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THE FIGURES OF SUPPRESSION. GAPPINESS OF LANGUAGE AND TEXT-WORLDS AND ITS REFLECTION IN STYLE

1. Reasons for suppression

H. Paul Grice's second Maxim of Quantity within the Cooperation Principle warns the speakers bluntly against giving more or less information than required in a given situation (Grice 1975). Yet, contrary to the Gricean idealized view of regular conversation and effective communication, the language of various discourses, to wit literary, religious, political, journalistic, etc., seems to rely on a different principle which might be expressed as follows: "It is not only how but also how much you say or do not say at all that matters." So what are the reasons for communicating less rather than more, that is for leaving lacunae in what we say or write? This article takes up the subject of the inherent gappiness of natural language, which finds stylistic reflection in a number of devices that I have proposed to gather under the umbrella term *suppression* (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013). Suppression, thus, is a collective megafigure of human cognition and language, a reflection of the pervasive *indeterminacy* of the actual and imaginary realities that shape our dealings with the world. By treating it as a megafigure, I claim that it is a rhetorical, textual property that structures several discourses in both overt and covert manner.

1.1. Gappiness of natural language

The most striking incompleteness of natural language at the level of lexis, recognized already in antiquity, was called by Michel Foucault in *Raymond*

Roussel "a piercing lack of words to describe the world," a linguistic empti-
ness of sorts (Foucault 1963/2001: 212, translation mine). In his penetrat-
ing analysis of the linguistic and literary experiments of the French psy-
chotic writer Roussel, Foucault points to a severe limitation of any natural
lexicon in describing the entities in the surrounding world. This scarcity of
linguistic means contrasted with the richness of the referents makes lan-
guage talk on the basis of its fundamental lack. And yet, the limitation of
lexical means as an inherent quality of language causes it to function as an
economical and efficient system, the aim of which is far from a redundant
repetition of things. Foucault refers to this double-faced quality of human
language as *whiteness*, *emptiness*, *void*, or an *absolute absence of being* (cf. also
Banasiak 1988: 164–166). It is worth adding that the economy of language
that purposefully chooses not to name everything in our experience is also
related to the lack of isomorphism between conceptualization and language,
to the fact that our thought need not be solely verbal or verbalized. Foucault
rightly notices that the emptiness that surrounds and pervades language
becomes its creative potential – literature is born in the vast *tropological
space* as a reaction to the linguistic underdetermination and a natural hu-
man drive to fill it in.

A similar conception of the intrinsic gap between linguistic expressions
and their denotata (signifieds) reverberates in Jacques Lacan's speculations
on the role of figuration in the unconscious:

> […] it is the signifier-to-signifier connection that allows for the elision by which
> the signifier instates lack of being [*le manqué de l'être*] in the object-relation, us-
> ing signification's referral [*renvoi*] value to invest it with the desire aiming at the
> lack it supports. (Lacan 1966/2004: 155)

More clearly the cognate idea in relation to the language of the conscious
has been expounded by Jacques Derrida in his famed essay "Différance":

> The sign represents the present in its absence. […] When we cannot grasp or
> show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot
> be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. […] According
> to this classical semiology the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both
> *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence from
> which the sign thus derives, provisional as concerns this final and missing pres-
> ence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation. (Derrida
> 1968/1991: 61, also Derrida 1968/2002: 35–36)

Lexicon is not the only locus of linguistic vacancy. Any text, by na-
ture, is also indeterminate or underdetermined in several other respects
(cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2006). Umberto Eco's study *Lector in fabula*

(1979/1994: 75) is largely devoted to *white places* and *lacunae* in the body of the text, which is presented as a simultaneously frugal and lazy mechanism, largely dependent on the interpreter's (especially the Model Reader's) inventiveness. This issue requires a brief overview, presented in summary below.

