

Freeing Verse: Memories of War in the Three Cin(E)-Poems “Frozen, Blistered Hand,” “The Big Push” and “The Dice Player”

*Sylvia Fam**

This paper explores the birth of the new genre of “cin(e)-poetry.” The emergence of this genre came as a response to the need for new artforms triggered by the enormous developments in the media of communication. As Kevin Stein explains in his book *Poetry's Afterlife: Verse in the Digital Age* (2011), poetry has lately sought freedom “off the confines of the printed page and into the virtual world of the computer screen” (xi). Despite the fact that cin(e)-poetry has fought its way to university curricula, academic symposia and cultural events, it is sometimes attacked on the grounds that poetry has been “cheapened by the quest for public audience”(106). Therefore, the paper begins by highlighting the cultural factors that demand such forms of change. This is followed by a brief discussion of the term “cin(e)-poetry” as opposed to other terms used to describe similar genres. The three poems chosen for this paper deal with the theme of war. George Aguilar’s “Frozen, Blistered Hand” (2012) and John Glenday’s “The Big Push” (2016) revolve around memories of World War I, and Nissmah Roshdy’s work “The Dice Player” (2013) deals with Mahmoud Darwish’s childhood recollections of the Palestinian struggle. Since the three works depend on the interaction of various modes of communication, the study is based on the theory of multimodality and semiotic translation.

The present age, as Dana Gioia says, is witnessing a “massive cultural revolution” (Gioia 2003, 21). There is an enormous shift in the means of communication and transference of information. Cornis-Pope contends that the new communication technologies “have challenged the very definition of literature, taking us beyond the verbal to the visual, aural, and kinetic” (Cornis-Pope 2014, 4). Diana George agrees that in this “technology saturated and image-rich culture, questions of communication and composition absolutely will include the visual, not as attendant to the verbal but as complex communication intricately related to the world around” (George 2002, 32). The drastic move from writing to image and from book to screen has brought with it a change in

* Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, Egypt.

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the definitions of long-established terms such as “language” and “literacy” (Kress 2003, 1). Knight agrees that literacy no longer has to do only with reading and writing, but also with “being knowledgeable in textual, visual, interactive, and web-based contexts” (Knight 2013, 147). The word “text” is also redefined. In multimodal-aesthetic studies, a “text” is the work of art that is studied, whether verbal, audio or visual or a combination of all three (Tønnessen and Forsgren 2019, 3).

The present generation, as Kress argues, “is best addressed through image” (Kress 2003, 156). Writing, which was “previously the canonical text par excellence, is giving way to image” (Kress 2010, 33). The Western culture that privileged the word over the image, as represented by Roland Barthes, was turned over by what Mitchell calls the “pictorial turn” (Mitchell 1994, 9). Tom Konyves agrees that “our century is the Age of the Image” (Konyves 2013, n.p.). Nissmah Roshdy, the composer of the cin(e)-poem “The Dice Player,” calls this major shift an “iconic turn,” and compares it to the shift from the oral tradition to reading and writing that was occasioned by the invention of printing. She writes:

Nowadays, with the evolution of Mass Media, visuals and images have become a consistent part of our everyday life. The shifting from “The linguistic turn” that focused on philosophy and language, to “the iconic turn” that focuses on images, has clearly affected the way people appreciate not just poetry but literature over all. (Roshdy 2013, 28)

In this visual culture, as Stein puts it, “the eye rules as both benevolent king and churlish despot. The visual has come to circumscribe the landscape of our aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional lives” (Stein 2011, 99).

With these changes came the pressing need to establish new hybrid artforms that could embrace the new and at the same time retain the old. Ball and Moeller contend that the new media have this ability to “bridge between rhetoric and aesthetics, between the scholarly and the creative, between low art culture and high art culture, and between academic texts and popular texts” (Ball and Moeller 2008, 2). It was out of this need that the genre of cin(e)-poetry emerged. In this genre, as Stein puts it, “the poem as printed-word artifact gives way to the poem as alchemic blend of word, image, sound, and motion displayed by means of the screen’s kinetic materiality” (Stein 2011, 115).

George Aguilar, the creator and promoter of the genre of cin(e)-poetry, defines it as follows:

Cin(E)-Poetry is a groundbreaking marrying of the old and new technologies to show how the power of poetry can be delivered through the mass medium in dynamic and innovative ways... Through the presentation of Cin(E)-Poetry, the artistic possibilities of old and new mediums of communication speak to lovers of the word, visual artists, filmgoers, teachers and the general public. (Aguilar 1995, n.p.)

