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**CONCERN WITH IDENTITY IN MODERN ENGLISH POETRY  
(by the example of “Epithalamion”, “Duality” by Dannie Abse and  
“Confessions” and “River” by Kathleen Raine)**

Bachelor’s thesis

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## **PREFACE**

Poetry should be considered within the context of time, culture and country. Hence, modern English poetry should be connected with events that took place during the second half of the twentieth century, World War II, in particular. It was a starting point for the appearance of new trends in poetry.

The present Bachelor's thesis, titled "Concern with Identity in Modern English Poetry", is aimed to reveal how the aspect of identity is presented in modern poetry by analyzing key topics of modern poetry, by comparing the role and place which two contemporary British poets - Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine - play and take in the poetic world and by comparing their poems "Epithalamion", "Confessions", "Duality" and "River" to interpret the concept of the speaker's identity.

The paper consists of five parts: the Introduction which discusses key issues of modern poetry and literary trends and movements. Chapter I considers works of Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine, critical articles, ideas of their poetry. Chapter II is the empirical part which discusses themes of poems by Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine, and stylistic devices, epithets which are used in their poems to reveal the issue of identity. The Conclusion sums up the results of the research and comments on the hypothesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The period of contemporary poetry was full of doubts and questions about the human future, people were more and more concerned with social and economic arguments. That was the time when the issue of identity, or the loss of identity, became very topical. People turned to the inner self in attempts to define true self (Feta 2013). Many poets of that period felt totally alienated; they explored new themes and issues such as gender, culture, national multiplicity, conviction, language as well as the position in society.

Concerns with identity in contemporary English poetry should best be considered against the background of the twentieth century starting from Modernism, since Modernism suggested new interpretations of identity in poetry.

According to Robert Pinsky “modern poetry often expressed or implied certain persistent ambitions, ambitions which have to do with giving the poem some of the status of an object or phenomenon, rather than a statement “(Pinsky 1976: 4).

*Feminism* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century literature made new perspectives of the woman’s role in society (Gower 2004: 309) and *existentialism* protected human’s identity, revealed a chance to the existence of the true self (ibid. :311).

Additionally to the above topics the previous century paid more and more attention to science; it happened because the scientific and technological progress affected society in a number of controversial ways. The scientific advancement also influenced the development of communication; it offered new images for the appearance of new metaphors (Roberts 2003).

Political themes were also present in poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because cultural and literature tendencies were connected with politics, new modes of perception of political realities. As a result poets were using military metaphors in their works; a previously unknown sphere became quite usual. It is necessary to point out here, that new countries were formed; they evolved from more powerful and huge countries and hence, the sense of national identity was developing faster than never in the past (Roberts 2003:51).

Poets were trying to protect cultural identity in the fast altering world by creating poems in different British accents, which sounded differently with many colloquial and slang words in texts (Deniz 2009).

According to Gower “at present, most of the well-known British poets avoid big issues and universal generalizations. Their characteristic poetry describes a rather narrow experience in great detail with technical skill, in a detached way without much

emotion” (Gower 2004:456). Also he adds that “much recent literature has behind it a political, social or racial cause. In Britain and the USA many writers without such commitment have revealed undercurrents of cynicism and nihilism, and a loss of faith in contemporary man” (Gower 2004: 311).

The background of society was changing throughout the century; hence, the identity of human nature acquired new forms and frames for its realization and manifestation. 20 century poets Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine were particularly interested in the changing issues of identity in their work by employing various stylistic devices in their poetic works. One of them, which is of a particular interest in the present study, is epithet.

Litell defines epithet as “a brief phrase that points out traits associated with a particular person or thing” (Litell 2002: 1435). According to Chernets (2004: 441), epithet is a metaphorical trope which is in two types - metaphorical epithet or epithet- ; it highlights specific features of the object. A. N. Veselovsky (1989: 59) states that epithet; in general, is a way to point out some quality of subject, which is more expressive. He suggests the following classification: “tautological epithet”, “explanatory epithets” (ibid.).

According to Veselovsky tautological epithets are combinations, for example of a noun and an adjective, which express “one and the same idea” (ibid), and explanatory epithets are epithets which have one common element: an element, which is essential for the subject or 2) an element which characterizes it in relation to practical purpose and ideal perfection (ibid.). Explanatory epithet can be divided into two types: 1) metaphorical epithet, 2) syncretic. In *Stylistics (1981)* Galperin defines metaphorical epithet as a device where “the noun to be addressed is contained in the of-phrase and the noun it qualifies is a metaphor (shadow, devil, military abbreviation, Flying Dutchman, dog). (Galperin 1981: 160). Galperin defines epithet as “a stylistic device based on interplay of emotive and logical meaning in an attributive word” (Galperin 1981:157). He divides epithets in two groups, semantic (associated and unassociated) and structural. Structural epithets can be compositional and distributional, first group of epithets also has its own subgroup; they are simple, compound, phrase and sentence epithets (ibid.). Specific combinations of words stay in the language and are transformed into collocations. In this way epithet gets a new role as long as an author uses pre-forms; because of that epithets can be considered as speech and language (ibid.:138). Epithets may be adjectives, nouns, completed phrases and qualitative adverbs (ibid 139-140).

The task of this paper is to analyse how epithets in selected poems reflect themes of identity. Identity is generally defined “as a very basic starting point, identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who’s who’...a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities” (Jenkins 2008:5). Identity in poetic analysis should be considered on the basis of poetic text analysis principles. According to Litell “the speaker in a poem is the voice that “talks” to the reader, like the narrator in fiction.” And Litell traces connection between identity and poetic text, “the speaker and poet are not necessarily identical. Often a poet creates a speaker with a distinct identity in order to achieve a particular effect” (Litell 2002:1450). Using Richard Jenkin’s words “equally familiar is the theme of ‘lost’ or ‘confused’ identity: people who can’t prove who they are, who appear not to know ‘who they are’, who are one thing one moment and something else the next, who are in the throes of ‘identity crises’” (Jenkins 2008:26). Then, the question is what activates concern with identity. “The transformation of everyday life in the affluent West during the 1950s and 1960s, for example, occurred amid argument and conflict about gender, sexuality, generation, race, class, imperialism and patriotism; all of which speak very directly to our topic here” (Jenkins 2008:26).