1.2. Inherent gappiness of text-worlds

The idea of imaginary worlds that as conceptual constructs underlie all developed works of fiction has long been present in literary theorizing. With the advent of text linguistics in the 1970s, the belief was voiced that any text of an adequate length and complexity, be it fictional or factive, literary or non-literary, can claim a *text-world* as its conceptual foundation, a network of ideas and relationships among them that impose coherence on the text (cf. de Beaugrande and Dressler 1982/1990: V.2). Since the analysis in the remaining sections of this chapter will be directed towards artistic texts, it seems more than fit to start the discussion of *indeterminacy* in the so-called *portrayed worlds of fiction* with the phenomenological aesthetic theorizing of Roman Ingarden. Already in the 1930s, he devoted to this problem two by now classical works, namely *The Literary Work of Art* (1931) and *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1937, German edition 1968), made known to the English-speaking readership as late as the year 1973. His theory has seen since then several critical and interdisciplinary applications and extensions, among others in the development of *text-world semantics* (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2009). The researchers in this field best known in the Anglo-American milieus who have taken up the theme of textual gaps and their *concretization* (to use the original Ingardenian term) include a prominent representative of the Konstanz-based "Poetics and Hermeneutics" group Wolfgang Iser (1976/1978), Lubomir Doležel (1989, 1995), Nils Erik Enkvist (1989), Eco (1979/1994, 1990), and in the neuroscientific-cognitive perspective Ellen Spolsky (1993) and quite recently Paul B. Armstrong (2013).

Basing himself on the distinction suggested by Ingarden, Doležel (1995) proposes to differentiate between two kinds of *underdetermination/incompleteness* of text-worlds, namely: 1) *ontological gaps*, which are irrecoverable due to the fact that information in this particular respect has been suppressed by the world-creator, that is the text says nothing on this point; Doležel refers to such lacunae as *zero of authenticating texture* and 2) *epistemic gaps*, where the lack of knowledge on the part of the interpreter in what concerns certain aspects of the textual world can be remedied and the *implicit texture* can be *inferred* on the basis of the explicit meaning present in the text. In the second case such text-driven meanings are acquired either through *inferen-*

tial mechanisms (*inferential excursions* according to Eco 1994: Ch. 7) or on the basis of *presuppositions* and *anticipations* (Eco 1979/1994: 162) that the interpreter is prone to articulate. Foucault (1969/1977: 153), in his theory of *discursive formations* (large bodies of discourses focused on a specific subject, viewed both from a diachronic and synchronical perspective), emphasizes that – of necessity – they all contain *fissures* and *cleavages* of various sorts which separate them from other discursive formations or mark shifts in perspective within one and the same discursive group.

This incompleteness in the construction and details of the textual world can be seen as either a challenge to the reader (especially the so-called lazy or unsophisticated reader) or else a source of pleasure, specifically to the imaginative interpreter, for Eco's Ideal/Model Reader will always try to fill in as many gaps as possible. Iser emphatically stresses that textual gaps act as stimuli or propellants for the reader's imagination, thus boosting his/her intellectual capacities. In his study of literary text worlds, Thomas G. Pavel (1986) notices that the cultures and periods of a stable world view (viz. Realism) tend to minimize incompleteness while the periods of transition and conflict (e. g. Symbolism, Postmodernism) will maximize it. Consequently, Doležel classifies texts along the lines of the world's *saturation* with gaps into *explicit* (prototypically scientific texts) and *(highly) implicit* (religious, literary, oratory and some journalistic genres).

Within the current that tries to straddle the border between the language and literature studies on the one hand and neuroscientific and cognitive studies on the other, Spolsky (1993) argues that the unavoidable incompleteness of fictional constructs, which imparts to literature a specific flavour, is an outcome of the inherently gappy organization of human mind. She espouses a modular approach to mind architecture, seeing the human brain as consisting of a number of autonomous areas, without a central processor that would conduct only a linear computation of information. The modules connect with one another in a kind of a network-like arrangement, which appears more efficient functionally. The gaps between modules are always there, however, and it is this fact which influences the way our cognition works in constructing representations of the world. Not only such representations, subsequently reflected in texts, but also interpretations themselves are tinged with underdetermination that our closure-loving intellect and a natural propensity for making sense even in the face of incomplete information are unable to overcome. Two decades later, Armstrong (2013) supports this vision of cognition, defending the aesthetic value of incompleteness in artistic discourses, be they verbal or non-verbal (pictorial, musical, etc.):

> The artistic values of disruption and disjunction are also consistent with a de-centred, parallel-processing model of the brain. Aesthetically pleasing purposive dissonance is not noise. Unlike the randomness and disorganization of noise, aesthetically meaningful dissonance is an internally coherent structure of differences that is strategically opposed to the harmonies it disrupts. The cognitive purposes of dissonance have to do with how the plasticity of the brain organizes itself. (Armstrong 2013: 48)

We can take *harmony* and *dissonance* as denoting here not only musical but also textual effects. The remaining part of this article will deal with particular stylistic and rhetorical devices realized as omissions of various sorts, which can be seen as purposeful *disruptions* or *disjunctions* in the body of the text.

