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Desire and Discomfort: The Stylistic Representation of Anxiety, Fear, Panic and Desire in Richard

Siken's Poetry Collection *Crush*

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Abstract

Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005) is defined by critics and scholars in terms of one underlying emotion — panic. This poetry collection which has been awarded and nominated for many prizes, including but not limited to Yale Series of Younger Poets prize 2005, offers a deep look into the uncomfortable emotions experienced by the speaker of the poems. The feelings of anxiety, fear, panic and desire are the most prominent throughout the collection and often times intertwine and overlap. Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005) contains 21 poems. This research takes into account the poetry collection as a whole, however, since the research is limited in scope, 10 poems were selected in order to examine the stylistics of discomfort and desire in depth. These poems are — *Scheherazade*, *Dirty Valentine*, *Little Beast*, *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*, *I Had a Dream About You*, *Straw House, Straw Dog*, *Wishbone*, *Driving, Not Washing*, *The Dislocated Room* and *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out*. Therefore, this MA paper endeavours to investigate the way Richard Siken creates and conveys the uncomfortable and heavy feelings of anxiety, fear and panic and the feelings of desire via the stylistic devices. The analysis part of this paper is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the stylistic correlates of fear and panic, while the second addresses the stylistics of anxiety and the third part of the analysis is concerned with investigating the poetic stylistics of desire in Richard Siken's poems in the poetry collection *Crush* (2005). Finally, the fourth part is devoted to the analysis of overlapping imagery of water and blood across the feelings of anxiety, fear, panic and desire in Siken's debut poetry collection.

1.   Introduction

1.1. Aim of the Thesis, Research Gap, Topic Relevance

The main goal of this thesis is to study the stylistics of panic, fear, anxiety and desire in Richard Siken's poems of his debut poetry collection *Crush* (2005). The poetry collection contains 21 poems, which this research paper takes into account. However, in order to have a clear and in-depth view of the poetic stylistics Siken employs to convey discomfort and desire, ten poems were chosen namely *Scheherazade, Dirty Valentine, Little Beast, A Primer for the Small Weird Loves, I Had a Dream About You, Straw House, Straw Dog, Wishbone, Driving, Not Washing, The Dislocated Room* and *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out.* These poems will be the focus of the analysis. Overall, the stylistic studies concerning uncomfortable feelings such as panic, fear and anxiety are scant to the best of my knowledge, while the stylistic of desire is even less frequently researched. Since the stylistics of fear, anxiety, panic and desire has not been extensively investigated so far, it will be paramount to derive these effects from Richard Siken's poems compiled into the poetry collection *Crush* (2005) and see how they are linguistically and formally constructed. This research gap, it can be argued, is a promising niche, since the political climate of the 21st century will undoubtedly produce art concerned with heavy emotions.

Richard Siken, born on February 15, 1967 in New York City, USA is a North-American poet, painter and film-maker. Siken's debut poetry collection *Crush* (2005) was a winner of Yale Series of Younger Poets prize 2005. The Yale Series of Younger Poets prize 2005 winner, Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005), was also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Lambda Literary Award, and the Thom Gunn Award. In the foreword of the poetry collection, Louise Glück states that "Siken turns life into art" (Siken, 2005: viii). American writer Nell Casey, in her account, has stated that Siken "effectively juxtaposes holy wishes with mundane images—making them both seem beautiful by some strange lyrical alchemy" (Schwerin, 2015). Opening the poetry collection, Louise Glück states in the foreword that "this is a book about panic" (Siken, 2005: vii). While the word panic itself is never explicitly mentioned in the collection, Glück states that "panic is a synonym for being", or, in other words, so internalised by the speaker that it is hard for him to differentiate panic from other states of being.

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Fear, anxiety, panic and desire have been made manifest in many literary forms. Lionel Kelly (2000) claims that panic is "one of the residual and necessary conditions of art, whether its sources are personal, social, political or global, and the function of the work of art is to mediate that sense of panic through the formal devices which structure the work" (Kelly, 2000: 1). Fear and anxiety are emotions mainly portrayed and relied upon but not limited to horror fiction. Interestingly, these intense and uncomfortable emotions have found their way into poetry long ago. Anne Karhio et al. (2011) posit that "poetry's efficacy may be that it helps us approach or frame a problem, rather than providing the sort of technological or political solutions one seeks for elsewhere" (Karhio et al., 2011: 2). In other words, poetry allows to play with the problem, examine it rather than focus on the end goal — solution, which may or may not exist. Nowadays, the emergence of fear-based or anxiety-infused art forms call for in-depth analysis of stylistics of fear, anxiety, panic and, on the other hand, desire.

The first point of interest, before one even opens *Crush* (2005) is its ambiguous title. According to Oxford dictionary the verb form means "to compress or squeeze forcefully so as to break, damage, or distort in shape" (Hornby, 2010) and, thus, carries all fear, panic and anxiety. To be broken, damaged or distorted is what one, understandably, fears. The noun form of the word "crush", however is a different side of the coin, meaning "a brief but intense infatuation for someone, especially someone unattainable" (ibid.) and, thus, evoking the emotion of desire. It makes sense, then, to analyse this poetry collection in terms of both — desire and discomfort.

Eleven years after having published *Crush* (2005), Richard Siken went on to publish a second poetry collection, *War of the Foxes* (2015). In 2019 Richard Siken, unfortunately, suffered a stroke, which "left him agitated, fearful, and confused. He was unable to speak in complete sentences or move the right side of his body" (Gupta, 2019). Nevertheless, only a year after the brain injury, Richard Siken has published a poem titled *Real* Estate. Recounting the gruelling process of adjusting to life after stroke, Siken admits: "I had a stroke and forgot almost everything. My handwriting was big and crooked and I couldn't walk" (ibid.), however language proved to be a way to understand the world for Siken: "Describing the world is easier than finding a place in it. Doorknob. Flashlight. Landmark. Yardstick." (ibid.).

1.2. *Crush*: Poetry Collection and Its Critical Reception

Crush (2005) was met with its fair share of praise. As aforementioned, nominee and winner of a plethora of awards, Siken's poetry collection was acknowledged as a promising work by Nobel prize winner Louise Glück, who identified panic as the main driving force of the collection (Siken, 2005: vii). Louise Glück pays special attention to the way the poems move through temporal dimension, claiming that the poems' repeating cycles epitomise the kind of profound wildness, which is also absolutely intelligible and intelligent: in *Crush*, the bullet enters the body and then returns to the gun" (Siken, 2005: xii).

Richard Siken's peers, other contemporary poets, also did not shy away from giving *Crush* (2005) its due praise. *Crush* (2005) has been widely praised by other contemporary poets, too. Shapiro (2013) elaborates on what Louise Glück termed "feverish energy" (Siken, 2015: xi) of the poems by describing the poems in *Crush* (2014) as "decidedly, unapologetically messy" (Shapiro, 2013). Shapiro (2013) acknowledges the raw power of Siken's poems: "They hurtle; they sprawl. They end awkwardly. They blurt out their secrets" (Shapiro, 2013). After examining a few prominent poems, Shapiro (2013) acknowledges that "the engine driving Siken's messy passion, it seems, isn't purely visual" (ibid.). Thus, the power of Siken's poetry in *Crush* (2005) stems from the poems being multifaceted works of art.