Poem is a complex system of elements which are connected by some main idea (Lotman 1996: 48). Poem analysis is quite a difficult task because one can find more than one subject for analysis: “1) poem’s place in the creative evolution of a poet; 2) in the history of the genre and literary movements; 3) in the literary and social movements of era; 3) in relation with the biography of the poet to his ideological position” (Holshevnikov 1985: 5).

Borev suggests five “fundamental steps” (Borev 1985:15) of analysis, the first thing is to make an overall picture of the text. One should note here that it is necessary to read other critiques in order to define from which side a work needs to be considered (Borev 1985:15). Further, the author asserts that it is important to understand whether the work is associated with the global background, and Borev identifies the following concepts: “reality”, “the art world”, “culture” (Borev 1985: 17-18). From the presented text it is clear that these terms are closely related to a literary text, they will help to read and analyse a text. Additionally, one needs to identify the “structure” (Borev 1985: 21) of the text. The next stage, as the author writes is “the definition of the meaning and value of the work in light of its social functioning (Borev 1985: 25). And the logical conclusion of the analysis is a peculiar conclusion and determination of the significance of the work (Borev 1985: 30).

In addition, there is another way to analyse a poetic text, I.A Richards suggests, that poetry should be viewed without context with author. His analysis is “philosophic, linguistic and psychological and semantics was a target of his researches” (Gower 2004: 452).

As to approaches to poetic text analysis, the first one is structural, which considers work as “a system of techniques “(Borev 1988:21), structural analysis represents a text as a bond of certain elements. The principles of structural analysis are summarised as follows: identification of bases; division of elements; studying of separate elements and the system of their interrelationships, integrity, which consists of elements; a synchronous approach, which suggests not the history of the emergence of a literary work, but structure (ibid. 22). In the book *Past into Present* (2004) another principle in analysis is stated, *deconstruction*, a “‘post-industrial’ theory deriving from Jacques Derrida (b. 1930) which aims to show that all texts undermine their own claims to absolute meaning, emphasizing that the reader plays an essential part in the production of meaning” (Gower 2004: 452-453). Moreover, there are also semiotic and stylistic analyses. In this particular work poems will be analysed by structural stylistic analysis.

The research paper is aimed to define current topics and issues in modern poetry, to compare the relationship between the two poets, Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine, the life-cycle of a person by means of analysis of selected poems. The hypothesis of this paper is: speakers’ concerns with identity, which they evaluate in connection with their belonging to the society, is expressed through the choice of epithets in poems "Epi-thalamion“, “Duality”, “River” and “Confessions” by Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine.

## CHAPTER I

### THEMES AND IDEAS OF ABSE'S AND RAINE'S POETRY

#### 1.1 K. Raine' Poetry in the Context of Modern Poetry

Before discussion the concern with identity in selected poems, it should be said that Kathleen Raine and Dannie Abse are vivid representatives of contemporary poetry. Many critics discussed their works and researched biographies. Raine and Abse touch different topics, for example, such topic as concern with identity.

Talking about contemporary poetry, it should be assumed that society under big changes in the twentieth century. Poets resorted to more aestheticism in their works, and the theme of nature ceased to be the main source of inspiration.

Kathleen Raine is a representative of 20 century poetry; she studied Jung's philosophy and believed in eternal existence. Oak and Euker wrote that Raine was not afraid of death. She explored the theme of rebirth and believed that the human being lives after death. According to Raine death was an inevitable event in our life, a new stage, the beginning of somewhat greater (Euker 2012). By analysing the poem *Wilderness* one can see two complete different worlds which exist there, the world of the child and the adult world; Karayeva is of the opinion that this is a deeply personal poem (Karayeva 2009). The poem *Wilderness* has a religious topic, this topic sounds in Raine's works quite often. The physical world seems to be not that attractive as an illusory, childish and beautiful world. (Karayeva 2009). In Raine's poetry nature is pristine, original and beautiful (Euker 2012).

Raine explored such themes as nature, Christian mythology, ancient myths; she applied psychoanalysis in poems. (Karayeva 2009: 99-100). Karayeva in "English Literary Autobiography" (2009) defines the role of Jung in Raine's approach to poetry:

K. Raine fascination with Jung is aspiration to look into the subconscious, poetic images gleaned from there called it the most archetypal determine myth poetical interpretation of external and internal experience of life in her autobiography - interpretation that it implements, referring directly to Jung in the preface to the first volume of her autobiography, "Find your myth, them live it, was Jung's rule of life". (Karayeva 2009: 101)

Raine borrowed a lot of images from Blake and Yeats. Raine studied biology in the University; she had a logical and analytical attitude of mind. These qualities can be traced in her works (Karayeva 2009: 115). She used the theme of nature in her texts, nature is an independent and free place. Kathleen Raine is a known British poet; she worked as translator and critic. She received literature awards: "Gold Medal for Literature, the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize, the Oscar Blumenthal Prize, the Chapelbrook



Award, the Cholmondeley Award, and the Smith Literary Award and a Commandeur de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres" (Poetry Foundation 2014: 1, 4 para).

Her critical reviews are devoted to the analysis of William Blake's works. Mary Oak (2012: 10) argues that Raine's poem *The Well* addresses ancient times and is an example of 'spiritual poetry'. This poem was written in 1960's and is closely connected "with spiritual poetry" (Oak: 10). The theme of nature also sounds in Raine's poetry; she studied natural sciences, the author also used Celtic motives in her poetry.

Farisha Euker, the executive editor of Luvah Journal, asserts that Kathleen Raine was concerned with life after death, and the holy Bible theme sounds in her work regularly. Life in representation of the poet exists in other universe and worlds (Euker 2012:2). The author of this article makes a critical analysis of poem "The Wilderness". According to Euker, this poem has a personal background; Raine focuses on "her personal experience": "the poem can be called universal: although it stands on the base of theological and religious notion of creation, it is experienced living in the cosmos" (Euker 2012:3).

