Hypertextuality in Ali Smith's *Like*[1]

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Abstract
This paper discusses Ali Smith's novel Like *within the framework of Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality. Genette's concept of hypertextuality is also discussed in detail, an approach that is central to the paper's exploration of the links at the level of story and at the level of discourse between the hypertext and the hypotext –* Like *by Ali Smith and* Claudine at School *by Colette, respectively. Important connections between the hypertext and the hypotext not only deepen the reader's understanding of the protagonist, Ash McCarthy, but also support the perception of her narrative as a coming-of-age story incorporated into the complex narrative of Smith's novel.*

Keywords: *hypertextuality, hypertext, hypotext, Ali Smith,* Like*, Collette,* Claudine at School.

The intertextuality of Ali Smith's works is a popular topic of study which has been the subject of numerous studies including books (Germanà 2013), research papers (Ranger 2019) and student theses (Cingolani 2015; Janíková 2020). The theme has been explored using a variety of different approaches. For example, Holly Ranger has investigated Smith's philosophical perspectives as reflected in the recurrent use of themes and episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in her works (2019: 400-401). Cingolani's study works with Genette's theory of transtextuality in order to reveal the intertextual structure of Smith's novel *How to be Both* and its capacity for generating a form full of interconnections and possible interpretations (2015: 16-18). In yet another example of contemporary research, Janíková focuses on the analysis of several postmodern features in Smith's *Autumn, Winter* and *Spring* and enumerates various intertextual elements, concluding that Smith's selection of a specific theme for each of her seasonal novels corresponds with the intertextual references to specific works by Shakespeare, Dickens and Huxley or to Blake's poetry (2020: 44-58).

This paper represents a further contribution to this trend in the literary criticism of Ali Smith's works by exploring the relations between Smith's novel *Like* (1997) and Colette's *Claudine at School* (1900) through the perspective of Gerard Genette's term hypertextuality. The study aims to show that hypertextuality, a specific form of what Genette calls transtextuality, creates various connective features between the two novels on the level of story, discourse and in terms of the themes which Smith addresses. The parallels between *Like* and *Claudine at School* play a particularly important role in the characterisation of the protagonist Ash McCarthy and shed light on the course of her personal development. The connections between the hypertext and the hypotext not only deepen the reader's understanding of the novel's protagonist but also allow her narrative to be perceived as a coming-of-age story incorporated within the complex narrative of Smith's novel.

As Ali Smith's first published novel, *Like* is one of her least studied works and is therefore open to analysis from a perspective that has been largely neglected by other scholars to date. Smith's fiction is well-known for presenting the readers with a wide range of narrative themes that provide complex and authentic images of contemporary human experience: fragmented relationships, love, the search for identity, globalization and

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explorations of social issues are all combined with the themes of death, the transience of life, the afterlife, guilt and suffering. As Monica Germanà and Emily Horton have noted in their introduction to Smith's work, *Ali Smith: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, "[Smith's] ethical and political preoccupations offer insightful critiques of the contemporary condition, touching on topics as diverse as globalization and technology, consumerism and gender norms" (2013: 1). However, it is the topic of identity to which Smith returns most frequently, in particular representations of identities that are neither stable and homogenous nor durable and convincing (Levin 2013: 38).

Another important aspect of Smith's novels is her experimentation with form and language. As Marina Warner has written, "[Smith] is a writer who skilfully moves between voices and modes and genres while keeping a picture of the whole story she is telling" (2013: viii). In addition, Levin states that "in [Smith's] work the amalgamation of these particular qualities – anger, experimentation and trickery – attains its most radical expression" (2013: 35). In general, each of Smith's novels features multiple narrative perspectives and shifting points of view occur throughout a single novel. According to Justyna Kostkowska, the interchangeability of narrators and multiple narrative perspectives disrupt the power relations between characters who are in control of the narrative and those who can be described as objects (2013: 149). Furthermore, these varying perspectives require a degree of participation on the part of the reader and support an equality of expression by providing different characters with space in which to manifest their own perspectives. As Smith herself says, it is

