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**MUSIC AND THE NOVEL OF THE LATE XX CENTURY AND
EARLY XXI CENTURY (PROBLEMS OF EKPHRASIS AND
TIME FLOW)**

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Contents of the dissertation

INTRODUCTION.....	4
CHAPTER ONE: The multifaceted nature of ekphrasis.....	11
1.1. Ancient ekphrasis.....	13
1.2. Examples of ekphrasis in Antiquity.....	15
1.3. Musical ekphrasis.....	19
1.4. The difference between programmatic music and ekphrasis.....	21
1.5. Musical ekphrasis in the literary tradition.....	24
1.6. Ekphrasis and the passage of time.....	26
1.7. Memories as temporal portal - the models of Proust and Bergson.....	29
2. CHAPTER TWO: Ekphrasis as a structuring element in the modern rock novel.....	32
2.1. Evolution of the rock novel.....	35
2.2. Punk rock as context in A Visit from the goon squad.....	40
2.3. Digitalization and the contemporary.....	46
2.4. The digital desert or the meaning of the pause (ekphrasis and sonic interludes).....	60
2.5. The timeline of memory in a series of examples of musical and mnemonic ekphrasis.....	68
2.6. Two approaches to the structure of the novel. Communicative strategies in the future tense. The pure language of the contemporary.....	76
2.7. A musical album (from A to B).....	82
2.8. Musical ekphrasis in the structure of Cruel Presence of Time.....	85
2.9. The Golden Cure.....	88
2.10. X and O.....	94
2.11. End of song.....	96
3. CHAPTER THREE: A novel-fugue.....	101
3.1. Canon and Fugue.....	105

3.2. Musical ekphrasis as a structural element of the novel fugue <i>Passion or the Death of Alice</i>	108
3.3. Bach's mirror fugues.....	116
3.4. Sensory counterpoints: visual versus auditory.....	124
3.5. The music-object dichotomy.....	128
3.6. The fugue as escape. The image of the contemporary in the novels of Dvorianova, Kundera and Barnes.....	132
3.7. From classical musical forms to the creation of the holooid.....	137
4. CHAPTER FOUR: Musical ekphrasis in Smith's novels - from tradition to experiment.....	142
4.1. <i>On Beauty</i> – a continuation of the English seriocomic tradition.....	147
4.2 Forster's Testament.....	149
4.3. Musical and artistic ekphrasis.....	154
4.4 The musical bridge between <i>Howards End</i> and <i>On Beauty</i>	156
4.5. Rembrandt's <i>Analects</i> - artistic ekphrasis and the last phase of depersonalization.....	164
4.6. <i>White Teeth</i> - polyvoice and timeflow.....	170
4.7. The musicality/non-musicality opposition. Bulgaria as a spiritual haven.....	176
4.8. NW - The postmodern hip-hop cacophony.....	179
CONCLUSION.....	189
ANNEX 1.....	196
ANNEX 2.....	198
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	200

Introduction

This thesis examines novels published from the 1980s to the early 21st century, with a focus on Western European literature, in which the musical theme is present in various forms. These include works by Jennifer Egan, Zadie Smith, Dana Spiotta, Milan Kundera, Julian Barnes, Emilia Dvorianova, and others. After an extensive reading of multiple texts, common trends in the presentation of the musical theme emerged, including the technique of ekphrasis.

Our hypothesis is that contemporary novels employing the musical theme create intra-musical narratives with temporal storylines that obey musical rules directly tied to the technique of ekphrasis. At the core of the study are analyses of specific examples of musical ekphrasis from the novels under consideration, subordinated to two main tasks: to examine: how the technique of ekphrasis interacts with the structure of the work, and what information about the characteristics of the characters and the environment they inhabit is contained in the relevant ekphrastic sections.

In order to achieve the stated goals, we introduce a particular understanding of musical ekphrasis and time progression¹, which we work with in the analytical sections of this paper. We analyze the musical elements in the selected novels, linking the musical assimilations of the characters to the change in the perception of time with the advent of digitalization and its imposition as a dominant informative modality. We orient the search around the assumption that authors handle music as a means to explore the consequences of the rapid development of technology, which reflects on interpersonal relationships with the disruption of family ties and cultural dissociation.

¹ When we talk about pictorial ekphrasis, this problem is absent. This is perhaps the reason why the theoretical empiricism on the topic is mainly on the mentioned manifestation of ekphrasis, because the objects it analyses are spatial and therefore more accessible to study. We choose the term time passage and use it to refer to the duration of the song and its subjective perception by the characters of these novels.

The dissertation traces the process by which hard-wired processes of alliteration interact with alternative structures inspired by music. In the novels analysed, we highlight examples of different uses of ekphrasis, including musical, pictorial, mnemonic and digital, depending on the object of study.

The analysis focuses on ekphrastic technique in the works, which we will assume are used to create various hybrid narrative structures, among which we highlight: the contemporary rock novel, the fugue novel, the contemporary ekphrastic novel (a novel with elements of ekphrasis). In this context, our research studies require a broader scope of research from the fields of music theory, art criticism and literary criticism, as well as working with philosophical works.

I. The multifaceted nature of ekphrasis

The first chapter presents exemplars and early examples of artistic ekphrasis. The studies of some of the most significant theorists of artistic ekphrasis are cited, including Mark Smith, Ruth Webb, Leo Spitzer, James Haffernan, Jean Hagstrum, and others. Information about the term has been extended to the musicological aspect of the subject by presenting research in the literary theoretical field, so musicologist Sieglind Bruhn's seminal work *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting*, as well as other studies, help us derive the main characteristics of musical ekphrasis from a musicological perspective. We bring the two perspectives - on pictorial and musical ekphrasis - together to develop a theoretical model of work in order to test its functionality - in the individual analytical chapters in the study.