Besides the theme of nature Raine also explored the theme of space and the universe. According to Euker (ibid.) Raine "believed that the two worlds of mundane values and spiritual values appear side by side in the history of created universe but spirituality has been forgotten in societies which are mainly materialistic and corrupted".

Raine's poems consist of two different realities, spiritual and practical. Karayeva and Euker claim that Raine used metaphysical themes in her poems. For Kathleen Raine nature is not only canvas for the picture of a poem, but an individual element which has its own life in her texts. Raine, similarly to her mentor Blake, used symbolism in poems. Symbolism is "a late 19th-century movement in art that sought to express mystical or abstract ideas through the symbolic use of images" (Collins 2014:1, 4 para). In symbolism artistic space is a system of levels. As a result:

So, especially in the non-classical poetry change the relationship between the external realities, this serves material for artistic creation, and the author, which structures the material in accordance with their aesthetic goals. (Temirshina 2012:6)

John R. Doyle, JR. wrote in his article "Merits acclaim of critics", that Raine is more famous in America, than in England. It happened because Raine had written "serious poetry". The poet had own style, which is noticeable and unique. The author notices that Raine uses all the time nature as a subject in her poems. Doyle said that: "readers of Kathleen Raine's poems will quickly observe that they are elemental in more than one

sense. In addition to the root meaning, her poems are elemental in that they are simple, pure, and concerned with first principles” (Doyle, 5 para).

According to Keeble (2014: para 2):

From the beginning Kathleen Raine’s poetry combined a singular clarity of sight and diction with a voice distinctly her own in which the forms of nature are seen with a directness that is without conventional sentiment yet coupled with an affinity of mood and intimacy of imaginative vision that penetrates to the numinous core of natural forms .

To summarize, critics of Raine’s poetry (Doyle, Temirshina, Keeble, Euker) suggest four main topics of her poems: 1) nature, 2) religion 3) symbolism and 4) metaphysical existence. Her texts were analysed in connection with William Blake’s poetry, Yung’s philosophy, the romantic concept of nature.

### **1.2 D. Abse' Poetry in the Context of Modern Poetry**

Dannie Abse is a famous Welsh poet, to clarify some aspects of his works, it is important to say that Abse is connected with medicine.

According to James D. Finn Abse tried to copy the style of Dylan Thopmson in the book “Ash on a Young Man’s Sleeve”. The tone of the article is quite critical, it was a publication of 1955 (Finn 1955). In the latest interview with Phil Morris Abse said, that he regrets that Thomas was a key person in his poetic work (Morris). Abse in his poetic works is also compared to Larkin.

Abse is known as a Welsh poet, but in fact, he was widely criticized for not being a true representative of Welsh literature. Abse never has a goal to get a proper description as someone.

D. Abse was born in a mixed family, his mother was a Jewish, father had a small business, but it collided; his family consisted of 3 another children, sister and 2 brothers. In spite of Dannie Abse’s roots he never discussed in public his connection with Jews, but this theme sounds in his poems and texts. Themes of his works are daily life, loss, Jewish themes, social issues and family.

Phill Morris in interview with Dannie Abse mentioned that “love, loss and memory are contrast and prominent themes in Abse’s work” (Morris, 2014: para. 3).

Abse said in the interview that, “I’m Jew as long as there is one anti-Semite alive” (ibid: para. 5). This particular phrase gives a clear representation of his position, he is not concerned with national identity, and in addition he respects the human right to be himself. It could be said that Abse used the Jewish subject often, but after analysing texts and articles, it is clear that it is not the main aspect.

Although *The New Yorker* also criticised him because he cannot organise his thoughts in material, nevertheless he is a gifted author, because figures which exist in his texts are flourishing (*The New Yorker*: 1957).

Isabel Quigly appreciates the manner of Dannie Abse, his works touch readers, but content is minor (Quigly 1956). Edwin Muir asserts that Abse's technique is not ideal, however he has own point of view (Muir 1957).

In 1959 critics' attitude towards Dannie Abse was more positive, Gene Baro named Abse as the representative of the new in poetry; according to Baro, Abse has everything to be a poet, readers understand his works, because they have same roots, he is verisimilar, poems include personal experience, he writes about love and feelings (Baro 1959). The author of the article argues that his poems are "metaphysical and social" (Baro 1959).

In 1976 critics are more encouraging, they do not notice in Abse's works traces of Thompson and Larkin, but appreciate his own style, for example, Lambert points that Abse uses his medicine experiments, it sounds in Pythagoros (Lambert 1976), Abse searched for own patterns in poetry. Soon Abse rejected the theme of "public' poetry" and he created a new vision (Mathias 1967).

In 1951-1956 the poet used *symbolism* in his works; the world depicted in his poems looked two-sided, the one to be moral and the second to be personal. The poem "Epithamilion" was also written during that time. As the critic noticed Abse's world is created from many levels of symbolism (Mathias 1967). The poem "Glove" is an expressive example of symbolism, for example:

Not a face now, but a mask,  
No a hand now, but a glove. (Times 1973)

As was written in the Times:

There is, however, one context (and only one that I can think of) in which both mask and glove are beneficently joined, and that is the operating theatre. Here both are the accompaniment of intent to heal, to make whole. They are indeed the formalisation of beneficence as exemplified in surgery, and I have no doubt that this is how Dannie Abse meant them to be understood. What they provide, however, is an area of confusion in this poem, the more because, in themselves dual- or treble-purposed, they have been used by the poet elsewhere with totally different significance. Carry-overs from poem to poem, in any case, raise questions of peculiar difficulty. (Times 1973)

It could be said that Abse is concerned with identity in a second edition of *Collected Poems*. His poems "Duality" and "The Trial" show diversity of human nature (Poole 1989). The critic asserts that Abse uses the idea of pluralism. According to *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1993) pluralism "is now used to cover a variety of beliefs <...>. The most controversial of these beliefs is the claim that not only is there a plurality of philosophical, critical, religious, or political theories and

practices - a fact obvious to everyone but that in principle there must be at least two (and probably many more) legitimate ways of grasping or working with any intellectual domain, ways that cannot be reduced to any one purer or truer way (Perminger 1993:918).