> the urge to tell a story in the several different voices that produce or provide it. For me there's no story without voice, no voice without story, and no single story that doesn't imply another one right next to it, or behind it, or in front of it there's always another story. So when it comes to the novel…then the different voices, and a democracy of voice, if you like, are what make it for me.
>
> (quoted in Kostkowska 2013: 147)

Smith's experimentation with language includes specific details such as literary allusions and references to films and song lyrics (Warner 2013: ix) but, as Holly Ranger points out, her writing can also be characterised as "an endless play with language, definitions, repetition, and puns" (2019: 399).

In his essay "Simile and Similarity in Ali Smith's *Like*", Ian Blyth argues that Smith's first novel "can be seen as a significant text in the development of Smith's fiction" (2013: 34). The novel is significant due to its early evidence of Smith's experimentation with language, including combinations of usage, the emphasis on the importance of the word "like" through the formation of various similes and comparisons, and the creative word play and syntactic experimentations (34-35), techniques which continue to appear in Smith's later fiction. However, as Blyth also points out, the word "like" is also employed in expressions which denote and refer to same-sex desire and love, thereby revealing one of the central themes of the novel (37). The two young protagonists, Ash and Amy, encounter major problems and difficulties when engaging in and attempting to form an intimate relationship, and the novel "foregrounds the process of trying to become intimate with what we know we cannot reach" (Kostkowska 2013: 141). As Ian Blyth notes, intertextuality plays a major role in Smith's first novel, including allusions to such famous works as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (2013: 27) or Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (2013: 32). In her exploration of the novel's intertextual allusions to Ovid, Holly Ranger even claims that *Like* is one of the "three most allusively Ovidian novels" that Smith has written to date (2019: 404). Drawing on the findings of these studies, this paper aims to demonstrate that *Like* features further examples of intertextual connections that can be defined in terms of hypertextuality.

Intertextuality is a complex concept that has been the subject of intensive research by numerous academics employing a wide variety of approaches. As the definition of the term offered by the *Oxford Dictionary* reveals:

> a term coined by Julia Kristeva to designate the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts. These intertextual relationships include anagram, allusion, adaptation, translation, parody, pastiche, imitation, and other kinds of transformation. In the literary theories of structuralism and poststructuralism, texts are seen to refer to other texts (or to themselves as texts) rather than to an external reality. The term intertext has been used variously for a text drawing on other texts, for a text thus drawn upon, and for the relationship between both.
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> (Baldick 2001: 128)

This general and concise definition of the term is, by necessity, a basic and simplified amalgamation of the theories developed by theoreticians such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva and Gérard Genette. While intertextuality is a key concept for both structuralists and poststructuralists, the two schools of thought differ in how they employ the concept; structuralists employ the term to identify and determine fixed literary meanings, whereas poststructuralists attempt to disrupt the concept of the stability of meaning itself (Allen 2000: 4). As Graham Allen (2000) has summarized, the term "intertextuality" was initially created to denote the fact that all texts (whether literary or non-literary) are constructed from systems and codes that have been established by previously written texts and thus lack an independent meaning (1). A variety of textual relations exists among texts, and thus "[t]o interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations" (1).

The origins of intertextuality can be traced back to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and his concept of the differential sign that is "shadowed by a vast number of possible relations" (11). Saussure's theory perceives the linguistic sign as a relational unit, suggesting that every linguistic sign possesses meaning on the basis of its combination and relationship to other pre-existing signs. Further developments of the concept appeared in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin who focused on utterance, proposing its division into monologic and dialogic utterances. While monologic utterance develops a single meaning and logic, dialogic utterance is dependent on another utterance (19). Bakhtin's notion of dialogism does not, therefore, simply refer to the dialogue between literary characters; it instead denotes the specific discourse of each character or human subject that does not only impact upon the discourse of others but is dialogic in itself. The dialogic character of this single discourse is reflected in Bakhtin's term of "double-voiced discourse" (24). As Allen clarifies, Bakhtin believed that "utterances depend on or call to other utterances; no utterance itself is singular; all utterances are shot through with other, competing and conflicting voices" (27).