The relationship between the problem of ekphrasis and the problem of time-flow is discussed in the subchapters "Ekphrasis and Time-Flow"

and "Memories as Temporal Portal - Proust and Bergson's Models". The hypotheses presented are based on the contemporary research of Leonid Bilmes Ekphrasis, *Memory and Narrative after Proust*, who introduces the term mnemonic ekphrasis, whose definition finds application in the analytical sections. We have taken the liberty of extending Bilmes's definition with theories of time from Henri Bergson's foundational works *Matter and Memory*, *An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, *Time and Free Will*, and Thomas Lennon's *Proust and the Phenomenology of Memory*, among others. Proust applies Bergson's model of time to distinguish between the two understandings of time in his novel: internal time, by means of which the narrative is constructed, and external time, related to events outside the protagonist's subjective world - hours, dates, etc., or put another way: *le temps* is spatial time, which can be "lost," and *la durée* is the time of consciousness, which involves duration. This is the model by which we will explore the musical assimilations of the characters in the analytic sections, with the difference that the main source of memories in their perceptions is music alone.

Bergson's intention is to show 'whether and how the relation between the material world and the conceptual articulation of our linguistic culture is possible' (Bergson 2003: 6). He poses the question of a kind of psychic, unconscious - animistic, vitalistic, extrasensory/sensory communication, believing that recognition (and, therefore, differentiation of objects) is an act of memory, of repetition and recall, which together form the basis of remembering. It is these that drive and structure the narrative of *On the Trail of Lost Time*. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson argues that 'the subject is an interlocutor whose ideas are developed in the mind to auditory representations which are then materialized in spoken words' (Bergson 2003: 107). We might relate the process Bergson describes to the recipient's perception of the musical work, as well as to the relationship between speech and music in contemporary ekphrastic writing. The hypothesis we will explore is that through the technique of ekphrasis, writers interrupt narrative time to provide the reader with access to the inner world of the character and

the inner time of the characters, refracted through listening to a piece of music.

Therefore, we arrive at the idea that the presence of a rational element in the perception of a musical work involves a process whereby the listener assimilates the music and refracts it through their imagination. The technique of ekphrasis operates by in the following way: a description of the character's subjective experiences and thoughts, refracted through the musical work. Therefore, we are interested in the subject of perceptions - the mind of the hero.

The re-creation of the musical work in prose can emphasize, through ekphrastic presences and rhetorical vividness, perceptions of the work, offering new variations on the reading of the text, and, in a sense, the possibility of a meeting of two arts as well as of different cultural and historical periods, techniques and means of expression. In this way an already well-known work could be understood in an unexpectedly different way. In the analytical parts of this study, we will consider works by Bach, Mozart, Shostakovich, Pink Floyd, David Bowie, Michael Jackson, Madonna, 2pac, and other musical artists whose work is reimagined through the lens of contemporary literature and culture in the novels under consideration.

Thus far, we have introduced more general definitions in an attempt to briefly systematize the complex nature of ekphrasis and the different perspectives of scholars. The following chapters are devoted to its rich possibilities and specificities in its application to the recreation of a musical work in literature.

II. Ekphrasis as a structuring element in the contemporary rock novel

Following the exposition of the concepts of ekphrasis and time progression, the subject of the second chapter is the contemporary rock novel. We use the definition of this subgenre introduced by Florence Dore to add that it is not only associated with the rock era, the emergence of the first music information carriers and the first music search engines, but also with the youth rebellions that occurred after Bill Clinton introduced the Telecommunications Act. At the same time, we assume that the new rock novel not only inherits the tradition of rock novels from the time of beatnik culture, but also represents the changes that have occurred in the digital age and the consequences of globalization . As a consequence of the many cultural and political changes that have occurred in America, there has been a noticeable use of a new type of writing technique to structure works, involving musical ekphrasis.

Novels that we believe fit the genre characteristics of a contemporary rock novel are Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* and *High Fidelity*, translated into English as Nick Hornby's *Ugly Life*, Rick Moody with *Ice Storm*, Dana Spiotta's *Eat the Document*, Lethem's *Chronic City*, Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street*, and others.

The works listed above reveal the common characteristics of the generation at the dawn of the digital age, when some of the first open access internet search engines Napster and Spotify were born. The development of rock music is heavily dependent on the retreat of the old classical analog sound at the expense of the technologically new sound. Songs were influenced by the economic and social changes that occurred, giving rise to a sense of atemporality and generational dissociation in the late Cold War to early 21st century. One of the characteristics of contemporary rock novels is that the protagonists of the older generation prefer to escape the problems and difficult definition of the present moment. The plots reflect changes in human relationships by linking rock music to economic, historical, and social

developments in America. The age of rock, concurrent with the trends described above, provoked the creation of a new type of means of expression, among them the use of musical ekphrasis in narrative postmodern structures in a different way. The digital age also gave birth to other creative practices in the genre of the contemporary rock novel. These are inspired by the important structure-forming function of contemporary musical ekphrasis.