Poole states that in Abse unites two personalities, like characters in “Duality”, one doctor and another poet. Mathias writes that duality where variations on a refrain, with frequent and repeated antithesis, create a close and individual structure (Mathias 1967).

Indeed, the collected poems represent all Abse’s nature, his duality, as a Jew and a doctor in one, that is why this book is captivating. The critic characterises Abse as an honest and great poet: Abse is great in every field, as a poet, and a representative of medicine. Poole says (2014: para 7)., “Characteristically plain and colloquial, eschewing rhetoric and verbal dazzle, the richness of a sensualist or the complexity of a symbolist, it's perfectly suited to its task”.

Whittome (2009) states that the way of a poet is difficult, since the young poet is under influence of well-known poets. And what is important, after years of writing, a poet can lose his talent, inspiration, and start to write a text which does not possess rhyme’s magic, however this phenomena did not happen with Abse; with years his texts become more appreciated by critics and readers. The editor of Publishing House Hutchinson, Anthony Whittome, remembers, that the first Abse’s publication was sixty years ago and he claims that such poetic longevity is remarkable, as is the fact that he has remained with this one publisher for all his original poetry and much of his prose. But even more impressive is the continuity and deepening of his vision (ibid.).

Like Kathleen Raine, Dannie Abse also was a representative of romanticism, though his connection with romanticism belonged to the 1940s and it ended when he acquired his unique style. Whittome (ibid.) states that

As his work grew , it became simpler and less rhetorical, but more profound – so that anyone who now encounters one of his poems can immediately grasp its meaning and enjoy its musicality, but then realize that this is only the beginning and that there are other, sometimes less comfortable, levels to explore.

The critic asserts that poems are thematically different. But Dannie Abse is always “full of understanding and affirmation” (ibid.). It is the fact that most critics say that his more successful poems were written after his wife’s dead, Joan, although Whittome highlights that it was “revelation” for the poet. For Abse it is a destroying lost, because he wrote about marriage and a modest blissful life. Mathias (1967) characterizes Abse’s

poems straightforward, sincerity is the main technique, poet turns to modern life and human experience.

To summarize, critics of Abse's poetry (Whittome, Finn, Mathias, Poole, Lambert, Baro, Muir, Quigly, Morris) suggest six main topics of his poems: 1) Jewish theme, politics; 2) lyric romanticism; 3) theme of daily life; 4) theme of lost; 5) symbolism; 6) metaphysic.

Abse does not refer to one theme only – at the beginning he imitates Thomas and uses lyric romanticism. He writes about politics because of his brother Leo involvement in it. Abse touches the theme of daily life; he is concerned with the area of human experience (Mathias 1967). Then the themes of diversity in human personality, society and masks which are necessary to wear enter his works; later, because of the tragedy with his wife he started to consider the theme of loss, the theme of endless love. These themes have enriched his poetry – the tragedy made his texts truthful, and this fact was noticed by the critics. According to reviews modern Abse's poetry is complicated and profound, his texts are divided into many levels, they are full of symbolisms and experience.

## CHAPTER II

### POETRY OF RAINE AND ABSE: THE SPEAKER'S CONCERN WITH IDENTITY

According to Michael D.C Drout modern poetry can be characterized as “fragmented” and “diverse”. Also he claims that poetry can be defined in numerous means. “Poetry is a verbal art form, which both form and content are important, in which sound and meaning are both essential for the artwork <...>. Poetry is patterned at various different levels, and part of the experience of reading or hearing poetry is the recognition of patterns” (Drout 2008:108).

As an example the author presents such stanza: “there once was a man from Nantucker”. Drout suggests that the reader immediately will understand which *pattern* it is, and also he asserts that: “we do not need to know the specific meter of the line to recognize it, nor do we have to figure out a particular rhyme scheme to recognize whether or not a line fits” (Drout 2008:7). Thus, poetry is a combination of forms, and these particular forms make the poem recognizable; the task of the poetic text analysis is to define the forms and stylistic means used by the poet to understand poets’ intentions and ideas. The present paper narrows the analysis to the use of epithets to reveal poets’ perception of the issue of identity.

The first scheme of analysis was taken from materials which are available at Haverford University, the title is “A Guide to reading Poetry effectively”, and this scheme is a model to reveal in what manner epithets show the concern with human identity. This particular scheme was chosen because the structure is very clear and complete, it helps to analyse poems from different perspectives and fulfil the purpose of the paper. The Model consists of five parts, first is *Content*, second is *Structure*, third is *Style*, fourth is *Poetic effects*, and final is *Hermeneutic Questions* (Haverford University). In order to verify the hypothesis the analysis is focused on epithets. The second chosen scheme is “Structural Linguistic Analysis of Poetic Texts” (Raud, 2012). The model includes a question-answer scheme to “to get the meaning” and “to enjoy the poet’s craft”. The “get the meaning part” includes five questions which help to reveal the poet’s idea and intentions, and the “enjoy the poet’s craft” part covers the areas of the language means used by the poet to reach his/her intentions (lexical, syntactical, phonetic stylistic devices) .

The analysis of the selected poems is divided into two sections. The first section is researching epithets in poems “Confessions” and “Epithalamion”. The second section

deals with such topics as diversity and changing of personality, by taking the example of poems “Duality” and “River”. The analysis will help to define how epithets reveal concern with identity in poems.

## 2.1 Dannie Abse: “Epithalamion”. Kathleen Raine: “Confessions”

These poems were chosen because they are united under the same topics - love and death; love and loss; religion. These themes influence on the change of identity.

The first poem under analysis is “Epithalamion” by Dannie Abse.

Singing, today I married my white girl  
beautiful in a barley field.  
Green on thy finger a grass blade curled,  
 so with this ring I thee wed, I thee wed,  
 and send our love to the loveless world  
 of all the living and all the dead.

