such purpose by anticipating a pestilence at its peak that would call Londoners to be brave, responsible, resilient, and to respond as a collective body. Manzoni pursues a more theoretical end as far as his essay appears at a political standstill for northern Italy and the city of Milan,¹ a condition which makes it look somewhat anachronistic in its appeal to criticise the reckless abuses that political institutions (and their functionaries) may perpetrate in times of danger. Thus, Defoe seems to imply, with sharp pragmatism, that in such hardship as that caused by the plague the indi-

1 In 1840, Lombardy was part of the Augsburg Empire of which Manzoni was, therefore, a citizen. After the failure of a plot in 1821, Lombardy failed to be annexed to the Kingdom of Sardinia again in 1848 due to the military defeat of King Carlo Alberto’s army. Lombardy became part of the new-born Italian Kingdom only in 1859, after the second independence war, in the broader context of the Italian Risorgimento.

vidual should pursue his or her good by simultaneously and responsibly taking into account the good of society as a whole. The individual and society must endure the plague as a single body. Manzoni looked at keywords of Enlightenment such as progress and posterity with some scepticism, having experienced with disillusion the betrayal of the ideal of the Revolution by Napoleon's tyranny. Since he was always accompanied by a profound religious inspiration, he gives prominence, therefore, to the aspect of individual moral responsibility implying that in the face of suffering, morality and faith must guide the individual through the ordeal. To both authors, reason can amend the moral and historical betrayal perpetrated by humans and institutions, but progress must be looked at critically by means of storytelling; they both imply that a profound awareness of the past is the best antidote against the risk of repeating its errors over again.

However, both Defoe and Manzoni acknowledge that such a horror as that unleashed by a pestilence can be only partially told. Words cannot fully express the extreme experiences of abjection that Defoe identifies with the mass burials in the Pit, and Manzoni with the moral conflicts raging in the human conscience twisted by fear. Their narrators – the witness and the omniscient historian – accept that language cannot domesticate evil and suffering by framing them in an image, and for this reason, they tell their stories by combining different genres and styles, creating hybridised narrative forms (after all, Defoe and Manzoni respectively pioneered the art of novel-writing in England and Italy) capable of challenging the ideological notion of disease beyond the cultural context of Enlightenment.

1 Narrative and Embodiment in Defoe's *Journal*

In his realistic and simultaneously skilfully-orchestrated account of the London plague of 1665, H.F., the narrator of *A Journal of the Plague Year*, proposes a lucid analysis of how the city of London dealt with the pandemic and its catastrophic consequences. The memory of the 1665 pandemics and the outbreak of a second strain in 1722 determines

I N T E R F A C E

some of the text's major structural features, namely: the urge to analyse a disturbing notion of embodiment, both on the individual and the social level; the narrator's investment in a rationalistic stance capable of countering prejudice and paranoia; and, the search for a narrative form capable of coping with a radical break in received notions of humanism. After a brief introduction to these driving rhetorical elements of the *Journal* (and some references to Manzoni in relation to those), this first part of the article will concentrate on each single component of Defoe's discourse. Defoe, as Manzoni after him, tells a story of the pandemic that merges the individual and the collective level, micro and macro history. *The Journal*, however (and to a lesser extent the *Preparations*),² locates this interplay as the privileged site of a new notion of embodiment. The *Journal* is a tale of individual and social bodies experiencing catastrophe and death. It is indeed at the same time the personal tale of H.F. – a character whose consciousness is reshaped by the pandemics – and a collective narrative, the novel of London under the plague, the tale of its destruction and difficult recovery. In relation to this collective level, London stricken by the plague becomes a metaphorically ill body, defaced and altered by the disease:

The face of London was now indeed strangely altered, I mean the whole mass of buildings, city, liberties, suburbs, Westminster, Southwark, and altogether; for as to the particular part called the city, or within the walls, that was not yet much infected. But in the whole the face of things, I say, was much altered; sorrow and sadness sat upon every face.

(Defoe, 1992, p. 17-18)

The change in the urban landscape brought about by the pandemic is reproduced on the faces and in the gazes of the citizens: the body of the city absorbs the experience of individual bodies, their movements across desolate streets, and their attempt to find survival methods.

The pairing of the individual and social body is made apparent in the description of the protagonist's vicissitude. The first dilemma that H.F.

² Defoe's *Due Preparations for the Plague* will henceforth be abbreviated as *Preparations*.

has to face is a dilemma of displacement: whether to leave London or stay. After a long dispute with his brother and a long interior struggle, H.F. resolves to stay in the city. This choice has two important, intertwined, consequences: firstly, it offers the reader a privileged viewpoint, that of the narrator, a witness who observes all the problems raised by the plague but who also comments upon them, producing an intersection between objective documentation and a subjective political commentary. The intermingling of fiction and history is a strategy that both Defoe and Manzoni use in order to examine the authorities' handling of the pandemic, and more broadly, the role of gossip, paranoia, and prejudice in modern societies. On a second level, the choice to remain assimilates the narrator's body to the body of the city, with the two becoming coextensive. The city stricken by the plague is at the same time a body objectively described in all its components and an ill body, which the narrator's gaze has to dissect and examine but also possibly heal by means of his narrative. This rationalistic attitude is a further connecting element between Defoe and Manzoni.

Taking a closer look at the depiction of embodiment in the *Journal*, it is not hard to notice that Defoe's description of the action of the plague on individual and social bodies is often accompanied by a lexicon of absence. For example, the attempt to flee from death transforms the city into a wasteland, a place abandoned by its defining dwellers:

When I speak of Rows of Houses being shut up, I do not mean shut up by the Magistrates, but that great Numbers of Persons followed the Court, by the Necessity of their Employments and other Dependences; and as others retired, really frightened with the Distemper, it was a mere desolating of some of the Streets.³

(Defoe, 1992, p. 19)

Although the novel is set in 1665, the first part of the quote hints at a contemporary event: the 1721-22 Quarantine Act, a measure of confinement which is problematically accepted by the narrator, but which was

³ In the quotes from the *Journal* the original capitalizations and spelling have been kept. All translations of quotes from works written in other-than-English languages are by the authors throughout the chapter, unless it is stated differently.

I N T E R F A C E

criticized by Defoe in his essays and articles (one of the most notable example being the *Due Preparations for the Plague*, completed shortly before the *Journal*), despite his support of Walpole's government. The first version of the Act received almost unanimous approval from Parliament. Among other things, it contemplated the possibility of embargoes of ships coming from abroad, the institution of *cordon sanitaires*, and strict confinement of single households when a family member contracted the disease. Strongly contested by merchants, the Country opposition in the House of Lords, Tories and disaffected Whigs, the Bill was amended in 1722, with the most contested clauses repealed.

The *Journal* registers the unequal impact of the plague both on individuals and social bodies: some have the means and skill to find a way to survive the disease, while others can only choose between dying in poverty or dying catching the plague. The poor in particular are "the most dangerous and the most liable to infection" (Defoe, 1992, p. 165). The *Journal* does only reflect all these passages, it offers an examination of the difficult coexistence between economy and freedom. Several studies have suggested that successive strains of plague across modern Europe followed the main trade routes in the continent.⁴ In addition to this, social differences were exacerbated by the pandemic. Defoe's London shows how privileged social bodies, the Court, the aristocracy and part of the rising middle class have many more opportunities to escape: they can leave the city without great economic damage, continuing with their lives elsewhere. The lower social classes – the poor and all the people who depend upon their business – are forced to stay and endure much closer proximity to death, as indicated in the following passage:

It is true a vast many People fled, as I have observed, yet they were chiefly from the West End of the town, and from that we call the Heart of the City, that is to say, among the wealthiest of the People, and such people as were unencumbered with Trades and Business. But of the rest, the Generality stayed, and seemed to abide the worst.