Our hypothesis is that the function of musical ekphrasis in narrative, in addition to being structuring, is also meaning-making. It relates to the changes that have occurred in the thinking of modern man, expressed particularly effectively in Jennifer Egan's novels *A Visit from the goon squad* and Dana Spiotta's *Eat the Document*. Egan's novel most clearly represents these innovative tendencies, and through an analysis of the passage of time in the digital situation that has occurred, we identify the emergence of a new type of personality that we call the modern digital contemporary, referring to Giorgio Agamben's study, *What is Modernity*, as well as the works of Jameson, McHale, and Martin. This new persona is of particular interest as it makes sense of history, existence and music in a different way to those of the previous generation. This chapter sets out the characteristics for recognising this character.

In the analysis of Egan's work, we bring out the different uses of ekphrasis and allow for the possibility that it is through this technique that the structure of the work is built, which we consider through two perspectives: digital and musical. The digital version is presented on Egan's website and supplemented with an analysis of the process of designing and building the structure of the novel. And the musical point of view we build by linking the lyrics of the songs included in the novel to the lyrics of the artwork and allowing for the possibility that the content of the work follows the organization of a musical album.

The novelists use the golden times of rock to preserve them and at the same time to evoke the memory of a generation that links music with youth. In addition to nostalgia for a bygone rock era, the novels merge two versions of "information carriers" from two arts that need each

other. This symbiosis between literature and music could be understood as an attempt at mutual preservation. The relationship between the two arts in the listed novels is realized through ekphrasis, which constitutes the structures of the listed contemporary rock novels. The writer's technique in constructing the works in this genre appropriates various embodiments of music through the technique of ekphrasis.

The listener may find themselves in the perpetual silence of the pause (the example of Link) in an attempt to stop time to realize their place in the family and the world. At the same time, even if he listens to the music in concentration, it does not evoke memories in him as it did in his parents, it does not create in memory a mental image or a desire to recreate. The musical representation of the rock generation's life in the contemporary is not tied to other people or real objects. The mimicry of collective memory is dominated by forgetting and the white space of the un-lived. Information remains in the consciousness, encoded through ekphrasis. For the new generation, this is the musical DNA-memory. Egan's and Spiotta's novels use ekphrasis in different ways and have different temporal outcomes, respectively: the repeated listening to the phonograph record in Spiotta's novel is an act of understanding America's past, while for Egan, the musical code is a process of validating an ambiguous future.

A central narrative theme in the rock novels is the life of the protagonist undergoing a process of initiation closely linked to music. Music is an important catalyst for the states of mind of the main characters in the works already mentioned - they attend concerts in groups of like-minded people and take drugs in an attempt to stop time at the point of youth and carefree. The dramatic collision in almost all rock novels occurs when the narrative timeline is moved forward - rock fans have aged, the new situation is radically different - access to music is not difficult and special as it was in the past; listening happens in solitude, not in front of a noisy scene with strangers: all this changes the listener's thought pattern as well.

In the twenty-first century, rock critics are publishing reviews of novels related to rock music. Howard Hampton notes that some of his "favorite

musical lyrics of the last decade have appeared in novels" , and rock writer Jay Ruttenberg claims that four of the novels he has read recently are, coincidentally, about rock. This coincidence provokes his question "whether rock music, long rumored to be in its twilight, functions better on the page than on record" (Ruttenberg 2019: 3). We might link this reinvention and bridging of music and literature to writers' 'taking aim' at nostalgia for a bygone time and referring to the famous modernist device of evoking through music a memory that activates all the senses, but also to a search for options for the mutual survival of arts threatened by technology.

The resurrection of this interaction is made possible through the technique of ekphrasis, which links personal experiences with memories of the golden age of rock, preserving musical styles in times of information-digital change.

III. Fugue Novel

In the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, besides the genre of the rock novel, the fugue novel was also revived. Writers experimented by incorporating musical elements into the structure of the modern novel. Chapter three discusses the features of the fugue novel genre with examples from Western European literature and the contemporary Bulgarian trace in Emilia Dvorianova's fugue novel *Passion or the Death of Alice*. The appendix lists works that meet the genre definition or use the principles of fugue in the creation of literary works. Again, we trace the uses of musical ekphrasis to introduce the idea that this technique is used in the compositional framework as a building block of the literary text.

The musical pattern is drawing more and more artists into creating a novel that is modeled on the famous musical form of the fugue. Initially, the musical-literary experiments are located in a vaguely defined "in-between" space, which can hardly be placed in a specific system and hierarchy to establish clear criteria for analysis. During modernism, artists increasingly consciously attempted to restore the syncretism/synthesis between music and literature. "There are dozens of studies that seek to answer the question of what constitutes 'musical' fiction. As has been known for millennia, there has been no music without speech. Plato argued that music without speech is incomprehensible nonsense" (Georgiev 2008: 7).

Modernists and postmodernists are looking for alternatives to the traditional form of narrative. Over the centuries, many Western European writers have had an interest in counterpoint and polyphony, musical components of the fugue.