Now, no more than vulnerable human,  
 we, more than one, less than two,  
 are nearly ourselves in a barley field -  
 and only love is the rent that's due  
 though the bailiffs of time return anew  
 to all the living but not the dead.

Shipwrecked, the sun sinks down harbours  
 of a sky, unloads its liquid cargoes  
 of marigolds, and I and my white girl  
 lie still in the barley - who else wishes  
 to speak, what more can be said  
 by all the living against all the dead?

Come then all you wedding guests:  
green ghost of trees, gold of barley,  
 you blackbird priests in the field,  
 you wind that shakes the pansy head  
 fluttering on a stalk like a butterfly;  
 come the living and come the dead.

Listen flowers, birds, winds, worlds,  
 tell all today that I married  
 more than a white girl in the barley -  
 for today I took to my human bed  
 flower and bird and wind and world,  
 and all the living and all the dead ( in Whittome 2009).

### I. Content

1. The title is Epithalamion, according to dictionary epithalamion is “a song or poem in honour of a bride and bridegroom” (Dictionary 2014, 2 para). This definition suggests that this poem has a positive meaning, but through the analysis it is clear that the poem is far from being sanguine.
2. The theme is indirectly stated, first of all the title is epithalamion. The title’s meaning is optimistic, but after reading it is clear that the attitude is sad.

Themes shift from one to another, it is possible to characterize the structure of the themes in the poem, first of all it is love, marriage; duration of life, mortality, defencelessness of human life. And the epithets help to present this:

- a) White girl is a symbol of marriage, purity - this epithet represents the theme of love and marriage.
- b) Vulnerable human, the meaning is human is fragile, and his life is framed by time.

This group of epithets (“white girl” and “vulnerable human”) symbolize mortality of life and immortality of love.

- c) Shipwrecked, the symbol of crashed dreams, lost love.

Poem takes place when the couple is married, and it embraces all periods of their life, till the death of the “white girl”. The narrator is explicit, apparently that this is description of poet’s life, considering the facts of Abse’s life. The mood is quiet miserable, although it is an epithalamion, it should be cheerful, however this oath is given already after death, and this is the oath of endless love.

## II. Structure

Poem can be divided into five parts: “of all the living and all the dead”, “to all the living but not the dead”, “by all the living against all the dead” (with question mark), “come the living and come the dead”, and all the living and all the dead”. The poet uses repetition devices in each stanza also he uses epithets which represent this condition of being between life and death.

## III. Style

It is important to emphasize that poem’s language suggests symbolism, which is represented by the epithet in “white girl”, i.e. it stands for the symbol of bride.

## IV. Poetic effects

List of epithets: “white girl”, “*beautiful* in a barley field”, “*vulnerable human*”, “*shipwrecked*”, “*green ghosts of trees*”.

## V. Hermeneutic Questions

Epithets of this poem are united to create the thesis, which was represented in hypothesis, human is defenceless from life’s circumstances and support; love only gives support. Even after death of the “white girl” the speaker continues to live, in order to fulfil his epithalamion.

In Anglo-Welsh Review’s interview with Dannie Abse the poet describes the meaning of this poem:



God exists because he is absent. I'm a secular Jew. I've said before that Auschwitz and Hitler have made me more of a Jew than Moses has. On the other hand, one of the large central things in public life in my lifetime has been Auschwitz, and I can't forget it, ever. But I'm not a *religious* Jew. That is not to say that one doesn't apprehend the mystery. Earlier you suggested that I try to define that which is undefinable and I think that's probably right. However, I never saw any of those images you've mentioned as having anything to do with an afterlife. It's legitimate for other people to see it that way if they wish to. ( Anglo-Welsh Review 1975)

The second poem under analysis is “Confessions” by Kathleen Raine

Wanting to know all  
 I overlooked each particle  
 Containing the whole  
*Unknowable.*  
 Intent on one *great* love, *perfect*,  
 Requited and for ever,  
 I missed love's everywhere  
*Small presence, thousand-guised.*

And lifelong have been reading  
 Book after book, searching  
 For wisdom, but bringing  
 Only my own understanding.

Forgive me, forgiver,  
 Whether you be *infinite omniscient*  
 Or some *unnoticed* other  
 My existence has hurt.

Being what I am  
 What could I do but wrong?  
 Yet love can bring  
 To heart healing  
 To chaos meaning (In Poemhunter 2004:3).

## I. Content

The title is “Confessions”, it suggests that poem has confessional meaning; the speaker would like to talk about something that happened in his or her life, the title makes the poem personal. The theme is stated indirectly, this poem contains the multiple choice of topics: first is love, second is religion, third is mysteries of universe, and last is vulnerability of the human`s nature.

It is a personal confession: it is known that Raine believed in immortality of the universe, and she was a religious person. The speaker asks for forgiveness in order to continue life as an immortal spirit:

*Forgive me, forgiver,*  
*Whether you be infinite omniscient*  
*Or some unnoticed other*

The poem addresses three characters “forgiver”, “infinite omniscient” and “unnoticed other”.

## II. Structure

The poem can be divided in two sections, from “wanting to know all” till “Only my own understanding”; second section is from “Forgive me, forgiver...” till “To chaos meaning”, which follow the changes of the speaker’s mind and the process of finding the true self.

**III. Style**

The poem’s language is primarily literal, but have some symbols, for example “infinite omniscient” is symbol of God, “unnoticed other” is a common human.

**IV. Poetic effects**

The poem contains epithets: “unknowable”, “one great love, perfect”; “small presence, thousand-guised”, “infinite omniscient”; “unnoticed other” (see Table 2)

**V. Hermeneutic Questions**

According to Haverford University “Hermeneutic circle“ is a situation when “many questions will have to be revised multiple times as your analysis of the poem proceeds“. Meaning of the poem is impuissance of human against life orders, and epithets highlight this idea, in, for example, “small presence”, although as speaker believes:

Yet love can bring  
To heart healing  
To chaos meaning. (Raine)

Love and religion support human vulnerability in this world.

