

Phonic Musicality as a Means of Recoding in E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*

Lidia Bilonozhko

ABSTRACT

The article examines art interactions, one of the most topical problems in literary criticism, in the form of literary-musical intermedial aspects in E.L. Doctorow's Ragtime. Principles of intermedial analyses have been introduced into the study with the aim of identifying artistic forms, namely specific piano phonic implications, of the musical genre of ragtime within the eponymous novel. These phonic aspects of recoding correspond to the term "word music" as defined in the typology of S.P. Scher. In addition, imitations of sound can be represented by both explicit and implicit poetological techniques defined as references in W. Wolf's conception of "musicalized fiction." E. Doctorow recodes figures of ragtime as complex literary forms based on organic interactions between different intermedial techniques – verbal music, word music, musical structures and techniques. In this respect, correspondences of word music to music as defined by A. Gier have also been considered in this study. The article also attempts to interpret the artistic sense of the analyzed literary-musical intermedial forms. To this end, two main lines have been defined which are connected to eternal human values as well as the writer's intentions to reveal controversial problems of American society.

KEYWORDS

E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*, intermediality, recoding, ragtime music, word music, verbal music, paratextuality

Modern literature provides both readers and literary critics with great challenges. Extending its expressive means, the art of word actively involves different kinds of media – painting, sculpture, music, and cinema into its artistic language and thinking. However, as Brad Bucknell suggests in an analysis of works by W. Pater, E. Pound, J. Joyce and G. Stein, the idea of music as being singularly significant for artists of various media is not new. Bucknell describes modernist and postmodernist artists' attempts to involve musical language with literature as "striving to the recondite through recondite meanings."¹ Clearly more practical research should be done to make theoretical approaches of literary criticism correspondent to the tendencies of modern literary practice, thus enabling a more comprehensive interpretation of literary pieces. From this point of view the currently developing theory of intermediality is understood in this article as a tool of literary critique to systematize research observations based on literary-musical interactions.

In his investigation devoted to the sonority of language, Marc Derveaux considers the duality of musicalization forms as potentially pointing to language play as a result of the erasure of meaning.² In this respect, certain spheres of poetics can be seen to represent a vivid and significant aspect of literary-musical intermediality, specifically poetics that considers language techniques as entwined with artistic meaning or aesthetic messages. Close reading can thus be defined as a central methodical principle of intermedial analyses.

1 Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce and Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

2 Marc Derveaux, "The Sonority of Language in Literary and Musical Modernity" in *Music and Literary Modernism: Critical Essays and Comparative Studies*, ed. Robert P. McParland (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2009), 5.

Modern intermediality theory in the sphere of literary-musical interactions is largely based on concepts formulated by S. P. Scher, A. Gier and W. Wolf. Many literary studies base their research principles in reference to typological systems introduced by these theoreticians. In their works, the significance of sound, both vocal and instrumental, in a literary composition is examined as an element of the intermedial integration of music into literature. The goal of this article is to reveal certain artistic techniques of ragtime in the novel of the same name by E.L. Doctorow, of one of the most well-known American writers of the XXth century. To achieve this goal, the study refers to certain aspects and principles of intermedial analyses, specifically verbal music, word music as well as implicit and explicit musical reference.

Ragtime as a form of musical art derives from both the African-American and European traditions. From the African-American tradition it borrows instability, variability of rhythmic patterns and responsive technique in the right-hand melody, as well as asynchrony between melody and accompaniment, showing great conceptual similarities with cakewalk. Ragtime also has much in common with classical marches, romantic waltzes and polkas.³ The recoding of ragtime musical techniques as well as references to cultural background in Doctorow's *Ragtime* provide a variety of possibilities for textual and conceptual games.

Musical code in Doctorow's *Ragtime* is quite distinctive in considerations of the plot, systems of images, the use of vocabulary and even the formal structure of the novel. The central figure of the putative "verbal music" (S. P. Scher)⁴ is surely the image of Coalhouse Walker, Jr. who, having once appeared and played two famous pieces of ragtime for an average American family, changed their life completely and by his later actions problematize the fundamental presuppositions of the American dream.

According to S. P. Scher's typology, the very possibility of language to imitate musical sounds is primarily provided by its phonetic level, which can often be observed in poetry, a phenomenon of musical phonetic imitation that Scher defines as "word music."⁵ This term corresponds to A. Gier's "music as signified."⁶ Although in Doctorow's *Ragtime* examples of word music may be difficult to identify, the distinct presence of certain sounds is quite distinguishable. This effect is introduced by means of a combination of verbal music techniques and implicit musical references through the principles of comparison as well as through symbolization.