The first part of this paper provides a brief overview of the uses of the fugue novel in Western European literature, presenting perspectives on the formation of the subgenre in some of the significant names of writers and theorists, including Aldous Huxley, Ezra Pound, Ruth Skilbeck, Milan Kundera, and others, in order to draw out the basic parameters of the multilayered structure of the fugue musical form and

its application in texts by Emilia Dvorianova, Julian Barnes, Milan Kundera, Robert Schneider, and Kazuo Ishiguro. As forerunners of this writing technique in Western literature, in addition to the authors already mentioned, we can include some of the works of Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Andre Gide, Aldous Huxley, Anthony Burgess, Thomas Mann, and others. In *On the Trail of Lost Time*, Proust incorporates some of the elements of the fugue: narrative themes with recurring motifs, variations on themes of memory and the creative process, and the subtle polyphony of multiple voices. In the perfect cases where the fugue is connected to the main character's life, he is a musician. For example, in Thomas Bernhard's novel *The Crucible*, the main character (composer Glenn Gould) seeks authenticity in the world around him in order to avoid his predestined downfall. Robert Schneider's protagonist in the novel *The Revelation* is also a musician. He explores familial ties and the absence of fulfilment and recognition from those close to him: 'if there is no solid, secure foundation, all music is worth nothing' (Schneider 2011: 14). A similar situation is found in Kazuo Ishiguro's work *The Inconceivable*, in which the protagonist is a composer doomed to save other people's lives and perform circular movements in space, driven by the logic of the fugue. The novel continues the line of existentialism, using musical art as the only way out of the the meaninglessness of existence (similar to the conclusions reached by the protagonist Antoine Rocantin in Sartre's *Contempt*).

In the second subchapter of this section, we focus on the technique by which the fugue model is carried over into Emilia Dvorianova's work *Passion or the Death of Alice*, with an emphasis on the many examples of different variants of ekphrasis. Research on Dvorianova's work to date has focused on women's writing, the political situation in Bulgaria after the changes, biblical motifs and the use of specific semantics. An interdisciplinary study of the musical elements associated with the novel *Fugue* is Rumyana Stancheva's comparative analysis *Common Terms in Literature and the Arts* and the chapter on the novel *Fugue* in her book *Comparative Literary Studies*. The femme fatale and five European cuts for the novel. Examples with the novel fugue. At the

same time, the technique of musical ekphrasis, which is the subject of our study, remains aloof from critical interest. The structure of Dvorianova's novel is a challenge for any reader due to the initial logical ambiguity, discouraging any attempt to make causal connections: 'Narrative, as a narrative speaking within and beyond itself, cannot serve in the evaluation/evaluation of the text' (Vrina-Nikolov: 2015), as the narrative moves on different levels embedded in the minds of the characters. The narrative is a source of meanings that branch out into multiple thematic centres/directions, and the fugue structure of the musical work organises them in a specific way. In repeated readings of the work, we identify different methods for exploring the text.

We use two approaches to examine the features of its composition. The first focuses entirely on the musical side: the elements of the fugue, the relationship to Bach's mirror fugues, and their application to Dvorianova's narrative technique; also the examples of musical and mnemonic ekphrasis and the influence they have on the structure of the work. The theme of the fugue is built up from the individual parts corresponding to the different voices, and with the introduction of the new voice, a response to the musical dialogue already begun. The construction of a dialogic, causally grounded structure based on the fugue form is suitable for unfolding and experimentation in the literary field, and its application in the novel structure leads to new aesthetic and semantic explorations. It is no coincidence that the first movement is named Prelude (a short musical composition that may vary from work to work). In the structure of the novel, as in the musical work, this movement is introductory, preparing for the actual action. The chapters are named according to the names of the protagonists: Io; Sebastian; Io. Each character is as dependent on the other as successive voices in a fugue. Sebastian's attitude to the world and the events around him is emotional, in counterpoint to Jo's world-view: she is an outside observer rather than a participant. At the same time, we begin to question whether they inhabit the same world, as their voices do not initially mesh - two parallel lines with an absence of dialogicity. The

narration and the juxtaposition of the monologues, expressed through ekphrasis, heighten the expressiveness of Sebastian's speech, as if he were "singing" an octave higher.

In the second, we look in detail at the examples of musical ekphrasis of each of the characters and assume that the totality of their interaction works as a structurally formative fugue in Dvorianova's novel. All the elements of the literary work intersect with the musical in a single coordinate system. We conclude that in this novel the literary and the musical merge where the auditory, visual and mental perceptions of the characters create complex paired worlds with the help of musical ekphrasis.

At the same time, we interpret variants of mnemonic ekphrasis; we analyze how the meaning-object world and music are juxtaposed; to this end, we explore the shifting voices/viewpoints and their relationship to the material world constructed thanks to the hearing/vision dichotomy. We assume that each character is tied to specific sensory perceptions, respectively bringing it closer or further away from the musical fugue. We explore the possibility that the musical interpretations of the characters, who are professional musicians, connect to the material world in the novel. The syncretically embedded multilayered perceptions of the characters and their interaction allow for the possibility of creating visual (holo) images through hearing. We can assume that in a state of intense emotional experience, characters project musical-musical images.

IV. Musical Ekphrasis in Smith's Novels - From Tradition to Experiment

The final chapter of this dissertation, "Musical Ekphrasis in Smith's Novels - From Tradition to Experiment," highlights the narrative ekphrastic technique employed by the British writer to unfold the multicultural world in the novels *White Teeth* and *NW*, with particular emphasis on the chapter devoted to Mozart's *Requiem* in the novel *For Beauty*.