Before starting the next analysis, the common concepts of “Epithalamion” and “Confessions” can be presented in a summary table:

|                     | Religious theme | Theme of love and loss | Life and Death | Epithets, which represent it                                |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|---|
| Poem “Epithalamion” | +               | +                      | +              | <i>Loveless world, vulnerable human</i>                     |
| Poem “Confession”   | +               | +                      | +              | <i>Great love, perfect; Small presence; unnoticed other</i> |

+ shows that both poets have such topics in their poems

**Table 1. Themes in poems**

This table helps to underline 3 common themes in poems; all themes are supported with epithets.

## 2.2 Kathleen Raine: “River”. Dannie Abse: “Duality”

The following analysis reveals how identity is expressed in the topic of diversity through epithets in poems “Duality” and “River”.

The third selected poem is “River” by Kathleen Raine.

In my first sleep  
I came to the river  
And looked down  
Through the *clear* water -  
Only in dream  
Water so *pure*,  
*Laced and undulant*  
Lines of flow  
On its *rocky* bed  
Water of life  
Streaming for ever.

A house was there  
Beside the river  
And I, arrived,  
An expected guest  
About to explore  
*Old* gardens and libraries -  
But the car was waiting  
To drive me away.

*One last* look  
Into that *bright* stream -  
Trout there were  
And *clear* on the bottom  
Monster form  
Of the *great* crayfish  
That crawls to the moon.  
On its *rocky* bed  
Living water  
In whorls and ripples  
Flowing unbended.

There was the car  
To drive me away.  
We crossed the river  
Of living water -  
I might not stay,  
But must return  
By the road too *short*  
To the waiting day.

In my second dream  
Pure I was and *free*  
By the *rapid* stream,  
My *crystal house* the sky,  
The *pure crystalline* sky.

Into the stream I flung  
A bottle of *clear* glass

That twirled and tossed and spun  
 In the water's race  
 Flashing the morning sun.

Down that *swift* river  
 I saw it borne away,  
 My empty *crystal* form,  
 Exultant saw it caught  
 Into the current's spin,  
 The flashing water's run (In Poemhunter 2004).

### **I. The language of the poem**

The language of the poem is simple, consists of many adjectives, these adjectives create background of this poem. The poet gives clear, sharp impressions by using the description of nature. Nature reveals the inner world of the speaker. The epithets draw the picture of nature: “clear water”, “pure water”, “rocky”, “bright stream”, “great crayfish”, “rapid stream”, “pure crystalline sky”, “flashing the morning sun”, “swift river”, “flashing water”.

The first part of the poem consists of “clear”, “pure”, “lace”, “undulant”, “rocky” epithets. These particular epithets represent clarity in narrator`s mind in the past. The epithets “undulant and laced” represent narrator`s singularity.

The poem can be divided in two parts, first, the nostalgia of the speaker, for example: “pure” and “clear”. And the second part is present time; speaker`s “empty crystal form” fall into the spin. Epithets of this poem present evolution of narrator`s world. His or her identity has changed and the “empty crystal form” became different.

### **II. Who is the speaker?**

The speaker is someone who is sleeping, and in a dream he or she sees the river. The river is a lifetime, which consists of some periods (first sleep, second sleep). As we read along we can tell the speaker is talking to anyone who might understand the world of nature in his or her dream.

The specific details of the poem clearly indicate exact time, epithets help to do that. First sleep is telling that time is close to evening, night. It is seen in such stanzas: “Of the great crayfish; that crawls to the moon”. The second sleep happening in a daytime, it is seen in such epithet “flashing the morning sun”.

### **III. What is the central purpose of the poem?**

The purpose of the poem might be to say that things are changing, and some events in human life create a new identity, new person. And sometimes, like the speaker we are nostalgic and recall our past, but some processes are irreversible.

The fourth selected poem is “Duality” by Dannie Abse.

Twice upon a time,  
there was a man who had two faces,  
two faces but one profile:  
not Jekyll and Hyde, *not good and bad*,  
and if one were cut, the other would bleed –  
two faces *different* as hot and cold.

At night, hung on the hooks on the wall  
above that man’s minatory head,  
one wants brass where one wants gold,  
one sees *white* and one sees *black*,  
and one mouth eats the other  
until the *second sweet* mouth bites back.

They dream their separate dreams  
hanging on the wall above the bed.  
The *first* voice cries: ‘He’s not what he seems,  
,’ but the *second* one sighs: ‘He is what he is,’  
then one shouts ‘wine’ and the other screams ‘bread’,  
and so they will all his raving days  
until they die on his *double-crossed* head.

At signposts he must wear them both.  
Each would go their separate ways  
as the East or the West wind blows  
– and *dark* and *light* they both would praise,  
but one would melt, the other one freeze.

I am that man twice upon this time:  
my two voices sing to make one rhyme.  
Death I love and Death I hate,

(I’ll be with you soon and late).  
Love I love and Love I loathe  
God I mock and God I prove,  
yes, myself I kill, myself I save.

Now, now, I hang these masks on the wall.  
Oh Time, take one and leave me all  
lest four tears from two eyes fall( In Whittome 2009).

### I. The language of the poem

The language of “Duality” is expressive, it is not simple. The word “duality” consists of two parts, one positive and the second is opposite. We can understand that the poem has two sides. The author uses epithets “good and bad”, “black and white”, “dark and light” to give clear and sharp images of speaker’s duality. The following epithets shape the image of the speaker: 1) “good”, 2) “bad”, 3) “different”, 4) “minatory”, 5) “white”, 6) “black”, 7) “separate”, 8) “double-crossed”, 9) “dark”, 10) “light”.

### II. Who is the speaker?

The speaker is a person who has two different personalities (“double-crossed head”), they create a conflict. One personality has own wishes, ideas and the second one has them just opposite.

### What is the central purpose of the poem?

The purpose of poem is to show the diversity of human nature. Every person has own unique identity. The identity is shaped by many factors (social, gender, cultural). And diversity of identity is represented by epithets, for example: “black and white”, “light and dark”, “good and bad”.