Julia Kristeva's revision of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism developed the same fundamental point that all texts are constructed from previously existing discourses (Allen 2000: 35-36) and she introduced the term "intertextuality" to define the constructed nature of discourse. Unlike Bakhtin, Kristeva's disregarded the terms "character" or "human subject", favouring more abstract terms such as "text" and "textuality" (36). However, Bakhtin and Kristeva share "an insistence that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse" (36).

Kristeva's perspectives are echoed in Gérard Genette's theory which perceives each text as a part of an enclosed literary system and stresses the textual relations which exist between texts and a variety of discourses, literary genres and modes of enunciation (Allen 2000: 101). As Allen notes, Genette developed his ideas in his works *The Architext* (1992), *Palimpsests* (1997a), and *Paratexts* (1997b) and "redescribe[s] the entire field of poetics from

a new perspective: that of *transtextuality*" (2000: 100); a perspective that, despite some notable similarities with Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, cannot be classified as poststructuralist but should be seen instead as an "open structuralism" or "pragmatic structuralism": "a poetics which gives up on the idea of establishing a stable, ahistorical, irrefutable map or division of literary elements, but which instead studies the relationships (sometimes fluid, never unchanging) which link the text with the architectural network out of which it produces its meaning" (100).

Genette differentiates between five types of transtextuality. The first of these, architextuality, is based on an architext which refers to the group of general and universal categories within the literary system which a text contains. Metatextuality establishes the relationship between texts in which a text delivers a commentary on another text without any obligation to cite the text which is being subjected to the commentary. Genette's explanation of paratextuality, the third type of transtextuality, is based on the relationship between text and the elements that appear outside of the main text, elements which can be divided further into, among others, epigraphs, titles, prefaces and acknowledgements (Genette 1997b: xviii). Somewhat confusingly, Genette names the fourth type of transtextuality as intertextuality, referring to the established connections between texts when one text appears in another. Genette's understanding of intertextuality differs from that of Kristeva's as he limits the scope of his intertextuality to allusions, quotations, marked references and plagiarism (Allen 2000: 101). Genette's final form of transtextuality is hypertextuality which he defines as the connection between a hypertext and a hypotext. As Allen summarizes, the hypotext is "a major source of signification for a text. In this sense, Homer's Odyssey is a major inter-text, or in Genette's terms hypotext, for Joyce's Ulysses" (108). Hypertextuality thus denotes the intentional and self-conscious establishment of a relationship between two texts.

The terms which are introduced in Genette's theory of transtextuality, in particular that of hypertextuality, offer a basis for a precise terminological categorization and delineation of different types of transtextual relations formed in Ali Smith's *Like*. In the following sections, the perspective of hypertextuality will be utilised to explore the deeper textual relationships between the hypertext *Like* and the hypotext *Claudine at School*. These hypertextual relations will open up new perspectives on the analysis of the protagonist of the novel, Ash McCarthy, and allow the reader to more accurately identify the generic features of the coming-of-age novel in Smith's complex narrative.

The hypertext *Like* consists of two parts, each of which is narrated by a different character. The first narrative section is focalized through the perspective of Amy Shone who has been left temporarily illiterate[2] and who leaves only cryptic and ambiguous hints concerning the events that led to her current situation. Amy lives in a small trailer park in Scotland with an eight-year-old child named Kate, but it is not clear whether Kate is in fact Amy's biological daughter. Of primary interest to this paper is the second section of the novel, narrated in first-person by the protagonist Ash McCarthy and interspersed with extracts from her diary entries relating to her personal background, especially the history of her relationships with various women that she has met throughout her life. The main focus of Ash's narrative is her relationship with Amy Shone and her coming to terms with her own bisexual identity. The course of Ash's development from her early adolescence up to adulthood is presented to the reader through entries in her diary which reveals the small-town environment in which she grew up, her problematic relationship with her father, and various relationships with others that contribute to the formation of her identity and her understanding of love.

