ARTICLE

Intermediality in the Novel "The Sellout" by Paul Beatty

*Larysa Mosiievych [1]** [ID] , Tetiana Kurbatova [2], Ganna Prihodko [3], Oleksandra Prykhodchenko [1], Iryna Bondar [2]*

[1]*English for Specific Purposes, Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhia 69600, Ukraine*
[2]*English for Specific Purposes, Kryvyi Rih National University, Kryvyi Rih 50027, Ukraine*
[3]*English Philology and Linguodidactics, Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhia 69600, Ukraine*

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the linguistic realization of intermediality in Paul Beatty's novel "*The Sellout*" and its role in creating satire and critiquing racial and cultural stereotypes. Intermediality, understood as references to music, cinema, and other art forms, is analyzed on explicit and implicit levels. The research aims to identify textual markers of intermediality, examine lexical and semantic groups, explore stylistic devices used for satire, and investigate conceptual metaphors that link art forms to the novel's broader themes. It employs literary, lexical and semantic, stylistic, and conceptual analyses. These methods reveal how intermediality contributes to both the narrative's depth and its satirical tone. The findings show that intermediality grounds the novel in contemporary American culture, criticizes the commodification of African American identity in popular media, and exposes the role of pop culture in reinforcing social inequalities. Explicit intermedial references create humour and satire through stylistic devices such as similes, bathos, and antitheses. Implicitly, intermediality uses conceptualizations of cinema and music to explore the themes of power, memory, and illusion. This study demonstrates that intermediality in *The Sellout* enriches its narrative complexity, amplifies its satirical impact, and challenges readers to critically evaluate societal norms. The paper is intended for a wide range of readers and specialists in literature and linguistics. It adds to expanding interdisciplinary research on intermediality, providing fresh perspectives on how contemporary literature integrates and reshapes different art forms to develop intricate and multi-dimensional narratives.

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Larysa Mosiievych, English for Specific Purposes, Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhia 69600, Ukraine;
Email: larisamosiyevich1977@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The novel *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty[1] under analysis belongs to postmodern American literature. The following literary techniques are peculiar to postmodernism, namely: irony, playfulness and black humor; pastiche; intertextuality; technoculture and hyperreality; metafiction; historiographic metafiction; temporal distortion; faction; paranoia; maximalism; minimalism; participation[2]. Postmodernism is all about the connections between texts, including various ways in which one text refers to another or many others. There is a current tendency of involving implication of various arts in the system of a literary text. Such phenomenon is termed as "intermediality"[3]. The term intermediality gains relevance as it represents the interaction of various codes in a literary text. Intermediality plays an important role in the understanding of literary text, because it helps to perceive the intended meaning of the selection of words, the special way of text organization and the interaction of codes of various arts, and the creation of a holistic poly-artistic space in the culture system[4]. Thus, intermediality helps reflect the postmodern perception of the world. It enables experimentation with mixing and incorporating various art forms into literary texts. Intermediality is a postmodern trend blurring the lines between literary and non-literary.

As means of manifestation and exchange, different media refer to and depend on one another, both explicitly and implicitly; they interrelate as elements of various communicative strategies; meanwhile, they are elements of a wider social and cultural environment[5].

Intermediality can be defined as an interrelationship between literary texts and various other media forms, and the myriad ways in which media can be represented in literary texts[6].

To sum up, intermediality in literature is about combining different types of media within a literary text to create a richer, more dynamic work. This blending can include visual elements, narrative techniques, or semiotic features that go beyond just words. Different media forms interact within a text, reflecting broader cultural and social influences.

Intermediality has become an object of interdisciplinary research and media studies. Clüver helped define how different media, including literature and visual arts, interact in artistic works. His ideas are often used to analyze the blending of different art forms[7]. Elleström developed a framework for studying intermediality. He looks at how different types of media, such as music or film, influence and combine with literature[8]. Rajewsky created a system to classify how literature connects to other media. She identifies three main types of intermediality: adapting one medium into another, combining multiple media, and referencing another medium[9].

Rarenko explores how use of theatre-related metareferences reinforces the effect of theatricality in postmodernist literary discourse. She focuses on explaining the way literary text can attain theatrical qualities through the use of self-reflexive comments on its medial status and metareferences to theatre as a distinctive media form[10].

Wildfeuer and Osborn focus on how poetry, music, and films are connected. They study how these art forms interact to create richer works[11, 12].

Wolf studies how music influences literature. He uses terms such as "word music" and "verbal music" to show how rhythm and harmony in music are reflected in writing[13, 14]. Wen explores how art and media connect across different cultures and regions[15]. His work focuses on how these connections promote global cultural exchange.

Moroshkina et al. focus on the study of intermediality in English-language literary texts of the 20th–21st centuries[16].

These studies emphasize the versatility and complexity of intermediality in shaping modern artistic and literary practices.

The Sellout by Paul Beatty was studied from diverse perspectives. For instance, Canelo examined how the literary devices of parody and allegory assist in the creation of the U.S. carceral system[17]. Astrada analyzed the novel through racial consciousness and racial solidarity[18]. Usman investigated *The Sellout* through Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theorization, and in his idea of the negro myth[19].

Use of intermedial techniques in The Sellout by Paul Beatty remains largely unexplored. Studying intermediality

in this novel is crucial for understanding how it creates its rich, multi-layered narrative and how this approach enhances its ability to challenge and dismantle racial stereotypes. In The Sellout by Paul Beatty, intermediality appears in both obvious and subtle ways, helping to build a complex story. Beatty uses this blending of media to create sharp satire that challenges racial stereotypes. By mixing different forms of expression, he adds depth to the narrative and makes the satire more impactful.