The following table summarises how epithets reveal the concept of identity in poems.

| <b>Title</b>   | <b>Epithet</b>                 | <b>Meaning</b>   | <b>Concern with identity</b>  |
|----------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| „Epithalamion“ | <u>White</u> ( adjective) girl | According to Macmillan Dictionary (2014) white is „something that is white is the same colour as milk or snow. If something is similar to this colour, you can say that it is a whitish colour“. | This particular epithet shows how the speaker sees his bride. She („white girl“) is pure and precious to the speaker.   |
|                | <u>Beautiful</u>               | In Collins Dictionary (in future C. D) this adjective has 2 meanings, first is „possessing beauty; aesthetically pleasing“ and the second is „highly enjoyable; very pleasant „.                 | Again this epithet was used to describe the „white girl“. She is attractive in the opinion of the author.   |
|                | <u>Loveless</u> world          | Loveless means without love or as written in C.D „receiving or giving no love“.  | This epithet represents irony, speaker is „ sending love to loveless world“. He believes that the world is without love. And their feelings can fulfil our empty world. |
|                | <u>vulnerable</u> human        | According to C. D (Collins 2014) this  | This epithet is used to show that the person is   |

|               |                            |  |   |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|---|
|               |                            | adjective has these definitions: „1) capable of being physically or emotionally wounded or hurt;<br>2) open to temptation, persuasion, censure, etc.; 3) liable or exposed o disease, disaster, etc.“. | weak without love in this world. The speaker is going to marry the “white girl”. Their union will be the symbol of love and protective force in this world. |
| „Confessions“ | <u>Great, perfect</u> love | The C. D (2014) defines adjective „great“ as „impressive or striking“.<br>Perfect is interpreted this way „excellent in all respects“.   | The speaker was looking for an ideal love all his or her life and missed true.  |
|               | <u>Unknowable</u>          | According to C.D (2014) unknowable is „1) incapable of being known or understood;<br>2) beyond human understanding“.   | This particular stylistic device describes all that the speaker has not found, or probably did not manage to find.  |
|               | <u>Small</u> presence      | The C.D suggests this definition „comparatively little; limited in size, number, importance, etc“.   | This epithet displays a lifetime of a person in this world. The speaker underlines that he or she has lost love.  |
|               | <u>infinite</u> omniscient | According to C.D (2014) infinite means „having no limits or boundaries in time, space, extent, or magnitude“.  | This particular epithet suggests that infinite omniscient is God, and human is defenceless against him.   |

|         |                    |  |   |
|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| „River“ | <u>Clear water</u> | In D.C (2014) is stated that clear is „1) free from darkness or obscurity; 2) transparent ⇒ clear water; 3) even and pure in tone or colour“.  | „Clear water“ in this poem represents purity of mind „ but only in a dream“, before the speaker was different. His personality has changed. |
|         | <u>Pure</u>        | According to C. D (2014) pure has these meanings : „1) free from tainting or polluting matter;2) clean; wholesome ⇒ pure water; 3) free from moral taint or defilement ⇒ pure love“.                     | This epithet (like „clean“) is related to previous life of the speaker.   |
|         | <u>Undulant</u>    | In C. D (2014) is written that undulant is „resembling waves“.   | The water is compared to life; undulant (epithet) is a symbol of freedom.   |
|         | <u>Rocky bed</u>   | Rocky as an adjective has these meanings: „1) consisting of or abounding in rocks ⇒ a rocky shore; 2) hard or unyielding ⇒ rocky determination; 3) hard like rock ⇒ rocky muscles“ (Collins Dictionary). | This epithet describes obstacles in a life.   |
|         | <u>Old gardens</u> | Old – “of or relating to advanced years or a long life” (Collins 2014).  | Old is a characteristic of nature. And nature the reveals inner world of the speaker.   |
|         | <u>Last look</u>   | Last – “being, happen-   | This epithet represents the   |



|  |                                |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
|  |                                | ing, or coming at the end or after all others; (esp. relating to the end of a person's life or of the world)” (Collins 2014).        | old state of the speaker.  |
|  | And <u>clear</u> on the bottom | Clear – “without discoloration, blemish, or defect” (Collins 2014).  | The epithet underlines the concept of purity.                                  |
|  | <u>Great</u> crayfish          | Great is “relatively large in size or extent; big” (ibid 2014).  | The epithet suggests enormousness of the world of nature                       |
|  | <u>Short</u>                   | Short is “of little length; not long” (ibid 2014).   | This particular epithet represents the duration of life.                       |
|  | <u>Free</u>                    | Free is “able to act at will; not under compulsion or restraint” (ibid 2014).  | The epithet underlines the aspiration for being free and independent           |
|  | <u>Rapid</u> stream            | Rapid –“(of an action or movement) performed or occurring during a short interval of time” (ibid 2014).                              | The epithet embodies liberty of the speaker.                                   |
|  | <u>pure crystal-line</u> sky   | Pure- “free from moral taint or defilement” (ibid 2014).<br>Crystalline – “made of or like crystal; transparent; clear” (ibid 2014). | This epithet symbolizes speaker`s bright future (her or she had such future) . |
|  | <u>Clear</u> glass             | Clear- transparent.  | It is a form of the previous state.  |
|  | <u>Swift</u> river             | Swift – “moving or able  | The epithet underlines the   |

|           |                     |   |  |
|-----------|---------------------|---|--|
|           |                     | to move quickly; fast” (ibid).  | aspiration for being free and independent  |
|           | <u>Crystal form</u> | Crystal – “resembling crystal; transparent ⇒ crystal water” (ibid).                       | This epithet belongs to the “group of transparent epithets”. It reveals pure and mental condition  |
| „Duality“ | <u>Good</u>         | Good- “having admirable, pleasing, superior, or positive qualities; not negative” (ibid). | This epithet opens the identity of the narrator.   |
|           | <u>Bad</u>          | Bad – “not good; of poor quality; inadequate; inferior” (ibid).                           | The second identity. It should be negative in order to survive in this world.                      |
|           | <u>Different</u>    | Different – “not identical or the same; other” (ibid).                                    | These identities (“bad and good”) are totally different.   |
|           | <u>Minatory</u>     | Minatory- “threatening or menacing” (ibid).   | The epithet underlines the danger of duality   |
|           | <u>White</u>        | White – “morally unblemished” (ibid).   | Again, this epithet is used to characterize the opposite meaning “white and black; good and bad “. |
|           | <u>Black</u>        | Black – “without light; completely dark”.   | One more epithet to represent the dissimilarity between to identities.                             |
|           | <u>separate</u>     | Separate - “existing or considered independently” (ibid).                                 | Separate, Dark and light are representing the difference between speakers.                         |
|           | <u>dark</u>         | Dark – “having little or no light” (ibid).  | One more epithet to represent the dissimilarity between to identities.                             |
|           | <u>Light</u>        | Light – “reflecting or transmitting a large   | The epithet is used to characterize the opposites  |

|  |  |                          |  |
|--|--|--------------------------|--|
|  |  | amount of light “(ibid). | in the self of the speaker<br>“white and black; good<br>and bad “. |
|--|--|--------------------------|--|