2. Suppression as a megafigure of cognition and verbal expression

From now on, we will consider the large figural strategy of *suppression* (Lat. *sustenatio*) as a cover term that subsumes a number of stylistic/rhetorical devices operative at the textual *microlevel* (phrases, clauses), *macrolevel* (larger stretches of text) and ultimately *megalevel* (a covert, underlying textual strategy, cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013).

2.1. Ellipsis

In his comprehensive study devoted to structural omissions and their stylistic function across a wide range of literary and non-literary, written and spoken discourses, Peter Wilson claims that his use of the term *ellipsis* is generic, that is covering all kinds of "structurally potential language elements" (Wilson 2000: 7, 22). The problem of elliptical constructions has been present in both linguistic and literary theorizing for decades, no wonder then that different approaches to and formulations of this phenomenon have appeared in the literature on the subject. Probably the most widespread understanding of the term will relate ellipsis to recoverable omissions that abound in all natural languages. This kind of structural gapping is quite common in English and usually passes unnoticed in everyday exchanges; such gaps are pretty automatically closed in interpretation. Randolph Quirk *et al.* (1985) account also for some looser, not immediately recoverable forms of omission that they dub *quasi-ellipsis* (quoted also in Wilson 2000: 17). Wilson tries to be generous in his own approach, finally opting to define ellipsis as "structural gaps that can be related to (a) omitted elements recoverable from the linguistic context, (b) other potential syntactic forms, (c) the situational context" (Wilson 2000: 18). This definition is broad enough to cover cases

of intra- and intersentential gaps, of omissions that require linguistic context (co-text) and/or extra-linguistic context (consituation) in order to be completed.

As such, structural ellipsis is treated as an important *cohesion-building device* in text studies (cf. de Beaugrande and Dressler 1982/1990, IV: 32–37), rightly connected with another extremely powerful cohesive mechanism, namely that of *anaphora*. In this vein Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum (2006: 1456) distinguish two kinds of ellipsis in English: *retrospective* and *anticipatory*, known better in textual and stylistic studies as *anaphoric* and *cataphoric*, respectively, to wit:

(1a)   If you want me to *invite Kim* as well, I will [ ].
(1b)   If you want me to [ ], I will *invite Kim*.

The ellipsis sites are indicated by means of empty bracketing; in the first sentence, the ellipsis positioned in the main clause looks backward for its expansion, while in the second example the gap appears already in the subordinate *if*-clause, creating for a moment a brief suspense that awaits its closure in the matrix clause that follows. Retrospective anaphora is by far the more common in all kinds of texts and discourses while the less frequent anticipatory anaphora (cataphora) has to be judged as a more interesting gapping device due to suspension it creates.

Let us now turn our attention to some examples of structural omissions in a literary form produced by a Victorian poet Christina Rossetti, whose works are characterized by a meticulously thought-out metrical, figurative and structural patterning and where ellipsis, though never over-used, plays an important role. Below, I quote the first stanza of the poem "Passing and glassing", marking the places of ellipsis together with what Wilson calls their *fleshing out*:

(2a) All things that pass
     Are woman's looking-glass;
     They show her how her bloom must fade,
     And [how] she herself [must] be laid
     With withered roses in the shade;
     [She must be laid] With withered roses and [with] the fallen peach,
     [Being] Unlovely, [and being] out of reach
     Of summer joy that was. (Rossetti 1904/2001: 226)

Wilson rightly underscores the fact that one of the most fertile sources of ellipsis in English is coordination. Depending on the level of coordination, which can be clausal, phrasal or occurring among phrasal elements, different patterns of ellipsis and its expansion are possible. Ellipsis at the clause level,

in Wilson's opinion, proliferates the amount of elided elements, which our analysis above well illustrates. Wilson opts, after Huddleston (1984) and C. Wilder (1994) to accept the Small Conjunct Hypothesis together with the Across-the-Board (ATB) Rule, in which elements are allowed to have scope over a variety of coordinate constituents. As a result, conjunction can be moved down to the phrasal and intra-phrasal levels and, consequently, a minimum amount of gap-expansion is required. This kind of *coordination-reduction* mechanism (cf. Wilson 2000: Ch. 6) will affect our analysis in the second part of the above-quoted stanza:

(2b) [She must be laid] With withered roses and the fallen peach,
    [Being] unlovely, [and] out of reach
    Of summer joy that was.