The article **aims** to explore lingual realization of intermediality in the novel *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty. The aim requires solving the following objectives:

- Analyzing principal ideas of the novel;
- Identifying explicit markers of intermediality in the text;
- Analyzing lexical units and their semantic contribution to intermediality;
- Indicating implicit markers of intermediality in the text;
- Studying post-irony and satire expression;
- Examining intermediality through conceptual metaphors;
- Exploring functions of intermediality in the novel.

The novelty of this paper stems from the fact that the novel *The Sellout* has never been the subject of intermediality analysis before.

The aim of the article was successfully achieved. The analysis effectively explored the lingual realization of intermediality in Paul Beatty's novel The Sellout, addressing all the outlined objectives.

2. Materials and Methods

To achieve the research goal and objectives, the following methods are applied: literary analysis, lexical and semantic analysis, stylistic analysis, the descriptive and interpretive method, and conceptual analysis. First, literary analysis of a text is applied to examine a theme, plot, composition, and protagonists in the novel. Next, lexical and semantic analysis is used to find and group linguistic signals related to music and cinema, such as mentions of songs, musicians, films, and actors. These signals are organized into semantic fields and subgroups based on their themes. Semantic fields *Music* and *Cinema* are distributed into subfields *Songs*, *Musicians*,

Films, and *Actors*, respectively. Stylistic analysis is then conducted to study cinematic techniques and rap imitation in the text. Finally, conceptual analysis helps identify deeper meanings through conceptual metaphors, while the descriptive method explains the role of intermediality in the novel.

Moreover, some poststructuralist and deconstructivist approaches are taken into account, as well as the technique of "close reading", which allows to identify veiled and unconscious references between texts of novels and other works of art[5].

Our illustrative material includes 100 text fragments selected from the The Sellout by Paul Beatty.

3. Results and Discussion

The Sellout is a thought-provoking novel that challenges readers' perception of racism in the USA. It explores complexities of racial issues and the impact of segregation on black communities. To prevent the erasure of the Dickens neighborhood from the map, the protagonist revives slavery, despite being black himself. Humor allows the author to critique social issues such as racism, police brutality, and cultural appropriation. The following examples illustrate racism in America:

> *"I've found that if you want to make a black person mad, all you have to do is call them white*[1]*"*.
> *"Black people don't know what to do with freedom.*[1]*"*.

Numerous samples demonstrate how the author sees the idea of resegregation:

> *"The town of Dickens was never desegregated, it was desegregated, and no one could argue with the results*[1]*"*.
> *"I guess segregation isn't always such a bad thing, especially when it comes to self-preservation*[1]*."*

Symbiosis of music and cinema in the novel is not accidental: one of the protagonists, Bonbon, is interested in African American music, while the other character, Hominy Jenkins, is obsessed with acting. To satirize racial stereo-

types and inequalities in American culture, Paul Beatty uses a lot of cinema and music references. On the one hand, these references provide the cultural background to reveal racial and identity issues. Classical films and musicals, such as *Gone with the Wind*, *Birth of a Nation*, and *West Side Story*, belong to the African American cultural code. On the other hand, they highlight the ways these cultural codes have both reflect racial stereotypes and inequality.

Moreover, the author subverts and re-appropriates these cultural artifacts to critique and comment on racial issues. For instance, in Chapter 8, by referring to Marvin Gaye's album "What's Going On", the protagonist comments the state of society: "*I wanted to be honest, like Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On.' He had his finger on the pulse of America, knew what was going down. He spoke for everybody, from the poor to the rich, from the black to the white, from the soldiers in Vietnam to the students on the quad*[1]".

To sum up, cinema and music references in the book represent intermediality. Wolf distinguishes two forms of the intermedial references – explicit reference, or intermedial thematization, and implicit reference, or intermedial imitation. Explicit intermediality is easy to indicate as it is mentioned in the text. Music and cinema are explicitly described through lingual signifiers. Intermedial imitation occurs when the signifiers of a work or its structure are affected by the non-dominant medium because they imitate its quality or structure[20].

The intermediality system in the novel can be represented as follows (**Figure 1**).
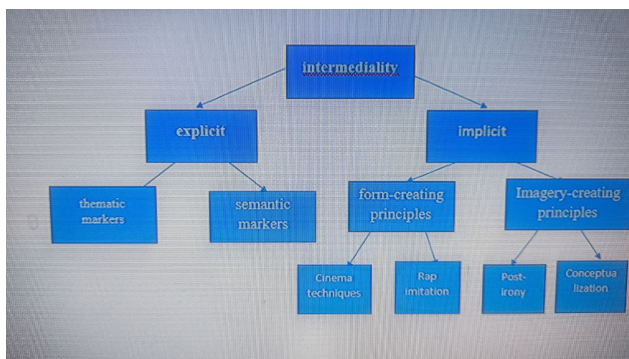
Figure 1. Intermediality system in "*The Sellout*".

Thus, intermediality in *The Sellout* manifests both explicitly and implicitly. Explicit manifestation is expressed through thematic and semantic markers. Implicit manifestation has a more complex structure. By form-creating princi-

ples, we mean techniques that involve those of reproducing composition, form, or borrowing and imitating artistic means from different media (such as music and film). These principles are reflected in the novel through the use of film techniques and rap imitation. Image-creating principles, on the other hand, are related to post-irony and conceptualization, which is achieved through conceptual metaphors.

3.1. Explicit References

Based on the **thematic criterion,** the lexical and semantic field ***Art forms*** is divided into the following lexical and semantic groups: ***Music*** and ***Cinema***. These groups are subdivided into ***Musical compositions***, ***Singers***, ***Genres,*** and ***Films*** and ***Actors***, respectively.