One example of this comes at the end of the 22nd chapter of the novel, where the narrator describes the close friendship between Emma Goldman and Mother's Younger Brother. An episode is related in which the sounds of moving train are compared with "suicide ragtime." It has already been revealed that Mother's Younger Brother is ardently in love with Evelyn Nesbit and having evidenced the touching love story of Sara and Coalhouse he can't stay at his elder sister's home and he rushes to his sweetheart. However, Emma Goldman persuades the young man to give up

3 Valentina Konen, *The Birth of Jazz* (Moscow: Sovietyky Kompozitor, 1990), 130–177.

4 Steven P. Scher, "Notes towards Theory of Verbal Music," in *Essays on Literature and Music (1967–2004)*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (New-York: Rodopi, 2004), 33.

5 Scher, *Essays on Literature and Music*, 30.

6 Albert Gier, "Music in literature: Influences and Analogies," trans. into Russian I. Borisova, *Messenger of Young Scholars. Humanities* 3 (1999): 89.

his bizarre dream of attainable love: "Why? Why can't you accept your own freedom? Why do you have to cling to someone in order to live?"⁷

The character is then depicted between the carriages of a train moving to New Rochelle:

He considered throwing himself under the wheels. He listened to their rhythm, their steady clacking, like the left hand of the rag. The screeching and pounding of metal on metal where the two cars joined was the syncopating right hand. It was a suicide rag. He held the door handles on either side of him listening to the music. The cars jumped under his feet.⁸

Here musical terminology and the characteristics of metallic sounds of a moving mechanism (clacking, screeching, and pounding) are used for comparison. Through intermedial artistic techniques like these the art in the novel appears as an inseparable part of life and its direct reflection.

Thus with the help of literary-artistic means the author represents "fictional music composition."⁹ This means that the presence of music here is not determined by any stereotyped judgments or ideas, as there is no such music composition as "suicide rag" in the real world. The way of "literary composing" in this case is rooted mostly in symbolic-metaphoric meanings of the text. However, prominent elements of onomatopoeia in the above citation also contribute significantly to a prose piece of musicalization actualizing word music techniques.

In consequence of such recoding strategy of ragtime, music as a form of art involves not only emotional, but also historical and therefore objective content. In addition, the suicide ragtime described in the novel can also be compared with the musical background in a film sequence. The combination of verbal music with elements of the word music displays feelings of the individual who is undergoing an extreme situation.

The key to the author's conception of relationships between history and ragtime can be found at the end of the novel: "And by that time the era of *Ragtime* had run out, with the heavy breath of machine, as if history were no more than a tune on a player piano."¹⁰ The acoustic characteristics of sound in this novel are crucial for the *Ragtime's* metaphor of the epoch. The author compares the historical period of the turn of the XXth century with a melody played on a pianola. This relation of music by this instrument is fixed and does not entail a creative understanding or a performer's interpretation of the piece being played. In fact, it is not even necessary to be able to play the piano at all to use this instrument to convey music. The mechanical piano, which is also mentioned in another sequence of the novel, acts as a sign of the transformation to mass art as the subject and object of industrialization, mechanization and commercialization, which can also be seen as the main characteristic of epoch as revealed by the novel.

This metaphor of mechanical art, particularly mechanical music, runs through the entire narrative of Doctorow's *Ragtime*. In W. Wolf's typology, sounds indicated by "implicit musical references"¹¹ appear in the novel through various phonic figures of moving transportation, various

7 Edgar L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* (1975, Los Angeles: Ketab Corporation, 2005, Kindle edition), chap. 22.

8 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 22.

9 Scher, *Essays on Literature and Music*, 30.

10 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 40.

11 Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction. A study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), 57–67.

mechanisms as well as certain emotional exclamations of characters. As a rule, all these sounds imply noise and not strictly music effects, which in poetic sense provides a feeling of chaos, disharmony, anxiety, turmoil, etc.