(Defoe, 1992, p. 19)

4 See, on this point, Ricci and others (2017).

In this light, both Defoe and Manzoni analyse the role of beggars, the poor and small businesses in the spreading of the disease (Defoe provides data relating the infection rate and the economic and sanitary conditions of different areas in the city). They also signal how these people are frequently the ones most exposed to the action of charlatans, astrologers, spreaders of “fake news” and miraculous cures for the disease. Their lives are therefore doubly exposed: to the necessities of small businesses unable to choose between biological and economical survival, and to the new, rising economy of misinformation. Bringing upon the city’s stage non-believers, apocalyptic preachers, fake doctors and forged truths, the plague creates bubbles where both individuals and social groups reset and redirect their economic and cultural needs according to their ideological orientation.

A social group, in particular, emerges in the *Journal*: the so-called anti-contagionists. H.F. faces them when inquiring about a man who has seen all his family loaded on the dead cart. They embody the belief that the disease was not really an infection, but derived from the so-called *contagium animatum*.⁵ H.F. is verbally abused while trying to defend this desperate man. These people ignore any form of social distancing, and when the dead cart comes across the street they open the windows and “make their impudent mocks and jeers at them, especially if they [hear] the poor people call upon God to have mercy upon them” (Defoe, 1992, p. 56). The need to find a cause of the disease quickly acquired broader and darker dimensions. It led to the necessity to find scapegoats.

The scapegoats emerge in both Manzoni’s work and Defoe’s. In Manzoni, who wrote about a city in political turmoil and involved in the wars between European powers, the scapegoat became the anointers, imaginary figures who had a strong influence on public opinion. In Defoe, who lived in a nation which had already acquired a form of political unity, the scapegoats were the French, first as spreaders of the disease (the epidemic first struck Marseilles in May 1720), then as deniers of

⁵ The idea of the *contagium animatum* had been formulated first in the sixteenth century by Cardanus and Paracelsus, among others.

I N T E R F A C E

freedom and negative models used to attack the Quarantine Bill as lib-erticide. Defoe saw the dangers of nationalism and based his criticism of the Bill (both in the *Preparations* and in the *Journal*) on humanitari-an and pragmatic principles: it abruptly separated families and commu-nities, and it was almost impossible to enforce. He also vehemently at-tacked another strain of paranoid thought: the anti-contagionist doctrine which was regaining momentum at the turn of the century and which is incarnated by the group mentioned in the passage above. Anti-con-tagionists and nationalists found in George Pye’s pamphlets a common reference point.⁶

Although the truth of the mob never became the truth of public author-ities,⁷ Defoe has to acknowledge that the truth of rational thought and that of the mob coexist in the same city, and seems to suggest that a dif-ficult balance between the survival of economy and social responsibility needs to be found in order to heal society as a whole. The collective and individual again overlap: mobsters, anti-contagionists and all-believ-ers constitute a counterpoint to the positive interaction between provi-dential order and human action in which H.F., a dissenter imbued with pragmatism, believes.⁸

Once again this polarization finds in the body its most significant ex-pression. It suggests a ghostly visitation in the description of the plague’s action on the ill. But, more significantly, the city itself becomes the stage where large groups of people imagine angels “clothed in white” (Defoe, 1992, p. 23) and many other delusions, visionary truths more palatable than the empirical truths of science. By means of the converg-ing action of half-truths, paranoia, and the plague, London becomes a city of ghosts and at the same time a ghostly city, peopled by living corpses and social bodies living in ignorance.

6 Pye maintained that the plague depended on the quality of the air.

7 Manzoni on the contrary describes magistrates and politicians as the most hideous characters, exactly because they made large use of prejudice and paranoia for personal and political gains.

8 As indicated by Capoferro (2010, p. 70-71), Defoe’s culture and education have a significant impact on the *Journal*’s “complex generic identity [...]”. In Defoe [...] the contrast, and the mediation, between empiricism and religion were a primary concern”.

Poignantly, both Manzoni and Defoe describe these delusions in similar terms: the former describes the Milanese seeing the devil crossing the streets of the city on a coach carried by six horses, while in the latter these images influence and unbalance H.F.'s rationalizing stance, imbuing it with biblical images of exodus, damnation and apocalypse. Despite these disturbing presences, the *Journal* explores the changing notion of embodiment as a way to affirm a progressive view of society.

As a new Jerusalem or Nineveh, London is metamorphosed into a body leaving Earth. Defoe describes it as,

While the Fears of the People were young, they were encreas'd strangely by several odd Accidents, which put altogether, it was really a wonder the whole Body of the People did not rise as one Man and abandon their Dwellings, leaving the Place as a Space or Ground designed by Heaven for an Akeldama, doomed to be destroyed from the Face of the Earth, and that would be found in it, would perish with it.

(Defoe, 1992, p. 20)

London as a body becomes also a culprit, and Defoe uses imagery related to the Aceldama to convey this. In the Christian tradition the Aceldama, or "potter's field", is alternatively the field bought by the high priests with the money given to Judas – and destined by them to the burial of strangers – or the field in which Judas himself was buried: in this second source the land, refusing to keep the traitor's remains, cracked open and expelled Judas's entrails. The image is very strong and it embodies London as a culprit convicted to receive the plague.

London is thus implicitly personified as Judas, the first traitor. A multifarious idea of betrayal permeates the whole work, something which is also true of Manzoni. In Defoe it is articulated on two main levels: the betrayal of reason and common sense seen above, and a betrayal rooted in British history, in this respect related to the body of the King. Many sermons published in 1665 (and probably consulted by Defoe) upheld the idea of the plague as a punishment for the city's sins, regicide in par-

I N T E R F A C E

ticular. London embodied Cain, an assassin spreading the king's innocent blood. The execution of Charles I was still a haunting presence in the city's memory in 1722, the year in which the *Journal* was published. H.F. obliquely refers to this historical event when he ironically describes the Court's flight from the city and its residence in Oxford during the Plague: Londoners had killed God (i.e. the King), and now God has left them. The medieval theory of the King's two bodies, which survived till the seventeenth century, definitely fades in Defoe's tale: the body of the King is absent, while the body of the city has to live in a new order in which the antithesis between nature and culture cannot be solved recurring to a superior power. As in Manzoni, a firm belief in the role played by providence in human history coexists with the necessity to provide an objective analysis of the pandemic, advocating for new models of ethics and responsibility.

The *Journal* makes use of bodily images to represent a new secular reality, a reality of absent kings and struggling bodies, reshaped and made formless by the Plague. As the *Journal's* narrator, H.F. has to invent strategies to cope with "the formlessness of that horrendous physical reality" (Zimmerman, 1992, p. 291).⁹ The concrete presence of this reified reality leads H.F. to engage in an uninterrupted conversation with death. Death is visible by means of its action on living bodies: i.e. the "tokens" on the ill. In such cases the narrative acquires a descriptive, positive, quasi-naturalistic stance: the narrator can express and communicate death, its presence announced but the ultimate outcome of its action postponed. When death's devouring effect takes centre-stage because of its immeasurable magnitude, the rhetorical structure of the conversation has to adapt accordingly. In such cases, the narrative device employed is erasure or obliteration.