The novel abounds in names of the songs such as "*In the still of the night*", "*Folsom Prison Blues*", "*Superfly*", "*Porgy and Bess*", "*Mammy*", etc. All these songs represent different genres (jazz, blues, folk music) and time and are historically and culturally significant, contributing much to the development of American music. The author gives samples of such Afro-American singers and bands as *Five Satins, Ella Fitzgerald, The Clash, Nina Simone, Marvin Gaye, Whitney Houston*, etc. All of them influenced the African American culture since they addressed issues related to racism and discrimination. The third subgroup is represented by music genres such as rap, blues, jazz, gospel, punk rock, and R&B/Soul. It is worth noting that rap permeates the novel as protagonist Bonbon is a rapper.

The subgroup ***Movies*** is represented by "*Birth of a Nation*", "*Gone with the Wind*", "*Blazing Saddles*", "*West Side Story*", "*The Wizard of Oz*", "*My Fair Lady*", etc. The subgroup ***Actors*** includes such names as *Al Jolson, Shirley Temple, Ronald Reagan, Eddie Murphy, Samuel L. Jackson, John Travolta, etc*. These movies and actors are significant for the African American cultural code as they perpetuate racial stereotypes and inequality in various ways.

Semantic Markers of Intermediality

Semantic markers of intermediality are studied through means of verbalization. The lexical-semantic group ***Cinema*** is verbalized by a variety of nominative, verbal, and adjectival units.

a. Nominative units include *B-movie, icon, blaxploitation films, pimp flick, ghetto horror, role, blow-up, flick,*

rom-com, etc. A B-movie is a low-budget, often low-quality film not intended to be a major release or critical success. For instance, *The B-movie icon had a gravelly voice and a tough-guy demeanor* [1]. Blaxploitation films are movies that emerged in the 1970s and were specifically aimed at African American audiences. These films typically feature black actors in lead roles and often depict black characters as heroes who fight against racism.

Speaking about structural features, it should be noted that units expressing the group **Movies** can be formed in the following ways: semi-abbreviations (*B-movie*), abbreviations (*rom-com*, from romantic comedy), blending (*blaxploitation*, from black exploitation), and sound imitations (*flick*).

b. Adjectival units are used to describe the quality of a movie (*low-budget, shoddy, campy*), the performance of actors (*over-the-top, wooden, hammy*), the plot (*predictable and formulaic*), the atmosphere of a movie, (*dark, uplifting, surreal, breathtaking, terrifying, gruesome*), etc.

Washed-up suggests that the career of TV stars has declined and that they are no longer as successful or well-regarded as they once used to be. Compound adjectives are used to describe a movie style, such as "grindhouse-inspired," "film-noirish"; e.g., *A washed-up TV star with a string of B-movie credits and one or two blockbuster roles* [1].

c. Verbal units include such words as *to direct, to cast, to play, to reboot, to cash, to screen, to perform, to be panned,* etc.; e.g., *I can't believe they're **reboot**ing that old movie franchise. It's like they're just trying to **cash** in on nostalgia* [1]. Verbs are often used in the -ing-form; e.g., *He had always dreamed of producing and directing his own film, but he never thought he'd actually get the chance to do It* [1].

Besides nominative, verbal, and adjectival units, the author includes comparisons with films or actors as explicit markers of intermediality; e.g., *My situation was starting **to resemble** the plot of 'The Birth of a Nation' in reverse; instead of white people donning blackface and performing for black people as sexually rapacious idiots, I was forced to don whiteface and perform for white people as a sexual black predator* [1]. This film glorifies the Ku Klux Klan, and, by comparing, the protagonist draws attention to the white supremacy in contemporary American society.

The lexical and semantic group **Music** is verbalized by nominative, verbal, and adjectival units. Here are examples

to illustrate each of them:

a. Nominative units include words such as *giant, voice, band, lyrics, melody, mixtape, solo, rhythm, chorus, soundtrack,* etc., e.g. *Miles Davis, Coltrane, Ellington, and the other giants of jazz. I made a mixtape of all my favorite songs to listen to on my commute* [1]. These examples demonstrate the ways movies and actors are described and discussed in *The Sellout*. Using verbs, nouns, and adjectives, the author creates vivid and often satirical portraits of the film industry. Some nouns refer to musical terms. For example, Beatty describes the protagonist *as having a 'polyrhythmic personality'* [1]. It is a musical term indicating the use of multiple rhythms in a composition.

b. Verbal units include words such as *to improvise, to sing, to riff, to strum, to belt, to jam,* etc., e.g. *He started **riff**ing on something he'd learned from Monk, the greatest of all jazz improvisers* [1]. Sometimes, the verbs have a connotative or figurative meaning beyond their literal definition; e.g., *She **belt**ed out the chorus like she was trying to shatter glass* [1]. *To belt* means to sing loudly and forcefully). All the verbs describe musical performances, techniques, and experiences, and serve to convey the energy and atmosphere associated with music.

c. Adjectival units are used to describe physical attributes of instruments, the mood of music, emotional peculiarities; e.g., *catchy, funky, groovy, haunting, jazzy, melancholic, mellow, raw, soulful, trippy, uplifting, vibey*. For instance, *The **catchy** beat and **funky** bassline got the crowd moving* [1]. According to Cambridge Dictionary, *funky* describes a style of music, usually for dancing to, with a strong rhythm based on jazz and a tune that repeats. Here are some other examples of adjectives; e.g., *The **jazzy** saxophone solo was a highlight of the performance* [1]; *The **haunting** melody of the song stayed with me long after it ended* [1]. Hence, adjectives in the group **Music** create a particular mood or tone that reflects a style of music.