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[2] Amy is unable to read any text for a considerable period in her narrative section although she later recovers this ability toward the end of her narrative at which point she is able to read fragments from texts again.

The fact that Ash's personal story shares some important similarities with the story of Colette's Claudine is suggested in a passage which makes open reference to Colette's novel. One of the entries in Ash's diary refers to the moment when she meets Amy as a teenager during a road trip across Scotland which she makes with Amy's parents. At one stop, Ash finds Amy's hotel room empty and she steals a bookmark before running off:

> I opened my hand and looked at what I had stolen, a strip of woven lace, sort of macrame, a bookmark maybe, I'd taken it just to show I could though I didn't even know what it was. I didn't know what to do with it. I hid it under my pillow. Later I went out the back and put it in the dustbin under the top layer of rubbish, same as I'd done earlier in the summer with the copy of *Claudine at School* in case anybody caught me reading it, or, more likely, I caught myself.
>
> (Smith 1997: 190)

The explicit reference to Collette's novel in this passage is combined with a hint towards some secret aspects of Ash's life that she does not want to reveal to others but that are clear to any readers who are acquainted with the story of *Claudine at School*. Indeed, a familiarity with the story of the hypotext renders the parallels between the events, existents (or characters) and also the settings of Smith's hypertext and Collette's hypotext immediately apparent. The fifteen-year-olds Ash and Claudine do not conform to the typical conventions of acceptable behaviour of teenage girls. They both exhibit rather tomboyish features, are impulsive and often violent, and display a certain degree of disdain for the rules imposed upon them by the environment which surrounds and forms them. In simple terms, neither of the characters exhibit conformist behaviour. Both girls experience a lack of parental guidance since their mothers are dead and their fathers are more preoccupied with their own interests than with their adolescent daughters. As a result, neither Ash nor Claudine have a meaningful relationship with an authority figure during their adolescence, which, as this paper will later demonstrate, compels them to deal with their complex identities alone without the advantage of parental guidance.

Another similarity that connects Ash and Claudine is their relationship with art. Claudine is musically talented and Ash expresses her interest in movies, theatre and acting. In addition, they are both depicted as artistically gifted individuals who use their talents to adopt the positions of "actors", adapting their behaviour and identity in specific situations in order to manipulate and take control – as in the case of Claudine – or to be taken control of – as in the case of Ash. Claudine displays manipulative behaviour when she consciously adopts the persona that will benefit her the most, placing her in a position of either control or power. As an example of this, she adopts the persona of a naïve schoolgirl when trying to seduce the paedophilic District Superintendent for the sole purpose of vexing her jealous classmates who are squabbling over the Superintendent's attention (Colette 1900: 30). By assuming the role of a flirtatious, immature and inexperienced girl, Claudine can ridicule school's male teacher and mock the expectations of both the teacher himself and also the gender-based expectations of society as a whole (45-46). In another scene, Claudine pretends that she is unaware of the love affair between the Headmistress and Aimée so that she can later use this knowledge to gain control over the Headmistress. In front of her audience, the class of oblivious girls, Claudine consciously takes on the persona of an ignorant girl to covertly display her knowledge of the affair to Headmistress. After Claudine sees the two women kissing, she narrates "I put on my most idiotic expression as I replied: But, Mademoiselle I went to the second class just now to ask if I was to use Number 2 green for the oak-leaf and there wasn't anyone there. I called up the staircase to you but there wasn't anyone there either… Mademoiselle Sergent turned a darker crimson still and answered hastily" (82).