The unconventional aesthetics of *Crush* (2005) lies in its 'vivid portrayal of violent male sexuality' (Wood, 2014). Siken openly disregards conventional values and social norms, which, according to Wood (2014) is what turns *Crush* (2005) into a "cult classic" (Wood, 2014). Often unconventional, Siken's poetry is infused with camp aesthetic — camp implying a 'love for the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration' (Sontag, 2018: 1). Wood (2014) concludes that "in drawing up on the tropes of the camp genre, Siken created his own cult classic" (ibid.). Camp's natural habitat being the stage, or in today's world the cinema, allows for Wood (2014) to identify the cinematic atmosphere of Siken's poems by arguing that "almost every poem in *Crush* (2005) is a movie on paper" and that "Siken writes with a precise, filmic imagery and a screenwriter's terminology" (Wood, 2014). In doing so, she concurs with Glück when she writes that "cameras are everywhere, and tapes, the means by which an instant can be replayed over and over, manipulated. The poems' tense playbacks and freeze frames — their strategies of control — delineate chilling certainties and

immutabilities" (Siken, 2005: viii). Camp aesthetics is also described by Sontag (2018: 15) as queer aesthetics, which may hint at Siken's use of male desire as an intrinsically violent force.

Gathering numerous favourable reviews and praise, Richard Siken has also landed a position on a list of *Five Poets Who Changed My Life* compiled by Lambda Literary Awards committee (Sexsmith, 2010). Powerful emotional impact of this collection is witnessed by a reviewer as follows: "when words rush across a page like that I get lightheaded, my senses swell up like I've been stung and I start seeing the spaces between letters like they're lit from behind" (ibid.). Siken's style of writing brings a breath of fresh air to the world of poetry: "the style of Siken's work gave me a permission to be a bloody mess of a heart on the page in ways that the preach of subtlety in highbrow poetry never did" (ibid.).

The importance of Richard Siken's *Crush* (2005) is, arguably, a substantial one. While still young in its existence, this poetry collection has already drawn interest by the academic community. The following section will discuss the feelings of anxiety, fear, panic and desire, which will be key concepts in the stylistic analysis of Siken's poems in his collection *Crush* (2005).

1.3 Anxiety, Fear, Panic and Desire: General Introduction

Before anxiety, fear, panic and desire can be discussed in more depth, the distinction between feelings and emotions ought to be established. According to American Psychological Association, feelings differ from emotions in one crucial way — emotions manifest either consciously or subconsciously, they engage with the world (American Psychological Association), while feelings are experienced consciously and are, thus, "purely mental" (ibid.). To elaborate further, feelings are the way a person interprets the underlaying emotion and are highly subjective.

While often linked and clustered together fear, anxiety and panic are three distinct emotional states. According to American Psychological Association dictionary, fear is "a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction that mobilises the organism by triggering a set of physiological changes" (American Psychological Association). Fear differs from anxiety "in that the former is considered an appropriate short-term response to a present, clearly identifiable threat, whereas the latter is a future-oriented, long-term response focused on a diffuse threat" (ibid.). On the other hand, panic is defined as "a sudden, uncontrollable fear reaction that may involve terror, confusion, and irrational behaviour, precipitated by a perceived threat", thus panic is usually considered to be a more intense emotion than either fear or anxiety. However, all of these three uncomfortable emotions have more than one thing in common. Anxiety, fear and panic all involve the uncomfortable reaction to a perceived threat. Moreover, the emotion is panic is described by relying on the definition of fear. Clearly, then, anxiety, fear and panic often intertwine and overlap. On the other hand, the emotion of desire, antonymous to fear, anxiety and panic is defined as "a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen" (American Psychological Association, 2015) and has been viewed by Western philosophers as "fundamental to human life" (Guengerich, 2015). Thus, desire is an intrinsically human emotion, "to be human is to desire what we do not have" (ibid.).

In sociological studies, anxiety, fear and panic have been devoted considerable attention. Research suggests that anxiety is not necessarily a temporary state or the emotional response to a certain, most likely, threatening situation (Rebughini, 2021). For instance, Rebughini (2021) claims that anxiety can acquire the quality of a permanent emotional state, which figures as an emotional background and can be triggered by moments marked by uncertainty or charged with unpredictability (ibid.). Panic, as a phenomenon, has long been a focus of many sociological studies. The first major study of panic has

been carried out in 1938 by a sociologist LaPierre and materialised as a chapter in a little book on human behaviour (LaPierre, 1938). What, ultimately, is at the core of panic as an emotion is the hope for escape. While Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005) said to be marked by panic, the cluster of emotions of panic, fear, anxiety may bring one closer to a bigger picture of Siken's poetic stylistics, since emotions such as hope might also play a part. Disaster researchers (Quarantelli, 2001) have noted that: "hope of escape rather than hopelessness is what is involved. Persons who perceived themselves as totally trapped such as in sunken submarines or collapsed coal mines do not panic because they see no way of getting away from the threat" (ibid., 5). Thus, ironically, to panic means to hope and to perceive possibility of escape.

Desire as a concept was, perhaps, most famously explored by Gilles Deleuze. For Deleuze, desire does not signal lack of something but, rather, constitutes an affirmative vital force (Gao, 2013: 406). Both Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari saw desire as a positive force, which drives and propels people further. Deleuze explains that desire is "everything whereby the world and affects constitute us outside ourselves, in spite of ourselves. It's everything that overflows from us. That's why we define it as flow" (Halsey, 2006: 46). Deleuze and Guattari posit that desire is not born from one's needs, but rather one's needs are derived from desire (ibid., 27). Thus, desire goes beyond simple longing or lust by creating needs that ought to be fulfilled. Unlike fear, anxiety and panic, which can be isolating in their experience, desire is a bridge between the literary text and the reader. Jay Clayton (1989) claims that desire is an important topic in literary studies since it addresses the "dissatisfaction with the various formalisms that have dominated critical thinking about narrative" (Clayton, 1989: 36). Since desire is frequently foregrounded in Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005) together with violence, the ambivalence of desire is especially important. Interestingly, Leo Bersani (2015) sees desire as a crucial link between social and literary studies and establishes a link between desire and violence, claiming that "desire in intrinsically violent" (ibid., 34). This violence might stem from one's desire to know the other. Foucault claimed that "to know the other is to know the other's desire" (ibid.). Peter Brooks (1984), also implies that desire might be a creative force and sees it as "aligned with Eros or the life instincts, an energy that fuels our most basic projects toward the world including that of narrative" (ibid., 35). Although seen as a creative force by various scholars, desire, as an emotion, has its darker, violent undercurrents. Thus, desire is an especially important phenomenon in literary studies, linking the realm of writing to that of reading.

The following section will introduce and discuss the stylistics of poetry, its relevance to Richard Siken's poetry analysis of the poetry collection *Crush* (2005) and the poetry genre in general.