Aguilar voices his fear that poetry, which has always enticed people to take action for the enhancement of the human condition, would recede to the “academic” circles in this technological era. In an effort to make poetry speak to the new technologically-oriented generations, Aguilar proposes the “new genre” of “cin(e)-poetry.” He explains his intentions in the following lines:

I sat down and came up with the term, “Cin(E)-Poetry”, which was short for Cinematic (Electronic)-Poetry. These three words connected together allowed two different artforms to be “connected” through any electronic means. “Electronic” meaning anything that was created using a machine (film, video or computer) and that could be delivered electronically via TV, projection, computer and the Internet. (Aguilar 2001, n.p.)

Stein agrees that the new technology makes poetry accessible not just to a group of elite readers, but to a wider audience that can view the hidden meanings, tap into the music and feel the texture of the words, enabling them to partake in the freeing power of words (Stein 2011, xi). Speaking on the same note, Aimée Knight explains that “with this bridge, the authors are not talking about an outmoded, disinterested aesthetic of the past, but something new. Something useful. Something that could aid in both the critique and the creation of digital compositions” (Knight 2013, 148).

Cin(e)-poetry is neither cinematic poetry nor poetic cinema since both expressions imply that one is subordinated to the other. In the first instance, cinema is just a modifier to poetry; and in the second, the reverse is inferred. The case for cinematic poetry is made by Wall-Romana who discusses the impact of the rise of the cinema on poetry which is evident in the Symbolist and the Imagist schools of poetry. The example of poetic cinema is given by Sara Keller who shows how Maya Deren’s poetry has affected her later cinematic creations. Aguilar, on the other hand, makes it clear that the characterizing feature of cin(e)-poetry is “that the poem and cinema must be equally balanced

in the work” (Aguilar 2013, n.p.). It is a “compatible matrimony where none is subordinated to the other” (Aguilar 2001, n.p.). The poet, the film-maker or graphic designer, and the musician collaborate to form a single poetic experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.

As a new genre, different artists have given cin(e)-poetry different definitions and sometimes used different terminology. Most prominent among these is Tom Konyves who gave it the title “videopoetry” in his “Manifesto” (2011), defining it as “a time-based, poetic juxtaposition of images with text and sound. In the measured blending of these three elements, it produces in the viewer the realization of a poetic experience” (n.p.). Konyves places cin(e)-poetry as a sub-category of videopoetry. However, what Konyves calls “videopoetry” belongs mostly to the category that Enberg calls “digital born,” that is, “made with the authorial intention to specifically engage, question, and explore digital means of poetic and artistic creation,” as opposed to the “digitized” work which was “transposed from print into digital form while retaining much or most of its original print character” (Enberg 2007, 3-4). The term “cin(e)-poetry” is adopted in this paper since Aguilar uses it to describe the “process of translating a poem into this new genre” (Aguilar 1995, n.p.).

With the advent of a new literary genre comes the need for new tools of literary criticism. In 2008, Ball and Moeller objected to the fact that scholars tended to “bring a set of scholarly, print-based assumptions to reading new media,” ignoring the role of images and sound in multimodal texts (Ball and Moeller 2008, 13). Earlier in 2003, Ikonen delegated the lack of tools for the critical analysis of moving texts to the fact that “the thematic of motion crosses over borders between the study of literature, the study of visual arts and film theory” (Ikonen 2003, n.p.). New studies in the field of semiotics and multimodality have provided the necessary tools. This approach to multimodal texts takes into account the interplay of the different modes of representation and the effect of this confluence on the viewer. Therefore, the present study is carried within the theoretical framework of intermodal translation, since the three cin(e)-poems in question are mainly translations from one mode of representation to other modes, while retaining the meaning and intention of the original. Aguilar and Roshdy use verbal texts as their source and translate them into audiovisual works. The source text for Glenday’s poem is a painting which he translates into the verbal mode and in collaboration with the filmmaker Xin Li it is transformed into an audiovisual text. The three poems use intersemiotic translation for the purpose of creating new works that can achieve a greater effect than that produced by the use of a single sign system.¹