Although Ali Smith assigns the role of actor to Ash in a literal sense by depicting her subsequent career as a professional actress, she also makes it clear that Ash shares Claudine's capacity to alter her personal identity for the sake of an "audience"; in this case, her love interest and close friend Amy Shone. Ash suppresses her own needs and constantly tries to please Amy, either by chasing wasps out of her room in the middle of the night or stealing a painting from a gallery for her, only to be told by Amy to take the painting away. Grand gestures, impulsive behaviour and the repression of her own needs are roles which Ash can take on only temporarily. She also acts out the role of the rebellious Scot, as she calls it: "[love for Amy] called for me to play my part, be the disruptive heroic rebel of a Scot" (Smith 1997: 271). Once she finally accepts that her love for Amy is not reciprocated, Ash forsakes the role of the heroic rebel who is willing to sacrifice her identity for her same-sex love and instead realizes her own self-worth.

The conscious role playing that Claudine and Ash adopt in their lives is closely related to the same central issue of both novels – the theme of homoerotic desire. Claudine falls in love with the school assistant Aimée and experiences heartbreak when Aimée spurns her disdainfully. Ash also experiences a brief love affair with a school assistant in her last year of high school and later falls in love with her friend Amy Shone – here, the simple substitution of the French spelling of the character's name for the English form is another parallel between the hypertext and the hypotext. Although Ali Smith modifies the problematic relationship between Claudine and Aimée and creates her own distinctive depiction of a homoerotic relationship, the informed reader can perceive Claudine's experience of heartbreak as a subtle foreshadowing of the nature and ultimate resolution of Ash's relationship with Amy. The problematic nature of this relationship is defined through another transtextual reference, an allusion that helps Ash to capture the essence of her inner conflict:

> The Frankenstein game. We make something of someone else, then we're surprised when we come home one day and it's gone out by itself for a wander around the neighbourhood. So we lock the door, angry, disappointed, how dare it. Then we get worried. Only we alone know how dangerous our creation is. So we reach for the rifle.
>
> (Smith 1997: 228)

The reference to Frankenstein emphasises the unnatural state of a relationship in which a person undergoes a change, transforming their own identity and consequently producing an artificial selfhood for themself. This game, as Ash calls it, has the only available outcome, which is the termination of such an artificial relationship through the metaphorical "reach[ing] for the rifle".

In addition to the parallels between the hypertext *Like* and the hypotext *Claudine at School* outlined above, another important similarity lies in the authors' choices of settings, those of the small town and the school environment, that clearly relate their respective narratives to the coming-of-age genre. The school environment in particular plays a significant role in the formation of identities by children and teenagers and thereby functions as a common setting for coming-of-age narratives. Given the fact that the homosexual relationships that Claudine encounters occur within the school environment and are thus accepted by Claudine as natural, commonplace events, she is able to develop her sexual identity with the liberty of choice. In contrast, the homophobic commentary on the Headmistress's relationship with Aimée that Claudine hears in her hometown is associated with the conservative values which are typical of small-town environments. Interestingly, in Smith's narrative both school and small-town environments engender negative attitudes towards any form of otherness. In an illustrative scene from *Like* we see Ash's high school classmates using derogatory terms when commenting on homosexuality. Ash is driven to argue to a large group of her peers that "[i]t's perfectly okay for people to like whoever they

want to like" (Smith 1997: 217). After her friends show their disgust at her conception of love, Ash further adds, "[n]ot unnatural, I said. Just unexpected. It's just a different kind of natural" (217). Ultimately, Ash is forced to leave her small town in order to accept her bisexuality fully: "I had left Scotland far behind and gone south, to the land of summer fruit" (160). The south of England and its implicit suggestion of a big city environment functions in Smith's novel as a land of liberty in which it is possible to express and accept one's own sexual identity. In this respect, Smith develops upon the critique of the small-town values that Collette had addressed in her novel.