This is evident in the treatment of the Pit, a vast burying place devised to contain the corpses of the dead in the parishes of Aldgate and Whitechapel, populous areas severely hit by the plague. H.F., animated by an insatiable, progressive curiosity, ignores the ban to visit the Pit. He actually visits the burying place twice, once during the daytime, the

⁹ The essay was originally published in PMLA 87 (1972), 417-423.

other at night. However, the gigantic hole in the land seems to challenge any description: on both occasions, the witness' gaze is blinded by the impossibility to describe it. Upon his first visit, H.F. cannot see anything because the corpses are immediately covered by the buriers. Upon his second, he goes there explicitly to see the bodies thrown from the carts into the Pit, and he declares that he has finally accomplished his goal. Nevertheless, his experience cannot be communicated to the reader, being literally unutterable: "This may serve a little to describe the dreadful Condition of that Day, tho' it is impossible to say any Thing that is able to give a true Idea of it to those who did not see it, other than this; that it was indeed *very, very, very* dreadful, and such as no Tongue can express" (Defoe, 1992, p. 53-54).

The indecency of a life so forcefully connected with death takes the bodies into the Pit and out of narrative possibilities. This negative climax is significantly followed by the description of the carts passing through the streets of London. H.F. is again hit by the indecency of their load, a mass of half-naked bodies, "some wrapt up in Linen sheets, some in Rags" (Defoe, 1992, p. 55). Every body seems destined to enter "into the common Grave of Mankind" (Defoe, 1992, p. 55). This consideration leads the narrator to raise questions about the future of the city after the plague. He examines the effect of the Pit, a gulf menacing London, and by extension any civilization. He also tries to determine to what extent this extreme experience could also represent a possibility of rebirth and renewal. A clear investment into reason clearly emerges at this point.

Following the narrator's interior struggle, the novel posits some positive replies to these questions. Despite the darkening presence of the Pit and the action of charlatans, the body of the city can experience a positive metamorphosis after the plague, which extends beyond the city's very boundaries. H.F. hypothesizes a future out of the city, outlining at the same time a possible renewal of society by means of a reassessment of the nature/culture relationship. The narrative presents episodes that act more as projections than commentaries on the present; they tend to anticipate a future after the plague. The most notable example in the

I N T E R F A C E

novel is the “Story of two Brothers and their Kinsman” (Defoe, 1992, p. 51). A soldier, a seaman, and a joiner regroup and use their skills and cunning to travel out of the city by land and river, passing checkpoints, building huts and camps, and finally receiving help, admiration and solidarity from the inhabitants of the small villages surrounding London. Defoe writes, “some sent them Chairs, Stools, Tables, and Such Houshold Things as they gave Notice they wanted; some sent them Blankets, Rugs, and Coverlids, some Earthen-ware, and some Kitchin-ware for ordering their Food” (Defoe, 1992, p. 117). The creation or the gift of an object provides human action with restorative possibilities: the body experiences regeneration by means of tools and objects. Further, the narrator imbues this adventure with a clear didactic purpose, stating,

Their Story has a Moral in every Part of it, and their whole Conduct, and that of some whom they join'd with, is a Patern for all poor men to follow, or Women either, if every such a Time comes again; and if there was no other End in recording it, I thing this a very just one, whether my Account be exactly according to Fact or no.

(Defoe, 1992, p. 100)

The moral of the story is projected into the future as a repository for memory, and it is reinforced by a peculiar dialectic structure where death and embodiment again play a crucial role. H.F. implicitly, but quite clearly, compares the three men’s story with his personal vicissitude: they both are different reactions to the same catastrophic event. While the first is a tale of bodies in voluntary exile, the second one (H.F.’s) embodies the city’s resilience. The three men’s tale represents a future outside civilization; it is a quasi-post-apocalyptic narrative where a desolated and infected city, invaded by weeds and reduced to an archaeological site, is replaced by a utopian community where culture is driven by nature. The second (H.F.’s tale) enacts the great tragedy of the city as a collective body struggling for survival through the means of science and culture. H.F. clearly opts for urban resilience, even at a narratological level: his choice to stay in the city (as Defoe himself did in 1722) makes the narrative possible. In addition to this, his observations

and his analytical attitude define his role as a projector or examiner, a role confirmed by the insertion in the novel of historical documents such as the Lord Mayor Orders of 1665 and the weekly bills of mortality, or again by H.F.'s final acceptance of the public role of examiner of the houses in his precinct. As in Manzoni, a keen and profound examination of the pandemic event, its causes and consequences on individuals and societies, is pivotal to any remodelling of a humanist perspective.

The city's two bodies – one real, the other ideal – share a common investment in man as *homo faber* or *maker*: as H.F. is able to bake his own bread and brew his beer without leaving home, the little troupe of outsiders forges certificates of health, stages quixotic interludes, builds shelters and objects in order to survive outside the city. All the characters share an ability to understand reality and react to the extreme challenges of death, sometimes stretching the boundaries of narrativity. Not far from Manzoni, Defoe's illuminist perspective lies in hybridization of fiction and history. Defoe and Manzoni offer to the reader two temporal frames: one closer to fiction, the other more related to history. The *Journal's* two tales (H.F.'s vicissitudes and the three men escapist tale)¹⁰ are indeed projected in two different temporal horizons: one is located in a future outside received notions of civilization, one in the present, characterized by its active, ethical and political involvement in the management of the pandemic and its consequences. This temporal duality is reinforced by the setting of the text: located in 1665 Plague-stricken London, the *Journal* clearly alludes to the 1722 incoming pandemic. This dual chronological perspective is reinforced by the use of rhetorical devices such as digression and deferral. A significant shift in point of view also occurs: while the manualistic structure of the *Preparations* was incarnated by an assertive, extradiegetic author, the *Journal* offers the first-hand perspective of an autodiegetic narrator who constantly questions reality, acting as both recorder and participant in the events.¹¹ The dialogue between fiction and history corresponds to the displaying throughout the text of a dialectics between the interior time of consciousness (the *Journal* as *Bildung*) and the exterior time of a

10 Many individual stories punctuate the narrative, but H.F. gives this one a special emphasis.

11 On the *Due Preparations* and the *Journal's* narrative structure, see Clegg (2021).

I N T E R F A C E

collective history. This dialectic, which corresponds to tension between individual and social bodies, becomes essential in the final part of the book when the narrator comments on London after the Plague. The novel accurately records the historical recovery of the city after the plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of the following year: the Stock Exchange reopens, the Court and the elite return, the limits to movement and trade are abolished, and London rapidly becomes the centre of an economic and construction boom that changes the face of the city. H.F. repeats his wish that economical recovery be accompanied by moral regeneration in the face of death: “Here we may observe, and I hope it will not be amiss to take notice of it, that a near View of Death would soon reconcile Men of good Principles one to another...” (Defoe, 1992, p. 140). But H.F.’s desire is left unfulfilled: the restoration of economic freedom does not necessarily correspond to a moral rebirth. The *Journal*, like the *Storia della colonna infame*, progressively acquires the tone of a tale commenting on the presence of evil in history. Despite the growing numbers of the economy, the plague has not changed humanity; the end of the pandemic does not indicate any new beginning. Solidarity can often be found only “on the other side of the grave”.

However, the narrator does not give up on a positive investment in man as a maker; this time the instrument is the pen, and the maker is explicitly a poet or writer. This individual investment in fiction is frequently confronted with the historical vicissitudes of the city, which was literally remaking itself after the plague. The London of 1665 and the London of 1722 are connected by means of a quasi-fictional or quasi-historical narrator. We know that Henry Foe, the author’s uncle, lived in London in 1665, but we don’t know if he stayed in the city during the Plague. We also don’t know if the novel is a fictionalized memoir: Daniel was five in 1665; therefore H.F., as his fictional counterpart, might also evoke and retell some of his personal memories. It is also important to remember that H.F. did not attribute a particular relevance to the truthfulness of the three men’s tale: the account being described as “a very just one, [...] be exactly according to fact or no”. Even if the outcome of the *Journal* is a return to the city and civilization, the imaginative imprint of the three men’s escapist tale and the hybrid structure of the narrative (part

history – part novel) guides H.F.'s reaction to the end of the pandemic. The return to normality is significantly often accounted for (as it happened during the current pandemic) as a loss or deprivation, as in the following description of the people returning to the city after the plague. Defoe writes, "The People being thus return'd, as it were in general, it was very strange to find, that in their inquiring after their Friends, some whole Families were so entirely swept away that there was no Remembrance of them left" (Defoe, 1992, p. 179).