The author also uses comparisons with famous musicians to comment on the state of society, e.g. *I wanted to be honest, like Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On.' He had his finger on the pulse of America, knew what was going down. He spoke for everybody, from the poor to the rich, from the black to the white, from the soldiers in Vietnam to the students on the quad* [1].

To sum up, the above means of verbalization demon-

strate various ways movies, actors, music, singers are described and discussed in *The Sellout*. The author uses verbs, nouns, and adjectives to create vivid and often satirical portraits of film and music industries, and depict commercialization of the African American culture. A great number of means of verbalization in the groups **Music** and **Cinema** highlight the indispensable role of music and movies in shaping the African-American identity.

3.2. Implicit References

Implicit references include form-creating and imagery-creating principles.

3.2.1. Form-Creating Principles

Form-creating principles are represented by cinematic techniques and rap imitation.

(1) The use of cinematic techniques in the text. According to Bellardi, features of cinematic writing include: "present-tense narration, the montage in general, a 'certain' visual quality of the texts, the camera-eye narratorial situation, a 'dry' dialogue, and the use of specific cinematic techniques such as travelling, pans, and zooms"[21].

In *The Sellout,* the author applies the **flashback** technique to describe the protagonist's childhood and his relationship with his father. A flashback is an interruption in the chronological narrative of a literary work to relate events from an earlier time. A flashback reminds the reader of past events, reveals and develops themes of a text, and supplies background information to characterize characters and events[22]. It provides additional information to help readers understand the story, and often contributes to the mood, characters, theme, or setting of the story[23].

Let us give the examples of the flashback:
- *I remember when I was a kid, my father would take me out to the Mojave Desert and we'd walk for hours in the heat until we found just the right spot, a stretch of parched sand perfect for doing doughnuts in our '65 Impala convertible*[1].
- *My father liked to take me to the park to play catch, to the zoo to see the animals, to the library to read books. He liked to teach me things*[1] .

The flashback technique helps vividly recount the main character's memories of his father, provide insight into their relationship that shaped his worldview.

One more cinematic technique, **slow motion**, is employed in the novel under study. In Chapter 4, the protagonist describes the "slow-motion cacophony" of a violent interaction, using the technique commonly used in action films; e.g., *The scene played out in slow motion, the cacophony of cracking skulls, breaking teeth, and snapping bones stretched out like a 45-RPM record played at 33 1/3.... It was like a scene from a John Woo movie: the villain, having suffered a mortal wound, takes his time to crumple to the ground in a hail of bullets*[1]. By employing this technique, the author makes the scene extremely tense and dramatic, involving the reader in the action and highlighting brutality and chaos of the situation.

(2) Rap imitation. The novel is significant for incorporating elements of rap music into its style and structure. It should be noted, that rap music is used by Afro-American musicians to speak out against social injustice and inequality. The communicative intent behind the rap artist's choice involves phonological arrangement, lexical choices and syntactic patterns[24]. In other words, rap imitation in *The Sellout* is done through phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and semasiological devices of stylistics. All of them help the author emphasize the absurdity of racial stereotypes and social hierarchies.

However, the most essential feature of rap is rhythm. It is often achieved through the use of a distinct rhythmic pattern that is repeated throughout the song. The quotes from the novel prove the priority of rhythm in rap music; e.g., *The rap rhythms of the street pulsated through my veins*; *I felt the beat of the rap music deep in my bones*; *My head bobbed to the rhythm of the rap, and I couldn't help but feel alive*[1] .

Rap rhythm patterns are incorporated into phonetic stylistic devices, including:
- **assonance**, which is repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words; e.g., *The complex rhyme schemes of the rap required precision and skill, but I was up to the challenge*[1]. The assonant sounds are the long *i* /aɪ/ and the short *i* /ɪ/. They create a rhythmic pattern in the sentence.
- **Alliteration**, which is repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of words; e.g., *The syncopated rhythms of the rap beat drove the crowd wild*[1].
- **Alternation** of long and short sentences, e.g., *...The three basic laws of ghetto physics are: Niggers in your face tend to stay in your face; no matter where*

the sun is in the sky, the time is always "Half past a monkey's ass and a quarter to his balls"; and the third is that whenever someone you love has been shot, invariably you will be back home on winter break, halfway through your junior year of college, taking the horse on a little afternoon ride to rendezvous with your father for a meeting of the Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals, the local think tank, where he and the rest of the neighborhood savants will ply you with cider, cinnamon rolls, and conversion therapy [1]. In the first complex sentence **polysyndethon** is used to convey a sense of urgency and importance. A long sentence is immediately followed by two simple sentences; e.g., Color *isn't a very good indicator. Neither is rind texture* [1].

Rap imitation is also related to incorporation of typical acoustic effects into the texts of rap compositions – exclamations, moans, asides, which have their roots in African traditions of oral performance. For instance, *WHAP! BLAAAAM! PIE-YOW!* [1]. All of them are written with capital letters.

Syntactic stylistic devices are represented by:

- **parallelism**, which is the repetition of words, phrases, or sentence structures; e.g., *Childbirth is like jazz. Muhammad Ali is like jazz. Philadelphia is like jazz. Jazz is like jazz. Everything is like jazz except for me* [1].