While the similarities in the choices of settings highlight the coming-of-age aspects of the two novels, important parallels between Collette's and Smith's representations of identity development can also be found at the level of discourse. Both novels use first-person narration and Ash and Claudine function as the sole focalizers in their narratives. Additionally, both narratives are written in the form of diary entries that grant a direct access to the internal life and monologues of the characters. Lastly, both narratives also feature the extensive use formal features such as self-conscious wordplay, puns and intertextuality. Both protagonists employ intertextual references for the purpose of expressing their emotions and attitudes, while their character traits are revealed through the employment of specific allusions. Thus, while Ash characterizes her relationship with Amy through the abovementioned reference to *Frankenstein*, Claudine provides a similar transtextual reference when she compares a flower gathering trip with Odysseus' dangerous journey, equating her theft of flowers with Homer's epic story:

> They did not budge; definitely tempted, but nervous. I seized two clumps of "Venus's slippers", speckled like tit's eggs, and I made a sign that I was waiting. Anaïs decided to imitate me and loaded herself with two double geraniums; Marie imitated Anaïs, Luce too, and we all four walked discreetly away. Near the door, absurd terror seized us again; we crowded each other like sheep in the narrow opening of the door and we ran all the way to the School where Mademoiselle welcomed us with cries of joy. All at once, we recounted our Odyssey.
>
> (Colette 1900: 247)

In both cases the transtextual references allow the narrators to reveal some important aspects of their personalities, whether it is Claudine's wild nature and tomboyish need for adventure or the crucial moment in Ash's personal development when she comes to understand the unnatural aspects of her relationship with Amy, comparing it to "The Frankenstein Game" (Smith 1997: 228).

The respective narratives of Claudine and Ash also show that they are setting out on a journey of self-discovery. Both protagonists are forced to confront their sexual identity, discover their true feelings and accept their otherness while gaining self-worth and confidence. Their journeys are long and arduous, in some sense comparable with that of Odysseus'. At the beginning of these journeys, Claudine and Ash are still afraid to show their true selves; they are ashamed to accept themselves fully, confused about their real identities and, in the case of Ash, are ashamed to find themselves as a representative of "the other" in the otherwise homogeneous environment of her small town. Ash is as terrified of being caught with a stolen bookmark as she is of being spotted reading the book *Claudine at School*, a work which features many unconventional characters and a variety of homosexual relationships. Claudine is also hiding her true self and her true feelings towards the school assistant Aimée at the beginning of her narrative, feeling the need to hide her brief affair with Aimée from her friends and her heartbroken self from everyone around her. However, as their journeys progress and both protagonists evolve, rebelliousness, disobedience towards authorities and a rejection of societal conventions change Ash's and Claudine's behaviour.

Claudine rebels against all authority figures and although her rebellious acts may seem to stem from her immature disregard for rules, her unruly behaviour in fact derives from her need for personal freedom and her contempt for social conventions. She compares her school with prison: "What disgust, what a desire to run away the sight of that dilapidated prison induced in me" (Colette 1900: 188) and is extremely scared of being locked in certain spaces. She also breaks the dress code in her school and fills her diary entries with ironic remarks against the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, primarily when enacted by male characters. Her rebelliousness has a root cause and it is not merely the behaviour of an immature girl. On one occasion, she finds herself wandering into a neglected and overgrown courtyard where she eats some of the fruit growing there, reminding both her and the reader of the Garden of Eden where the biblical Eve also violated the rules and ate the forbidden apple from the Tree of Knowledge:

> I lifted the rusty latch and found myself in a little square courtyard, by a shed. It was overgrown with jasmine and clematis, and there was a little wild plum-tree and all sorts of charming weeds, growing unchecked. On the ground,-admirable find!-some strawberries had ripened and smelt delicious.
>
> (Colette 1900: 173)

Claudine's rebelliousness against voices and figures in power may be an indication of her evolution into a more mature person and her literal struggle to be free reflects her need to find confidence in her otherness and cast off the restrictive social standards.