The absent social bodies are here reduced to the smaller unit of families. A few sentences later, the process interestingly concentrates on single dead bodies, and one in particular. H.F. describes London's rebuilding process after the plague and the Great Fire as frenetic and almost unstoppable. A rebuilding committee was established after the Fire and a town planning scheme was presented and London was fully engaged in urban development supporting the nascent urban industry. Real estate speculation realigned "parishes on a strict grid with a church at the centre of each block" (Bender, 1992, p. 320-321).¹² This process involved burying fields. Being precious building land, many of them were converted to other uses: far from being a resting place, the grave was devoured by speculation and the bodies were exposed and abused a second time, not by death or by the plague but by the economy. Commodified, the corpses implicitly evoke and reverse the generative role of objects presented before in the escapist tale.

H.F., an examiner who observes, catalogues, and measures almost everything (including the dimensions and capacity of the Pit in the first part of the novel), finally offers the reader a list of the burying grounds undergoing such conversion. Number four on the list is "a piece of Ground in *Moorfields*, by the going into the Street which is now call'd *Old Bethlem*, which was enlarg'd much, tho' not wholly taken in on the same occasion" (Defoe, 1992, p. 181). And, as specified in the following author's note, "N.B. – The Author of this Journal, lyes buried in that very Ground, being at his own Desire, his Sister having been buried there a few Years before" (Defoe, 1992, p. 181).

¹² The article was reprinted from chapter 3 of Bender's *Imagining the Penitentiary* (1987).

I N T E R F A C E

Defoe is even more radical than Manzoni. He does not merely advocate for dialogue between fiction and history (as the latter does), but, by means of an explicitly meta-narrative turn, he places H.F. among the dead, implicitly directing attention to the “real” author, Daniel Defoe, a living and public persona actively involved for the large part of his life in debates around the plague and its management. The return to a split chronology, opposing the book of the dead of 1665 to the “living book” of 1722, is further complicated by the stanza which concludes the *Journal*:

A dreadful Plague in London was
In the Year Sixty Five,
Which swept an Hundred Thousand Souls
Away; yet I alive!

H. F.

(Defoe, 1992, p. 193)

H.F.’s body speaks to the reader from his grave, alive among the “thousands souls” swept away by the Plague, as symbolically testified by the semicolon separating “away” from “I alive” in the last verse. The poem can be read as an epigraph on H.F.’s grave and on the book as a whole. It constitutes a final display of displacement and a rhetorical invention out of the ordinary connecting again realism and fiction. H.F. declares to have placed his “coarse but sincere Stanza [...] at the End of my ordinary Memorandums” (Defoe, 1992, p. 193). It is also a further complication of the text’s layered and hybrid formal structure. If the novel is, as famously stated by Michail Bakhtin, the genre that “reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding” (1984, p. 7), H.F.’s death – simultaneously real and fictional – and the speaking presence of his body from the grave is the only unifying perspective in the *Journal*, connecting the two temporal frames and making the generic indeterminacy of the text acceptable and productive. This “real” body, which also constantly alludes to the textual body, is also the only token of memory in the midst of disaster, a way to make sense of the tragedy of history by means of literary imagination, and by extension a possible therapy against the

disease and its consequences on the social and cultural level. The textual body finally appears as a healing body. Manzoni's final choice to publish in the same volume *I promessi sposi* and *La storia della colonna infame* probably marks a similar attempt to heal the moral ambiguities of history through realism and fiction alike. The *Journal* implicitly declares that H.F.'s body exists, and needs to be remembered. *La storia della colonna infame* strongly advocates for the re-establishment of truth against the intentional manipulations of memory. Conflating fiction and history, the two texts reaffirm a tentative but possible rebirth of a humanist perspective.

2 Alessandro Manzoni's account of the Milanese plague of 1630

The plague that appears in chapters 31 and 32 of Manzoni's historical novel *I promessi sposi*¹³ has the mythical meaning –in the frame of the fiction– of “fulfilment of individual destinies” and “necessary condition of the reconstruction of society, accordingly with the eternal Christian scheme of ‘fall’ and ‘redemption’ through atonement” (Nigro, 1988, p. 172). The two above-mentioned chapters follow the account – in chapter 28– of two other calamities that struck the Duchy of Milan between 1628 and 1630: the first is the war to conquest Monferrato and the Duchy of Mantova, fought by the French against the combined forces of Spain and the small Italian Duchy of Savoy (later on supported by the German mercenaries of the Sacred Roman Empire); the latter is the famine caused by the war in 1628-1629. The historical digression contained in chapters 28, 31, and 32 places the story of the fictional characters in the broader context of the events that affected social and political life in northern Italy during the Thirty Years War. Such conspicuous digressions (to which one must add several smaller ones in chapters 12, 22, and 27) were not groundless but rather functional to harmonise fiction with Manzoni's transcendent idea of history as the human tem-

13 The novel was initially titled *Fermo e Lucia* in its first unpublished version of 1821-1823. Manzoni resumed this work in the mid-1820s and published it in 1827 as *I promessi sposi*. The second and last edition of the novel appeared in 1842, after undergoing thorough linguistic revision. At this stage, the novel was accompanied by a short historical appendix called *Storia della colonna infame*, which accounted for the trial against suspected anointers during the Milanese plague of 1630. *Storia della colonna infame* went through painstaking rewriting between 1821 and 1840.

I N T E R F A C E

porality in which the divine providence makes itself manifest (Cinelli, 2014a, p. 155).

In chapter 28, by relying on the works and testimonies of seventeenth-century Milanese chroniclers,¹⁴ Manzoni depicts the “ritratto doloroso” (Manzoni, 2004, p. 479)¹⁵ of plague-stricken Milan, down the streets of which a “miserable troop” (Manzoni, 1845, II, p. 323) (soon after called a “deplorable multitude”, [Manzoni, 1845, II, p. 327]) of hungry and desperate people swarms. Unlike Defoe, Manzoni does not personify the city or look at its population as a body stricken down by the calamities of war, famine, and disease. However, like the English writer, he shows some sort of “sociological” interest in the *notizie positive* that he can find about the famine and the plague: the former seems to bring for the first time some equalisation among social classes, insofar as the rich and powerful who once strutted around boldly, surrounded by their bodyguards, the so-called *bravi*, now beg or wander in shabby clothes.

The staggering increase of beggars triggered the epidemic. With the rise of the temperature in the spring of 1630, and due to a shortage of money, which the Spanish Governor Ambrogio Spinola spent for the war, the Tribunal of Health decided to gather all the beggars in one single lazaretto even by force, by employing the police and offering a reward to those who conducted any beggar to the lazaretto. In a few weeks, the camp was overcrowded with more than 10.000 people, and as the first fevers appeared the Tribunal decreed to open the gates and allow the healthy beggars to leave.