2. Framework

2.1 The Stylistics of Poetry

Stylistics, as an academic discipline, is concerned with the relationship between language and artistic function (Leech & Short 2007: 11) and is thus situated between literary and linguistic studies. Michael Toolan (2019) proposes a succinct definition : "literary stylistics is a practice of analysing the language of literature using linguistic concepts and categories, with the goal of explaining how literary meanings are created by specific language choices and patterning, the linguistic foregrounding, in the text" (Toolan, 2019: 1). The definition seems to ascribe a certain scientific quality to literary stylistics and while Toolan (ibid.) agrees that literary stylistics has often times claimed to be "quasi-scientific" (ibid.), subjective interpretation is still at the core of the discipline, as it "is an ineradicable element of such textual analysis" (ibid.). Thus, stylistics mediating between literature and linguistics analyses literary texts via linguistic models, its main goal being to trace "textual meaning or effects to linguistic sources wherever textual meanings or interpretations plausibly can be so traced" (ibid.). Other scholars, Carter (2010: 117), for example posit that stylistics is concerned with the intricacies of style in language and how this style is the effect of the relationship between intra-linguistics features of a text and non-linguistic phenomena, such as author or genre (ibid.).

Stylistics does not treat the language of any given text in isolation. It recognises the importance of the larger context, defined by Toolan (2019) as cultural differences and various experiences of reading, as well as diversity in reception and production and many possible sociohistorical conditions within which a text is produced. Toolan (ibid.) also takes into account different circumstances or resources available to the author. Within this larger context, though, the fixed and stable component remains the language of the text "as the essential and comparatively stable and permanent foundation" (ibid.). There is a variety of linguistic features that one can focus on when analysing a literary text. Amongst the most extensively researched include modality and transitivity (see Toolan 2019 for an extensive list).

The multidimensional nature of stylistics can be witnessed within the phenomena of iconicity or "the means by which poetry creates the semblance of felt life" (Freeman, 2009: 423) Iconicity creates "sensation, feelings, and images in language that enables the mind to encounter them as phenomenally real" (ibid., 447), thus, iconicity is a sort of a bridge between the reader's mind and the world (ibid.) as

the iconic structures create meaning on the ground of resemblance (Elleström 2017: 675). Iconicity can manifest as "the text's implied sounds, or graphology, or grammar, or semantics, or some combination of these" (Toolan, 2019: 15) and, thus, it invites the reader to pay attention on the text as a form, "for its own sake" (ibid.). Iconicity can be viewed and interpreted as a straight iconic link between the verbal sign and the image or object, as for instance in onomatopoeia (Fischer 1999: 346). While language is often perceived to be symbolic or "an arbitrary matching of forms or signifiers with meanings" (Toolan, 2019: 15), iconicity showcases how signs can embody or even enact the intended ideas (ibid.). The addressee, then, is less likely to look past the form in search for a form-transcending meaning (ibid.).

Stylistic analysis of any poem offers a better, more in-depth and more meaningful understanding of poetry. Understanding any given text, especially poetic requires tools for its analysis. Stylistic analysis, by expanding one's sensitivity and knowledge of how language works, allows one to arrive at a more precise, meaningful understanding of a poem (Sharma, 2018: 7). One of the key assets that the discipline of stylistics possess is its multifaceted nature. For instance, via stylistic analysis, one can approach a text through various lenses, such as phonological, semantic, syntactic, lexical and/or graphological (ibid., 8). These elements that make up a text have layers of meaning that once identified help to make up a bigger picture of a literary text.

Therefore, it is clear that stylistic analysis is not only helpful but important and necessary while analysing poetic texts. It not only helps to make sense of the poems but also arrive at more meaningful and well-rounded interpretations of poems. By examining various stylistic elements and devices, one, ultimately, gets a profound grasp on poetic power. Thus, the following section will provide the stylistic correlates of fear, anxiety, panic and desire, which will assist in the analysis of Richard Siken's poems.

2.2 Stylistic correlates of fear, anxiety panic and desire

Fear, anxiety and panic are feelings especially pronounced in contemporary society. Some scholars go as far as to imply that crises are "endemic to modernity in general" (Karhio et al., 2011: 2). It is then no surprise that writers and poets have endeavoured to re-enact these feelings in the medium of verbal art. These prominent feelings manifest in poetry in various ways. The following part of the paper will explore the stylistic correlates of fear, anxiety and panic.

One of the linguistic cues that warrants stylistic examination in the light of uncomfortable feelings is negation. Negation "acts as an instruction that a proposition should be understood as an unrealised state, event or existence" (Nahajec, 2013: 109) and engages both parties — speaker and hearer, or writer and reader:, since "a reader must infer the intended relevant meaning of a negated proposition" (ibid.). Furthermore, where negation is involved in a literary text, so are cognitive processes. For a hearer or a reader to comprehend a negated statement, he or she must conceptualise the positive counterpart that is being denied (ibid.). By constructing non-states and non-events, negation "operates to activate implied rather than explicit meaning" (ibid.).

On the other hand, negation can also be used a stylistic device to signal the feelings of desire and love. Double negatives are especially prominent in carrying out meaning of love and desire (Akun, 2013: 859). While, double negatives, such as "can't undo" are considered inappropriate by prescriptivists (ibid., 860), their appearance in a poetic piece is oftentimes charged with meaning. The intricacies of love and desire can sometimes be only depicted by using seemingly redundant linguistic constructions as double negation (ibid., 865). Therefore, negation can signal not only uncomfortable feelings of anxiety, fear and panic but it may also be indicative of feelings of desire.

Phonetic analysis[1] is likewise crucial in pinning down the stylistic correlates of uncomfortable feelings in poetry. Back vowels especially signal darkness and/or discomfort as there is a "structural relationship between back vowels, darkness, mystic obscurity, and hatred or struggle" (Tsur, 1992: 24). Vowels are especially important since they "are the most melodic of phonemes and hence must occupy a privileged position in the analysis of the music of verse" (Powell, 2015: 90). Kraxenberger and Menninghaus (2016) experimentally show that phonological recurrence (rhyme, alliteration,

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[1] For the purpose of phonetic transcriptions where relevant, Oxford Learner's Dictionary (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/) was selected.

assonance, and consonance), word positioning (position within a line and line position) and dominant stress peaks influence the reader to perceive the words in poetry either as distinctively joyful or sad (ibid., 298). This implies that the reading of a poem can be influenced by not only semantic content but also phonological and/or rhetorical qualities (ibid., 299). For example, Kraxenberger & Menninghaus (2016) research found that lexical tokens featuring alliteration, assonance or consonance were more often than not perceived as uniquely joyful as compared to the words devoid of these features (ibid., 298). On the other hand, words that possess a dominant stress peak and appear in advanced positions within the poems were often identified as emotional when compared to words that occur in unstressed positions (ibid.). For example, voiceless stops, such as /t/, /k/, /p/ are "short, tense, and uncomfortable to utter" (Tsur, 1992: 23). Sounds like these bring about "strong, rough, and uncomfortable feeling which correlates with the feeling of suffering" (ibid.). Moreover, /s/ and other sibilants have the potential to convey "hushing quality" (Powell, 2015: 84). Clearly, then, phonology is an important feature when it comes to meaning-making and stylistics of poetry.