This time, the preposition 'with' has scope over the entire coordinated nominal phrase 'withered roses and the fallen peach', while the participial form 'being' scopes over the conjoined adjectival phrase 'unlovely and out of reach'. What is more, the combined pronominal and verbal ellipsis [she must be laid] at the beginning of the first line in (2b) could possibly be dispensed with on condition we treat the prepositional phrase 'with withered roses and the fallen peach' as an epanaphoric, refrain-like extended repetition of the preceding phrase 'with withered roses.' Yet, no matter what stance we assume towards coordination patterns and the ensuing manner of recovering ellipted elements, "gaps are everywhere" (Wilson 2000: 1) and it is only a matter of their density that imparts a specific stylistic ambience to a given text.

2.2. Anacoluthon

Contrary to regular ellipsis (which is a structural device rather than a figure proper), *anacoluthon* (from Gr. 'illogical'), is classified as a mixed syntactico-semantic stylistic figure of shifting one construction to another by breaking off in the middle. After the break, the addresser usually continues by using a completely different construction. Anacolutha happen quite frequently in everyday exchanges, either in sloppy speech or as a result of memory failure or intention shift. Although they create syntactic inconsistency/incoherence, the receivers tend to overlook it, guided by the discursive strategy called *acceptability* by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1990: VI), which amounts to showing good will in the retrieval of sense. Typically, such "uncompleted embarkation on a new syntactic structure, a so-called false start" (Wilson 2000: 23), will take the following forms:

(3a) Well where do [ ] – which part of the town do you live?
(3b) You really ought [ ] – well, do it your own way.

Rhetorical and stylistic studies have pointed to the fact that anacoluthon is a scalar phenomenon, in which the degree of recoverability varies. In (3a) the ellipted part of the question seems to be [you live], which – upon having been judged to sound too general, becomes more specific in the reformulated question. However, in (3b) the omission is no longer recoverable, unless we have a larger textual or situational context at our disposal from which the missing part of the sentence can be inferred. Graphically, anacolutha are usually signalled by dashes or dots.

2.3. Aposiopesis

Aposiopesis (Gr. 'becoming silent', Lat. *reticentia*) is a rhetorical and stylistic device akin to anacoluthon in several respects. It is a figure of breaking off and declining to continue the utterance for various reasons, quite commonly to avoid a breach of the Politeness Principle. What often characterizes aposiopesis is the expressly stated reason for its use. Like anacoluthon, it has to be classified as a syntactic-semantic gap, signalled graphically in written texts. This time, however, we move further along the cline of indeterminacy, for more often than not aposiopesis will function as an utterly irrecoverable deletion. It can work as a *micro-figure,* within the limits of one sentence, or as a *macro-figure*, the task of which is to construe a larger excerpt.

In English literature, Laurence Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) stands not only as a precursor of modern experiments with the texture of narration but also as a rich source of metatextual excursions and a fountain of omissions of different length and type. Let us consider some of them:

(4a) My mother, you must know – but I have fifty things more necessary to let you
     know first […]. (Sterne 1759/2007: 185)

This is a truly prototypical instance of an aposiopetic construction, an irrecoverable omission, with an apology of sorts appended to it.

Consider now a quote from the story descriptive in an ironic way of what befell Corporal Trim while he was nursed by a fair Beguine in hospital:

(4b) "It was not love" – for during three weeks she was almost constantly with me,
     fomenting my knee with her hand, night and day – I can honestly say, an'
     please your honour – that * * * * * * * * * * * * * once. That was very odd, Trim,
     quoth my uncle Toby. (Sterne 2007: 462)

Since dashes, which are used profusely throughout the novel, do not signal omissions, aposiopesis is marked by a sequence of asterisks, one of favourite graphical means of showing gaps utilized by Sterne. With a certain amount of inferential work on the reader's part the omission in (4b) can be spelled out, being an epistemic gap according to Doležel's distinction (cf. section 1.2). The reasons for suppression in this particular case are the requirements of decency, in accordance with the rules of politeness operative in 18th century England.