Ali Smith appropriates Claudine's rebellious nature but also transforms it in her depiction of Ash's identity development. Ash's sexual otherness also violates the rules and conventions of her small town to such an extent that she eventually chooses to leave her hometown and search for a more accommodating environment in which her identity can develop more freely. As an adult, Ash admits to her fear of accepting her true self as a consequence of the town's hostile environment: "if we had fallen so clearly, so loudly... my father would have got the looks in the street and less work coming his way, and my brothers would have had the snide comments and the jeers and maybe the threats in pubs... I'd even have found it harder to get a summer job" (Smith 1997: 159). After leaving for England, Ash attempts to fully come to terms with her bisexuality. She relates a recurrent dream to Amy in which she sees her own reflection on the surface of water which Amy interprets as revealing the fulfilment of Ash's struggle for freedom and self-acceptance. As Amy says: "You're blessed with a reflection that has a mind of her own. Other people see themselves on the surface of things, but you're lucky. Not only can you see past the mere mirror of yourself. Even more, your reflection is free to go where she wants, do what she wants, regardless of what's expected of her" (293). However, Ash's rebelliousness differs from Claudine's in its aims. While Claudine revolts against the authority figures and dominant discourses in her society, Ash's rebelliousness stems from her desire to be accepted and loved by Amy. Even though Ash may be more comfortable with her sexual identity, she constantly adapts her needs when trying to establish a relationship with Amy. It is only after making the final break with Amy that she is able to fully accept her entire identity and unapologetically express her views and emotions.

The hypertextual relations between *Like* and the *Claudine at School* which have been discussed in this paper reveal important similarities between two coming-of-age narratives which were created in different historical periods and cultural contexts. Both texts deal with personal developments that are crucially influenced by the strong sense of otherness; the otherness that transgresses the widely accepted norms of the societies in which the protagonists grow up and struggle to accept their identities. Nonetheless, these hypertextual relationships also point out the important differences between Colette's hypotext and Smith's

hypertext. Despite the enormous transformation in attitudes and liberalization which western countries have undergone in recent decades, Ash's personal development is paradoxically influenced by a stronger fear and a deeper inner struggle, and Smith's late-twentieth-century protagonist has greater problems to accept her otherness and be open about her sexual identity. Although Claudine never openly displays her sexual otherness in public due to the dominant effect of the conservative mores of nineteenth-century society, she nonetheless appears to show a greater confidence and an internal acceptance of her identity which fuel her rebellious acts and provide her with the sense of a certain (albeit limited) form of liberation. Claudine thus performs various subversive acts that help her to undermine, to a certain extent, conventional behaviour and traditional rules. Her personal development is paradoxically supported by the school environment that, despite its apparently conservative character, provides a space in which hidden homoerotic desires can be expressed and acted upon.

In contrast, although Ash lives in the age of postmodern liberalism and is in a position to voice her defence of homoerotic forms of love, she is nonetheless still subject to the powerful pressure of a homophobic environment, both in her hometown and at her high school. In addition, it is difficult to read her rebellious acts as signs of her development towards a greater maturity; instead, they are a paradoxical reflection of her subordinated position in a homoerotic relationship that is unable to provide her with any real sense of liberation. Ali Smith's novel thus presents a perspective that unmasks the persisting conservative trends which lie beneath the surface of late-twentieth-century liberalism, trends that have been confirmed by studies uncovering the high rates of verbal harassment that bisexual students experience from their peers at school (MAP 2016: 7). Smith's novel also reveals that homoerotic relationships are just as encumbered by power relations as heterosexual ones and thus cannot be presented as unproblematic sites of personal liberation.

In conclusion, the hypertextual relations between *Like* and *Claudine at School* play an important role in Ali Smith's criticism of the incomplete transformation of postmodern society, highlighting the fact that strong conservative values remain embedded into liberal society that contribute to the continuing marginalization of certain forms of otherness, not only those related to sexuality. Smith's hypertextual appropriation of Colette's fin-de-siècle novel thus acquires the form of transposition in which the usage of augmentation[3] helps her to expand upon the original work in terms of thematic extensions and allows her to create her own story for the twenty-first century.[4]

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[3] Augmentation, as Genette explains in *Palimpsests*, concerns the act of adding features which differ from the hypotext into the hypertext, resulting in a certain degree of distortion (1997a: 254).
[4] Ali Smith also explores the same issues in her later novels *Girl Meets Boy* (2007) and *How to be Both* (2014).

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