In the same months, the German *Landsknechts* entered the Duchy of Milan to besiege Mantova against the French. These mercenary troops lived off the land and terrorised the population with robberies, devasta-

¹⁴ Like Defoe, who based his account of the London plague on three different sources produced by a historian, a physician, and a clergyman (Keys, 1944, p. 52), Manzoni relied on seventeenth-century sources too, among which the chronicles by clergyman Giuseppe Ripamonti and physician Alessandro Tadino stand out (see Girardi, 1977, p. 32). A thorough discussion of the use of archival sources in *I promessi sposi* and *Storia della colonna infame* can be found in Codebò (2006, p. 189-190).

¹⁵ The quoted expression cannot be found in the English version sourced in this article because the translator cut off the entire sentence.

tion, and rapes. Manzoni learns from the chroniclers that it was an Italian mercenary enlisted among the Spaniards, who brought the plague to Milan in the first place:

This unfortunate soldier, and bearer of misfortune, entered Milan with a large bundle of clothes, bought or stolen from German soldiers; he went to lodge with some relations in the suburb of the Eastern-gate, near to the Capuchin convent; but scarcely had he arrived, when he fell sick, and was carried to the hospital, where a plague-spot, which showed itself below the arm-pit, excited the suspicion of his medical attendant. The fourth day he died. The Tribunal of Health commanded the house which he had inhabited to be condemned, and his relatives to be confined within it. His clothes and the bed upon which he had died at the hospital were burned.

(Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 25-26)

“Patient zero” infected his landlord, family and servants and soon after the plague spread in the neighbourhood. The Tribunal of Health, however, was inadequate to tackle the contagion. If, on the one hand, the physicians underestimated the danger and attributed the increasing deaths to other causes, on the other hand,

The terror of the lazaretto sharpened all wits; the sick were concealed; the grave-diggers and their superintendents were corrupted; false certificates even were purchased from the subalterns of the Tribunal itself, who were deputed by it to inspect the dead bodies. Yet upon every discovery which they succeeded in making, the Tribunal ordered the burning of property, the sequestration of houses, the sending of whole families into the lazaretto; therefore it is easy to infer what must have been the anger and murmurs of the people, of the nobility, of the merchants, and of the lower classes, persuaded as they all were, that these were only useless and ridiculous annoyances.¹⁶

¹⁶ Compulsory seclusion and quarantine of the sick and their families was enforced only after the Black Death of 1348 alongside the establishment of lazzaretti and Tribunals of Health in cities like Venice and Milan (see Cipolla, 2007). It is also remarkable that such measures did not rest on universal

I N T E R F A C E

(Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 27)

Nonetheless, the plague spread through the city and the physicians, who did not admit their mistake yet, began to talk about a “malignant” or “pestilential fever” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 29). The Tribunal then decided to entrust the Capuchin Friars with the management of the overcrowded lazaretto, a fact that Manzoni does not miss to comment with irony. It is also striking to notice how similarly Manzoni and Defoe highlight the widespread hostility of the populace towards the practice of isolating and secluding the families of the sick. Both in London and Milan, household leaders deceived the authorities by concealing the sickness of their relatives or even bribed the officials to avoid restrictions, destruction of property, and seclusion.

At this stage, a new character enters Manzoni’s narrative, who will become more and more essential in his discourse about the plague: the anointer. As it was impossible to deny the violence of the contagion, and yet the denial of its natural causes remained unmovable, an idea rather common at the time began to circulate, that of “magical arts, diabolical operations, and people leagued together to spread the plague by means of contagious poisons and sorcery” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 33). Manzoni mentions that this was an old and consolidated belief¹⁷ and that, to make it worse, news broke from Madrid in 1629 that four Frenchmen had left Spain taking with them pestilential ointments. The idea of the anointers, although irrational and unlikely, soon became popular because “when disease strikes humans and they suffer, the identification of a scapegoat seems inevitable” (Geremia, 2021, p. 79). In fact, during a catastrophic epidemic, when the institutions find themselves

prophylactic criteria but were rather affected by prejudice and discrimination as demonstrated in Massong (2021).

17 Several studies testify to the fear of pestilential anointment in Early Modern Europe. Claudia Geremia writes that “between the Middle Age and the Early Modern Age, minorities were blamed for the plague and it was not enough to condemn them. God’s wrath, caused by sinners, had to be appeased by sacrifices” (2021, p. 80). In the specific case covered by Geremia, Catholic Inquisition blamed the ethnic minorities subjugated on the Canary Islands by Spanish and Portuguese colonisers. Likewise, Muslims and Jews were repeatedly lynched by furious mobs of Christian inhabitants in the European plague-stricken cities since the fourteenth century, as shown by Samuel Cohn (2007). According to Leonardo Sciascia, the figure of the anointer appeared for the first time during the plague of 1576, “quando colto sul fatto ([...]: ma quale fatto?) un ignoto fu impiccato” (1990, p. xxvi).

unable to stop it, it is rather common that “the entire responsibility for the crisis is collectively transferred upon the scapegoat” (Girard, 1974, p. 843). Collective fear of anointers broke out because “it is more agreeable to attribute evil to human wickedness against which you can vent anger and vengeance, than to recognise in it a cause which leaves you only the possibility of resignation” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 43). In May 1630 foreigners and people who were suspected of acting “strangely” were assaulted, arrested, or even lynched and everywhere people began to see mysterious traces of dirt and filth. Things that were normal two months before now became evidence of malicious contagion.

However, the absence of anointers in Defoe’s account of the plague suggests that not everywhere in sixteenth-century Europe people believed in their existence, which can perhaps be explained by considering the diverse historical contexts of Milan in 1630 and London in 1665. Differently to Defoe’s London, which had recently recovered from a long and troubling civil war, Manzoni’s Milan lay at the centre of a battlefield where foreign armies had been clashing for over eleven years. The terror of foreign soldiers and the despise of political institutions chaired by prominent foreigners who did not care about local populations planted the seeds of mistrust and fear. Thus, while in London the institutions remained firmly in their place (yet not the Court, towards which Defoe is critical) and the officials kept working despite the risks of falling sick and dying, in Milan the institutions were weak and inept, corrupted and ready to indulge the populace’s moods rather than administer law and justice. Instead of confuting the rumours, the Tribunal of Health legitimated the suspicion that anointers were at bay, starting a panic. The political discourse about the anointments even degenerated when the Tribunal of Health announced that those who denounced any act of anointing would be granted a reward and *impunity*, which shows “a condescension all the more blameable as it was pernicious” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 37). Not only did the authorities encourage the shameful practice of spying, under circumstances of distress and social tension, but the decree even foreshadowed the involution of political agency into that “grey zone”, in which politicians indulge illegality to provide themselves with the means – licit and illicit – to fulfil the duties they should

I N T E R F A C E

carry out but are not up to. The “perniciousness” of the decree consists in that the Milanese political institutions used their powers not guided by justice and compassion but by employing force, malice, and treachery.

In chapter 32, Manzoni reports the events of the war to explain its impact on the disastrous management of the sanitary emergency in Milan. When the Council of Ten plead with the Spanish Governor Spinola for financial measures aimed at making more funds available for the Tribunal of Health, the representative of King Philip II deputed Chancellor Antonio Ferrer as his lieutenant in Milan. At the same time, the Council of Ten also requested Cardinal Federigo Borromeo to organise a solemn procession to carry the relics of Saint Carl around the city to stop the epidemic. Of course, this accelerated the spread of the plague. However, no one blamed the folly of gathering thousands of people in a procession:

Yet (astonishing and deplorable power of prejudice!) the greater number did not attribute this effect to the assembling of such an immense concourse of people for so long a time, or to the increase of fortuitous contact; but to the facility afforded to the poisoners for the execution of their diabolical designs. It was said, that mixing with the crowd, they had infected with their poison as many persons as came in their way.

(Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 49)

The spreading of the plague was accompanied by the belief that the devil himself had come to Milan on board a coach carried by six horses. As public discourse intertwined with popular belief, the few who still resisted the thesis of the anointments were overwhelmed by public frenzy (Preto, 1987, p. 64). No one remained, thus, who said that the disastrous sanitary emergency in Milan vastly depended on the inefficiency and indifference of the Spanish government.¹⁸ Manzoni writes

¹⁸ “Lenta, ma inesorabile, tra proclami e bandi inascoltati, in un atteggiamento di scetticismo e quasi di irridente indifferenza degli organi governativi e sanitari, preoccupati più di minimizzare il problema che di risolverlo, la peste si era fatta largo già a partire dal 1629. L’arrivo di un inverno rigido ne aveva rallentato momentaneamente la diffusione, alimentando un precoce quanto sciagurato clima

that according to Alessandro Tadino – despite the divergence of other chroniclers’ opinions on this matter – after the plague the population of Milan shrank to about 64.000 inhabitants, whereas there were 250.000 in 1629.

On the eve of summer 1630, all was set for the beginning of the trials of the anointers. This unsettling page of history, unknown to Defoe’s London, was well-known to Verri and Manzoni, who devoted to its critical examination an important part of their respective historical and philosophical reflections.¹⁹ In *Storia della colonna infame* Manzoni suddenly changes the scale of his historical investigation and abandons the broad scenario of the war to concentrate on a “micro-historical” event. Insofar as when one changes scale does not see the same things differently but rather begins to see *other things* (Ricoeur, 2000), in this work Manzoni focuses on the individual characters involved in the history of the trial. In *Storia della colonna infame*, which shares with the novel the thorough psychological introspection of the characters, the readers come across living characters portrayed in full detail with their personalities and stories, as far as Manzoni strives to get some insight into their minds, feelings, and emotions. Whereas history entered the novel in the form of isolated digressions, here it combines with storytelling in a form of historic-drama (Ginzburg, 2006, p. 311-312).

The history of the Milanese trial begins on June 21, 1630, at about 4.30 in the morning, as Caterina Rosa, who is depicted as “a woman of humble condition”, is “unfortunately” standing at her window in Via della Vedra and sees a man approach. He carries a parchment in his hand and seems to be writing. The man now and then scrubs his hand against

euforico. Pericolosi movimenti di truppe alla volta del Monferrato, teatro di una guerra di successione, uniti alla discesa di lanzichenecchi diretti nel mantovano e ad altri episodi di assembramenti di folla, quali i festeggiamenti in occasione del carnevale e in onore della nascita dell’infante di Spagna, determinarono, nella primavera del 1630, l’esplosione del contagio, destinato, per un gioco della sorte, a divenire incontenibile dopo la processione dell’11 giugno, autorizzata dal Cardinale Federico Borromeo proprio per invocare un aiuto soprannaturale nella lotta al male” (Garlati, 2011, p. 397).

¹⁹ Pietro Verri’s *Osservazioni sulla tortura*, written in 1776 but published only in 1804, constitutes the main connection between the memory of the plague conserved in the archives and Manzoni. I will not linger on highlighting the differences of intents and outcomes and the similarities of style and rhetorical argumentation existing between the *Osservazioni*, chapters 31-32 of Manzoni’s novel and *Storia della colonna infame*, because this lies beyond the scope of this article. See Garlati (2011, p. 410-424); and Cinelli (2014b, p. 89-90).

I N T E R F A C E

the wall and his gesture recalls – in Caterina’s mind – the rumours about “those who for the last few days had been anointing the walls” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 224). “Seized with this suspicion”, the woman keeps an eye on the Unknown until he gets out of sight. On the same street, there is a second observer, a woman called Ottavia Bono. When questioned by the guards, later on, she will tell that she also saw the man write on his paper but not touch the wall. It turns out, during the inquiry, that the man was actually writing, the reason why he cleaned ink from his fingers by touching the wall, against which he was walking to protect himself from the rain. However, Caterina states that “the man acted as if anointing the wall” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 225). She believes in the existence of anointers and this is sufficient to change her impression into truth, subverting the whole logical process. The devilish plot is on, entirely built on fear and suspicion.

It is interesting to note how Manzoni shifts from the large scale to a smaller one, from the public frenzy fuelled by political discourse to individual illogical reasoning. Here Manzoni looks into the very process of derangement which changes reason into madness. The perspective is capsized: in the novel, the discourse on the plague seemed to spread top-down, although false opinions and popular superstition also nourished the theories of charlatans and politicians. Here, the tale of the conspiracy spreads bottom-up as rumours and hocus-pocus.

After the turmoil raised by Caterina, people begin to see the walls anointed with a mysterious substance, which the authorities identify with evidence of the crime. Manzoni calls it “a circumstance that would have appeared very improbable in a romance, but which illustrates only too fully the blindness of passion” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 226). The inkstand that Caterina saw in the Unknown’s hands too easily turns into a “vase” full of who knows what mysterious venom. Other people, questioned about the substance soiling the walls, say that they had not even noticed it until the whole thing of the anointment was brought up. Thus, as the rumour spreads, the Unknown is identified as Guglielmo Piazza, an official of the Tribunal of Health. The Senate, informed that a street has been anointed, issues an arrest warrant. Fear has gone full

circle and Manzoni writes: “with these words, already full of a deplorable certainty, and which passed from the lips of the multitude to those of the magistrates, the trial opened” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 228).

What fuels the obstinacy of the interrogators is the “firm persuasion” and the universal “terror of a chimerical attempt” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 228-229). Thus, “the more enlightened classes” participate “in the wicked delusion” that has already taken the upper hand on popular minds (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 229). Fear is the common feeding ground of both popular belief and political error. Ignorance may justify the former, while the latter can be explained by “exasperation”, as far as the Milanese Senate find themselves unable to provide the population with any solution, explanation, and protection as the plague kills by the thousands. Fear of appearing unfit to rule drives the Senate to look for a scapegoat, and Guglielmo Piazza is the perfect victim of such a perverted purpose. However, Piazza is innocent, so his interrogators can force him to confess the crime only by torturing him.

At this stage, it is the judges of the court who carry out a double betrayal (Volpi, 2008, p. 166): towards the Senate, because they apply torture without their authorization; and towards Piazza, who is falsely offered impunity in exchange for the names of his accomplices (orally and in private conversation, not during the official interrogation). Manzoni tries to imagine the “struggles of this soul, which the memory of the recent tortures doubtless filled, now with the fear of personal suffering, now with fear of causing suffering to others” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 274). Piazza eventually betrays another “unfortunate man”, Giangiacomo Mora, a barber who lives and works in Via della Vedra, claiming that Mora gave him the anointment to spread. Mora is easy prey: the guards find in his house “a small brick oven containing a small copper boiler” with some muddy water and slimy matter at the bottom. It is just “lye to wash with” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 284), he says, but in the eyes of the authorities, the substance is, of course, something worse. They also find a recipe that Mora tries to destroy and that will be eventually used against him in the trial.

I N T E R F A C E

Manzoni uses the verb “to fabricate” to mean the “deal of difficulty and trouble” by which Piazza builds his logical picture of the criminal plot that, of course, has no motive and is, therefore, inconsistent (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 278). Nonetheless, the judges believe his absurd story because they have no other clue and yet need to find a culprit. Thus, we see two parallel “fabrications”: Piazza rehearses and builds an unlikely plot to involve Mora in the crime, and the Tribunal conjures fantastic evidence of a non-existing crime to justify the arrest and torture of the barber. Mora, in turn, mentions other people to save himself and eventually accuses Gaetano Padilla, a Spanish nobleman, of being the real “criminal mind” behind the plot. Not one single iota of these “fabrications” is questioned critically by judges and the members of the Senate alike.