The British writer's work abounds in cultural references to various art forms, but in our opinion, their musical aspect is of particular importance to her artistic suggestions. Smith's writing carries a specific charge that gives it a special place in contemporary literature. She is both a continuator of the English literary tradition and a consistent opponent of the virtual world because of the unrealistic notions that technology creates in people. Her attitude to contemporary society is expressed by her deep aesthetic and cultural bias towards specific texts, historical events and works of art that have an 'aura'. She does not acknowledge information technology as an achievement of modern science: 'I need a certain amount of ignorance to perceive my sensations' (Smith 2017). Echoes of these reflections echo throughout her novels - Smith does not judge her emotional characters for the mistakes that are a natural part of life's lessons. Their imperfections are sympathetic (like Forster's characters) and the writer deliberately places characters with stunted empathy and compassion, rational products of modern Western society, on the other side. The accusations in her novels are most often directed at the invisible digital devices that permeate every intimate corner; she also criticizes politics (without directly mentioning specific examples). Smith explores the influence of these two institutions hostile to modern man to trace how personality changes under societal pressure.

In his texts, Smith also outlines the important opposition of presence/absence of musical hearing, which is often expressed through forms of artistic/musical ekphrasis. This opposition gives rise to two

respective types of characters: rational ones who have no sense of music, cannot perceive it and do not understand it / musical personalities for whom it is a solace and delight. There is also an interesting exception in the registration of the opposition, in which musical ekphrasis is replaced by artistic .

We examine the writer's first novels, *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*, and the analysis compares her writing technique with that of E. M. Forster, whom she takes as her teacher. Our aim is to argue our hypothesis that Smith inherited the use of the technique of musical ekphrasis from the English classicist. An important aspect of the analysis is the oppositions of presence/absence of musical hearing and the related dichotomy of pictorial/musical ekphrasis, which we assume to condition opposing mental attitudes and at the same time frame Smith's characters' altered sense of time. In her novels, the problem of the passage of time is explored through individual stories within the close circle of family ties.

The relationship between time and music is the focus of the study, represented by the author's footnotes, which form a kind of musicography of songs in different styles and by different artists. In this chapter, we allow for the possibility that musical ekphrasis in Smith is expressed by multiple references to musical works, performers and specific quotations. We observe a similar tendency in the writing technique of other contemporary writers, including Salman Rushdie, Jeffrey Eugenides, Eric Emmanuel-Schmidt, Jonathan Franzen, Paul Auster, and Amelie Notomb.

Just as polyphonic music counterpoints musical parts (voices) to create tension, so the polyphony in Smith's novels presents a multitude of different, often conflicting points of view converging on a particular center: a family, an object, or an idea. The harmony in her works is found in the artful assemblage of different voices and their "parties," which abandons the pursuit of objectivity in favor of contradiction and the pauses between them.

Music is a very important part of her characters' world, and the polyphonic polyphony allows for a different view of her work, further expanding the idea of time in the narrative structure.

The attention in the first sub-chapter devoted to the novel *On Beauty*. The work is a palimpsest of sorts - the hypotext contains numerous references to Forster *Howards*'s novel and to Prof. Hunt's essay. Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Justice*, David Lodge's *Good Work*, and Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Men* (1975), as well as the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Smith stitches the storylines together using multiple intertextual connections, building images of the characters and their personalities directly linked to musical and aesthetic preferences. Her interaction with other British writers informs her writing style, which incorporates musical elements and examples of ekphrasis. These fit into the overall vision of contemporary British musical writing while continuing the English tradition of seriocomic literature. The principles of musical ekphrasis 'construct' a seemingly contradictory polyphony that asserts subjective views that construct identities and existential mirrors of political and ethnic discourses. Smith transports Forster's London liberal salons to the ivory towers of the American humanitarian campus. Before focusing on the examples of musical and artistic ekphrasis, it is necessary to introduce the plot of the novel, since the characters' aesthetic perceptions, reflected in their musical and artistic assimilation, are tied to their characters, professions, and morals.

On Beauty pays homage to Forster's personal creed of 'tolerance, good humour and sympathy' (Forster 1962: 75), values he considers crucial in a world 'torn by religious and racial persecution' (ibid.). The novel's title is inspired by the British classicist's aesthetic views and recalls the love of the humanities he developed during his years at Cambridge as a member of Bloomsbury. At the same time, the homage to Forster is not one of imitation, but of finding one's own writing voice. Smith updates the themes preoccupying Forster in *Howards End* and places them in a contemporary context, as one of her characters playfully states at the beginning of the novel 'this is not 1910' (Smith 2013: 15).

The particular approach to world-building in *For Beauty*, as in *White Teeth*, is expressed in the clash of different mental, ethnic and philosophical models. The writer creates characters with seemingly clear goals and development, like her teacher: according to her, 'most novelists fear creating one-dimensional characters; Forster boldly makes this fear part of her art' (Smith 2013: 5).

The centre of the analysis is the narrative describing Mozart's concerto, with a marked emphasis on the novel's intertextual relationship to E. B. Forster's aesthetic ideas. M. Forster from his work *Howards End*. To this end, we compare chapter five of *On Beauty* and chapter five of *Howards End*, devoted to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. At the same time, we consider examples of artistic and musical ekphrasis that are tied to the mind-sets and deficits of contemporary characters. Smith resurrects Forster's messages through the intertextual musical parallels in Mozart's Requiem chapter. The differences in the examples of musical ekphrasis in the two novels are indicative of the characters' changing attitudes to music, to English society and the birth of the new classical music listener. Assuming that the musical work has its own world and time, and that the lives of the protagonists Kiki (*For Beauty*) and Helen (*Howards End*) are other realities, the synthesis between music and life paths creates a specific third dimension encoded in their musical perceptions. Musical ekphrasis has a clear function in description: the recipient (the literary character) listens to a piece of music, it impacts the senses and creates a vivid visual an image that can be provoked by past experiences. Human consciousness, according to neurobiology, registers music through "the cochlear spirals in the ear that constantly allow rhythmic processes to take place, converting the frequency of oscillations in sounds or music into intervals. The fact that the cochlea is a spiral means that it carries perceived vibrations from the material world along a path of open, increasing curves - into infinity" (Berent 1988: 43). The musical effects of Mozart's Requiem create a universe of individual meanings in Smith's characters. They become the co-creators of a new reality, proving that it is not only technology that generates worlds - in this case, thought images are

created, provoked solely by music. Incorporating the technique of ekphrasis, the author reveals the rich possibilities of the imagination to create new worlds when in contact with a work of art.