Repetition is one of the poetic stylistic devices that can mirror anxiety. Far from having a purely rhythmic function, repetition is "an artistic, controlled evocation of obsessive ideas and concomitant compulsive action" (Hadda, 1998, 82). Richard Siken's poems in his collection *Crush* (2005) are especially charged with repeating lexical items. If repetitions occur noticeably frequently in first person voice poems, Hadda (1988) argues, they "suggest the verbalisation of repeated thoughts" (ibid., 82). This repetition is, then, indicative obsessive behaviour, which can signal anxiety (ibid.).

Another stylistic device that is key in analysing uncomfortable feelings in poetry is metaphor, "probably the most useful linguistic tool in creative and imaginative literature" (Adam 2008: 53). Metaphor's fundamental function, is to supply the writer with an "alternative linguistic mechanism" (ibid., 57) that would aid in expressing ideas. Metaphor works by employing tenor (later named target by Lakoff & Johnson (1980)), or the item being described and describing it via the means of vehicle (later source (Lakoff & Johnson 1980)). In other words, metaphor uses associations between tenor (target) and vehicle (source). The existence of any metaphor is thus based on the premise that there exists, even if at the level of perception, some common ground between the tenor and the vehicle (Adam, 2008: 57). Thus, Adam (ibid.) concludes that albeit tenor (target) and vehicle (source) have little to nothing in common, the writer's ability to use his or her imagination in order to bridge the gap between the two entities and establish a certain logical connection taps into a reader's imaginative mind (ibid.). It follows, then, that the metaphors found in poetry are an important stylistic device in

analysing the written work, since the common reference points established between the tenor (target) and the vehicle (source) can reveal how a poet perceives a certain issue. Metaphor, then, is an important device in the analysis of poetic stylistics by being impactful and expressive entities. Metaphors, by relying on poet's imaginative bridging between tenor (target) and vehicle (source) carry a lot of subjectivity and, thus, feeling manifests in literary language. It can be assumed that negative feelings, such as anxiety, fear and panic will be triggered by both target and source domains, albeit in different ways. While target domain will likely present these feelings explicitly, the more concrete source domain may only allude to uncomfortable, disturbing entities.

Imagery is another important stylistic device in analysing uncomfortable feelings in Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005). Imagery or otherwise termed "verbal art form" by Micheal Riffaterre (1981) has a direct link to reality via a reference. Imagery is not solely restricted to conveying the images, it also functions as "a representation of the unreal" (ibid., 107). As such, imagery is not easy to describe and is often conflated with figurative language, symbols or metaphors (Dídac, 2003: 2). Nevertheless, literature triggers images via language, thus The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics defines imagery as "images produced in the mind by language" (cited in Dídac, 2003: 2). As such imagery can be said to be closely related to syneasthesia or the way language evokes and refers to sensual experiences (ibid.). One of the reasons poets may use imagery is to make some abstract ideas concrete, more visceral and more memorable for the reader (ibid., 3). This ability to be visceral is what makes imagery so stunning.

Moreover, metaphor is an important stylistic device that can signal the feeling of desire. While often thematised, desire can also be portrayed in other ways, for example, in the "soliloquising self of the poetic speaker" (Buelens & Eechout, 2010: 38). Nevertheless, metaphor is one of the most common stylistic devices for portraying the feeling of desire. In poetic texts, desire often intertwines and overlaps with feelings of love and lust (Charteris-Black, 2021). From Jonathan Charteris-Black's (2021) empirical analysis, the metaphors of desire can be characterised as pointing towards an experience of heat and fire or based on the experiences of physical and natural forces (ibid., 1). Metaphors of desire are especially important since they can mimic the actual feeling in the readers (ibid., 10). However, the triggering of the intended feeling depends on the complexity of metaphor (ibid.). The more complex and richer the metaphor is, the higher the chances that the reader will exhibit a visceral response to it (ibid.). Thus, while often thematised, desire as a feeling also relies on stylistic devices, such as metaphors to carry out meaning.

Imagery is a stylistic device that can undoubtedly convey negative emotions and feelings. For example, the visual movement from "panoramic vistas to localised objects" (Hinrichsen, 2008: 45) becomes a very prominent poetic as well as psychological strategy for containing anxiety and grounding the speaker (ibid.). The imagery of anxiety also often includes boundaries, such as walls, doors and frames (ibid., 48), which once again try to contain the discomfort felt by the poetic voice. Imagery is especially important in the analysis of poetry and especially in the analysis of negative feelings in poetry. This is due to the fact that imagery provides an experience (Kuzmičová, 2013: 13 cited in Castiglione, 2022: 8). Thus, imagery's ability to provide a reader with a visceral experience is a critical notions in studying and understanding negative feelings in poetry.

The following sections will explore the stylistic constructions of fear/panic, anxiety and desire in Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005).

3. Analysis

3.1. The Stylistic Construction of Fear/Panic in Richard Siken's Poetry Collection *Crush*

Ever since Louise Glück introduced/prefaced *Crush* (2005) with the words: "this is a book about panic" (Siken, 2005: vii), the general consensus has been that panic is at the core of Siken's work. . The aim of this section, thus, is to study how Siken stylistically constructs this emotional state in his poems *Scheherazade, Wishbone* and *Straw House, Straw Dog* from the poetry collection *Crush* (2005). Nevertheless, the feelings of fear and panic are brought uncomfortably close to the feeling of desire and oftentimes overlap.

Crush (2005) opens with a poem titled *Scheherazade*. This name comes from *The Arabian Nights* and refers to "the Sultan's bride, who saves her life by maintaining the Sultan's interest in the suspenseful tales she tells" (Walton, 2015). Since in the original story the speaker is trying to save her life by telling stories through the poems, a sense of fear due to the sense of a threat and panic due to the feeling of being trapped are already evoked, provided the literary allusion is known to the reader. Richard Siken's poem *Scheherazade* alludes to negative feelings not only lexically but also rhythmically as it is comprised, mainly, of monosyllabic words (72 out of 130). The prevalence of monosyllabic words in a poem usually gives the reader "a measured, hesitating feel" (Sedia, 2021) or "cautious deliberation" (ibid.). However, it also makes the poem sound "clipped" (ibid.) evoking rushing, which in turn makes one breathe faster, giving the poem a stressful, hyperventilating sensation. The only five-syllable word in the poem is, significantly, 'inconsolable': a word with a negative connotation, that results foregrounded due to its size compared to the rest of the words. Visually, it stands out as the longest word on the page and audibly it takes the most effort and time to pronounce, thus lingering in one's mouth and underpinning the poem's feelings — panic and fear: "That means it's noon, that means we're inconsolable" (Siken, 2005: 3). Moreover, the fear and desire in the opening poem manifest again as the closing lines are full of anguish too: "tell me how all this, and love too, will ruin us. / These, our bodies, possessed by light. / Tell me we'll never get used to it" (Siken, 2005: 3). Arguably, the future tense in connection with negatively charged "ruin" mimics the feelings of anxiety. The inconsolability stems from the fact that the speaker fears being ruined by what he desires — love. Not only this, he also exhibits his fear that the uncomfortable feelings of fear and panic will always linger and will be impossible to become used to or escape.