Now comes one of the most interesting cases of aposiopetic constructions in Sterne's work:

(4c) Then it can be out of nothing in the whole world, quoth my uncle Toby, in the simplicity of his heart, – but Modesty. – My sister, I dare say, added he, does not care to let a man come so near her ****. I will not say whether my uncle Toby had completed the sentence or not […] as, I think, he could have added no One Word which would have improved it.

If, on the contrary, my uncle Toby had not fully arrived at the period's end, then the world stands indebted to the sudden snapping of my father's tobacco-pipe for one of the neatest examples of that ornamental figure in oratory, which Rhetoricians style the Aposiopesis.

[…] Make this dash, 'tis an Aposiopesis. – Take the dash away, and write backside, 'tis Bawdy. – Scratch Backside out, and put Covered way in, 'tis a Metaphor […]. (Sterne 2007: 77–78)

Apart from the aposiopetic gap, signalled by four asterisks (to which Sterne refers as a *dash*), what makes this citation of particular value is a meta-rhetorical commentary on the reasons for applying aposiopesis and its textual role. We learn that this particular rhetorical device has been occasioned by the considerations of modesty and polite behaviour. The expansion of the lacuna would have brought a trivialism, obscenity or vulgarism into uncle Toby's pronouncement, whereas some more indirect or sophisticated reference to what has been suppressed might have resulted in metaphor. Tristram Shandy delivers here a rhetorical mini-commentary on the fine line that separates the figures of oratory and, by extension, proper, polite and cultivated behaviour from bawdiness. All the three examples of Sternian gaps cited above can be classified as instances of *micro-aposiopesis*, active within a sentential domain.

Consider, for a change, the following single-stanza poem "Fare thee well!" ["Bądź zdrowa!"]) by Tadeusz Miciński, a Polish symbolist-expressionist poet from the turn of the 19th century:

(5) Fare thee well! [strange that bell's reprise!]
     Fare thee well! [leaves falling from the tree …]

Fare thee well! [love is like demise …]
Fare thee well! [an ill wind sings cruelly …]
– Nevermore! –
Your crying tears my heart in twain!
– Erupting unexpectedly.
– Farewell I bid thee … – needs must be – and Thou, O God, deign –
– to have mercy!…
Ahorse!… Christ Almighty!… (cf. Miciński 1899/1947, transl. by T. Bałuk-
Ulewiczowa 2015)

The entire stanza is organized by a chain of micro-aposiopetic constructions, marked graphically by means of dashes and three dots, hence an instance of macro-aposiopesis. Contrary to the examples from Sterne's novel, the function of stacked omissions in Miciński's lyric is an iconic reflection of a highly emotional, close to hysterical mood of the poetic persona, whose voice is failing in the traumatic situation of a final, desperate parting between him and his beloved.

2.4. Poetical ellipsis

A transition between aposiopetic constructions and what I have chosen to call *poetical ellipsis* (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013: 122) may be very smooth, indeed, as always when we face scalar phenomena. Contrary to regular syntactic ellipsis, which is recoverable, this one calls for a certain degree of imagination and opens several possibilities of concretization. It will be largely, though not totally, unrecoverable but not necessarily related to a sudden breakdown of a syntactic construction like in the case of anacoluthon or aposiopesis. Neither have the reasons for such omissions to be specified. *Tristram Shandy* contains several instances of this stylistic device, with a varying degree of recoverability of elided elements. Consider an exemplary figure of this kind, drawn from the chapter entitled "Upon Whiskers", which soon after its opening contains what follows:

(6)   THE FRAGMENT
* *
* *
– You are half asleep, my good lady, said the old gentleman, taking hold of
the old lady's hand, and giving it a gentle squeeze, as he pronounced the word
Whiskers – shall we change the subject? By no means, replied the old lady –
I like your account of those matters; […]. – I desire, continued she, you will
go on.
The old gentleman went on as follows: – Whiskers! Cried the queen of Navarre
[…]. (Sterne 2007: 276)