- **Epistrophe,** which is repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive clauses or sentences; e.g., *They come to L.A. aspiring to be white. Even the ones who are biologically white aren't* **white white**. *Laguna Beach volleyball* **white**. *Bel Air* **white**. *Omakaze* **white**. *Spicolli* **white**. *Brett Easton Ellis* **white**. *Three first names* **white**. *Valet parking* **white**. *Brag about your Native American, Argentinian, Portuguese ancestry* **white**. *Pho white. Paparazzi* **white.** *I once got fired from a telemarketing job, now look at me, I'm famous* **white.** *Calabazas white. I love L.A. It's the only place where you can go skiing, to the beach and to the desert all in one day* **white** [1]. Besides creating a sense of rhythm, epistrophe has an emotional impact on a reader by reshaping his/her their views on white priority.

- **Anadiplosis**, which is the repetition of a prominent and usually the last word in one phrase or clause at

the beginning of the next; e.g., *We'd like you, o holy, highly sought after white male consumer between the ages of thirty and forty-five, sitting in your recliner, we'd like you to spend your money and join our happy, carefree, prejudice-free* **world. A world** *where black men drive sitting straight up in their seats and not sunk so low and to the side you can see only the tops of their gleaming ball-peen heads* [1].

- **Nominative sentences**, e.g. *The rows of fruit trees. Separated by color. Light to dark. Lemons. Apricots. Pomegranates. Plums. Color-specific trees create a satirical effect and emphasize an absurdity of situation* [1].

On the **vocabulary** level, rap parody is realized by **wordplay, vulgarisms,** and **slang** words. Using words in a playful way creates witty and amusing dialogues; e.g., *On the drive over, he'd brag that the black community was a lot like him –* **ABD.**

"All but dissertation?"

"All but defeated."

You know that **NK** *on Johnny Unitas's neck don't stand for 'Nice Kid'?" "Stands for Nigger Killer* [1].

Wordplay is based on abbreviations that can be deciphered in different ways. The other sample of wordplay is based on renaming the books; e.g., *....Foy handed me a copy of* **Tom Soarer***, then signed it without me asking him to. The novel Tom Sawyer is changed into* **Tom Soarer** [1] Soarer is originated from a verb *to soar* (to fly high in the sky).

Deviation from standard spelling is used in the novel as a sign of marginal Afro-American subculture; e.g., **Dat's good eatin'***!" Instead of That Dat is used, - g is omitted in eating. "Buckwheat, I* **dun tol' yo' pappy, I ain't takin' care uh nun ob hiz odder chil'ren***!"* [1].

Slang words abound in "The Sellout"; e.g., *We hang in groups of three or four, smoking cigarettes and talking shit while some* **ghetto bird** *circles overhead and the main man runs his fingers over the* **black and whites** *of our mug shots, marveling at the thickness of our lips and the shit-eating grins we flash to show our gold teeth* [1]. In this sentence, Beatty uses slang terms *ghetto bird* instead of a *police helicopter* and *black and whites* instead of *photographs*. Slang words enable creation of a realistic depiction of African American subculture.

A number of vulgar words are used in the novel to re-

flect the Afro-American language, e.g. *That 'longest journey'* **shit** *is Lao-tzu"*; *That's some* **bullshit***!" a man shouted before asking for more cake and drink* [1].

A lot of stylistically lowered vocabulary in the novel is used to denote nationalities relevant to Mexicans and African Americans; e.g., *I do hear tell of some hardcore, color-blind thugs who roll into lockup and dance with* **the niggers** *or* **the vatos** *who brung 'em* [1]. *Vato is* a Spanish term that means a guy or a dude.

Mixing and synthesizing are the key elements of rap culture, defining its stylistic peculiarity. This tradition can be seen in hybridization of rap lyrics – the presence of insertions from other languages. In the novel, there are many Spanish words that retain their authentic spelling, e.g. *Un negrito está en la cocina mirando a su mamá freír un poco de pollo ... ¡Aprendí que he sido blanco por solo diez minutos y ya los odio a ustedes mayates!* [1].

Metaphors, metonymy, personification, simile create vivid images elevating the lyrical complexity of rap. Below are examples of stylistic devices of semasiology:

Metonymy: *My girlfriend of five years lies facedown on the bed, her pretty head in her hands,* **watching the weather** *on the television atop the dresser* [1]. It represents the weather forecast being shown on TV, rather than an abstract concept of weather.

Simile: *It's that all the buildings are more or less the same height and there's absolutely no skyline, save for the Washington Monument touching the night sky* **like a giant middle finger** *to the world* [1] .

Hyperbole: *I seen it* **a million** *times," my father used to say* [1].

Metaphor: *America is a giant chicken coop* [1]. By comparing America to a chicken coop, the author criticizes confinement, chaos, and exploitation in his country.

Personification and simile: *Racism* **sat** *at the table* **like an uninvited dinner** *guest* [1]. The author highlights unwelcome nature of racism by both stylistic devices.

Epithet: *The* **teary-eyed** *joy and the thankfulness he showed me as he crawled, not away from the beating, but into it* [1]. At first glance, it may seem to be an oxymoron. However, tears and joy do not necessarily contradict each other, especially during highly emotional events. Thus, **teary-eyed** *joy* can be an emotional juxtaposition. The other examples of epithets *The 'n-word' is the most* **vile** *and* **despicable** *word*

in the English language [1]. The emotionall charged epithets vile and despicable illustrate how offensive the N-word can be.

It should be noted that most of these devices carry negative connotation, since they emphasize absurdities, and hypocrisies in an American society.

To sum up, rap imitation is expressed in the novel by phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and semasiological devices of stylistics. These devices demonstrate how rap artists use language to blend storytelling with rhythm and cultural critique.

3.2.2. Imagery-Creating Principles

Imagery-creating principles combine incompatible concepts of music, cinema and politics on the meta-context level. It is carried out through conceptualization and post-irony.