The novel describes Freud's first visit to New York, during which the psychoanalyst is engendered with emotional resistance to American life and particularly to the sounds of the city: "What oppressed him about the New World was its noise. The terrible clatter of horses and carriages, the clanking and screeching of streetcars, the horns of automobiles."¹² Taking into consideration the sometimes extreme emphasis by critics on the psychoanalytic aspects of the novel's plot, the figure of Freud is a part of historical background and his appearance is not inadvertent. In this respect, Doctorow follows modernist traditions of appropriating "techniques attributed to mass cultural production – shock and sensation"¹³ into the "lexicon of high-cultural aesthetic values." Within the modernist aesthetic paradigm of understanding the human body as being inseparable from the social and ethnic realm,¹⁴ Doctorow addresses rational principles of evaluation. Similarly to how the famous scientist can't really hear the "music" of New York, science itself is shown incapable of dealing with objective life and human nature.

A further consideration of civilized life comes through various figurations of transport sounds which create a vivid picture of the cityscape: "The car moved through the city, its motor humming in the warm afternoon,"¹⁵ "A police van passed them, its bell clanging; it turned the corner,"¹⁶ "Trolleys went along in clusters, their bells ringing, the flashes of electricity from their pantographs crackling along the overhead wires,"¹⁷ "[...] the crowd surged to the doors as the train slid in chuffing and hissing great clouds of steam."¹⁸

Apart from the sounds of moving transport, phonic representations produced by other mechanisms can be found in the descriptions of the trial of Harry Thaw. In a room where journalists are forbidden, Evelin Nesbit hears the sounds of steel pens writing, a detail mentioned in the text three times: "She could hear the scratching of the steel pens,"¹⁹ "She heard the scratch of the steel pens,"²⁰ "She heard the scratches."²¹

In the first citation the sound of pens is characterized by an adjective; in the second and third, by nouns. The structure can be compared with the twelve-bar blues. At the same time, in the repetitions and paraphrases the reception process is focused on sound characteristics as an element of a secondary semiotic system figuring bureaucracy and the cold conventionalism of the trial, thus a projection of pseudo-democracy of the USA.

12 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 6.

13 Allison Peas, *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 165.

14 Peas, *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity*, 166.

15 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 6.

16 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 7.

17 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 12.

18 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 16.

19 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 11.

20 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 11.

21 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 11.

Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, the mechanical sound of working looms triggers in the immigrant Tateh's mind images of poverty, misery, destitution as well as his hopelessness in the fight for rights and freedoms: "He heard the clacking of the looms."²² "I hate machines" – he says to his daughter, – "This country will not let me breathe."²³ Thus the metaphor of breathing emphasizes the essentiality of the material world as opposed to the spiritual one. The image of the Jewish intellectual who cannot become accustomed to the sounds of machines in America represents an alternative modern view on art, one which cannot find a proper space in the strange world of industrial and commercial development. At the same time, art merges with popular culture and fuses into a homogeneous unity. As in many other parts of the novel, the description of mechanical sound provides a means of musicalization on the level of word music techniques, as the word "clacking" not only names the type of the sound, but also demonstrates onomatopoeic features.

However, especially in considering the central metaphor of the mechanical piano, the complete correspondence of clacking looms to word music techniques may also be challenged, as clacking itself is not an imitation of musical sound. Instead, recognizing references to ragtime sounds requires intellectual operations that are mainly associative as well as metaphoric thinking. In this view, it would be likely more suitable to define this phenomenon of sound imitation as an implicit sound analogue.

Thus, in context of the system of ethnic issues the conception the motive of spiritual uneasiness provoked by interpenetration of everyday life and art points to Doctorow's critical attitude toward the idea of the "melting pot" of American culture. Further, the writer's understanding of art as a primary tool to describe the development of the USA is obvious when considering the full scope and content of the novel. Art, it seems, contains the unique characteristics of a nation that can never be lost or forgotten.

In this aspect, the writer provides the main character Coalhouse Walker with leading artistic and conceptual features as ragtime, laid in the basis of the novel's aesthetics, is rooted in African-American culture. Basically, the main line of narration in *Ragtime* is organized around this African-American musician, who as already mentioned represents the central element of verbal music techniques. In addition, the African-American component appears through the principle of mosaics, which may be observed in the following episode.

During one of the meetings in support of the Mexican Revolution, Mother's Younger Brother becomes acquainted with Ben Reitman, Emma Goldman's manager, who was dispensing punch and entertaining guests. While telling Mother's Younger Brother about certain tragic events which happened to him in San Diego "[Reitman] was holding the punch ladle and it began to click against the side of the bowl."²⁴

A closer analysis of the portrayal of Ben Reitman in the novel will facilitate a description of a mosaic combination of several motives: the African-American blues singer, representations in minstrel shows, motives of classical theatrical art, the atmosphere of night clubs where ragtime was born as well as the revolutionary spirit of freedom, self-sacrifice, protest, etc. It is also emphasized

22 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 17.