From the intra-textual context we can infer that the lacuna filled with asterisks contains an exposition focused on the subject of whiskers. Yet, apart from this key-word, repeated explicitly in the text, it remains close to impossible to guess in any detail what has been left out of narration. A purely ludic aspect of this rhetorical device (and narrative strategy) becomes quite apparent, prodding the reader into imagining the missing content, as a part of the game of completion played incessantly throughout the novel by the narrator with his narratees. The kind of ellipsis demonstrated in (6), on purely structural grounds will be classified as both retrospective (anaphoric) and anticipatory (cataphoric) for the theme of whiskers has been signalled previously to the quoted excerpt and will be repeated in the subsequent deployment of the story.

Contemporary literature does not shun this kind of ellipsis. Here comes an excerpt from Chang-Rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker* (1995), in which Henry Park, the Korean-American protagonist, receives a list of his failings from his departing wife Leila. Though the motif of parting is distantly related to Miciński's aposiopetic effusion of emotions in example (5) above, the way of presentation is conspicuously different, showing the ironical, distanced attitude of a modern woman towards a painful situation of a marital split:

(7) You are surreptitious
     B+ student of life
     first thing hummer of Wagner and Strauss
     illegal alien
     emotional alien […]
     Yellow peril: neo-American
     great in bed […]
     anti-romantic
     ------------------ analyst (you fill in)
     Stranger/follower/traitor/spy. (Lee 1995: 5)

The locus of poetical ellipsis is signalled explicitly – though apparently addressed to the main character, it actually serves as an invitation to the reader to become involved in the game of spelling out the omission, of bridging the gap in narration. The knowledge of the wider co-text will definitely help the reader to expand the ellipsis site; still, a considerable margin of freedom is left to the interpreters in exercising their imagination.

2.5. Paralepsis/preterition/apophansis

The three terms listed above are largely synonymous, referring to the figure of the feigned passing over, a *simulated omission*, the situation in which the

speaker promises not to mention something only to bring it into discussion later, sometimes in great detail. Under the name of *apophansis* it has been known since time immemorial in oratory, especially in political speeches. This rhetorical device can be seen as the teasing of the listener and often borders on linguistic manipulation. Owing to this strategy, the speaker excites his audience's curiosity and creates *suspense*.

Probably the most famous example of paralepsis/apophansis in the English literature is a protracted soliloquy with a few dialogical inserts delivered by Mark Anthony in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (III.II), the essence of which is cited below:

(8) Anthony: But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar.
                        I found it in his closet, – 'tis his will: […]
                        Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read […]
        Citizens: The will, the will! We will hear Caesar's will.
        Anthony: Have patience, gentle friends, *I must not read it* […]
        Citizens: They [Brutus and his collaborators] were villains, murderers: the will!
                        Read the will! […]
        Citizens: […] the will: – let's stay and hear the will.
        Anthony: *Here is the will*, and under Caesar's seal: –
                        To every Roman citizen he gives […] *seventy-five drachmas.* […].
                                            (Shakespeare 1947: 598–600, italics mine)

Anthony, as an experienced orator, deftly instigates the citizens' curiosity – they crave to know the content of Caesar's testament. Yet, Anthony keeps the suspense growing for a prolonged period of time, pretending to ultimately yield to their insistent requests. In fact, he proves his skill in the linguistic manipulation of the crowd in the best tradition of Sophists' rhetorical tricks. The passage demonstrates Shakespeare's dexterity in using a macro-figurative pattern of paralepsis, which is additionally combined with other tropes, such as metaphor and irony, for it is the same excerpt in which Anthony repeatedly refers to Brutus as "an honourable man" (Shakespeare 1947: 598). The intertwining chains of apophansis and irony, interspersed with other figures, create a superb effect of an intricate rhetorical organization of this excerpt (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013: 81–82, 121 for more detail).

2.6. Silence

An extreme realization of suppression comes as *silence*, the technique whose persuasive but also manipulative force has been discussed in critical literature under the label of *rhetoric of silence*. Though seemingly an absolute violation of the Gricean Maxim of Quantity, the decision to decline from

mentioning certain things or to stop saying anything at all can boast a gamut of functions to play both in spoken exchanges and in literary practice.