Conceptualization. According to Kövecses, a conceptual metaphor, as a means of conceptualization, is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another [25]. Conceptual metaphors in the novel include the following: (1) MUSIC IS POWER, (2) CINEMA IS ILLUSION, (3) CINEMA IS MEMORY, and (4) POLITICS IS THEATRE.

(1) MUSIC IS POWER

The following examples illustrate the metaphorical mapping of music to power:

- *The power of music is the power of life, and it's something that you can never take away* [1].
- *Music is a weapon. It can be used to defend, to attack, or to liberate* [1].

Beatty depicts music as a tool of oppression and empowerment as well, depending on how it is interpreted. The conceptual metaphor MUSIC IS POWER demonstrates complex relationship between culture, identity, and social power in contemporary America.

(2) CINEMA IS ILLUSION

According to Paul Beatty, cinema has a remarkable ability to influence our desires and beliefs, despite being rooted in illusions and distortions of reality. The following examples illustrate the metaphorical mapping of cinema to illusion:

- *Cinema is* **an illusion, a distortion** *of reality that we willingly subject ourselves to* [1].
- *Cinema is a kind of* **brainwashing***, a way of controlling the masses by making them believe in things that*

aren't real[1].

(3) CINEMA IS MEMORY

Cinema can preserve and evoke our memories as well. The conceptual metaphor *cinema=memory* can be found in the examples:

- *Cinema is like **a time machine**. It can transport us back to a particular moment in history, and allow us to relive it as if it were happening all over again*[1].

- *Cinema has the power **to preserve memories** and to make them come alive in a way that nothing else can*[1].

(4) POLITICS IS THEATRE

The author employs the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS THEATRE throughout the text to illustrate that politicians are more concerned with their appearance and public perception than with actual needs and concerns of the people they serve:

- *Politics is **theater.** It doesn't matter if you win. You make a statement. You say I'm here, pay attention to me*[1].

- *I was a cultural experiment, **the theater of the absurd**, a freak show*[1].

Therefore, conceptual metaphors in the text challenge traditional ways of understanding social reality, encouraging readers to question assumptions that shape their views on race, identity, and social justice in the US. Through conceptual metaphors, intermediality is illustrated as interconnected elements in the chain: *Politics-Theater-Music-Cinema*.

Post-irony and political satire. As mentioned in Introduction, postmodernity is characterized by irony. Unlike explicit rhetorical tools such as metaphors or similes, where the meaning is straightforward, irony is more subtle. Irony makes intertextual references into something more than simply academic play[26]. Postmodernism challenged perception of irony; it became viewed as a spectrum from satirical sincerity to satirical irony[27].

Moreover, in postmodernism, a traditional interpretation of irony as a comic element shifted and transformed into post-irony. Post-irony can be viewed as a second layer of irony, meaning the speaker takes the audience through a layer of irony only to result back at authenticity. It can be a part of imagery-creating principles in intermediality, since it adds layers of meaning that enhance the interplay of music, cinema, and politics on a meta-contextual level.

According to Li, post-irony and political satire are linked because both mix humor and seriousness in new ways[28]. Post-irony makes it hard to tell if something is sincere or mocking. Political satire uses this to point out problems in society and challenge authority, making people think about the deeper meaning behind the jokes.

In *The Sellout*, **post-irony** emerges from unexpected mismatches in the narrative and Beatty's language. These exaggerated ideas serve to mock the absurdity of racism and cultural myths. Below, we provide the examples of irony:

"You can't sell out if no one is buying[1]*."*

This line is deeply ironic because "selling out" usually refers to abandoning one's principles for personal gain. However, the protagonist suggests that African Americans do not even have the opportunity to sell out because society does not value them enough in the first place.

The Protagonist's Name: "Bonbon"

Despite being a complex and deeply introspective character, the protagonist's nickname is "Bonbon", a childish and ridiculous name for someone dealing with serious racial issues. This irony emphasizes how he is underestimated by society.

The "Therapizing" of Racism

At one point, the narrator claims: *"I had vowed to therapize myself with as much popular culture as possible"*[1]. The idea that watching movies and listening to music could function as "therapy" for racial trauma is ironic because entertainment often reinforces stereotypes that contribute to racial issues.

"Crop" as a Slave

The protagonist is a farmer whose "crop" is Hominy, a human being he "cultivates" as a slave. The word "crop" traditionally refers to plants. In this context, it's mismatched: slavery is exploitation, not cultivation, creating a jarring effect that underscores the absurdity of treating a person as a commodity.

"Freedom" in Hominy's Enslavement

Hominy repeatedly calls his enslavement "freedom," a mismatch with the word's usual meaning. Freedom implies autonomy, yet Hominy finds it in submission, gleefully embracing his role as the protagonist's slave. It's a linguistic mismatch that's both funny and sad.

Intermediality in *The Sellout* can create a satiric effect. The following quotes illustrate how a satiric effect is

achieved through **music references**:

In *The Sellout*, the protagonist's father, a self-styled psychologist with unorthodox methods, uses music as part of his bizarre experiments to probe racial identity and condition his son: *He'd set me up in his chair, hook me up to the polygraph, and over the drone of the air conditioner and the syncopated rhythms of Miles Davis's Bitches Brew or the lilting chaos of the Sun Ship album by John Coltrane, he'd ask me questions like, 'If Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse are the same species as Goofy, then why does Goofy walk on two legs and talk, while Mickey and Minnie scamper about on all fours and squeak?' or 'Why do the cowboys in the white hats always win?'* [1]*"*. In this passage, Beatty uses Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* and John Coltrane's *Sun Ship*, wild, experimental jazz albums, as the backdrop to the father's absurd psychological experiments, heightening the satire by pairing their cultural depth with silly questions about Mickey Mouse and cowboys. The music's chaotic rhythms amplify the ridiculousness of probing racial identity with a polygraph, mocking the father's over-the-top methods and the idea that Blackness can be dissected through cartoon logic. This satirical contrast between jazz's Black heritage and the trivial setup sharpens the critique of how media and pseudoscience distort racial stereotypes.