23 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 17.

24 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 22.

that clicking occurs in an uncontrolled way and it is accompanied by Ben's laugh: "He laughed as if he couldn't believe his own hand shook as it did."²⁵ The linkage of Ben's image with such vivid psychological aspects is quite apparent in this case, activated at the intellectual-intuitive horizon of the reader's reception, which also requires at least a rudimentary knowledge of psychoanalyses. In this regard, the motive of the involuntary clicking of the ladle points to musicality, as it is music which in the purest way not only represents, but also embodies feelings, the inner world and anxieties of a person.

Simultaneously, the recoding of the musical medium in the described episode is completely subordinated to formative principle of the ragtime. It is possible to observe the synthesis of art genres as being the foundational principle of ragtime music. The transformation of specific oral, theatrical as well as historical-cultural concepts plays significant role in this aspect.

Whereas a bluesman would use his voice and its various modulations, a cakewalk performer exploited his footsteps, a black pianist composed his music in the atmosphere of entertainment establishments, the ragtime performed on mechanical piano represented in Ben Reitman as an example of implicit musical references, combines all these within one specific mechanical sound. This phonic representation can be compared as well with the sound of cymbals performing marches within genres of European music. The way these motives are introduced as part of the "artistic-acoustic" picture of the novel can be defined as a way of figuring generic accord from disparate and even dissonant strata. This synthesis is formed from peculiar "minimized matrixes" borrowed from various cultural-artistic layers that play a significant role in the formation of the aesthetics of ragtime.

Another intermedial form of ragtime's recoding that could be distinguished in the text is more connected with European component of this musical genre, namely with the traditions of brass music. Basically, fundamental relations of ragtime with genre of a march, where brass instruments play leading role, are actualized. Among words naming sounds in Doctorow's *Ragtime* there is a part of them pointing to the sounds produced when involving air: "Every few moments there would issue ... a weak or perhaps only decorous groan. Houdini cleared his throat,"²⁶ "He felt the wind in his face and discovered he was shouting,"²⁷ "He would pace his room ... and hum loudly when he heard her voice,"²⁸ "They were dragging the mothers kicking and screaming to trucks ...,"²⁹ "His strident caw could be heard throughout the park,"³⁰ "During dull moments of the game the crowd yelled to him and applauded his antics."³¹ Most references to this kind of sound can be connected with the physical activity of individuals, effects which represent epithets which express various emotional states: pain, anxiety, anger, horror, fear, etc. In many cases these emotional states can be seen to serve as manifestations of extreme situations.

25 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 22.

26 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 13.

27 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 13.

28 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 14.

29 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 16.

30 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 30.

31 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 30.

The musical genre of march is rooted in European musical traditions, and therefore the idea of the march represents a European code in the novel which is exploited in a particular way. The reason for this is obvious when considering the plot of the novel. Essentially, within the conception of existential history conveyed, vivid associations are made between episodes in the history of the USA and of Europe and, even further, between social, multi-ethnic structures and ragtime's dialogically syncretic nature.

At the same time, European culture and literature are generally oriented to the inner world of the human being when compared, for example, with African culture, in which the realistic physicality of human existence dominates more. March is also connected with military life, which appears in the novel as a source of certain reflection. Referring to ragtime's musical aesthetic which is involved in cinema art, Doctorow makes the reader think about the fleeting and illusive nature of life.

The concept of ragtime also helps the author reveal regularity as opposed to the contradictions and oppositions of European and American culture, as ragtime represents artistic unity despite its heterogenic cultural elements. Thus, in returning to phonic background in reference to the brass musical code it's possible to summarize the effects of sound, i.e. ontological characteristics, as caused by the coincidence of conceptual meaning of brass music juxtaposed with functional contextual markers of the novel.

A historic-musical conception of ragtime in one fragment of the text is implied through an explosion: "One day there was a blowout so explosive that it socked four workmen out of river silt and shot them up through the river itself forty feet into the air on the crest of a geyser."³² This describes the deaths of people who passed away when an extremely dangerous construction for railway transport under the East River was being constructed. To describe this event the author uses the verb "to blow," which in other cases characterizes the sounds of car horns: "The car barreled along its tracks down the side of the road, and whenever it approached an intersection its air horn blew."³³ In actuality, a contextual sense of the fragment's narration enables the distinguishing of an imitation of a trumpet sound during a funeral march. Thus, musical instruments are featured in the text implicitly by a complex of internal textual relations involving a combination of naming and imitation based on word-building and polisemantic potentialities.