In the second subchapter, we analyze the characters of the novel *White Teeth* to allow for the possibility that the multicultural world of the novel is represented using the musical polyphony and the counterpoint technique. At the same time, we pay attention to the musical preferences of specific characters in accordance with the assumption that the music they listen to is directly related to the development of their life destinies and the creation of specific mental attitudes. The skeleton of the narrative rests on the opposition between the spiritual and religious values of the East and the materialism of English society. Smith focuses on the momentary and transient satisfaction of primary needs in Western society, "where patience and pity are unknown words, where people, whatever they want, want it immediately, expect their lovers, their children, their friends, and even their gods to appear cheap and quick" (Smith 2013: 217). These are the thoughts of the protagonist Samad Iqbal, faced with the complexity of instilling authentic cultural and human values in his twins, Majith and Milat. Smith updates the biblical story of Cain and Abel - in his London version, Majith is an atheist who believes in scientific progress and the power of the West, while Milat is a member of an Islamic sect - to bring the brewing cultural conflict to a climax.

By using musical references to build up the characterizations in the novel, the writer deliberately turns her work into a laboratory similar to that of the character Marcus Chalfon. The reader is also a co-author relying on the conceptual experiments. This feeling is enhanced by the counterpointing of the voices. Like Doris Lessing and her masterpiece *The Golden Notebook*, Smith divides the work into four parts with five subparts, each of which is self-contained and highly fragmented. This composition does not disrupt the plot, but deliberately seeks a structural solution to enhance the fragmentation and the characters' sense of rootlessness and lack of direction. The voices of the characters are in constant opposition - Samad Iqbal and his son Milat are emotionally

torn by their efforts to resist the assimilationist tide of the British way of life. The music of the West is incompatible with their culture and in particular with conservative Bengali values. In this novel, Smith explores the history, musical culture, and national language of the immigrants to find a cause-and-effect relationship in the behavior of the characters. Underlying all the conflicts is the characters' relationship to their own past: 'unrecognizable great-grandsons ... a genotype hidden by a phenotype' (Wood 2000). The collective image of the immigrant in Britain is constructed with examples from the musical history of the west and the individual lives of people from north-west London. The personal experiences and events in the lives of the first-generation settlers ask the complex questions of multicultural coexistence and of their cherished desire to find their place in English society. The novel also explores the self-consciousness and emotional instability of the second generation (the children of these families): the Irie Jones, Joshua, and Iqbal twins. They are torn between different cultures, faced with the challenge of charting their own path. The world of Smith's characters is heavily centered in religion and music. There is an inevitable clash between the new and the old; between progress and tradition; between East and West; between the desire to be accepted and the defeat of being an outsider, between visual culture and music. Despite her youth (Z. Smith wrote *White Teeth* when she was 24), the writer explores the deep layers of the human psyche with unexpected wisdom and affecting humanity. She is a first-person witness to the harrowing experiences of people in an ethnically diverse society, allowing her to explore their inner-family conflicts. Smith incorporates into her text numerous references to the Bible and the Koran, quotations from songs, actual London toponyms, and a host of historical artifacts. Constructed in this way, the novel's cultural layer gains authenticity. The characters are highly mythologized representatives of ideas rather than full-blooded characters (the two Iqbal twins embody two of the most relevant theses of the new age: tradition and progress). This exploratory pattern of clashing different character-ideas is also found in the other Smith novels we examine.

Music is present throughout the narrative in the form of song quotations and artist names that go along with the children's coming of age and the changing of the arts to reinforce the sense that Western culture plays the role of educator, but also reflects the negative consequences of mass industry and spiritual crisis. Songs and artists that symbolise promiscuity are listed: Michael Jackson, Madonna, Marvin Gaye, Publick Enemy. The twins' contrasting musical tastes shape the two camps in the narrative: 'Majid wanted to be in another family [...] he wanted his mother to play the cello, not bang on a sewing machine [...] he wanted a piano in the lounge' (Smith 2014: 183). Unlike his brother, Milat is not interested in classical music and instead of playing the saxophone given to him by the music lady, he plays computer games, listens to Freddie Mercury and Bruce Spingsteen. The musical taste of the twins, represented in the opposition of classical music (Majit) - mass pop and rock culture (Milat), also determines the personal development of the characters. In particular, the transition from a traditional and patriarchal culture, as Bengali culture is presented to us, to Western messages and dances that call for freedom, liberation and individualism, alien to the Iqbal family.

The real problems and differences between the twins occurred when the state budget for music classes was cut. In the immediate aftermath, Milat becomes a member of a Muslim terrorist group and Majid travels to India to explore his roots. He developed his unconventional progressive thinking by exploring his own past and participating in a scientific experiment that polarized public opinion. In a sense, we can include Majith in our definition of a contemporary, which we have already pointed out, in line with Agamben's definition.