Padilla, however, unlike the others, is a prominent member of the Spanish political elite and can afford a lawyer, claiming the right to a regular trial. The crime, Padilla’s lawyer simply argues, has no “*corpus delicti*”, which spares the defendant torture and easily discharges him of all accusations. However, the trial goes on to its bitter end for the others:

The infernal sentence decreed that, placed upon a car, the doomed men should be conducted to the place of execution; that they should be gashed with a hot iron, during their progress; have the right hand struck off before Mora’s shop; have their bones broken on the wheel; be bound alive to the wheel, and raised from the ground, and at the end of six hours be put to death; that their bodies should be burnt, and their ashes be cast into the river; that the house of Mora should be demolished; and that upon its site, a column should be erected, called the Column of Infamy.

(Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 327)

The execution unfolds as a narration (*progress*) and a theatrical display of vengeful wrath.²⁰ The original crime scene, Mora’s house, becomes

20 “Le supplice judiciaire est à comprendre aussi comme un rituel politique. Il fait partie, même sur un mode mineur, des cérémonies par lesquelles le pouvoir se manifeste. [...] Le supplice a donc une fonction juridico-politique. Il s’agit d’un cérémonial pour reconstituer la souveraineté un instant blessée. Il la restaure en la manifestant dans tout son éclat. L’exécution publique, aussi hâtive et quotidienne

the stage of such a political display of justice, where the two men are mutilated and entwined alive on the wheel, the house itself is destroyed and replaced by a monument. While the body of the accused has been so far the place where private and secret violence was perpetrated, the body of the executed men becomes the place where violence is publicly displayed as political vengeance. Piazza and Mora are the scapegoats whose sacrifice must reconcile the various parts of a disaggregated social and political body.

As we have seen, betrayal occurs on both public (political) and private (moral) levels, stretching from the sphere of discourse to that of feelings. Politics betray with their discourse in the forms of decrees (*gride*), as well as by promising fake impunity. Private betrayal occurs in the sphere of conscience, where the individuals deal with the moral principles they ought to comply with in order to do the right thing. Indignantly, Manzoni blames the judges for corrupting the innocent thus making them guilty: “By means of their impunity and torture, these judges succeeded, not only in causing two innocent men to perish by a fearful death, but caused them, as far as lay in their power, to die guilty” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 328), by using weapons “taken from the arsenal of jurisprudence” but striking their blows “arbitrarily and treacherously” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 305). Manzoni focuses on moral responsibility because he claims that “it was not the man of the seventeenth century who reasoned thus illogically, it was the man of passion” (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 295).

Passion is again the source of one further form of betrayal, i.e. that of the historians who handed down the story of the trial since 1630. In the seventh and last chapter of *Storia della colonna infame*, Manzoni unfolds the series of the “historical effects”²¹ which he has critically

qu'elle soit, s'insère dans toute la série des grands rituels du pouvoir éclipse et restauré” (Foucault, 1975, p. 51-52).

21 According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, historical comprehension implies the rhetorical practice of “application”, which means that the historian reads sources critically and from a different perspective than that from which they were produced. In turn, the historian must accept that future interpreters will comprehend his or her words differently than he or she meant them. Thus, “the line of meaning [...] always and necessarily breaks off in an open indeterminacy” and the historian must understand that comprehension is “effected” by all the singular acts of intermediation that put the historian in contact with the tradition. In turn, the historian is also a “historical effect”, which future generations will have to

I N T E R F A C E

engaged and questioned. Historians like Muratori and Giannone are sternly criticised because they refused to admit the judges' error and the innocence of the slaughtered people in the name of "peace of mind", thus "following one after the other, like Dante's sheep" (Manzoni, 1845, III, p. 222). Their betrayal was intellectual, for they did not delve deep into the sources; moral, for they refused to challenge a clear injustice; and political, for they underrated the responsibility of the historian in the face of posterity. Manzoni believed that the historian must be critical and engage the sources to force them to reveal what they pass over in silence, which explains why he saw in fiction a way of providing insight into a blurred page of history, and therefore into the unfathomable ways of providence:

I promessi sposi and *Storia della colonna infame* articulate, albeit in different fashions, Manzoni's project of making the examination of archival records the center-piece of not only historical research but of any historical narrative, whether fictional or not. Both *I promessi sposi* and *Storia della colonna infame* can be viewed as experiments in which Manzoni attempts to verify if, and how, he can apply the document and the narrative, i.e. the resources of the archive and those of the novel, to a truthful rendition of the past.

(Codebò, 2006, p. 188)

Unlike Defoe, who tells the story of the plague from the first-hand perspective of an autodiegetic narrator, Manzoni chooses the way of detachment, first by inventing the Anonymous narrator of the novel,²² and second by openly relying on archival sources to weave the narration as a historian.

In the early 1820s, as Manzoni began to write his novel, the history of the trial against the anointers was only a long digression that should be excised from the main plot of the *Fermo e Lucia* – as the novel was

bear in mind while interpreting the tradition (2004, p. 335-336).

²² Manzoni presents the novel *I promessi sposi* as the re-writing of an old seventeenth-century manuscript written by an anonymous author.

originally titled. In 1827, the history of the trial was re-written (like the novel) into a new text called *Appendice storica*, which, however, remained unpublished. In 1824, Manzoni had pondered about publishing it as an autonomous text, but because the trial against the Milanese political dissident Federico Confalonieri had ended just a few months before with a death sentence,²³ Manzoni decided not to divulge his work to avoid retaliation (Nigro, 2002, p. xii-xiii). Manzoni feared that the Austrian authorities would easily recognise in his work on the anointers some reference to the trials against the Milanese *carbonari* Federico Confalonieri and Silvio Pellico. By 1840, when *Storia della colonna infame* was ready, Manzoni's conception of literature had radically changed. In 1827 he had stated that "the true alone is beautiful" ("*il vero solo è bello*") (Manzoni, 1981, p. 207),²⁴ thus distancing himself from fiction that, in his opinion, by that time had degenerated in the "Romanesque" (*romanzesco*), something averted from history (truth). The novel (fiction) and the story of the trial (history) were now published together as the two faces of the same coin and yet presented as utterly different objects that shared one main concern: the presence of evil in history and its problematic justification as a moral aberration. Their accounts identify the ideal site for such an epistemological enquiry in the modern urban scene: the city is at the same time the place where progress can be seen at its peak and the stage where "the plague shows that there are times when the whole city is nothing but human fragility writ large" (Gordon, 1997, p. 76).

3 Conclusion

Defoe and Manzoni offer a sharp and severe analysis of humanity be-

²³ Federico Confalonieri was a supporter of the cause for Lombardy's independence from the Augsburg Empire, a collaborator of the journal *Il conciliatore*, a member of the secret society Carboneria since 1820, and a friend of Manzoni. After the failure of the Milanese insurrection in 1821, he was arrested, trialled, and eventually sentenced to death in 1823. The penalty was lessened in 1824 to a life sentence. Confalonieri was eventually pardoned in 1835. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/federico-confalonieri_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/

²⁴ The idea of the *Discorso* rose already in 1827 as a response to Goethe's negative remarks about the historical chapters of *I promessi sposi*. The *Discorso*, however, underwent a long revision and was published only in 1850.