In an article entitled “Intersemiotic Translation as Resemiotisation: A Multimodal Perspective” (2016), O’Halloran, et.al., extends translation studies beyond the interpretation of linguistic signs to include other sign systems such as image and sound. This approach relies on Jakobson’s distinction of the ways of interpreting linguistic signs into: intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation, taking it a step further by including translation across the various non-verbal sign systems as well (202). O’Halloran, et.al., calls this process “resemiotisation” where “language and other semiotic resources are viewed as resources for making meaning” (199). The collaboration and interaction of the various sign systems “permit semantic expansions which extend beyond those possible with one resource alone” (205). The use of multiple modalities gives multimodal works a greater effect than unimodal texts. Research in the field of memory and representation has proved that the combination of information from different modalities improves the performance of memory. According to these studies, “working memory capacity can be higher for cross-modal objects than for unimodal objects” (Quak, et. al. 2015, 8). This accounts for the rising interest in the fields of different modes of representation and the confluence of the multiple modes in creating the desired effect.

In the context of intersemiotic translation, the different modes play the role of figures of speech in relation to each other. In semiotic vocabulary, as Ikonen explains, “metonymy” means “the combination of two signifiers in any possible dimension and to any direction,” and “metaphor” means the possibility of creating new meanings when “the signifiers merge with each other or replace one another.” It is the soundtrack, however, as Konyves argues, that “has the potential to function as an ‘independent’ catalyst in the integration of text and image.” It brings to the cin(e)-poem “the secret ingredient – from another dimension – simultaneously guiding, shadowing, punctuating and enveloping the ‘unfurling’ of the work” (Konyves 2013, n.p.). The sound effects, for example, play the role of intersemiotic onomatopoeia between word and image. In addition to the devices of metonymy and metaphor, there is what Arnheim calls the “symbolic scene.” This scene crystallizes the psychological effect of the whole work. It makes the “implicit meaning” of the film “visible in a comprehensible manner” (Arnheim 1983, 151).

In Aguilar’s “Frozen, Blistered Hand,” he uses the cinematic technique of “montage” to produce his own intermodal and intertextual mixture of six of the most famous and influential World War I poems. The “Cin(E)-Poem,” as the title page indicates, starts with a digitized photograph of a World War I officer together with a sound track of vocals, followed by the sudden appearance of a

war aircraft dashing through the screen with the accelerating sound of its engine. After setting the scene through image and sound, Aguilar starts showing the verbal texts using digital stills, accompanied by the tunes of a Brahms violin composition. Starting by lines from Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" (1918), the resulting work is, metaphorically, a strange meeting of the poets Wilfred Owen, W.B. Yeats, Isaac Rosenberg and Alan Seeger on the screen, about a century after the original poems were written. Though all of them long dead, Aguilar still calls it a "process of collaboration" (Aguilar 2013, n.p.). The two lines excerpted from Owen's poem read as follows: "Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred... / By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell" (00:05-00:10). Owen's poem describes an imaginary meeting in "Hell" between the narrator and a man he had killed in battle. Ironically, in "Hell," the distinction between enmity and friendship is blurred, as seen in the line: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend" which appears in a separate frame later in the work (01:54-01:56). The second poem by Owen is "*Dulce et Decorum Est*" (1917). The title is taken from Horace's quotation "It is sweet and meet to die for one's country. Sweet! And Decorous" (Bloom 2009, 14-15, 22-23). The scenes described in the poem, however, are far from sweet. The speaker describes a gas attack during which he had to watch a fellow-soldier suffocate for failure to put on his mask in time. Within the lines excerpted from this poem, Aguilar inserts an extract from another war poem, namely, Isaac Rosenberg's "Break of day in the trenches" (1916). If the reader is not familiar with the poems, it is hard to tell that the lines are taken from two different poems by two different authors. This shows the universality of the experience of the horrors of war. The narrator in Yeats's poem describes the feelings of Irish soldiers fighting for the United Kingdom during a time when they themselves were trying to establish their own independence from England (Foster 2011, 68-69).

Near the end of the cin(e)-poem, Aguilar quotes the famous line: "I have a rendezvous with death," by Alan Seeger; a rendezvous that the young author kept. The poem, published after Seeger's death in the Somme offensive, caused a wave of publicity, making it a national emblem in American schools (Van Wienen 2002, 4-5). Aguilar closes his poem with the apocalyptic lines from Yeats's "Second Coming" (1919), with the contention that anarchy and bloodshed herald the coming of a new beginning. A century after the war, Aguilar has arranged this strange meeting of the most famous war poets, stressing the brutality and futility of war, whether the narrator be English, Irish or American. The sudden blacking out of the screen and the silence of the violin in the middle of the tune gives the feeling of open-endedness. Remarkably,

Owen himself considered his poem “The Strange Meeting” an unfinished fragment (Bloom 2009, 22). Aguilar’s poem attempts to leave the viewer with the same feeling of incompleteness and fragmentation, sinking into a void of darkness. In order to convey this poetic experience to the viewers, Aguilar combines the effects of word, image and sound which have interdependent roles in the process.