On the positive side, silence can serve as a reflection of or adherence to the overriding Politeness Principle, thus showing its pragmatically-induced aspect. In certain cultural and artistic milieus silence can become a *semantic condition of elegance*; hence, the attempted completion of empty spots might even seem to be aesthetically vulgar. This canon often obtains in Oriental literary contexts, of which the rules for the construal of the *haiku* poetic form are highly revelatory (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013: 123–125 on the rhetorical strategy of euphemistic suppression in *haiku*).

To the contrary, among the negative effects of reverting to silence we can list the holding back of the information required. In this guise silence may become one of covert techniques of lying. From the logico-semantic perspective we touch here upon the issue of half-truths, half-lies, non-truth, truth concealed, truth coming in degrees, etc. – all these concepts take us beyond the classical truth-valuation in terms of absolute truth opposed to absolute falsity, towards non-classical many-valued or fuzzy logics, a fascinating subject that we are not going to develop at this point for reasons of space limitations.

Alessandro Serpieri (1982/1987), who treats ellipsis very broadly as any kind of linguistic or logical cut, claims that in literature silence may function at different levels of text construction and on different planes of meaning – it can reflect the indeterminacy of the fictional world through the suppression of narration (silence related to gaps in the fabula/plot), or it can be realized on the plane of logical relationships underlying the action (patterns of coherence). We can add that silence can also be indicative of certain emotional states of characters, point to their metaphysical searches, or it can play a purely aesthetic role of overcoming the routine of regular event-oriented narrative flow and regular dialogues or conversations.

Tristram Shandy comes again as an invaluable source of textual silences. One of them, for instance, is realized as a square gap marked in ink below the inscription 'Alas, poor Yorick,' serving as an elegiac epitaph to one of the leading characters in Tristram Shandy's narrative (Sterne 2007: 25). This graphically represented silence opens to the reader a meditative space on the old topic of v*anitas vanitatum.* In turn, Chapter 38 (p. 379) contains a blank page with an invitation to the reader to take a pencil and draw a portrait of the 'concupiscible widow Wadman,' the object of uncle Toby's fervent love. Here, the empty physical space of the page opens a possibility either to visualize the feminine beauty or to ponder (even if ironically) on the eternal subject of love, in the face of which we may stay speechless. The Sternian silences, fertile in suspense, take also the shape of one-sen-

tence Chapters 5 and 9 (p. 220 and 342) or of a totally missing Chapter 24 (p. 240) in another section of the book.

Gérard Genette, in his essay "Silences de Flaubert" (1966), discusses a peculiar narratorial technique – at the moment of utter happiness, the characters of Gustave Flaubert's novels (*Madame Bovary, L'Éducation sentimentale, Salambô*) in their elation cease to talk, often for extended periods of time. Their non-existent conversations or monologues become substituted with lengthy contemplative descriptions of the world or their dreams. Seemingly, language becomes useless as a means of inter-human communication, replaced by the immersion in other sensory modalities (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.). Genette refers to it as a *halt of all conversations*, *the suspension of all human speech* (Genette 1966: 236–237, translation mine). He also claims that apart from the metaphysical import, the Flaubertian silence assumes a highly aesthetic function. This project to say nothing inaugurates a contemporary *dedramatized* and *denovelized* novel, a book about nothing, a book without a clear subject, a "petrified language which reduces itself into silence" (p. 241–243, translation mine).

Likewise, silence functions at the macro- and mega-figurative level in several dramas, exercising as well a powerful effect in their performance. The playwrights who had a particular predilection for applying silence to create the *affect of boredom* (Colebrook 2002: 23) were Antony Chekhov, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, who also pointed through it to the existential pointlessness and absurdity. According to Peter Stockwell's cognitive poetic model (and especially the *Gestalt* theory), in Pinter's plays silence in the shape of protracted pauses becomes foregrounded as a *textual dominant*, ceasing to be a mere *ground* and turning into a major *figure* (Stockwell 2002: 14).

3. Conclusion – Functions of Suppression

From our concise overview presented above it should become obvious that the generalized *megafigure of suppression* subsumes a number of more specific techniques that traverse a long scale, from regular syntactic ellipsis towards one end, through a number of syntactic-semantic omissions realized as stylistic/rhetorical devices whose borderlines are fuzzy, down to broad textual strategies of silence at the other end of the cline. All of them, depending upon the particular paradigm fashioned by the cultural setting, epoch or genre to which a given text/discourse belongs, count among fundamental factors that influence both style in the traditional sense of *elocution*, the outward garb of diction imposed on content, and the content itself, through the implications for the text-world construal, the shaping of narrative strategies, the highlighting of characters' features, etc.