The same can be concluded regarding several more examples of language games based on the intermedial actualizing of paratextual *Ragtime* relations. In one passage, the word "ragging," derived from "rag" is used in combination with "curse" to generalize this course. The language of baseball players during a game attended by Father and his son is described: "The players' every ragging curse could be heard clearly by his son."³⁴

Characterizing the voice peculiarities of a young baseball player's assistant who also uses rude words in trying to follow the manners of senior teammates, the novel's narrator involves musical terminology and mentions one of the brass instruments: "His shouts and taunts were piped in soprano."³⁵ In this case combination of previously mentioned "ragging curse" along with naming

32 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 13.

33 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 12.

34 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 29.

35 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 30.

soprano sounds as well as the idea of the baseball players' age difference actualizes the difference in height of the sound. Herewith, onomatopoeia plays a certain role, as "rag" sounds tougher than "pipe." In addition, the contrast of proper musical context (playing the pipe and a quarrel) are structured in reader's consciousness according to associative principle as a rise and decline.

As we can see, the analyzed details clearly manifest the coexistence of at least two secondary semiotic systems within the novel's text. On the one hand, the details obviously emphasize American family traditions (cultural aspect), featuring a general picture of competition and team spirit of one of the most popular kind of sports in the USA; on the other, they express artistic and genetic characteristics of ragtime, as this genre of music is also an inseparable part of the American identity.

Similarly to ragtime's peculiar structural characteristics, the usage of noun "rag" as a part of expressive language acts as a prominent leitmotiv of the novel. By rags, the narrator calls the rest of Tateh's estate, which he had left in Lawrence (*Massachusetts*), having decided to leave in search for better luck as well as for the clothes of the Zapatista army, known for their violence: "His belongings, his rags he would leave the landlord,"³⁶ "They wore rags."³⁷ In both cases within the novel's context this word symbolizes chaos, ruining power and violence.

At the same time the word "rag" is a part of the word "ragtime." This is one of the ways of articulating music in a literary composition. The second part of the word, "time," strengthens philosophical meanings related to the implementation of Doctorow's conception of existential history and art as a form of history.

Being an inseparable part of the story's title and the name of musical genre, the title also implies ragtime's semantics and serves as an objective symbol of the historical period. Under "objective" in this case we mean actuality or complete embodiment of music as a text with all profound complexity of cultural-artistic background. Word art helps musical ideas reveal themselves on a higher level of objectivity and vividness, which according to D. Nalyvaiko's conception of literary-musical interactions literature can be provided due to the associative links the words are able to exercise.³⁸ Here again one more important feature of American literature can be traced, the motive of the silenced and the unspeakable concerned with African-American literary discourse. This can be one of the reasons why the author puts a black musician in the center of his novel.

In addition, references to musical media as well as the implications of music in a literary composition focuses the writer's attention on the ethnical problems of multinational American society; this is not only a tribute to the postmodern tradition. Basically, music, as the art of the human's inner world, points to the universal values of a society. However, the implementation of this idea by Doctorow is contrasted with the author's ironical view.

One more notable detail which can be considered as a form of variability inherent to ragtime as a genre of music is the use of words "rage" and "outrage" within which, from the phonetic point of view, "rag" is submerged. During negotiations with Coalhouse Walker, the well-known African-American conformist B.T. Washington, one of the novel's heroes, calls the black musician a monster. In quite an emotionally poetical way Washington expresses his anger because

36 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 17.

37 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 40.

38 Dmytro Nalyvaiko, *Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature* (Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy Publishing House, 2006), 21–22.

of inconsistency of such behavior with the status of the musician: "But you are a musician! I look about me and smell the sweet of rage, the impecunious rebellion of wild unthinking youth."³⁹ Here musical terminology serves as the very bridge between two media – music and literature. The idea of metaphorical contradiction of musical harmony to chaos in real life at the same time reveals the author's aim of visualizing music as an inseparable part of the historical epoch and therefore of American identity.