This leads to the second poem, Glenday’s “The Big Push” (2016) which was produced by Mosaic Films in collaboration with The Poetry Society and the Fleming Collection to mark the centenary of the Somme offensive. In a teaching resource arranged by the poet himself and posted on the website of *The Poetry Society*, Glenday states that his work “was inspired by the painting ‘The Eve of the Battle of the Somme’ by Sir Herbert James Gunn.” In the production of the cin(e)-poem, he collaborated with the animator Xin Li” (Glenday 2016, n.p.). The painting shows the picture of some swimmers in a small lake, with one of them lying leisurely on his back. The tents in the background give the impression that the painting could be about a summer camp. Ironically, the theme of the painting is the eve of one of the bloodiest and most tragic battles in human history, namely, the Battle of the Somme which took place from July until November 1916. Only at a closer look can the viewer notice the Red Cross and some scattered soldiers in uniform in the background. An even closer look at the bottom right corner shows the inscription “France 1916.” It is Glenday’s verbal text that explains the puzzling contrast in the painting. During the eve of the Somme offensive, some of the soldiers went swimming in the mill in order to experience how their weight is lifted by the water, allowing them only for a short while to rise above their fears. Similar to the painting, the verbal text uses juxtaposition. The brutality of war is coloured by humour and irony, and the colloquial language is loaded with high philosophical ideas.

In the cin(e)-poem, the elements of sound and movement bring the painting and the verbal representation to life. The work starts with the display of the painting, and with a zoom-out, the titles appear progressively. The voice of the poet himself reciting his poem is introduced, along with the appearance of a dark whirlpool and the blurred image of a soldier. The sound merges with the image as the poet recounts how the soldier was singing the popular song “When you come to the end of a perfect day,” with a crew of soldiers, “bleeding from the ears” as his audience (“The Big Push” 00:24-00:34). The narrator, who is one of the young swimmers, recounts the story of how “old clock parts” were used in trench mortars “for want of iron scrap,” (00:42-00:45) and how he and his friends tried to stealthily laugh and “for one heartbeat forget to be afraid” (01:07-01:09).

The irony in the verbal text and the painting is heightened by the concurrent scenes of war and play. As the narrator recapitulates the swim, the rippling sound of water accompanies the movements of the swimmer as he weightlessly drifts, and the melodious song of a skylark is heard as the cheerful bird appears on a sprouting branch. Soon, however, the wings of the skylark are replaced by those of a war aircraft. Another ironical scene is that of the ball-game. The soldiers were persuaded out of their trenches by the temptation of an ongoing ball-game, “lest their nerve fail” (01:30-01:33). The view of the players is set against the soldiers trudging forward, with lead shrapnel falling like showers of rain; and the ball fades into a missile. The sounds of bombs are mixed with the sounds of seagulls. Finally, the image of the soldier re-appears, swallowed by the whirlpool. Like Aguilar’s poem that apocalyptically ends with the prophecy of a second coming, the narrator prophesies that the dead could once more appear “green,” with a promise of Spring that would make their sorrows feel just like a change of seasons. The work is the result of the joint effort of painter, poet and animator. Glenday translated Gunn’s painting into the verbal mode, and Xin Li in turn translated both into an audiovisual work in an effort to create a poetic experience that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The third poem, “The Dice Player,” shows that the genre of cin(e)-poetry has succeeded not only in crossing the barrier of time, introducing the first World War to a new generation after a hundred years, but has also succeeded in bridging different cultures, showing the universality of suffering and the lasting effects of aggression. The greatness of Darwish, as Alshaer notes, “lies in the universality of his poetry” (Alshaer 2011, 92). He “chronicled what befell the Palestinians in a manner that resonated with humanist principles and universal aesthetics” (93). This “continuous negotiation of the personal and the collective aspects of life” give Darwish’s poetry an all-embracing human touch (95).