The last part of the chapter is devoted to Smith's novel NW, in confirmation of the thesis that the writing technique used differs significantly from that in her previous novels. In this work, in our view, she finds her own voice through the combination of two techniques, the stream of consciousness and the technique of ekphrasis, which make up the narrative. We explore how the techniques of stream-of-consciousness and ekphrasis connect, and the presence of four narrative

lines highlights the individual approach in Smith's contemporary polyphonic writing, combining the melodies of the big city with the individual music of its inhabitants. The novel is constructed cinematically, scenes are divided according to the characters' individual sense of time. The narrator, who dwells on a particular shot, finds no connection between external time (the objective, physical appearance of the characters in the space they inhabit) and internal time (sensations, emotions, thoughts). The latent urge to distance is expressed through the fragmented frame, and the characters "get out" of it with the help of drugs, television and workaholism. In some of the fragments, the connection between the two streams of time resounds - it is the music that anxiously communicates to the reader the alienation that has occurred.

The discrepancy between internal and external time is represented most vividly in Leah. She constantly observes the movement of time for other people, but for her it seems to have stopped (internal time). Outer time is compressed by old age, compressed or stretched by smoking hashish; it is 'strange' (Smith 2014: 145) and yet 'inner time is stretched and silent, insensitive to the minutes and hours outside it' (Smith 2014: 65). The portrait of Leah and her lover is sketchy: they spend most of their time in silence, there is no contact between them: 'He is two steps away from her. He is on the other side of the world' (Smith 2014: 65). The blue screens of the computer and the television stand between them, as if they are not alone but overwhelmed by sensations and emotions that are not their own.

Leah's longing is to restart the system for a new life, like the woman in the cloche skirt whose tombstone she examines: 'Time has gnawed away the details: no name no date no face no knees no feet no explanation for her mysterious gift' (Smith 2014: 89). She seeks to erase all the information she takes in on a daily basis. The brief moments in which she clears her mind is the time of concentration in the point of the Indian, in the music of Kinks, in the children's song, in the silence. Whenever Keesha visits Leah in her home, the music on the radio stops and the DJ commentary begins. She finds something unusual in this

sequence of repetitive events: there is 'forever talking between two songs' (Smith 2014: 211) and tries to explain why the music stops, what this pause is telling her, but Leah's father interrupts her thoughts: 'there's just no music' (Smith 2014: 211).

The music/absence is a metaphor for vitality, it could be understood in the following way: there is no life in this house - Leah's mother bears the painful scars of emigration, which she passes on to her daughter. But Keesha's presence at the moment when there is no music could also be interpreted as a fatal predestination. The heroine is always living between two songs; she changes her name to Natalie to start the new song, starts a family, breaks away from Kilburn moves to a nicer neighborhood, but the lack of music haunts her. At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Keesha/Natalie is changing her social status, but this also doesn't bring her the authenticity she craves.

Another example of the use of the word music to refer to important moments is by Lloyd (a minor character). He uses the phrase that it is "not his music" when he wants to disassociate himself from a certain situation or belief: "Just noise" (Smith 2014:125). He is measuring everything against the music, not just using the word. His life is measured by the music, hence the change in it. The character has let go is a past that sounded different, and it is as if the musical metaphor is the reason he is still alive.

In the next metaphysical encounter, Leah observes a young girl making a daisy chain and sings about some secret code: 'Split the stem with your fingernail, push through the next daisy' (Smith 2014: 127). Once again, Leah returns to a childhood song; for her, music replaces the loved one, the kind interlocutor. The heroine often recalls her childhood and teenage years when she felt good, grew up free, but something went wrong, she could not 'push the next daisy'. It is as if the image of the little girl is Leah, unable to take responsibility for her life, to stand up to her mother and her partner, to declare her true desire to be herself. Her painful experiences are transformed with the song, with her wanting to forget the real responsibilities and problems she faces on a daily basis.

The metaphor of the broken color chain sounds like a modernist anxiety that one thing follows another, that the clock is ticking and each character's time is numbered, but also that none of the characters are able to live it to the fullest. Their words are fragmentary, meaningless and disconnected: 'And this will pass. Four forty-five. Zig, zag. Tick. Tick' (Smith 2014: 127). The physical world is also unreliable and prone to fragmentation. A plastic pen splashes into Leah's mouth, the phone booth has "thick broken glass, cubic shards, all around" (Smith 2014:107). The characters see, as if on a screen, the destruction of their own dreams, and the only moments in which they feel security and reconnect with their lost selves are moments of solitude with the music. Musical moments of self-absorption are the last hope to hear the friendly voice of the performer, to sink into the melody and escape reality, like the characters in the novel *Fugue*. Thus Smith's characters attempt to outwit time by replacing it with the musical time of the song. It has a clear beginning and end, which gives them a moment of solace. Life is monotonous, filled with painful events, out of control or possibility of change. Music reaches out where words are lacking to make up for the gaps. At first glance, there is nothing unique about NW's characters, their stories can be heard on radio and television, but the way they feel time is special: the many quotes from songs reveal sad destinies in which their sense of inauthenticity is constantly resounding.

Conclusion

The main focus of our research is on the use of ekphrastic techniques in the work of Jennifer Egan, Zadie Smith, Emilia Dvorianova and a number of other contemporary novelists, suggested by the hypothesis of the function of musical ekphrasis in the literary text and the demonstration of its effectiveness. The model for analyzing examples of ekphrasis in the selected novels involves a listener character who assimilates music and refracts it through his imagination, making sense of it through the senses of hearing and the subsequent description of a state, emotion, feeling in a literary text.