I N T E R F A C E

fore and after the plague. Their gaze illuminates the paranoid attitudes, the contradictions and the moral dilemmas generated by the pandemic event. It certainly offers a progressive and secular perspective, attempting at the same time to justify the latter's incorporation into a providential vision. However, they both retain a pragmatic, disenchanting conception of history. While they acknowledge the limits and failures of individual and collective memory, they also seem to imply that history, far from being linear and progressive, can lead to regression and contradiction. *The Journal* and *La storia della colonna infame* intend to foster a greater awareness of the traumatic event in eighteenth and nineteenth post-pandemic Britain and Italy; however, this new knowledge conceals an illusion: the idea that the plague necessarily brings to a better society. Despite their different approaches and aims, Defoe and Manzoni contribute to tearing the veil off this illusion.

They both narrate the plague's impact on seventeenth-century societies in London and Milan by combining several rhetorical strategies and genres, namely history, novel, chronicle, and judiciary report. The intellectual framework through which they approach the topic is of paramount importance; it is rationalistic insofar as they belong to the cultural milieu of the European Enlightenment. For different reasons, however, their rationalism also blends with the metaphysical belief in divine providence as a power that shapes the events in human lives. Defoe's empiricism is that of a man immersed in a flourishing mercantile society, of which he also sees a flaw in the tendency to superimpose the reasons of the economy over ethics. Manzoni's spiritualism fits his post-Enlightenment disappointment in the aftermath of Napoleon's wars, which culminated in the Vienna Congress, restoration of the old regimes, and a general betrayal of the revolutionary ideals. While Defoe looks at the historical past to interpret a crisis unfolding in the present, Manzoni's gaze on the past encompasses an allegorical reflection on how evil recurs and affects all human experiences, both in the public and private spheres, notwithstanding the historical context.

These two different perspectives suggest a few considerations about our present experience of the pandemic. On a more general level, a meta-

physical interpretation of the pandemic may not have circulated (or, if it has, it was limited to a few religious leaders who did not gain a large audience). Nonetheless, several conspiracy theories have somehow replaced it as a surrogate of rational explanation. The followers of these theories respond today to their principles and statements, not unlike those believers who adhered to religious and superstitious interpretations of the epidemic in the seventeenth century: in lieu of the devil and anointers, conspiracy theorists claim that Covid-19 was manufactured in secret laboratories to force governments all around the world to enforce restrictions and strict social control. In relation to Defoe's and Manzoni's overlapping of collective and individual levels, the historical experience of changing habits – in private and in public – draws significant similarities between the present and the seventeenth century: the relationship between individual and society was affected in both cases by isolation, fear, social distancing, suspicion, and the abnormal perception of political power as a coercive force that pursues ends that often stand in open contrast with self-perception, social identity, and ethics.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Bender, J. (1987). *Imagining the Penitentiary. Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth Century England*. University of Chicago Press.
- . (1992). The City and the Rise of the Penitentiary: A Journal of the Plague Year. In Defoe, D. *A Journal of the Plague Year [1772]*. Critical edition by P. R. Backscheider. Norton, 317-335.
- Capoferro, R. (2010). *Empirical Wonder. Historicizing the Fantastic 1660-1760*. Peter Lang.
- Cinelli, G. (2014a), Etica e filosofia della storia di Alessandro Manzoni. *Allegoria*, 69-70(26), 139-155.
- . (2014b). Il rapporto di Alessandro Manzoni con Verri e con l'Illuminismo in *Storia della colonna infame*. Opinione, pubblico, posterità. *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 35(1), 73-100.
- Cipolla, C. (2007). *Contro un nemico invisibile. Epidemie e strutture sanitarie nell'Italia del Rinascimento*. Il Mulino.
- Clegg, J. (2021). Preparing for Plague in 1720's London. Daniel Defoe's Grand Experiment. *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 1(23). <https://doi.org/10.13128/jems-2279-7149-12554>.
- Codebò, M. (2006). Records, Fiction, and Power in Alessandro Manzoni's "I promessi sposi" and "Storia della Colonna infame". *Modern Languages Notes*, 121(1), 187-206.
- Cohn, S. (2007). The Black Death and the Burning of Jews. *Past and Present*, 196, 3-36.
- Defoe, D. (1722). *Due Preparations for the Plague, As well for Soul as Body: Being some Seasonable Thoughts upon the Visible Approach of the present dreadful Contagion in France, the properest Measures to prevent it, and the great Work of submitting to it*. Matthews & Batley.
- . (1992). *A Journal of the Plague Year [1772]*. Critical edition by P. R. Backscheider. Norton.
- Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Gallimard.

- Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed. Continuum.
- Garlati, L. (2011). "Colpevoli di un delitto che non c'era". Il processo agli untori nella lettura di Verri e di Manzoni. *La Corte d'Assise*, 1(2-3), 395-449.
- Geremia, C. (2021). Plague and Superstition in the Canary Islands: Inquisitorial Trials (1523-1532). *Rivar*, 9(25), 77-92.
- Ginzburg, C. (2006). *Il filo e le tracce. Vero, falso, finto*. Feltrinelli.
- Girard, R. (1974). The Plague in Literature and Myth. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 15(5), 833-850.
- Girardi, E. N. (1977). I cronisti lombardi dei Seicento e i "Promessi sposi". In Girardi, E. N. & Spada, G. *Manzoni e il Seicento Lombardo*. Vita e pensiero, 32-55.
- Gordon, D. (1997). The City and the Plague in the Age of Enlightenment. *French Studies*, 92, 67-87.
- Keys, M. (1944). The Plague in Literature. *Bulletin of Medical Library Association*, 32(1), 35-56.
- Löwith, K. (1967). *Weltgeschichte und Heilgeschehen*. Kohlhammer.
- Manzoni, A. (1845). *The Betrothed Lovers. A Milanese History of the Seventeenth Century. With The Column of Infamy*. 3 vol. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans.
- . (1981). Del romanzo storico e, in genere, de' componimenti misti di storia e d'invenzione. In *Scritti di teoria letteraria*. Rizzoli, 193-282.
- . (2004). *I promessi sposi [1840]*. Mondadori.
- Marquard, O. (1973). *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie*. Suhrkamp.
- Massong, N. (2021). The Mobile Woman: Getting Around during the 1630 Plague in Bologna. *Connections: A Journal of Language, Media and Culture*, 2(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29173/connections42>.
- Nigro, S. (1988). *Manzoni*. 2nd ed. Laterza.
- . (2002). Nota critico-filologica: i tre romanzi. In Manzoni, A., *I promessi sposi – Storia della colonna infame*. 2 vol. Mondadori, II, vii-xviii.
- Preto, P. (1987). *Epidemia, paura e politica nell'Italia moderna*. Laterza.
- Ricci, Y., Lee, H., & Wu, C. (2017). Trade Routes and Plague Trans-

I N T E R F A C E

- mission in Pre-Industrial Europe. *Scientific Reports*, 7, 1-10.
DOI:10.1038/s41598-017-13481-2.
- Ricoeur, P. (2000). *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Seuil.
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1971). Lettre à Voltaire. In *Oeuvres complètes*. Seuil.
vol. 2, 316-324.
- Sciascia, L. (1990). La colonna infame [1973]. In Manzoni, A., *Storia della colonna infame*. Bompiani, xxiii-xxxiv.
- Volpi, A. (2008). *L'ordine violato. Il tradimento nell'opera di Alessandro Manzoni*. Stilo.
- Voltaire (2009). Préface au *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*. In *Toutes les Oeuvres*. Oxford Voltaire Foundation, vol. 45a, 321-333.
- Zimmerman, E. (1992). H.F.'s Meditations: a Journal of the Plague Year. In Defoe, D. *A Journal of the Plague Year [1772]*. Critical edition by P. R. Backscheider. Norton, 285-295.

[received September 15, 2022
accepted November 25, 2022]