Although several translations of Darwish’s poem “The Dice Player” were available, Roshdy decided to produce her own translation. Besides the translation from Arabic into English, the process of converting the poem into a film included another form of translation, namely, translating the poetic imagery into visualized images. Moreover, in order to represent the numerous kinetic verbs in the poem, the artist created a persona in the form of a silhouette, together with a dance routine performed and videotaped by the artist herself. Roshdy also employed the technique of “kinetic typography” which uses animation to create a moving typed text. This technique helps in “bringing some of the expressive power of film – such as its ability to convey emotion, portray compelling characters, and visually direct attention – to the strong communicative properties

of text” (Lee, Forlizzi, and Hudson 2002, 81). Johnston contends that “digital modelling and animation of letterforms offer an opportunity to perceive modulations in poetic voice as sculptures” (Johnston 2011, 16). This shows that with the turn of the century there was more than just a “pictorial turn,” as Mitchel says, or an “iconic turn,” as Roshdy chooses to call it, but also a “turn toward living language,” as Johnston argues (8). Animation in itself is a process of giving life and movement to a static object. Animated text, or kinetic typography, is therefore a “confluence where language and life intermingle at a functional level” (11).

This kind of expression, as Roshdy points out, has a predecessor in the form that is historically known as “Concrete Poetry,” which attempts to reflect the meaning of the poem in the shape that the text takes on the printed page (Roshdy 2013b, 12). The extract chosen by Roshdy begins with the repetitive tunes of the lute and the restless movements of an unidentifiable alphabetical letter. This introduces the poet’s wondering voice sounding the question: “Who am I?” After a series of possibilities, the poet introduces himself as a “dice player” who sometimes wins, and loses at other times. The loss is pictured in the dice falling down the stairs and the gain is represented by an undefined shape mounting the years and reaching up to the moon, turning eventually into the figure of a young boy. The motif of war and play around which the other two poems revolve is also highlighted in this poem. The image of the boy playing under a shady tree on his home farm is set against the scene of the tombs of the victims of war. The alternation of the scenes of struggle and sport are accelerated by the alterations in the poet’s voice, accompanied by the rising and falling tunes of the Oriental lute. The progression of kinetic words, accelerating from walking to scampering to running to going up and down, is reflected in the tempo of the dance movements and the pace and tone of the recitation. Imagery in the poem is embodied in the images displayed and resonates in the sound, giving the original poem movement and life.

The metonymic relationship among the three different sign systems used in the poems studied is manifest in the combination of word, image and sound in creating the meaning and the artistic effect. The appearance of the verbal text is different in each of the three poems, but in none of them are the words reduced to mere captions of the images, nor the images to mere illustrations of the words. In “Frozen, Blistered Hand,” the words appear in separate frames in alternation with the war scenes; the way the contemporary audience used to view the news headlines about the war. In “The Big Push,” the verbal text was inspired by the painting, but it is not a mere description of the scene. In the meantime, the

juxtaposition of the swimming scene and the war scene represented in the painting is not only retained in the verbal text, but also heightened by the addition of the football game that is not present in the original. As for the “Dice Player,” the animated letters and animated images reflect the meaning of the verbal text. For example, in the beginning of the poem, the Arabic word "أنا" (the pronoun “I”) is minimized, whereas the interrogative "من" (Who?) is maximized in order to emphasize the poet’s quest for his identity (00:20-00:22). The effect is also enhanced by the crescendo and diminuendo in Darwish’s voice. The indecision of the identity is also underlined by the shabby, featureless silhouette figure. Roshdy also exploits the shape of the letters to reflect the meaning. She makes use of the repetition of the Arabic letter "د" slanted slightly to form stairs that go up and down the lanes of the poet’s memories and dreams (01:22-01:24). The distinctive interplay of the three different modes of representation gives each of the poems its special flavour.

All three modes take part in creating the metonymic correlation of word, image and sound. It is the soundtrack, however, that plays the unifying role in the matrimonial process. In Aguilar’s poem, the dramatic music soundtrack becomes diegetic as the picture of one of the soldiers playing the violin is animated, and the sound appears to be produced by the bow touching the strings of the violin in his hand. This makes the music an integral part of the scene, giving the whole poem a sense of continuity. The poem itself, as mentioned above, consists of lines from different poems mixed and rearranged by Aguilar. It is the music that makes them one uninterrupted thread. The rise and fall in the music also embodies the shift from the clouds to the trenches in the war scenes, which in itself is a reflection of the shift of mood from elevation to depression in the verbal text. In “The Big Push,” again, the voice of the poet gives unity to the poem. The way the images fade away into one another reflects the dreamlike mood of the poet, narrating his memories of the war. The sound effects of seagulls, rippling water, receding waves and the singing skylark on the one hand, alternating with the sound of machine guns and bombs on the other, together with the changes of pitch, tone and rhythm in the poet’s voice, act like cross-modal onomatopoeia for the alternating scenes of battle and play. The shift in mood is emphasized by the juxtaposition of the scenes and sounds. In Roshdy’s poem, the recording of the live event that functions as the soundtrack to the moving pictures is originally comprised of the recording of Darwish’s recitation of the poem, accompanied by the performance of the Joubran Trio. From the very first shot, the mood is set by the melancholic sound of the Oriental lute and the shrill voice of the poet. The letters rise and fall to the sounds of the strings