\*- epithets are underlined

**Table 2. Identity represented by epithets.**

These particular epithets help to reveal speakers’ concerns with identity, which they evaluate in connection with their belonging to the society and their inner world. First of all, it should be noted that Abse and Raine are highlighting two opposites. The first one (in poems "Epithalamion „and “Confessions”) is when a person is defenceless in the world without love, support and belief.

The second one (in poems “Duality”, “River”) is when a person should wear masks in order to fit into society. Additionally, a person is changing through the lifetime and these changes make his identity different.

Both poets express their concerns with how society and circumstances of life bring changes to human`s personality.

## CONCLUSION

Contemporary poetry can be characterised by true self's search, poets express their concerns with identity and created speakers with different personalities. The changes in the world suggested to poetry new topics, like gender, culture, national multiplicity, conviction, language as well as the position in society. Identity in poetic analysis should be considered on the basis of poetic text analysis principles. According to Litell "the speaker in a poem is the voice that "talks" to the reader, like the narrator in fiction." And Litell traces connection between identity and poetic text, "the speaker and poet are not necessarily identical" (Litell 2002:1450). 20 century poets Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine were particularly interested in the changing issues of identity in their work by employing various stylistic devices in their poetic works.

Many critics have studied themes and trends in poems of Raine and Abse. They tried to highlight main topics and trends. According to Euker Kathleen Raine was particularly interested in life after death (Euker 2012:2), and this is the topic through which Raine discussed many modern themes, including the search for speaker's true self.

Whittome, Finn, Mathias, Poole, Lambert, Baro, Muir, Quigly and Morris are underlining six main topics of Abse's poetry: 1) Jewish theme, politics; 2) lyric romanticism; 3) theme of daily life; 4) theme of lost; 5) symbolism; 6) metaphysic. The goal of the present paper is to observe whether speakers connect their concern with identity with their belonging to the society. For the analysis were chosen four poems: "Epithalamion", "Duality" (D. Abse) and "River", "Confessions" (K. Raine). The analysis presumes that this concern is expressed by the choice of epithets in the selected poems. For the analysis two schemes ("A Guide to reading Poetry effectively" and "The poetic text analysis study guide") were applied. These particular models helped to reveal connection between identity and epithets. Through the analysis the main topics in poems were emphasized, the image of the speaker were described and epithets were found and examined. These epithets are: "white girl"; "beautiful"; "loveless world"; "vulnerable human"; "great, perfect love"; "unknowable", "small presence"; "infinite omniscient"; "clear water"; "pure"; "undulant"; "rocky bed", "old gardens", "last look"; "and clear on the bottom", "great crayfish"; "Short"; "free"; "rapid stream"; "pure crystalline sky"; "clear glass"; "swift river"; "crystal form"; "good"; "bad"; "different"; "minatory"; "white"; "black"; "separate"; "dark"; "light".

The analysis has confirmed that the speakers of the poems under analysis are connected with society, and they estimate own personality through this connection. The re-

search can underline three types of such a link: 1) with a group of people, 2) with a loved one and 3) with God. The speaker personifies himself through these bonds. Thus the goal of the paper was achieved. The hypothesis has been confirmed: speakers' concern with identity, which they evaluate in connection with their belonging to the society, is expressed through the choice of epithets in poems "Epithalamion", "Duality", "River" and "Confessions" by Dannie Abse and Kathleen Raine .

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## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Käesoleva töö teemaks on „Identiteedi probleem kaasaegses poeesias“ . Antud töö eesmärgiks on välja uurida kuidas isiksuse aspektid on esitatud kaasaegses poeesias kahe autori eeskujul Kathleen Raine ja Dannie Abse, analüüsides luuletusi "Epithalamion“, “Duality”, “River” ja “Confessions”. Kaasaegse luuleperiood oli täis kahtlusi ja küsimusi inimese tuleviku suhtes, inimesed olid üha enam mures sotsiaalse ja majanduslike argumentidega. See oli aeg, mil identiteedi küsimus või identiteedi kaotus, sai väga aktuaalseks. Inimesed pöördusid sisemise mina poole katsetega määratleda tõelist ennast (Feta 2013).

Paljud luuletajad sel perioodil tundsid täiesti võõrandunud; nad uurisid uusi teemasid ja küsimusi, näiteks sugu, kultuur, riigi mitmekesisus, veendumus, keele kui ka positsioon ühiskonnas.

Käesolev töö koosneb viiest osast, sissejuhatuses arutletakse trende ja liikumisi kaasaegses luules, kuidas analüüsitakse luuletusi.

Esimene peatükk annab ülevaate kriitilistest artiklitest. Lisaks tutvustatakse peamisi teemasid ja suundumusi luuletajate töödes.

Teine peatükk analüüsib valitud luuletusi ja epiteete, mis peegeldavad isiksust.

Analüüsi tulemus kinnitab töö alguses püstitatud hüpoteesi, et isiksuse probleem on seotud sellega kuidas ennast hindab tegelane ühiskonna seose kaudu, mis on väljendatud epiteetide valikuga luuletustes "Epithalamion“, “Duality”, “River” ja “Confessions” , mille autorid on Dannie Abse ja Kathleen Raine.