The musical context in which we operate in the process of musical perception does not involve a concrete object, as in the analysis of an artistic ekphrasis, but the subject, the consciousness of the character: our interest is therefore limited to subjective time. In these interpretations, we refer to the work of Henri Bergson and, in particular, to his definition of the different tenses - the time of consciousness (*la durée*), with the help of which the narrative is constructed, and the external time (*le temps*), which relates to events outside the protagonist's subjective world - hours, dates, etc., and involves duration.

With the above examples of the use of ekphrasis, we find that when the process of music assimilation begins, narrative time is interrupted, which is in turn replaced by the internal time of the artistic character, stimulated by the musical work.

In the process, we identified the emergence of the new listener, whom we called the contemporary. We described the characteristics of this character in novels by Jennifer Egan, Zadie Smith, Emilia Dvorianova, Dana Spiotta, Don DeLillo, and other authors, and we registered a functionally new type of relation to music for the new type of person: the songs that the new listener makes sense of often do not evoke in his or her mind a mental image or plot for a musical narrative, since he or she does not return to the past to relate it to real experiences.

Three features stand out after the analysis of the image of the contemporary. He immerses himself in musical pauses and transforms them into dialogic spaces of communication; he creates music that synthesizes tradition (classical music) and innovation (hip-hop); and he explores his own traumas using classical music. We establish, based on specific examples of the use of ekphrasis, that the new persona in the novels analyzed does not follow the beaten path of modernism (and more specifically, Proust's model). He does not usually associate music with specific experiences, as is the case with the characters for whom we have discussed mnemonic ekphrasis, such as those in the novel *Fugue*, and also the musical and artistic assimilations of characters from older generations in rock novels and the works of Forster and Smith. As a consequence of this distinction, we conclude that the musical stimulus does not produce the expected result in the characters because there is a change in the function of the music. The contemporary does not use music to travel through memories, but to carve out a personal time of calm and concentration, pleasure and encounter with the present moment. Unlike the previous type of listener, who through music escapes from the present and relives his past years, his youth, the new personality (the contemporary) seeks silence to connect with his own voice and to identify in a world with many versions and profiles.

The analyses conducted showed that the examples of ekphrasis associated with specific musical works also created the illusion of time travel. This inventive authorial approach creates a tension between past and future, reflecting new communicative practices since the advent of digitalization.

The musical world of the characters, created with the help of ekphrasis in the presented works, appears as an alternative personal reality to both the virtual web and the real reality. The "space" designed by the imagination of the characters plays the role of a substitute for live communication, but also of a path to enlightenment of the spirit.

This dissertation points to examples of the rich possibilities that the technique of ekphrasis provides for contemporary writers. These include the projection of mental images, the important role of musical

time flow as a journey into the self, and the construction of alternative spaces for communication. Through the use of ekphrasis, writers resist the "takeover" of human consciousness by technology and its penetration into every intimate corner of the human being. We have identified the functionalization of the use of ekphrasis as an effective artistic response in defense of personal space and an alternative to the encroaching digital world. At the same time, the creation of a mental image provoked by music strengthens the individual's relationship with his or her inner world, thus making communication with an artificial intelligence or virtual image inferior to the benefits of personal interpretation of artworks that carry their own aura.

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Contributions of the thesis:

1. The thesis is the first systematic study in Bulgaria of the problems of ekphrasis and the timeflow in the novels of contemporary authors.
2. Original analyses of musical pauses as an essential structural element in the novels *A Visit from the goon squad* by Jennifer Egan and *Eat the Document* by Dana Spiotta are proposed.
3. The use of fugue as a structural element in Emilia Dvorianova's novel *Passion or the Death of Alice* is argued.
4. The author's own interpretation of the differences between analogue and digital communication in the novels *A Visit from the goon squad*, *Eat the Document*, and *Great John's Street* is presented.
5. An operational definition of musical ekphrasis and the persona of The Contemporary in the novels *White Teeth*, *Immortality*, *On Beauty*, *NW*, *A Visit from the goon squad*, *Eat the Document* is proposed and characterized.
6. Proven are the basic for assigning the novels *White Teeth* and *On Beauty* to the seriocomic English literary tradition.

Publications on the dissertation topic:

1. **Ganeva, Vesela.** *Contemporary Communication Strategies in Jennifer Egan's Novel A Visit from the goon squad*, Journal of Communication and Literature. The Time of Eternity," Jiallo, vol. VIII, 2020, Issue 17; ISSN 1314-9067 <https://www.abcdar.com>.
2. **Ganeva, Vesela.** *Zadie Smith's novel White Teeth - a crossroads between East and West* no2/2020, Journal of the History of the World. Page.
3. **Ganeva, Vesela.** *Emilia Dvorianova's Passion or the Death of Alice - the Musical Fugue as a Meaningful and Structural Centre*, published in the Proceedings of the Vienna Conference, funded by the Research Fund under contract: CHF20-FLF-005.
4. **Ganeva, Vesela.** *The Digital Desert in Jennifer Egan's Novel A Visit from the goon squad*, no3/2019, Journal of Literary Studies. Page - NACID
5. **Ganeva, Vesela.** *From Classical Musical Forms to the Creation of Holodramas: Emilia Dvorianova's Novel Passion or the Death of Alice*, published in Proceedings of the Jubilee Scientific Conference of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the NBU and the Department's Philology Programmes, 4-5 June 2022.