The stylistic device of imagery is prominent in conveying the feelings of fear and panic. These uncomfortable feelings in the opening poem and the poetry collection as a whole are encoded in the imagery of physical fatigue, with a strong allusion to the image of death, too. For instance the heavy feelings are represented by the heavy physical labour of pulling bodies (and presumably corpses) out of the water: "Tell me about the dream where we pull the bodies out of the lake" (Siken, 2005: 3). According to Kathrin Bethke (2021) poets often describe heavy physical actions to "conceptualise the mental feeling of "heaviness" (Bethke, 2021: 22). Moreover, the action of pulling bodies out of the sea entails drowning or coming dangerously close to the experience of drowning. The experience of drowning may not signal a physical one but, rather, a mental feeling of drowning. Interestingly, patients suffering from panic attacks, typically describe these attacks in terms drowning: the common ground between these two experiences of drowning and enduring a panic attack is laboured breathing (Schuster, 2017). The feeling of drowning permeates the poetry collection. Halfway through the book, in the poem titled *Wishbone*, Siken reiterates the feeling of being underwater: "I say I want you inside me and you hold my head underwater" (Siken, 2005: 40). Here, panic and desire is intertwined, as desire is signalled by the transitive verb *want* and followed by a direct object *you*. The panic, in turn, is induced by the imagery of drowning as the poetic speaker recounts the experience of having his head held underwater. Thus, the feelings of panic and desire co-mingle.

In addition, the imagery of fire and heat also signal the relationship between fear/panic and desire. For Siken even love is tainted by fear. In a poem titled *Straw House, Straw Dog*, he writes: "I had four dreams in a row / where you were burned, about to burn, or still on fire" (Siken, 2005: 31). The imagery of fire is often connected with intensity of love and desire but also pain as Joanna Bourke (2014) claims: "the correlation between intensity, heat and pain occurs 'at the level of the body" (Bourke, 2014: 6). The burning body as an imagery is also accompanied by a feverish one. As Richard Siken also uses a heat metaphor (LOVER IS FEVER): "You are a fever I am learning to live with, and everything is happening / at the wrong end of a very long tunnel" (Siken, 2005: 31). Thus, Richard Siken conveys the feelings of love and desire in terms of heat and fever metaphors. Arguably, it is not an accidental stylistic choice but a meaningful one as it permeates the poetry collection. The metaphor of fire as conveying feelings of love and fear are present throughout the collection, with 13 out of 21 poems featuring the relationship between love and fear/panic. In the poem titled *I Had a Dream About You*, Siken writes: "Your feet were burning so I put my hands on them, but my hands were burning too" (ibid., 30). Thus, fire as a metaphorical representation for love does not only threaten to burn but in Siken's poems actually cause burning and, thus, pain and, by extension, fear.

Richard Siken also relies on phonological devices to convey the feelings of fear and panic. As mentioned before, dark vowels often evoke dark, uncomfortable feelings. Richard Siken's poem titled *Wishbone* opens with a lot of back vowel sounds (with 23 out of 67 words in the opening stanza containing dark vowels), such as /uː/, /ʊ/, /ɔː/, /ɒ/. Ever since the opening word "you", containing the back vowel /uː/, the reader is exposed to a plethora of dark vowels setting the mood. Apart from "you", the are sounds in "owe" such as /ʊ/, "gone" employs a back vowel /ɒ/, "shoes" exhibit a dark /uː/, while "look" contains /ʊ/. Thus, the beginning of the poem is tainted dark by the overwhelming use of the back vowels. Below, the phonetic transcription of the opening stanza highlights the denseness of dark vowels[2]:

> j**uː** seɪvd maɪ laɪf, hiː sɛz. aɪ ə**ʊ** j**uː**, aɪ ə**ʊ** j**uː** ˈɛvrɪθɪŋ.
> j**uː** də**ʊ**nt, aɪ seɪ, j**uː** də**ʊ**nt ə**ʊ** miː skw**ɒ**t, lɛts dʒʌst gɛt ˈgə**ʊ**ɪŋ, lɛts dʒʌst gɛt g**ɒ**n, bʌt hiːz rɪ ˈlɛntlɪs,
> kiːps ˈseɪɪŋ aɪ ə**ʊ** j**uː**, sɛz j**ɔː** ʃ**uː**z ɑː ˈfɪlɪŋ wɪð j**ɔː**r ə**ʊ**n
> dæm blʌd, j**uː** mʌst w**ɒ**nt ˈsʌmθɪŋ, dʒʌst tɛl miː, ænd ɪts j**ɔː**z
> bʌt aɪ kɑːnt l**ʊ**k æt hɪm, kæn ˈhɑːdli spiːk"

> "You saved my life, he says. I owe you, I owe you everything.
> You don't, I say, you don't owe me squat, let's just get going, let's just get gone, but he's relentless,
> keeps saying I owe you, says your shoes are filling with your own
> damn blood, you must want something, just tell me, and it's yours.
> But I can't look at him, can hardly speak" (Siken, 2005: 40).

As mentioned before, dark vowels signal darkness and/or discomfort as they recall dark heavy feelings, hatred, struggle or, even, mystical obscurity (Tsur, 1992: 24). Richard Siken manages to evoke these sensations with the opening stanza alone of the poem *Wishbone*.

The opening stanza of a poem, heavy with dark vowels is, arguably, not an accidental choice in the poem above. In a different poem titled *Straw House, Straw Dog*, Richard Siken begins with a stanza also laden with dark vowels:

> aɪ w**ɒ**ʧt ˌtiːˈviː. aɪ hæd ə kə**ʊ**k æt ðə bɑː. aɪ hæd f**ɔː** driːmz ɪn ə rə**ʊ**
> weə j**uː** wɜː bɜːnd, əˈba**ʊ**t t**uː** bɜːn, **ɔː** stɪl **ɒ**n ˈfaɪə.
> aɪ w**ɒ**ʧt ˌtiːˈviː. aɪ hæd ə kə**ʊ**k æt ðə bɑː. aɪ hæd f**ɔː** kə**ʊ**ks,
> f**ɔː** driːmz ɪn ə rə**ʊ**.

> "I watched TV.   I had a Coke at the bar.   I had four dreams in a row
> where you were burned, about to burn, or still on fire.
> I watched TV.   I had a Coke at the bar. I had four Cokes,
> four dreams in a row" (Siken, 2005: 31).

Interestingly, the dark vowels are not concentrated in the initial, middle or final positions but, rather, appear all throughout the opening stanza of the poem. Out of nine poems analysed from Richard Siken's poetry collection Crush (2015), 6 poems are characterised by an opening stanza laden with dark vowels (*Dirty Valentine*, *Little Beast*, *Wishbone*, *Straw House, Straw Dog*, *I Had a Dream about You* and *The Dislocated Room*). The usage of dark vowels in the opening stanzas and then throughout the poems too, allows for Siken to not only set the heavy, dark mood but make it inescapable, which, arguably, mimics the poetic speaker's inability to escape fear and panic.

Therefore, Richard Siken uses a variety of stylistic devices in order to convey the feelings of fear and panic. While short, rhythmic words, which create the sensation of breathlessness and hyperventilation are especially characteristic of the opening poem named *Scheherazade*, other analysed poems convey fear and panic via different stylistic devices. In poems *Wishbone* and *Straw House, Straw Dog*, Richard Siken employs the imagery of physical fatigue and drowning, imagery of heat and fire and relies on dark vowels to convey the sense of panic and fear.