"The next week we were playing blues for the homeless, jazz for the state workers, and Beethoven for the deaf. We were the musical equivalent of a rainbow coalition [1]*"*. This quote expresses the idea of not using music to address vital issues. Bathos employed in the novel reveals a gap between music references and people mentioned in the example.

The following quotes illustrate how a satiric effect is achieved through **cinema references**:

Hominy's obsession with *The Little Rascals* in *The Sellout* is a key example of how Paul Beatty uses cinema as an intermedial tool to fuel his satire. For instance, when the protagonist first describes Hominy's backstory: *"Hominy Jenkins had been an* Our Gang *kid, one of the later, less-talented ones… He wasn't Stymie or Buckwheat, not even close, just one of those sepia-toned, knickers-wearing, Little Rascals spear-carriers who spun tops, got beat up, and ran around in circles while the real stars did their thing"* [1]. Paul Beatty employs satire by exaggerating Hominy Jenkins' insignificant role as a "less-talented" *Our Gang* kid, whose trivial actions (spinning tops, getting beat up, and running

in circles) contrast absurdly with the "real stars." Beatty exposes the absurdity of Hollywood's racial hierarchy, critiquing how Black characters were either tokenized as quirky stars such as Stymie and Buckwheat or relegated to pointless background roles.

We listened to hip-hop, the great uniter, and watched movies starring Jackie Chan and the Wayans Brothers, each one a two-hour-long advertisement for its own inevitable sequel [1]. By using the noun "sequel", Beatty critiques that profit in Hollywood is prioritized over creating original stories.

When Hominy insists on being whipped, cinematic imagery takes center stage: *"Hominy stripped off his shirt and handed me a leather belt… 'Hit me, massa, hit me like they did in the pictures!' he shouted, his eyes gleaming with a strange joy… I gave him a halfhearted lash, and he giggled like Buckwheat caught stealing watermelon* [1]*"*. In this passage, Paul Beatty uses satire by having Hominy Jenkins gleefully demand a whipping "like they did in the pictures," exaggerating and mocking Hollywood's stereotypical depictions of Black suffering in plantation films and comedies. The absurdity of Hominy's joy, paired with the Buckwheat reference, ironically critiques how media turned racial pain into entertainment, exposing the ridiculousness and lasting impact of these tropes.

When the protagonist resegregates the school bus, he imagines it like a scene from a movie or a song: kids separated by race, but with a surreal, almost celebratory vibe. It is less about real buses and more about the cultural images of segregation which the Americans have seen in films or heard in protest songs. *"I painted a silver line down the middle of the bus aisle, and when the kids boarded, I told the black ones to sit on the left and the Latinos to sit on the right. The white kids, all two of them, got to sit wherever they wanted, which ended up being the back of the bus, because even at that age they knew that's where the cool kids sat… It wasn't long before the bus became a rolling party, a soul train line of bobbing heads and swinging hips, the kids laughing and singing corridos and rap songs…* [1]*"*. The satire in this scene lies in the absurd and ironic portrayal of segregation as something celebratory rather than oppressive. By turning a historically painful act into a lively, music-filled spectacle, the novel mocks how cultural memory, shaped by films and protest songs, can sometimes distort or trivialize

real historical injustices. The fact that the children embrace the segregation as a "rolling party" highlights the disconnect between lived experiences and symbolic representations of race in American society.

In *The Sellout*, intermediality creates a strong satirical effect by blending music and cinema references with social critique. Music and cinema references reflect absurdities and contradictions of the contemporary American society. Intermediality enables demonstrating how popular culture is often used to reinforce stereotypes and distract the reader from essential issues.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, intermediality in *The Sellout* creates a satiric effect by combining music, cinema with serious social and political issues the author addresses. Paul Beatty uses intermediality to critique commodification of African American culture in American media and satirize racial stereotypes. Heterogeneous codes associated with different art forms enable the author to convey meaningful and profound ideas, and create a captivating artistic text.

In The Sellout, intermediality appears in both explicit and implicit ways. Explicit intermediality is shown through thematic and semantic markers. Implicit intermediality has a more complex structure. Form-creating principles are reflected in the novel through the use of film techniques and rap-style imitation. Image-creating principles, however, are tied to post-irony and conceptual metaphors, which add deeper layers of meaning. The fact of equating politics with theater and cinema in conceptual metaphors Music is Power, Cinema is Illusion, Politics is Theatre, etc. also creates a satiric effect.

In addition to literary ones, various aspects of linguistics are involved in the analysis of intermediality such as stylistics, lexicology, and cognitive linguistics. They are supported by background knowledge in cinematography and rap culture. *The Sellout* is an example of how intermediality can be used in a novel to create a complex and multi-layered narrative that challenges readers and makes them think critically about social norms.

To summarize, functions of intermediality in *The Sellout* are as follows:

- References to music and cinema serve to ground the narrative in contemporary American culture;
- References to music and cinema highlight how pop culture reinforces social inequalities and shapes readers' understanding of social justice in America;
- Intermediality creates a satiric tone by combining heterogeneous codes associated with different art forms.