I give floor to Sterne, the master of narratorial suppression, to tell us a few highly emotional words about the aesthetic value of gaps and silences. The citation below is a continuation of metatextual ponderings in (4c) above:

(9)　Just Heaven! How does the *Poco piu* and the *Poco meno* of the Italian artists; – the insensible more or less, determine the precise line of beauty in the sentence, as well as in the statue! How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick, *et caetera*, – give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure! – Of, my countrymen; – be nice; – be cautious of your language; and never, O! Never let it be forgotten upon what small particles your eloquence and your fame depend. (Sterne 2007: 78)

In this surprisingly contemporarily-sounding, *intermedial* description of style as a phenomenon operative across all kinds of semiotically conceived texts, verbal and sculptural works are compared, to show how a deft application of "the insensible more or less" may affect their apprehension in the eyes of the receiver.

Translated into the most recent parlance, Sterne's exhortation reverberates in Armstrong's neuroaesthetic speculations:

(10) Aesthetic experiences of harmony and dissonance play with the brain's recursivity and its contradictory need to create constancy and to preserve flexibility. How this happens, with what potential consequences, is suggested by phenomenological accounts of reading as a process of gap filling and consistency building. These descriptions of reading are fully consistent with neuroscientific explanations of the hermeneutic cycle, and they suggest how the neurological processes […] are manifested in our interaction with literature.
For example, reading a literary work is similar to the visual system in its tendency to "finish off" incomplete figures […] whether these are indeterminacies left unspecified by the perspectives in which characters, objects and scenes are represented or tacit meanings suggested but not explicitly articulated, or connections between states of affairs left for the reader to discover. (Armstrong 2013: 84)

We can add that if, paradoxically, our brain is – actually – to a certain extent gappy in its structure, yet simultaneously genetically induced to search for closures in representation and interpretation at all costs, then the balancing between expressing "the insensible more or less" will be present as a stylistic dominant in all artistic creation, verbal and non-verbal alike, bringing literature, the fine arts, architecture, music, theatre, film, etc. close together. It was in this broad artistic context that Viktor Shklovsky (1917/1965) talked about *defamiliarization* as a shift from the routine apperception of the world. The skilful introduction of the figures of suppression into any kind of artistic text will undoubtedly add to its *de-automatization*: gaps, lacunae,

cleavages, cuts, absences – whatever name we use to describe them, will all increase textual vagueness and ultimately lead to what Stockwell (2002) terms a *refreshment of conceptual schemata.*

On the psychological side, suppression is of great value in combating boredom for it stimulates the reader/listener/viewer through the suspense created. *Suspension*, sometimes treated as a separate figure active at the narrative level (cf. Chrzanowska-Kluczewska 2013: 123), will characterize specific genres, prototypically detective stories/novels but also political and media discourse. The psychological, cognitive and aesthetic effects of suppression tend to overlap for, as Armstrong notices, textual blanks and the drive to fill them in encourage the readers' immersion in the text's world and, consequently, in illusions, but also "create a space for abstract readerly reflections" (Armstrong 2013: 84).

The psychological aspects of suppression extend also over its pragmatic, contextual and social dimension. The considerations of politeness and tact that often influence our decisions to become less verbose or turn taciturn, akin to strategies of euphemism, are directed towards the weakening of disconcerting or disturbing effects upon the interpreter. Not without reason does Kathie Wales (1989) refer to the functions of aposiopesis as the *avoidance of unpleasantness*. Yet, it should be constantly borne in mind that the distance separating the polite limitation of information from the purposive suppression of truth, which hinges on manipulation, is dangerously small. Thus, "the insensible more or less", which has been the central theme of our considerations in this article, should be used with care, so that its persuasive force does not slide too easily into deceit.

It seems more than proper to use the famous Wittgensteinian statements from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921/2008: 89) as our coda:

> There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical. (*TLP*, 6.522)

> What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence. (*TLP*, 7)

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