As mentioned before, while often overlapping states, anxiety is different from fear and panic in not having a direct object of fear. Thus, the following section will analyse how Richard Siken creates and conveys the sense of anxiety in his poems *Straw House, Straw Dog*, *Wishbone* and *Scheherazade*.

3.2. The Stylistic Construction of Anxiety in Richard Siken's Poetry Collection *Crush*

As mentioned before, fear/panic and anxiety differ in one key aspect. While fear and/or panic are feelings that have a specific target a person is afraid of, anxiety lacks such object of fear and is rather, generalised, unable to be pinned down and, thus, omnipresent (American Psychological Association, 2015). In *Crush* (2005) anxiety manifests in various ways, such as repetitions and an attempt to localise anxious feelings via the movement from panoramic vistas to localised objects. This section will analyse the poems titled *Straw House*, *Straw Dog*, *Wishbone*, *Scheherazade* and *The Dislocated Room* in order to investigate how Richard Siken portrays anxiety via stylistic devices.

One of the prominent manifestations of anxiety in *Crush* (2005) are repetitions. Midway through the poetry collection, the poem titled *Straw House*, *Straw Dog* opens with lines:

> "I watched TV. I had a Coke at the bar. I had four dreams in a row
> where you were burned, about to burn, or still on fire.
> I watched TV.
> I had a Coke at the bar.
> I had four Cokes,
> four dreams in a row" (Siken, 2005: 31).

Further down, the repetition is all the more incessant: "Four dreams in a row, four dreams in a row, four dreams in a row" (ibid.). These repetitive lines together with the repetition of "I watched TV", "I had a Coke at the bar" and "I had four dreams in a row" (ibid.) is, arguably, a symptom of obsessive, anxious thinking (Segerstrom, et al. 2000) that may tap into the poetic speaker's anxieties Hadda (1988: 82). The repeated language is not the only indication of obsessiveness and, thus, anxiety. The speaker also repeats actions, such as drinking coke and having obsessive dreams. Thus, Richard Siken uses a stylistic device of repetition to hint at the anxious nature of the speaker, thus permeating the poems with a sense of impending doom.

Another of Siken's poems, namely, *Wishbone* is also obsessively repetitive since the beginning:

> "You saved my life he says, I owe you, I owe you everything.
> You don't, I say, you don't own me squat, let's just get going, let's just
> get gone, but he's relentless
> keeps saying I owe you" (Siken, 2005: 40).

The repetition here is not merely of lines but of direct speech, too. Thus, it points towards the characteristic spoken language tendencies (Biber & Leech, 1999: 204) that are not merely there to

"enhance rhythm, musicality, closure" (Hadda, 1988: 93). Rather, they point to a deeper psychological tension made manifest in the speaker. Since, according to Janet Hadda (1988) poems that employ a first-person narrator often indicate a particular persona the poet intends to convey (ibid., 82). The repetitions and, by extension, suggestions of the verbalisation of repeated thoughts tap into the general persona of the speaker — one plagues by repetitive, anxious behaviour and feelings. As such, in Siken's poems the repetitive lines point to obsession — a symptom of anxiety.

Moreover, right from the opening poem, *Scheherazade*, there is a visual movement from panoramic vistas to localised objects. : "tell me about the dream where we pull the bodies out of the lake and dress them in warm clothes again" (Siken, 2005: 3), moves on to the field full of horses: "how it was late and no one could sleep, the horses running until they forget they are horses" (ibid.) and comes to a halt within the root system: "like a tree where the roots have to end somewhere" (ibid.). This movement from panoramic to localised has been defined as a "defensive eye" (Hinrichsen, 2008: 45) and further described as "a protective relationship to the world dependent upon a continual switching of visual perspectives that diffuses the pressures interior to the poem" (ibid.). Hinrichsen continues to explain the continual switching between panoramic vistas and localised objects is "a key poetic and psychic strategy for containing and binding generalised anxiety" (ibid.). This movement is not accidental as in another poem, titled *The Dislocated Room*, there is a similar shift from the vastness of the sky to the isolation of the Holiday Inn room:

> "It was night for many miles and then the real stars in the purple sky,
> like little boats rowed out too far,
> begin to disappear.
> And there, in the distance, not the promised land,
> but a Holiday Inn,
> with bougainvillea growing through the chain link by the pool" (Siken, 2005: 46).

Such movement is a symptom of the speaker's urge to move from generalised anxiety to specific object in order to ground oneself and/or gain a sense of presence. Paradoxically, what Siken's speaker finds as the localised object of fear, though, is his lover's rejection as the poem *The Dislocated Room* continues: "The door swung wide: twin beds, twin lamps, twin plastic cups / wrapped up in cellophane / and he says No Henry, let's not do this" (ibid.). Thus, the generalised anxiety of the speaker becomes localised as the transition from panoramic vistas to specific objects and/or persons is explored.

Thus Richard Siken employs the stylistic devices of incessant repetition and the visual movement from panoramic vistas to localised objects in order to convey the feelings of anxiety. The repetitions often involve not only lexical level but pertain to the actions carried out by the speaker of the poems, thus, indicating obsessive behaviour, which is closely linked to anxiety. Moreover, the visual movement from panoramic vistas to localised objects, employed by Siken to mirror anxiety highlights the poetic speaker's need to ground himself and contain his anxieties by shifting the focus into a localised position.

While the preceding chapters focused on the emotional states of fear/panic and anxiety, the following section will analyse how Richard Siken conveys desire in his poems titled *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out*, *Wishbone* and *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*.

3.3 The Stylistic Construction of Desire in Richard Siken's Poetry Collection *Crush*

In *Crush* (2005) the isolating forces of fear, panic and anxiety are opposed and perhaps counterbalanced by desire, which seems to evoke closeness and unity. However, I would like to argue that Siken showcases the sometimes violent and dark nature of desire by means of metaphors and similes and negation in his poems *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out*, *Wishbone* and *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*.

Richard Siken employs metaphors and similes to convey the feeling of desire and, at the same time, show the violent nature of it. Poem titled *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out* contains lines: "Every morning the same big / and little words all spelling out desire, all spelling out / You will be alone always and then you will die" (Siken, 2005: 11). Here, Siken thematises desire by linking it with the sense of inescapable doom as the lines "You will be alone always and then you will die" (Siken, 2005: 11) show. The future tense together with the negative connotation of loneliness paint a dark undertone of desire and longing. Thus, Siken, via repetition and parallelism, which makes the repeated parts semantically equivalent in the context links desire with loneliness and, ultimately, death. It is fair to assume, then, that for Siken's poetic speaker desire is associated with loneliness and lonely death. Later on, in the poem the lines: "Love, for you, / is larger than the usual romantic love. It's like a religion. It's / terrifying. No one / will ever want to sleep with you" (Siken, 2005: 14) showcase the way Siken uses simile (LOVE IS (LIKE) RELIGION) to bring desire/love dangerously close to fear and panic. Thus, the association between desire and loneliness and fear of loneliness remains constant.