and the volume of the Darwish's voice. This merges with the moving figure of Roshdy herself, performing the dance routine that gives the words muscle and bone. Together, the moving image, the moving letters, the poet's voice and the music form a cross-modal synesthetic dance that enhances the linguistic text, giving it life and voice.

The metaphor, like the metonymy, takes on a new meaning in the study of multimodal texts. In the verbal metaphors, as Carroll explains, the two items compared are linked by a copula, or as he calls it, "the 'is' of identity or apposition" (Carroll 2009, 348). In the visual metaphor, on the other hand, the connection is established through the technique of "homospaciality," that is, the two objects are present in the same space. In film, an additional technique is usually made use of, which is "superimposition" (353). The two objects that are compared merge together. A step further that is available in film is when one of the objects compared replaces or becomes the other. This gives metaphor in film more credibility and deeper effect. This is most evident in "The Big Push" where the ball in the football scene is transformed into a missile and the skylark in the swimming scene becomes an aircraft, adding to the irony of the juxtaposition of sport and battle. In "The Dice Player," the whole poem is built on the metaphor of life as a game of dice where the screen becomes the virtual board. The two dots in the Arabic letters become the dice, and the persona or the player moves up and down the board. The motion of the animated letters, however, brings to mind another board game, which is "Snakes and Ladders," as there are actual ladder formations and the meandering movements of the letters assuming different shapes give the feeling of the wavy movement of the snake. The difference is that the persona in the poem becomes the game piece, going up and down the board, giving the impression that the game is played by Fate, and the poet is played with rather than player, ascending to the moon with dreams that are toppled down by the nightmarish memories of war. In Aguilar's poem, the game/war motif is not in the poem itself but in the process of the making of the cin(e)-poem using the technique of "machinima" which means "the practice or technique of producing animated films through the manipulation of video game graphics" (*The Oxford Dictionary of English*). Aguilar uses this computer game to make "cameraless" motion pictures that alternate with shots of real combat. In the poem, the closeness of the virtual and the real is so crafty that sometimes it is hard to tell the difference.

Like metonymy and metaphor, symbol plays a vital role in the three poems in question. The symbolic scene is concerned with the motif of flight as a sign of transcendence above the atrocities of war, whether this flight be represented

through an aircraft, a bird or a kite. Darwish describes this process in a letter that he wrote to a friend a few months before his death. He says:

A literature born of a defined reality is able to create a reality that transcends reality - an alternative, imagined reality. Not a search for a myth of happiness to flee from a brutal history, but an attempt to make history less mythological, to place the myth in its proper, metaphorical place, and to transform us from victims of history, into partners in humanizing history. (qtd. in Murphy 2017, n.p.)

This quote describes the power of art to rise above reality, enabling the soul to experience a kind of freedom similar to that of flying. Aguilar's poem starts with the scene of the soldiers in the trenches listening to one of them playing the violin. For a short time, the soldiers are allowed to rise above the cruel reality. This shot is followed by the aircraft floating in the air, as though it were an embodiment of the short-lived feeling of freedom that they were allowed to experience. The frame that follows displays the lines from Yeats's poem where the speaker says: "I know I shall meet my fate / Somewhere among the clouds above" ("Frozen, Blistered Hand" 0050-0053). The flight is interrupted by chaotic battle scenes. Near the end, the plane floats again, accompanied by the repetition of the main musical theme, followed by Yeats's words: "Surely the Second Coming is at hand" (02:19-02:32). The flight colours the poem with a human touch that overrides the harsh reality, reminding the viewer that man is capable of creating beauty out of brokenness. In "The Big Push," the juxtaposition is more dramatic. It is depicted in the swimming scene where, as the narrator says, the swimmers are allowed "just for a while to have no weight, to go drifting / clear of thought and world" (01:55-01:58). The gentle sound of water carries the viewer inside the scene. The feeling of weightless freedom is heightened with the appearance of the singing skylark climbing over the branches, "like an unbodied joy," bringing to mind Shelley's "Skylark." The bird reminds the narrator of the day the aircraft battalions took off from Somme, looking down on the picturesque "swathes of tiny, brilliant flowers" (02:07-02:41). The contrast between the beauty of nature on the one hand, and the ugliness of war on the other, sharpens the sense of irony. The poem ends, like the previous one, with the expectation of a second coming, this time of the dead in a "green" forgetfulness of all their suffering which "will mean no more to them / than the setting-in of the ordinary dark, or a change of weather" (02:55-03:05). As for "The Dice Player," the flight scene is different. The kite is not