5. Prospects for Further Research

The findings of the present paper on intermediality in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* open new prospects for future research in both literary studies and linguistics. Future research could explore how other contemporary authors use intermedial references to critique societal norms. Comparative studies in linguistics could examine whether intermediality functions similarly in translated works or in novels written in non-English contexts, where cultural and media references may vary significantly.

Author Contributions

Funding

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Beatty P., 2016. The Sellout: a novel. Farrar, Straus And Giroux: New York, NY, USA. p. 304

[2] Aristova, N.O., 2015. American literature from a postmodern perspective. Scientific Bulletin of the International Humanitarian University. 16, 72–74.

[3] Pieshkova, O., 2018. Postmodernism literary text: tendencies towards intermediality (based on the novel "Origin" by Dan Brown). Science and Education a New Dimension. Philology. 46(159), 64–70. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31174/SEND-Ph2018-159VI46-15

[4] Wolf, W., 2002. Intermediality Revisited: Reflections on Word and Music Relations in the Context of a General Typology of Intermediality. Word and Music Studies. 4, 13–34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004334069_003

[5] Prihodko, G., Prykhodchenko, O., Vasylyna, R., 2024. Intermedial relations in a literary text. Cognition, Communication, Discourse. 28, 91–101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26565/2218-2926-2024-28-06

[6] Hallet, W., 2015. A Methodology of Intermediality in Literary Studies. In Rippl, G. (ed). Handbook of Intermediality: Literature - Image - Sound – Music. De Gruyter: Berlin, Germany; München, Germany; Boston, MA, USA. pp. 605–618. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110311075-034

[7] Clüver, C., 2007. Intermediality and Interarts Studies. Available from: https://semioticadaimagem.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/intermediality-and-interarts-studies.pdf (cited 5 March 2025).

[8] Elleström, L., 2021. The Modalities of Media II: An Expanded Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations. In: Elleström, L. (ed). Beyond Media Borders. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland. 1, 3–91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49679-1_1

[9] Rajewsky, I., 2005. Intermediality, intertextuality, and remediation: A literary perspective on intermediality. Intermédialités/Intermediality. 6, 43–64. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1005505ar

[10] Rarenko, N., 2020. Postmodernist Literature and Theatre From the Perspective of Intermedial (Meta)reference. Science and Education a New Dimension. Philology. 72(241), 51–55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31174/SEND-Ph2020-241VIII72-11

[11] Wildfeuer, J., Bateman, J., 2017. The film Text Analysis. Routledge: Abington, UK. pp. 200–210.

[12] Osborn, B., 2018. Intermediality and the Modernist Moment in Music and Literature. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, Scotland. p. 256.

[13] Wolf, W., 2011. (Inter)mediality and the Study of Literature. CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture. Available from: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/ (cited 5 March 2025).

[14] Wolf, W., 2005. Intermediality. In Herman, D., Jahn, M., Ryan, M.-L., (eds.). Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory. London: Routledge, UK. pp. 252–256.

[15] Wen, T., 2024. Transforming Intermediality and Transregional Communication. LLC "Scientific journals": Kyiv, Ukraine. 175. DOI: https://doi.org/10.61786/titc2024-1

[16] Moroshkina, H., Prihodko, G., Prykhodchenko, O., 2020. Projections of intermediality in a literary text. WISDOM. 15(2), 21–32. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24234/wisdom.v15i2.348

[17] Canelo, M., 2022. Paul Beatty's The Sellout as Allegory of the US Carceral System. Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies. 44, 187–205. DOI: http://doi.org/10.28914/Atlantis-2022-44.2.10

[18] Astrada, S., 2017. Home and Dwelling: Re-Examining Race and Identity through Octavia Butler's Kindred and Paul Beatty's The Sellout. Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy. 25(1), 105–120. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5195/jffp.2017.816

[19] Usman, K., Ashfaq, S., 2021. Segregation in postracial America: a fanonian critique of the sellout. PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology. 18(10), 2733–2740. Available from: https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/10234 (cited 5 March 2025).

[20] Wolf, W., 2017. Selected essays on intermediality by Werner Wolf (1992–2014): Theory and typology, literature-music relations, transmedial narratology, miscellaneous transmedial phenomena. Brill, Rodopi: Leiden, The Netherlands. pp. 213–317. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004346642

[21] Bellardi, M., 2018. The Cinematic Mode in Fiction. Frontiers of Narrative Studies. 4(s1), 24–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/fns-2018-0031

[22] Cuddon, J., 2013. A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. Wiley Blackwell: Hoboken, NJ, USA. p. 784.

[23] Gebeyehu, T., 2019. Analysis of Literary Techniques Employed in the Novel The Revelation: Flashback in Focus. Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. 63, 1–7. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7176/JLLL/63-01

[24] Claudia, C., 2003. The Word Out: A Stylistic Analysis of Rap Music [Masters of Arts]. Montclair, NJ: Montclair State University. p. 800. Available from: https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd/800

[25] Kövecses, Z., 2019. Perception and Metaphor: The case of smell. In Speed, L.J., O'Meara, C., San Roque, L., et al., (eds.). Perception metaphors. John Benjamins: Amsterdam, The Netherlands. pp. 327–346.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18299.31526

[26] Hutcheon, L., 2002. The Politics of Postmodernism. Routledge: London, UK. p. 232. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203426050

[27] Miller, P., Ethics and Irony. SubStance. 38(3), 51–71.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.0.0054

[28] Li, A., 2022. An Exploration of Post-Postmodern Political Irony in Contemporary American Late-Night Television Shows. Journal of Student Research. 11(3), 1–12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v11i3.2913