Siken uses a metaphor of LOVE IS A BATTLE in the poem titled *Wishbone*, where desire is directly and explicitly associated with violence:

> "Do you want it? Do you want anything I have?
> Will you throw me to the ground like you meant it, reach inside and wrestle
> it out with your bare hands? If you love me, Henry, you don't love me
> in a way I understand" (Siken, 2005: 41).

Here, violence is suggested by the use of the dynamic verbs "throw" and "wrestle" and, more generally, by the LOVE IS A BATTLE metaphor. Thus, Siken exposes the violent nature of desire. Later on, the metaphors of death resurface in the shape of LOVER IS KILLER metaphor, derived from the LOVE IS DEATH archetype: "I'll be your / slaughterhouse, your killing floor, your morgue / and final resting" (ibid.). Siken posits another metaphor — DESIRE IS DEATH. Naturally, then, such desire evokes

fear, panic and anxiety since Siken's poetic desire is not uniting but, rather, suggesting demise. The semantic distance between the I (target) and the sources (killing floor, morgue) is great, as these linguistic metaphors instantiate the PERSON IS PLACE conceptual metaphor. This makes the metaphor particularly striking, since as Lodge (1977) claims the semantic strength of a metaphor depends on the "existential, conceptual or affective distance between the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor" (ibid., 201). Thus, the degree of incongruity between the entities in questions is especially pronounced in Siken's metaphors of LOVER IS KILLER or DESIRE IS DEATH. Thus, the incongruous nature of desire and death makes Siken's metaphors (and similes) especially potent with meaning and effect.

Interestingly, negation also cues the presence of desire. The poem titled *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves* abounds with negation:

> "And no one can ever figure out what you want,
> and you won't tell them
> and you realise the one person in the world who loves you
> isn't the one you thought it would be,
> and you don't trust him to love you in a way
> you would enjoy" (Siken, 2005: 24).

Since negation entails "that a proposition should be understood as an unrealised state, event or existence" (Nahajec, 2009: 109), Siken once again draws attention to the loneliness of desire by maintaining that no one can know the speaker's desire and the speaker is not willing to communicate it. Moreover, by negating the expectation of the love object: "and you realise the one person in the world who loves you / isn't the one you thought it would be" (Siken, 2005: 24) and his ability to love: "and you don't trust him to love you in a way / you would enjoy" (ibid.) Siken constructs desire as a, primarily, negative force.

Therefore, Siken constructs desire via metaphors and similes, and negation. All these stylistic devices show the nature of Siken's poetic desire — it is a bleak, threatening and negative force. Desire, thus, is closely linked to the feelings of panic, fear and anxiety as analysed before. The overlaps across the emotional states of fear/panic, anxiety and desire in Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005) are most often witnessed in terms of imagery of blood and water. These overlaps are analysed in the following section.

3.4. Imagery of Blood and Water in Richard Siken's Poetry Collection *Crush*: Overlaps Across the Effects

The preceding sections attempted to analyse stylistic features of fear, panic, anxiety and desire in selected Richard Siken's poems in his poetry collection *Crush* (2005). Nevertheless, the distinction between stylistic features that comprise the expression of fear/panic, anxiety and desire are not distinctly clear-cut. Many a time, the stylistics of these feelings are conflated. For example, as analysed prior, Richard Siken uses negation to convey both panic and desire. Curiously, one of the most uniting stylistic feature in Richard Siken's *Crush* (2005) is imagery. Siken, predominantly, uses the imagery of blood and water to convey feelings of fear, panic, anxiety and desire.

Water is a very potent yet ambiguous image in Siken's poems. For instance, *Dirty Valentine* contains lines: "We're filming the movie called *Planet of Love* — / there's sex of course, and ballroom dancing, / fancy clothes and waterlilies in the pond" (Siken, 2005: 4). Siken uses the image of a pond and waterlilies in connection with love and sex. Since "the symbolism of water has a universal undertone of purity, clarity, refreshment, mystery and fertility" (Roy, 2008), it would be fair to assume that Siken's use of water entails fertility, which is closely associated with desire. However, Siken intertwines desire with a deep struggle and anxiety. In the poem succeeding *Dirty Valentine* and titled *Little Beast*, Siken writes: "You could drown in those eyes, I said, / so it's summer, so it's suicide, / so we're helpless in sleep and struggling at the bottom of the pool" (Siken, 2005: 6). Here, fertility and sexual desire quickly turn into struggle and a sense of drowning, which connotes both fear/panic as a direct fear of drowning and anxiety as a generalised threat of suffocation. Later on in the poetry collection the image of water and the sense of desire and fear intermingle more deeply. In the poem *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*, Siken writes:

> "The blond boy in the red trunks is holding your head underwater
> because he is trying to kill you,
> and you deserve it, you do, and you know this, and you are ready to die in this swimming pool
> because you wanted to touch his hands and lips and this means
> your life is over anyway" (Siken, 2005: 22).

Thus, the desire for the boy is equated with drowning and being killed. Such a strong desire for another and unrequited love might be looked at through a classical, mythological perspective. One of the retellings of the myth of Narcissus by the Roman poet Ovid claims that the handsome Narcissus refused the advances of the nymphet Echo, who desired the young man (Cartwright, 2017). The nymphet's demise by drowning is akin to the poetic speaker's demise in Siken's poems — unanswered

love and one-sided desire. It is fair to assume that Richard Siken employs allusions to literary tradition as one of his stylistic devices when dealing with desire. For Siken desire, then, ultimately, entails demise.

The image of blood also serves to co-mingle the feelings of fear, panic, anxiety and desire in Siken's poetry collection. One of the first poems, *Little Beast*, has these final lines: "Sorry / about the blood in your mouth. I wish it was mine" (Siken, 2005: 7). While desire is lexically instantiated via the verb "wish", here, blood and desire are closely linked through the context of the speaker desiring his blood in his lover's mouth. Though culturally dependent, blood is often seen as embodying violence (McCarthy, 1969). As the poetry collection develops, the image of blood also moves from embodying desire to suggesting anxiety. In the poem titled *Driving, Not Washing*, Siken begins: "It starts with bloodshed, always bloodshed, always the same / running from something larger than yourself story" (Siken, 2005: 42). Here the symbol of blood is connoting anxiety rather than desire as it did in the earlier poem. Nevertheless, the image of blood in Siken's poetry carries the weight of both fear or fear of violence and desire. Therefore, the imagery of blood and water serve to unite the feelings of fear, panic, anxiety and desire. This not only brings unity to the poetry collection, it also problematises the realm of feelings within the poems, as feelings of desire/love and fear/anxiety are so closely linked.

Therefore, the imagery of water and blood in Richard Siken's poems titled *Dirty Valentine*, *Little Beast*, *Primer for the Small Weird Loves* and *Driving, Not Washing* showcases how the poet brings the states of anxiety, fear, panic and desire close together, making them almost indistinguishable.

4. Conclusions

The present study focused on uncomfortable feelings, such as anxiety, fear and panic and the feeling of desire, which is closely linked to violence in Richard Siken's debut poetry collection *Crush* (2005). The study aimed to investigate the way these feelings are manifested in stylistic terms. In total ten poems, namely *Scheherazade, Dirty Valentine, Little Beast, A Primer for the Small Weird Loves, I Had a Dream About You, Straw House, Straw Dog, Wishbone, Driving, Not Washing, The Dislocated Room.* and *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out* were examined and analysed in depth.