originally in the script. It was inspired by Darwish's recollection of his childhood dreams for the future. The brilliance of this image lies in the fact that the kite is held down by a string. It appears to be flying, but it is constantly threatened to be pulled down. The meaning is made more manifest by the agitated movements of the performer, embodying the action verbs that describe the emotional ups and downs of the speaker, and ending with the final drop of both kite and player. This is a reflection of the fact that unlike the other two poems, the conflict that it depicts is not yet resolved.

As seen in the analysis of the cin(e)-poems, the medium of film intensifies the poetic experience. As Fluck notes, because of the coordination of sound and vision, the medium of film "achieves the impression of an unmediated directness of representation" (Fluck 2003, 213). Film gives the effect of "immediate experience" (213). This accounts for the large impact of cinema in shaping collective memory since it gives the audience a sort of communal experience (214). It provides a simulation of what is known as "episodic memory," which, according to Nyberg, "is a past-oriented memory system that allows reexperiencing of one's own previous experiences." This type of memory belongs to the category of long-term memory (Nyberg 2008, 99).

The three cin(e)-poems with which this study is concerned deal with the first-hand memories of war, allowing the viewers to share the autobiographical experience with the authors of the original works. In Aguilar's work, the authors of the original poems witnessed the horrors of World War I. They give an unembellished testimony of their actual battlefield experience. Owen died in action in November 1918, a few days before the Armistice was signed (Ward 2008, 18). His resentment of the war was no secret. He refused to idealize the war, deliberately averting from words like "glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion or power" (Owen 1965, 31). In the Preface to his *Collected Poems*, he wrote: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. ... The Poetry is in the pity. ... Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful" (31). This point is proved further by Rosenberg's ironical poem that describes the war scene from the point of view of a rat, the only "live thing" in the trenches. Recalling to mind John Donne's "The Flea," but in a totally different context, the speaker contemplates about how the rat would wander the battlefield without distinguishing between camps, touching the corpses without any regard to their allegiance (Bloom 2009, 74). The irony is intensified by the lines from Yeats's poem "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" (1918): "Those I fight I do not hate, / Those I guard I do not love" (Yeats, 2017, 13). The

dramatic effect is aggravated by Seeger's famous promised rendezvous with death. In order to deliver the poetic lines in a "historically accurate cinematic manner that home-front citizens received news of the war," Aguilar makes use of real pictures taken from the archives of the Pathé News Gazette which produced news films and movies at the time (Stein 2011, 124). Alternating with the battle-front scenes, the verse lines appear within the cinematic frame of the Pathé News snapshots, with the background sound of the flickering newsreels that were used at that time. The viewer experiences the poetic lines within the historical context that produced them. Through the cinematic techniques, the viewers are allowed to share the experiences of the poets.

A glimpse at the silent cinema of the war gives momentum to the truthfulness of the accounts conveyed by Aguilar's cin(e)-poem. The cultural legacy of the public memory of the Great War was mainly shaped by the commercial film, *The Battle of the Somme* (1916). This film was the fruit of the joint effort of the cinema industry in Britain and the War Office. Taking advantage of the public "confidence in the medium of film to represent reality," the film was used for the purposes of profit and propaganda (Hammond 2011, 20-21). The film, like Aguilar's poem, is composed of intertitles, followed by scenes from the battlefield. Unlike Aguilar's poem, however, the film presents an idealized picture of the soldiers marching, tending to their horses, eating and waving to the camera with their hats. The attack itself was a staged act, due to the difficulty and risk involved in filming the actual battle. Even the final section which included scenes of the wounded and the dead was given the aura of glory and reverence (24). Therefore, as Branach-Kallas and Strehlau remark, "although a hundred years after the outbreak of hostilities we might be more sensitive to the tension between commemoration and contestation; there is a pressing need to remember, re-conceptualise and re-imagine the Great War" (Branach-Kallas, Sabinarz, and Strehlau 2015, x). This need is fulfilled through Aguilar's poem that offers instead of a well-wrought plot, a truthful account of the desolation and destitution of the war.