Although used by B.T. Washington, "rage" has a different etymological background.⁴⁰ In Doctorow's novel it becomes a part of intermedial unity on the syntagmatic level of the composition due to presence of the ragtime code. In this way the writer expands the boundaries of musical art, making an attempt to give his own interpretation to one of its genres. The onomatopoeic possibilities of the word "rage" also emphasize the idea of resistance common to the African-American mentality of the pre-jazz period: "Oh Lord, he said, lead my people to the Promised Land. Take them from under the Pharaoh's whip. Free from the shackles from their minds and loosen the bonds of sin that tie them to Hell."⁴¹ In contrast to spirituals, which propagated hope and reconciliation to a subdued people, the image of pianist Coalhouse Walker – and therefore ragtime – manifests rebellion, renunciation and the active struggle for freedom and human rights.

The same is true for "outrage" and "outraged": "An editorial called for an investigation of the outrage by the Federal Government,"⁴² "Thaw escaped to Canada, leaving a trail of outraged waitresses and stunned hoteliers."⁴³ In one more episode telling about Father's return from the Northern Pole one more lexical unit contributing to musicalization strategy is mentioned. That is "rug", which is being cleaned by a housemaid Brigit. Despite "rag – rage / outrage", "rug" is connected with "rag" not only through context or phonological means but also etymologically.⁴⁴

After Sara and her baby have moved to Mother and Father's house, Brigit listens to the Victrola all the time. Her favorite composition "I Hear You Calling Me" is about a dedicated love which continues even after the death of the sweetheart. It is performed by John McCormack, who was a very famous singer that time. The literary reference to a real musical composition acts as a means of verbal music and stimulates development of reader's reception towards the further recognition of musical signs.

Similarities in sounding along with the bright semantic contrast of "rag – rug" as an opposition of fragments to the whole, catastrophic vision of family coziness due to associative-image system imitate the march technique of accompaniment to ragtime. Simultaneously, the song as an element of verbal music is obviously opposed to the detail of the common world, represented by the sound of a vacuum cleaner. The irony here involves Father's confusion of this sound with the sound of the wind which he used to hear during the expedition. Thus ragtime music is recoded

39 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 37.

40 "Online Etymology Dictionary," Douglas Harper, accessed April, 25 2016, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=rage

41 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 37.

42 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 17.

43 Doctorow, *Ragtime*, chap. 27.

44 "Online Etymology Dictionary," http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=rug.

through the descriptive sounds of mechanisms, an effect which implicates the idea of the technocratic society in which individuality becomes restricted, constrained and somewhat ridiculous.

Although the lexical items “rag” – “rug” – “rage” – “outrage” – “outraged” occur only a few times in the novel, they generalize the thematic-emotional content of the whole text. United by the idea of chaos, instability, cruelty and catastrophe, they form a certain syntagmatic unity of an intermedial nature. These items can thus be defined as implicit musical references that refer to the title of the novel and expand the understanding of the represented aesthetics of ragtime. Obviously, words have been chosen which sound similarly in order to figure features of ragtime in the novel.

Thus, the poetological peculiarities of the novel *Ragtime* by E.L. Doctorow form a complex system of literary-musical intermediality. In representing an inseparable part of the artistic language, these forms display clearly recognizable features of ragtime music. The intermedial strategy as a dominant principle of artistic language allows the author to actualize his artistic conception of live history and encourage a discussion of American society and its foundational concepts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bucknell, Brad. *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce and Stein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Derveaux, Marc. “The Sonority of Language in Literary and Musical Modernity,” In *Music and Literary Modernism: Critical Essays and Comparative Studies*, 4–11. Edited by Robert P.Mc. Parland Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2009.
- Doctorow, Edgar L. *Ragtime*. Los Angeles : Ketab Corporation, 2005. Kindle edition.
- Gier, Albert. “Music in literature: Influences and Analogies,” Translated by I. Borisova, *Messenger of Young Scholars*. Humanities 3 (1999): 86–99.
- Harper, Douglas. “Online Etymology Dictionary.” Accessed April, 25 2016. http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=rage.
- Konen, Valentina. *The Birth of Jazz*. Moscow: Sovietyky Kompozitor, 1990.
- Nalyvaiko, Dmytro. *Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature*. Kyiv: Kyiv-Mohyla Academy Publishing House, 2006.
- Peas, Allison. *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Scher, Steven P. “Notes towards a Theory of Verbal Music,” In *Essays on Literature and Music (1967–2004)*, 23–36. Edited by Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf. New-York: Rodopi, 2004.
- Wolf, Werner. *The Musicalization of Fiction. A study in the Theory and History of Intermediality*. Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999.

Lidia Bilonozhko received her Master of Arts in Comparative Literature at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and her PhD in Comparative Literature at Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University. She teaches at the Department of English Philology at National Dragomanov Pedagogical University in Kyiv, Ukraine.