It was discovered that Siken's poems rely heavily on repetition, negation, metaphor and imagery in order to convey uncomfortable feelings as well as link desire with dark and, often, violent feelings. The study showed that the feelings of fear and panic are often conveyed via the heavy use of monosyllabic words, which give the poems a rushing, clipped feeling often indicative of breathlessness and hyperventilation. Moreover, the imagery of physical fatigue is prominent in Siken's poems, which are drenched in feelings of panic and fear. The imagery of drowning is also a key image of panic and/or fear as many psychologists report their patients describing panic attacks in terms of feeling like oneself is drowning. Besides, the imagery of heat and burning is often used by Siken to evoke panic and fear and relate these intense and uncomfortable feelings to the feelings of desire and love. Finally, the dark and intense feelings of panic and fear are evoked by the use of dark or back vowels, such as /uː/, /ʊ/, /ɔː/, /ɒ/. These dark vowels infuse the poems with the sense of ominousness and fear.

Shifting the focus to the way Siken conveys anxiety in his ten poems out of the poetry collection *Crush* (2005), it was discovered that anxiety manifests itself by incessant and almost constant repetition. The repetitiveness found in the poems, it is argued, allude to the obsessive behaviour and obsessive thought processes which are identified as symptoms of anxious feelings. Not only this, Siken also uses the imagery of movement from panoramic vistas to localised objects in order to gain stability to control the anxiety.

Desire is viewed by Richard Siken in his ten poems which were analysed as often tainted with violence and dark undertones. Siken uses metaphors and similes to convey this dark nature of desire and links desire and love with death and killing as metaphors LOVE IS A BATTLE, LOVER IS KILLER, DESIRE IS DEATH show. Yet another stylistic function, which allows Siken to portray desire is negation. By using

negative forms, such as "no one", "won't", "isn't", "don't", Richard Siken shows desire to be a negative and destructive force.

Moreover, the imagery was found to be very pronounced and often overlapping in ten poems published in Richard Siken's poetry collection *Crush* (2005). Imagery relating to water and blood is especially prominent in the poems and, while, both entities are liquid water was found to signal desire intermingled with panic, while blood often coded the uncomfortable feelings of anxiety, fear and panic.

Therefore, the present study investigated the stylistic properties that underpin Richard Siken's poetics of anxiety, fear, panic and desire. While this paper focused on key parts of the poetry collection, it is limited in scope and expertise. Thus, more extensive analysis of the promising poet's work should allow a better perspective into Siken's poems. For one, gender studies could provide an interesting insight into how Richard Siken's stylistics of anxiety, fear, panic and desire is influenced by gender and sexuality.

5. Summary in Lithuanian

Troškimas ir diskomfortas: nerimo, baimės, panikos ir troškimo meninės raiškos priemonės Richardo Sikeno poezijos rinkinyje „Crush"

Šiame magistro darbe analizuojami baimės, nerimo, panikos ir troškimo stilistikos elementai Richardo Sikeno poezijos rinkinyje „Crush" (2005). Šis debiutinis poezijos rinkinys buvo pripažintas kaip geriausias dalyvavęs Yale Series of Younger Poets konkurse 2005-aisiais metais. Nobelio literatūros premiją 2020-aisiais laimėjusi amerikiečių poetė Louise Glück apibūdino Richardo Sikeno poezijos rinkinį „Crush" (2005), kaip poeziją apie paniką. Richardo Sikeno poezija yra persmelkta tokių stiprių jausmų kaip ne tik panika, bet ir baimė, nerimas ir troškimas, kuris dažnai yra neatsiejamas nuo fizinio smurto bei skausmo. Šiame darbe analizuojami dešimt eilėraščių iš Richardo Sikeno poezijos rinkinio „Crush" (2005), pavadinimais *Scheherazade*, *Dirty Valentine*, *Little Beast*, *A Primer for the Small Weird Loves*, *I Had a Dream About You*, *Straw House, Straw Dog*, *Wishbone*, *Driving, Not Washing*, *The Dislocated Room* and *Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out*. Šių eilėraščių meninių raiškų priemonių analizė yra suskirstyta į keturias dalis. Pirmoje analizės dalyje dėmesys skiriamas baimės ir panikos jausmams ir jų raiškos meninėms priemonėms. Richard Siken pasitelkia tokias menines priemones kaip vienbalsių žodžių vartojimas, o tai suteikia eilėraščiams skubos ar net dusulio jausmą, kuris yra glaudžiai siejamas su baime ir panika. Be to, tokiuose eilėraščiuose sutinkai ilgesni nei vienskiemeniai žodžiai iškarto atsiduria pirmame plane. Neretai, tokie ilgiu išsiskiriantys žodžiai turi negatyvią reikšmę, kaip kad "unconsolable" (ang. *nepaguodžiamas*). Baimės ir panikos jausmai taip pat yra perteikiami pasitelkiant poetinius vaizdinius, tokius kaip nuovargis ir skendimas. Skendimo vaizdinys yra dažnai asociojuojamas su panikos jausmu. Ugnies bei karščio vaizdiniai taip pat yra sutinkami išskirtinai panikos ir baimės jausmais pasižyminčiuose Richardo Sikeno rinkinio eilėrasčiuose. Galiausiai, užpakalinės eilės balsių (ang. *back vowels*) vartojimas taip pat signalizuoja tamsius tonus, kurie sukuria įtampos, baimės ir panikos atmosferą. Antroji analizės dalis yra skiriama nerimo būsenos meninės raiškos priemonėms Richard Siken poezijos rinkinyje „Crush" (2005). Nerimas šiame rinkinyje pasižymi pasikartojančiomis lingvistinėmis struktūromis — besikartojančiais žodžiais ar net visais sakiniais. Žodžių ar sakinių nuolatinis kartojimas yra neretai siejamas su nerimu ir įkyriomis mintimis. Taip pat, nerimas yra vaizduojamas pasitelkiant lingvistinį judėjimą nuo panoraminių vaizdinių iki lokalizuotų objektų taip siekiant apibrėžtį nerimą bei jį suvaldyti. Trečioji analizės dalis yra skiriama troškimui ir jo meninės raiškos priemonėms. Troškimas Richard Siken poezijoje šiame rinkinyje pasireiškia per metaforas ir/ar palyginimus. Pavyzdžiui, metafora ᴍʏʟʏᴍᴀsɪs ʏʀᴀ ᴢ̌ᴜᴅɪᴋᴀs yra ypač išreikšta, be to sieja troškimą su smurtu. Taip pat, troškimas

pasireiškia per neiginių besikartojantį vartojimą. Neiginių formos Richard Siken eilėraščiuose dažniausiai lydi troškimo jausmus išreiškiančias poezijos eilutes. Galiausiai ketvirtoji analizės dalis yra skiariama kraujo ir vandens vaizdiniams, kurių dėka nerimo, baimės, panikos ir troškimo jausmai dažnai persipyna drauge. Šie vaizdiniai atskleidžia Richard Siken poezijos požiūrį į nerimo, baimės, panikos, bei troškimo ir/ar meilės jausmus, kaip glaudžiai tarpusavyje susijusias asmens gyvenimo dalis.

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