Like Aguilar's work, "The Big Push" is also a cinematic representation of the original work created by a war witness. In the lesson plan, Glenday clarifies that "Herbert James Gunn fought in the Artists' Rifles during the First World War – and two of his brothers were killed in the conflict. He had visited northern France before the War to paint landscapes, so he was familiar with its beauty, which was now the setting for a human tragedy" (Glenday 2016, n.p.). Glenday also refers the readers to Joshua Levine's book *Forgotten Voices of the Somme: The Most Devastating Battle of the Great War in the Words of Those Who Survived*

(2008), to show that his poem was built on the accounts of the eyewitnesses themselves. As Holmes says in the introduction to that book, its great strength “is that it tells the story of the Somme in the words not of professional historians, but of the men who fought the battle.” He explains that “neither patriotism nor the strong bonds forged within units made men immune of the shock of war” (Levine 2008), xii). Through the dramatization of the painting and the poem that are both based on first-hand experiences, the audience is allowed to see the real colours of war. The new media have made the voice of the poet himself reciting his own poem accessible for generations to come.

The third poem, like the other two, recounts a personal experience. “The Dice Player” is an autobiographical poem. It is one of the last poems written by Darwish shortly before his death in 2008. Though written late in his life, the poet recollects his childhood memories of the 1948 Israeli attack on his village, al-Berweh. Darwish was only six years old when he witnessed the world that he was familiar with topple down to the ground. The event is narrated in the poem from the point of view of the young survivor (Alshaer 2011, 92). Roshdy’s first encounter with Darwish’s poem was in an event entitled *Fi Zel El Kalam* (In the Shade of Words) where a recording of the poem in the poet’s own voice was played, accompanied by the live performance of the band “Trio Joubran.” The mesmerizing effect of Darwish’s voice motivated Roshdy to create her cinematic version of the poem (Roshdy 2013b, 53). By taking her work to the Zebra festival in Berlin, she carried to the international audience a taste of the Eastern culture, introducing them to the photographic quality of the classical Arabic alphabet, accompanied by the tunes of the Oriental lute, and the expressive voice of the Palestinian poet.

To sum up, in the present age, the long-established print culture is giving way to multimedia. Enduring words such as “language,” “text,” “literature” and “literacy,” are given new definitions. As a result, traditional forms of literature have sought freedom off the printed page in the virtual world of technology. Cin(e)-poetry is a new hybrid genre that emerged out of the need to address the present technologically-oriented generation. It is the offspring of the union of the age-old but never aging poetry, and the relatively new and continually renewable cinema. A key characteristic of this new genre is that it involves a process of translation from a single mode to multiple modes. It depends on the interplay of word, image and sound. Therefore, the study of this genre has to take into account all three dimensions, as well as the effect of the process of translation on the source text. New studies in the field of intersemiotic translation have provided the required tools. The three poems chosen in this study are

examples of how translation from a single mode to multiple modes helps in creating a unique poetic experience. The three poems deal with personal memories of war. Through the use of the interaction of word, image and sound, the viewers are allowed to partake in the experiences that occasioned the original poems. The first poem recreates the atmosphere of World War I as it was actually lived by the contemporaries and authentically recounted by the poets. The other two poems allow the audience to listen to the real voices of the poets reciting their poems. Together, they offer a candid version of the atrocities of war, as opposed to the romanticized narratives of commercial cinema. In short, the three poems are examples of how the joint efforts of old and new, poetry and cinema, can create a new genre that is greater than the sum of its parts. Poetry gives truthfulness and integrity to the cinema; and the cinema supplies the tools which give the poems the immediate and lasting effect that the challenges of the present age demand.

Endnote

1. There is sometimes an overlap in the use of the terms “mode,” “medium” and “sign.” The paper adopts the definitions given in the *Glossary of Multimodal Terms* where the “mode” is the channel of representation, for example, the audio and the visual modes; the “sign” is the means that is used, such as sound or image; and the “medium” is the material that carries the sign such as print or screen.

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